

*Destiny, love and the cultivation of  
suspense: the 'Roman d'Eneas' and  
Aimon de Varennes' 'Florimont'*

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DESTINY, LOVE AND THE CULTIVATION OF SUSPENSE:  
 THE ROMAN D'ENEAS AND AIMON DE VARENNES'  
FLORIMONT

In a small number of verse romances, the structure of the work is determined not by the hero's endeavours but by his fulfilment of a destiny which is revealed to the public at an early stage.<sup>1</sup> The reader or listener knows, at least in outline, what is going to happen not merely because he has heard the story before but because it is explicitly predicted in advance. The hero, whether aware of it himself or not, is seen to progress ineluctably towards a deed which he is destined to perform or a role he is destined to fulfil. This predestination is at times accounted to many, pagan, gods, sometimes to the more abstract Fortune and sometimes to a single divine figure. Perhaps, indeed, it was the difficulty of reconciling many classical gods with monotheistic Christian thought which led to the widespread references to Fortune, a kind of compromise solution and, as such, possible to reconcile with either religious context. For the effect on the narrative development, however, it makes little difference: the gods, God and Fortune are represented as equally omnipotent and omniscient. Even where the classical gods are shown to disagree about the hero's fate, no real doubt is allowed to arise about the final outcome, and the author often reinforces predictions made in more supernatural circumstances.

Theoretically, it might be expected that maintaining interest in the narrative might cause problems in such works; suspense is at any rate greatly reduced if not altogether lacking. Of course, in epics the heroes' actions are usually depicted as manifestations of destiny, yet interest does not flag; without entering into an analysis of the genre, it may be suggested that the public's involvement in the narrative results not from suspense but from the exhilarating effect of watching the characters engaged in a mighty conflict, perhaps even of near cosmic proportions. Aeneas in Virgil's work cannot fail, nor in a sense can Roland: his sacrifice is seen as a triumph when his soul is taken up to heaven and the Franks return and, with God's help, achieve a resounding victory over the massed armies of the pagan world. Yet the divine favour which Aeneas and Roland enjoy does not make their efforts any less admirable: their foes are worthy opponents for heroes whose stature is only increased by their superhuman victory. This exhilarating atmosphere, based on wonder and admiration, is, moreover, conveyed in elevated diction and excitement is generated by the pace and metre of the narration.

None of these tendencies is characteristic of the verse romance with its light octosyllabic couplets. Even a cursory glance at the French version

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of the *Aeneid*, the anonymous *Roman d'Eneas*, shows a remarkable change of emphasis which must have important effects on our reaction to the narrative.<sup>2</sup> The role of the gods is drastically reduced but, paradoxically, this leads to a stronger assertion of the hero's destiny, since the conflict between gods is largely eliminated, perhaps in deference to monotheistic Christian teaching. A comparison of the two texts will elucidate both the change of emphasis and its effects and the way in which the French author introduces a new dimension of narrative interest which to a certain extent counterbalances this change.

Virgil opens his poem with a brief summary (I, 1-33) of the hardship which, because of Juno's attachment to Carthage, the hero is to endure before he at last settles in Italy and founds the Roman nation:

*tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem.* (I, 33)

His French adapter abandons this short introduction together with the *in medias res* beginning of the Latin epic, so that Aeneas' destiny emerges only in the course of the narrative. The *Eneas* opens after the Fall of Troy with an account of Aeneas' preparations for flight. Venus, his mother, advises him to leave and instructs him where to go:

que il ait la contree querre,  
dont Dardanus vint en la terre,  
ki fonda de Troie les murs. (39-41)

This is Latium, consistently confused with Lombardy by the French poet, but it is not yet named as such. Twice during the long journey which eventually brings Aeneas and the Trojans to Carthage, Aeneas recalls the future which the gods have promised to him, first in the storm which causes him to lament his fate:

Promise m'ont ne sai quel terre,  
ne sai o ge la puisse querre;  
molt ai trové isles en mer,  
de la terre n'oi' parler  
que vois querant a molt grant peine,  
si com fortune me demeine. (225-30)

and secondly when at last the weary travellers arrive on the coast of Libya and Aeneas tells them to rest for he is confident that the gods will bring them safely to Lombardy as they had promised (339-42). This is the first time that Dardanus' land is specifically identified as Lombardy by the French poet. Such reminders of Aeneas' destiny to found a new city in the land promised him by the gods are a distinctive feature of the work's narrative structure. There is a third in the explanations offered to Dido by messengers about the

