

THE TIME SETTING OF THE DIALOGUE  
*BRUTA ANIMALIA RATIONE UTI*

*To my friend Philip A. Stadter*

Philip Stadter is a world-famous scholar who has earned great merits in the interpretation of and comment on many works of different authors of ancient history writing: this applies also, and particularly, to Plutarch. Stadter has been a remarkable President of the “International Plutarch Society”, who distinguished himself through several projects aimed at promoting the interpretation of and comment on Plutarch’s several works. He has also been, and is, a great friend of Florence and many Florentines – and I take pride in considering myself one of these – witness the many times he has presented us with his scholarship and friendship during his frequent stays in the city<sup>1</sup>. His ‘retirement’ calls for well-deserved applause, not unlike the parade of a triumphal chariot. In order to honor him, I turn again, briefly, to a topic I have recently had the chance to tackle<sup>2</sup>: my object here is to provide further insights in view of the interpretation of and comment on two passages of the so-called *Gryllos*, namely the beginning of the dialogue and 986D.

Plutarch’s dialogue entitled *Περὶ τοῦ τὰ ἄλογα λόγῳ χρησθῆναι* (*Bruta animalia ratione uti*: “Beasts are rational”), often called *Gryllos* for short, from the protagonist’s name<sup>3</sup>, begins abruptly, with a sentence whose exact meaning has never been satisfactorily explained, though the amount of bibliography devoted to this writing is becoming considerable. The dialogue is opened by Odysseus, speaking these words to Circe, the famous sorceress of the *Odyssey* (books 10 and 12):

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<sup>1</sup> I take this opportunity to quote, as an example, his paper *Parlare ai sordi: Erodotο, il suo pubblico, e gli Spartani all’inizio della guerra peloponnesiaca*, in Casanova - Desideri 2003, 21 -34.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. my paper *Il Grillo di Plutarco e Omero* (Nr. 1 in this volume).

<sup>3</sup> As noted by Ziegler 1965, 134, the title *Gryllos* can hardly be original; it has however established itself and I occasionally use it myself. At any rate, scholars agree that *Περὶ τοῦ τὰ ἄλογα λόγῳ χρησθῆναι* is also an incorrect title. As observed by Barigazzi 1992, p. 314 n. 4, such a title would rather apply to the *De sollertia*.

ταῦτα μὲν, ᾧ Κίρκη, μεμαθηκέναι δοκῶ καὶ διαμνημονεύσειν· ἠδέως δ' ἂν σου πυθοίμην εἴ τινας ἔχεις Ἑλληνας ἐν τούτοις κτλ. (985D).

“These facts, Circe, I believe I have learned and shall not forget them; yet I should be happy to learn from you further whether there are any Greeks among those...” (Cherniss - Helmbold’s translation).

These words function as an introduction to the dialogue proper, involving Odysseus and a talking pig named Gryllos<sup>4</sup>.

None of the editions and translations I have consulted offers a clear and convincing explanation of the dialogue’s opening sentence, namely exactly what Odysseus both states he has understood and promises to remember. Helmbold<sup>5</sup>, Dierauer<sup>6</sup> and Indelli<sup>7</sup> refer to Horace, *Sat.* ii.5.1: it is a reference which does explain the rhetorical pattern, namely the abrupt opening, but not the content<sup>8</sup>. Scholars usually refer to the famous episode in the tenth book of the *Odyssey*, with no attempt to offer detailed explanations. Myrto Gondicas<sup>9</sup>, for example, refers especially to *Od.* 10.212-213, where, however, only wolves and lions are mentioned, as being subject to Circe’s spells. And to turn to the most recent scholarship, D. Del Corno writes: “la materia è offerta dal famoso episodio dell’*Odissea* (X, 135-399) ... ma questo spunto è sviluppato da Plutarco in modo totalmente libero e autonomo”<sup>10</sup>; on the other hand Gino Ditadi<sup>11</sup> notes: “Plutarco si discosta dal racconto omerico, nel quale non vi è alcun dialogo tra Odisseo e uno dei maiali, cfr. *Odissea* X 226-231; 388-396”.

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<sup>4</sup> This is no doubt an onomatopoeic name, and actually means “pig” according to Hesych. s.v. Γρύλλος. Nevertheless, it was given to real men, e.g. Xenophon’s father and son. Circe’s words introducing this character (986B: “you may, if you wish, call him Gryllos”) amount to the recognition that, to those who live κατὰ φύσιν, i.e. the veritable wise men, only reality counts, whereas names are conventional and valueless.

