

## THE AUDIOVISUAL SERIES: A PREQUEL

Tenui licet cymba in vertiginosum mare crebisque  
implicitum scopulis novus descendam nauta, incertus  
nunquid opera precium facturus sim, si omnia leggero.

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium*<sup>1</sup>

Where does the television series come from?<sup>2</sup> What does its venerable pedigree, referred to by Tokarczuk, look like? These basic questions cannot be answered without a careful and documented review of the millennia-long history of narration, parts of which are barely remembered if not completely forgotten. A return to texts appears necessary, even though the journey across the massive narrative “continent”<sup>3</sup> is arduous for a lone traveller. Narratives are not created equal, and it may prove risky to proceed without adopting an organizing principle. Theoretical narration studies, such as the over half-a-century-old seminal book *The Nature of Narrative* by Robert Scholes and Robert L. Kellogg, even in its 2006 revised and expanded edition in collaboration with James Phelan, provide interesting but only partial insights.<sup>4</sup> Such studies – unsurprisingly – remain centred on literary narrative; the expressed general views lack a solid demonstration and may be interpreted as glib and facile, for example, “For writing to be narrative no more and no less than a teller and a tale are required” (Scholes,

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<sup>1</sup> Boccaccio, 2011, 16–17 (trans. Jon Solomon): “As a new sailor on a rather frail skiff I will descend into the vertiginous sea encircled by ubiquitous cliffs, uncertain as to whether the labour will be worth the effort of reading all the books.”

<sup>2</sup> The distinction made in 1974 by Raymond Williams in *Technology and Cultural Form* between a “series” composed of almost stand-alone episodes (little narration is carried over from episode to episode) and a “serial” presenting narrative arcs gradually progressing during a number of episodes, is irrelevant and unnecessary here, as we approach the genre as a broader format encompassing two or more subgenres. For the evolution of these categories, see also Hilmes et al., 2014, 27, and Kelleter, 2017a, 12.

<sup>3</sup> I borrow the expression from Jean-Claude Picard’s title *Le continent apocryphe* (1999).

<sup>4</sup> See the perceptive review of the 1966 edition of *The Nature of Narrative* by Dorrit Cohn (1969). Kent Puckett, in his *Narrative Theory* (2016), written half a century later, is obviously more up to date; he offers an excellent review of theories of narration, with the main focus on literature.

Phelan, and Kellogg, [1966] 2006, 4). Even chapters like “The Classical Heritage of Modern Narrative” (57–81), which sounds almost as a subtitle to the present book, display the authors’ unquestionable erudition but prove unsatisfying to a classicist. The challenge facing scholars attempting to trace the evolution of storytelling lies in achieving a sensible balance between the enormity of detail and the desired credibility of a synthesis. How to recognize the narratives that have delighted, absorbed, and entertained their recipients, that is, played the same role as the twenty-first-century genre under investigation here, is the first methodological question. It must be emphasized here that the perspective from which the question is asked is necessarily that of a classicist and classical reception scholar who, outside of Graeco-Roman antiquity and Greek and Latin texts, relies on translation into modern languages and to a great extent on the existing scholarship.

## **Episodic Storytelling: Its Diversity and Themes**

A logical approach would be to establish criteria for identifying narrative genres that may have contributed to the development of the television series. What core elements define the television series that are shared by its narrative predecessors? A telltale indication and an essential formal criterion would be episodic structure originating in the oral tradition. A simple definition of such texts (whether pre-literate, literate, or audiovisual) may run as follows: a more extended narrative told in a series of instalments that may be “consumed” at least one at a time by individuals or by a group.<sup>5</sup>

Episodic narratives often take the form of continuous narration, for instance, ancient epic poems, Hellenistic romances, medieval *chansons de geste*, chivalric romances, and so forth. On the other hand, collections of stand-alone stories may be linked by a common theme and structure, for instance, New Testament Apocrypha, early Christian and medieval collections of hagiographies, *exempla*, medieval lays and fabliaux, epic and romance cycles or sets of stories possibly

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<sup>5</sup> Group consumption is typical for the oral tradition; it also occurs, *mutatis mutandis*, in the case of live spectacles, or cycles of films viewed in movie theatres. At the early stage of adoption of radio and later television technology, when very few households owned receivers, listening or watching in groups of friends and neighbours was quite popular and persisted for decades, especially in less opulent or communist economies, where receivers were often made available in community centres. From 1954 to 1968, I regularly watched television in the common room of the company which owned the building my family lived in in Warsaw.