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Trojans' departure from Troy; they tell her how the gods told Aeneas what to do:

fors le mistrent de la cité;  
grant gent ot o lui asemblé;  
par lor comandement vait querre  
Itaile, une loingtaine terre. (577-80)

The hero's destiny at this point is vague but nevertheless assured: he is to find Italy according to the promise of the gods. The role of the gods is already shown as being much more one-sided than in the *Aeneid*. Not only have all the scenes in which they argue among themselves been omitted entirely from the French poem, but Juno's hatred of Aeneas is reduced to a minimum (183-7 and 520-7 only) even though an account of the Judgement of Paris is included.

The pattern of reminders continues throughout the extended Dido episode (1186-9; 1608-10; 1615-24; 1759-63 and 1867) and in two instances it is the poet himself who addresses his public, thus giving the reminder greater emphasis and credibility (1623-4 and 1867). Aeneas, and the reader/listener at the same time, is given more detailed information about the future which awaits him in the next episode when he is visited by the shade of his father Anchises and then descends with him into Hades. When Anchises first addresses his son, he tells him that he will have to endure a war before he can take possession of his promised land (2169ff.), but:

puis maintendras en pais la terre,  
la fille al reis prendras a femme,  
puis ne sera fins de ton regne:  
de tei naistra reials ligniee,  
par tot le mont iert essalciee. (2186-90)

The prophecy thus includes the first reference in the French poem to Aeneas' marriage to Lavinia. In the Underworld, Anchises reiterates his warning of future suffering and war, though the details are not recounted (2991-6), and the prophecy of Aeneas' marriage (2936-7) giving further information about his unborn progeny.

With his arrival in Italy, the predictions start to be fulfilled and further reminders of his predestined role are given (3027-8 and 3041ff.). The poet recalls for us the bitter war which Aeneas must endure before his destiny is accomplished (3115-8 and again 3319-22), but at no point is any doubt allowed to creep in about his ultimate victory. Once more the author stresses the Trojans' destiny when commenting on the Latins' misplaced confidence:

ja n'i cuident a tens venir,  
 que li Troïen ne s'en fuient,  
 mais molt sont fol quant il le cuient:  
 issi ne s'en iront il pas. (4240-3)

It could be argued that in the Aeneid too there is no real doubt that Turnus will be defeated in the end and logically this is quite true. Nevertheless, without analysing in detail the course of the war, it can be seen that the conflict is presented as being much more even, largely because in the Latin poem certain of the gods side against Aeneas and seek to thwart his endeavours at every turn. In spite of Turnus' threats and display of righteous indignation at Aeneas' attempt to snatch his bride, Lavinia, from him, the French poet stresses again and again that Aeneas must be victorious (e.g. 4177-82 and 9609). As might be expected, Aeneas remains aware of his destiny throughout (4711-7; 4725-6 and 9348-94), but his conviction is also shared by Lavinia's father, Latinus, who recognises in Aeneas the stranger who is destined to marry his daughter (3233-40; 3340ff.; 6552-8 and 7794-5).

The balance of the Latin epic is so upset by the emphasis placed on Aeneas' inevitable victory that in the Eneas Turnus becomes a pathetic, almost ridiculous character; Virgil, on the other hand, had made him at least a worthy opponent for Aeneas, perhaps actually surpassing him. The different attitudes of the two poets are well illustrated in the episode where Turnus boards a ship and, to his great consternation, is carried away from the scene of the fighting. In the Aeneid, he pursues on to the ship a phantom in the form of Aeneas, sent by Juno to lure him from the fray. The French poet substitutes an ordinary archer for the phantom; Turnus is thus made to look rather foolish. His reaction to the disaster is also in contrast with Virgil's portrayal of the character at this point. As the boat drifts away, he expresses his regret at starting the war and admits that the gods are against him:

Li deu me heent, bien le sai,  
 combatent sei por Troïens,  
 il les maintient de lonc tens,  
 il lor aquiteront la terre. (5810-3)