<sup>5</sup> Cherniss - Helmbold 1957, 493.

<sup>6</sup> Dierauer 1977, 189.

<sup>7</sup> Indelli 1995, 114, n. 1.

<sup>8</sup> The similarities between the *Gryllos* and Horace’s satire are basically two: (1) the peculiarity of the partner teaching Odysseus how to live (a pig and Teiresias respectively), and (2) the abrupt opening (Hor., *Sat.* 2.5.1 *haec quoque, Teresia*, etc.). Any way, an opening *in medias res* also characterizes several of Plato’s dialogues and Lucian’s writings. Dierauer 1977, 189-190, particularly refers to the latter.

<sup>9</sup> Gondicas 1998, 127, n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Del Corno, in the introduction to Magini’s translation, in Magini 2001, 40 f.

<sup>11</sup> Ditadi 2000, 267.

Accordingly, in the introduction to Waterfield and Kidd's translation we read: "The scene is the tenth book of the *Odyssey*: or rather, Plutarch's version of the tenth book of the *Odyssey*"<sup>12</sup>.

A more precise reference has been pointed out in 1996 by Fernández Delgado<sup>13</sup>. He refers to *Od.* 10.336-400 and interprets Odysseus and Circe's dialogue in Plutarch as a recollection of their first meeting. He adds that the Plutarchean dialogue's opening sentence, ταῦτα μὲν... διαμνημονεύσειν (985C), does remain "cryptique", but must at any rate be connected with "le rapport sexuel entre Ulysse et Circé dans l'épisode de l'Odysée (10.347), réalisé comme ici avant que le héros ne lui demande la libération de ses compagnons"<sup>14</sup>. For this reason he interprets Plutarch's dialogue as a "distorsion parodique".

Well, in my opinion there is nothing "cryptic" in the opening sentence, and it is simply not true that, in the final analysis, Plutarch detaches himself from Homer. What must be realized is that the situation in Plutarch is not related to the 10<sup>th</sup>, but rather to the 12<sup>th</sup> book of the *Odyssey*, that is not to the main Circe episode, but to its closing, or appendix, in the latter book.

It is hardly necessary to remind that, at the end of book 10, Odysseus receives from Circe the permission to leave, but he is also ordered and instructed to visit the afterworld; and that, in book 12, after he has visited Hades, he does come back to Aeaea, but not to Circe's; rather, he sends his companions to fetch Elpenor's corpse, which they bury on the shore. This, however, does not escape Circe, who joins them on the beach and has a day-long banquet served to them. At night, Odysseus's companions sleep on the ship: no one wants to go to Circe's any more. The sorceress takes Odysseus aside in order to foretell his future and instruct him how to behave in the adventures that still await him (the Sirens, the Symplegades, Scylla and Charybdis, etc.). She utters a long *rhexis*, from v. 37 to v. 141. In the two opening lines the sorceress urges the hero to concentrate on her words, adding that, at any rate, a god will be there to remind him how to behave:

ταῦτα μὲν οὕτω πάντα πεπείρανται, σὺ δ' ἄκουσον  
ὥς τοι ἐγὼν ἐρέω, μνήσει δέ σε καὶ θεὸς αὐτός (*Od.* 12.37-38).

<sup>12</sup> Waterfield - Kidd 1992, 375.

<sup>13</sup> Fernández Delgado 2000, 171-181.

<sup>14</sup> Fernández Delgado 2000, 173, n. 7.

“All this has come to pass; but listen now  
to what I’m going to tell you, which a god will also remind you.”

In these lines the first sentence hints at the complete fulfilling of the predictions she had made in the 10<sup>th</sup> book (vv. 504-540): now Odysseus must listen intently to new ones.

In my opinion the Plutarchean *Gryllos*’s opening sentence, ταῦτα μὲν, ᾧ Κίρκη, μεμαθηκέναι δοκῶ καὶ διαμνημονεύσειν, clearly takes up, in a direct and punctual fashion, these two Homeric lines. When Odysseus says: “these facts I believe I have learned”, he is replying to the Homeric Circe’s ἄκουσον of v. 37; and when he adds: “and shall not forget them”, or rather “I shall remember them to the end, from top to bottom (δια-)”, he is answering Circe’s recommendation: the hero has listened intently (which is only natural, as his own life is at stake); therefore he shall probably remember *of his own accord*, with no need for a god to remind him of such instructions. Nevertheless, Circe’s speech is over one hundred lines long, it is intricate, full to the brim of facts, detailed descriptions, odd suggestions; though sure of himself, Odysseus is in no position to swear he has understood quite everything and will be able to remember *quite everything*<sup>15</sup>; this is possibly why he says μεμαθηκέναι δοκῶ καὶ διαμνημονεύσειν, rather than μεμάθηκα καὶ διαμνημονεύσω. The link between the two texts is quite clear and evident, and Plutarch made it even more obvious by having his Odysseus begin with ταῦτα μὲν, exactly like Circe does at *Od.* 12.37.<sup>16</sup>

