

THE “EPIC CANON” OF THE BORGIA TABLE: HELLENISTIC LORE OR ROMAN FRAUD?

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The Borgia Table is inevitably cited in any serious study of early Greek epic poetry.¹ The marvellous name conjures up visions of tainted goblets, Machiavelli's *Prince*, and the fair Lucrezia. Reality is less romantic, for this Borgia Table is nothing but a scrap of ancient stone with a few letters on it (*IG* 14.1292). There is a link with the notorious Papal line, tenuous though it be. The piece once belonged to a remote collateral, a distinguished “ecclesiastic, diplomatist, ruler, scholar, archaeologist, man of letters, and Christian gentleman,” “in whom the embers of the House of Borgia flickered” not quite two centuries ago.² Stefano Cardi-

¹ Friedrich G. Welcker, *Der epische Cyclus, oder die homerischen Dichter* (Bonn 1835) 35; Gottfried Kinkel, *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* 1 (Leipzig 1877) 3–4; Ulrich v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Homerische Untersuchungen*, *Philologische Untersuchungen* 7 (1884) 333–35; Thomas W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* 5: *Hymnos Cyclum Fragmenta Margiten Batrachomyomachiam Vitas Continens* (Oxford 1912) 110, 111, 112; Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* (Cambridge, Mass. 1914) 482; Albert Severyns, *Recherches sur la Chrestomathie de Proclus* 1: *Le Codex 239 de Photius* 2: *Texte Traduction Commentaire*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège 79 (1938) 88; George L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry from Eumelos to Panyassis* (Cambridge, Mass. 1969) 28, 35, 40. These works and those in note 4 below will be cited by author's name alone.

This paper has been much improved as a result of suggestions made by the anonymous referee and by the editor of *TAPA*. In addition, Richard Janko has helped the writer to see a clearer relationship between the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and early Theban legend.

² Frederick Baron Corvo, *Chronicles of the House of Borgia* (repr. New York 1962) 340, 339. In case any reader should share the writer's idle curiosity, the so-called “Borgia Life” of Lucretius takes its name from a different member of the family, the humanist Girolamo Borgia (1475–1550), sometime Bishop of Massalubrense. On him see Mario Emilio Cosenza, *Biographical and Bibliographical Dictionary of the Italian Humanists and of the World of Classical Scholarship in Italy 1300–1800* vol. 1 (Boston 1962²) 674–75 (I thank the late Beatrice Corrigan for the reference). The Aztec pictographic parchment “Borgia codex,” on the other hand, is named for our Cardinal; see Eduard Seler, “Der Codex Borgia,” in his *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Amerikanischen Sprache- und Altertumskunde* 1 (Graz 1960) 301–40 (I acknowledge the guidance of Ronald A. Barnett on this matter). More information about Cardinal Borgia, with further references, is given by Sergio Donadoni, “La ‘Charta Borgiana’,” *PP* 208 (1983) 5–10; the article concerns the first Greco-Egyptian

nal Borgia (1731–1804), in the course of a life that transcended three-score years and ten, amassed a respectable hoard of antiquities, with which he endowed the Borgia Museum in Velletri, his birthplace.³ As early as 1786 his collection included the object that concerns us here. After his death it passed to the National Museum at Naples, where it now bears the inventory number 2408.

The Borgia Table is a small rectangular fragment of yellowish marble, .085 m wide and .045 m high, broken on all four edges. On the front it has two horizontal rows of small rectangular sculptured panels, with brief subscriptions. It is also inscribed on the reverse. It belongs to the class of objects known conventionally as *Tabulae Iliacae*: *pinakes* of Imperial date, decorated with reliefs that illustrate literary works (especially epic), and inscribed on the *recto*, and sometimes on the *verso*, with appropriate texts. Not too long ago Anna Sadurska provided a corpus of nineteen of these objects, with descriptions, texts, photographs, and discussions. Since then two more have been added to the list.⁴ Each table is designated by a conventional *siglum* consisting of a serial number plus one or more letters, either arbitrarily assigned in alphabetical order or as an abbreviation. The Borgia Table is 10K.

Sadurska dates the Borgia Table to the first quarter of the first century of our era. It comes from what she calls the “Second Workshop.” The products of this *atelier* closely resemble those of the “First Workshop,” which was apparently directed by Theodore the Egyptian. Some of the output of the “Second Workshop” (including the Borgia Table) are markedly inferior in workmanship, and perhaps are designed to “satisfaire les goûts et les besoins d’une clientèle plus modeste”; conceivably they are simply lower class products of Theodore’s studio.⁵ The

papyrus ever published, in 1783 (I owe the reference to the kindness of the anonymous referee). The Bishop and the Cardinal, it seems, belonged to the Junior or Italian Branch of the family. The Senior or Spanish Branch was more notorious.

