

FLAUBERT AND THE LEGEND OF SAINT JULIAN

By EUGÈNE VINAVER, M.A., D. LITT., D. ès L.,
PROFESSOR OF FRENCH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

ET voilà l'histoire de saint Julien l'Hospitalier, telle à peu près qu'on la trouve, sur un vitrail d'église, dans mon pays.

With these words Flaubert concludes his *Légende de saint Julien l'Hospitalier*, the second of the three stories which he published in 1877 under the title of *Trois contes*. The *vitrail d'église* to which he refers is a window in the north transept of Rouen cathedral representing scenes from the legendary life of St. Julian, the patron saint of travellers. But the reference should not be taken literally. We have it on the authority of the *Journal des Goncourt* that Flaubert's publisher, Charpentier,¹ once asked him whether he really wanted a reproduction of the window to appear in the book, considering that he had on occasion disclaimed any indebtedness to it. "I want it, certainly", he replied, "precisely because it has no connection with the story."

Literary documents were of greater value to him than the most authentic iconographical material, and one such document was a book on glass-painting published in Rouen in 1832 by a well-known local artist and archaeologist, Eustache-Hyacinthe Langlois.² The book must have attracted Flaubert's attention in the days when, as a pupil at the Collège de Rouen, he was fascinated by history and mythology,³ for it contained, in addition to an engraving and a description of the cathedral window, an account of the legend of St. Julian based on Jacobus à Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*.⁴ But it is not certain that he made any extensive

¹ *Le Journal des Goncourt*, vi (Paris, 1892), Charpentier, 76.

² *Essai historique et descriptif sur la peinture sur verre . . . et sur les vitraux les plus remarquables.* ³ Cf. his letter to Ernest Chevalier of 24 June 1837.

⁴ The year 1260 seems to be the most probable *terminus ad quem* for its composition, but it did not acquire its traditional title until much later. An almost identical account of the legend of St. Julian occurs in the *Speculum Historiale* by Vincent de Beauvais and in *Gesta Romanorum*.

use of this account. Langlois told the story exactly as he had found it, adding nothing except some stylistic ornaments of a kind that Flaubert must have strongly resented,¹ and to ascertain how much of the legend was accessible to Flaubert and was likely to appeal to him in the early stages of his work it is enough to read the *Golden Legend* itself, either in the original Latin or in Jean de Vignay's French translation. For my present purpose it will suffice to reproduce in modern spelling Caxton's rendering published in 1483. It is "drawn from" Jean de Vignay and is remarkably close both to the Latin and to the French :

Another Julyen there was that slew his father and mother by ignorance. And this man was noble and young, and gladly went for to hunt. And one time among all other he found a hart which returned toward him and said to him, "Thou huntest me that shall slay thy father and mother". Hereof was he much abashed and afear'd, and for dread that it should not happen to him that the hart had said to him he went privily away, that no man knew thereof, and found a prince, noble and great, to whom he put him in service. And he proved so well in battle and in services in his palace that he was so much in the prince's grace that he made him knight and gave to him a rich widow of a castle, and for his dowry he received the castle. And when his father and mother knew that he was thus gone they put them in the way for to seek him in many places. And so long they went till they came to the castle where he dwelled, but then he was gone out, and they found his wife. And when she saw them she enquired diligently who they were, and when they had said and recounted what was happened of their son she knew verily that they were the father and mother of her husband, and received them much charitably, and gave to them her own bed and made another for herself. And on the morn the wife of Julyen went to the church, and her husband came home while she was at church, and entered into his chamber for to awake his wife. And he saw twain in his bed, and had wende that it had been a man that had laid with his wife, and slew them both with his sword, and after went out and saw his wife coming from church. Then he was much abashed and demanded of his wife who they were that lay in his bed. Then she said that they were his father and his mother which had long sought him, and she had laid them in his bed. Then he swooned, and was almost dead, and began to weep bitterly, and cry :

"Alas ! caitif that I am ! What shall I do that have slain my father and mother ? Now it is happened, that I supposed to have eschewed !"

And said to his wife,

"Adieu and farewell, my right dear love ! I shall never rest till that I shall have knowledge if God will pardon and forgive me this that I have done, and that I shall have worthy penance therefor."

¹ Here is his description of the murder scene : " Oh douleur ! Oh cruelle méprise ! Il se croit trahi par un criminel adultère. Transporté de fureur, il ne délibère pas, tire sa funeste épée et, sans rompre le silence, fait passer de leur paisible sommeil à celui de l'éternité les déplorables auteurs de ses jours."

