

IOPAS REVISITED (*AENEID* I 740 ff.)

A reexamination of Iopas' song at the end of *Aeneid* I, replying to T. E. Kinsey, *EMERITA* 47, 1979. Importance of the theme of luxury. Contrast between the irregularity and disorder in nature reflected by Iopas and the cosmology of Anchises in *Aen.* VI 724-51. «Symbolic» meaning in Virgil should not be conceived too narrowly; neither literalism or allegory is a valid approach.

The recent study of T. E. Kinsey, «The Song of Iopas», *EMERITA* 47, 1979, pp. 77-86, reexamines this suggestive passage (*Aen.* I 740-7):

cithara crinitus Iopas
personat aurata, docuit quem maximus Atlas.
hic canit errantem lunam solisque labores,
unde hominum genus et pecudes, unde imber et ignes,
Arcturum pluuiasque Hyadas geminosque Triones,
quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles
hiberni, uel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet;
ingeminant plausu Tyrii, Troesque sequuntur.

In Virgil small details and even apparently minor episodes are seldom fortuitous or without some significance; and it is good to see the importance of these rather neglected lines recognized. Kinsey's positive contribution consists in a reconsideration of the relation between Iopas' subject and *Georgics* II 477-82, which Virgil here adapts in a modified form. Kinsey's negative contribution is a critique of earlier interpretations, including one of my own («The Song of Iopas in the *Aeneid*», *Hermes* 99, 1971, pp. 336-49). In a brief article, obviously, one cannot take full account of all preceding approaches or restate all the main points of predecessors with whom one differs. In several places, however, Kinsey is seriously misleading or inaccurate about the contents of my earlier study. Much of his interpretation also seems to me unfounded.

On the main general function of Iopas' song there is, happily, some measure of agreement, namely that it provides «an impressive background against which the story of Dido and Aeneas, and indeed that of the agonies of the fall of Troy can be told» (Kinsey, p. 78; I had elaborated on this point at length, *Hermes*, pp. 342-3, 346-8). On the nature of this background, however, there is still a major difference in point of view.

Kinsey fairly summarizes my interpretation (in part) of Iopas' song as «supposed to emphasize the irregularities and blemishes in nature and give a picture of it bedimmed by suffering and change where the will of Jupiter seems momentarily obscured» (p. 84). To this interpretation he raises two objections: (1) the fact that in adapting *G. II* 477-82 Virgil omits the two lines about the most violent phenomena of nature from Iopas' song; and (2) the significance of Atlas as Iopas' teacher (*Iopas ... / docuit quem maximus Atlas*, *I* 740 f.).

On the first point, it is certainly true that the echo of the *Georgics* passage omits *G. II* 479-80:

unde tremor terris, qua ui maria alta tumescant,
obcibus ruptis rursusque in se ipsa residunt.

In their place Iopas' song contains an account of the origin of men, beasts, water and fire and reference to three major constellations (*I* 743-4). Kinsey's attention to the substitution is helpful; but it does not invalidate the point which I made about the disorder in nature which Iopas' song conveys. Kinsey objects (p. 84) that «certain of the lines from the *Georgics* passage, which do emphasize the disorder of nature, have actually been removed from the present passage, as I pointed out above». Yet what Kinsey had pointed out above (p. 80), after quoting *G. II* 477-82, was «that Virgil adds to the impression of toil and trouble conveyed by the word *labores*, that of uncertainty by substituting *errantem* for *defectus*». Then, commenting on the omitted lines, *G. II* 479 f., he said, «These are primarily land disasters and not of regular occurrence and Virgil is concerned to remind his audience of the normal dangers of sea-travel» (p. 80). In the first place, however, the sea is very much involved, the *maria alta* (*G. II* 479) which the Trojans have just now so painfully experienced (*Aen. I* 34-156). In the second place, even without *G. II* 479 f., the picture of nature which Iopas presents is still one of violence, disturbance, irregularity. Kinsey himself admits as much on p. 80. Whatever changes Virgil has made in the *Georgics* passage (one of them, the origin of men and beasts, will be considered below), he has not changed Iopas' fundamentally negative

picture of the natural order. Kinsey's objection to my emphasis on «the disorder of nature» (p. 84), then, seems to be in contradiction with his own stated view of that disorder on p. 80. One cannot have it both ways.

Commenting there too on line 744, *Arcturum pluuiasque Hyadas geminosque Triones*, Kinsey observes that these three constellations «were all important for navigation» (p. 80, cf. Austin's commentary, *ad loc.*, not cited by Kinsey on this point, «All these constellations were important for navigation...»)¹. But, as Austin also points out, the first two of these constellations are also «associated with stormy weather»: in other words, they are still manifestations of disturbances on the face of nature, from which, of course, follows their association, stressed by Kinsey, with the difficulties of sea-travel (p. 80). The connection with storms is made explicit, of course, by *pluuias* here and is also present in *imber* in the preceding line (743). (It is perhaps worth mentioning at this point that the first half of Orpheus' song in Apollonius' *Argonautica* I 496-511, which Virgil obviously has in mind, has nothing about the disruptive phenomena of nature, but mentions only earth, sky, sea, celestial bodies, mountains and rivers with their nymphs, and living things; *Ecl.* VI 31-40 has more energy and conflict.)