connected by a frame, like *The Seven Sages of Rome* or its Eastern branch, *The Book of Sindibad*, and of course the *Decameron*, *Canterbury Tales*, and their numerous imitations, late seventeenth-century French fairy tales, and *One Thousand and One Nights* with its embedded stories introduced to the European culture as a collection only in the eighteenth century via the French translation (1704–1717) of Antoine Galland (1646–1715)<sup>6</sup> quickly and anonymously rendered in English (1706–1721).<sup>7</sup> The advent of the press and the growth of its accessibility in the nineteenth century launched weekly or daily instalments of new novels often by great writers who gained unprecedented steady access to massive numbers of readers still during the course of writing.<sup>8</sup>

Whether episodes are joined by narrative continuity or by a common theme and structure, such works present, in a measure suitable for the particulars of each story, a relatively steady range of fast action, adventure, dramatic tension, and romance, spiced with startling, improbable, magical or quasi-miraculous reversals; in other words, they should be able to retain the interest of large audiences and keep them asking for more. The popularity and influence achieved in its time by a text is an important criterion for its inclusion in the timeline spanning the gap between the glorious epic and the much less exalted ordinary television series; it can be gauged by the number of extant manuscripts, and, after the Gutenberg revolution, the number of printed editions, as well as the reception of the text by contemporary and later writers.

## Episodic Storytelling: A Roadmap

As the first step of our inquiry, literary texts defined as episodic narratives will be reviewed to form a sequence facilitating navigation through the narrative

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<sup>6</sup> For Galland's biography, see Jack Zipes's stimulating and useful selection *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm* (2001, 827–828). The tales are arranged by themes.

<sup>7</sup> On the reception of *The Arabian Nights* and its global cultural importance, see Zipes, (1999) 2007, 53–64, and a recent monograph by Muhsin J. al-Musawi (2021). Also in 2021, the British-Syrian poet Yasmine Seale published a new English translation in a volume edited by Paulo Lemos Horta (*The Annotated Arabian Nights*, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Today's writers admit, and writing coaches advocate, the need to redraft a novel at least ten times or so. It seems remarkable how these nineteenth-century authors were able to deliver every week an instalment of a novel *in statu nascendi* and still end up – at least some of them – with a coherent whole and, occasionally, a masterpiece.

continent. This rudimentary roadmap<sup>9</sup> will help us reach the second step – a more detailed discussion of the most important consecutive milestones making it possible to trace the evolution of episodic narrative as a broad genre.

The first literary genre that qualifies as episodic is **epic**, which came to us in a post-oral, literary version, divided into sections to be read as instalments. In the Hellenistic era, a second episodic genre added a less majestic growth ring to the family tree: the **Greek romance** and its satirical Roman variants.<sup>10</sup> Christianity introduced its own stories spiced with edifying moral flavours and produced **apocryphal apostolic romances**. The five apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (John, Paul, Peter, Andrew, and Thomas) were used by the Manichaeans as a collection already in the fourth century CE (see Klauck, 2008, 3). Latin apocryphal Acts featuring all Apostles, entitled **Virtutes Apostolorum**, appeared as a collection in the eighth century, at the latest, and as individual texts possibly much earlier (see E. Rose, 2013, 57–96). Picking up the trail of apostolic romances, **hagiographies**, both Latin and Byzantine, **exempla** and **bestiaries** appeared, compiled with preachers in mind but attractive also to the growing masses of the faithful willing to replace sinful pagan entertainment with tales of divine miracles and heroic deeds of Christians persecuted for their beliefs. The cult of the saints, revitalized by the growing number of canonizations,

