

ON THE “UNDYING OLD AGE” OF CLEONICUS  
(MATRO FR. 7 O.–S.)\*

This article discusses an enigmatic bit of parody by Matro of Pitane (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> cc. BC) transmitted at Athenaeus 15. 697 f – 698 a.

Matro fr. 7 O.–S. (= Lloyd-Jones – Parsons *SH* 540; Brandt fr. 6):

- 1 οἱ μὲν γὰρ δὴ πάντες, ὅσοι πάρος ἦσαν ἄριστοι,
- 2 Εὐβοίους τε καὶ Ἑρμογένους δῖοι τε Φίλιπποι,
- 3 οἱ μὲν δὴ τεθνᾶσι καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισιν.
- 4 ἔστι δέ τις Κλεόνικος, ὃς **ἀθάνατον** λάχε **γῆρυν**,
- 5 οὔτε πονητῶν ἀδαήμων οὔτε θεάτρων,
- 6 ᾧ καὶ τεθνεώτι λαλεῖν πόρε Φερσεφόνεια.

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4 ὃς ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρυν Stadtmüller, Casaubono ducente: ὃν ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρας **ACE**: ὃν ἀθάνατος λάχε γῆρυν Stadtmüller: ὃς ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρας Brunck<sup>1</sup>

For all who were outstanding men of old,  
Euboeus and Hermogenes and the brilliant Philips,  
they are dead and in the house of Hades;  
but there is a certain Cleonicus, who has got **an immortal voice**,  
a man unknown neither to poets nor to audiences,  
to whom Persephone has given the ability to chatter even after he is dead.

My questions are: what appears to be more convincing in line 4, the manuscript reading ἀθάνατον γῆρας or the emendation ἀθάνατον γῆρυν? And in consequence: what does the puzzling expression ἀθάνατον γῆρας mean? Did Cleonicus pass away, like his fellows Euboeus, Hermogenes, and two Philips, or is he still alive? Why is the most detailed characterization given to Cleonicus?

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\* My thanks go to B. Seidensticker, who read this article in draft and made helpful comments, and to S. D. Olson for stylistic improvements.

<sup>1</sup> The *apparatus criticus* for line 4, which is important for my argument, and the translation I offer, are those of S. D. Olson and A. Sens (1999, 70–71). See the commentary by P. Brandt (1888, 95) and the recent and comprehensive commentary by Olson and Sens (1999, 151–153).

We should begin by looking at the versions of fr. 7, 4 in various editions:

ὄν ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρας Pelzer 1855, Meineke 1859, Kaibel 1890, Gulick 1951;

ὅς ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρας Casaubon 1597, Brunck 1772, Schweighäuser 1802;

ὄν ἀθάνατος λάχε γῆρυσ Brandt 1888;

ὅς ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρυν SH 540 (Lloyd-Jones – Parsons 1983), Olson–Sens 1999; Olson 2012.

Brandt approved and accepted into his edition Stadtmüller’s ὄν ἀθάνατος λάχε γῆρυσ, which is clearer and fits better with λαλεῖν (Brandt: “egregie emendavit”)<sup>2</sup> than does the odd reading ὄν ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρας in Athenaeus.

Lloyd-Jones and Parsons<sup>3</sup> and Olson and Sens<sup>4</sup> prefer Stadtmüller’s ὅς ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρυν (“almost certainly right”),<sup>5</sup> with Casaubon’s ὅς in the subordinate clause. On this reading of the text, the verses become flattering praise of Cleonicus. Scholars have attempted to give an ironic sound to the verses. Already Brandt, who was sure that Matro was mocking a rival (“Cleonicum quendam insectetur adversarium artis-que suae aemulum”),<sup>6</sup> assumed that the joke consisted in the fact that Cleonicus was unknown (ἔστι δέ τις) and too garrulous (λαλεῖν); he understood γῆρυσ as ‘loquacity’: “cui vox, i.e. loquacitas non interitura contigit”.<sup>7</sup> Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (SH 540) also seem to take the verses with a pinch of salt, giving γῆρυσ the same meaning: “Horum optimi jam diem obierunt; restat unus, in aeternum **garrulus**, **cui maledicunt** tam poetae, quam auditores”. The translation by Olson and Sens is in the same vein, but with no explicit irony.

The word γῆρυσ, however, can scarcely have the meaning ‘loquacity’.<sup>8</sup>

It therefore seems better to return to the manuscript reading or to the text as emended by Casaubon ὄν / ὅς ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρας (“who(m)

<sup>2</sup> Brandt 1888, 95.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd-Jones – Parsons 1983 (henceforth SH).