In the Aeneid, he does not despair in the same way; his concern seems to be more for his honour than that the gods might really have abandoned him:

omnipotens genitor, tanton me crimine dignum  
 duxisti et talis uoluisti expendere poenas?  
 quo feror? unde abii? quae me fuga quemue reducit?  
 Laurentisne iterum muros aut castra uidebo?  
 quid manus illa uirum, qui me meaque arma secuti? (X, 668-72)

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Although in the duel at the end of the poem Virgil at no time admits that Turnus might win, by omitting any reminder or prediction of the final outcome in this scene, he allows the odds to appear more equal than they are in reality. The French poet, however, comments that Fortune is against Turnus (9609). Turnus, himself, as in Virgil, expresses his despair that the gods are against him:

Li deu ne vuelent, ce m'est vis,  
qu'ae la terre et le pais,  
as Troïens l'ont tot doné;  
vos en sereiz deserité. (9657-60)

The sense of the inherent inequality of the two which is so distinctive a feature of the French poet's adaptation of the *Aeneid* leads to another alteration: in both poems, Turnus is made to flee from Aeneas who wants to do battle with him; but in the Virgilian epic his flight is forced upon him by the goddess, Juturna, his sister, who has disguised herself as his charioteer in order to try and protect him, whereas in the medieval version he flees out of fear for his own life.<sup>3</sup>

All real conflict is eliminated. Indeed, the war in Latium is made to seem so unnecessary, since it is obvious to all concerned what the outcome must be, that the whole motivation of the conflict has been undermined.<sup>4</sup> It might therefore be expected that the *Eneas* is an excessively tedious work with no suspense at all and not even a tragic hero in Turnus whose fate is to be pitied. Yet this is far from the case, as can be seen from the work's popularity and influence. The important predictions concern only the main framework of the poem, Aeneas' conquest of Latium and marriage with Lavinia, and are expressed in fairly general terms. Room is therefore left for considerable episodic development within this framework. This is exploited, for instance, when Ascanius hunts and kills the hart, in Pallas' participation in the war and in the battle scenes where interest at times devolves upon even more minor characters, such as Nisus and Euryalus. But a new narrative interest is also supplied by the love intrigue: the love between Aeneas and Lavinia is the most important innovation to Virgil's text made by the French poet; nor is it, strictly speaking, included in the hero's destiny since only their marriage is predicted (cf. 2187). Although their love is linked with the main action, being dependent on the defeat of Turnus, it is treated in quite disproportionate detail, several thousand lines being devoted to the theme. At first, Lavinia falls in love with Aeneas before he shows any interest in her; but soon Aeneas' love is roused, too. Since they remain separated until the war is decided, there is opportunity for considerable development of the theme, with both lovers tormented by uncertainties and suffering at the distance between them. For instance, a major incident superfluous to Aeneas' destiny is added when the hero arouses

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Lavinia's anger by failing to visit her immediately after the successful conclusion of the battle.

Even at early stages in his work, the French poet takes great care to prepare the way for the increased importance of the love element in this episode. He omits entirely the scene in which the ghost of Aeneas' wife, Creusa, appears to him in the ruins of Troy; in the Aeneid she complements Venus' instructions to the hero and in addition tells him that he will find another wife in the new land the gods have promised him:

illic res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx  
parta tibi; lacrimas dilectae pelle Creusae. (II, 783-4)

This change has an important effect on the Dido episode: in Virgil, Aeneas is aware of the marriage in Italy which is his destiny, yet he opposes his fate by lingering in Carthage with Dido. Even though his love for Dido is caused by the gods and not a voluntary act, the inference is that he wrongs the Carthaginian Queen gravely by indulging it, and she dies hating him (cf. the scene in the Underworld, Aeneid VI, 469-74). In the French poem, however, no blame can be attached to Aeneas since he does not yet know that a bride awaits him in Latium. If he did, now that a real love element has entered his relationship with Lavinia, the consequences for the character of the hero would be serious. But his love for Dido is not his responsibility and, as ever in this poem, the will of the gods represents what is right. It is indeed Dido and not Aeneas who is in the wrong. The poet refers to her love as 'mortal poison' (811) and she herself regrets her love for him as much as his departure:

