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## Inventing the Origins of Theatre History: The Modern Uses of Juba II's *theatriké historia*

### Richard Schoch

It is an Oedipal irony of theatre history that over the past half century some of its leading practitioners have begun their undeniably heterogeneous works with ritualistic invocations of the same text. This work is frequently taken to be the oldest in our field: the *theatriké historia* of Juba II of Mauretania (ca. 48 BC – ca. 23 AD).<sup>1</sup> Composed during or just before the reign of Augustus, and written in Greek, the language of scholarship in the Roman world, Juba's text survives only as isolated quotations in a handful of late classical works. Its composition has been proposed more than once—and in more than one manner—as theatre history's founding moment.

In this essay I look at what we know about a text that despite—more likely, because of—almost total disappearance has been used to construct disciplinary myths of origin. In so doing I want to offer a more deeply excavated historicist reading of this early work of theatre scholarship: not to overturn, but to situate, modern rhetorical readings of it, thereby building up a stronger sense of a disciplinary past that can be put into an always new relation with the present. I argue that the context, composition, and reception history of the *theatriké historia* prevent us from confidently ascribing any foundational status within theatre history to that text or to its author, despite a continuing desire, at least on the part of some theatre scholars, to do just that. My contention is that in its modern afterlife, Juba's lost work has possessed a value as a placeholder for disciplinary myths of origins that is not historically warranted. Indeed, the more deeply we immerse ourselves in the documentary record the more it hinders the construction of straightforward and empowering narratives of disciplinary identity. This withdrawal from originating claims does not, however, result in the dismantling of our disciplinary identity but rather in the freedom for theatre scholars to see themselves as part of an endeavor that, although it possesses a history, does not need to begin that history at any precise moment or with any single person.

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## I

I start with three historians of the stage who, by claiming Juba as their disciplinary forerunner, encode a shifting set of historiographical and disciplinary positions. The first reference appears in the totemic compendium that is Alois Nagler's *Sources of Theatrical History* (1952). The second comes from R.W. Vince's essay "Theatre History as an Academic Discipline" in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past* (1989), the influential collection edited by Thomas Postlewait and Bruce McConachie. Lastly is Joseph Roach's introduction to the historiography section of *Critical Theory and Performance* (1992), a widely read volume edited by Roach and Janelle Reinelt, enlarged and revised in 2007. Though each citation of Juba is anecdotal and speculative, that does not disable the citations but instead gives them symbolic force, in that their purpose is not to document disciplinary practice but to mythologize it.

Here, in chronological order, are the relevant passages and my explication of them, in which I aim to show how each historian (necessarily) created Juba in his own image and, correspondingly, how each historian's approach diverged from that of his predecessors and successors.

The idea of collecting materials for a history of the theater is part of our classical heritage. The earliest attempt dates back to the time of Augustus, when Juba II, King of Mauretania, compiled his seventeen-book *theatriké historia*. The greatest single blow sustained by our field of learning is the loss of Juba's work.

. . . When King Juba was compiling his theatrical history, he had access to the primary sources of Greek and Roman stage practice. He must have had before him all pertinent source material, the disappearance of which is responsible for our groping in the dark when we try to investigate the theatre of antiquity. Juba must have read Agatharchus' own commentary on the design work he had done for Aeschylus; he must have been familiar with the treatises of Democritus and Anaxagoras on the use of perspective on the Greek stage; he must have abstracted the books on masks which Aristophanes of Byzantium had edited. The wealth of information contained in Juba's theater history can still be appraised, though indirectly and often despairingly, by an attempt to decipher the few puzzling pages which Pollux, relying on Juba, wrote on the physical aspects and masks of the Greek theater.<sup>2</sup> (Nagler, 1952)

Alois Nagler, the Austrian émigré who for thirty years taught theatre history at Yale University, was North America's most redoubtable champion of *Theaterwissenschaft*: a polemically "scientific" approach to the theatrical past, rigorously committed to collecting, ordering, and authenticating primary sources. As Nagler made clear on the first page of *Sources of Theatrical History*, the only goal of the theatre historian was "to reconstruct, both vividly and accurately, the conditions under which" plays were first performed.<sup>3</sup> Analysis and interpretation did not figure in an undertaking modeled more on empirical historical philology than subjective literary criticism.

Before Max Hermann's lectures at the University of Berlin in 1901, so Nagler decreed, theatre history consisted of inconsequential works unhelpfully inspired by "personal enthusiasm and local patriotism."<sup>4</sup> He lamented the shabbiness of theatre history's infrastructure, particularly in the United States—no journal, no monograph series, no professional organization (he later helped to found the American Society for Theatre Research)—but he did not argue for the discipline's academic legitimacy. That battle had been won, at least in Europe. Nagler's concern, rather, was methodological. The stuff of theatre history, he pronounced, was found in primary sources and artifacts, not in dramatic texts or biographies of playwrights.

Thus, Nagler invoked Juba to give the *sources* of theatre history a myth of origins, so that the discipline's sovereignty rested upon the distinctiveness of its materials. Projecting backward onto Juba his own insistence that drama and theatre were separate fields of inquiry, he imagined that Juba's text featured neither redactions of Aristotle's *Poetics* nor exegeses of Terence but a transcription of "Agatharchus' own commentary on the design work he had done for Aeschylus" and a distillation of "the treatises of Democritus and Anaxagoras on the use of perspective on the Greek stage."<sup>5</sup> Nagler believed that the *theatriké historia* abridged the most important "primary sources of Greek and Roman stage practice" because he could not imagine the foundational work of theatre history as anything else.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, he dreamt of a text so valuable that its survival would have prevented the subjugation of performance to text that had hemmed in critical debate for centuries. More pointedly, Juba's work of presumed encyclopedic vastness anticipated the serial performance documents that filled the pages of Nagler's own sourcebook. Nagler longed to find Juba but found only himself.