In Homer the sorceress closes her predictions/instructions at line 141. Immediately after, dawn appears and Circe starts back to her palace with no formal farewell. It has already been observed that “di un congedo formale non è detto nulla”<sup>17</sup>. So, I would ask, did actually nobody sleep? Has the whole night been spent in talk? It is not unlikely

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<sup>15</sup> Or perhaps this δοκῶ might imply an attitude of courtesy, unpretentiousness, maybe even a pinch of irony (his own life being at stake...); maybe one could recognize a slight taunt at Homer’s heroes’ *makrología*. In the *Gryllos* Odysseus will be shown several times to be impatient of idle chats, and in at least two instances (985E ἔτερον αὖ τινα τοῦτον, ᾧ Κίρκη, κυκεῶνα λόγων κτλ.; 986A ἐχέτω ταῦτα ὡς λέγεις, ᾧ Κίρκη· τί γὰρ δεῖ πολλάκις ζυγομαχεῖν ἡμᾶς περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν;) will show a dislike of long talk, as befits an active and practical person.

<sup>16</sup> The circumstance that the two ταῦτα μὲν refer to different things does not make the coincidence less meaningful.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Omero. Odissea*, vol. III (books IX-XII), intr., testo e comm. di A. Heubeck, trad. di G. A. Privitera, Milano 1983, p. 143 (on *Od.* 12.143).

that this odd circumstance did not escape Plutarch and encouraged him to create his own piece of literature to fill the temporal vacuum left open at v. 141. The local setting of the dialogue remains in essence undetermined: a secluded area by the beach, surely not Circe's dwelling (in the morning she walks back toward the island's interior, whereas Odysseus boards the ship and leaves: vv. 142-145); but in both texts the time setting is surely the last night on Aeaea. "Last night on Aeaea": this could be a new title for Plutarch's dialogue, *i.e.* for the new episode he added to Circe's saga, a fiction inserted into the network of Homer's narrative.

I feel confident about the soundness of this interpretation. My confidence is based largely on the connection between Homer and Plutarch just discussed; and I find additional support in the Plutarchean text itself. In the first place, the latter shows the decision to sail home has already been made; in the *Odyssey* this happens at the end of book 10, after a year-long stay at Circe's (467 f.). Besides, when Circe says ἐπι γυναῖκα θνητὴν (...) διὰ μυρίων ἔτι κακῶν σπεύδεις (985F), she gives no details about the μυρία κακά, nor does Odysseus ask for any: this means that the voyage to Hades of book 11 has already taken place and the predictions/instructions of the long *rhesis* at 12.37-141 have already been uttered.

A further support to my contention comes from reading 986D in a more proper and correct way than has hitherto been done.

The speaker, here, is the "pig-man" Gryllos, scolding Odysseus, who, just like children who shrink from medicines and school,

οὕτω σὺ διεκρούσω τὸ ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου γενέσθαι, καὶ νῦν αὐτὸς τε φρίττων καὶ ὑποδειμαίνων τῇ Κίρκῃ σύνει, μὴ σε ποιήσῃ λαθοῦσα σὺν ἡ λύκον, ἡμᾶς τε πείθεις, ἐν ἀφθόνοις ζῶντας ἀγαθοῖς, ἀπολιπόντας ἅμα τούτοις τὴν ταῦτα παρασκευάζουσαν ἐκπλεῖν μετὰ σοῦ κτλ.

"... just so you have shied away from the change from one shape to another. At this moment you are not only living in fear and trembling as a companion of Circe, frightened that she may, before you know it, turn you into a pig or a wolf, but you are also trying to persuade us, who live in an abundance of good things, to abandon them, and with them the lady who provides them, and sail away with you..." (Cherniss - Helmbold's translation).

It must be remarked that in this passage the transmitted text has συνεῖναι, not σύνει: but the latter is an absolutely necessary correction

by Reiske, in order to restore the syntactical order of the sentences (besides being simple, economical, and convincing). For this reason it has been accepted by everyone, including Hubert<sup>18</sup>.