<sup>4</sup> Olson–Sens 1999, 70; Olson 2012, 180.

<sup>5</sup> Olson–Sens 1999, 152.

<sup>6</sup> Brandt 1888, 56.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>8</sup> According to *LSJ* and *Diccionario Grieco-Español* (Adrados 1994), γῆρυσ is ‘voice, speech’, γηρύω ‘to sing or say, speak, cry’. According to *LfggrE*, it is attested only once in early Greek epic poetry, at *Il.* 4. 437 in the meaning of ‘voice’: ὥς Τρώων ἀλαλητὸς ἀνὰ στρατὸν εὐρὺν ὀρώρει / οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἦεν ὁμὸς θρόος οὐδ’ ἰα γῆρυσ.

too old an age reached”). The interpretation offered by Schweighäuser is particularly convincing: “Nobis prorsus videbatur, ridentem Matronem de illo homine dixisse, **ad extremam usque senectutem adeo esse loquacem, ut post mortem quoque loqui non desiturus videatur**. Atque etiam de molesta et tumultuosa loquacitate verba fecerat Clearchus, quum istos Matronis versus adponeret. Et Matron ipse, cum ait ἔστι δέ τις, satis significare videtur, non admodum nobilem hominem esse, quem dicat”.<sup>9</sup> Ch. B. Gulick’s, A. Rimedio’s and C. Friedrich’s translations are in the same vein.<sup>10</sup>

I would like to suggest an additional argument supporting the manuscript text *resp.* Casaubonus’ change in it.

Matro’s hexameters in fr. 7 have the character of a *cento*: verses 1, 3, 5, 6 are almost purely Homeric,<sup>11</sup> while verse 2 has nothing to do with Homer because it consists of non-Homeric names. Homeric *versus detorti* can be identified for all these lines except line 4 after ἔστι δέ τις:<sup>12</sup>

1. οἱ μὲν γὰρ δὴ πάντες, ὅσοι πάρος ἦσαν ἄριστοι *Il.* 11. 825 = 16. 23
2. δῖοί τε *Il.* 10. 429; *Od.* 19. 177
3. εἰ δ’ ἤδη τεθνᾶσι καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισιν *Il.* 22. 52; *Od.* 15. 350
4. ἔστι δέ τις *Il.* 2. 811; 11. 711, 722; *Od.* 3. 293; 4. 844
5. οὐ γάρ τι πληγέων ἀδαήμων οὐδὲ βολάων *Od.* 17. 283
6. τῷ καὶ τεθνηῶτι νόον πόρε Περσεφόνεια *Od.* 10. 494

I suggest a possible source of Matro’s ὄν ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρας in line 4 in a recurrent pattern, marked by J. B. H. Hainsworth as a formula in his commentary on the *Odyssey*.<sup>13</sup> The following versions are preserved:

- ...ἄγῆρων ἀθάνατόν/ἀθανάτην τε *Il.* 2. 447; *HH, In Cer.* 242  
 ...ἄγῆρω τ’ ἀθανάτω τε *Il.* 12. 323; 17. 444

<sup>9</sup> Schweighäuser 1802, 305.

<sup>10</sup> Gulick 1951, 241: “All who were aforetime the bravest, Euboeus and Hermogenes and the godlike Philips, they all are dead and dwell in the halls of Hades. But there is one Cleonicus, **to whose lot undying old age has fallen**. Well acquainted with poets and with audiences, to whom, even when dead, Persephone gave the gift of gabble”; Rimedio 2001, 1799: “Ma vive un tale Cleonico, che **ebbe in sorte vecchiaia immortale**, non inesperto di poeti né di spettatori: a lui anche morto concesse di ciarlare Persefone”; Friedrich 2001, 508: “Doch da ist einer, Kleonikos, der **ein unsterbliches Alter** erlost hat...”.

<sup>11</sup> Matro uses the technique of *cento*: e.g., fr. I. 19–21 are almost entirely *cento* (Ermolaeva 2015, 119–141).

<sup>12</sup> Brandt 1888, 93; Olson–Sens 1999, 70–71.

<sup>13</sup> Hainsworth 1988, 272–273, 267–268.

...ἄθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον ἡματα πάντα *Il.* 5. 136, 7. 257, 23. 336

ἄθανάτους ὄντας καὶ ἀγήρως ἡματα πάντα *Il.* 7. 94

...ἄθανάτους καὶ ἀγήρως ἡματα πάντα *Il.* 8. 539

ἄθάνατόν κέν τοι καὶ ἀγήραον ἡματα πάντα *HH, In Cer.* 242

ἡ μὲν γὰρ βροτός ἐστι, σὺ δ' ἄθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως *Od.* 5. 218

ἡ μὲν ἔην θνητή, αἱ δ' ἄθάνατοι καὶ ἀγήρῳ *Hes. Th.* 277

This formula, especially in the *clausula* σὺ δ' ἄθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως, might be the source of Matro's line 4: ..., ὃν ἄθάνατον λάχε γήρας (○ – ○ ○ – ○ ○ – ×).

But if ὃν/ὃς ἄθάνατον λάχε γήρας is right, what does this odd expression mean?

Matro could have used the widespread Homeric formula “undying and not old aged” to produce the idiosyncratic phrase “undying old age”, which means simply “a very long old age”.<sup>14</sup> Expressed in such a paradoxical way, this exaggerating hyperbole fits the style of parody better than the ordinary compliment “undying voice” does, provided that the character of the parody can be briefly summarized with Wilamowitz' words: “Es störte sie (sc. Hörer) nicht, wenn's auch Unsinn war, denn lachen kann man auch über Unsinn”.<sup>15</sup>

Line 5 οὐτε πονητῶν ἀδαήμων οὐτε θεάτρων does not contradict this interpretation and might in fact have expressed another aspect of the joke, perhaps with a touch of reprimand or even blame.

The adjective ἀδαήμων with *gen. rei* has an active meaning ἄπειρος, ἀνεπιστήμων (*Etym. Magn.* s.v.), ‘unknowing’, ‘ignorant’ (*LSJ*<sup>9</sup>) of something (e.g. *Od.* 5. 634 μάχης ἀδαήμονι φωτί), like δαήμων with *gen. rei* ‘knowing’, ‘experienced’ in something. The adjective ἀδαήμων with *gen. personae* is attested more rarely, e.g., *Pind.* fr. 198 a 2 οὐτοι με ξένον / οὐδ' ἀδαήμονα Μοισᾶν ἐπαίδευσαν κλυταί / Θῆβαι...

Some differences accordingly arise among the existing interpretations. Lloyd-Jones and Parsons interpret it in the **passive** sense and *in malam partem*: “horum optimi iam diem obierunt; restat unus, in aeternum garulus, **cui maledicunt tam poetae quam auditores**” (*SH* 540). Gulick

<sup>14</sup> It can be also a hint to the popular motive “undying old age” of Tithonus (e.g., *Sappho P. Köln* 21351). There are examples of Matro's *vis parodica* proving that he could use such or similar literary techniques, amusingly reusing Homeric formulas (Olson–Sens 1999, 33–40); for a thorough analysis of meaning and comic effects of parodic elements in Greek literature, see Degani 1983, in particular 5–33. On Matro's reuse of Homeric formulae, see Degani 1991, 147–163. On typology and patterns of parody in Matro, see also Condello 2002, 133–150.

<sup>15</sup> See in Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1962, 331 (= 1923, 175).

assumes that it has an **active** meaning and adds an ironic remark: “Whoever Cleonicus was, he is here mockingly said to be acquainted with the theatre, **back stage and front**”.<sup>16</sup>

Olson and Sens’ commentary suggests what some might take to be over-interpretation, since they suppose a complex allusion to Homer, but their interpretation actually seems quite plausible: “Verse 5 is modeled on *Od.* 17. 283, where the disguised Odysseus tells Eumaeus that his bitter experiences in war and in the seas have accustomed him to being struck and pelted with missiles. There is thus a mocking implication that Cleonicus’ poetry is so bad that objects were thrown at him as well as in the theater”.<sup>17</sup> In this case, Cleonicus’ professional reputation in v. 5 can also be interpreted *in malam partem*.

Finally, had Cleonicus already passed away, like his famous colleagues, or is he still alive?<sup>18</sup>

The most obvious way of interpreting line 6 ᾧ καὶ τεθνειῶτι λαλεῖν πόρε Φερσεφόνεια might seem to be that Cleonicus too is already dead.<sup>19</sup> This appears to have been one of the motivations for Stadtmüller’s emendation γῆρον and of its wide acceptance.

There are two objections, however, to this understanding. First, in v. 4 Cleonicus (ἔστι δέ) is clearly opposed to the dead poets in v. 3 (οἱ μὲν). Second, Cleonicus’ old age would be irrelevant if he had already died.