Theatre historians like to date their discipline from the *Theatriké historia* of King Juba II of Mauretania (ca. 50 B.C. – ca. A.D. 23), a voluminous work reputedly devoted to a discussion of all matters associated with the stage. Unfortunately we do not have it. As a matter of fact, our knowledge of King Juba's writings, like much of our knowledge of theatre history itself, is based on indirect evidence (in Juba's case, references and citations in later

Greek and Latin writers) and on speculation. Only tantalizing tidbits can be gleaned from writers such as Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophistae* or Julius Pollux in his *Onomastikon*. The *Theatriké historia* is not the only document that modern theatre historians wish had been preserved, but the suggestion of a distinct discipline implicit in its title renders its loss particularly painful.<sup>7</sup> (Vince, 1989)

Four decades later, Ronald Vince understood that he benefited from the institutional resources that Nagler and others had labored to secure. Still, he felt that the discipline was in “crisis,” struggling to define its “professional identity.”<sup>8</sup> Working through that struggle in his essay, Vince concluded that dramatic literature and theatrical performance were distinct, though sometimes overlapping, areas of inquiry; that theatre history related more to the understanding of past performances than to the application of such knowledge to contemporary practice; that theatre history held an insecure and uncertain place in universities; and that gathering factual knowledge was but the first step in interpreting historical events.

Vince believed that reframing his profession’s identity depended upon affirming its place within a “long tradition.”<sup>9</sup> Again, Juba was invoked to symbolize the discipline’s deep origins. But whereas Nagler presumed to know the contents of Juba’s lost work, Vince cautioned that what survived of it was at best secondhand. Yet the seemingly discouraging facts of the reception history of Juba’s text highlighted the existence of a vibrant scholarly community. Learned Greeks and Romans read texts in theatre history and then referenced those texts in their own writings, thus ensuring that (some) facts and (some) ideas were sustained through a centuries-long cycle of reading, compilation, and citation. For Nagler, what made Juba a disciplinary progenitor was his assumed immersion in primary sources; for Vince, however, what gave Juba the same status was his place in a scholarly network. Depicting Juba as the founder of a “distinct discipline” provided historical anchoring at a time when, Vince believed, the profession was “unsure” how to define theatre “as an independent branch of knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> His solution was to bolster contemporary scholarship with classical precedent.

The problem was that the precedent lacked force. “Between Juba’s time and the sixteenth century,” as Vince himself observed, “no one was concerned with the history of the theatre as such.”<sup>11</sup> If no one followed Juba’s lead then in what sense did he found the discipline? Moreover, the late classical authors who quoted Juba betrayed not the slightest interest in “the history of the theatre as such.” Nor was Juba an important source for Renaissance scholarly engagements with the performance traditions of classical antiquity. (The sources that mattered were Attic tragedy, Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and Vitruvius’ *De Architectura*.) If Nagler overreached in presuming to know the contents of Juba’s text then Vince overreached in a related

desire to install Juba as a pedigreed disciplinary ancestor. Nevertheless, the fragility of Vince's argument reveals less its shaky factual basis than the firm institutional need from which it arose.

Historians often begin the history of the discipline of theater history with an anecdote on irretrievable loss. The seventeen-volume compilation of sources on the ancient theater, assembled in the reign of Augustus by Juba II of the African province of Mauretania, disappeared. Only fragments of its mouth-watering table of contents could be reconstructed from other sources. This parable of disinheritance articulates a wistful sense of incompleteness, which seems to haunt theater historians generally, even when documents do survive intact, because of the evanescence of performance itself.<sup>12</sup> (Roach, 1992, 2007)

Joseph Roach's take on the same material just three years after that of Vince occupied a position of greater theoretical distance than chronology alone would imply. As he later summarized, writing performance history is "impossible without theory."<sup>13</sup> The chief theoretical insight drawn upon, one now well established in literary, theatre, and cultural studies, is that *all* texts are representations, and thus akin to literature in their multiple signifying capacities. That insight permitted Roach to read Juba's fragmentary text not as a documentary remnant but as an image for the writing of history. The near total loss of Juba's text thus became a vivid allegory for the "disinheritance" that is performance scholarship's starting point.

Roach teased out the now familiar parallel between doing performance and writing its history: both are acts of disappearance.<sup>14</sup> For all the heavy demands that we make upon them, source documents behave in precisely the same manner as the events that they (imperfectly) preserve, because neither survives. Performance, therefore, shares a symptomatic relationship not merely to its own history, but to history as such. For Roach, too, Juba founded a discipline; but one founded in contradiction, not certainty. In the early 1990s the idea of inherently unstable disciplinary practice carried the force of a polemic because it refuted earlier orthodoxy that assiduous archival research could lead to the objective reconstruction of past performances. For Nagler, the vanishing of Juba's text was lamentable because it obstructed the search for total knowledge. For Roach, however, that same loss was edifying, because it threw into relief the intrinsic limitations of searching for knowledge. Thus, Juba's "anecdote of irretrievable loss" does not withdraw from meaning—by denying posterity access to factual records—but delivers meaning—by revealing that the dream of unmediated access to the past is only a dream.

But as Roach would be the first to admit, dreams have power over us. It is telling that a scholar rightly praised for his exemplary historical research managed to get wrong some of the few things we do know about Juba and his writings. Roach described the *theatriké historia* as comprising seventeen volumes when it actually comprised seventeen or more “books,” which were divisions of texts into segments not nearly as long as a standard monograph.<sup>15</sup> Seventeen books would have been a great length for a classical text but there is something misleading, nonetheless, in the slippage from “book” to “volume.” Having correctly noted that only fragments of Juba’s work survive as quotations in other works Roach then referred to its “mouth-watering” table of contents. Perhaps, but who knows? It has not survived. Nor can we extrapolate from the fragments because they are overwhelmingly devoted to a single topic—musical instruments. Some scholars, including Nagler, have proposed that part of Juba’s text passed without attribution into the *scholia* on Greek and Roman dramatists and the *Onomasticon* of the Greek grammarian Julius Pollux (*fl.* 170 AD) but nothing substantiates that proposition.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, there is no firm evidence that Juba wrote about theatre architecture, scenography, acting, audiences, or any other topic that might make today’s theatre historians salivate. Whether the author himself salivated over such topics remains a mystery.