³ Anna Sadurska, *Les Tables Iliques* (Warsaw 1964) 58, refers to “la collection privée du cardinal Borgia-Velletri, à Rome.” This curious nomenclature seems founded on a phrase in the title of an early publication of the piece by A. L. Heeren, “Über ein Fragment einer alten Marmortafel im Museo des Cardinals Borgia zu Velletri, bei Rom,” *Historische Werke* 3 (Göttingen 1821) 150–70.

⁴ On the Iliac tables see Otto Jahn and Adolf Michaelis, *Griechische Bilderchroniken* (Bonn 1873); A. Sadurska, above, note 3, and “La vingtième table iliaque,” in *Mélanges offerts à Kazimierz Michałowski* (Warsaw 1966) 653–57; W. McLeod, “New Readings in I.G., XIV, 1285, II, *verso*,” *Hesperia* 42 (1973) 408–15; Nicholas Horsfall, “Stesichorus at Bovillae?” *JHS* 99 (1979) 26–48; “*Tabulae Iliacae* in the Collection Froehner, Paris,” *JHS* 103 (1983) 144–47. Sadurska discusses the Borgia Table on pages 58–61 of her book. In what follows, measurements of various portions of the stone are estimated from her photograph, Plate 11.

⁵ Sadurska 11. Horsfall 34 calls a sister of the Borgia Table (the Second Verona Table, 9D) “an unsigned product of Theodorus’ workshop.” On the Egyptian affinities of Theodore, see Sadurska 10, note 11a; Maria Teresa Bua, “I giuochi alfabetici delle tavole

letters of the Borgia Table, "ugly, careless, irregular, deeply incised," were cut by the same man who did the Second Verona Table (9D; *IG* 14.1285 II) and the "Roman Chronicle" (18L; *IG* 14.1297; *FGrH* 252) of A.D. 15/16. On the front of the Borgia Table the upper row of reliefs is almost totally broken away, but there are visible the lower edges of four rectangular panels with their subscriptions, the latter on a thin *fascia* about .0085 m high. The text almost duplicates another cut by the same hand on the reverse of the Second Verona Table.⁶ It treats of the descendants of Cadmus, and offers a synchronism between his children and the priestesses of Hera at Argos. A proper restoration of the text on the Borgia Table provides some guidance as to the original size of the stone before it was shattered. In the transcription below, successive genealogical entries are identified by Roman numerals. The clauses of the inscription, and therefore the panels, are arranged from right to left.⁷

I	e.g.	[Κάδμος γήμας Ἀρμονίαν] [τὴν Ἀρεως καὶ Ἀφροδίτης] [γεννᾶ κόρας δ' Ἰνώ Ἀγαύην] [Αὐτονόην Σεμέλην, υἱὸν] [δὲ Πολύδωρον.]	5
II		[Ἀρισταίου δὲ καὶ] [Αὐτονόης Ἀκταίων.]	
III		Ἀθάμαρ[τὸς δὲ] καὶ Ἰνοῦ[ς Λέαρχος] καὶ Μελικ[έρτης.]	10
IV		Ἐχέιονος δὲ Σπαρτοῦ καὶ Ἀγαύης Πενθεύς.	
V		Ζεὺς Σεμέλη πλησιάσας καὶ κεραυνώσας, ἀνελόμενος τὸν <Δ>ιόνυσον ἐνράπτει εἰς τὸν μηρὸν, ὕστερ[ο]ν διὰ Ἑρμοῦ δίδωσιν Ἰν<ο>[ι] τρέ[φ]ειν.	15
VI		[Ἥρας Ἀργείας ἱέρεια Εὐρ]υ<δ>ί- [κη Ἀκρισίου γυνὴ Λακεδαίμο- [νος δὲ παῖς καὶ Σπάρτης, ἔτ] <η> μεί'.	20

The most common type of Iliac Table consists of a large central rectangular or square panel, bordered on all four sides with rows of smaller panels. If the Borgia fragment follows the pattern, it must come from near the edge of such a table. Most frequently the border panels run anti-

iliache," *Atti delle Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Memorie* (Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche), 8th series, 16 (1971-72) 3-35; Horsfall 27-29; *SEG* 29 (1979) 993.

⁶ Sadurska 61.