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<sup>9</sup> While proofreading an earlier version of this chapter, I came across Christopher Booker's book *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* ([2004] 2010), where the well-known British journalist and writer analyses the reasons why in the long history of fiction, the uncountable plots can be reduced to a handful of basic patterns or templates occurring separately, overlapping, or used in various configurations. Like Joseph Campbell's 1949 pattern of "the hero's journey," briefly discussed in Chapter 4, p. 326, the book is influenced by Carl Jung and integrates some of the Campbellian elements. While Booker's purpose is quite different from mine here, both relate to storytelling and initially apply a similar method to deal with the overwhelming literary legacy by introducing the concept I call a roadmap, Booker – a route-map ([2004] 2010, 7). The difference of purpose is best reflected in the choice of discussed texts, in part because Booker's main focus is on the last two centuries, but mainly because, unconcerned with genre, evolution, and chronology – concepts crucial in my study – he bundles together all categories of plots and specific to them archetypal characters created in all manifestations of culture, whether elite, popular, or in between, making his reasoning a stimulating and irresistible intellectual exercise but not a strictly scholarly one.

<sup>10</sup> The kinship between the Greek romance and the television series and the assessment of being "ephemeral and superficial" attached to both have been naturally noticed and discussed by scholars. See, e.g., Niklas Holzberg ([1995] 2005, 1), who mentions soap operas. Massimo Fusillo quotes the ancient writers' low opinion of the Hellenistic romance (Philostratus, *Epistles* 66; Persius, *Satires* 1.134; Julian the Apostate, *Epistles* 89b, 301b) but highlights the limits of useful comparisons: "the label of para-literature can be a good starting point to understand the role of the ancient novel in the system of literary genres, but must be then articulated according to the various idiosyncratic narrative and aesthetic strategies of the single works" (Fusillo, 2016, 21–22).

snowballed into extensive hagiographical collections culminating in the thirteenth-century **Legenda aurea** assembled by Jacobus de Voragine.

Cycles of legendary epic and chivalric romances flourished since the early Middle Ages and featured **matters of Britain** (the “frivolous and pleasant” Arthurian cycle [“Li conte de Bretaigne si sont vain et plaisant”]), of **Rome** (“wise and instructive” topics from Greek and Roman mythology, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar [“Cil de Rome sont sage et de san aprenant”]), and of **France** (*chansons de geste*, “proven to be true every day” [“Cil de France de voir chascun jor aparant”]);<sup>11</sup> fictionalized history absorbed also fantastic and magic elements. Translations from Latin into vernacular languages or from one vernacular to another (especially from French to English and vice versa) made the genre widely popular.

In order not to lose sight of Byzantium while following medieval chronology in the West, we return briefly to the **Byzantine** literary scene, which continued to be active and witnessed a revival of the Hellenistic romance in the Komnenian twelfth century, then launched into vernacular semi-epic proto-romance with **Digenis Akritis** set against the background of the borderlands and their struggles, and, finally, during the long Palaiologan Renaissance (1261–1453), produced vernacular romances with roots in the Komnenian novels, and characterized by “permeability as well as openness towards material of foreign origin” (Cupane, 2016a, 98). A large proportion of extant vernacular romances were based on foreign models,<sup>12</sup> such as the politically motivated *romans d’antiquité*, which provided some European royal and princely houses with Homeric ancestors. *The Trojan War*, for instance, is based on Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s *Roman de Troie*, the only non-anonymous *roman d’antiquité* (Yiavis, 2016, 130–134). Homer was a beloved topic of Byzantine vernacular writers. The *Achilleid* and the *Byzantine Iliad* are far removed from the original epos focusing on Achilles and Paris, who become characters of a romance. The three surviving versions of the *Achilleid* vary in length from 763 to 1,820 verses and are considered by scholars to be separate works on the same topic. The *Byzantine Iliad* contains two stories put together, one about Achilles, and the other about Paris.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>11</sup> Categorized by Jehan Bodel (1165–1210) of Arras – also an author of *fabliaux* – in the prologue to his *Chanson des Saisnes*, 6–11. Lines 9, 10, and 11, provided here in square brackets, are unfailingly quoted by all who study medieval literature; see, e.g., C.M. Jones, 2014, 2–3, or Boutet, 2019, 9–10.

<sup>12</sup> Kostas Yiavis (2016, 127) calculates that 43% of all vernacular romances written from the twelfth to the sixteenth century were adaptations.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion of both works, see Lavagnini, 2016, 234–257.

stream of vernacular romances continues until the fall of Constantinople and becomes entangled with folk songs since the proliferation of the Akritic cycle.