And she answered,

“ Right dear love, God forbid that you should go without me ! Like as I have had joy with you, so will I have pain and heaviness.”

Then departed they and went till they came to a great river over which much folk passed, where they edified an hospital much great for to harbour poor people and there do their penance in bearing men over that would pass.

After long time Saint Julyen slept about midnight sore travailed and it was froyn and much cold, and he heard a voice lamenting and crying that said :

“ Julien, come and help us over ! ”

And anon he arose and went over and found one almost dead for cold, and anon he took him and bore him to the fire, and did great labour to chafe and warm him. And when he saw that he could not be chafed nor warmed he bore him into his bed and covered him the best wise he might. And anon after, he that was so sick and appeared as he had been a mesel,¹ he saw all shining ascending to heaven, and said to Saint Julien, his host :

“ Julien, Our Lord hath sent me to thee, and sendeth thee word that He hath accepted thy penance.”

And a while after Saint Julyen and his wife rendered unto God their souls and departed out of this world.

The first thing that one notices about this narrative is the emphasis on Julian's penance and on his rise to sainthood. The story is concerned not with the causes but with the consequences of Julian's crime. In a life of a saint it could not be otherwise. But one may well imagine that a novelist approaching the same theme would feel, as no doubt Flaubert felt, that in this instance the author of the *Golden Legend* had failed to supply the essential constituent element of a work of fiction, namely the means of leading up to the central episode of the tale. How indeed was this episode to carry conviction? Even if it were made plain that the catastrophe was caused by the operation of forces beyond human control or understanding, no novelist could refrain from dwelling upon its antecedents. Emma Bovary's tragic end may well be pre-determined, and Charles Bovary may express Flaubert's own mind when he says : *c'est la faute de la fatalité* ; for all that, in *Madame Bovary* as in all such forms of tragic art the forces of destiny are brought into play, or at least appear to be brought into play, by something inherent in the character : something which sets in motion the machinery of destiny and so supplies, if not the genuine, at least the ostensible starting point of the tragic sequence of events. When Flaubert first

¹ = a leper.

began to think of the legend of St. Julian there was nothing in the books he had read that could suggest such an approach to its central theme ; and there is evidence to show that it took him many years to discover how this theme was to be handled, and perhaps even to decide whether it could be handled at all.

We know from the memoirs of Maxime Du Camp that as early as 1846 Flaubert thought of writing a story about St. Julian.¹ Ten years later, on 1 June 1856, he refers to St. Julian in a letter addressed to Louis Bouilhet and says : “ I am still preparing my legend and correcting *St. Antoine*.”² Then for about nineteen years no more is heard of it. But when in September 1875, tired of struggling with a novel which he never finished—*Bouvard et Pécuchet*—Flaubert went to Concarneau for a holiday, his thoughts returned to Saint Julian. At the end of September he wrote to his niece : “ I can assure you that I am being very reasonable. I have even started writing something short. In the last three days I have written half a page of the plan of the legend of *Saint Julien l’Hospitalier*. . . . I want to *force* myself to write it. I shall write it as a penance with the sole purpose of seeing what comes of it.”³ A week later—on 2 October—he writes to Edmond Laporte : “ Next week I am going to start on a short story just to see if I am still capable of writing as much as a sentence. To be quite honest, I doubt it. I think I told you about *St. Julien l’Hospitalier*. It is just this that I want to write. Not that it amounts to much ; in fact it is of no importance.” Similar remarks occur in a letter written the next day to Madame des Genettes. The subject clearly fascinates him, but throughout his stay at Concarneau he seems to struggle unsuccessfully with some initial difficulties. When early in November 1875 he decides to go to Paris the story is barely begun. From Paris he writes to George Sand :⁴ “ You know that I have abandoned my big novel to write a mediaeval trifle (*une petite bêtise moyenâgeuse*) which will not exceed 30 pages.” This was on 11 December 1875. Then, quite unexpectedly, on 18 February

¹ *Souvenirs littéraires*, i (Paris, 1883), 325.

² Gustave Flaubert, *Œuvres complètes illustrées, édition du centenaire*, Paris (Librairie de France), 1928, *Correspondance*, ii, 18-19.

³ *Op. cit. Correspondance*, iii, 224.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 234.

1876, he writes again to George Sand, saying, "I finished my short story last night". The story was published a year later in a volume containing two other stories of approximately the same length, *Un cœur simple* and *Héroidias*. The collection was the last of Flaubert's works to be published in his lifetime.

