The Song of Iopas — *Aeneid* 1. 740-46

Iopas' 'song' in *Aeneid* 1 — although it is convenient to refer to it as such — is a mere résumé. It is Virgil's summary of a comprehensive Lucretian account of the 'nature of things', from the origin of life and matter:

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cithara crinitus Iopas 740
personat aurata docuit quem maximus Atlas.
hic canit errantem lunam solisque labores,
unde hominum genus et pecudes, unde imber et ignes,
Arcturum pluviasque Hyadas geminosque Triones;
quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles 745
hiberni vel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet.
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Iopas of the uncut hair — great Atlas was his teacher — plays on a gilded lyre. He sings of the wandering moon and the toils of the sun; whence men arose, and beasts, and fire and water; of Arcturus and the rainy Hyades and the Great and Lesser Bear; why winter suns plunge so impatiently in sea or what stands in the way of sluggish night.

Certain difficulties of this passage — both as regards its detail and its general significance — have often been discussed by critics,¹ and, in an exchange of views in *Emerita*, by Charles Segal and T. E. Kinsey.² It is the views of these two scholars in particular which I will consider in this article. The fundamental difficulty is the relation of the song to its context, since it is uncertainty on this point which makes the details problematical. I will therefore begin by briefly sketching in the context.

¹ See p. 18 below, with n. 5.

² In order of publication: Kinsey 47, 1979, pp. 77-86; Segal 49, 1981, pp. 17-25; Kinsey 52, 1984, pp. 69-76; Segal ibid. pp. 77-82. The exchange was provoked by an article of Segal, 'The Song of Iopas in the Aeneid', *Hermes* 99 (1971): 336-49. I will include all of these in my discussion, and refer to them as Segal 1971, etc.
At the end of *Aeneid* Dido welcomes Aeneas and his Trojans to Carthage by providing a banquet in her palace. In setting and scale, the banquet is of regal magnificence. Beneath lamps that hang from a ceiling of fretted gold, the Trojans recline on couches draped with cloth of purple, Dido herself on a couch of gold. Fifty slave-girls prepare the meal, two hundred slaves attend the guests at table. Amidst this scene of general grandeur, two details underline the noble descent of Dido herself. On the tables stand golden vessels carved with the proud record of her ancestors and ‘a long, long catalogue of exploits sustained by hero after hero from the distant origin of her race’ (641-42); the bowl from which she pours a libation is ennobled by the memory of generations of royal possessors: ‘Belus’ — founder of the dynasty of Tyrian kings — ‘and all the line descended from him, used to drink from it’ (729-30). Dido enhances the splendour of the banquet, which is the appropriate counterpart to the greatness of her descent, by the nobility of her own character. ‘I have known sorrow, and it teaches me to help the unfortunate’, she had told the Trojan Ilioneus when he asked her for help (630), and the generosity of this reception vindicates her words. Conferring her hospitality on the Trojans amidst these heirlooms, which directly recall, and this splendour, which still reflects, the ancient greatness of her house, Dido is every inch a queen.

But when Virgil puts Dido’s greatness before us so clearly, it is already undermined and marked for destruction. Aeneas’ mother Venus knows that he cannot stay in Carthage, but must go on to Italy, but for her own limited purposes she has seduced Dido to fall in love with him. For Dido this love can end in nothing but despair, and through the brilliance of the banquet we see it looming behind her like the shadow of the assassin’s knife. When the childless queen is captivated by the radiant cheeks of the boy she believes to be Aeneas’ son Ascanius but who is in reality Venus’ catspaw Cupid, she is already ‘in the grip of the doom to come’, *pestit devota futurae* (712), and she takes him on her lap ‘unaware, poor queen, what a mighty god is sitting on her knee’, *inscia ... insidat quantus miserae deus* (718-19).

The god works quickly, and by the time Iopas has sung his song, Dido is enmeshed. She begins to ask Aeneas about his past, and the drift of her questions is a subtle but unmistakable pointer to the new focus of her attention. At first, harmlessly enough, she asks him about famous figures of the war at Troy, Greek and Trojan alike, Priam and Hector, Diomedes and Achilles (750-52). Frank and open herself, she instinctively sides with the

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3 *series longissima rerum / per tot ducta viros antiqua ab origine gentis.*

4 *quam Belus et omnes / a Belo soliti.*
victims of what she calls 'Greek treachery', insidias . . . Danaum (754) — a phrase which indirectly but unequivocally assures Aeneas where her sympathies lie. Then the scope of her questions narrows, and she leads Aeneas' conversation through the misfortunes of the Trojans at large (casusque tuorum, 754) to come in the end to a personal and explicit 'your' and 'you': erroresque tuos; nam te iam septima portat . . . aetas (755-56).

These few lines, the last in Book 1, finalize the tendency of the whole banquet scene: the transition of Dido from great queen, heir to the traditions and splendour of ancient kings, to simple vulnerable human being. Yet if this is the tendency of this episode, how does the song of Iopas contribute to it? — since I will make two assumptions which seem to me to be necessary: first, that it does contribute, and is not a mere purple patch; and second, that the whole of it contributes, and not merely this detail or that, which would still leave the function of the song itself unexplained.