Roach was crafting a parable, not constructing a narrative history; and therefore complete exactitude was not a foremost concern. Nevertheless, these few slips serve to refetishize documentary sources. To describe Juba’s text as seventeen volumes long is to imagine a work with few rivals, even now when Google searching teams of academics are crafting entries for an ever-expanding number of theatre and performance encyclopedias. To describe, moreover, the missing table of contents as “mouthwatering” licenses what Helen Freshwater terms the “beguiling fantasy of self-effacement, which seems to promise the recovery of lost time . . . and the fulfillment of our deepest desires for wholeness and completion.”<sup>17</sup> Such was not Roach’s deeper intent: elsewhere he insisted that “[t]here is no reason to assume the innocence of the archive.”<sup>18</sup> He coolly observed that we “cannot put Juba back together again”—and yet his narrative of enchanted melancholy spoke a desire, however briefly indulged, to do just that.<sup>19</sup>

These sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory, ways in which Juba’s text has served as theatre history in epitome demonstrate our discipline’s “non-identity through time,” to invoke Foucault’s term for genealogical heterogeneity.<sup>20</sup> Yet behind these varied interpretations of the same narrative resides a shared desire to imagine a performance-centered text that could have exercised a lasting influence upon scholarship and scholarly identity. A history of the stage written in antiquity and that survived antiquity—a *Theatrics* to reign alongside the *Poetics*—would have changed everything. Exactly how things would have changed depends upon the position of the historian. Nagler saw Juba as the archetypal archivist, Vince regarded him as the inventor of professional identity, whereas Roach presented him



as the prefiguration of theatre history in the age of theory. Each scholar found in Juba an image of his own perspective on our discipline. And I am fully aware that in this essay I am, although from a different perspective, doing much the same.

Juba appears in myths of disciplinary origins articulated by scholars as methodologically dissimilar as Alois Nagler and Joseph Roach partly because so little is known about him. Or rather, theatre historians, unlike classicists, have been content to know so little. Because as long as Juba remains a blank signifier he can, conveniently, serve any turn: Juba the diligent archival scribe, Juba the networker, Juba the rhetorical springboard for cultural poetics. In emptiness lies utility.

But the historical record is not empty. So in the next section of this essay I want to put some pressure on King Juba and the *theatriké historia*—by looking in detail at an episode in theatre history usually only glanced at. I adopt this historicist method not out of allegiance to an epistemology of presence but out of a desire to discover what would happen to our sense of theatre history's disciplinary past if we looked at Juba as a historical figure and not as an empty signifier onto which we can project our own shifting prejudices, desires, and concerns. My argument is that the historical record itself will thwart any attempt to trace the origins of theatre history back to King Juba—and that this is no bad thing.

## II

Although Juba's many writings survive only as fragments quoted in other texts, and although there are few contemporary accounts of his political and intellectual life, references to him are scattered across the works of Plutarch, Tacitus, Josephus, and other later chroniclers of the Augustan age. The remains of Caesarea, his royal city, survive—including its theatre, which he had built, one of the first Roman theatres outside Rome itself—along with coins minted during his reign and statuary commissioned for his palaces. In recent years diligent classical historians have been able to build a coherent picture of Juba's life and times, exemplified in Duane W. Roller's *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene* (2003).<sup>21</sup> For classicists, though, Juba is just one more Augustan client king, no different in political terms than, say, Herod the Great of Judea or Rhoemetalkes I of Thrace.

Like all those who study King Juba, I have profited from Roller's meticulous scholarship, as reflected in the biographical material below. At the same time, I have linked the established narrative to the particular circumstances in which Juba would have written his theatre history. Though necessarily brief, my account is the first attempt by a theatre scholar to study Juba from an explicitly theatrical perspective. And so the purpose of the following narrative is twofold: first, to articulate the historical context for Juba's theatrical writings, such context being largely unfamiliar to scholars in our field; and, second, to establish what the historical record tells us—or more importantly, doesn't tell us—about Juba's status as a theatre historian.

Juba II was born around 48 BC in Numidia, the kingdom lying to the south and west of Carthage and ruled by his father, Juba I. In Rome's civil war, the elder Juba supported the losing faction after the breakup of the First Triumvirate—he sided with Pompey against Julius Caesar—and paid for that allegiance with his life. Rather than allowing himself to be exhibited in Rome as Caesar's captive and then beheaded, Juba fought a suicide duel with Marcus Petreius, another defeated Pompeian, in which the Roman general killed him.<sup>22</sup> He left behind a toddler son who quickly found himself displayed in an extraordinary Roman paratheatrical.

In September 46 BC Julius Caesar celebrated in Rome a quadruple triumph commemorating his victories in Gaul, Asia Minor, Egypt, and northern Africa.<sup>23</sup> The triumph depicted Caesar's enemies committing suicide—including Juba I's duel unto death—a flaming model of the lighthouse at Alexandria, elephants carrying torches, and a procession of noble captives, the last featuring the two-year-old orphan Juba II.<sup>24</sup> A century and a half later Plutarch optimistically described the child prisoner as “the happiest captive ever captured” because he arrived in Rome a barbarian enemy of the state but grew up to become a learned historian and client king of Augustus.<sup>25</sup> Thus was the child reborn in a spectacular performance event, itself remembering Caesar's defeat of enemies foreign and domestic.