The implications of this curious sequence of events are worth considering. In the middle of writing the most difficult of his works—*Bouvard et Pécuchet*—Flaubert decides to put it on one side and devote himself to a comparatively modest task. He goes to Concarneau trying to forget for a moment all about *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, and for someone like Flaubert the way to do this is to write something else. But the cure proves no less troublesome than the disease. We can picture Flaubert vainly struggling with his self-imposed task in his voluntary exile. According to his letter of 7 October,¹ a fortnight after completing half a page of the plan he writes about one page of the story itself. Another ten days go by and he admits that "*Saint Julien* has hardly advanced at all", adding that he would probably need some books on the Middle Ages: *ce n'est pas commode à écrire, cette histoire-là*.² Four days later, on 21 October, there is another cry of despair: "*Saint Julien* is not making much progress."³ And then suddenly, after his arrival in Paris, he settles down to it and writes it from beginning to end in a matter of two months—a remarkable record if we are to believe his own account of how long it usually took him to write a single page. All his biographers say that in December 1875 and in January 1876 he spent a good deal of time reading books on the Middle Ages and especially books on the art of hunting. But Maxime Du Camp asserts⁴ that although Flaubert went to the Bibliothèque Nationale and studied various treatises on hunting from Phoebus and Du Fouilloux to Baudrillart's *Dictionnaire des Chasses*, these works were of no real use to him. How, then, are we to account for this unusual quickening of pace?

It might be better not to account for it at all and leave the mystery unsolved. But even if no solution is attempted the issue can be substantially clarified. There is one piece of

¹ Op. cit. *Correspondance*, iii, p. 228.

² Ibid. p. 229.

³ Ibid. p. 230.

⁴ *Souvenirs littéraires*, i, 237.

evidence which students of Flaubert have until now completely ignored, and that is the existence of a medieval—probably late thirteenth century—version of the legend of Saint Julian, a version considerably more developed than the ones which Flaubert is supposed to have known.¹ It exists in two forms: an octosyllabic poem and a prose tale, neither of which was available in print in Flaubert's time. The poem was published in 1899 by Adolf Tobler, and the prose tale in 1901 by Rudolf Tobler, both in the not easily accessible *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen*.² The Bibliothèque Nationale has four manuscripts of the thirteenth century prose tale,³ and there is good internal evidence to show that Flaubert saw and used at least one of them.⁴ Occasionally we can even see how he struggled with Old French. At the beginning of his story he says that when Julian was seven years old his mother taught him to sing. The Old French text says: *quant li enfes ot passé VII. ans si fu molt grans de son eage et ama deduit de chiens et d'oisiaus*. Here Flaubert seems to have deciphered everything correctly except the word *chien*. Remark "sa mère lui apprit à chanter"

¹ The present-day view of Flaubert's treatment of the legend is stated in René Dumesnil's Introduction to his edition of *Trois contes* (Paris, "Belles Lettres", 1936). Earlier studies include an essay by Marcel Schwob (*Œuvres*, 1896, vol. iv, 157-83) and an article by Gédéon Huet (*Mercure France* 1-er juillet 1913).

² *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Litteraturen*, LIII. Jahrgang, CII. Band, 109-78; LV. Jahrgang, CVII. Band, 79-102. Flaubert's critics have so far virtually ignored these publications. Adolf Tobler writing about Flaubert in vol. 101 of the *Archiv* (99-110) said little of importance about Flaubert's sources and completely failed to notice the link between *Saint Julien* and the prose tale, no doubt because at that time the latter was still unpublished. The first critic to discover this link was Miss Sheila M. Smith in a typewritten thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in the University of Manchester (*Les Sources de la Légende de saint Julien l'Hospitalier de Flaubert*, 1944). I take this opportunity of acknowledging my debt to her thoughtful and scholarly investigation which puts the whole of the critical literature on *St. Julien* out of date. Even so distinguished a mediævalist as the late Albert Pauphilet referred to the Latin version as "l'état le plus parfait où la légende soit parvenue avant Flaubert; en d'autres termes, la source, le modèle" (*Flaubert: La Légende de St. Julien l'Hospitalier*, "Les Cours de la Sorbonne," Tournier et Courtants, "Cours professé en 1936").

³ MSS. B.N. fr. 987, 1546, 6447 and 23112. There are three other manuscripts on record: in Lyons, in Tours and in Alençon.