Interpretations of the song which pre-date his 1971 article have been conveniently summarised by Segal,5 and I will quote from his summary:

Servius (ad 472) . . . suggested that the philosophic subject-matter was appropriate for the still-chaste queen . . . Among modern critics Cartault gave up in despair. The subject of the song, he felt, had no connection with the rest of the book and merely reflected Virgil’s personal interests . . . Walter Kranz . . . interpreted the song as part of the local atmosphere. Iopas, whom Servius (ad 1. 738) connects with local African history, reflects Libyan or Phoenician religious beliefs and treats the sun or moon as gods or ‘Urgötter’. [Léon Hermann believes that] crinitus Iopas is to be identified with Maecenas. Viktor Pöschl . . . suggests that the song is to be taken as a reflection of the mood of love growing in Dido’s heart . . . The long nights of winter of which Iopas sings (745-6) blend with this long night of awakening passion in which Dido’s daylight scruples begin to be overcome by a stronger force.

Segal wastes no time on Léon Hermann’s suggestion: we cannot take

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it 'very seriously . . . despite his disarming assurance: "Après tout, la chose n’a rien que de naturel"'. Kranz’s interpretation too he regards as ‘unsatisfactory because . . . it presupposes a knowledge of remote peoples which Virgil could not expect many of his readers to have’, and — a more cogent objection, in my opinion — ‘it does not account for the fact that sun and moon form only a small part of the song’. Segal finds Viktor Pöschl’s view ‘somewhat more satisfactory’, and he also sees some merit in Servius’ note — it ‘is not so wide of the mark as it might at first look’ — but adds that ‘it does not constitute the whole story’. I will look into Pöschl’s long night of passion later. Here I will say only that Servius certainly needs qualification. Even if we did not have the example of Aspasia before us, who (so Plutarch tells us), when she was not arranging assignations for Pericles with freeborn ladies of Athens, was consorting with philosophers such as Socrates and Anaxagoras, we might doubt a necessary generic connection between chastity and philosophy; and suppose we did admit that, we would still have to explain how Iopas’ philosophy, which is cosmology, not ethics, has specific relevance to Dido.

Segal himself argues that the whole episode of Iopas is darkly suggestive, and adds to the sinister certainty we already feel that Dido’s encounter with Aeneas must come to a tragic end. In both the singer and his teacher Atlas disturbing symbols confront pious Aeneas, founder of the stern and virtuous Roman race: ‘Atlas is a Titan, a conquered opponent of the Olympian and Jovian order . . . In book IV Virgil describes Atlas . . . His picture suggests . . . a harsh outlaw — durus is Virgil’s epithet — who must endure punishment and exile in a bleak, wild setting (4. 246-51)’. Iopas ‘has long hair and a gilded lyre . . . The hair may be simply a sign of affinity with Apollo [though Segal seems to imply by this that it may not, in which case it is presumably a sign of oriental effeminacy] . . . But the golden lyre is a reminder of the luxurious accoutrements of the entire banquet . . . We are thus further enveloped in the atmosphere of dangerous oriental luxury with which

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6 Even if we could believe that Iopas was Maecenas, we would still have to explain why Virgil put this song in his mouth in this context.

7 Pericles 32.1. Plutarch cites this as a supplementary charge brought against Aspasia by the comic-poet Hermippus when he prosecuted her for impiety.

8 For Socrates, ibid. 24.5. Her association with Anaxagoras is implied by their common attachment to Pericles. Both she and Anaxagoras were prosecuted at the same time (loc. cit. n. 7 above).

9 1971, pp. 344-45.
the scene began'. In the song itself, ‘Iopas’ words give us an image of nature bedimmed by suffering and change'.

There are two separate issues here — Virgil’s presentation of the singer, and the content of his song — and I will consider them in turn. First, Iopas’ teacher Atlas.

The passage of Book 4 to which Segal refers reads as follows:

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\begin{align*}
\text{iamque volans apicem et latera ardua cemit} \\
\text{Atlantis duri caelum qui vertice fulcit,} \\
\text{Atlantis, cinctum assidue cui nubibus atris} \\
\text{piniferum caput et vento pulsatur et imbri,} \\
\text{nix umeros infusa tegit, tum flumina mento} \\
\text{praecipitant senis, et glacie riget horrida barba (246-51).}
\end{align*}
\]

Now it may be that when Virgil wrote this description he intended his readers to recall every last detail of the biography which mythopoeic imagination had created around the name of Atlas, but that seems to me unlikely. To adapt a phrase from Aristotle, those details lie outside the poem — I mean, they are nothing to the point. What interests Virgil here is not the how or the why of Atlas’ transformation, but the paradox of animate identity preserved in the stone that entombed it. This storm-battered, frozen massif was once a living being, and somehow, through the rock and ice, we can sense the lineaments of a being sentient still, and the force of a will unbroken. Its own cold may torment the man-mountain but it will stubbornly endure to the end the ceaseless assaults of time and nature. If we knew nothing of the myth of Atlas we could grasp this essential import from Virgil’s words, which are virtually self-explanatory. He is not trying to ransack the storehouse of the mythographers himself, or encourage us to aimlessly finger its treasures, and we add nothing to the force of his response to the myth if we stop to ask ourselves how Atlas was transformed, or why, or why he must hold up the sky with his head.

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11 1971, p. 345.

12 What Aristotle means by ἐξω τῆς τραγωδίας (Poet. 54b7) is not quite the point I am making here, though Aristotle clearly implies the necessity for the spectator, or reader, to dissociate from the poet’s text the irrelevant or extraneous.

13 We know the ‘how’ — Perseus transformed the Titan with the head of the Gorgon Medusa — and the ‘why’ — Atlas had denied Perseus hospitality. Ultimately it was
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There is one detail of the myths surrounding Atlas, however, which Virgil does intend us to recall, and he does not rely on our spontaneous recollection, but underlines it himself. It is not by accident that Mercury alights on Mount Atlas on his flight to Carthage. The blood of the petrified giant flows in the veins of the god who momentarily rests on the forbidding peak: the daughter of Atlas was Maia, and she was Mercury’s mother. Thus, writes Virgil, Mercury flew on ‘and cut the winds, coming from his mother’s father’:

\[ \text{ventosque secabat, materno veniens ab avo} \] (257-58). Mercury, grandson of Atlas, was inventor of the lyre, and if Virgil is encouraging us to look anywhere beyond this episode, it is back to the teacher of the minstrel Iopas.