<sup>16</sup> Gulick 1951, 241.

<sup>17</sup> Olson–Sens 1999, 152.

<sup>18</sup> Euboeus is presumably Euboeus of Paros (*fl.* c. 359–336 BC). Athenaeus knew four books of his parodies (15. 698 a–b), only two lines of which have come down to us (*SH* 411; 412); additional testimonia regarding Eubeus are discussed in Olson–Sens 1999, 10. Others – Hermogenes, two Philips and Cleonicus – are only names for us, because their texts are completely lost (Olson–Sens 1999, 151–152 note how common these names were in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC). Matro praises as ἄριστοι those who passed away. At first sight, it seems that his hexameters do not belong to gastronomic parodies like his *Symposium Atticum* (fr. 1 O.–S.) and all other surviving fragments (fr. 2–6 O.–S.). Alternatively, we might assume that gastronomic parody could include passages of a personal character or even invective against the author’s colleagues, contemporary rivals or predecessors, as Old Comedy did. Note for example an anonymous hexametrical parody fragment of the 4<sup>th</sup> BC with similar content, *Adespota parod.* fr. 6 O.–S. = *incert.* fr. 4 Brandt, ap. Ath. 13. 571 b: οὗς ἐδίδαξαν ἀριστερὰ γράμματα Μοῦσαι, “Whom the Muses taught left-handed letters” (Olson–Sens 1999, 155).

<sup>19</sup> Olson–Sens 1999, 152: “The point of the μὲν–δέ contrast in vv. 3–4 is that, whereas Euboeus and other poets of the recent past are now confined to the ‘house of Hades’ and thus permanently out of contact with the upper world, Cleonicus’ voice continues to be heard, despite the fact that he too is dead (v. 6)”. An anonymous reviewer suggests: “Or perhaps, the point is a contrast between poets whose works ‘died with them’ and someone like Cleonicus, who left poems behind to be read by others”.

Consequently, it is worth considering the possibility that he is still alive. Irony and invective directed against a contemporary person is apparently more biting and laughable than when the target is dead. Matro seems to follow Old Comedy here.<sup>20</sup> If Cleonicus, perhaps Matro’s opponent, is alive, the punning parody of him, modelled on Homeric patterns, recalls moments when a comic poet praises the older generation of poets and blames his contemporaries;<sup>21</sup> for example, lines 551–560 of the parabasis of the second *Clouds*.

Granted that Cleonicus is still alive, line 6 may imply that he is so long-lived that he should be dead long ago, and he is so garrulous that even death will be unable to shut him up (while the ἄριστοι, like Euboeus, Hermogenes and the godlike Philips, are dead and silent).<sup>22</sup>

Comparison with Ar. *Eq.* 533 ff. ἀλλὰ γέρων ὦν περιέρρει ... (snide remarks about Aristophanes’ rival Cratinus, who has allegedly had the misfortune to live past his prime, thus embarrassing himself) might be productive for imagining what Matro is saying about Cleonicus.

The verb λαλεῖν is to be interpreted here *in malam partem* ‘endless talking’, ‘babbling’, ‘not speaking to the point’, as it is often the case in the comic dramatists<sup>23</sup> (e.g., in Eup. fr. 116 K.–A. λαλεῖν ἄριστος, ἀδυνατώτατος λέγειν; in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* 91 in regard to new poets who compose tragedies Εὐριπίδου πλεῖν ἢ σταδίῳ λαλίστερα; in Theophrastus’ *Character* 7 *Lalias*, etc.)

Cleonicus obtains a gift from Persephone like Teiresias. But unlike Teiresias, Cleonicus receives loquacity, not insight: verse 6 is modeled on τῷ καὶ τεθνηῶτι νόον πόρε Περσεφόνηια (*Od.* 10. 494) with λαλεῖν instead of νόον.

It seems that, if Cleonicus composed his own epitaph, it might be similar to that of Meleager, who later wrote (*AP* 7. 417. 7–10):

πουλυετῆς δ’ ἐχάραξα τάδ’ ἐν δέλτοισι πρὸ τύμβου·  
γῆρως γὰρ γείτων ἐγγύθεν Ἰάιδεω.  
ἀλλὰ με τὸν λαλιὸν καὶ πρεσβύτην σὺ προσειπὼν  
χαίρειν εἰς γῆρας καὐτὸς ἵκοιο λάλον.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., *Vilification and Ridicule of Individuals* in Dover 1974, 30–33.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., Ar. *Ra.* 72–97: Οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὐκέτ’ εἰσὶν, οἱ δ’ ὄντες κακοί...