⁴ Probably MS. B.N. fr. 6447.

is by no means inappropriate ; but it suggests that he mistook the words *deduit de chiens et d'oisiaus* for *deduit du chant d'oiseaux*. A still more curious misreading brings into his text a reference to shells. When Julian and his wife leave their castle to do penance they live like beggars, and eat, according to the Old French version, anything they can pick in the forest and from the bushes by the roadside. The Old French word for " gathering, " picking up " , is *conqueuillir*. In Flaubert Julian picks up shells—*coquillages*—no doubt because in the corresponding place in the Old French manuscript Flaubert saw a word which looked very like *coquillages*—*conquilloeint*.¹ Not all his errors are quite as blatant. He translates word for word the description of the burial of Julian's parents as given in the Old French : *et les porterent au moustier et les enfouirent a grant honor* ; but whereas *moustier* has here the usual Old French meaning of " church " ,² he writes : " On enterra les morts avec magnificence dans l'église d'un monastère." He obviously thought the *moustier* could only mean monastery as in Modern French. On the whole, however, he understood the Old French text remarkably well and it is interesting to see how every now and then he combined what he had found in it with the version of the *Golden Legend*. Both in Flaubert and in the medieval prose tale it is Christ himself who appears in the guise of a leper ; he asks first for food, then for drink, and Julian having given him all he has, lies down with the stranger to keep him warm. In the prose tale the leper then vanishes, and Julian hears a voice saying, " I am Christ from whose sight nothing is hidden, and for your great goodness and your faith in your Lord your sin of homicide is forgiven " .³ In the *Golden Legend* and in all the other versions which had appeared in print in Flaubert's time the leper is not Christ, but a messenger from heaven. Julian sees him " all shining ascending to heaven " and hears

¹ MS. B.N. fr. 6447, fol. 217,2^{ro} col. 1: *et autres fruis ke il conquilloient par les buissons*. Both these errors have been noticed by Miss S. M. Smith (*op. cit.* pp. 29 and 39).

² Cf. *Chanson de Roland*, line 1750 ; S. M. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

³ MS. B.N. fr. 6447, fol. 218 v^o col. 1 : " Je suis Cris vers cui nule cose n'est couverte. Por la grant merite et por la foi de ton Signor vos est pardonés li pechiés de l'omecide ke vos feistes." Jesus is speaking here to Julian and his wife.

him say : “ Julian, Our Lord hath sent me to thee, and sendeth thee word that He hath accepted thy penance.” Flaubert welds these two visions into one : “ the leper clasped Julian closely and his eyes shone like stars ; his hair lengthened into sunbeams . . . an abundance of bliss, a superhuman joy filled the soul of Julian while he who lay beside him grew and grew until his head and his feet touched the walls. The roof disappeared, disclosing the heavens, and Julian ascended into infinity face to face with Our Lord Jesus Christ who bore him in his arms.”

There are many other similar indications of Flaubert's familiarity with the Old French prose tale.¹ What matters most, however, is not that he borrowed certain details from it, but that he found in it something which facilitated his approach to his task and helped him to evolve his own conception of the story. The legend of St. Julian as he knew it before November 1875 attracted him, but failed to inspire him ; or at any rate it failed to suggest to him a suitable method of handling the story. When he wrote *Madame Bovary* he often talked about his subject with a kind of exasperated spite, hating it and reviling it at times ; but he never found anything in it to disturb or to distract him in his effort to write it out to his satisfaction. Through the long years in which phrase was being added to phrase, through all the torment which it cost him to fashion his language, there was no question of struggling with a theme that he had not entirely mastered, of “ holding it down with one hand while writing with the other.”² With the story of Julian as told in the *Golden Legend* and as represented on the stained glass window in Rouen cathedral he was much less at ease. The story was “ une petite bêtise moyenâgeuse ”, a bare sequence of fortuitous events demonstrating the power of destiny, but devoid of human

¹ A complete list of their common features would exceed the limits of this essay. Suffice it to mention that parallel incidents occur throughout the story and that verbal agreements are not infrequent. Here are two striking examples : “ ala tant par la glace et par plueve ke sa char devint toute noire ” becomes in Flaubert's text : *le vent tanna sa peau* ; Flaubert's *elle les coucha elle-même dans son lit, puis ferma la croisée ; ils s'endormirent* is modelled on “ ele les couce et cuevre molt bien et puis ist de la cambre et clos l'uis ; cil sont maintenant endormi.” Cf. S. M. Smith, op. cit. pp. 32 and 36.

² Cf. Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*, London, 1929 (The Traveller's Library), 61.

interest. And it seems legitimate to conjecture that it did not begin to take shape in his mind until he had seen the prose tale in a manuscript in Paris.