In Segal’s view, Virgil has encouraged us to make the connection to the ‘outlawry’ of Atlas by the single adjective *durus*, which he translates as ‘harsh’. Admittedly that is a possible translation of the word, but it is tendentious here, and assumes what it sets out to prove, that it is an outlaw Virgil is talking about. If we apply *durus* to Atlas as the mass of rock, it means ‘hard’; if we apply it to the Titan imprisoned in stone who defies the elements for ever while he bears the weight of the heavens on his head, it means ‘tough’, ‘enduring’, and is, very likely, a Virgilian wordplay on the literal meaning of Atlas’ name, ‘much-enduring’.14

Yet even if we suppose that Segal’s interpretation is right, we would still need to suppose that the ‘harsh outlaw’ of Book 4 should control our responses to the teacher of Book 1, and that is by no means self-evident. In fact, the reverse could be argued with much greater plausibility, that the positive connotations of Atlas’ role in Book 1 control our response to his reappearance in Book 4. In the features of the frozen mountain we recognize the features, not of an outlaw whom we have not met, and will not meet, in the *Aeneid*, but the imprisoned spirit of the sage who taught Iopas.

Virgil made Atlas Iopas’ teacher not because he was a ‘conquered opponent of the Olympian order’, but for reasons much more immediate: first,

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14 If we can take *durus* as ‘harsh’ (and perhaps it does have that subsidiary connotation), surely it applies more properly to Atlas’ inhospitality to Perseus than to his attempt to seize the rule of Olympus by force.
their shared African homeland; and second, the tradition, often noted by commentators,\(^\text{15}\) that Atlas himself was an ‘Urphilosoph’, a prototype of natural philosophers. In Conington’s words, ‘he seems to have been a sort of mythical representative or progenitor of physical philosophers, among whom he is recorded by Diogenes Laertius’.\(^\text{16}\) Further, there is a clear implication in the context that we are to regard his appearance here as teacher as conferring lustre on his pupil, not as contaminating him with the stain of blasphemous rebellion. Just as it is a convention in Greek and Roman epic that the value of the gift, and thus the status of the recipient, is enhanced by the status of the giver — Dido’s cup, which once belonged to Belus, represents a variation on this theme — so is it also a convention that the status of the teacher is index to the quality of the pupil. Thus Hesiod claims authority for his poetry by asserting that he was taught by the Muses,\(^\text{17}\) and in a dream of equally creditable import Homer appeared before the doubtless deserving eyes of Ennius and ‘began to unfold the nature of things in his words’.\(^\text{18}\) Virgil uses the convention himself in Book 5 of the \textit{Aeneid},\(^\text{19}\) when the old Trojan Nautes encourages a desponding Aeneas. His words deserve respect — his teacher was Tritonian Pallas — and their wisdom is proven by the outcome, as we knew it must be. When we read this passage in Book 1, therefore, our natural assumption will be that the fact that Iopas was taught by Atlas amounts to an indirect tribute to his skill. It is true, of course, that Virgil does not have to be bound by the convention — he may be creating a positive response which he will subsequently negate. Yet if that is what he is doing — if he is turning the convention on its head — he must surely have given us a clearer clue to his intention. As it is, we would leave the episode of Iopas with our false impression intact, and would come to a true understanding of what it meant only when we reached that distant allusion, at best faint and only possible, not probable, in Book 4. Virgil credits his readers with remarkable sensitivity indeed if he imagines that their subtle penetration of the layers of \textit{durus} there

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15 And by Segal, 1971, p. 344.

16 Ad 741.

17 \textit{Theog.} 22f.

18 \textit{coepisse et rerum naturam expandere dictis}, \textit{Lucr. R.N.} 1.126.

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will shake the impression left in Book 1 that Iopas was a bard of no ordinary skill since he had been taught by maximus Atlas.

On the question of Iopas’ long hair and gilded lyre, Segal himself seems to be in two minds. Whereas, on p. 340, they further envelop us in an ‘atmosphere of dangerous oriental luxury’, on p. 339 they ‘evoke the heroic past and the values of the heroic world’.

Segal was right the first time. It hardly seems necessary to argue that long hair was no sign of dangerous luxury in an age when Homer’s regular designation for the warriors who conquered Troy is the ‘long-haired Achaeans’, κάρης κομόωντες Ἀχαιοῖ. If Virgil had said nothing about Iopas’ hair, his readers would have assumed it was long. It does not make him compromising company for god-fearing Aeneas, who presumably had long hair himself, and if Virgil mentions it specifically it is because, like his teacher Atlas, it calls attention to Iopas’ status. As Segal more or less admits, it assimilates him to Apollo, the god of music whose hair was never cut short. So does his golden lyre. No ordinary minstrel, Iopas plays no ordinary instrument but that which was the ‘possession of Apollo and the dark-tressed Muses’; neither he nor his lyre are symbols of that wanton extravagance in Dido’s court which is suggested by Segal’s phrase ‘oriental luxury’. There may be a fine line between the regal splendour that marks a great queen and the luxury of self-indulgent power, but Virgil is not suggesting that Dido has

20 It was not only Homer’s Achaeans who had long hair. Romans of earlier and manlier generations too left their hair and beard uncut. Hence, so Varro tells us, their ‘statues generally have long hair and a generous beard’, capillium et barbam magnam (Rust. 2.11.10). When Masinissa met Scipio in 206 B.C., he was filled with respect at a presence made even more imposing by a head of unshorn hair: praeterquam quod suapat natura multa maiestas inerat, adornabat promissa caesaries (Liv. 28.35.6). Scipio’s long hair did not, in the eyes of Masinissa or Livy (or, obviously, of Scipio himself) detract from a habitus corporis . . . virilis vere et militaris (ibid.).