⁷ This text, and that of the "canon" below, are taken from Georg Kaibel's diplomatic transcription in *IG* 14 (Berlin 1890). The first two entries are restored *exempli gratia* from the parallel text *IG* 14.1285 II; for an improved text see McLeod 408-9. For the restoration of lines 19-21, see McLeod 415.

clockwise around the centre, beginning either above the right edge of the central panel (Capitoline Table, 1A; Tomassetti Table, 16Sa); or, more commonly, above the middle of the panel (New York Table, 2NY; First Verona Table, 3C; Sarti Drawing, 6B; Thierry Table, 7Ti). There is one exception, the Second Verona Table (9D): it was bordered with two rows of panels. The outer row ran clockwise, apparently beginning from the upper right side of the central panel; but here once again the inner row ran anti-clockwise, beginning from the upper left side of the central panel.⁸

The Borgia Table, with its upper series of panels running from right to left, may well come from the top border of the table. The text as restored above suggests that there were originally six scenes. The extant fragment, which contains part of the last four of the six panels, will have been placed towards the left side of the central panel.

The border scenes of the Iliac Tables, where they can be identified, are derived from epic. The *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aethiopis*, and the *Little Iliad* all serve as sources in various other tables. The panels of the Borgia Table are the only ones to draw upon the Theban cycle of legend (the same information is repeated, without parallel illustrations, on the reverse of the Second Verona Table). The three Theban epics known by name are the *Oedipodea*, the *Thebais* (which told of the Seven, as did the later homonymous poems of Antimachus and Statius), and the *Epigoni*. They concerned only the later Theban legends. Early Thebes was treated in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, in the *Europa* ascribed to Eumelus, and in the anonymous *Phoronis*, but there will be other possibilities.

The second row of panels on the front preserves two scenes to their full height, about .019 m. Their iconography remains obscure, and the fragmentary subscriptions yield no continuous sense.

The full height of the border panels and their accompanying texts would be .055 m (two rows of reliefs, each .019 m high, plus two rows of inscriptions, each .0085 m high). On the basis of the lettering, one might venture an approximation of the total width occupied by the six inscribed panels in the upper row:

text I	20 letter-spaces	about .029 m
plain vertical band		about .004 m
text II	15 letter-spaces	about .022 m
plain vertical band		about .004 m

⁸ On the Capitoline Table, 1A, see Sadurska 26–28 with pl. 1; on the Tomassetti Table, 16Sa, *ibid.* 72–73, pl. 15; on the New York Table, 2NY, *ibid.* 38–39, pl. 2; on the First Verona Table, 3C, *ibid.* 41, pl. 4; on the Sarti Drawing, 6B, *ibid.* 48–49, pl. 9; on the Thierry Table, 7Ti, *ibid.* 51, pl. 10; on the Second Verona Table, 9D, *ibid.* 56, pl. 11. The Froehner Tables (20Par, 21Fro) both preserve vertical rows of panels from a side margin, but fail to suggest the orientation of the panels at the upper margin.

text III	15 letter-spaces	about .022 m
plain vertical band		.003 m
text IV	16 letter-spaces	.023 m
plain vertical band		.005 m
text V	23 letter-spaces	.033 m
plain vertical band		.004 m
text VI	24 letter-spaces	about .035 m

The total width of the six panels and the five dividing bands would be of the order of .184 m. This will be the width of the lost large central relief. Of the total, about .029 m is missing to the left of the preserved fragment, and about .070 m to its right. If there was a single row of vertical panels (say about .03 m wide) at each border, separated from the central portion by a vertical band, the whole table would have been in the vicinity of .25 m broad. (Sadurska estimates the original size of the closely related Second Verona Table to have been .24 m by .24 m.)

The reverse of the Borgia Table contains three inscriptions. The upper two are in columns. That on the left preserves only the ends of the lines, and defies interpretation. The text on the right is complete on both sides and at the bottom. At least one line is missing at the top. It recounts the birth of Erichthonius, perhaps in the version that was current in the epic *Danais*.⁹

Beneath these two columns is a wider inscription, complete at the top and possibly at the right, but missing an unknown portion at the left and bottom. It is this text that has bulked large in the *testimonia* to the Cycle.

]μαχίας οὐχ ἦν Τέλεσις ὁ Μηθymναῖος ὑ[.]ι[.]] ἔπεσ<ι>ν καὶ Δαναΐδας ,ςφ' ἐπῶν καὶ τὸν τ]ῆν Οἰδιπόδειαν τῆν ὑπὸ Κιναιθωνος τοῦ]τες ἐπῶν οὔσαν ,ςχ' ὑποθήσομεν Θηβαῖδα]ν τῶν Μιλήσιον λέγουσιν ἐπῶν ὄντα ,θφ']πμ ,δν'. ταύτηι δὲ]τὸν κύκλον	5
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The inscription is in the form of a list of literary works, about each of which certain details of information are given. The list is written continuously (rather than in columns), and is given syntactic coherence by a series of verbs, conjunctions, and connectives. It includes the following details:

- (a) the title of the work;
- (b) its author;
- (c) his demotic;
- (d) the length of the work.