There is a symbolic significance in Flaubert's encounter with the anonymous author of the thirteenth-century tale. The thirteenth century was the time when in the sphere of fiction a vast traditional material was subjected to the scrutinizing minds of innumerable *remanieurs* eager to refashion it in accordance with new aesthetic principles. The voluminous prose romances of that period were not mere compilations of unco-ordinated fragments of narrative; they were reflections of a steadily growing tendency to convey more convincingly and more coherently what earlier writers were content to state as fact. The prose tale dealing with the life of St. Julian is one of a great number of works in which this tendency is apparent. The prose writer is not concerned with a mere chronicle of events, and Julian's misfortune is to him something more than an accident that could happen at any time and under any circumstances. It springs from a complex situation, and is brought about by a certain arrangement of the narrative which is by no means haphazard. Julian is a typical medieval nobleman, the son of the Count of Anjou. Before he is born his mother, the Countess of Anjou, has a prophetic and terrifying dream: she dreams that she has given birth to an animal with human features which devours both herself and her husband. Throughout the years of Julian's childhood (he is a handsome boy with fair hair and everybody admires and loves him) the memory of this dream haunts her. Like any young nobleman, Julian learns the art of hunting; but soon his passion for it becomes irresistible. He will not let a day pass without going into the woods with his dogs. These are, then, in the medieval prose tale, the two premises of the story: the prophetic dream and Julian's excessive enthusiasm for a noble sport; two antecedents of his crime, one supernatural, the other natural. But in Julian's case the enjoyment of hunting, however natural, is carried to excess. One day his companions told him he had been out hunting long enough, for both men and dogs were weary. Julian, however, refused to turn back and said to them: "Go and leave me. I do not



Unos paruu
Unos racôte
la vie mon signū
s. julien ke il
a translatee de
latin en romāc
et dist ke tuit cil
lu lescouteient
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uront mlt gnt
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en furent. li vns

(MS. B. N. fr. 6447, f. 211 r col. 2)

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wish to return yet. I shall seek more adventures in the forest." And so he took his bow and went. A few of them followed him, but were soon left far behind. When Julian was alone he came upon an animal in a deep thicket. He went round the thicket to see how best to aim at it, but as he approached, the animal cried out and said, "Child, kill me not. I shall tell you your destiny. You will, with a single stroke, kill your father and mother." When Julian heard this he withheld his arrow, but after a moment stretched his bow and was about to shoot when the animal cried out again, repeating the same words. Amazed and frightened though he was, Julian took aim, and once more the animal said: "Child, kill me not, for I tell you truly, with one stroke you will kill your father and mother, and wherever you go no one but God can prevent this happening." Trembling with terror, Julian smashed his bow and his arrows and said, "Vile beast, you have told a lie". And he swore never to go to any place where he might find his father and mother.¹

How different this is from the traditional *Golden Legend* story, where we are merely told that Julian was "noble and young and gladly went for to hunt"—presumably no more than any other young nobleman—and that "one time among other" he met a stag who turned towards him and spoke in a human voice.² Even in the thirteenth century poem about St. Julian, which chronologically stands between the *Golden Legend* and the prose tale,³ we do not find the theme of Julian's unreasonable passion for hunting. His encounter with the supernatural animal occurs

¹ MS. B.N. fr. 6447, fol. 211 v^o col. 2: "Quant li enfes oï çou, si tresua d'angoisse et prist son arc et ses saiettes, si les brisa et dist: Pute best, tu as menti de quan que tu as dit, car je n'irai ja mais en leu u mon pere ne ma mere soit. Et puis desrompi ses cevels et detort ses poins, et puis dist: Deus, u est la mors, ke ne me prent ele ançois ke ce aveigne!"

² The stained glass window in Rouen cathedral contains no representation of hunting scenes or indeed of any event of Julian's life prior to his voluntary exile.

³ The poem was an expansion of the chapter on Julian in the *Golden Legend* or in *Speculum Historiale* (with a possible intermediary in the form of a Latin verse text); the prose tale was an adaptation of the poem. Rudolf Tobler argued that because the prose tale was more cogent and attractive than the poem it must have been written first: "Wie aber die Prosalegende klarer und zugleich poetischer ist als die gereimte, so darf man wohl auch annehmen, dass sie der ursprünglichen Form der Legende näher steht" (*Archiv*, vol. 106, p. 315). The underlying assumption is characteristic of scholars of Tobler's generation. How strongly he

