

VALERIA MELIS 

UNIVERSITY OF CAGLIARI – UNIVERSITY CA' FOSCARI VENEZIA

**SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE LEGEND
OF THE MARATHON RUNNER
(HDT. 6.105, ARISTOPH. *NUB.* 63–67,
PLUT. *DE GLOR. ATH.* 347C, LUCIAN. *LAPS.* 3
AND THE ROMAN TRADITION)**

ABSTRACT: A well-known tradition has it that after the victory of the Greeks over the Persian army at the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.E.) one of the Athenians ran forty kilometres from Marathon to Athens and died soon after his arrival in the city, after giving the good news.

However, the story is more complicated than it seems, and several issues have claimed the attention of scholars, such as what the Marathon runner's name was, what form of greeting he used and whether the episode really happened or not.

The first part of my paper offers a reconsideration of the extant sources in order to express my point of view on the abovementioned issues. The second part aims at showing a selection of parallel passages which could possibly prove useful in trying to illustrate how the legend of the Marathon runner evolved into the shape it assumed in the Lucianean account, which is still considered as the 'official' version of the story.

KEY WORDS: Philippides, Marathon runner, Herodotus, Aristophanes, Plutarch, Lucian of Samosata, Classical Philology

A well-known tradition has it that after the sudden victory of the Greeks over the more powerful Persian army at the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.E.) one of the Athenians offered to announce the victory and ran forty kilometres from Marathon to Athens. He died soon after his arrival in the city, after having exchanged greetings and giving the good news.

However, the story is more complicated than it seems, and several issues have claimed the attention of scholars, such as what the Marathon runner's name was, what form of greeting he used and whether the episode really happened or not.

The first part of my paper offers a reconsideration of the extant sources in order to express my point of view on the abovementioned issues. This section in particular involves a discussion of the name of the runner who went from Athens to Sparta, in order to both shed some light on the problem itself and to add some considerations to the scholarly debate on Aristoph. *Nub.* 63–67.

The second part aims at showing a selection of parallel passages which could possibly prove useful in trying to illustrate how the legend of the Marathon runner evolved into the shape it assumed in the Lucianean account, which is still considered as the 'official' version of the story.

1.1 THE SOURCES

Our main sources were written later than the events at Marathon: they are Plutarch's *De gloria Atheniensium* 347C (1st century C.E.) and Lucian's *Pro lapsu inter salutandum* 3 (2nd century C.E.). We also have what we could call an earlier 'non-source' (5th century B.C.E.): the sixth book of the *Historiae* of Herodotus.

In fact, despite his chronological nearness to the battle, Herodotus gives us no information about the runner who ran from Marathon to Athens in order to announce the Greek victory.¹ The only thing we learn is that since the Athenians were in difficulty, they sent a ἡμεροδρόμος

¹ Siron 2018: 114: 'La plupart des éléments qui composent ce qui n'est encore que l'histoire de Philippidès sont donc débattus'.

(a professional courier: cf. Hdt. 9.12.1; Liv. 31.24 *hēmerodromos uocant Graeci ingens die uno emetientis spatium* [‘the Greeks call *hēmerodromos* one who is able to run long distances in only one day’]; Corn. Nep. *Milt.* 4.3) from Athens to Sparta before the battle.² According to Ms. A, the name of the ἡμεροδρόμος was Φειδιππίδης, while in Ms. D it is Φιλιππίδης (6.105):

καὶ πρῶτα μὲν ἐόντες ἔτι ἐν τῷ ἄστει οἱ στρατηγοὶ ἀποπέμπουσι ἐς Σπάρτην κήρυκα Φειδιππίδην [A : Φιλιππίδην D], Ἀθηναῖον μὲν ἄνδρα, ἄλλως δὲ ἡμεροδρόμην τε καὶ τοῦτο μελετῶντα.

First of all, the generals, while still in the city, sent the herald Pheidippides to Sparta. He was an Athenian who was also a ἡμεροδρόμος by profession.

According to Pheidippides’/Philippides’ own account, while he was running, he met the god Pan near to Mount Parthenion (Hdt. 6.105), the one above Tegea. The god was angry with the Athenians for neglecting his cult, even though he had shown favour to them.³ And so, since the Athenians considered the episode to be true and fearing the god’s anger, they dedicated a temple to him under the Acropolis and instituted annual sacrifices and a race with torches in his honour.⁴ Returning to the main story, Herodotus tells us that the messenger arrived in Sparta the following day (Hdt. 6.106); after he spoke to the *archontes*, the Spartans agreed to help the Athenians, but they also said that, as it was the ninth of the

² As regards ἡμεροδρόμοι, see Matthews 1974–1975; Christensen, Nielsen, Schwartz 2009.

³ Wilson 2015: 118 n. 6.105.2; Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 230. As regards the similarities between Pheidippides/Philippides and Pan due to their link with the figure of the messenger, see Borgeaud 1979: 196–197; Nenci 1998: 226–227 n. 105.

⁴ I am not inclined to believe that Pheidippides’ own account of his encounter with Pan depended on a momentary disturbed state of his mind, as Forehand, Borgeaud and, more recently, Scott have suggested; I think, instead, that this detail (whether or not Herodotus was the first to report it) could serve to provide an *aition* of the origin of the cult of Pan. See Forehand 1985: 1–2; Borgeaud 1988: 133; Scott 2005: 369; Siron 2018: 115–120. On Pan’s role in the battle of Marathon see Gartzou-Tatti 2013: 98–101; for more on the political and social basis which could have contributed to the making of the legend see Mastrapas 2013: 111–122.

rising month, they were prevented by law from going out until after the moon's circle was full.

This story thus has nothing to do with the final, victorious phase of the battle of Marathon, and Herodotus makes no mention of the hoplite who ran from Marathon to Athens after the fight. Instead, despite their chronological distance from these events, Plutarch and Lucian are the first to do so.

In the third chapter of *De gloria Atheniensium*, Plutarch tells us that painters and historiographers are not as important as the generals they celebrate. Here Plutarch narrates the episode of the *marathōnomachos* who, after fighting in the battle of Marathon, ran from Marathon to Athens in order to announce the Greeks' victory and then dropped down dead (347C):

τὴν τοίνυν ἐν Μαραθῶνι μάχην ἀπήγγειλεν, ὡς μὲν Ἡρακλείδης ὁ Ποντικὸς ἱστορεῖ, Θέρσιππος ὁ Ἐρωεύς.⁵ οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι λέγουσιν Εὐκλέα δραμόντα σὺν τοῖς ὅπλοις θερμὸν ἀπὸ τῆς μάχης καὶ ταῖς θύραις ἐμπεσόντα τῶν πρώτων⁶ τοσοῦτον μόνον εἰπεῖν “χαίρετε” καὶ “χαίρομεν”, εἶτ' εὐθὺς ἐκπνεῦσαι. πλὴν οὗτος μὲν αὐτάγγελος ἦκεν τῆς μάχης ἀγωνιστὴς γενόμενος.

According to Heraclides Ponticus, Thersippus Eroeus was the man who brought back the news of the battle of Marathon, but most people say that it was Eucles who ran in full armour, hot from the battle. As he burst in through the doors of the first men of the State, he only managed to say “χαίρετε” and “χαίρομεν” before dropping dead. He had been an eyewitness to the battle in which he had taken part.

According to Plutarch, if someone narrates events they did not take part in, then they cannot expect to be honoured like Thersippus (or Eucles); for the same reason, the writer mentions three *marathōnomachoi*, Cynegeirus, Callimachus and Polyzelus, who died or were seriously

⁵ Ἐρχιδεύς Wil. Nach.: Ἐρωιάδης Thiol. Fraz. and Kirchner, *Pros. Att.* 7200. For further discussion see pp. 37–38.