⁹ Harpocration, s.v. “autochthones”; see Huxley 35–36.

On the preserved fragment the length is included for every entry; the author's name and demotic are omitted for one (*Danaides*).

Two of the titles, *Oedipodea* and *Thebais*, are attested for early epics. One of the authors named, Cinaethon, is known to have written epic. The four lengths that are preserved, ranging from 4400 to 9500, are compatible with epic. The use of the word ἔπη in the stichometry points in the same direction. We may safely accept the conventional view that what we have here is a list of epic poems, an "epic canon," if you like.

The list, we are sometimes told, enshrines vestiges of Hellenistic research, and it is tempting to conclude that it is a legitimate descendant of the Alexandrian *pinakes*. If in fact it be so, it clearly merits serious consideration.¹⁰ It has been studied a good deal, and more than one set of supplements has been offered. The most familiar version is that of Wilamowitz:¹¹

καὶ Δαναΐδας ,ςφ' ἐπῶν καὶ τὸν [Ἡσιόδου Αἰγίμιον ἐπῶν ὄντα
 . . καὶ] τὴν Οἰδιπόδειαν τὴν ὑπὸ Κιναίθωνος τοῦ [Λακεδαιμο-
 νίου λεγομένην πεποιήσθαι παραλιπόν]τες ἐπῶν οὖσαν ,ςχ'
 ὑποθήσομεν Θηβαίδα [Ὀμήρου ἐπῶν . . . καὶ τὰ κατ' Ἐπιγό-
 νους ἃ ποιῆσαι . . .] τὸν Μιλήσιον λέγουσιν ἐπῶν ὄντα ,δφ'
 [καὶ Ἀλκμαιονίδα ἣν οἱ μὲν Ὀμήρου οἱ δὲ λέγουσιν ἐπῶν]
 μ,δν'. ταύτη δὲ

This restoration makes the text considerably more informative. The *Oedipodea* now turns out to be 6600 lines long. The title *Epigoni* is now inserted in line 5, to go with the length 9500 lines. This is a step forward, if we can rely on it, and one may wonder how Wilamowitz arrived at his supplements.

The method is not unique. Alexandre Dumas relates how, in the dungeons of the Château d'If, the imprisoned Abbé Faria triumphantly produces his treasure: a charred shred of paper preserving the initial portion of some fifteen lines of writing. The missing letters have been restored, to reveal exactly where the fabulous Spada millions are cached on the islet of Monte Cristo.

¹⁰ Erich Bethe, *RE* 4.2 (1901) 2091, s.v. "Danais, 5," lines 44–46: the account on the Borgia Table is derived from the best sources ("nach der aus besten Quellen stammenden Angabe"); Walter Burkert, in *I poemi epici rapsodici non omerici* (Padua 1981) 30: "There were left some grammarians, who consulted the old poem . . . ; from them some information spread to . . . the *Tabula Borgiana*. . . ." Even Horsfall 33, with note 52, mentions the "scholiastic language" of the Borgia Table's canon, and refers to Pfeiffer's discussion of Callimachus' *Pinakes*.

¹¹ Wilamowitz 333–34. In the transcription I have restored the order ,ςφ' ἐπῶν in line 2 of the inscription; Wilamowitz had inadvertently normalized the word order to ἐπῶν ,ςφ'. I have also removed the accents from the articles of οἱ μὲν . . . οἱ δὲ in line 6. Earlier restorations had been offered by Welcker 35; August Boeckh and Johann Franz, *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* 3 (Berlin 1853) 6129.

—Qui l'a reconstruite ainsi? [says Edmond.]

—Moi [replies the Abbé], qui, à l'aide du fragment restant, ai deviné le reste en mesurant la longueur des lignes par celle du papier et en pénétrant dans le sens caché au moyen du sens visible; comme on se guide dans un souterrain par un reste de lumière qui vient d'en haut. (*Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*, chapitre 18)

This method, with its appeal to good sense and continuity, was used by Wilamowitz in his reconstruction of the Borgia Table. Today, of course, epigraphists are more circumspect. One would hardly venture to fill such immense gaps without the guidance of a formula or a close analogy. And even a century ago the great Wilamowitz—the epithet is permanent for anyone who sat at the feet of Werner Jaeger—was appropriately diffident about his version. "Es liegt auf der hand," he said, "dass die zeilen viel zu lang waren, als dass sich eine sichere herstellung erzielen liesse; ich vermute, es war etwa so. . . ." But his hesitancy has not prevented a host of lesser men from treating his restoration as canonical.¹² At all events his final text (like that of the Abbé Faria) pays no attention to line-length, and his conjectural lines range from 61 letters to 72 letters. Such wide variation is unacceptable, and should persuade us to take a closer look.