21 See p. 19 above.


23 Απόλλωνος καὶ ἱοπλοκάμων / σύνδικον Μοισάν κτέανον, Pindar P. 1. 1-2.
crossed it. The generosity of her instincts has not been corrupted by the wealth of ancient kings. When Ilioneus asks her for help she replies, with simple magnanimity, Urbem quam statuo vestra est, 'The city I am founding is yours' (573).

Now Virgil could, I suppose, have written the tale of Aeneas' untimely dalliance with a Dido who was the daughter of a goatherd and lived in a shanty on the banks of the Bagradas. In that case we would now be reading a pastoral romance comparable in tone to the Hecale of Callimachus. But if he wanted us to feel for the tragic fall of a great queen he had first to persuade us of her greatness, and part of the persuasion lies in the splendour he has her unfold at this banquet. It is this, not her 'luxury', that is enhanced by Iopas and his gilded lyre; and they, like every other detail of the banquet, give us the outward measure of the height from which Dido has already begun to fall. This intensification of pathos by affective contrast is typical of the Aeneid. It has its analogue, for instance, in the contrast between what Priam was — the proud ruler of Asia — and the headless nameless corpse abandoned on the beach of Troy:

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\text{tot quondam populis terrisque superbum regnatorem Asiae. iacet ingens litore truncus avulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus (2. 556-58);}
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and, on a smaller scale, in the beams the Trojans tear from the roof of his palace to drop on the attacking Greeks: they are ornamented with gold, auratas (Ibid. 448).

At this point, before I discuss Segal's analysis of the song itself, I would like to consider T. E. Kinsey's interpretation of the episode, which he develops partly in response to Segal. Kinsey is no more convinced than I am by the construction Segal places on the implications of Atlas as Iopas' teacher, or on the description of the bard himself. 'In the Aeneid', he writes, 'Atlas is not represented as a 'harsh outlaw' . . . In VIII 138-41, where Aeneas is demonstrating to Evander that they are related, Aeneas traces both their lines back to Atlas. Other and better reasons can be found for making Atlas Iopas'
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teacher'. The description of Atlas at Book 4. 246-51 is 'simply ... physical ... I see no justification for saying it shows “the clearly negative cast of his character”, whatever that is supposed to mean'. As for Iopas, ‘He is an imposing figure. He has been given a prestigious teacher, an epithet (sc. crinitus) elsewhere given by Virgil to Apollo and the golden lyre of Apollo and the Muses. There is nothing to create prejudice in the golden lyre; the Italians in the later books have gold on their armour.’

So much for Iopas and Atlas. As for the song itself, Kinsey believes that it ‘marks an important stage in the affair of Dido and Aeneas’. It influences Aeneas’ decision to stay in Carthage, since it reminds the Trojans of the dangers of the sea and, because of its recognition of the ties of common humanity, encourages them to accept Dido’s previous offer of hospitality: ‘Iopas’ Song ends with an account of certain phenomena connected with the hardships of seafarers’; it implies that nature is hostile to men ... Iopas sings too of the origin of men and beasts, a theme which must with this background have given his audience a feeling of the unity of animate as against inanimate nature and in particular of the unity of men, whether Trojans or Carthaginians. The Trojans have been given an offer of hospitality by Dido and this song would clearly encourage them to make full use of it ... As the result of Iopas’ song, the friendly feeling between the two sides is at its

25 1979, p. 84. Kinsey cites Austin on 1. 741, who adduces Atlas’ association with Africa, his relationship with Mercury, and his reputation as the inventor of astronomy.

26 1984, p. 70.

27 1984, p. 72.

28 1979, p. 79.

29 1984, p. 74.

30 By the ‘background’ Kinsey means the ‘nature of the audience [both sides had recent experience of long sea-voyages] and ... the atmosphere of good-fellowship in which the Song was performed’ (1984, p. 72).
height and the pressure is strong on Aeneas to agree to a lengthy stay.31

In my opinion this interpretation is unsustainable. In a song which embraces the phenomena of nature from the creation of matter to solar eclipses it is fanciful to see in a bare enumeration such as ‘the origin of men and beasts, of fire and water’ an assertion of the ‘unity of men, whether Trojan or Carthaginian’. To do so is to presume that we can know far more about the content and the tendency of Iopas’ song than Virgil chooses to tell us; nor can the song be said to reflect or underline the ‘atmosphere of good-fellowship in which [it] was performed’. It is far too terse and abstract for that.32

Kinsey’s reference to ‘certain phenomena connected with the hardships of seafarers’ is based on lines 744-46:

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Arcturum pluviasque Hyadas geminosque Triones;
quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles 745
hiberni vel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet.
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‘Arcturus, the Hyades and the Triones’, he writes, ‘were all important for navigation. The rising and setting of Arcturus . . . were periods of storm. The evening rising . . . and morning setting . . . of the Hyades indicated rain. The Great and Little Bears were important for steering and in stormy weather the stars could not be seen . . . The last two lines . . . further draw attention to the difficulties of sea-travel in the autumn and winter’.33 Whether lines 745-46 denote autumn and winter I will consider later. Here it is enough to point out that there is no necessary connection at all between Arcturus, the Hyades, the Great and Little Bears, and the hardships of sea-faring. The stars may indeed be invisible to sailors during storms, but Iopas says nothing to imply that they were always invisible, or that the stars were responsible for it.34 And though

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31 1979, p. 79.