⁶ τῶν πρώτων *codd.*: τῶν πρώτων Cobet.

wounded on the battlefield (cf. Hdt. 6.109–117).⁷ I will return to them later.⁸

In the opusculum *Pro lapsu inter salutandum*,⁹ Lucian's first aim is to explain, in an erudite way, the three forms of greeting χαῖρε, εὖ πράττε, ὕγιαίνε.¹⁰ He begins by illustrating the ancient uses of χαῖρε by means of *exempla* borrowed from literature, such as tragedies or epic poems, then from historical accounts. The latter section begins with the episode at Marathon: in fact, the first man to use this greeting is said to be Philip-pides (3):

πρῶτος δ' αὐτὸ Φιλιππίδης ὁ ἡμεροδρομήσας λέγεται ἀπὸ Μαραθῶνος ἀγγέλλων τὴν νίκην εἰπεῖν πρὸς τοὺς ἄρχοντας καθημένους καὶ πεφορο-

⁷ See Frazier, Froidefond 1990: 241 n. 6; Gallo, Mocchi 1992: 93 n. 44. Plutarch also mentions the battle of Marathon in *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, an open letter to the nobleman of Sardis, Menemachus, who had asked the writer for political advice. In this script, Plutarch underlines that the Greeks must hold public office only under the authority of the Romans and that it is necessary to avoid encouraging the Greek vainglory through the memory of their past deeds and freedom (Plut. *Prae. ger. reip.* 17.814C, ταῦτα γὰρ καὶ νῦν ἔξεστι ζηλοῦντας ἐξομοιοῦσθαι τοῖς προγόνοις· τὸν δὲ Μαραθῶνα καὶ τὸν Εὐρυμέδοντα καὶ τὰς Πλαταιάς, καὶ ὅσα τῶν παραδειγμάτων οἰδεῖν ποιεῖ καὶ φρυάττεσθαι διακενῆς τοὺς πολλοὺς, ἀπολιπόντας ἐν ταῖς σχολαῖς τῶν σοφιστῶν [‘it is possible even nowadays to imitate our ancestors by emulating these deeds; however, the battles of Marathon, of Eurymedon and of Plataea and all those models, which make the crowd pompous and superb for nothing, must be left to the schools of the sophists’]). Plutarch testifies to the persistence of the memory of the battle of Marathon among the Greeks of the 1st century C.E. and how it was useful to keep them united by means of their feelings of pride and belonging to a common stock. See Valgiglio 1976: esp. xvii n. 4; Carrière 1984.

⁸ Cf. pp. 42–43 and 46–50.

⁹ Lucian wrote the *Pro lapsu inter salutandum* between 171 and 174 C.E. and therefore at a mature age, during the time he spent in Egypt. This opusculum is the author's apology for having wrongly greeted a high magistrate by saying ὕγιαίνε rather than χαῖρε, which is instead the most appropriate greeting for the morning. See Longo 1976: 24 and 689.

¹⁰ Lucian (*Laps.* 2) explains that, at his time, χαῖρε is used in the morning and when one meets somebody for the first time; he also says that in antiquity this greeting was used for toasts and for leave-taking; instead, it was not used at a particular time of day. Then, χαῖρε was used in unhappy circumstances, such as for mourning and for the final leave-taking of an enemy.

νικότητα ὑπὲρ τοῦ τέλους τῆς μάχης “χαίρετε, νικῶμεν” καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν συναποθανεῖν τῇ ἀγγελίᾳ καὶ τῷ χαίρειν συνεκπνεῦσαι.

The *hēmerodromos* Philippides is reportedly the first to have used this greeting. After running from Marathon in order to announce the victory to the assembly of archons who were anxiously awaiting the end of the war, he said “χαίρετε, νικῶμεν!” and soon after these words he died, expiring with that χαίρετε.

Several differences exist in the evidence given by Plutarch and Lucian: first, the name of the Marathon runner (Plutarch: Θέρσιππος ὁ Ἐρωεύς/Εὐκλῆς ~ Lucian: Φιλίπιδης); second, the qualification of the Marathon runner: according to Plutarch, he was an ἀγωνιστής, hence one of the *marathōnomachoi*, while for Lucian he was a professional courier (ἡμεροδρόμος); third, the form of the greeting (Plutarch: χαίρετε καὶ χαίρομεν ~ Lucian: χαίρετε, νικῶμεν).

1.2 THE PROBLEM OF THE MARATHON RUNNER’S NAME

1.2.1 THE NAME OF THE *HĒMERODROMOS* IN HDT. 6.105.1

According to Ms. A (and to its family), the name of the Herodotean ἡμεροδρόμος who ran to Sparta before the battle was Φειδιππίδης, whereas according to D (and to its family) it was Φιλίπιδης.¹¹ The main sources supporting the D reading, Φιλίπιδης, are Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 7.84; Plutarch, *De Herodoti malignitate*, 862a; Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio*, 1.28.4, 8.54.6; Pollux, *Onomastikon*, 3.148; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 3.44.3; Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, 1.98; Suda, s.v. Ἰππίας, all dating from the 1st to the 10th century C.E. (see also *scholl. in Aeschinem* 2.130.4, *ad Aristidem* 51.215, *ad Clem. Al.* 33.32, p. 310, 1.21 Φιλίπιδην· οὗτος ὁ Φιλίπιδης ἡμεροδρόμος ἦν, ὡς φησιν Ἡρόδοτος [‘Philippides: according to Herodotus, this Philippides was a *hēmerodromos*’]).

¹¹ Ms. A (= *Laurentianus* LXX3) belongs to the 10th century C.E. and to the so-called ‘Florentine family’, which is the oldest one (but, according to the *recentiores non deteriores* principle, not necessarily the best one); Ms. D (= *Vaticanus gr.* 2369) belongs to the 11th or 12th century C.E. and to the ‘Roman family’. See Asheri 1989²: lxxxi–lxxxv.

In *Naturalis historia* 7, Pliny the Elder describes men endowed with extraordinary physical strength, like Vinnius Valens (7.82) who was able to lift up chariots loaded with wine bottles or pulled by oxen in opposite directions, and to do the other extraordinary deeds which are engraved on his tomb. Then, Pliny tells the story of Philippides, the first man who ran for two days from Athens to Sparta, covering the extraordinary distance of 1,140 *stadia* (7.84):

Cucurrisse MCXL stadia ab Athenis Lacedaemonem biduo Philippidem¹² magnum erat.

It seemed a huge deed that Philippides accomplished one thousand one hundred forty *stadia* running from Athens to Sparta in two days.

In his *De Herodoti malignitate*,¹³ Plutarch maintains that Herodotus lied about the law which impeded the Spartans from helping the Athenians before the battle of Marathon. According to Plutarch, if Herodotus' statement had been true, the Athenians would have sent Philippides to Sparta once the battle had ended, which is absurd (862a):

εἰ γὰρ ἀνέγνω ταῦτ' Ἀθηναίοις, οὐκ ἂν εἶασαν οὐδὲ περιεῖδον ἐνάτη τὸν Φιλίππιδην¹⁴ παρακαλοῦντα Λακεδαιμονίους ἐπὶ τὴν μάχην ἐκ τῆς μάχης γεγενημένον, καὶ ταῦτα δευτεράϊον εἰς Σπάρτην ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν, ὡς αὐτὸς φησιν, ἀφιγμένον.

If Herodotus read these facts to the Athenians, they would neither have permitted nor tolerated the fact that on the ninth day Philippides arrived from the battlefield claiming help from the Spartans as soon as the battle ended and that he arrived in Sparta from Athens on the second day, as Herodotus says.

¹² The reading 'Phidippidem' is only attested in the *Plinianae exercitationes in Solini polyhistora* of Claudius Salmasius. See Ian, Mayhoff 1967: 29.

¹³ See Lachenaud 1981: esp. 248 n. 158; Grimaldi 2008; Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 233 n. 106.3.

¹⁴ Φιλίππιδην *codd. cum Her. codd.* DRSV : Φειδι- Reiske *ex Her. codd.* ABCP.

Oddly enough, Plutarch does not say anything about the hoplite who announced the victory after the battle of Marathon and limits himself to underlining Herodotus' tendency to tell lies.