Now, the difference of verbal tenses is perfectly to the point: Odysseus has refused passing into a beastly body immediately after his first arriving at Aeaëa – witness the fact that he has done everything in his power not to fall into Circe’s traps. Accordingly, Plutarch employs the aorist (διεκρούσω). “And now – Gryllos adds – you are in Circe’s company overcome by trembling and fear”.

But – it is worthwhile asking – at what time has Odysseus been with Circe φρίττων καὶ ὑποδειμαίνων... μή σε ποιήσῃ λαθοῦσα σὺν ἡ λύκον? If we follow Homer’s text, he never lived with her with such a fear. Before his arrival, at *Od.* 10.281-306, he has received preventive instructions and the herb μῶλυ from Hermes, so as to be able to resist all the sorceress’ snares; and later, when he accepted making love to her, he did so only after her solemn oath not to harm him (*Od.* 10.336-48). So, for a whole year, he has lived with Circe with no fear whatever.

There is one single day in which Odysseus is afraid of Circe, or, at least, does not trust her, namely at the beginning of book 12, when he comes back from Hades and, upon landing on Aeaëa, he sleeps with his companions on the shore, waiting for dawn (*Od.* 12.6 f.). Then, when day has come, he sends them to Circe’s to get Elpenor’s corpse, but he does not go himself. Clearly, Odysseus does not trust her any more: he either has no more herb μῶλυ to protect him, or fears she might have changed her mind about the permit to leave she has granted him. At night’s fall, after the drawn-out meal on the beach, which Circe has provided, Odysseus’ companions go to sleep aboard the ship, while he lingers talking her – but on the beach, without going to her dwelling. Obviously, Odysseus, either out of caution or in fear, does not wish to receive her “last kiss”!

In Plutarch’s text time relations are spelled out quite clearly: Odysseus has refused passing into an animal’s body *in the past*, i.e. in the episode recounted in *Od.* 10 – witness the aorist διεκρούσω. But now (νῦν), after a year and his trip to Hades, in his last night on Aeaëa he

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hubert 1954, 78. Probably the infinitive συνεῖναι is an easily explainable mistake due to the fact that the scribe thought it was subordinate to the preceding ὑποδειμαίνων.

stands by her in fear, his thought fixed on leaving, and tries convincing Gryllos and the others to leave with him.

This final detail, *i.e.* the allusion to the already planned departure, confirms that this is precisely the last night on Aeaea, the only moment when, in Homer as well as in Plutarch, he appears to be afraid of Circe.

Accordingly, σύνει at 986D cannot mean “you *are living* with Circe”, as generally understood<sup>19</sup>, but rather “you are with” or “stand by” her *at this moment* (νῦν), referring to a particular point in time and a quite special meeting: the one marked by fear, of the last day on Aeaea. Therefore νῦν cannot mean “from that time on”, but rather “at present”, or “today”, with a pointed reference to the moment when Odysseus on the one hand (τε) stands by Circe trembling and fearing, and, on the other (τε), is trying to convince his companions to leave with him (αὐτὸς τε φρίττων... σύνει, ἡμᾶς τε πείθεις... ἐκπλεῖν μετὰ σοῦ). Understanding the precise meaning of νῦν in this passage is tantamount to setting the precise time of the dialogue between Gryllos and Odysseus portrayed in Plutarch’s *Bruta ratione uti*.

A further confirmation of the soundness of my interpretation comes from 988F, where Gryllos reproaches Odysseus:

σὺ δὲ σπεύδεις ἀκοῦσαι τὸ περὶ τῆς σωφροσύνης, ἐπεὶ σωφρονεστάτης μὲν ἀνὴρ εἶ γυναικός, ἀπόδειξιν δὲ σωφροσύνης αὐτὸς οἶει δεδωκέναι, τῶν Κίρκης ἀφροδισίων περιφρονήσας.

“But you are eager to hear about temperance since you are the husband of a model of chastity and believe that you yourself have given proof of self-control by rejecting the embraces of Circe” (Cherniss - Helmbold’s translation).

This passage shows first of all that *at this moment* Odysseus is *not* living with Circe any more (be it in fear or without fear), but has given her up in favor of Penelope: this clearly rules out that Odysseus may still be living with Circe, in fear.