Quant veit que li vasals s'en voit  
et que s'amors a mort la trait,  
ele comence a sospirer ... (1971-3)

She feels that the guilt is hers for betraying the faith she owed her dead husband:

por quei trespasai ge la fei  
que ge plevis a mon seignor? (1988-9)

and even forgives Aeneas as she dies. In the Underworld, moreover, she dare not look at the shade of her husband for shame at her behaviour with Aeneas (2651-62). So the French poet allows his Aeneas to remain unblemished, the perfect hero: Dido, like Turnus, has to suffer in his favour.<sup>5</sup>

In the Roman d'Eneas, Aeneas is, in a sense, even more indisputably the national hero than in the Aeneid. The gods' determination of his destiny



is completely single-minded and Turnus' character is made to pale into insignificance beside him. Yet Aeneas' superhuman qualities as national hero are associated with the new human interest of the love intrigue which provides a change of focus in a text where suspense is low since the outcome is known from the start. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the two elements are imperfectly integrated: however satisfactory the motivation of the love scenes taken in isolation, there is no motivational link between these and the war against Turnus - that is the fulfilment of Aeneas' destiny - already rendered rather gratuitous by the unassailability of Aeneas' position.

It is impossible to assess to what extent the introduction of the love element in the *Eneas* is merely a concession to medieval taste made by our poet. It would not be the only one: descriptive scenes, often very exotic, are added to the French version; details of Roman history which could hold little interest for a French public are omitted, and the pagan Underworld is even transformed so as to resemble the Christian concept of Hell. The type of love treatment found in the *Eneas* recurs in other verse romances of the period, Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligés*, *Floire et Blancheflor* and many others. Nevertheless, it is believed that the adapter of Virgil's great epic was largely instrumental in setting the fashion. We may therefore surmise that he introduced the theme not only to pander to popular taste but in a conscious attempt to counterbalance the changes brought about by the new attitude to the hero and his destiny. His success, partial though it may be, was surely responsible for the great popularity of the work.

Aimon de Varennes' *Florimont* (1188) also contains a combination of heroic action performed in the fulfilment of destiny and a love intrigue which is excluded from this destiny.<sup>6</sup> Here, however, the two are integrated in a completely satisfactory way and a high level of suspense is maintained, not just in the love episodes but throughout the work. How is this achieved? *Florimont's* destiny is revealed to us not in straightforward, easily interpreted prophecies but in dreams. The first (1490-515) comes to King Philip of Macedonia: his father appears and tells him that Macedonia will suffer war but the country will be saved by a poor man who is to marry the King's daughter. The 'poor man' is not positively identified with *Florimont* at this stage. The second dream (1715-844) is far more important a largely controls the structure of the work. It is dreamed by *Mataquas*, *Florimont's* father, and is extremely long and elaborate and couched in symbolical terms (*Florimont*, for instance, figures as a lion). *Fouquart*, the boy's tutor, though understanding the dream, remains silent as to its significance which therefore only emerges as the poem progresses (1879-84). Suspense is thus not reduced to any significant extent even though a sense of direction and cohesion is provided as each phase of the predictions is accomplished. After each series of events, *Fouquart* explains which portion of the dream has now been

fulfilled. The details of Florimont's love life are not included in the dream, even in a veiled manner. Let us follow the narrative through.

When the boy, the son of King Mataquas of Albania, has grown to a young man, he rids the country of a terrible sea-monster which has ravaged its shores and demanded tribute of the people. As a result of this achievement, a *fée* offers him her love. She gives him a sword and a ring which will make everyone do the wearer's will, and she tells him how to extract a healing ointment from the dragon he has killed. She also stipulates that their love must remain secret if he will not accompany her to the Ile Celee. Meeting his *amie* frequently, Florimont grows in honour: he goes to the court of his uncle, the King of Esclavonie, and is dubbed a knight. Although there is no allusion to the *fée* in Mataquas' dream, the monster which Florimont kills must correspond to the wild beasts (1728), and the reference to the big lion (1729-39) clearly relates to his story at the court of the King of Esclavonie. Fouquart makes this explicit:

Menbra li de la vission  
 De lyeoncel et del lyeon  
 Que li dus li avoit conté.  
 Or set il bien de verité:  
 Se fut li lyeonsiaus dorez  
 Quant Florimont vit adoubé. (2947-52)

Similarly, Fouquart recognises in Florimont's killing of Garganeus, a giant who has been demanding human tribute and torturing his prisoners, the fulfilment of 1745-50 (3657-64).