<sup>22</sup> Nina Almazova suggested a rather witty interpretation in her discussion of the text (emphasis hers): “Presumably Matro speaks of Cleonicus’ conditions metaphorically: he mockingly claims that – since a person *cannot* live that long – actually his rival is already dead, and if in spite of this he can still be seen in the theatres and goes on with his performances, it is only because of a special favour of Persephone”.

<sup>23</sup> See Ussher 1993, 82.

“Here Meleager characterizes himself as an old man who is still a charming ‘chatterer’, i.e. singer...; and adapts the traditional χαῖρε-formula to wish the reader / passer-by similarly ‘garrulus’ old age”.<sup>24</sup>

In sum: I defend the manuscript reading γῆρας *versus* the emendation γῆρυν accepted in recent editions of Athenaeus and Matro of Pitane. The exaggerating hyperbole “undying old age”, which perhaps means “a very long old age”, seems to be an adaptation of the Homeric formula “undying and not old aged”, which fits the style of parody better than the ordinary compliment “undying voice”.

If we accept that fr. 7 is devoted to Matro’s fellow parodists, the text could be used as evidence for parody performances or competitions held at theatres in his time.<sup>25</sup> This in turn increases the value of the verses as testimony for relations among parodists attested by parody itself.

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<sup>24</sup> See the commentary by N. Hopkinson 1999, 257.

<sup>25</sup> A question arises as to what the audience of parody was. R. B. Cebrián, for instance, argues that parody was composed mostly by young authors and for a young audience (Cebrián 2008, 38–42). This seems to me a dubious approach and Matro’s fr. 7, for instance, interpreted this way, and provides arguments against it.



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The author defends the manuscript reading γῆρας *versus* the emendation γῆρυν accepted in recent editions of Athenaeus and Matro of Pitane. The exaggerating hyperbole “undying old age”, which likely means “a very long old age”, seems to be an adaptation of the Homeric formula “undying and not old aged” that fits parodic style better than the ordinary compliment “undying voice” would.

Автор статьи предлагает дополнительные аргументы в пользу рукописного чтения γῆρας, которому в последних изданиях Матрона из Питаны и Афиней (единственный источник, сохранивший стихи Матрона) предпочитают исправление γῆρυν. Парадоксальная гипербола “бессмертная старость”, по мнению автора, должна относиться к глубокому старику и подчеркивать необычную и нелепую для такого возраста говорливую активность персонажа, которого высмеивает Матрон. Комплиментарное же чтение “бессмертный голос” плохо согласуется с жанром пародии и подошло бы скорее энкомию.



## CONSPECTUS

MICHAEL POZDNEV	
Das Geschenk eines Rhapsoden: Über eine Weihinschrift aus Dodona . . . .	5
TATIANA KOSTYLEVA	
And What Were <i>You</i> Like in Hades? Eur. <i>HF</i> 1410–1417 . . . . .	19
ELENA ERMOLAEVA	
On the “Undying Old Age” of Cleonicus (Matro fr. 7 O.–S.) . . . . .	28
CARLO MARTINO LUCARINI	
Platone e gli Eleati (I) . . . . .	36
SOFIA EGOROVA	
Poeta <i>Classicus</i> : Was Horace in the Fleet during the Battle of Actium? . . .	65
ALEXANDRA NOVIKOVA	
A Fox and a Weasel (Hor. <i>Epist.</i> 1. 7. 29–36) . . . . .	78
ILSETRAUT HADOT	
Les attitudes diverses des néoplatoniciens au sujet de la théurgie . . . . .	92
DARIA KONDAKOVA, NATALYA KUZNETSOVA	
<i>AP</i> IX, 484 (Palladas): Aiolos serviert Wind . . . . .	123
<p>SYMBOLAE CHRISTIANO HABICHT NONAGENARIO  OBLATAE, QUAE HYPERBOREI VOLUMINIS XXII FASCICULO II  IN EIUS HONOREM EDITO ADICIUNTUR</p>	
KOSTAS BURASELIS	
Zanes Speak: Olympic Fines in Hellenic Intellectual and Political Context	133
ALEXANDER VERLINSKY	
Draco’s Constitution in the <i>Athenaion Politeia</i> 4: Is It an Interpolation or an Author’s Later Addition? . . . . .	142
Key Words . . . . .	174