Caesar understood the need to protect and educate his dead enemy's son so that in manhood Juba would be his ally rather than a vengeful adversary. Thus was the princeling from Numidia absorbed within the most powerful Roman family and remade in its image. Caius Julius Juba would have received a privileged education from eminent Greek tutors, who clearly schooled him not just in Greek and Latin, but history, linguistics, mathematics, natural science, and the arts. He would have had access to great libraries and great minds, and probably began in his youth to compile the numerous and varied texts that eventually earned him the honorific *rex literatissimus*.<sup>26</sup>

As a young man Juba would also have shared the company of political and military leaders, most especially Caesar's heir, the radical young Octavian, who became the prudent and paternal emperor Augustus. Cassius Dio (ca. 155-229 AD) records in his monumental history of Rome that Juba fought alongside Augustus in Spain in 27-25 BC to quash a rebellion among mountain tribes.<sup>27</sup> Juba must have demonstrated not just unquestioned loyalty but military prowess, for shortly afterwards Augustus entrusted him with the kingdom of Mauretania on the empire's southern periphery. He would rule it for half a century. Juba's loose unorganized kingdom, which he had never seen until it became his kingdom, encompassed present-day Algeria and Morocco. Though barely out of his teens, Juba was prepared—by virtue of his upbringing in a noble household, his superior education, and his talent on the battlefield—to become the Roman emperor's client king in northwest Africa. Augustus gave him a royal consort, Cleopatra Selene, daughter of the immortal Cleopatra and Mark Antony and the only surviving member of

the Ptolemaic dynasty. The two children of Rome's enemies now ruled in Rome's name and under the might of her protection.<sup>28</sup>

Like Herod the Great, his more controversial contemporary, Juba was a prime example of the *rex socius amicusque* ("friendly and allied king"): "the sympathetic monarch at the fringes of the empire," as Roller explains, "who could be relied upon to uphold Roman interests, both culturally and politically."<sup>29</sup> Rome's paramount interest was peace, so that its far-flung regions could prosper and thus add to the even greater prosperity of the motherland. Though his lineage was African and his cultural sympathies Greek, this particular client king remained faithful to Rome.

That faithfulness showed itself in Juba's efforts to recreate in Mauretania the artistic, literary, and intellectual court culture that flourished in Rome, the culture in which both he and Cleopatra Selene were formed. The expectation that a monarch should become the leading cultural patron of his realm had originated four centuries earlier in the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king, exemplified by Alexander the Great. The founding of royal libraries at Alexandria and Pergamon in the third century BC only bolstered the connection between kingship and scholarship. Juba would have subscribed to the monarch-as-intellectual tradition simply because he was a monarch, although his genuine scholarly inclinations and curiosities made that tradition all the more vibrant. His legacy lived on, such that within the Flavian period Pliny regarded him as a leading authority on natural history while Plutarch later approvingly characterized him as "the most learned of all kings."<sup>30</sup> Even the early Christian scholar Tertullian lauded him as a great pre-Christian scholar.<sup>31</sup>

But a scholar of what? Typical of his time, Juba was polymathic, curious about everything from music to natural science. Theatre was indeed an appropriate subject for a scholar-king to master, but there were others: mathematics, botany, geology, medicine, art, religion, and history, to cite just a handful. However Juba thought of himself—Romanized proxy king, Hellenized man of letters, deracinated Numidian—he did not think of himself as a theatre historian and he did not think of theatre as an "independent branch of knowledge," to use Vince's phrase. Indeed, Roller speculates that the *theatriké historia* was a "juvenile work" prompted by Juba's "interest in obscure terminology."<sup>32</sup> His writings, then, on theatre history must be seen not as exceptional—not as discipline founding—but as conventional, for they adhered to the Hellenistic precept that those who rule should be scholarly and learned. In terms, moreover, of the scholastic tradition on drama and theatre that runs from Aristotle to Athenaeus, and which took the form of lexicons, scholia, and compendia, Juba's works must be regarded as being even less distinctive or original.<sup>33</sup> They are very much part of an enduring literary tradition that Juba inherited from his predecessors and bequeathed to his successors. My interest here is not Juba's relative standing among writers in antiquity—that is something for classicists to debate—but whether there might be any empirical justification for his repeated singling out by the discipline of theatre history in its attempts to articulate

a narrative of its own origins. What I am suggesting is that the documentary record offers little justification for the “exceptionalism” that theatre history has attributed to this distant author and his conveniently obscure text.

The diverse learned labors of which Juba’s theatrical research formed but part expressed a vast imperial project, the only project Juba knew and the one for which he had been exceptionally well prepared. In Rome during his political and military apprenticeship, writing theatre history was part of training for a life in service as a future scholar-king. In Caesarea during his manhood it was Juba’s fulfillment of the imperialist agenda, in that court scholarship was a sign of Mauretania’s allegiance to its Roman protectors and the broader project of Romanization across the empire. Juba may well have been a model client king for Caesar Augustus, and his kingship certainly included patronage of both court and public theatres and the production of scholarly writings about the theatre—but none of that makes him a model theatre historian, a professional practice and an institutional identity that makes sense to us but did not and could not make sense to him. Efforts to turn Juba into the Western world’s first theatre historian speak more of contemporary desires than of the actuality of the past.

### III

Thus far I have looked at the discursive forces that shaped how Juba would have written theatre history. But what of the few surviving parts of his text? Do they look like what we would today call theatre history? Was his text used in the classical world as a source of theatre historical knowledge? Does the lost work seem to inaugurate a distinctive consciousness about the theatrical past? The answers are not straightforward.