The next episode is devoted to the hero's love for the *fée* and is not included in the prophecy: he has been meeting her frequently and indeed has often been aided by her in attaining great honour. Now, however, Fouquart discovers his love by magic; when, unwilling to leave his mistress, Florimont refuses to go to Philip's court, the tutor persuades the Queen to follow him and watch the lovers at one of their meetings. The *fée* is angry that their love has been discovered and leaves Florimont for ever. Florimont is heart-broken: he no longer seeks to gain in prowess and even gives away all his riches until the prosperity of the whole country is threatened. It is attacked and Florimont, now known as the *Povre Perdu*, cannot provide the necessary leadership to repel the aggressor. In the dream, these events are foreshadowed only by a reference to the lion cub sickening and losing his beauty. A closer correspondence is found, however, as Fouquart realises, when the hero is aided to regain his former position by the knight, Risus, just as the *veltres* of the dream helps the little lion recover after its period of suffering (4707-17, cf. 1751-94).

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Risus is on his way to help King Philip of Macedonia in a war against the Hungarians who are trying, against Philip's will, to wed his daughter, Romadanaple, to their King. Florimont accompanies him in this mission. From now on the action is the fulfilment of Philip's dream as well as that of Mataquas: the King repeatedly wonders whether the Povre Perdu can be the poor man who, according to his father in the dream, would come to his aid (5597ff.; 7279-81; 9379-83; 9419-22 and 9432-4). In the dream, the King is advised that his daughter should wed the poor stranger (1512), and as soon as the King of Hungary has been made a prisoner and the war thus brought to a successful conclusion, Philip definitely recognises the Povre Perdu and the marriage is arranged (10798-812).

Following the tendency which has already been noted, the love element itself, as opposed to the marriage, is excluded from the predictions concerning Florimont but nevertheless is developed at length. A detailed analysis would be superfluous. There is, however, one incident of interest here: when Romadanaple tells her servant of her growing love for the as yet unidentified hero, four manuscripts (A G I K) put the following verses into her mouth:

Maestre, d'une avision  
Anuit sonjoie d'un lion  
Qui ci devant mon lit venoit.  
Li lions parlot, ce disoit  
Que, se devenoie s'amie,  
Il destruiroit le roi d'Ongrie.

(Hilka p.542)

Even though A. Hilka rejects the authenticity of these lines, they can be regarded as an attempt to associate the love as well as the marriage with Florimont's destiny. Once the wedding has taken place, all the predictions made in Philip's dream have been fulfilled, although there are still some events outstanding which have been forecast to Mataquas in his complex dream.

Before the poet continues to relate these events, however, he cleverly forges a link between the two dreams: Fouquart is made to show in detail how the war with Camdiobras and Florimont's marriage to Romadanaple correspond to the predictions in his master's dream as well as to those in Philip's: the leopard is Philip, the dragon the King of Hungary, and Romadanaple the flower; the tree which is to grow is Alexander (11391-410; cf. 1795ff.). The rescue of Mataquas, imprisoned by the Emir of Carthage during Florimont's absence, and the subsequent war against that city which constitutes the next episode are the fulfilment of 1824ff. Fouquart, because of the dream, is confident in Florimont's success, and when the war is over he recalls it explicitly:

Floquars en son escrit esgarde,  
 De la vission se prist garde  
 Et si a trové del lyon  
 Que le duc getoit de prison  
 Et puels serchoit les forés tant  
 Que il conqueroit l'olifant.  
 Floquars voit l'olifant maté  
 Et le duc de prison geté:  
 Bien ait la vision trovee  
 Que li dus li avoit contee.

(13473-82)

Apart from this now habitual explanation by Fouquart at the end of the episode, Mataquas himself is made to recall his dream, first when talking to those who free him from his dungeon (13285-98) and then again when Florimont asks him to tell his story (13355).