Kinsey's second point has to do with Atlas. As a pupil of Atlas, I suggested (p. 344 f.), Iopas is not the best authority for a harmonious world-order, given Atlas' sinister association in the epic and cosmogonic traditions and in Virgil himself. I did not deny, as Kinsey seems to imply (p. 84), that there were other associations of Atlas and other possible reasons for Virgil's making Atlas the teacher of Iopas (p. 344 with note 2). I would certainly agree that elsewhere in the *Aeneid* Atlas has neutral or even positive associations (e. g. VI 796 and VIII 135 ff.). In the two passages in which Atlas is associated with Dido and therefore more relevant to the context of Iopas' song, however, the connotations are clearly of a darker nature. In my earlier study I cited at length *Aen.* IV 246-51 and only mentioned in passing IV 481-2 (pp. 344-5). That second passage, however, is equally relevant and is worth quoting *in extenso*. Dido, now given over to the «furies» (IV 474) of her grief at the loss of Aeneas, has determined to die and only seeks a way to deceive her sister Anna. Finally she finds a solution and addresses her sister as follows (IV 478-491):

¹ R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Primus*, Oxford 1971, p. 225, who also notes (p. 224) the repetition of I 744 in III 515 ff., again a point made by Kinsey (p. 80) without reference to Austin. Austin's commentary was, of course, not yet published when my earlier study appeared.

inueni, germana, uiam (gratare sorori)
 quae mihi reddat eum uel eo me soluat amantem.
 Oceani finem iuxta solemque cadentem
 ultimus Aethiopum locus est, ubi maximus Atlas
 axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum:
 hinc mihi Massylae gentis monstrata sacerdos,
 Hesperidum templi custos, epulasque draconi
 quae dabat et sacros seruabat in arbore ramos,
 spargens umida mella soporiferumque papauer.
 Haec se carminibus promittit soluere mentes
 quas uelit, ast aliis duras immittere curas,
 sistere aquam fluuiis et uertere sidera retro,
 nocturnosque mouet Manis: mugire uidebis
 sub pedibus terram et descendere montibus ornos.

Atlas here marks the limits of the civilized world and belongs to a fabulous setting where black magic is practised, magic that interferes with the regular order of nature (489-91). Atlas himself, of course, is only the bearer of the heaven's starry pole at this remote edge of the earth (481 f.); but his relevance to Iopas, through Iopas' queen, taken together with his traditional associations in the epic tradition and the clearly negative cast of his character in IV 246-51, is in keeping with that flawed world-order which his pupil makes the subject of his song.

Kinsey notes that Iopas' song, *inter alia*, substitutes the birth of men and beasts for the earthquakes of G. II 479 f.: «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» (p. 79). 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. First, there is nothing of the «unity» of men and beasts, nothing either of «the unity of animate as against inanimate nature». The sequence of parallel *unde* clauses (*unde hominum genus et pecudes, unde imber et ignes*, 744) suggests merely that Iopas sang of the origin of men, animals, and inanimate nature (significantly, some rather violent phenomena of inanimate nature) as different parts of his cosmogony. True, men and beasts are grouped in one clause, rainstorms and fire in another; but that is a natural enough division, and there is certainly no suggestion of opposition between them. The parallelism of the two clauses rather suggests the reverse. Even if there were some hint here of the unity of men, «whether Trojans or Carthaginians», would not such a meaning be ironical, considering the disunion which is to

follow as the sequel to this romance, with its result of bitter enmity between the two peoples (IV 621-29; cf. VI 841-46)?

On p. 346 of my earlier article I briefly contrasted the different views of nature and the cosmic order in Iopas' song and in Anchises' famous speech in *Aen.* VI 724-751, one of the most important passages in the poem for Virgil's philosophy of suffering. I pointed out there the difference between the disturbed fires of Iopas' song, coupled with storms as part of the potential disorder of nature (I 743), and the divine fire which informs living beings (VI 730-32):

igneus est ollis uigor et caelestis origo
seminibus, quantum non noxia corpora tardant
terrenique hebetant artus moribundaque membra.

