

Abstract: In *Aen.* 8.685 *hinc ope barbarica variisque Antonius armis* Vergil describes Marc Antony's forces at Actium. Here *variisque*, found in all the extant manuscripts, has been suspected by some scholars and Niklaas Heinsius proposed the correction *Phariisque* ('Egyptian'). His conjecture, however, although elegant and very close to the transmitted text, failed to persuade. The proposal has on the contrary strong evidence, not yet adduced, to support it. According to Octavian's official propaganda and in order to remove the idea of civil war, Vergil describes the battle as a war between Rome and a foreign enemy, Egypt (as can be gathered from vv. 696, where Cleopatra leads the fleet with the *sistrum*, 698-700, where Egyptian theriomorphic gods, and especially *latrator Anubis*, face Olympic gods, or 711-3, where the Nilus, pictured as a river-god, offers shelter to the losers). Furthermore, the depiction of Actium's battle on the shield owes much to Callimachus' *Hymn* to Delos and particularly to Apollo's second prophecy (vv. 171-90), which prefigures Ptolemy II's defeat of the Gauls in 278 B.C.; in *Aen.* 8.685 Vergil imitates closely *Del.* 172 s. οἱ μὲν ἐφ' Ἑλλήνεσσι μάχαιραν / βαρβαρικὴν καὶ Κελτὸν ἀναστήσαντες Ἴαση. Especially noteworthy is the *dicolon* μάχαιραν / βαρβαρικὴν καὶ Κελτὸν ... Ἴαση, paralleled by Vergil's *ope barbarica variisque ... armis*, and the alliteration between the last two words (*ἀναστήσαντες Ἴαση* ~ *Antonius armis*). In Callimachus the rare βαρβαρικός is varied by the ethnic Κελτός, which strongly supports *Pharius* in Vergil. Finally, Flavian poets (Martial, Valerius Flaccus and Statius), independently of each other, imitate Vergil's verse, showing that they read *Phariisque* there.

Keywords: Vergil, *Aeneid*, Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos*, Flavian poets.