without any preparation, when Julian goes out hunting with his men and quite by chance finds himself alone in a thicket. It is only in the prose tale that a link is established between his behaviour and the curse laid upon him—a tenuous link, to be sure, but no more tenuous than that which is needed to give his fate an appearance of meaning. Having heard the prophecy, Julian not only destroys his bow and arrows, but discards his armour and goes on a pilgrimage to Rome, and thence to the Holy Land. After his return he sets out for Compostella, but one day he finds himself in a besieged castle where the sight of a battle tempts him to resume the life from which he had fled. He tells himself that it is wrong for the son of a count and a countess to live like a beggar. He forgets St. James and the pilgrimage, becomes a knight and henceforth thinks of nothing but deeds of arms. When the fatal moment arrives and Julian's parents come to his castle, neither the *Golden Legend* nor any modern adaptation of it explains Julian's absence. "He was gone out, and they found his wife", says Caxton. "He was accidentally (*casu*) absent from the castle", says the Latin text. Only in the versions which in Flaubert's time were not accessible in print¹ are we told that Julian was absent because he had gone out hunting and had stayed out longer than he had intended. He hunted all through the night, and it was not until late in the morning that he realized it was time for him to return home. No details of the hunt are given, but the meaning of it is clear. Julian has broken his vow. He has gone back to the way of life which had ended so abruptly with the fatal prophecy, and the renewal of that way of life brings with it the fulfilment of the prophecy. The prose writer does not say, and we must resist the temptation to read any such meaning into his words, that Julian killed

believed in it is shown by the fact that the occurrence of complete octosyllabic lines in the prose text struck him as another proof of his theory: the poet, he thought, would naturally choose as a model a text which was already partly in verse. One unmistakable piece of evidence against the priority of the prose tale is the appearance in it of Jesus Christ in place of the "messenger from heaven" (see above, p. 234, n. 3). No thirteenth-century poet could have substituted the latter for the former.

¹ He is not likely to have seen an article by Lecoq Dupont on the Alençon MS. in the *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, année 1838* (pp. 190-210)—the only printed account of the prose tale published in his lifetime.

his parents because he was intoxicated with the slaughter of innocent creatures. There is no suggestion of a *psychological* link between the killer of animals and the murderer of his own parents. The connection between them is established on a different plane from what we expect, and the whole pattern of the story is made coherent in a manner characteristic of medieval writers: not psychologically, but *structurally*, by the mere impact of parallel situations upon the reader's mind. Julian, carried away by his love of hunting, hears a terrible curse laid upon him by a hunted animal; there is a poetic, not a moral justice there, but it suffices to justify the curse, even though the retribution is so much greater than the fault. Once these two things—the enjoyment of hunting and the fatal curse—are made part of a sequence of themes, such is the force of poetic logic that Julian's tragic action can be brought about by a mere *reprise* of the theme of hunting. It is difficult for us today to understand how this is done. The method belongs to a time when even mediocre writers knew what poetic logic meant, and so could operate at a higher level of aesthetic consciousness than that which some of the finest modern novelists, preoccupied as they are with the representation of reality for its own sake, are ever likely to reach. We recognize the exclusive power of formal elements everywhere except in literature, an art upon which we make a variety of other demands, not all of them consistent with the artist's task. Let us at least remember that our theory of the art of the novel, far from being the only legitimate one, is no more than a peculiar flower of a peculiar civilization.

To discover in what way the thirteenth-century prose tale affected Flaubert's *conte* it is enough, to begin with, to realize that in both works the essential moments of action are the two episodes which have just been mentioned: the one leading to the encounter with the stag, and the other immediately preceding the murder of Julian's parents. In Flaubert both these episodes are elaborated into long descriptions of hunting and form two parallel movements upon which the whole development of the central theme of the story is based. The first movement begins when Julian sets out one winter morning before dawn, with a bow slung across his shoulder. "Soon he came to a forest. A