When clogged with the dross of earthly life, these seeds of the divine fire, akin to the Stoic πνεῦμα, remain bound in the prison of the body. The cleansing fire of purification, however, (*exurit igni*, VI 742) frees the body of its mortal accretions and allows the soul to reach Elysium until it must once more leave that pure celestial fire (*aurai simplicis ignem*, VI 747). Now this philosophically conceived *ignis* markedly differs from that of Iopas' song — an indication, I believe, of the deliberately flawed cosmology of his song, a cosmology appropriate to a setting where the fires are not those of the pure heavens, but of dangerous passion and sensual lusts (cf. I 673, 688, 710, 726 f.).

What I failed to notice in 1971, however, (and here I am grateful to Kinsey for making me look at the passage again), is that Virgil invites us to compare Iopas' conception of the world-order directly with Anchises. We may compare

unde hominum genus et pecudes (I 744)

and

inde hominum pecudumque genus (VI 728).

Whereas Iopas does not see beyond the coordination of men and beasts in their mortal origins, Anchises' point is the differentiation of men and beasts through man's participation in that immortal fiery essence which, by a process of purgation, he can attain in its pure, celestial state (VI 747). The comparison of the two passages, linked by verbal repetition as well as by a common subject, cosmology, again reveals the narrowly physical limits of Iopas' concerns.

I wish to observe here an important distinction between my approach and Kinsey's. In my paper I tried to relate the setting of

Iopas' song to its narrative context and to trace the relation of its contents to other views of nature in the *Aeneid*. There is no justification whatsoever in the text for attempting to analyze the thoughts and feelings of Iopas, as we can, for example, those of Dido. Thus from a methodological point of view the psychologizing which Kinsey attempts in the last paragraph of his first section is entirely misplaced: «One other question is worth raising. Are we to suppose that Iopas intended his song to have the effect it did have?» (Kinsey, p. 81). The answer, I would suggest, is a resounding no. But Kinsey's Iopas goes on to «realise the military situation», to «recognise» Aeneas' «incipient love for the queen», and to «have devised a song which at one and the same time puts forward reasons why the Trojans should delay their departure and tests Carthaginian and Trojan feelings towards each other» (pp. 81-2). This Iopas is a fiction of Kinsey, not of Virgil. Virgil's Iopas is an element in a narrative, not a flesh-and-blood character to whom one can impute intentions or observations that are not clearly indicated or intimated by the text. Admittedly Kinsey grants that his interpretation is «speculative» and lacks «evidence for a definite conclusion, although the emphasis of the song makes it tempting» (p. 82). There is no evidence in the song; Kinsey's temptation is a classic case of the «documentary fallacy», so thoroughly exploded for a major classical author three decades ago by A. J. A. Waldock².

My final point is less important, but I mention it lest readers be misled by Kinsey's misquotations of my views. «... Segal thinks the very presence of music also indicates decadence. This, he argues, is the only appearance of music in the *Aeneid* and their music is one of the signs of decadence Numanus taunts the Trojans with» (p. 85). As to the second point, I did not, of course, say that this is the only time that music «appears» in the *Aeneid*. What I actually said was, «Pöschl observes that this is the only time that music is actually performed in the *Aeneid*» (p. 342). I said nothing, furthermore, about «Carthaginian decadence», nor did I even use the word «decadence» at all. The dangers of oriental luxury in the setting are clear enough and were eloquently pointed out by Walter Kranz in an essay which both Kinsey and I cite. Kranz's article I called «learned and useful» (p. 336), deservedly, as it is an interesting piece of work by a distinguished scholar. Among other things, Kranz argued that Iopas' song reflected Phoenician worship of the sun and moon as gods. I went on, therefore, to state my disagreement with Kranz on this point and gave as one of my reasons (p. 337), «... It

² A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist*, Cambridge 1951, chap. 2.

presupposes a knowledge of remote peoples which Virgil could not expect many of his readers to have». Now, Kinsey says, «Segal in general follows Kranz but suggests some further points» (p. 85). On the previous page he too had criticized Kranz: «But how is the reader supposed to know that the sun and moon represent foreign gods?» (p. 84, no footnotes to other discussions of Kranz's article). This is exactly the criticism which I had made in the sentence cited above, where in fact it is but one of two of my criticisms of Kranz's article. And yet according to Kinsey «Segal in general follows Kranz». Kinsey has not, I fear, read, or written, with much discrimination or responsibility.

To return, however, to the subject of luxury, Kinsey has not, in my mind, disproven the pejorative implications of the setting of Dido's banquet. I would not lay heavy stress on this point, but I continue to think that a long-haired bard with a golden lyre, taken together with the rest of the setting (e. g. I 637-42 and cf. IV 138 f.), points toward those sumptuous oriental trappings and *Persicos apparatus* which Augustan writers so frequently contrast with Roman simplicity. Though I disagree with Kranz on other points, I still think that this part of his article, discussed on p. 341 of my essay, remains valid, that Virgil's audience would have picked up intimations of dangerous dallings by recent Roman generals at the court of an attractive and seductive queen in North Africa. Be that as it may, my point in raising the theme of music and citing Numanus' taunt in *Aen.* IX, like that of Iarbas' in IV 215-17, was not to incriminate Carthaginian «decadence»; in fact their seriousness and strenuous energies are carefully given their due (p. 338). Numanus' taunt represents, in fact, a problem that Virgil had to confront in making an Eastern people the founders of Rome. One (among many) of the functions of Iopas' song was to suggest, early in the poem, the difference between Roman character and destiny and the defeated Eastern people from whom they arose.