Pausanias summarises the story of Philippides in the first and eighth book of his *Graeciae descriptio* (1.28.4, 8.54.6):¹⁵

ὡς πεμφθεῖη Φιλιππίδης ἐς Λακεδαιμόνα ἄγγελος ἀποβεβηκότων Μήδων ἐς τὴν γῆν, ἐπανήκων δὲ Λακεδαιμονίους ὑπερβαλέσθαι φαίη τὴν ἔξοδον, εἶναι γὰρ δὴ νόμον αὐτοῖς μὴ πρότερον μαχομένους ἐξιέναι πρὶν ἢ πλήρη τὸν κύκλον τῆς σελήνης γενέσθαι· τὸν δὲ Πᾶνα ὁ Φιλιππίδης ἔλεγε περὶ τὸ ὄρος ἐντυχόντα οἱ τὸ Παρθένιον φάναι τε ὡς εὖνους Ἀθηναίους εἶη καὶ ὅτι ἐς Μαραθῶνα ἦξει συμμαχήσων. οὗτος μὲν οὖν ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ ἀγγελίᾳ τετίμηται [...] ἀπωτέρω δὲ ὀλίγον Πανὸς ἔστιν ἱερόν, ἔνθα Φιλιππίδῃ φανῆναι τὸν Πᾶνα καὶ εἰπεῖν ἃ πρὸς αὐτὸν Ἀθηναῖοί τε καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα Τεγεᾶται λέγουσι.

When, after the landing of the Persians, Philippides was sent as a messenger to Sparta, he said that, as soon as he arrived, the Spartans delayed their intervention: in fact, as a rule, they did not leave to fight before the circle of the moon was full; moreover, Philippides said that Pan came to meet him near Mount Parthenion and that the god said that he was favourable to the Athenians and that he would go to Marathon to fight with them. The god was consequently honoured by the Athenians ... A little further on there is Pan's temple, where Pan reportedly appeared to Philippides and told him what the Athenians and the Tegeans narrate'.

Pausanias evidently does not focus on Philippides' mission, but on the etiological story of the Athenian cult of Pan, previously narrated by Herodotus, who is plausibly the source of this account.

Pollux refers to our Philippides as a ἡμεροδρόμος in his lexicon *Onomastikon* (Poll. *Onom.* 3.148 καὶ Φιλιππίδης ὁ ἡμεροδρόμος).

In the *Protrepticus*,¹⁶ in an attempt to persuade the Greeks to abandon paganism for Christianity, Clement of Alexandria mentions Philippides as the man who was the first to reveal the identity of the god Pan to

¹⁵ See Musti, Beschi 1982; Casevitz, Pouilloux, Chamoux 1992; Casevitz, Jost, Marcadé 1998.

¹⁶ Mondésert 1949²; Butterworth 1968.

the Athenians (3.44.3 Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ οὐδὲ τὸν Πᾶνα ἤδεσαν ὅστις ἦν, πρὶν ἢ Φιλιππίδην εἰπεῖν αὐτοῖς [‘The Athenians did not know who Pan was, before Philippides told them’]).

Solinus also mentions Philippides in the *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (1.98 *Philippides biduo mille centum*¹⁷ *quadraginta stadia ab Athenis Lacedaemonem decucurrit* [‘Running from Athens to Sparta, Philippides completed one thousand one hundred forty *stadia* in two days’]). His model was probably the aforementioned *Naturalis historia* of Pliny the Elder. In fact, if we compare the two texts, we are able to observe that Solinus mentions the extraordinary deeds of brave runners in the same order and with more or less the same words as Pliny.

Finally, the lexicon *Suda*, s.v. Ἰππίας, tells us that Ἀθηναῖοι [...] ἐκάλουν δὲ ἐπὶ συμμαχία καὶ Λακεδαιμονίους διὰ Φιλιππίδου τοῦ ἡμεροδρόμου, ὃς τοὺς χιλίους καὶ πεντακοσίους σταδίου ἤνυσε διὰ μιᾶς νυκτός (‘The Athenians [...] claimed an alliance with the Spartans by means of the *hēmerodromos* Philippides, who covered one thousand five hundred *stadia* in only one night’).

These examples show that the D reading, Φιλιππίδης, is found in the majority of the texts (mostly late manuscripts) which report the story of the Herodotean ἡμεροδρόμος.

As for the A reading, Φειδιππίδης, this form of the name is found in the best manuscripts¹⁸ of Cornelius Nepos’ *De uiris illustribus* (1st century B.C.E.) and also, according to some scholars,¹⁹ in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* (5th century B.C.E.).

Cornelius Nepos mentions Phidippus in the section of the *De uiris illustribus* devoted to the warlords of foreign peoples (*Liber de excellentibus ducibus exterarum gentium*, 4.3):

¹⁷ *Codd.* RC transmit the reading *mille ducenta*, N²M *mille centum*, which, considering the text of Solinus’ model, Plin. *HN* 7.84, I believe to be the correct one; *contra*, see Mommsen 1895: 25, who prefers the RC reading.

¹⁸ The *Parcensis* (P) and the *Danielis siue Gifanii* (Dan. Gif.) of the 15th century C.E.; in the rest of the manuscript tradition we find the *lectio facillior* ‘Philippumque’. Nenci 1998: 266 n. 105.2.; *contra* Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 231 n. 105.1.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Athanassaki 2016: 218–219 and bibliographic references quoted there.

Athenienses [...] auxilium nusquam nisi a Lacedaemoniis petiuerunt Phidippumque cursorem eius generis, qui hemerodromoe uocantur, Lacedaemonem miserunt, ut nuntiaret quam celeri opus esset auxilio.

The Athenians [...] never claimed help but from the Spartans and sent Phidippus, one of those couriers called *hēmerodromoi*, to Sparta in order to rapidly claim help.

Cornelius only mentions this episode, completely omitting any reference to the hoplite who died after announcing the victory over the Persians.

As for the *Clouds*, scholars think that Aristophanes may allude to the Herodotean Pheidippides in lines 63–67 of the comedy, where Strepsiadides speaks of the quarrel he had had with his wife over the name of their newly-born child:

ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἵππον προσετίθει πρὸς τοῦνομα,
 Ξάνθιππον ἢ Χαίριππον ἢ Καλλιπίδην,
 ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦ πάππου ἰτιθέμην Φειδωνίδην. 65
 τέως μὲν οὖν ἐκρινόμεθ'· εἶτα τῷ χρόνῳ
 κοινῇ ξυνέβημεν κάθήμεθα Φειδιπτίδην.

She wanted to add *-hippus* to the name, thus ‘Xanthippus’ or ‘Chaerippus’ or ‘Callippides’, while I wanted to name him Pheidonides after his grandfather. For a time we argued; then eventually we came to a mutual agreement and named him Pheidippides.²⁰

On a first exegetical level, Φειδιπτίδης is simply a good compromise between Strepsiadides’ desire for a name echoing that of his father’s, Φειδωνίδης (or Φεῖδων as one can read in line 134), and his wife’s preference for a name ending in *-ιππος* either because it was usually associated to aristocratic people or, as Sommerstein²¹ maintains, because ‘she wanted the boy to become a horseman and hoped that his *nomen* would prove an *omen*.’²²

²⁰ Transl. Alan H. Sommerstein.

²¹ Sommerstein 1982²: 162 n. 63. See also Turato 1995: 192 n. 17.

²² Unfortunately, Pheidippides’ behaviour turns out to be the antipode of his mother’s hopes: his passion for horses and horse racing degenerates into a vice that brings him to squander family assets and, in so doing, he becomes a perfect emblem of the new

On a second exegetical level, due to the link with the verb φείδομαι ('to save money') and cognate words, Φειδιππίδης probably also recalls the parsimony of Strepsiadēs' family, which is in sharp comic contrast with Pheidippides' tendency to dissipate money in horse racing: the contrast is in fact conveyed in the name itself by means of the addition of the suffix -ιππ- to the φείδ- root.

