

Taking (and Giving) Blows: Patterns of Violence and Spectacle in *Le Mystère de Saint Martin* (1496)

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I am honored to participate in a session dedicated to the memory of Robert Potter, colleague and friend. Bob was not only a fine scholar of early drama but was an active director, playwright, and all round man of the theater. And he combined these two spheres wonderfully (I remember he once “commissioned” me to appear as Titivillus in the middle of a paper he was delivering on the morality play *Mankind*). It is in the spirit of Bob Potter, then, that I venture forth with some observations on a very large saint’s play, the three-day-long *Mystère de Saint Martin* written and no doubt largely “directed” by Andrieu de la Vigne for the Burgundian town of Seurre in 1496. I do not pretend to great expertise in medieval French drama – indeed I am heavily indebted to the work of Graham Runnalls and Viki Hamblin specifically– but I have spent a good bit of time on expressions of the cult of Martin of Tours and have some three decades of experience in directing productions of early drama. I would like to examine here some of the larger patterns that this playwright employed in order to structure his magnum opus, and this from a practical theater perspective, isolating some of the gestical patterns and meta-rhythms, with an eye, that is, to “production.” ¹

The rubric for this special session is “Representing Violence, Horror, Sex and Scatology (In Memory of Robert Potter).” The *Mystère de Saint Martin* has them all, and particularly the violence. I would like to begin, therefore, with a bit of Potteresque iconoclasm, namely, that a late medieval playwright of La Vigne’s stamp had a lot in common with the writers and directors of “action flicks.” Here in 2013 the testosterone and gasoline-fuelled *Fast and Furious* franchise is now in its sixth incarnation, and Bruce Willis continues to *Die Hard*. It is almost axiomatic that such pieces of popular entertainment depend upon a regular, one might even say precisely calibrated episodes of violence, horror, sex, etc. One can almost click a stop-watch between explosions, car chases, impossible displays of martial arts, and so on. In other words, we are dealing with quite tried and true *formulae* for keeping an audience.

Medieval drama was, by and large, just such a popular art form - as well as, of course, a serious devotional exercise and teaching opportunity. Saints' plays in particular afforded many opportunities for strong stage action and spectacle whether religious, picaresque, martial, or demonic. It should come as no surprise that La Vigne would punctuate his "straight" religious and didactic scenes of prayers, homilies, baptisms and benedictions, healing miracles, mystical Masses, and the elaborate installation of a bishop with episodes of violent display and grotesquery. As the playwright testifies in the autograph *Procès-verbal*, he cranked out the 10,445 verses of the Seurre St. Martin play in only five weeks! No wonder that scholars find little in the way of literary merit or theological sophistication in the work . 2 This is not to say, however, that it was a failure as a piece of popular entertainment or that it did not greatly redound, in contemporary terms, to the credit of the town and its patron saint.

What I would like to do here is examine the passages of violence and other bits of scenography, moving from the macro to the micro level and back again, over the three-day play. With 260 rubrics (stage directions) embodied in the text, a manuscript nearly contemporaneous with the performance itself, we have a unique opportunity to visualize much of the action on stage. Reviewing these scenes, something like a "through line" emerges, a pattern common to many hero-tales right up through the "spaghetti westerns" to *Django Unchained*, in which the long-suffering victim of others' violence eventually comes back with a vengeance having acquired new weapons. In Martin's case these are the mitre + crozier of the bishopric of Tours. He goes from taking to giving blows.

La Vigne's play is divided into six units, a morning and an afternoon session over three consecutive days:

Day 1 = 2067 verses in the morning; 1971 in the afternoon

Day 2 = 1389 and 1837 verses

Day 3 = 1638 and 1543 verses

We see that the total for the first day was over 4000 verses, while the totals for the following two days were nearer 3000, evidence perhaps that the playwright was factoring in audience fatigue. To follow his patterns of stage spectacle and violence, the “Table du Mystère” of the modern editor, André Duplat is an invaluable tool and is included here as an appendix. Four levels of stage violence can be isolated ranging from the supernatural (in *diableries*), to the geo-political (war on a grand scale), to the societal (as found in brigands, heretics, residual pagans), to the domestic.

Day 1, Morning La Vigne begins his dramatization of the life of Martin with an obvious crowd-pleaser, a *diablerie* --114 lines “full of sound and fury” signifying very little beyond rhymed rage, demonic alliteration, and other linguistic grotesqueries. In addition to the nearly impenetrable puns in two “ballads,” shared by Lucifer and Satan (with some help from Burgibus and Berith), there would have been “horrible howling,” blasts of trumpets and other “rough music” and, of course, plenty of fireworks. A later rubric mentions the firing of canons. (We know from the *Procès-verbal* that a major accident occurred right at the outset when the seat of Satan’s pants caught fire.) At first blush, this *diablerie* seems to have nothing to do with main character. It is a mysterious prologue on another planet before the main titles roll – an almost self-contained bit of horror show and sure-fire (pun intended) entertainment. Its function as an infernal backdrop to the shining example of the saint will, of course, become apparent. La Vigne will return to the device four more times, once more on the afternoon of the first day; twice on the second day with *diableries* of 92 and 82 verses, one each session; and a final *diablerie* of 104 verses on the third day. It is only in the later *diableries* that verbal abuse is, briefly, directed at Martin specifically (*ce paillardreau, filz de putain, Martin* (l.2250) in #2; *coquin Martin villain* (l. 5048) in #3, *ce ribauldeau Martin*(l. 5496) in #4) as the devils begin to penetrate the action of the play proper.