It is not clear whether any of the text is missing at the right. The way in which the final words or syllables are vertically aligned suggests that the text is complete on this side. (The appearance, to be sure, may be illusory.) The amount missing at the left is unknown. A new entry begins at the end of line 2, and the name of the poem is masculine (τὸν). At the left edge of the preserved fragment, line 3 begins a new entry, with the *Oedipodea*, feminine. It follows that at the very least one full entry is missing between the end of line 2 and the preserved beginning of line 3: the title of a poem (masculine singular), its author and his demotic, and its length; in addition there will have been some syn-

¹² Those who accept Wilamowitz's supplements include Alois Rzach, *RE* 11.2 (1922) 2357, lines 45–50. "Nach der Borgiatafel . . . (vermutungsweise ergänzt von v. Wilamowitz . . .), soll dies Gedicht, wohl in seiner letzten Gestalt, 6600 Verse umfasst haben . . ."; Wilhelm Schmid and Otto Stählin, *Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur* (= Müller's *HBdAW* 7) 1.1 (Munich 1929) 202, "Oidipodeia (6600 Verse) . . ."; Herbert J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature* (London 1934) 51, "An *Oedipodeia* . . . attributed to Kinaithon . . . extended to 6,600 lines"; Albin Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature* (translated by James Willis and Cornelis de Heer; London 1966) 80: "*Oedipodea* with 6600 lines. Cynaethon is sometimes named as the author"; Martin L. West, *OCD*, (Oxford 1970²), s.v. "Epic Cycle," p. 388: "*Oedipodea* (6,600 lines): Cynaethon of Lacedaemon"; Hans von Geisau, *Der Kleine Pauly* 4 (Munich 1972) 252.23–24, s.v. "Oidipodeia": "Es umfasste 6600 V.e und stammte von dem Lakedaimonier . . . Kinaithon . . ."; Constantine A. Trypanis, *Greek Poetry from Homer to Seferis* (London 1981) 73, "The *Oedipodeia*, a work of 6600 lines, was ascribed to Cynaethon. . . ."

tactical cement—either a verb to account for the accusative case of *Oedipodea* or a coordinating conjunction.

Similarly, at the end of line 4, we have the beginning of a new entry, including the title, *Thebais*, which is feminine. Then, at the left preserved edge of line 5, we have the end of an entry: the last letter of the author's name, his demotic, and the stichometry. But the participle ὄντα, which is either masculine singular or neuter plural, cannot refer to the *Thebais*. That is, between lines 4 and 5 there is missing at least the equivalent of a full entry: the author and demotic for the *Thebais*, and its length; a verb or conjunction to introduce the next entry; its title; some syntactic completion for the verb "they say" (probably a relative pronoun and an infinitive, "whom they say to be . . ."); and all but the last letter of the author's name.

In these two places we are able to check, and in both a full entry is missing between the preserved parts of successive lines. Wilamowitz, of course, saw this, but failed to draw the necessary conclusion: it will hardly be otherwise in those parts where we cannot check. There cannot be fewer than 35 letters missing, and probably as many as 40, or even more.¹³ Forty letters would occupy something like .10 m. If on the *recto* there was a single vertical row of panels at the right border, the original edge of the stone would be about .104 m away from the extant fragment. The beginning of each line in the long inscription on the *verso* would thus fall close to the edge. Since the number of letter-spaces in the preserved portions of lines 1–5 total 32, 29, 32, 31, 30, it follows that at least one-half of the text is lost, and that *at least* one full entry is missing between successive lines. Even if there were two rows of vertical panels at the sides, one cannot find space for more than 50 or 60 missing letters. This is not enough to accommodate two entries, and it seems to follow that there is *only* one entry missing between consecutive lines. We can now draw up a tentative index (to be sure, riddled with gaps) of what the list originally contained.¹⁴

¹³ The shortest possible restoration at the beginning of line 3 is the title of a poem (Αἰγίμουν seems to be the shortest possibility), plus the name of an author (and his demotic), plus a numeral, plus ἐπῶν καὶ; a minimum of 30 letters. The shortest possible restoration at the beginning of line 5 is the author's name and demotic, plus a numeral, plus ἐπῶν καὶ, plus the title of a poem (Κύπρια is the shortest) plus ἃ ποιῆσαι Ἀρκτῖνοι; a minimum of 35 letters, even if one chooses to supply Homer, without an ethnic, as the author of the *Thebais*. Most names of authors and poems would require even more space.