The grounds which lead scholars to think that Aristophanes wished to allude to the Herodotean Pheidippides are mainly because the names favoured by Strepsiadēs' wife actually refer to real famous people: for example, Xanthippus was the name of both Pericles' father and one of his sons and also of the archon of 479/478, while Callippides was a tragic actor who won the Lenaea five times in the years in which the *Clouds* was performed (cf. *IG II²* 2319.82–83 and *IG II²* 2325.253).²³

However, I think that this evidence is not strong enough to claim that Aristophanes wanted his audience to recall the Herodotean hero of Marathon: while both Pheidon and Pheidippos were always common names in the Greek world, Pheidippides was quite rare and indeed is never attested in Athens.²⁴ The only attestation is that of the Herodotean ἡμεροδρόμος reported in Ms. A, so we cannot completely exclude the fact that Aristophanes might have aimed at making his name resound in the audience's ears.²⁵ However, it seems odd that Aristophanes made such a subtle allusion: it is well known that he usually refers to real people more explicitly, as we can see, e.g., in lines 46 and 64 of this comedy. Moreover, why

generation of Athenians, in stark antithesis to that of the *marathōnomachoi*. The *nomen omen* fails to achieve its desired effect.

²³ See Dover 1968: 102 n. 63; Lewis 1970: 288–289; Sommerstein 1982²: 162 n. 64. As regards Chaerippus/Charippus, the scholar observes that this name is found in the 5th century B.C.E. (he quotes Andoc. 1.35 and *IG II²* 1927.110.1) and that it 'neither seems to have any particular social cachet'; Mastromarco 1983: 336 n. 13; Guidorizzi 1996: 191 n. 46, and 194 n. 64: 'Naturalmente i nomi equestri hanno un tono aristocratico, ma in questo caso alludono in primo luogo alla mania sportiva di Fidippide, il cui carattere viene così prefigurato.'

²⁴ See Dover 1968: xxv; Sommerstein 1982²: 163 n. 67.

²⁵ Athanassaki 2016: 218–219: 'The name Pheidippides, semantically problematic, is rare in Attica. [...] Does Aristophanes allude to the famous hemerodrome? It is by no means certain, but it is possible, if of course the correct reading of the Herodotean manuscripts is Pheidippides. [...] The rarity of the name would facilitate the association between Strepsiadēs' spoiled son and the hemerodrome'.

should he suggest the name of the Herodotean runner to the audience if he does not make even a slightest allusion to running? I argue that the word play on the name Φειδιππίδης, which fits perfectly into the general sense of the text, seems to be *per se* enough to explain why Aristophanes could have chosen Pheidippides as the name of Strepsiades' son.

Thus, the clues which could link the story of the Aristophanean Pheidippides to the battle of Marathon do not seem to be strong enough to let us infer that the poet is actually alluding to the Herodotean ἡμεροδρόμος.

Hence, let us try to solve the issue of the name of the Herodotean ἡμεροδρόμος from a different perspective. Some editors of Herodotus, such as Hude, How & Wells, Legrand, Barberis and Colonna & Bevilacqua, accept the reading of Ms. D, Φιλππίδης, while Rosén and Nenci prefer the reading of Ms. A, Φειδιππίδης.²⁶ The only literary sources of the form Φειδιππίδης are Cornelius Nepos and, according to some scholars, Aristophanes' *Clouds*, which, as we have shown, does not seem useful for our purposes. I think, thus, that the problem could be better solved by means of philological criteria.

Some Attic inscriptions shed light on the fact that in the 5th century B.C.E. there was a sharp distinction between EI, which was the usual grapheme for the ancient diphthong ει, and E, which was used for the secondary [eː]:²⁷ it thus seems that at the time of Herodo-

²⁶ Hude 1927³; How, Wells 1961²: 107–108 n. 105; Legrand 1963; Barberis 1992²; Colonna, Bevilacqua 1996; Rosén 1997; Nenci 1998; Frigo Bonn, *s.v. Pheidippides*, *DNP* 9 (2000), coll. 763–764.

²⁷ Before the 5th century B.C.E., there are very few examples of ι instead of ει, either as the original diphthong [eː] or the more recent long e-vowel [eː]; however, in some words in Attic, (e.g. χίλιοι, ἰμάτιον, Μιλίχιος), ει passed to ι earlier than elsewhere, perhaps due to an assimilation phenomenon encouraged by the presence of the liquid consonant in some of these words. As for the age from the 5th century B.C.E. onwards, by 31 B.C.E. the pronunciation of ει from [eː] to [iː] in all positions (except for the prevocalic one) in Attica is not easy to fix on the basis of inscriptions. However, according to Lejeune, the Attic inscriptions of the 5th century generally distinguished between the ancient diphthong ει, represented by the grapheme EI, and the secondary [eː], represented by E. Instances of I for ει are quite rare in the 4th and early 3rd centuries B.C.E. and examples of EI for ι (which is more significant because a careless omission is impossible) are even rarer. Perhaps an [iː] pronunciation of ει existed as a substandard by the 4th century and certainly from the end of the 3rd century onwards, when such spellings begin to appear in decrees: at this time ει ~ ι are more frequent, although still rare until the last quarter of the 2nd century B.C.E. In the Attic inscriptions of the 4th

tus²⁸ people wrote and pronounced Φειδιππίδης. If so, it is more plausible that Φειδιππίδης, clearly the *lectio difficilior*, could be the genuine form of the name registered by Herodotus which was corrupted in the course of the manuscript tradition: ΦΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΔΗΝ became ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΔΗΝ due to the pronunciation of /ei/ as /i/ (iotacism) and the consequent confusion between the two corresponding graphemes, as well as the confusion between Δ and Λ.²⁹

1.2.2 THE NAME AND ‘IDENTITY’ OF THE MARATHON RUNNER IN THE AGE OF THE SECOND SOPHISTIC

I would now like to offer my point of view on the problem of the name of the hoplite who announced the Greek victory over the Persians in the battle of Marathon. Our sources, both included in the cultural frame of the Second Sophistic, are Plutarch (*De glor. Ath.* 347C, Θέρσιππος ὁ Ἐρωεύς/Ἐρχιεύς/Ἐρωιάδης or Εὐκλήης) and Lucian (*Laps.* 3, Φιλίππίδης).

As for the name Θέρσιππος, all the extant manuscripts transmit the demotic Ἐρωεύς. However, the lack of any Attic deme with this name brought Wilamowitz, followed by Nachstät,³⁰ to correct the transmitted

century B.C.E, the secondary [e'] is usually represented by the grapheme EI: this means that both in writing and in pronunciation, there is no longer any distinction between the original diphthong ει and the secondary [e']. Widespread use of EI for ī is foreign to texts dating from the end of the Hellenistic period, but develops in Roman times. In the early Roman period there is widespread use of I for ει and of EI for ī [= i'], but while the first is rarely found later, the latter is increasingly used, and in the 2nd century C.E. EI is the normal spelling for ī [= i']. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E. it is usual for lengthy texts to use EI and I indifferently as graphemes for what had originally been ī, so that the same or closely related words are frequently spelled both with EI and I in the same text. See Lejeune 1972: 229–230, § 240; Threatte 1980: 190–199.

²⁸ Herodotus' arrival in Athens dates back to 446/445 B.C.E.

²⁹ *Contra* Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 231 n. 105.1. See also Renchan 1969: 69; Frost 1979: 159–163; Badian 1979: 164; Nenci 1998: 266 n. 105.2; Christensen, Nielsen, Schwartz 2009: 148–169, at 148 n. 3: the two scholars underline the fact that the name 'Pheidippides' is attested in an inscription from Thera (*IG XII 3 536*, dating back to the 8th century B.C.E.) and in one from Eretria (*IG IX 9 246B 18*, dating back to the 4th or the 3rd century B.C.E.); Athanassaki 2016: 217–219.