However, this very passage is often misunderstood to the opposite effect, by assuming it to state that Plutarch’s Odysseus, unlike Homer’s, has always refused Circe’s advances. In this connection I would like to

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Xylander 1778, p. 102 “(cum) degas”; Reiske, *ibid.*, p. 102, n. 11 “conversaris”; Ricard 1844, t. IV, p. 547; “en vivant avec Circé”; Adriani 1829, vol.V, p. 484 “dimorando con Circe”; Russell 1993, 339 “living with Circe”; Indelli 1995, 61 “te ne stai con Circe”; Gondicas 1998, 104 “tu vis auprès de Circé”; Magini 2001, “vivi accanto a Circe”. Vd. too Lapini 1996, 209 s. (and n. 18).

call attention to the fact that the verb used by Plutarch is περιφρονήσας, not καταφρονήσας: Odysseus has shunned Circe's lovemaking only after a long enjoyment of the same; he as *not* shunned it altogether. Therefore such elegant but unwarranted and/or illative translations as those of Ricard, Russell, Zinato, Indelli and Magini<sup>20</sup> must be rejected. These scholars, on the other hand, do not explain why Plutarch should have "moralized" Odysseus (who incidentally, from Gryllos's point of view, is the "villain"), while leaving "in sin" the character he considers the "heroine", namely Circe.

It must be further observed that, by "moralizing" Odysseus, one is also forced to moralize the Mendes billy-goat, whom Plutarch mentions immediately after as a parallel to Odysseus's sexual behavior:

989A οὐ θαυμαστὸν οὖν ἔστιν, καθάπερ ὁ Μενδήσιος ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τράγος λέγεται πολλαῖς καὶ καλαῖς συνειργνύμενος γυναιξίν οὐκ εἶναι μίγνυσθαι πρόθυμος, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς αἴγας ἐπτόηται μᾶλλον, οὕτω σὺ χαίρων ἀφροδισίοις συνήθεσιν οὐ θέλεις ἄνθρωπος ὦν θεᾷ συγκαθεύδειν.

"So it is no wonder that, like the Mendesian goat in Egypt which, when shut up with many beautiful women, is said not to be eager to consort with them, but is far more excited about nannies, you likewise are contented with the kind of love that is familiar to you and, being a mortal, are not eager to sleep with a goddess" (Cherniss - Helmbold's translation).

Indelli and many others with him (and before him) understand that the goat *does not copulate at all* with the "many beautiful women" who

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ricard 1844, t. IV, 552: "en te refusant aux *desires* de Circé"; Russell 1993, 342: "rejecting Circe's *advances* "; Zinato 1995, 61: "disdegnando le *profferte* di Circe"; Indelli 1995, 79: "disprezzando i piaceri d'amore *che potevi provare* con Circe" (my italics). Several translations, in themselves liable to be interpreted *in utramque partem* (Xylander 1778, 111: "Circes concubitu spreto"; Adriani 1829, vol. V, p. 490: "col dispregiar l'amor di Circe"; Gondicas 1998, 111: "en refusant la couche de Circé") appear to favor Odysseus's "chastity" through the comparison with the solutions adopted at 989A. Several translators do however realize that this alleged "chastity" appears rather odd: cf. Ricard 1844, 553, n. 1: "Gryllus fait honneur à Ulysse d'une chasteté qu'il n'a point eue. Il suffit de lire Homère"; Ambrosoli (in Adriani 1829, 490, n. 2): "questa lode non appartiene ad Ulisse secondo quello che si legge nell'*Odiss.*, l. X e XI" (to be corrected into "X e XII"). Magini 2001, p. 90, translates: "mostrando disdegno per i piaceri d'amore con Circe" and rightly notes (p. 221) that "il connubio con Circe non fu certo rifiutato da Ulisse (v. 347)" (*scil.* of *Od.* 10).

are put at his disposal<sup>21</sup>. This amounts to a further forcing of the text, which, in reality says that the goat is not particularly fond of these unnatural copulations, *but nevertheless accepts them*, though, understandably, he is more prone (πρόθυμος) to copulate with she-goats. That this is the right interpretation is proved not merely by the occurrence of μάλλον<sup>22</sup>, but also by sheer likelihood, as the goat's rite would in all probability have been discontinued if the animal had refused to perform the very act constituting the rite's deep meaning<sup>23</sup>. Plutarch's intended meaning is that, just like the Mendes goat does copulate with women but prefers goats, so Odysseus did make love to Circe out of necessity (or opportunism), for lack of alternatives, but now, being finally able to go back to Penelope, he is eager to do so (and if, as I believe, the *Gryllos*