32 See Kinsey in his 1987 article on Iopas in the Enciclopedia Virgiliana, iii (s.v.lopa): ‘V. indica solo gli argomenti del canto e non fa parola delle opinioni dell’ aedo si questi temi’. (I owe this reference to the reader for Prudentia.)

33 1979, p. 80.

34 If I understand Kinsey correctly, he is confusing cause with effect, since he seems to be saying that the danger to seafarers lies not in the storms which obscure their guiding stars, but in the stars which the storms obscure.
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the risings and settings of Arcturus and the Hyades may have indicated storms and rain, we need not assume that Iopas, in his synoptic cosmology, chose to dwell upon their risings and settings. Here again Kinsey seems to be taking it upon himself to write into Virgil’s text something the poet himself has clearly not included, if it ever crossed his mind. Finally, these very three constellations, which Kinsey takes to be a sure portent of disaster for those who go down to the sea in ships, could be, as Virgil himself tells us, the exact reverse: a sign to the experienced observer of fair weather to come. If we are to believe Kinsey, Aeneas’ helmsman Palinurus must have shivered in his seaboots as he listened to Iopas singing his song; but when he had to choose the right time to lead the Trojan fleet across the unknown Adriatic, ‘he looked at all the stars . . . Arcturus, the rainy Hyades, and the Great and Little Bears [the line is repeated from Book 1] . . . and when he saw that their signs were consistent in the cloudless sky’, far from being reminded of the ‘hardships of seafarers’, ‘he gave a clear signal from his high stern . . . and we set out on our voyage and spread the wings of our sails’:

sidera cuncta notat . . .
Arcturum pluviasque Hyadas geminosque Triones . . .
postquam cuncta videt caelo constare sereno,
dat clarum e puppis signum . . .
temptamusque viam et velorum pandimus alas (3. 515-20).

For much the same reasons as mine, Segal, in his response to Kinsey’s article, rejects the notion that the origin of men and beasts is a theme which must have promoted a feeling of unity between Trojans and Carthaginians: ‘One wonders what in “this background” ”must” have given the poet’s audience this feeling, for there is very little of it visible in Virgil’s text’.35 Kinsey’s defence of his position36 is unconvincing, and Segal’s scepticism is justified. On one point, however, Kinsey and Segal do agree: that is, the essentially disturbing picture of nature created in Iopas’ song. ‘Iopas’, writes Kinsey, ‘sings of a Universe . . . hostile to men’; he ‘ends with an account of certain phenomena connected with the hardships of seafarers’; and through his mouth Virgil creates an ‘impression of toil . . . trouble [and] uncertainty’.37 Segal lays great emphasis on the negative image of nature

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36 Quoted in part at n. 30 above. Kinsey adds that ‘the Song [which I would not call part of the “background”] . . . was so wide in scope that men and beasts could be lumped together and mankind treated as a whole . . . [and] it ended with an account of phenomena which would remind a seafaring audience of the perils of the sea’ (ibid.).

37 1979, p. 79; 1984, pp. 74 and 80.
presented by Iopas. 'The celestial movements which he describes bear the taint of erratic movement and effort: *hic canit errantem lunam solisque labores* (742)'. His song implies 'toil and imperfection . . . something awry and mysterious in the cosmic order', and contains little beyond 'the flaws of . . . beautiful and mysterious phenomena'. 'The picture of nature . . . is one of violence, disturbance, irregularity'. The 'fires [of] the song [are] disturbed', the cosmology 'deliberately flawed'. Iopas presents 'a picture of a world flawed by violence, irregularity, disorder', 'a vision of a disturbed cosmic order appropriate to the dangerous erotic atmosphere around Dido and Aeneas'.

Because Segal lays so much emphasis on this aspect of Iopas' song — it is crucial to his interpretation — and because I have already considered the most important of Kinsey's 'phenomena', in what follows I will examine their common ground specifically through the arguments of Segal. 'Iopas' words', to take his first formulation, 'give us an image of nature bedimmed by suffering and change'. Now unless we are to envisage the universe as the motionless, timeless Parmenidean "one", it is difficult to conceive of it without change; but whether change necessarily 'bedims' is another matter. In so far as the moon not only sets, but also rises, not only wanes, but also waxes, a critic of more optimistic bent than Segal might argue that the universe is brightened by change, not dimmed. The same might be said of Arcturus, the Hyades and the Bears. They may disappear consistently, but until now, at least, they have reappeared with equal consistency, and unless we begin treating them in the way we treat our own planet they may go on reappearing for a long time yet. Segal does not explain how the origin of men and beasts or of fire and water has bedimmed the universe.