Returning to the West, we should mention **Marie de France**, active in the late twelfth century (1160–1215), who wrote courtly poems of love and adventure (***dits*** or ***lais***) in Francien mixed with Anglo-Norman; she also translated Aesop's fables. Both genres were listened to, and later read, piece by piece, rather than all in one session. The funny, less courtly equivalents, or cousins, of medieval *lais*, the **fabliaux**, are short narratives that feature many satirical representations of medieval society and make fun of its members using scatological and obscene humour. Some of the fabliaux were later reused by **Giovanni Boccaccio** (1313–1375) and **Geoffrey Chaucer** (1342/43–1400), and integrated into their tales.

In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, another set of stories in Latin – ***Gesta Romanorum*** – joined the previous compilations providing 200–300 (the number varies depending on the manuscript) legends and anecdotes from Greece, Rome, and more exotic places, which proved to be valuable not only to preachers but also to fourteenth-century masters of episodic narration, **Boccaccio** and **Chaucer**, to say nothing of the two-century-younger Elizabethan genius, William **Shakespeare**. Boccaccio, best known today for his ***Decameron*** (1353),<sup>14</sup> wrote later (1350–1360) a Latin mythography, ***Genealogia deorum gentilium***, which focused on the Greek and Roman pantheon;<sup>15</sup> he continued to revise and expand it until his death in 1375. Even more popular than the *Decameron*, it circulated in different manuscript versions for 100 years, until Wendelin of Speyer produced its *editio princeps* in Venice in 1472 (ISTC, ib00749000).

The fifteenth century returned to the matter of Britain, producing an English prose rendering of the Arthurian cycle and rekindling the appetite for the chivalric romance, this time disseminated in print: **Thomas Malory's *Le morte Darthur***, written in 1468–1470 and published in 1485 by William Caxton, who had nine years earlier printed the *editio princeps* of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the eight-book frame story dating from 1387–1400. Caxton's biographer, E. Gordon Duff, believes that no perfect copies of this small folio survived (Duff, 1905, 37), as they were, undoubtedly, destroyed through overuse.

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<sup>14</sup> *Editio princeps* printed by Christoph Valdarfer in Venice, in 1471 (*Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* [hereinafter: *ISTC*], ib00725300).

<sup>15</sup> See the recent edition of the Latin text with an English translation by Jon Solomon, vol. 1 and vol. 2 (Boccaccio, 2011 and 2017); in January 2024, vol. 3 was still in preparation.

Philip the Good (1396–1467), the Duke of Burgundy, well versed in Classics and Greek mythology, who created the Order of the Golden Fleece,<sup>16</sup> asked his secretary, Jean Miélot, to translate Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium* into French. The work was completed in 1468, one year after the Duke's death. It appeared in print three decades later. Laurent de Premierfait (1360?–1418) did a French translation of the *Decameron* in 1411–1414, based on the Latin version produced by Antonio d'Arezzo and published in a modified version in 1485 in Paris by Jean Du Pré and Antoine Caillaut for Antoine Vérard (ISTC, ib00728800), under the confusing title *Livre de Cameron ou Cent Nouvelles*.<sup>17</sup>

The same Philip the Good commissioned another collection of stories compiled in 1462: *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, where thirty-six storytellers (historical figures from the court of Burgundy) recounted various anecdotes reflecting the period. It was previously tentatively attributed to Antoine de La Sale (1386–1460), Philippe Pot (1428–1493), or even the young Louis (1423–1483) (future Louis XI), who was kicking his heels at his uncle's court before succeeding his father, Charles VII, in 1461.

Frame stories, introduced a century earlier by Boccaccio, became a popular genre, practised and imitated by later writers, such as **Marguerite de Navarre** (1492–1549), who intended to produce her own *Cent Nouvelles*, but completed only seventy-two; the collection was published posthumously, in 1558, with many modifications by Pierre Boaistuau (1517–1566),<sup>18</sup> as *Histoires des amans fortunez*, and one year later as *L'Heptaméron des nouvelles de la Princesse*