Athenaeus of Naucratis, the second century AD author of the *Deipnosophistai*—“the dinner-table philosophers” or “the learned banqueters,” in loose translation—was probably the last classical writer to cite Juba frequently and was one of the few scholars in antiquity interested in theatrical and performance history, broadly understood.<sup>34</sup> Pretty much all that remains of King Juba’s history of the theatre are the following citations that appear in Athenaeus’ sympotic text:

Juba claims in Book IV of his *History of the Theatre* that the instrument referred to as a *trigōnos* was invented by the Syrians, along with the so-called Phoenician lyre . . . a *sambukē* . . .<sup>35</sup>

Juba says in the treatise mentioned above that the Egyptians claim that the single pipe [ie, flute] was invented by Osiris . . .<sup>36</sup>

Juba says that they [*elumoi*-pipes] were invented by the Phrygians and are also referred to as baton-pipes, because they are the same thickness.<sup>37</sup>

Juba says that the Thebans invented pipes made from a fawn's leg.<sup>38</sup>

According to Juba, Alexander of Cythera gave the harp (*psaltērion*) its full complement of strings, and when he grew old he dedicated it in Artemis' temple in Ephesus as the most brilliant invention his craft had produced.<sup>39</sup>

Juba also mentions the Phoenician *lura* and the *epigoneion*, which has now developed into the upright harp but preserves the name of the man who played it [Epigonus].<sup>40</sup>

The Argive tragic actor Leonteus—he was a student of Athenion and a slave of Juba the King of Mauretania—was also a glutton, according to Amarantus in his *On the Stage*, in which he claims that Juba wrote the following epigram about Leonteus when he did a bad job of acting in the *Hypsipyle*:

When you behold me, the carbon-eating voice  
of the tragic actor Leonteus, do not believe that  
you look upon Hypsipyle's ugly heart. For I  
was once Bacchus' friend, nor did his gold-  
spangled ears get as much pleasure from any  
other voice. But now earthenware pots and dry  
frying-pans have taken away my voice, since  
I paid more attention to my belly.<sup>41</sup>

Though its author was born in a Greek-settled city near the Nile Delta, the *Deipnosophistai* is set in imperial Rome. The work purports to be an account given by "Athenaeus" to his friend Timocrates of a lavish banquet held at the home of the wealthy aristocrat Larensius. Though the host speaks but rarely in the text, great praise is lavished upon him for his generosity and the magnificence of his library, rhetorically constructed as heir to the great Hellenistic libraries at Alexandria and Pergamon. The guests, each expert in different areas of learning, come from outside Rome, and thus are living emblems of imperial culture's wide reach. Classicists propose that the real Larensius was the real Athenaeus' patron and gave the foreign scholar employment in his household, where Athenaeus would have had access

to the well-stocked library needed for culling the thousands of quotations used in the *Deipnosophistai*.<sup>42</sup>

Like the more stylish texts of Plato and Xenophon that it imitates, Athenaeus' work is constructed as a dialogue within a dialogue. The outer dialogue is the conversation between "Athenaeus" and Timocrates with the inner dialogue being the account of the banquet, conducted mostly through declamations of the more than twenty guests. Those declamations, which comprise the bulk of the prose, read as catalogues of information on sundry topics: food, drink, courtesans, dances, games, and music. A casual sequence holds together the inner dialogue—the banquet is introduced (Books 1-5), courses are served (Books 6-10), followed by the symposium (Books 10-15)—but the events are not what interest Athenaeus. Rather, through the events he depicts a cohort of relentlessly expert talkers who can recite yards of poetry by heart and instantly recall passages from arcane texts. He stages the banquet as the performance of knowledge: successive acts of citation, reference, and allusion. Indeed, Athenaeus quotes from more than 2,500 works, including hundreds of fragments from lost tragedies and comedies, many of them known to us from no other source. This makes the *Deipnosophistai* neither easy nor pleasurable to read. But had it not survived—and it has survived only because of a single ninth-century manuscript—our knowledge of classical Greek literature and its reception would be substantially impaired.<sup>43</sup> And we would know almost nothing about Juba's theatre history.

We do not know whether Athenaeus read firsthand the thousands of works from which he quoted. If so, that would have been a staggering accomplishment, requiring access to a library of unusual vastness for the time. Hard practicality alone suggests that, like his peers, Athenaeus lifted passages from the compilations and glossaries produced by earlier scholars, supplemented by his own direct reading. Bibliographic intermediaries usually passed without reference, creating the impression that the fictional symposium's participants—like their creator—possessed extraordinary firsthand knowledge. That was not cheating. It was how information at the time was pooled and circulated.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Athenaeus may well have encountered Juba's theatrical history not in its entirety but as piecemeal quotations in yet other works—just as he cited a passage from Juba as recorded in a text compiled by Amarantus.<sup>45</sup> What has been passed down to us could, therefore, be the mediation of a prior mediation.

What does the *Deipnosophistai* say about theatre? Athenaeus cites hundreds of plays but is totally uninterested in them from a dramaturgical perspective. He cares not the slightest for plot, action, character, diction, or any other Aristotelian category. Instead he treats drama as a commonplace book: a gathering up of information on varied topics. Rummaging through Greek and Roman plays he collects references appropriate to a banquet: an allusion to tripe in Aristophanes' *Knights*, a warning about the danger of too much wine from Euripides' *Cyclops*,

and a line from Sophocles' lost play *Cedalion* that uninvited guests at a banquet should be whipped.<sup>46</sup> Passages from Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and five lines from Euripides' *Trojan Women* are presented as evidence for whether the ancients ate pig brains.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, it is not just comedy and tragedy that Athenaeus treats as a warehouse for citation. He draws upon a vast range of literary, historical, and scientific works—from Plato's *Crito* to Theophrastus' treatise *On Plants*—not to analyze them but to extract information about some other topic. The same disregard that Athenaeus shows for the integrity of dramatic literature he shows to other genres and texts, all of which possess for him only instrumental value.