³⁰ Nachstät, Sieveking, Titchener 1935.

reading into Ἐρχιεύς, and Thiolier and Frazier,³¹ based on Kirchner, into Ἐρωιάδης,³² Instead, Gallo & Mocchi,³³ following the manuscripts and the form reported by Pape-Benseler,³⁴ think that Ἐρωεύς is correct, arguing that it could be an alternative form of Ἐρωιάδης, just as Ἀλωεύς is an alternative for Ἀλοιάδης in denoting the inhabitants of Ἀλώιον. However, I do not find the latter inference convincing: in fact, Stephanus Byzantinus' witness (Steph. Byz. A 237 Billerbeck [= Meineke, pp. 79–80, line 20], Ἀλώιον· πόλις Θεσσαλίας ἐπὶ τῶν Τέμπεων, ἣν ἔκτισαν οἱ Ἀλωάδαι καθελόντες τοὺς Θραῦκας. ὡς εἶναι αὐτὴν ἀπὸ Ἀλωέως. τὸ ἔθνικὸν Ἀλωεύς) reports that Ἀλώιον was founded by the descendants of Ἀλωεύς, the Ἀλωάδαι, and that the ethnic name is Ἀλωεύς. According to this evidence, I argue that Ἀλωάδαι was used in order to denote those descendants of Ἀλωεύς who founded the city, while Ἀλωεύς indicates each inhabitant, and the two terms do not overlap. There is nothing to suggest that Ἐρωιάδης = Ἐρωεύς as Ἀλοιάδης = Ἀλωεύς. Moreover, in his study on forms of abbreviated demotics, Whitehead³⁵ reveals that the only forms for Eroiadai are EP, EPOI, EPOIA, EPOIAΔ, EPOIAΔH, that is, never EPΩEYΣ or anything of the kind. Thus, to the best of our knowledge, the best solution seems to be Wilamowitz' reading of Ἐρχιεύς.

As to the 'identity' of the Marathon runner, the evidence collected and discussed by L. Athanassaki seems particularly interesting to me. In accordance with E. L. Bowie's studies on the matter,³⁶ the scholar shows pieces of evidence³⁷ which allow us to think that the Maratho-

³¹ Thiolier 1985; Frazier, Froidefond 1990.

³² The Ἐρωιάδαι are the inhabitants of the Ipphoontides (Harp. ε.140 = Diod. Perieg. fr. 13b Müller; Hdn. *De pros. cath.* 3.1, p. 66; Hsch. ε.5977; Steph. Byz. 5.126, who asserts that the name denoting each inhabitant of that deme is Ἐρωιάδης but makes no mention of the demotic Ἐρωεύς; Phot. ε.1947; Suid. ε.3088). Demosthenes mentions Στέφανος Ἐρωιάδης (40.12) and Ξάνθιππος Ἐρωιάδης (61.5) in his speech *In Neaeram*.

³³ Gallo, Mocchi 1992: 92 n. 41.

³⁴ Pape, Benseler 1959, s.vv. Ἐρωεύς and Ἐρωιάδαι (Ἐρωίδαί, Ἐρωῖδαι).

³⁵ Whitehead 1990: 122.

³⁶ Bowie 2013: 251–253.

³⁷ In particular, an inscription on the Island of Delos, which shows that Atticus' immediate family 'can be traced back to Euclēs I in the second Century B.C.:'; an inscribed statue base, 'found in front of the *Stoa Poikile* in 2013', in which we read that Polycarminus, son of Euclēs, 'set up the new Hero Euclēs, son of Herodes, of Marathon'. See

nian family of Herodes Atticus' father, Tiberius Claudius Herodes Atticus (with whom Plutarch could have had 'social interactions'),³⁸ and Herodes Atticus himself were interested in spreading the belief that the heroic Marathon runner Eucles was their ancestor.³⁹ Athanassaki thus thinks that Plutarch did not indicate any demotic for Eucles presumably because his audience knew whom he was hinting at, and that he was well aware of the Attici's attempts to link themselves to the Marathon runner. In fact, Plutarch alluded to the spreading of their version of the story with the words οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι λέγουσιν ('most people say'); however, he also decided to put forward Heraclides Ponticus' authoritative testimony that the name of the Marathon runner was Thersippus, in order to draw attention to the fact that this was a disputed story.

Lucian, for his part, mocks Herodes Atticus and his family in some of his satirical writings (cf., e.g., *Icar*. 18, the *Timon*, whose protagonist, according to G. Tomassi, is a mask of Herodes Atticus' father, and the *Nauigium*, where the character of Adimantus has several points in common with Herodes himself),⁴⁰ and thus he could hardly 'have missed the systematic effort of Herodes and his ancestors to cultivate close ties with [...] the legendary Marathon runner'.⁴¹ Athanassaki asserts that Philipides was chosen to be the one to announce the victory after the battle of

Athanassaki 2016: 221; Ameling 1983 n. I; <http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/index.php/news/newsDetails/videocast-open-meeting-work-of-the-school-during-2013andrupestral-in-scripti> (J. Wright presents the statue base found in 2013); a cave dedicated to Pan after the battle of Marathon and located near Herodes Atticus' villa in Oenoe. According to Athanassaki 2016: 224 'claiming the *kleos* of the victory announcement and heroic death seems therefore a desirable and easy step for a Marathonian family who counted several Eucles among their ancestors. The fact that the family had property in the vicinity of one of Pan's sanctuaries was a further incentive. [...] Herodes Atticus exercised his great influence in order to put into relief Marathon and spared no effort to associate himself with Miltiades'.

³⁸ See Athanassaki 2016: 221, who follows E. L. Bowie's suggestion that the rhetorician Herodes appearing in the *Quaestiones conuiuiales* (8.4 and 9.14) could be Tiberius Claudius Herodes Atticus, father of Herodes Atticus. See Bowie 2002: 42–43.

³⁹ Herodes tried to claim descent from Miltiades and Cimon as well (Philostr. *VS* 2.1). See Tentori Montalto 2013: 49 n. 131; Athanassaki 2016: 223.

⁴⁰ See Tomassi 2011: 89–97. On Herodes Atticus and Lucian, see Schwartz 1965: 32 ff., and 132–134; Baldwin 1973; Jones 1986; Follett 1994: 131–139; Tomassi 2007: 163–187.

⁴¹ Athanassaki 2016: 227.

Marathon because of the writer's relationship with Herodes Atticus, and the hypothesis that he decided to offer a different version of the facts in order to avoid endorsing Herodes Atticus' attempt to ennoble his origins is certainly fascinating.

In any case, whether or not Lucian was indeed the first to put the story of the Herodotean ἡμεροδρόμος together with that of the hoplite in *Pro lapsu inter salutandum* 3, his opusculum on greetings is certainly the first attestation of this story, which has become what one might call the 'official' version ever since its consecration by Robert Browning in his poem *Pheidippides* in 1879.⁴²

1.3 THE GREETING USED BY THE MARATHON RUNNER

To conclude the first section of my reflections on the episode of the Marathon runner, I wish to return to the issue of the greeting, which I have left open until now. I think that, whether the greeting used by the Marathon runner was real or merely part of the legendary account, we can only make a brief comment from a philological point of view. In the passage from Plutarch's *De gloria Atheniensium*, the manuscript reading is χαίρετε, χαίρομεν, but some editors (such as, for example, Thiolier, and Frazier-Froidefond based on Cobet) prefer χαίρετε, νικῶμεν, the form attested by Lucian *Pro lapsu inter salutandum* 3.

I argue that the best choice for this passage is to preserve the manuscripts reading, χαίρετε, χαίρομεν, which involves a word play well included in Plutarch's *usus scribendi*.⁴³ Any contamination between the two forms should be avoided.

2.1 THE MAKING OF THE LEGEND OF THE MARATHON RUNNER: A HYPOTHESIS

There is much discussion as to whether the episode of the Marathon runner should be considered as a historical event or whether it is just a legend. While some scholars have concluded that the story described

⁴² Some scholars think that Lucian is responsible for the conflation. See, e.g., Alinson 1931: 152.