As to the kind of music that is allowed to be admired in the *Aeneid*, neither Misenus in book VI nor Cretheus, an unfortunate bit of cannon-fodder in book IX, is a good example of song for song's sake. Both sing specifically martial songs (*aere ciere uiros Martemque accendere cantu*, VI 165 of Misenus; *equos atque arma uirum pugnasque canebat*, IX 777 of Cretheus). Neither figure has a particularly happy fate to recommend him. Cretheus is at least beloved of the Muses, but Misenus' singing has distinctly jarring notes:

...forte caua dum personat aequora concha
d e m e n s , et cantu uocat in certamina diuos...

I would not, of course, deny that Virgil's audience deeply enjoyed the learned associations of Iopas' song and the kind of recondite didactic poetry which it reflects (pp. 337-40 of the *Hermes* article discuss the literary background of the song); but in the heroic society of the poem things are different. Martial songs, of course, are approved, as Cretheus' friendship with the Muses illustrates; but there is no other parallel in the poem for an extended non-martial song like that of Iopas. Legendary poets like Orpheus (VI 119 f.) or Musaeus (VI 667) receive due honor; but in luxurious surroundings song can carry negative associations, like the dangerously seductive song of Circe (VII 11 f.). In Anchises' prophecy to Rome's founder, astronomical lore of the kind that Iopas sings is left to others (VI 849 f.).

The closest parallel in the *Aeneid* to the philosophical song of Iopas is, as noted above, the cosmology of Anchises in book VI, which Kinsey does not mention at all. The contrast only sets off Iopas' song as a picture of a world flawed by violence, irregularity, disorder. It may reflect also, as I suggested in my earlier study, a poetic vision which is itself not yet pure, but is still subtly enmeshed in the sensual entanglements of that dark night of incipient passion. It is the appropriate song for this ominous, though apparently innocent, setting. While not a song of love (which, as Servius' comment *ad loc.* suggests, would be unfitting for the noble and dignified Dido, *reginae adhuc castae*), Iopas' song accelerates rather than hinders the dangerous direction in which the two main protagonists are heading. It contains an image of the world which does in fact surround Aeneas and Dido in their ill-fated and tragic love-affair³.

It is not necessary to call this larger, atmospheric significance by that much-abused term, symbolism. It is, in fact, characteristic of Virgil's highly evocative art that the one-to-one equations of the type (rather misleadingly) called «symbolic» are often reductive and simplistic. Still, one would have hoped that after the work of Otis, Pöschl, Putnam, Quinn—to mention only a few major interpreters—Virgilian scholars would not find it necessary to debate whether a given passage has symbolic implications or not. It is perhaps encouraging, I suppose, that Kinsey, in sifting through the issue, finally allows that relevance to specific narrative context may not exclude the possibility of symbolic meaning (p. 82)⁴.

³ Some of these connections are documented and elaborated in my *Hermes* essay, pp. 342-3, 346-7.

⁴ In like manner Austin's remarks, «But we need look no farther than the Alexandrian precedent, combined with Virgil's own speculative interests, to explain

I do not, therefore, think it necessary to equate *errantem lunam* strictly with Dido, *solis labores* strictly with Aeneas (I 742), as e. g. Pöschl and Quinn do (misgivings about this interpretation in my *Hermes* essay, p. 345). The «symbolic» significance of a passage like Iopas' song, I suggest, is more pervasive and less definable in terms of allegorical equivalents than such interpretations suggest. Virgil's evocative diction and imagery in such settings are not so easily exhausted. Neither naive literalism nor reductive allegorization can reach the heart of his poetry. For these reasons, among others, it continually suggests new meanings and elicits and demands new interpretations, but interpretations based on the text.

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Iopas' song» (p. 222) and «Iopas' song is no more than a reflection of Augustan intellectual interests, which, in Virgil at least, with his Lucretian inclinations, went deep» (p. 223), imply an unnecessary dichotomy between sources and meaning. There is no reason whatsoever why Virgil cannot be reflecting personal and contemporary scientific interests while also developing an episode which has an integral meaning for his poem. Austin's remarks still do not take account of the content of Iopas' song. Why, e. g., did not Virgil more closely follow *Argonautica* I 496 ff. or even *Ecl.* VI 31 ff.?