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Adriani 1829, 491: "onde non è meraviglia che il becco (...) rinchiuso fra molte e vaghe donzelle abborrisse i loro congiungimenti, e più tosto corresse alle capre"; Indelli 1995, 81: "non è disposto a unirsi con loro, ma è stato preso da desiderio più ardente per le capre". In his introduction, Indelli describes the content of the passage in the following way (p. 12): "come Ulisse ha disprezzato τὰ Κίρκης ἀφροδίσια, secondo Grillo non per temperanza, ma solo perché, essendo uomo, non ha voluto unirsi con una dea (cioè con un essere a lui superiore), così si racconta che, in Egitto, il caprone di Mendes, pur rinchiuso insieme con molte belle donne, non vuole unirsi con loro, ma è molto più attratto dalle capre". Others use less explicit expressions: cf. Ricard 1844, 553: "le bouc (...) ne témoigne aucun désir pour elles, et ne s'enflamme que pour des chèvres"; Gondicas 1998, 112: "n'avait nulle envie de s'accoupler avec elles mais soupirait plutôt après les chèvres". This line is also followed by Bergua Cavero 1991, 18, who considers Plutarch's version about the goat opposed to Pindar's (fr. 201 Maehler) and Herodotus' (ii.46.4). More sources on the Mendes goat on n. 23. Russell shrewdly states that the goat's little προθυμία to copulate with women is sufficient to acquit him: "this goat (or ram), which was the incarnation of Osiris in the Egyptian religion, copulated openly with women. Plutarch's version saves his reputation" (Russell 1993, 387, on Plut. 989).

<sup>22</sup> Understandably enough, this μάλλον proves difficult for the "moralizers". They either try to save their interpretation by taking it (no doubt wrongly) in the sense of *potius*, rather than *magis* (so Adriani and Gondicas: see above, note 20); or resignedly resort to an asymmetrical translation, as, for instance, is Zinato's: "non (è) pronto a unirsi con loro e smania molto di più per le capre" (Zinato 1995, 61-63), where "molto di più" looks more like a translation from Helmbold's English ("far more", see below, note 24) than from Plutarch's Greek. "Molto più" also appears in Indelli's paraphrase (1995, 12: quoted above, note 20).

<sup>23</sup> The numerous witnesses about this rite, spread over a period of several centuries, imply quite the opposite, *i.e.* that the goat did perform its duty: cf. Pind., fr. 201 Maehler; Herod. 2.46.4; Diod. 1.84.4-6; Strabo 17.1.19 (for a more comprehensive survey of the witnesses cf. Indelli 1995, 129, n. 100).

is temporally to be placed at the moment described in the 12<sup>th</sup> book of the *Odyssey*, he has one additional reason to hurry back to his wife, having learned from Teiresias that she has not cheated on him, as he feared, but has remained faithful: cf. 11.178-183). So the proper translation of τῶν Κίρκης ἀφροδισίων περιφρονήσας is: “you gave up Circe’s lovemaking (*sc.* though you enjoyed it up to now)”.

The words οὐ θέλεις probably played a considerable role in these misunderstandings, but they do not really contradict what I have just said, as it is quite clear that Gryllos uses them in the meaning of νῦν οὐ θέλεις “*now* you do not want”, i.e. he covertly rebukes Odysseus’s about-face, as though saying οὐκέτι θέλεις. Or perhaps, given the peculiar nature of his relationship with Circe, one might be justified in assuming that even at the time he did make love to her, Odysseus was always innerly οὐ θέλων<sup>24</sup>.

As a conclusion to my discussion, I would like to point out that, to me, the only real difference between Homer’s narrative and Plutarch’s dialogue is to be found at 986F, where we encounter the statement that Odysseus, by leaving Circe, gave up immortality and eternal youth: ὃς τὸν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήρω σὺν ἐμοὶ βίον ἀφείς, ἐπὶ γυναῖκα θνητὴν... σπεύδεις. In the *Odyssey* such an offer by Circe is never mentioned, though it is explicitly made by Calypso at *Od.* 5.206-213. It is highly likely that Plutarch (as not a few other exegetes and commentators) has conflated and unified in his memory both episodes of the *Odyssey*.

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<sup>24</sup> The only translators who cannot be charged with the misunderstanding of this passage (though they do nothing to clarify their interpretation) are Cherniss - Helmbold 1957, who (though translating 986D with “living in fear as a companion of Circe”: 497-499) render 988F with “rejecting the embraces of Circe” and 989A with “is said not to be easier to consort with them, but is far more excited about nannies” (p. 511).