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40 He implies an explanation for the second half of the line by taking *imer et ignes* as 'rainstorms and fire' (1981, p. 20 — my emphasis). But *imer* means 'rain' as well as 'rainstorm', and rain, like fire, may be as beneficial as it is harmful. Segal, however, seems uncertain whether *imer* means even 'rainstorm', and not elemental 'water', since he writes (p. 18) that 'Iopas' song contains an account of the origin of men, beasts, water and fire'. Despite the difficulty of the plural *ignes* (Kinsey 1979, p. 80, n. 1), I believe that is how line 743 should be taken — the parallel to the creation of life is the creation of the elements, not limited manifestations of their secondary forms.
With regard to solis labores we can agree with Segal that the universe — or at least part of it — is bedimmed by an eclipse of the sun. The point at issue, however, is whether we are to find the implications of this disturbing in Iopas’ song. In Book 2 of the Georgics Virgil uses the phrase lunae labores to denote eclipses of the moon: defectus solis varios lunaeque labores (477); but he is not trying to conjure the threats to human security which are conjured by Segal’s ‘suffering’, ‘toil and imperfection’, ‘violence, disturbance [and] irregularity’.41 In this passage of the Georgics Virgil is making a modest

41 Virgil’s Roman readers may have been much less conscious than we are of the literal meaning of labores in this context. Livy quotes as already proverbial an expression in which laborare apparently means ‘to be dimmed, eclipsed’: Veritatem laborare nimis saepe aitun, extingui numquam (22.39.19 — v. Weissenborn-Müller ad loc., and OLD, s. v. laboro 3 d, where, however, the Livian example is not cited). This slight instance exemplifies one of the greatest difficulties facing a critic who works with a language not her or his own: to determine the extent to which the literal sense of a figurative expression is present to the mind of the native user. I doubt that the New Zealand student who calls his flat a ‘shambles’ means, or has any notion of meaning, that it is a place where animals are regularly slaughtered; or that the rugby player who describes himself as ‘knackered’ is purporting to say that he has been bought and butchered; but both terms may confuse the book-educated foreigner.

An important contribution to the interpretation of labores in the Song of Iopas is made by W. Richter (op. cit. n. 5 above). In this context, he argues, the word does not necessarily refer only to eclipses. It is a loan-translation of the Greek παθήματα in its neutral scientific sense, ‘was mit oder an einem Ding geschieht, genauer wohl, was sich nach den Gesetzen der Natur an ihm vollzieht; der Ausdruck hat nichts mit einer Schädigung, Minderung oder Bedrangnis des Objektes zu tun’ (p. 100). According to Richter, both at Aen... 1. 742-43 and the very similar G. 2. 477-82 Virgil may be influenced, directly or indirectly, by Aristotle Metaph. A2, 982b 8f., especially 15-17: οιον περι τε των της σελήνης παθημάτων καί των περί των ἡλίων [καὶ περὶ ἀστρων] καὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντός γενέσεως. On the assumption of this influence, Richter doubts that labores, either at G. 2. 478 or in the the Song of Iopas, has any affective force at all: ‘Labor ist bei ihm (sc. Vergil) also ein Übersetzungsterminus; ob der Dichter diesem Wort daneben einen poetischen Zusatz-Gehalt — etwa im Sinne einer anthropomorphen Empfindungsfähigkeit der Natur — zu geben beabsichtigte, lässt sich von hier aus weder positiv noch negativ entscheiden. Die beiden Kontexte als solche legen dies nicht eben nahe, da sie sich strikt an den in der aristotelischen Metaphysik vorgegebenen Zusammenhang halten’ (p. 101). Translations of lunae labores as ‘Mühen’ or ‘Nöte des Mondes’ (Götte, Klingner) or ‘travails of the moon’ (Wilkinson) are ‘Verlegenheitsübersetzungen’ (p. 98, n. 7).
prayer to the Muses to help him study the processes of nature — all of its processes, both the regular and common, such as the orbits of the heavenly bodies — \textit{caelique vias et sidera} (477) — and the irregular and less common, such as eclipses of the sun and moon, and earthquakes:

\begin{quote}
defectus solis varios lunaeque labores, 
unde tremor terris (478-79).
\end{quote}

All of them are part of nature, and the account which does not embrace them all must remain incomplete. Similarly Propertius, promising to verse himself, one day, as well in natural philosophy as he is at the moment versing himself in love, will investigate, like Virgil, both the rule and the exception: the phases of the moon and the undying winds over the sea, the earthquake that shook Mount Pindus and ‘why the orbed sun mourned with his horses shrouded in black’:\textit{solis et atratis luxerit orbis equis} (3. 5. 34). With these analogies in mind, I would suggest that Iopas’ eclipses are an expression of his scope, not of his \textit{Weltgeschmerz}.

Lines 745-46 are especially important to Segal’s interpretation of the song, and, in his view, of considerable symbolic significance in the whole episode of Dido and Aeneas. As I have said, he approves of Pöschl’s view that ‘the long nights of winter of which Iopas sings (745-6) blend with this long night of awakening passion in which Dido’s daylight scruples begin to be overcome by a stronger force’.\textsuperscript{43} Segal adds that ‘the long winter nights foreshadow the long winter of idleness and luxury which Aeneas spends with Dido’,\textsuperscript{44} and that Virgil ‘enlarges to cosmic proportions the imagery of fire and darkness which pervades the closing section of book 1’.\textsuperscript{45}

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\textsuperscript{42} 3. 5. 27-28, 29, 33. Cf. Hor. \textit{Epp.} 1.12. 14-18., and Ov. \textit{Met.} 15. 66-71 (both cited by Austin ad 742f.)

\textsuperscript{43} This is Segal’s summary of Pöschl, 1971, p. 337.

\textsuperscript{44} 1971, p. 343.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 348.
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This interpretation rests on a translation of line 746 which, although commonly accepted, is in my opinion questionable. It assumes that the nights (noctibus) are the nights of winter, and that involves the further assumption that tardis means ‘slow to end’. In itself, it could equally mean ‘slow to begin’, and if that is what it means here, Iopas is not referring to two complementary aspects of the same season, but to the succession of the seasons, identifying winter by its short days and summer by its short nights.\footnote{The point becomes clear if we substitute ‘tardy’ for ‘sluggish’ in my translation: ‘what stands in the way of tardy night’.