Nearly all of Athenaeus' references to Juba—as cited above—are clustered in one section of Book 4 in a disquisition on musical instruments. The relevant passage begins as the banqueters, engaged in a lively discussion of cooking, enjoy the pleasant sound of a water-organ (*hydraulis*) played in the next room. Tyrian Ulpian, the caviling symposiarch, disrupts the enjoyment by teasing a guest, the Egyptian musician Alkeides, about the inferior taste of his fellow Alexandrians: "Do you hear that fine and beautiful sound, you most musical of men? . . . It's not like the *monaulos* so pervasive among you Alexandrians, which gives its hearers pain rather than any musical delight."<sup>48</sup> Alkeides responds with a lengthy defense of his brethren's musical refinement in the form of an annotated catalogue of the many musical instruments familiar to Alexandrians. He begins with the *hydraulis*, moves onto various kinds of pipes, claiming one source after another, with Juba first mentioned by name at 4.175d, in a reference to a triangular harp. Comments on other instruments follow, with more than fifty authorities cited, but none more frequently than Juba. The passage ends abruptly, as Alkeides merely stops speaking. Athenaeus the narrator intervenes to bring Book 4 to its close, and Juba disappears from the dialogue.

Juba's history of the theatre is the main source for the information on musical instruments that Alkeides presents within the narrative, and that fact itself might be revelatory.<sup>49</sup> Because no author cited on the same topic is later than Juba, it is possible, though by no means certain, that the *entire* passage on musical instruments derives more or less unaltered from his text.<sup>50</sup> If so, then Juba's original work could have been similar to the speeches of the fictional banqueters—that is, accumulated and synthesized quotations drawn from earlier works. Juba's literary peers were often compilers, not interpreters, of information, and we cannot assume that he was any different.<sup>51</sup> (Nor, by the same token, can we assume that he was exactly the same.) We should not, therefore, be surprised that most of the musical instruments that Juba describes were already well known in Greek literature, such that his text would seem to preserve rather than advance knowledge.<sup>52</sup> The credible possibility that Juba's full text bundled information drawn from varied sources suggests that to read Juba as mediated by Athenaeus might actually be to read Juba properly, rather than from a position of deficit or editorial manipulation.

We cannot, then, take for granted that the *theatriké historia* was the product of heroic primary research demanding years of labor, let alone a singular interpretation of the theatrical past based upon authoritative sources. It could have been, but we do not know. Moreover, the extreme breadth of Juba's writings—from natural history to theatre—suggests that it could be misleading to construct (as Nagler did) an image of Juba pouring over precious archival records. And it might be equally misleading to read (as Roach did) the history of Juba's perished text as a "parable of disinheritance"—misleading in that it does not conform to what the surviving record tells us—because there might not have been anything unique to disinherit, and certainly not if Juba's text was an assemblage of other texts and therefore less a singular entity unto itself than a gathering together of fragments.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, the very notion of a *written* history, as archaeologist John Moreland reminds us, fragments the past by privileging texts (supposedly superior) over objects and artifacts (supposedly inferior).<sup>54</sup> For performance historians especially, the fragmentation becomes even more pronounced in the longstanding disjunction, as Diana Taylor has analyzed, between "archive" (that which endures, such as texts and artifacts) and "repertoire" (that which is embodied, such as gesture and ritual).<sup>55</sup> More and more, the fragment seems to be not the remainder or residual of historical inquiry but rather its starting point. To cite, as Roach did, the impossibility of "put[ting] Juba back together again" could be redundant: because unlike Humpty Dumpty, Juba might never have been in one piece. There might never have been a great fall.

#### IV

What might it mean, epistemologically, if Juba's text was fragmented not just in its transmission but also in its creation? First, we must define "fragment." Historically, the prevailing notion of a fragment has been one of incompleteness: the detached, the isolated, the unfulfilled. The fragment represents a rupture in totality yet remains intelligible only within a system of totality, inasmuch as the fragment's meaning derives from the prior unity from which it has become divorced. Because the part owes its meaning to the whole, it cannot be understood except in relation to the whole. Whether, in turn, the fundamental meaning of the whole can be deduced from the isolated fragment has been a matter of scholarly disagreement, with Marc Bloch, for example, taking the extreme position that fragments are epistemologically null: "The knowledge of fragments, studied by turns, each for its own sake, will never produce the knowledge of the whole; it will not even produce that of the fragments themselves."<sup>56</sup> Other historians, such as Stephen Bann, have advocated strongly for a historiography of synecdoche, in which individual and separate fragments participate in and, indeed, reveal wider historical experiences and the "integrative reconstruction of historical totalities."<sup>57</sup>



Whether scholars are confident or pessimistic about the ability of the fragment to stand for the lost whole, they nonetheless tend to share the belief that fragments are unintelligible apart from larger systems of wholeness and completion.

This conventional understanding of the fragment also stands behind the three disciplinary invocations of Juba with which I began this essay, in that they all meditate upon the material incompleteness of a document taken to be the first work of theatre history, the first instance of systematic disciplinary totality. Nagler, Vince, and Roach have all maintained that our relationship to Juba's *theatriké historia* is necessarily one of loss. This loss can be understood as artifactually redeemable—however unlikely, Juba's full text might one day be rediscovered—or it can be understood metaphorically as constitutive of disciplinary practice—loss is the inevitable and unalterable starting point for theatre scholarship. Either way, the only value possessed by the fragmentary text, so the argument goes, is its ability to imply a totality beyond itself, whether archival, professional, or methodological.