woodcock sat on a branch, its head beneath its wing. Julian, with the flat of his sword, cut off its feet, and without stopping to pick it up rode away. . . . He entered an avenue of tall trees. . . . A deer sprang out of the thicket and a badger crawled out of its hole; a stag appeared in the road, and a peacock spread its fan-shaped tail on the grass—and after Julian had slain them all, other deer, other stags, other badgers, other peacocks, and jays, blackbirds, foxes, porcupines, polecats, and lynxes appeared—a host of beasts that grew with every step he took. Trembling, and with a look of appeal in their eyes, they gathered around Julian only to be slain in their turn. . . . Presently an extraordinary sight made him pause: a deep valley filled with a great herd of deer. Huddled together, they were warming one another with the vapour of their breaths that mingled with the early mist. For a few minutes Julian stood still, breathless with joy. . . . And as his first arrow sped through the air, the deer turned their heads towards him, crowded closer, and uttered plaintive cries; then, as Julian's arrows began to fall thick and fast, the animals, maddened with terror, climbed upon one another, their bodies forming a moving mountain, until finally it fell apart and they lay stretched out on the sand. . . . Night came, and behind the trees, through the branches, the sky appeared like a sheet of blood. And as Julian leant against a tree wondering how he had accomplished this great slaughter, he saw a large stag with a doe and a fawn. . . . He stretched his bow and instantly the fawn dropped dead, and as its mother raised her head uttering a cry of anguish Julian thrust his knife into her breast and felled her to the ground. Then the great stag sprang forward. Julian aimed his last arrow at him, and the shaft struck deep between the antlers. But the stag still advanced towards Julian as if to charge him, and Julian recoiled in horror. Presently the huge animal halted. With eyes aflame and the solemn air of a patriarch and a judge it spoke to the tolling of a distant bell: 'Accursed! Accursed! Accursed! Some day, fierce heart, thou wilt murder thy father and mother.' Then the great beast sank to its knees, closed its lids, and died."

Fierce heart—cœur féroce: by these two words as by a flash of lightning Julian's fate is revealed to him—and to us.

An untold sadness comes over him, a sickening terror. For he has found within himself the cause of his impending doom, and from now onwards all that he cherished most in life becomes charged with an inescapable sense of foreboding. The adventures that follow are told with significant brevity. A few lines suffice to describe Julian's wanderings, his successes on the battlefield and his marriage to the Emperor's daughter. Julian becomes a powerful ruler, admired by the princes and nobles who owe him allegiance ; but when they beg him to go out hunting with them he refuses to yield to their entreaties, as if he feared his own violence. Then, one summer evening, as he was about to kneel in prayer, he heard the bark of a fox and a soft padding under the window. He seized his bow, left the castle grounds and walked through the forest, enjoying the velvety softness of the grass. A great stillness reigned everywhere, and he failed to see any of the beasts that a moment ago seemed to be prowling around the castle. Suddenly a body blacker than the surrounding darkness sprang from behind a tree. It was a wild boar. Julian had no time to stretch his bow. Then, at the edge of the wood, he saw a wolf and aimed an arrow at him ; the wolf paused, turned its head, and continued on its way. Presently shapes began to move in the darkness, and there came forth panting, wild-eyed hyenas : they approached Julian, sniffed at him and grinned hideously, showing their fangs. He whipped out his sword, but they disappeared in a cloud of dust. Then he thrust his lance between the dewlaps of a bull, but the weapon snapped as if the breast had been made of bronze. A weasel slid between his feet, a panther leapt over his shoulder, and a serpent coiled itself around a tree, while among the leaves a monstrous jackdaw was watching Julian intently. Fiery sparks appeared between the branches of the forest. Those were the eyes of wild cats, of squirrels, of monkeys and of parrots. Julian aimed his arrows at them all, and the arrows glanced harmlessly on the leaves of the trees ; he threw stones, and the stones fell to the ground. " And all the beasts he had pursued appeared. They formed a circle round him, some sitting on their hind-quarters, others standing at full height. Cold with terror, he took a step forward, and they all moved with him, the hyenas striding in front of him, the wolf and the wild

boar at his heels, while on one side the bull swung his head and on the other the panther, arching its back, advanced with slow, long strides. . . ." There was irony in their sly gestures. They watched him out of the corners of their eyes, and Julian, deafened by the buzzing of insects, bruised by the wings and tails of the birds, choked by the stench of animal breaths, walked with outstretched arms and closed lids like a blind man, the thirst for slaughter stirring afresh within him, a thirst that the blood of animals could no longer quench.

Only a few moments separate this vision from the scene in which Julian sees his father and mother stretched before him, with splashes of blood on their white skin and on the ivory crucifix which hangs in the alcove. He has killed them with his own dagger, having failed to recognize them in the dark and thinking that a man was lying beside his wife. The passion which raged within him as he returned to the castle, the exuberance of his own fierce heart nurtured on bloodshed and thirsting helplessly for yet another prey, has caused all this. . So ends the second movement of Flaubert's tale, the more terrible in its impact because of its subtle resemblance to the first. There is between them a remarkable interplay of the real and the supernatural. Just as the stark realism of the wholesale slaughter of animals dissolves into the scene of the supernatural prophecy, so the dream-like terror of the animal world closing in upon Julian and pursuing him as if to wreak a supernatural vengeance upon him culminates in the tragic reality of his predestined crime. And the intensity of the whole sequence is such that the transition from real life to magic and from magic to real life is no more than a modulation welding the complex succession of themes into a single harmonious texture.