\textbf{46} }\textbf{46} }

This is how Servius understood the line — he glosses tardis with aestivis, tarde venientibus, i.e. ‘summer [nights], slow to come’. Segal quotes Servius, but is unconvinced: ‘This interpretation strains the sense of tardis, and also would lead us to expect aut instead of vel. The matter seems to be settled in favor of winter nights by Lucret. 5.699, adduced by Conington ad G. 2.482’.\footnote{1971, p. 342, n. 1.}

Now it is true that Servius is not always a trusty guide into the realms of higher criticism, but when he tells us what is or is not acceptable Latin idiom we should pay careful regard to what he says. He had access to a vast amount of written Latin, both literary and non-literary, which is lost to us — including earlier commentaries on Virgil — and that intuitive sense which comes naturally to a native speaker but is not easily acquired by others.\footnote{Few modern critics, I imagine, would assert with confidence that they know what Asinius Pollio was alluding to when he taxed Livy with patavinitas (Quint. 1.5.56; 8.1.3); but there was something in the North Italian’s Latin which struck a Roman ear. Without the authority of Tiro (Gel. N.A. 1.7.1) would we accept as credible the following reading in a speech of Cicero: \textit{hanc sibi rem praesidio sperant futurum} (Verr. 5.167)? Our knowledge of Latin is much more defective than we are prone to admit, but we pronounce on it secure in the knowledge that no Roman is going to contradict us. It is possible for us to reach a degree of competence in a modern foreign language much greater than circumstances will ever permit us to reach in Latin; but, unless we have been brought up bilingually, a few days in the native environment of that language are enough to convince us that we can make little claim to authority.

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49 See \textit{OLD}, s. v. \textit{tardus}. Conington (ad G. 2. 482) acknowledges that \textit{tardis} is, in itself, ambiguous.

For the attenuation of the disjunctive force of \textit{aut}, see Kühner-Stegmann, ii: 101-2, §§ 4 and 5; for the development of the disjunctive force of \textit{vel} (‘ganz gewöhnlich in klassischer Sprache’), ibid., 108, § 3.
distinction which Segal implies between *aut* and *vel* was breaking down already in the Latin of Plautus, and had virtually disappeared by Virgil’s time, even in the conservative idiom of prose. Virgil, of all poets, would have had no qualms about pushing usage to the limit anyway. The line(s) of Lucretius which seem to Segal to ‘settle the matter’ fall far short of doing that:

\[\text{propterea noctes hiberno tempore longae cessant (5.699-700).}\]

Therefore in winter time the nights lag long.

It takes an act of faith to believe that when Virgil wrote

\[\text{quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles hiberni vel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet}\]

\[\text{why winter suns plunge so impatiently in sea or what stands in the way of sluggish night}\]

he was alluding to these lines, and Zeus must have taken away the wits of the normally sober Conington when he imagined that this chimerical resemblance ‘decided’ the issue, as he puts it. If Virgil owes anything to Lucretius here, it was not the eccentric impulse to express one of the older poet’s ideas twice in different words, but the terse crystallisation of the subject of Lucretius’ discussion: the seasonal alternation of long and short days and nights:

\[\text{Crescere itemque dies licet et tabescere noctes, et minui luces, cum sumant augmina noctes, . . . quia . . . alternis partibus anni tardius et citius consuerunt confluere ignes qui faciunt solem certa de surgere parte (680-82, 701-3).}\]

And likewise it may be that days grow longer and nights wane, and again daylight grows less, when nights take increase . . . because . . . in alternate parts of the year the fires, which cause the sun to rise from a fixed quarter, are wont to stream together now more slowly, now more quickly.51

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51 Trans. Cyril Bailey.
In my opinion, then, none of Segal’s arguments refutes Servius’ interpretation. There is one, however, which can be made in Servius’ support. The subjects of Iopas’ song form a series of pairs of what we readily feel to be natural opposites: moon and sun, man and beast, fire and water. Even the star-names of line 744 do not quite interrupt the series, and when we read lines 545-46 we will be disposed to recognize it again. In the last two lines of the song Virgil does complete the pattern, but not by contrasting the days and nights of winter. That is a contrast of aspect only. What he has induced us to anticipate is a contrast in kind, and that is the short days of winter and the short nights of summer.

If the arguments above are valid, there is not much left in Iopas’ song of Kinsey’s ‘toil . . . trouble [and] uncertainty’ and ‘the hardships of seafarers’, or of Segal’s outlawry, oriental luxury, violence, irregularity, disorder, and nature bedimmed by suffering and change — not enough, at all events, to give an adequate explanation of the function of this episode. What is its function then? Why, into this drama of a noble woman falling fatally in

52 Though the oppositions here are of a slightly different nature.

This paper was first presented to the Research Seminar of the Department of Classics at the University of Otago, and I am grateful for comments of members of the Seminar, especially Mr Robert Hannah and Dr John Garthwaite. Dr Garthwaite argued that it is unlikely that Virgil would have completely broken the series at line 744, and Mr Hannah suggested that he had not, in that there is one latent ‘opposition’ between Arcturus and the Hyades, and a second in geminos Triones: despite the precise evidence of observation (as he later informed the author), it seems to have been commonly accepted in antiquity (and is, though only in a general sense, correct) that as Arcturus rose the Hyades set, and vice versa. Thus it seemed that they could never share the heavens, and when both were visible simultaneously, it was in opposite sectors of the sky. As for geminos Triones: ‘Although the Great and Little Bears were seen together, in Virgil’s time they never came together, but opposed each other across the north celestial pole, which was not contained (as it is today) by the Little Bear’.