The way in which the two prophetic dreams are interpreted in retrospect, as each phase of the action is accomplished, is then the major technique used to integrate the different parts of the action into a cohesive whole. The fulfilment of Mataquas' dream indeed and Fouquart's regular explanatory comments constitute the main articulating device and so govern the structure of almost the whole work. The cohesive effect increases as the work progresses, for each time Fouquart notes that a certain part of Mataquas' dream has been accomplished it reinforces the feeling that later parts will also be shown to have their fulfilment. However admirably predestination may be used to unify the action, Florimont does not conform to the pattern of the predestined hero about whose exemplary fate no doubt can remain. The obscure nature of both the dreams prevents their reducing suspense. The symbolical references can at most suggest only a general outline of the vicissitudes Florimont is to face.

It is perhaps for this reason that the poet has not found it necessary to treat the love intrigues at quite the length the Eneas poet does. Nevertheless, ample development is given to episodes in which Florimont pursues his love both for the fée and for Romadanaple voluntarily and not in fulfilment of his destiny since love, as distinct from marriage, is never mentioned in the dreams. These episodes, despite their exclusion from the prophecies, are satisfactorily if not perfectly integrated into the work as a whole. Florimont's relationship with the fée has a continued influence on the narrative, largely because she gives him certain gifts which help him at later stages: the sword, the ointment to cure wounds and the ring which allows him to persuade people to comply with his requests. Moreover, the consequences of Florimont's attachment to the fée, that is his weakness, are predicted in Mataquas' dream, even if the love itself is not. This is in marked contrast to the Dido episode in Eneas where the hero is clearly

opposing his destiny. The love between Florimont and Romadanaple is reminiscent of that between Aeneas and Lavinia, and in both cases the eventual marriage of the lovers is in fact predestined. In both works, however, the love theme is developed at some length, but in Florimont it remains subordinated to the account of the predestined war with the King of Hungary and the marriage follows immediately on its resolution, whereas in Eneas the marriage is delayed after the end of the war while the poet indulges in a further disproportionate development. Despite the place assigned to Eneas in literary history, Aimon de Varennes' poem is in fact artistically a far more successful work. While the suspense remains unimpaired, Florimont's exploits, chivalric and amorous, are satisfactorily articulated by the two prophetic dreams which at the same time provide a link between the parts of the action concerned with Albania, Florimont's homeland, and with Macedonia.

Douglas Kelly has recognised the unified effect of Florimont despite its apparently rather disparate subject matter:<sup>7</sup>

The linking of the two branches into one coherent plot was Aimon's goal. And, as we have seen, it is done naturally and with great taste and care. (p.291)

His interpretation of Florimont is not equally convincing, however. He tries to give too great a thematic importance to Florimont's fulfilment of destiny, seeing the poem in terms of a conflict between Chance, or Fortune, and Destiny. Defining Destiny as the expression of the hero's duty or will, and Fortune as his inclination, D. Kelly asserts that Florimont encounters difficulties when he follows Fortune and neglects his Destiny. His love for the fée, for instance, prevents his answering Philip's call for aid. Fortune and Destiny normally play exactly the same structural role in a narrative. The poet indeed alludes to Fortune with reference to Florimont's successes just as much as to his misfortunes (e.g., 3665-73 and 13535-7). Moreover, the fée brings him good as well as evil: the gifts he received from her help him to achieve his successes. D. Kelly comments:

The brilliant destiny foreshadowed in the dreams of Mataquas and Phelipe and which devolved upon him by reason of his nobility was to be subverted for the sake of love. (p.286)

There are two faults of logic in this statement: firstly, as D. Kelly rightly observes elsewhere, it is not only Florimont's successes which are foretold in Mataquas' dream; and secondly, the view that the hero's honourable achievements are necessarily acts of will independent of any externally controlled fate does not find unqualified support in the text. D. Kelly says that:

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The prediction in the dream is founded not on outside forces, but on F[lorimont]'s own very real qualities. (p.290)