⁴³ See Gallo, Mocci 1992: 92–93 n. 42.

by Plutarch and Lucian is real,⁴⁴ others have sought to prove it is a fake altogether. Glotz, for example,⁴⁵ maintains that ‘le coureur de Marathon appartient à la légende’; Biliński⁴⁶ thinks that Aristoph. *Eq.* 1333–1334 is to be considered the oldest piece of evidence of the existence of the hoplite of Marathon and argues that ‘in base ai risultati delle mie indagini sono convinto della realtà storica dell’avvenimento’; according to Payrau,⁴⁷ Biliński ‘conclut cette étude critique en acceptant la vérité historique de l’anecdote. La démonstration n’est pas absolument convaincante’; Frost⁴⁸ is also sceptical about the historicity of the episode (he argues that the Athenians could have sent a horseman instead of a runner);⁴⁹ according to Krentz,⁵⁰ ‘this story [...] probably is not historical, though not because the feat was impossible’, while Rhodes⁵¹ points out that the run ‘from Marathon to Athens after the battle to announce the victory [...] appears to have entered the tradition by the fourth century’. I argue that one should not adopt a clear stance, since the evidence adduced in support of one theory or the other is not compelling.⁵² Hence, I prefer to focus on the making of the legend rather than on its historicity.

⁴⁴ Siron 2018: 128: ‘Certain chercheurs ont pensé que le messager évoqué par Lucien avait réellement couru de Marathon et Athènes. Sian Lewis parle sérieusement d’un messager qui aurait existé mais aurait été identifié plus tard à Philippidès. Nicholas Hammond est même allé jusqu’à faire la route d’une quarantaine de kilomètres pour voir combien de temps elle nécessitait. Le docteur Jean de Mondenard, enfin, a recensé les neuf explications avancées pour expliquer la mort du coureur, entre overdose de stimulants, absence au contraire de produit dopants, collapsus ou problème du foie qui n’éliminait plus les toxines’.

⁴⁵ Glotz 1938: 2, and 39 n. 151.

⁴⁶ Biliński 1960: 18–19, and 31.

⁴⁷ Payrau 1960: 513.

⁴⁸ Frost 1979: 159–163.

⁴⁹ One of the anonymous reviewers of my paper suggested that this kind of objection ‘flies into the face of the evidence concerning other *hēmerodromoi*: why not on horse instead of on foot in their cases as well? One obvious reason is that Greece in the early 5th century had no proper roads (see Kendrick Pritchett 1980, esp. pp. 143–196)’. I thank him/her for the suggestion.

⁵⁰ Krentz 2010: 163–164.

⁵¹ Rhodes 2013: 9.

⁵² However, as Pelling 2013: 23 argues with regard to the specific episode of Cynegirus’ heroic death (Hdt. 6.113–114), I think that also in the case of the episode of the Marathon runner ‘there is no reason to doubt that something like this happened’.

2.1.1 SOME ‘MYTHICISING’ PROCESSES OF ACCOUNTS OF THE PERSIAN WARS

It would be difficult to deny that many episodes of the Persian Wars were ‘mythicised’ on more than one occasion.⁵³ Here I shall just offer a few examples which could be useful to try and reconstruct how the legend of the Marathon runner could have been shaped or, in other words, to identify some common patterns which could be considered the ‘ingredients’ used in its making.

As I have pointed out above,⁵⁴ after narrating the Thersippus episode, Plutarch mentions three honourable *marathōnomachoi*: Cynegeirus, Callimachus and Polyzelus (*De glor. Ath.* 3.347D). Herodotus talks of them in his account of the battle of Marathon, and Plutarch also mentions them in his *Parallela Graeca et Romana* (305C).⁵⁵

According to Herodotus (6.114), Cynegeirus, brother of the famous tragic poet Aeschylus,⁵⁶ died because his hand was chopped off as he grabbed the stern of one of the Persian vessels. Plutarch’s account is the same, but the author further ‘inflates’ the story by adding that the ship was sailing.⁵⁷

Herodotus (6.114) does not reveal much about Callimachus, except to say that he died after fighting courageously, while Plutarch reports that he died because his body was pierced by an extraordinary number of spears.

As for Polyzelus, Herodotus narrates (6.117) that, during the battle, this valiant Athenian met a huge hoplite whose beard was so long that it cast its shadow over his shield. Soon after this encounter, the Athenian went blind and one of his comrades died. Two points seem worth noting here: first, the name of the soldier has gradually been deformed: Herodotus calls him ‘Epizelus’, Plutarch ‘Polyzelus’; second, Herodotus knows by hearsay⁵⁸ that the soldier has narrated this episode himself.

⁵³ Rhodes 2013: 19: ‘Legends were soon attached to the Marathon campaign’.

⁵⁴ Cf. p. 3.

⁵⁵ Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 247 (Callimachus), 255 n. 114 (Callimachus, Cynegeirus), 260–262 n. 117.2–3 (Epizelus [= Polyzelus]). Cf. also Suda, s.v. Ἰππίας.

⁵⁶ How, Wells 1961²: 113 n. 114.

⁵⁷ Cf. also Ps. Plut. *Pro nob.* 10; Iustin. 2.9.16–19; Himer. *Or.* 2.21.

⁵⁸ See Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 262 n. 117.3.

I will return to these aspects later on in the paragraph devoted to my conclusions.⁵⁹

According to Herodotus (8.8), at the time of the battle of the Artemisium, Scyllias, a man of Sycion who was the greatest diver of his time, defected to the Greeks and performed such a marvellous aquatic exploit that Herodotus himself declares that he was not completely convinced about the truthfulness of this story. Scyllias dived into the sea at Aphetæ and only rose to the surface when he arrived at Artemisium, thus swimming underwater for about eighty *stadia*. Herodotus tells us that there are many tales about this man, some probably false, others true, and that, as regards this aquatic exploit, he thinks that Scyllias actually reached Artemisium by boat.⁶⁰

Besides these episodes (cf. also Paus. 1.32.5, who says that, ὡς λέγουσιν, a man looking like a peasant appeared on the battlefield and defeated a great number of barbarians with a plough, and that he disappeared soon after the fight), in which ordinary military deeds are ‘mythicalised’, another closer parallel to Plutarch’s and Lucian’s stories of the Marathon runner is that of Euchidas, transmitted by Plutarch in the *Life of Aristides*. After the victory over the Persians at Plataea (479 B.C.E.), the oracle of Delphi prescribed that the Greeks build an altar to Zeus Eleutherios which could not be used for sacrifices until the fire, contaminated by the barbarians, had been extinguished and new pure and sacred fire had been brought back from Delphi (Plut. *Vit. Arist.* 20.4–5):

Εὐχίδας ὑποσχόμενος ὡς ἐνδέχεται τάχιστα κομπεῖν τὸ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πῦρ, ἦκεν εἰς Δελφοῦς [...] καὶ λαβὼν ἀπὸ τοῦ βωμοῦ τὸ πῦρ, δρόμῳ πάλιν εἰς τὰς Πλαταιὰς ἐχώρει καὶ πρὸ ἡλίου δυσμῶν ἐπανῆλθε, τῆς αὐτῆς ἡμέρας χιλίους σταδίους κατανόσας. ἀσπασάμενος δὲ τοὺς πολίτας καὶ τὸ πῦρ παραδούς, εὐθὺς ἔπεσε καὶ μετὰ μικρὸν ἐξέπνευσε.

Euchidas, who volunteered to bring the sacred fire as rapidly as possible, went to Delphi [...] and, after taking the sacred fire from the altar, he ran

⁵⁹ Cf. pp. 47–50.

⁶⁰ Pausanias (10.19.1–2) records a statue of Scyllias erected by the Amphictyons at Delphi to commemorate how he and his daughter Hydna had worked on the Greeks’ behalf. Scyllias and Hydna thus became legendary figures. On these episodes see Bowie 2007: 98–100.

back to Plataea and arrived there before sunset, accomplishing a thousand *stadia* in one and the same day. Then he greeted his countrymen and gave them the fire. Soon after he fell down and expired.

After Euchidas' death, the Plataeans buried him in the sanctuary of Artemis Eucleia and inscribed a verse in tetrameter upon his tomb, running as follows: 'Euchidas, to Pytho running, came back here the self-same day'.