Does it have to be that way? If, as Michel de Certeau put it, history begins with a gesture of "*setting aside*" selected objects deemed worthy to hold the status of documents within a collection, then it is far from clear that theatre history begins with Juba because it is far from clear that his text marked any initial "*setting aside*" of theatre historical documents, however much that has been desired (and sometimes presumed) by later generations of scholars.<sup>58</sup> It is equally possible, as I have tried to show in this essay, through a more grounded historicist approach, that whatever Juba wrote about theatre history likely entailed the copying, reordering, and quoting from what had already been set aside. That would not, however, make it a matter of tracking down Juba's previously unacknowledged sources, as if the authors of those earlier texts were the *real* founders of theatre history. It may well be the case that theatre history never had a first time, never had a moment of genesis, and so cannot claim a founder. To that extent, theatre history would be an activity that, although recurring, was never inaugurated. What I'm suggesting, then, is that we stay open to the possibility that our scholarly practice has no origin, seeks no origin, and, therefore, need not mourn the absence of origin or construct foundational myths to forestall such mourning. This would leave our discipline without an individual *founder*, a condition that perhaps few scholars today would lament. Yet it would leave our discipline with something more important: a historically accumulated sense of *practice*. And it would make our discipline even more reflective of performance itself, given that both have invested heavily in what Roach, in a now classic formation, suggestively terms "the doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins."<sup>59</sup>

To get some purchase on the idea of theatre history as an existence without an essence—a practice without an inception—it is helpful to be reminded of the early Romantic perspective on the fragment and its relationship to knowledge. Such a perspective, I suggest, can help us to overcome the persistent—but reductive—

binary of lost and found when assessing the significance of Juba's text for theatre scholars in the twenty-first century. Identified most strongly with the writings of Friedrich Schlegel at the end of the eighteenth century, the Romantic fragment was fragmentation for its own sake, "a genre by itself, characterized by a concept of its own."<sup>60</sup> Instead of being marked by incompleteness or partiality, as it has generally been, the fragment stands as an accomplishment unto itself. And yet this accomplishment—the integrity of the fragment, as it were—possesses "systematic intention" and "systematic exigency," as the critic Rodolphe Gasché observed.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the fragment contains totality within itself, thereby living out the paradox of being incomplete and complete at the same time. "A fragment, like a miniature work of art," as Schlegel wrote, "has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine."<sup>62</sup>

The fragment is not, however, just one state of knowledge among many. It is the only possible mode of fulfilling systematic intention. Because, in the Romantic view, unity is always presented through the fragmentary, there is nothing outside or beyond the fragment that could somehow transcend it, redeem it, or otherwise restore its lost wholeness. There is, however, much that lies within the fragment. And thus it is not a question of *overcoming* the fragment in search of an (impossible) experience of the whole but rather of penetrating ever more deeply inside it. As Gasché further explains, fragments are not "broken parts of a former or anticipated totality" but rather "the *positive* mode in which the presentation of the whole occurs."<sup>63</sup> The realm of the fragment is the only possible realm where the systematic can be manifested.

To say that totality occurs only within a fragment that is itself not superseded (because it cannot be superseded) is to say that the dialectic of lost and found does not obtain. What, then, happens to our sense of theatre history—the past and our writing of the past—if we set aside the concept of lost and found? What happens is that we can no longer regard Juba as the founder of our discipline, whether literally or symbolically. Of course to put it that way is to narrow the argument, as if the question "how did theatre history begin?" is a question about names and personalities. But the question is much larger. It is a question about the nature of the discipline itself. Being confronted with a fragmentary text that itself may have always been fragmentary might lead us to propose that just as the fragment does not have to refer back to a prior wholeness to acquire legitimacy—the porcupine is sufficient unto itself—the discipline of theatre history does not have to refer back to any founder or any founding moment to acquire its legitimacy. And just as the fragment contains "systematic intentions" within itself the practice of theatre history contains disciplinary intentions within itself. Those intentions are not objects to be discovered—the first performance, the first document, the first archive, the first book, the first theatre historian—but events to be enacted and reenacted—the constitution of facts, the alignment and realignment of forms of

historical knowledge, the enunciation of what is historically thinkable. That event, the “doing” of theatre history, I am suggesting, can only ever be joined already in progress. *In medias res*, as the ancients themselves would have put it.

## Notes

1. The author would like to thank Scott Magelssen and the anonymous readers for the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* for their insightful comments upon an earlier draft of this essay.

No allusion to the Juba of antiquity seems intended by the performer “Master Juba” (ca. 1825 – ca. 1852), whose name likely derived from the central or West African term *giouba*.

2. Alois M. Nagler, Introduction, *Sources of Theatrical History* (New York: Theatre Annual, 1952) xix-xx.

3. ix.

4. xx.

5. xix.

6. xix.

7. R.W. Vince, “Theatre History as an Academic Discipline,” *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, eds. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: U of Iowa Press, 1989) 2.

8. 1.

9. 2.

10. 2, 1.

11. 2.

12. Joseph R. Roach, “Introduction: Theater History and Historiography,” *Critical Theory and Performance*, eds. Joseph R. Roach and Janelle G. Reinelt (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1992) 293.

13. Joseph R. Roach, “Introduction: Theater History and Historiography,” *Critical Theory and Performance*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2007) 196.

14. For a critique of performance as disappearance see Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011).

15. In his *Bibliotheca* Photius refers without comment to the seventeenth book of Juba’s text, which gives us a minimum (but not a maximum) length for the *theatrikè historia*. Photius writes: “Read the *Various Extracts* of the sophist Sopater, in twelve books, compiled from the works of different historians and writers . . . The twelfth book is taken from various sources . . . [including] the seventeenth book of king Juba’s *Theatrical History*.” Photius, *Bibliotheca* (Cod. 161), *The Library of Photius*, ed. and trans. J.H. Freese vol. 1 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920) 234.

16. See, for example, John Edwin Sandys, *A Short History of Classical Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1915) 77. Written in the second century AD, the *Onomasticon*—meaning a study of the origin of names—is a thesaurus of Attic phrases, including terms for performance.