<sup>16</sup> Philip the Good formed this chivalric order in 1430 at the occasion of his wedding to his third wife, Isabella of Portugal; it was originally inspired by Jason and the Argonauts' quest for the Golden Fleece. The pagan mythological connection caused protests, which were neutralized by associating the order with the biblical story of Gedeon, whom God gave proof of his future assistance by first wetting the fleece with heavenly dew but keeping dry the surroundings and then by covering with dew only the surroundings and keeping the fleece dry. The Burgundian Golden Fleece came to be known as *Gedeonis signa*. The first seat of the Order in Bruges was decorated with tapestries illustrating the story of Gedeon. See Huizinga, (1924) 2019, loc. 1323–1337; see also Van Loo, 2021, 267–269. The eight huge tapestries (6 m by 100 m) designed by Baudouin de Bailleul from Arras were ordered in 1449 from weavers Robert Dary and Jean de l'Ortie. See Delmarcel, 1999, 29. The concept of Gedeon's Fleece, not only as a biblical story but as a symbol of God's promise of victory, was well known to the faithful since several centuries earlier because of its inclusion in the *Little Office of the Immaculate Conception*, "At Tierce," second stanza: "Hail, Gedeon's Fleece! Hail, blossoming Rod! Samson's sweet Honeycomb! Portal of God!" ("Little Office of the Immaculate Conception," 2012).

<sup>17</sup> See Gathercole, 1969, 300–301; Di Stefano, 1999, 160; and also the section "Novellas and Frame Stories" of the present chapter.

<sup>18</sup> See Marguerite d'Angoulême, 1558. He dedicates the book to Marguerite de Navarre on the title page, as well as in the introduction. Boaistuau is best known for his compilation of stories about strange things and monsters, *Histoires prodigieuses*, published in 1560.

*Marguerite de Valois, royne de Navarre*, printed in Paris by Vincent Sertenat in the original order restored by Claude Gruget.<sup>19</sup>

Petronius' *Satirica*, Apuleius' *Asinus aureus*, French fabliaux, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* make fun of the society and culture of their times. They use satire, ridicule, and frequently vulgar, even obscene humour. In the early sixteenth century, this ribald and hearty interpretation of reality became the main appeal of the so-called picaresque romance or novel developed in Spain, but also in Italy, Germany, and elsewhere, spreading through translation across Europe. The genre was imitated and appropriated during the next several centuries in many different national cultures, producing a picaresque myth and transforming it in the twentieth century into the neo-picaresque novel (see Garrido Ardila, [2015] 2016, 1–53; Godsland, [2015] 2017, 247–268).

The seventeenth century explored even more obviously fantastic stories: **fa-  
bles** and **fairy** (or **wonder**) **tales**. In France, **Charles Perrault** (1628–1703), the champion of the Moderns in their quarrel with the Ancients (see Winkler, 2017, 44–45), after a career as secretary to the Minister of State, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, at the court of Louis XIV, began to compose fairy tales (*Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités* or *Contes de ma mère l'Oye*, 1697). His younger contemporary **Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baroness de la Motte d'Aulnoy** (1652–1705),<sup>20</sup> an unconventional and colourful figure, wrote *Contes de fées* (1697), a year later *Les contes nouveaux ou Les fées à la mode*, many of which were inspired by folk tales; she even managed to support her family with the income from her writing. Fascination with fairy tales and their suitability as entertainment for children and as texts reinforcing moral education resulted eventually in more collections of tales, uplifting or not, but authored mainly by eighteenth-century women. Among them, **Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve** (1685–1755): “La Belle et la Bête” in *La jeune américaine et les contes marins* (1740), and **Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont** (1711–1780), who produced seventy volumes of fairy tales for children.

In the nineteenth century, fairy and folk tales attracted the attention of scholars in Germany, who collected, studied, and published them. The most influential and best-known were the famous **Brothers Grimm, Jacob Ludwig Carl** (1785–1863) and **Wilhelm Carl** (1786–1859).

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<sup>19</sup> A copy can be viewed online at the Gallica repository (Marguerite d'Angoulême, 1559).

<sup>20</sup> For a recent confirmation of Mme d'Aulnoy's birthdate, see Volker Schröder's fascinating blog *Anecdota* (2021).



The development of the press – a medium episodic by nature – ensured the dissemination of a new narrative genre with roots reaching antiquity, **the novel**. It quickly caught readers' fancy, and their numbers mushroomed as literacy levels rapidly increased. Most late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century novels were published in instalments in the press of Europe and America. After a press run, they were usually published in book form. Gradually, the number of novels disseminated in the press diminished and dwindled to what eventually became a marginal phenomenon.