¹⁴ The argument, be it noted, is valid only if the text is complete on the right. If, however, it continued as far as the right-hand edge of the stone there would be space for an additional 30 or 40 letters, depending on whether the vertical border on the obverse consisted of a single or a double row of panels. In the table there remains the theoretical possibility that entries 1 and 2, 5 and 6, 9 and 10, in reality refer to the same poem. To accept this would be bad method, because it postulates that the text behaves differently in the parts that can be checked from the way in which it does where we cannot check.

NO.	LINE	TITLE	AUTHOR AND DEMOTIC	LENGTH
1.	1-2	-] <i>machia</i>	<i>not</i> Telesis of Methymna	[-]
2.	2	[-]	[-]	[-] lines
3.	2	<i>Danaides</i>	[name omitted]	6500 lines
4.	2-3	[masc. sing.]	[-]	[-]
5.	3-4	<i>Oedipodea</i>	Cinaethon of [-]	[-]
6.	4	[fern. sing.]	[-]	6600 lines
7.	4-5	<i>Thebais</i>	[-]	[-]
8.	5	[m. s. / n. pl.]	[-] of Miletus	9500 lines
9.	6	[-]	[-]	[-]
10.	6	[fem. sing.]	[-]	4400 lines
11.	6-7	[-]	[-]	[-]

(Remainder missing)

All the entries are in the accusative case except the first preserved one, which is genitive. Various suppletions suggest themselves: *Titanomachy*, *Gigantomachy*, *Centauromachy*, *Theomachy*, or even *Batrachomyomachy*. In explanation of the genitive, the locution "begin from" (*ἀρχεσθαι ἐκ*) springs to mind. In particular it recalls the words of the epitomator of Proclus, to the effect that the Epic Cycle "begins from the storied union of Heaven and Earth." This text of Proclus in fact is usually set among the testimonia to the *Titanomachy*.¹⁵ It suggests that, first, the restoration *Titanomachy* in the Borgia Table is correct; and second, that this is the first entry in the table.

In other sources the author of the *Titanomachy*, if not anonymous (frr. 3a, 6, 7, 8 Allen), is given as Eumelus (frr. 2, 4 A) or Arctinus (fr. 4 A). The person to whom authorship is here *denied*, Telesis of Methymna, is totally unknown to other sources. Some authorities have been tempted to see in Telesis an hypocoristic variant for Telesarchus, who wrote an *Argolicum* or *Argolica*, but he is as likely to be a late local historian as an early epic poet. We know also of lyric poets Telesilla of Argos and Telestes of Selinus. Neither comes from Methymna, and nobody associates either with a *Titanomachy*, or with any other sort of *-machy*, whether affirmatively or negatively.¹⁶

Entry Number 3 on the Borgia Table refers to the *Danaides*. An epic of that name is otherwise unknown. There was a play so called in the tetralogy by Aeschylus to which the *Suppliants* belonged. There was an epic *Danais*, singular, of unknown authorship, of which three fragments are preserved (Kinkel pp. 78, 313). Quite possibly the episode

¹⁵ Erich Bethe, *Homer: Dichtung und Sage* 2.2 (Leipzig, 1929²), ὁ ἐπικός κύκλος, test. 3. In the discussion that follows, fragments are cited preferentially from the editions of Bethe, Allen, and Kinkel.

¹⁶ On Telesarchus see Wilamowitz 334; Gustav Türk, *RE* 5A.1 (1934) 386 "Telesis" 36-45; *FGrH* 309. On the fragments of Telesilla and Telestes, see *PMG* 372-74, 419-22.

about the birth of Erichthonius that is narrated in one of the texts just above the "epic canon" was derived ultimately from the *Danaïs*.

Entry Number 4 is lost, except for the article that introduces it. The titles of most epics are feminine singular; some are neuter plural. A very few are masculine singular; one thinks of *Aegimius* and *Keykos Gamos*—both of them, as it happens, concerned with the life of Heracles. Either we have here one of them inserted between the Argive tale of the daughters of Danaus and the Theban story of Oedipus, or else we have a totally new epic.

Entry Number 5, the *Oedipodea*, is well attested as an epic. Authorities differed as to whether the name was neuter plural (fr. 1 A) or, as here, feminine singular (fr. 2 A). They do agree, however, that its author is unknown. But not to the writer of the Borgia Table! He ascribes the poem to Cinaethon, who must be the epic poet Cinaethon of Sparta mentioned by Pausanias (2.3.9). He wrote genealogical epics connected with Crete, Jason, the Atreids, and Messenia (Kinkel pp. 197–198). He is also named as the author of a *Heraclea* (Kinkel p. 212), and as one of the candidates for the *Telegony* (test. 1 Bethe) and the *Little Iliad* (test. 8 Bethe). No one except the Borgia Table associates him with the Theban cycle.