17. Helen Freshwater, “The Allure of the Archive,” *Poetics Today* 24.4 (Winter 2003): 738.

18. Roach, *Critical Theory and Performance* (2007) 194.

19. Roach, *Critical Theory and Performance* (1992) 293.

20. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972) 32.

21. Duane W. Roller, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene: royal scholarship on Rome’s African frontier* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003). In a related critical edition, Roller translates the surviving fragments of Juba’s work of theatre history and supplements them with brief commentary, mainly lexicographic. See Roller, ed., *Scholarly Kings: The Writings of Juba II of Mauretania, Archelaos of Kappadokia, Herod the Great and the Emperor Claudius* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, Inc, 2004) 35-42. For a more belletristic narrative, see W.N. Weech, “Rambles in Mauretania Caesariensis,” *Greece & Rome* 1.2 (Feb. 1932): 65-73.

22. Joseph Addison’s political tragedy *Cato* (1713) depicts the Numidian king’s fateful opposition to Caesar.

23. Plutarch, *Caesar* 55; Appian, *Civil War* 2.101-2; Suetonius, *Augustus* 8. All translations of classical texts are from the Loeb Classical Library editions.

24. Suetonius 8.

25. Plutarch, *Caesar, Plutarch's Lives: In Eleven Volumes*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1958) 55. Though Juba was later taught to remember his father, he had no recollection of his family's involvement in Rome's civil war.
26. Lucius Ampelius, *Liber Memorialis* 38.1.2. See also Roller, *World of Juba II* 2-3.
27. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 53.25-6.
28. Roller, *World of Juba II* 59ff.
29. Roller, *World of Juba II* ix.
30. Pliny, *Natural History* 5.16; Plutarch 55.2. See also Roller, *World of Juba II* 157-58.
31. Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 19.6.
32. Roller, *Scholarly Kings* 35.
33. See Ronald W. Vince, *Ancient and Medieval Theatre: A Historiographical Handbook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984) 53-9.
34. Roller, *World of Juba II* 164-5. Pliny and Plutarch were interested in architecture, not performance.
35. Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters (Deipnosophistai)*, ed. and trans. S. Douglas Olson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006) 4.175d; Olson 2:347; Juba Fr 15. The *trigōnos*, meaning triangular, was a spindle-shaped harp, widest in the middle and tapering at the ends. It is known from Attic vase painting after 450 BC and was almost always played by women. The *sambukē* was a triangular harp. See M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 72.
36. Athenaeus 4.175d; Olson 2:347; Juba Fr 16.
37. Athenaeus 4.176f-177a; Olson 2:353, 355; Juba Fr 81. Mentioned by Sophocles in the lost plays *Niobe* and *Drummers*, *elumoi*-pipes, carved from boxwood, emitted a deeper sound than Greek pipes. According to the scholia on Terence, they were used on the Roman stage (West 91).
38. Athenaeus 4.182e; Olson 2: 357; Juba Fr 82. Presumably, the pipes were made from a hollowed out femur.
39. Athenaeus 4.183c; Olson, 2: 361; Juba Fr 83.
40. Athenaeus 4.183c-d; Olson 2: 361; Juba Fr 84. The *Epigoneion* was a forty-stringed instrument, originally played horizontally, so presumably a zither that rested on the musician's knees (West 78-9).
41. Athenaeus 8.3433f; Olson 3:67; Juba Fr 104. Euripides' tragedy *Hypsipyle* survives only in fragments.
42. See Olson, Introduction, *The Learned Banqueters (Deipnosophistai)* 1:viii.
43. Geoffrey Arnott, "Athenaeus and the Epitome: Texts, Manuscripts, and Early Editions," *Athenaeus and his World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, eds. David Braund and John Wilkins (Exeter: U of Exeter Press, 2000) 42-3.
44. Olson, Introduction, *The Learned Banqueters*, xv-xvi; Christian Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," *Athenaeus and his World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, eds. David Braund and John Wilkins (Exeter: U of Exeter Press, 2000) 85-7.
45. It bears remembering that the *theatriké historia* was as chronologically distanced from Athenaeus as John Genest's *Some Account of the English Stage* (1832) is distanced from us. And how many of us have read all ten volumes of Genest?
46. Athenaeus 3.94d.; 2.36d.; 4.164a.
47. 2.66a-b.
48. 4.174b.
49. The passing reference to *Amarantus' On the Stage* is shrouded in deep mystery for that evidently useful work is otherwise totally unknown.
50. Roller, *World of Juba II* 176; Roller, *Scholarly Kings* 35.
51. Roller cites among Juba's sources Aristoxenos Taras, Archytas of Taras, Douris of Samos, and Poseidonios of Apamea (Roller, *Scholarly Kings* 35).
52. Only two of the instruments were unfamiliar at the time: a "Phoenician lyre" and "a stringed instrument named after Epigonos of Sikyon" (Roller, *World of Juba II* 177).
53. Although, ironically, the seemingly fragmented nature of Juba's lost text recalls nothing so much as Nagler's *Sources of Theatrical History*, a work that is indeed an assemblage of anecdotes and fragments.
54. See John Moreland, *Archaeology and Text* (London: Duckworth, 2001) 9-32.
55. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003) 16ff.
56. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Vintage Books, 1953) 155.
57. Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 38, 85.
58. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia UP, 1988) 72, 73.

59. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996) 3.

60. Rodolphe Gasché, "Foreword: Ideality in Fragmentation," *Philosophical Fragments*, by Friedrich Schlegel, trans. Peter Firchow (Minnesota: U Minnesota Press, 1991) viii.

61. Gasché xi.

62. Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragment 206," *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minnesota: U Minnesota Press, 1991) 45.

63. Gasché xvii.