2.1.2 'MYTHICISING' PROCESSES OF ATHLETIC DEEDS

The stories of several Ancient athletes who sought immortality by doing extraordinary deeds could be included in such a 'mythicising' mechanism.⁶¹

Apart from the stories of Milo of Croton, Dioxippus and Cleomedes,⁶² some episodes in the life of the pancratiast Polydamas of Skotoussa, winner of a crown at the Olympic games of 408 B.C.E., seem to be particularly full of strange events: he ripped the hoof off a struggling bull; stopped a moving chariot by grabbing it and digging his heels into the ground; fought alone against three of the Persian King Darius II's bodyguards and defeated them, and he went to Mount Olympus and killed a lion with his bare hands in order to imitate Heracles. Polydamas may however have died young, trying to hold up a cave that was about to

⁶¹ See Boehringer 1996: 37–61; Bentz-Mann 2001: 226–240; Currie 2005; Lunt 2009: 375–392; Golden 2013: 349–356.

⁶² The wrestler Milo (late 6th century B.C.E.) was one of the greatest Greek athletes. Thanks to his athletic prowess, he was thought to be endowed with supernatural powers and he victoriously led the soldiers of Croton against the city of Sybaris. On this occasion, in order to represent himself as Heracles, he wore six Olympic wreaths, a lion skin and carried a club; the athlete Dioxippos (4th century B.C.E.), wearing only a garland and carrying a club like Heracles, defeated a fully armed Macedonian. Cf. Diod. Sic. 12.9.5–6 (Milo) and 17.100–101 (Dioxippos); Paus. 6.14.5–9 (Milo); Strabo 6.1.12 (Milo); Curt. 9.7.16–26 (Dioxippos). See Lunt 2009: 380–381; Golden 2013: 352 and 354. In 492 B.C.E., when the boxer Cleomedes was denied victory by the judges of a competition for having murdered his opponent, Ikkos of Epidauros, he returned to Astypalaea and, grief-stricken, knocked down the pillars of a school, whose roof collapsed, killing sixty boys. Cleomedes hid inside a chest in Athena's sanctuary, only to disappear when his countrymen opened it (Paus. 6.9.6–8). See Fontenrose 1968: 73–104; Lunt 2009: 384–385; Golden 2013: 354–355.

collapse on a group of his friends, and his statue in Olympia was said to be endowed with curative powers.⁶³

Euthymos of Locri was a boxing champion whose story resembles the myth of Heracles and Hesione: in fact, he defeated the ghost of Polites, one of Odysseus' former comrades who had forced the city of Temesa to make an annual sacrifice of a virgin, and managed to rescue the maiden who was to be sacrificed that year. At the end of his life, Euthymos disappeared into the river Caecinus, said to be his father (Homer. *Il.* 5.628–651; Pind. *Nem.* 1.94–95; Eur. *HF.* 400–402; Callim. *Aet. frr.* 98–99 Pfeiffer; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.9; Hyg. *Fab.* 89; Diod. Sic. 4.42; Plin. *HN.* 7.152; Paus. 6.6.4–10; Ael. *VH* 8.18).⁶⁴

Theagenes of Thasos was mainly a boxer and pancratiast, but he gave up these sports for long-distance running in order to imitate Achilles. According to an epigram on one of his statues, he ate an entire ox and carried a large bronze statue home from the city marketplace. He was said to be the real son of Heracles and, according to Pausanias, some of his statues had the magic power to heal the sick. After Theagenes' death, his fellow citizens dedicated a statue to him, but one of his enemies used to flog it every night, until one day he was killed when it fell on top of him. The man's son prosecuted the statue for murder, and it was thrown into the sea, only to be then fished out of the water and re-dedicated by the Thasians in order to put an end to a famine (D. Chr. 31.95–97; Plut. *Mor.* 811 d–e; Paus. 6.6.5–6, 6.11.2–9; Lucian. *Dial. D.* 12; Ath. 10.412 d–f).⁶⁵

We could also include the story of Ladas in this series of strange events. According to Pausanias, after winning a long-distance running competition at Olympia, Ladas fell sick and died on his way home. Pausanias' lack of certainty about the fact (δοκεῖν δέ μοι κάμνων αὐτίκα μετὰ τὴν νίκην) allows us to include it in the extraordinary death of athletes after immense athletic exertion (Paus. 3.21.1).⁶⁶

⁶³ Lunt 2009: 381; Golden 2013: 355.

⁶⁴ See Currie 2002: 35–37; Lunt 2009: 382; Golden 2013: 355.

⁶⁵ See Pouilloux 1954: 102–103; Bohringer 1979: 5–18; Pouilloux 1994; Jones 1998; Lunt 2009: 382–383; Golden 2013: 353, 355.

⁶⁶ See Biliński 1960: 30: 'Tuttavia tale morte non sembra essere probabile [...] e la morte per esaurimento, in seguito alla corsa, sembra essere una leggenda'; Musti, Torelli 1991: 260 n. 21.2–8; Matthews 2007: 2–14; Lunt 2009: 352.

2.1.3 COMMON PATTERNS OF ‘MYTHICISING’ PROCESSES: THE MYTH OF CLEOBIS AND BITON

All these (selected) examples seem to prove useful in shedding light on some common patterns which frequently occur in the ‘mythicising’ processes of ‘athletic’ performances:

1) extraordinary death (Cynegeirus, Callimachus, the comrade of Epi-/Polyzelus, Euchidas, Ladas, Cleomedes [?]⁶⁷);

2) attempts to grab, stop, hold up or carry huge or heavy objects and, in general, to accomplish extraordinary deeds, such as covering long distances in a short time (Cynegeirus, Polydamas of Skotoussa, Theagenes of Thasos; Euchidas; Scyllias; Ladas);

3) supernatural epiphanies (Epi-/Polyzelus; Euthymos of Locri).

A good example of the occurrence of these patterns in the mythical tradition could be found in the legend of Cleobis and Biton, transmitted by Herodotus. The historian describes the two heroes as ‘well-off and endowed with considerable physical strength’ and ‘both winners in athletic competitions’ (Hdt. 1.31.1 τούτοισι γὰρ ἐοῦσι γένος Ἀργείοισι βίος τε ἀρκέων ὑπὴν καὶ πρὸς τούτῳ ῥώμη σώματος τοιήδε· ἀεθλοφόροι τε ἀμφοτέροι ὁμοίως ἦσαν). The myth is set in Argos at the time of the festival dedicated to Hera. Cleobis’ and Biton’s mother wanted to go to the celebrations, but the oxen who were to pull her carriage never arrived and so Cleobis and Biton decided to pull it themselves. After pulling it for forty-five *stadia*, all the people of Argos praised them for their strength and kindness. Their mother, then, prayed to Hera to grant them the best possible destiny for a human being. After the celebrations, the two brothers fell asleep in the temple of the goddess and never woke up: dying was in fact the most glorious destiny for a human.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ For Cleomedes’ story see p. 44, n. 62. He actually disappears and thus we cannot be sure that he died.

⁶⁸ Cf. Solon’s words at Hdt. 1.31.3 and, for parallels, How’s & Wells’ commentary on this passage (How, Wells 1961²: 68 n. 31.3).

3. CONCLUSION

Let me now try to draw some conclusions about the disputed issues called into question in the introductory remarks of my paper.

As for the name of the Herodotean ἡμεροδρόμος who ran to ask for help before the battle of Marathon, it might be Φειδιππίδης, but not Φιλίππιδης. If we believe that Aristophanes, in his *Clouds*, alluded to the ἡμεροδρόμος (presumably in order to outline the contrast between Pheidippides' behaviour and the ancient values of the *marathōnomachoi*), we should consider, for example, Nenci's⁶⁹ point of view plausible, in which he asserts that the Herodotean story of the Marathon runner could have influenced Aristophanes.⁷⁰ However, due to the lack of convincing clues about any allusion to the Herodotean ἡμεροδρόμος in the *Clouds*, I think it would be advisable to base our hypotheses on philological criteria⁷¹ which allow us to easily explain the transition from the form Φειδιππίδης to Φιλίππιδης. In the *Clouds*, I argue, the comic word play and conceptual contrast between the root φειδ-, which gives the audience a glimpse of the parsimony of Strepsiades' family, and the suffix -πιπ-, which alludes to the preference of Strepsiades' wife for names usually associated to aristocratic people, are enough to justify the choice of 'Pheidippides' as a name for their son, whose passion for horse racing is the cause of the dissipation of family assets.