If in fact entry Number 6 is independent, evidently the Borgia Table inserted another poem in the list between the *Oedipodea* and the *Thebais*. This is bizarre; all other sources make the latter the immediate sequel to the former.

Logically, the epic *Epigoni* known from other sources would be expected to follow the *Thebais*. Its author is elsewhere either anonymous or hesitantly Homer (fr. 3 A), and its length is 7000 lines (Allen p. 115). Entry Number 8 does not preserve a title; but it has the wrong gender or number (masculine singular or neuter plural), the wrong author (an anonymous Milesian), and the wrong length (9500 lines) to refer to the *Epigoni*.

Entry Number 8 in fact has been thought to point in a different direction. In a list of epics and epic poets, "the Milesian" is likely to be Arctinus. (If it is not Arctinus in this instance, then we have a totally new epic poet.) In other sources Arctinus of Miletus is reported as the author of three poems: the *Titanomachy* (fr. 4 A; if it is the first entry in the Borgia Table, it will not appear again as the eighth); the *Aethiopis* (test. 1, 5, 9 Bethe), of five books (i.e., about 3250 lines);¹⁷ and the *Iliou Persis* (test. 1, 7; fr. 1, 2 Bethe), of two books (i.e., 1300 lines). Since all three titles are feminine singular, none of

¹⁷ Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, Mass. 1957) 604–5, provides estimates of the lengths of various early epics, based on an average book length of 650 lines.

them is intended here. That is, Arctinus is credited with a new poem. This, in an entry which professes to retail familiar information ("they say . . .").

If entry Number 8 is in fact neuter plural, it might be thought to refer to the *Cypria*, since this poem would provide a convenient lead-in to the Trojan cycle, and since not many epic titles are neuter plural (*Heraclea*, *Naupactica*, *Oedipodea*, *Corinthiaca*, *Argonautica* come to mind). Alas, the *Cypria* is not elsewhere ascribed to Arctinus. It was 11 books long (i.e., ca. 7150 lines), that is, somewhat shorter than entry Number 8.

Of course we cannot claim to possess all the facts that were available to the ancients, but so far as our evidence goes, it appears that the compiler of the Borgia Table was a rugged individualist:

- (a) There *was* an epic canon that followed upon the *Titanomachy*, including the Trojan Cycle. Of it our author knows nothing.
- (b) He adduces Telesis (otherwise unknown), and then *denies* that he wrote the epic *-machy*.
- (c) He cites an epic *Danaides* (otherwise unknown).
- (d) He does not list *Oedipodea*, *Thebais*, and *Epigoni* in this, their canonical order.
- (e) He alone ascribes the *Oedipodea* to Cinaethon.
- (f) He ascribes a new poem to Arctinus.

The extant portion of the stone contained at least eleven entries. We can read, or plausibly restore, four titles, four line-counts, and three statements of authorship. Three of the poems are mentioned elsewhere. *None* of the other details is substantiated, and some of them are contradicted in our other sources. Where we can check the statements on the stone, it is wrong. Why should we imagine that it is right where we cannot? The only way to make the Borgia Table approach credibility is by introducing logic and good sense in the restorations.

If, gentle reader, you live in a world where nothing matters but facts, you may stop here, concluding simply that the Borgia Table does not command your assent. Yet one cannot help asking why. Why was the text inscribed? If the compiler is not rehearsing good Hellenistic scholarship, what *does* he think he's doing? Someone who presents a false document as if it were authentic is a forger. There were many fakes, of all sorts, in antiquity. Literary works provide remote parallels, and suggest a motive. The librarians at Alexandria and Pergamum, or rather their royal masters, were so acquisitive that they lay open to swindlers (Galen 15.105 Kühn). The *Culex* may well be a Virgilian imposture of Tiberian date. Suetonius could lay hands on some fabricated elegies of Horace and a spurious letter to Maecenas (*Vita Horat.*). Not too many years later, as James Zetzel has shown, Tiro's apocryphal edition of Cicero and fraudulent autograph Virgils were available. In-

deed, Aulus Gellius (2.3.5) cites a grammarian who paid twenty pieces of gold for a manuscript of *Aeneid* 2 imagining it to be the poet's own. Evidently the antiquarian bookseller had a ready market.¹⁸