There is, of course, in Flaubert's *St. Julien* something more obvious and less unusual, namely the technique of a psychological novel reminiscent of *Madame Bovary*. The action, or the plot, in the type of novel of which *Madame Bovary* is an example, arises from character, and character from environment. There is no doubt that Flaubert applied this formula to the story of St. Julian as soon as he saw that the early prose writers had established a link between Julian's love of hunting and his tragic fate. He deliberately lengthened the description of Julian's

initiation into the art of hunting and while preserving the fairy-tale theme of prophecy told the story in such a way as to suggest a realistic, psychological explanation of Julian's crime: if the "fierce heart" exasperated by the miraculous hunt and thirsting for bloodshed blinds Julian to everything that might avert the tragedy it may well be because his life has made him what he is, and because the irony of life is such that the slightest flaw can bring catastrophe upon the most ordinary human beings. The tragedy of *Emma Bovary* may similarly be accounted for by a few seemingly ordinary traits of character determined by some very ordinary circumstances of life. A novel constructed in this fashion offers a wide field of inquiry both to the psychologist and to the sociologist; it can even tempt the novelist himself to become either one or the other or sometimes both, and most of Flaubert's imitators seem to have yielded to this temptation. But we should do Flaubert a great injustice if we reduced him to the level of his would-be disciples. Even while writing *Madame Bovary* he was much less concerned with the panorama of French provincial life or with the correct analysis of the psychology of characters than with something more important which he never properly defined, but which can be deduced from practically everything he said about his novel: a certain *inner structure* of the work, which would carry conviction by virtue of its own harmony sustained by the power of language. Great tragic writers have always felt as he did that the sense of the inevitability of the disaster cannot be brought home to the reader merely by a logical presentation of causes and effects, even if supernatural causes are allowed to intervene, and this is the reason why no great tragic writer has ever been able to separate tragedy from poetry. It is because Flaubert knew this instinctively that the whole energy of his mature years was spent in an endeavour to transcend the purely dramatic and psychological conception of the novel and make it into something valid on other grounds than the art of motivating action through character. In *Madame Bovary* he certainly does not abandon one method in favour of the other; but he already feels that it is not enough to have a chain of incidents determined by what a given character is likely to do in a given situation. Imperceptibly

to the reader, one method is laid upon the other, poetry upon drama, and the effect is one of an irresistible *movement* towards the catastrophe, of a complex contrapuntal composition which by its own momentum sweeps away all obstacles to our understanding of the heroine's tragic fate.¹ In his later works, and especially in *l'Education sentimentale*, Flaubert will depart more decisively still from the novel form as it was traditionally interpreted and as his less gifted followers have understood it ever since: he will shift the emphasis more resolutely from the dramatic to the poetical values, from the objectively discernible relationship of character and incident to the inner coherence of the work itself. And it is no mere accident that to a reader like Proust the real greatness of Flaubert is revealed much more fully in *l'Education sentimentale* than in *Madame Bovary*, for in *l'Education sentimentale*, so Proust tells us, "the revolution has been accomplished; what, up to the time of Flaubert, had been merely *action* has become *impression*."

The story of St. Julian is, on a reduced scale, the summing up of this process. On the one hand, it is, outwardly at least, a revival of the novel of action, with its careful subordination of incident to feeling and of feeling to circumstances; on the other, it is a novel of impression which depends for its effect on its own poetic medium—on the rhythm of its structure, on the inner harmony of its composition, on the incantatory power of each one of its movements. It is a far cry from *Saint Julien l'Hospitalier* to the medieval prose tale which gave it its final impetus; but the significant thing is precisely that single spark that passed between two minds separated by a gulf of six centuries. In the thirteenth-century tale there was in embryo nearly all that distinguishes a novel from a fairy tale, and nearly all that Flaubert needed to set his own angle of vision. And the magnificent spectacle of a great artist bringing to completion a task barely begun by an obscure early writer is one which at any time, regardless of all variations of taste, will be worth our understanding.

¹ He never formulated this deeper law except indirectly as when he expressed his longing for a work free from all "machinery" and containing nothing but sentences (*phrases*), beautiful sentences as free as the waves of the ocean. "Sentences" is not the appropriate term, nor for that matter is "style".