As to the 'identity' of the Marathon runner who died after announcing the Greek victory, Plutarch says that this was a disputed issue: most people think that he was Eucles, while Herclides Ponticus' witness suggests that he was Thersippus. Then, Plutarch likens the heroic deeds and death of Thersippus/Eucles to those of the *marathōnomachoi* Cynegeirus, Callimachus and Polyzelus, who – according to Plin. *HN*. 35.34, Paus. 1.15.3 and Ael. *NA*. 7.38⁷² – were depicted in the painting of

⁶⁹ Nenci 1998: 266–227 n. 105.2.

⁷⁰ Legrand's explanation does not seem convincing to me: he argues that Φειδιππίδης could be a variant suggested by Aristophanes to a scribe who 'a pu juger que ce nom, composé de φείδω, convenait à un coureur à pied, qui permettait d'économiser les chevaux' (Legrand 1963: 105 n. 2).

⁷¹ Cf. pp. 36–37.

⁷² How, Wells 1961²: 113 n. 114: 'In the picture of Marathon in the *Stoa Poikile* there were figures of Miltiades [...] of Callimachus [...] of Cynegeirus [...] and apparently of his brother Aeschylus'.

the battle of Marathon kept in the *Stoa Poikile*. Hence, Athanassaki's suggestive hypothesis that Herodes Atticus and his family, who count several 'Eucles' among their ancestors, attempted to link themselves to the Marathon runner for political purposes, finds support in the finding⁷³ of an inscribed statue base in front of the *Stoa*, on which 'we read that Eucles' son Polycarmus "set up the new Hero Eucles, son of Herodes, of Marathon"''.⁷⁴

As for the form of the greeting used by the Marathon runner in Plutarch's *De gloria Atheniensium*, I think that the manuscripts reading, *χαίρετε, χαίρομεν*, should be preserved: nothing authorises us to contaminate the Plutarchean text with the one reported by Lucian and, as Gallo & Mocci have remarked, the word play realised by the juxtaposition of the two verbs perfectly fits in with the author's style.⁷⁵

Finally, as for the question about whether the episode of the Marathon runner really happened or not, due to the lack of compelling clues, nothing emerges that would allow us to adopt a clear stance. I think, however, that there is no reason to think that the episode was completely made up. That said, my interest in the episode of the Marathon runner lies not in any historicity that the story may 'hide', but in how and why the legend evolved.

We know that many episodes of the battle of Marathon have been 'mythicised': Cynegeirus', Callimachus' and Epi-/Polyzelus' extraordinary deeds, visions and deaths, as well as those of Euchidas at Plataea and of Scyllias from Sycion, are good examples of such a 'mythicising' process.⁷⁶

There is a common thread running through all these stories of our heroes: first, both the Marathon runner and Euchidas greet their countrymen

⁷³ In 2013.

⁷⁴ See Athanassaki 2016: 215, and 221. On the painting kept in the *Stoa Poikile*, see also Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 3–5.

⁷⁵ Cf. p. 10.

⁷⁶ Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 2: 'Commemoration started early [...] A dedication on the Athenian acropolis in the name of the polemarch Kallimachos (ML no. 18 = Fornara 49) was then probably erected very soon after the battle [...]. A stone memorial to the dead of the Erechtheid tribe [...] was also probably erected within a few years'.

and suddenly expire after running a long way⁷⁷; second, the Herodotean Pheidippides and Lucian's Philippides are professional ἡμεροδρόμοι,⁷⁸ whereas both the Plutarchean Thersippus/Eucles and Euchidas are not professional couriers and carry out their mission voluntarily; third, just as happened in the case of the Marathon runner, the name of the Herodotean Epizelus has been gradually deformed: Plutarch, in fact, calls him Polyzelus.

It is also worth noting that Cynegeirus' and Callimachus' deeds were 'mythicised' ever since the time of Herodotus and that the marvellous elements of their episodes increased over time, as the abovementioned⁷⁹ passages from Plutarch show. Moreover, Herodotus tells us that he knows by hearsay that Epizelus had narrated his extraordinary episode himself, which seems to be further evidence of the fact that the 'mythicising' process began soon after the war ended.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ The cult of Eucleia could also link these episodes: after the battle of Marathon, the Athenians dedicated a sanctuary to Eucleia (Paus. 1.14.5) and Euchidas was buried in the sanctuary of Artemis Euclea. See Athanassaki 2016: 220–221. On the basis of these elements, Biliński argues that Eucles could originally have been an epithet, then used as a name for the anonymous Marathon runner (Biliński 1960: 27–28). I think that his hypothesis is not without grounds, but also that the more recent one given by Athanassaki (cf. pp. 38–40) allows us to better understand the reasons which brought our main sources, Plutarch and Lucian, to offer their versions of the fact.

⁷⁸ See Christensen, Nielsen, Schwartz 2009: 153.

⁷⁹ Cf. pp. 42–44.

⁸⁰ The historical events at Marathon have evidently been enriched with 'mythical' elements and epiphanies (see Hornblower, Pelling 2017: 1–9, and 261 n. 117.2–3). The 'mythicising' process affected different aspects of the battle and its protagonists, and increased over time: for example, according to a declamatory speech by Nicolaus (*Ethopoeia* 1.386 Walz), Miltiades met Pan before the battle, while in Herodotus' account this role is played by the ἡμεροδρόμος Pheidippides; instead, according to Polemon (1.35 and 2.41.62), the only advice Miltiades gave the Athenians was to make sacrifices to Pan after the battle (see Nenci 1998: 268). Apart from these accounts, an epigram, often attributed to Simonides, which may date back to the 5th century B.C.E., reports that Miltiades dedicated a statue to Pan in gratitude for his help against the Persians. The passage from the lexicon Suda which informs us about the running of the ἡμεροδρόμος Philippides, also gives an account of the misadventures of Callimachus and Polyzelus, but fails to mention Cynegeirus stating that someone said that the phantom who appeared to Polyzelus was Pan and not the huge hoplite mentioned by Herodotus and Plutarch. See Page, *FGE* V and Athanassaki 2016: 218. As Theon reports in his *Progymnasmata* 2 (II 67, 22 Sp), in the 4th century B.C.E. Theopompus criticised the Athenian tendency to exaggerate their victories, particularly that of Marathon (*fr.*

The stories of Ancient athletes who sought immortality by earning a heroic *status*, those of prodigious events involving athletic deeds and the sudden death of the legendary brothers Cleobis and Biton after their athletic effort provide further examples of a common pattern which could have been involved in the making of the legend of the Marathon runner.

We do not know exactly when and how the legend developed. According to the Plutarchean witness,⁸¹ we are only able to say that the first literary account of the legend could be found in the 4th century B.C.E in the literary production of Heracleides Ponticus. Plutarch also tells us that an alternative version of the story was circulating at his time, in which the hero was called Eucles; according to Athanassaki, based on E. L. Bowie's studies on the matter,⁸² the latter version of the story could have to do with the political attempt of the Marathonian Attici family to link themselves to the glorious Marathon runner.

Perhaps in order to avoid endorsing Herodes Atticus' attempt to enoble his origins, Lucian 'rationalised' the legend by giving the Marathon runner the role which the runner might really have had, namely that of ἡμεροδρόμος, assigning him the name of the only ἡμεροδρόμος he knew, that is Herodotean Philippides.

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153 Jacoby = 167 M. ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐν Μαραθῶνι μάχην οὐχ οἷαν ἅπαντες ὑμνοῦσι γεγεννημένην ['also the battle of Marathon was not as the people exalt'].

⁸¹ *De glor. Ath.* 347C.

⁸² See pp. 38–40.

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