Dr Garthwaite added that the series extends beyond the song to the chiastic opposition of Tyrii Troesque in line 747, which should be compared, in its effect, to the similar Carthago Italiam contra of the prooemium (1.13). This suggests an interpretation of the song which had not occurred to me: that it is an expression of the impossibility of the union of intrinsic opposites: of Dido and Aeneas, Carthage and Rome. (Mr Hannah has since expanded on his remarks in an extremely valuable article, ‘The Stars of Iopas and Palinurus’, forthcoming in AJP.)

53 1984, p. 80.

54 Ibid., p. 74.
love, has Virgil inserted a song on the origin of life and matter, the courses of the stars, the succession of the seasons? To me the explanation seems simple, and it is surprising that it has not been considered before.\(^5\) What Virgil is saying is that Dido did not need Venus to make her fall in love with Aeneas. She fell in love for reasons far older, and far deeper, reasons that were born into the world with the birth of life itself, the same that have always made their power felt within the generations of animate things, and always will, as long as we continue to act according to the laws laid down for us when the world began. For we are not outside the world, or above it. We are part of it, created in it and from it, and we will follow the paths eternally appointed for us as naturally and inevitably as sun, moon, stars and seasons will follow theirs. Whether they lead us to tragedy or not will depend on the moment, or the luck of the case — though by proclaiming this law of our existence here, by suggesting that what is happening to the noble and generous Dido is only part of the "nature of things", Virgil seems to have small confidence that luck will lie with those who deserve it.\(^6\)

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\(^5\) Not in print, that is, though it may well have occurred to generations of Virgil's readers.

\(^6\) Philip Hardie's interpretation would seem close to my own: 'The Song of Iopas might be taken as indicative of ... general correspondences between events in the natural cosmos and events in the human, historical world' (op. cit. n. 22 above, p. 63). Hardie, however, sees the correspondences in more positive terms than I do: The 'significance of the "philosophical overture" provided by Iopas ... can be appreciated only by those in full possession of the complete story of Aeneas and his race, who can understand that the workings of history do eventually reveal the same underlying order that governs the natural world. Events at Troy and Carthage seem to those who live through them to indicate only the reverse' (pp. 65-66). I would say that the reverse is part of the underlying 'order', if that is the word for it. Hardie adds that his 'robust' view 'does not exclude the possibility of more "melancholy" readings' (p. 66, n. 78). Clausen (op. cit. n. 19 above), Brown (The Structural Function of the Song of Iopas, n. 5 above) and Eichholz (op. cit. n. 5 above) see the relation between song and setting as one of contrast, not complement: 'A contrast seems to be implied between the calm, remote heavenly bodies and the immediate tumult in Dido's breast' (Clausen, p. 31); 'To this [sc. Clausen's] perceptive observation it may be added that the style of the two passages corresponds in such a way as to sharpen the contrast between them' (Brown, p. 315); 'More important [sc. than the suggestion of the refinement and affluence of Dido's court] is the contrast [Eichholz's emphasis] that [the theme of Iopas' song] evokes ... It is completely impersonal. So far from representing emotions and personal experiences ... it has nothing to do with the emotions and experiences of anyone present, or indeed with any emotions or personal experiences whatsoever' (Eichholz, p. 108).
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My interpretation is not susceptible of proof, though it is perhaps supported by passages in two other works. The first is the song of the Satyr Silenus in Virgil’s sixth Eclogue, where the poet seems to be hinting again at an intrinsic connection between the creation of the physical universe and the tragic passion in the individual spirit. Silenus begins his song with the formation of the cosmos out of chaos and the origin of life in animal and plant. Then, condensing ages into two lines (41-42) he passes quickly to the myth of Hylas, who was dragged to his death by the nymphs of a Bithynian pool, and sought and mourned by a desolated Hercules (43-44); and from this to the wayward love of Pasiphaë for a snow-white bull. ‘Ah, hapless girl’, he asks, ‘what derangement has seized you?’: *a, virgo infelix, quae te dementia cepit?* (47). On the mythological level, he might have known — Pasiphaë’s passion was sent upon her by a vengeful Poseidon, as Dido’s was sent upon her by Venus — but the Satyr who begins his song with the creation of the universe may have other causes in mind — older, and less immediate, but no less real.

The second passage is from Shelley’s *Hymn of Pan*. Pan, like Iopas and Silenus, begins his song with the cosmos:

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I sang of the dancing stars,
   I sang of the daedal Earth,
   And of Heaven — and the giant wars,
   And Love, and Death, and Birth. (25-28)
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In this macrocosm giants fought gods in the primordial war, and in it life plays out the ever-recurrent scenes of its timeless drama: Love, and Death, and Birth. Viewed in this universal perspective, these are beyond judgement — like the stars and the earth they are simply existent facts, a part of the way things are. But in the microcosm of the individual spirit the universal fact becomes private pain: Love and Life will survive, but the living must die, and the lover pursue an empty phantom joy:

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And then I changed my pipings, —
Singing how down the vale of Maenalus
   I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed.
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus!
   It breaks in our bosum and then we bleed. (29-33)
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I don't suppose that Shelley is thinking of the *Aeneid* here. In his Hymn, however, he is saying much the same thing as Virgil says through the song of Iopas. We will act and suffer as we do because the laws of the universe are what they are.

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57 The rough similarity between his *Hymn* 18-24 and *Eclogues* 27-30 suggests that if he owes anything to Virgil at all (which he probably does not) it is rather to the *Eclogues*. 