Writers who contributed to various press outlets on a large scale discovered the advantages of episodic storytelling and ventured into writing cycles linked by continuous narration, characters, setting, etc. Cycles of novels published in book form were successful but never reached the massive and immediate popularity of press instalments. The unopposed triumphal march of the novel continued through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, securing an important place on the narrative "continent" of the twenty-first century. In the late 1920s, **radio novels** appeared. Two decades later they were joined by the nascent **television series**, which fully blossomed in quantity in the late twentieth century and both in numbers and quality in the first decades of the twenty-first century venturing from television to new distribution platforms, such as Internet-powered streaming services. Having reached the end of our simplified roadmap from the epic tradition to audiovisual series, a hopefully useful guide through the thicket of the millennia-long accumulation of stories, we shall now proceed to a more detailed discussion of genres identified as "ancestors" of the television series, attaching greater importance to the earlier periods, further away from the traditional focus and expertise of media scholars.

## The Evolution of Episodic Storytelling

### Ancient Epic

"Epic begins at Sumer," according to Samuel Noah Kramer, the hero of my extracurricular high school readings. He dated Sumerian epic poems to "a good millennium before the Hebrews wrote down their Bible and the Greeks their *Iliad* and *Odyssey*" (Kramer, [1956] 1981, xxii and 223–244). This marvelous gift, brought to us by archaeology out of the ruins of Nineveh, is a series of stories recounting heroic deeds in words recorded on clay tablets, starting at the end

of the third millennium BCE (George, 2008, 11). After making a certain impact on the Bible, it went out of circulation, forgotten like the empire it was associated with and like its languages. The Sumerian epic remained buried in the metaphorical sands of history and the real sands of Upper Mesopotamia. It began to victoriously regain its place in the world's culture only after cuneiform writing, resembling bird scratches made in straight horizontal lines, was deciphered and the languages it recorded remastered in the late nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

During the Sumerian epic's long absence from human memory, the two Homeric poems and the Bible, containing Sumerian echoes, initially shaped the Mediterranean and eventually global culture. After the fall of Nineveh in 612 BCE, the library housing Sumerian and Akkadian masterpieces never rose from ruins; the command of the languages and cuneiform writing were lost for even longer than the knowledge of Ancient Egyptian and hieroglyphics. When the language of the epic of Gilgamesh was forgotten despite having been so diligently recorded in clay, the Greek epic, originally oral, was only beginning to reach its fixed written form. The Ancient Greek language evolved and changed, but it suffered no significant rupture or lengthy absence comparable to the venerable Sumerian tongue.

Homeric epic remains today, and has been for over two millennia, a written literary text.<sup>22</sup> The oldest iconographical testimony to the war of Troy is a relief of the Trojan Horse on a burial πίθος (*píthos*) found on the island of Mykonos and dated to 675 BCE (see Andersen, 1997, 182–191). This proves only that the story was known at that date, not that the text of the *Odyssey* was already in the present form. The same is true of other evidence found on early vases depicting the blinding of Polyphemos by Odysseus.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> On December 3, 1872, George Smith presented to the Biblical Archaeology Society his translation of the story of the flood he found among tens of thousands of clay tablets brought to the British Museum from Nineveh in the 1840s by Austen Henry Laynard and Hormuzd Rassam. See Damrosch, 2007, 32–33.

<sup>22</sup> How and when exactly the oral epics transformed into written texts can never be established with any certainty. For a discussion of this issue, as well as of the orality, authorship, and dating of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, see West, 2011, 383–393.

<sup>23</sup> Martin West (2011, 393) mentions (without reference) a vase depiction of the blinding of Polyphemos, dated to 675 BCE. The Cyclops theme appears, e.g., on a proto-Attic black-figure amphora decorated by the so-called Polyphemos Painter, dated to 670–660 BCE (Eleusis, Archeological Museum 2630) and on a krater signed by the potter Aristonothos, found in Cerveteri (Caere), dated to 650 BCE, now at Musei Capitolini in Rome (Spivey, 1997, 56–58, 208). See a detailed analysis and discussion of the Polyphemos theme on vases dating from seventh–fifth centuries BCE in Grethlein, 2015, 203–206.