Yet there is no intrinsic opposition between Florimont's 'qualities' and the intervention of 'outside forces'. It can even be argued that, since the dream is sent to the hero's father not at his birth but at this conception, both his destiny and the qualities of character necessary to realise it must have been assigned to him at the same time. His 'qualities' are thus themselves the expression of his predestined fate. There is no doubt that in Aimon's poem all that is in the dreams and much of what is not specifically mentioned there (e.g. his love for the fée since its effects are foretold) must be seen as constituting a predetermined plan. At times the actions involved in its fulfilment may be depicted as being acts of will since his character is in itself determined in advance and anyway he is unaware of his destiny. Even those events excluded from the prophecies, in which he therefore appears to act freely, are never allowed to interfere with his destiny in any way; and in these, where D. Kelly sees Fortune at work, his volition, his will, in fact, seems to play a more important role than in the explicitly predestined episodes. There seems therefore to be no justification whatsoever for the opposition between Fortune and Destiny, between inclination and will, which D. Kelly postulates in his analysis of Florimont.

The question which I think really needs to be asked about Florimont is how important his destiny actually is. Does he appear to the reader as a predestined hero whose mighty exploits are a source of wonder and admiration? That does not seem to be the case. Despite the framework of a destiny to be fulfilled, Aimon de Varennes' attention turns on the hero as an individual, and our interest is focussed on the reactions and emotions of a particular man in a specific set of circumstances. There is no sign of a conflict between right and wrong. Nevertheless, even if Florimont is far removed from a Roland or from the Aeneas of the Virgilian text, his destiny obviously has a vital role to play in the structure of the poem, as the main device used to link together the different threads of the narrative.

Florimont can therefore be said to conform to the norms of the verse romance in the sense that it is concerned with the exploits of an individual rather than a collective destiny. Eneas, on the other hand, perhaps represents a stage in the transfer of interest towards individual and personal preoccupations and away from the collective and national. This shift in emphasis can be associated with the introduction of the love theme into narrative, perhaps partly to capture the interest of the reader once a sense of cosmic

conflict is lost. Indeed, the authors of the poems I have examined here exclude love as opposed to marriage from destiny and this tendency is common to almost all verse romances. Sometimes, of course, the natural and voluntary nature of love is deliberately and explicitly stressed by the writer, presumably as a comment on the Tristan story. The Tristan texts are, in fact, the only ones which do not adhere to this principle; but their position within the genre is anomalous in many respects, in particular since they do not conclude with the conventional reconciliation of conflict and happy ending. Be that as it may, it would appear that the love theme was introduced, in the romans d'antiquité at least, as a kind of 'extra' to increase suspense and help to retain the reader's interest in an action which, if it were confined to the account of a national destiny, would be so predictable and lacking in conflict as to risk being boring. In Florimont, however, where the action, centred largely on the individual, is far from predictable, love, being an individual response, is better integrated than in the Eneas, and it is destiny which seems to be exploited for mere narrative effect, as a strong cohesive element binding the different threads of the story into a unified and satisfying whole.

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## READING MEDIEVAL STUDIES

### NOTES

1. Cf. Evelyn Birge Vitz, 'Narrative Analysis of Medieval Texts: La fille du Comte de Pontieu', Modern Language Notes, XCII, 1977, 645-75.
2. Eneas, ed. J.-J. Salverda de Grave, Biblioteca Normannica, IV, Halle, 1891. References to the Aeneid are to Virgil, Opera, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford, 1969.
3. A strange reminiscence of the original Virgillian concept of Turnus is seen in the comment passed by the poet on the duel: 'combat sei fortune o vertu' (9728). This is a literal translation of the Latin 'fors et uirtus miscentur in unum' (XII, 714), an apt enough comment in the context of the Latin poem, but completely contradicted by the treatment of Turnus in the Eneas.
4. Jessie Crossland, 'Eneas and the Aeneid', Modern Language Review, XXIX, 1934, 282-90.
5. For a different interpretation of this episode, cf. Daniel Poirion, 'De l'Enéide à l'Eneas: mythologie et moralisation', Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, XIX, 1976, 213-29.
6. Aimon de Varennes, Floriment, ed. A. Hilka, Gesellschaft für romanische Literatur, XLVIII, Göttingen, 1932.
7. D. Kelly, 'The Composition of Aimon de Varennes' Florimont', Romance Philology, XXIII, 1969-70, 277-92.