Spurious scholarly research might seem less profitable, because less appealing. Yet the Iliac Tables found patrons, who have recently been identified by Nicholas Horsfall. He begins from the nature of the documents. The sculptured reliefs and the inscribed texts of the tables are characterized by "minuteness of . . . craftsmanship" and by "a combination of error and erudition." One of them has 126 verses of the *Iliad* written in letters too small to be read with the naked eye. Another has each book of the *Odyssey* illustrated—not by the most famous episode in the book, but by the first one. Another has certain Iliadic scenes accompanied by captions that do not tally with the reliefs. Another professes to illustrate Stesichorus' *Sack of Troy* when it does no such thing. The cultural claims of the tables are pretentious, but the level they attain is not high. In short, Horsfall argues convincingly that the *Tabulae* were catchpennies produced for the eager but unlettered *nouveaux riches*. They are tawdry gewgaws intended to provide the illusion of sophistication for those who had none.¹⁹

We are transported to the world that a generation later was inhabited by that great humanist and patron of the arts C. Pompeius Trimalchio Maecenatianus. His guests eat dinner to the accompaniment of Homer, recited in Greek. His halls display scenes from epic, perhaps after the fashion of the narrative Homeric friezes from Pompeii, or perhaps like the Iliac Tables. He knows and loves the old tales, but without any sordid pedantry. For him the Dioscuri are Diomed and Ganymede, and their sister Helen was carried off by Agamemnon. In one passage he confuses Cassandra with Medea, Daedalus with Epeius, Niobe with Pasiphae. He has Ajax go mad for love, and butcher a calf. He recollects that Troy was finally taken by that consummate trickster Hannibal. We may have thought that Odysseus put out Poly-

¹⁸ See Eduard Fraenkel, "The Culex," reprinted in his *Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 2 (Rome 1964) 181–97, especially 192–94; Leighton D. Reynolds and Nigel G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars* (Oxford 1974²) 7, 28f.; Wolfgang Speyer, *Die Literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum: Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung* (= Müller's *HBdAW* 1.2, Munich 1971), especially 131–49; Sir Ronald Syme, *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (Oxford 1968) 119–25, 213–14; Syme, *Emperors and Biography: Studies in the Historia Augusta* (Oxford 1971) 15–16, 263–66, 283–84; James E. G. Zetzel, "Emendavi ad Tironem: Some Notes on Scholarship in the Second Century A.D.," *HSCP* 77 (1973) 225–43, especially 239–42. I am happy to acknowledge the guidance of Professor Zetzel in compiling this note and the portion of the text to which it refers.

¹⁹ See Horsfall 33–35; the quotations are from 34, 33. The tables cited in the text are the Shield of Achilles, 4N (Sadurska 45), the Tomassetti Table, 16Sa (Sadurska 73), the New York Table, 2NY (Sadurska 38–39; Horsfall 34), and the Capitoline Table, 1A (Horsfall 35–43).

phemus' eye, but Trimalchio knows that the Cyclops pulled out the hero's thumb.²⁰

In such an environment the Borgia Table would be truly at home. It is a piece of marketplace trumpery designed to massage the ego and lighten the pocketbook of the newly rich. Why the compiler did not trouble to get correct information, we cannot be sure. Perhaps, like others before and since, he was moved to share with an unsuspecting world evidence that no one else could possess because he had himself made it up. Syme's term "rogue scholiast" seems apt. Perhaps he wanted simply to befool the experts. (Had he but known . . . !) And if that pleasure were blended with profit, who could resist? In vain do we look for his sources. Only so much is clear: he did not base his work on the best Hellenistic research. He lifted a name or two out of the handbooks, added some appropriate numerals, and stirred in a bit of imagination. The Borgia Table is a pretense of literacy for the unlettered. From a scholarly point of view it is a travesty. Perhaps it cannot, in honesty, be omitted from discussion. It should never be cited without a stern *caveat*.²¹ If we must refer to it, let us make clear exactly how much is on the stone and how much is conjecturally restored. In the fifteenth century it was said to be the part of wisdom to shun the Table of the Borgias. This other, earlier Borgia Table cries out for similar treatment.

²⁰ Petronius, *Satyricon* 59.3, 29.9, 59.4, 52.1–2, 59.5–7, 50.5, 48.7; on the wall-paintings, see Kurt Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination*, Martin Classical Lectures 16 (Cambridge, Mass. 1959) 37.

²¹ The *Certamen* admittedly lies open to suspicion, but at least it quotes some real lines (attested elsewhere) from real poems. Even though it ascribes the *Thebais* and *Epigoni* to Homer, its stichometry will not be as immediately suspect as that of the Borgia Table.