The opening *diablerie* might well have been needed for an audience to settle in and then focus on the largely sacred and didactic stretch of the long first morning session. The goal of the first day’s first unit is to build to the single most important image for the cult of St. Martin, “The Charity,” the icon of the young cavalryman slicing his cloak to share it with a naked beggar. Apart from the panoply surrounding the war council of Caesar Julian and the knightly investment of the young Martin, with the mildly amusing

rodomontades of three nobleman (a duke, a count and a marquis), and a brief passage of “tavern realism” before Martin’s Dream, Morning Day 1 had been a rather dignified and pious affair. Martin had begun in respectful disagreement with his parents over the religion of *le dieu Mahon*. He had consulted with Christian priests on the Faith, and had dutifully submitted to his father’s will that he be inducted into the Roman army despite his own inclinations. There is a hint of Martin’s future mistreatment in the stage direction: *Les escuyers prennent saint Martin comme par force et l’emmaynent* (l. 983), as Martin is hauled off to military service. Turning more and more toward Christ, Martin had patiently endured the taunts of the three noblemen for his seemingly senseless act of charity before the gates of Amiens. He had also insisted that his servant, Francequin, sit beside him in the tavern for their evening meal. These demonstrations of saintly humility then move directly on to the climax of the morning session, “Dream,” the appearance of Christ and his angels to the sleeping Martin. Christ exhibits the severed cloak-half, with instrumental and vocal music underscoring the scene. Martin’s baptism immediately followed as a satisfying denouement.

Day I, Afternoon. If the morning session was long and pious as befits a patron saint, the afternoon is something else again. We start off with a *diablerie*, the longest of the work at 239 verses. Three stage directions call for devil Astaroth to flog (*frappe*) his minions. The introduction of *celle putain Proserpine* also adds a bit of an erotic charge to the hellish cacaphony. The *diablerie* segues, with barely a change of register, into a scene of the barbarians planning to attack. They are led by the *Roy de Barbarie* together with a “Grand Turk of Tartary” and “Sultan of the Greater Indies.” The King revels in his *Sarrazinesme*, boasting of his war dromedaries, buffaloes, and elephants. All the East, it seems, is arrayed against the Roman Empire. The playwright next indicates a full-scale battle scene before the walls of a nameless city, the sequence ending with the hapless mayor and townsmen all bound and led away. The town’s gatekeeper *est ja lije et garroté avec les autres. Ilz les mectent en prison* (l. 2430). *Garroté* seems to indicate that the defeated Romans are bound together at the neck, in a classic image of defeated enemies, future slaves.

Martin the new Christian, the young innocent is now sucked into this vortex of demonic and barbarian violence. Baptism has, in a sense, made him a target. He must

also contend against his own regime, the pagan Roman Empire. From his death onwards the historical Martin was placed in the first rank of the Confessors. But his early devotees also saw him, at least partially, as one of the Martyrs - for his defiance of Julian the Apostate, his persecution by the Arians in Milan, etc. Martin, as the bloodied champion of orthodoxy, for example, leads the procession of martyrs in the great 6th century mosaic in Sant' Apollinare, Ravenna. Sulpicius Severus himself had suggested the motif in his Letter to Deacon Aurelius: "For although the character of our times has been such as not to afford him the opportunity of martyrdom, he none the less will share the martyr's glory" (Sulpicius, p. 53). **3** Andrieu de la Vigne was not entirely ignorant of this tradition. His Martin certainly takes on many of the postures of a martyr.

A key scene is his confrontation with Caesar Julian, the future Apostate, here assumed already to be Emperor. Martin having jettisoned some, if not all, of his military accoutrements at the site of the Dream, refuses Julian's donative to the troops and requests his release from the service, making his famous declaration of complete pacifism: *Mais de m'armer desormais me deporte,/Car chevalier je suis de Jhesucrist/Qui en sa foy maintenant me comporte,/Croyant de luy tout ce qui escript* (ll. 2714-2717). The Emperor rages against the coward and the bargain is struck that Martin will appear defenseless before the barbarian horde, protected only by the sign of the cross, and *ilz prennent saint Martin et le lient, puis le maynent en prison* (l.2762), a stage direction closely paralleling that in the earlier battle sequence. The playwright now finds himself painted into a corner, theatrically speaking. In closely following Sulpicius Severus, he needs must present one of the most coincidental "miracles" in the Christian tradition: "The next day the enemy sent envoys to ask for peace, surrendering themselves and all they had. Who can doubt...that this victory was due to this man of blessings and was granted to him so that he should not be sent unarmed into the battle?" (Sulpicius, p. 16) The miracle is all in the eye of the beholder. La Vigne's Martin effects the miracle solely by means of a Ballad he recites in prison. It has the wonderful pacifistic sentiment as refrain: *Ne laisse point le sang humain espandre* but, with no supernaturals engaged or even music underneath, apparently, it is hardly an effective stage miracle. Nevertheless, the *Roy de Barbarie* immediately has second thoughts and sends a letter to the Roman Emperor offering peace negotiations (if only

all international relations were so easy!). Here is a playwright with two stage armies in place but with nothing now for them to do. La Vigne appears to have missed an opportunity here. He could have brought Martin out amidst hooting, shield-thumping barbarians armed only with a home-made crucifix (as is sometimes portrayed in the visual arts) and have the miracle proceed from there, but he let faithfulness to sources trump theatricality in this instance. Martin does. Unlike Julian in the source, the stage Emperor recognizes Martin's agency in causing the miraculous peace, offers him gifts and begs his forgiveness as well. It all feels just a bit lame, although Martin has amply demonstrated the patience, humility, and courage in the face of certain death characteristic of the martyr saint.

La Vigne is in better theatrical form with the multi-part sequence involving the Brigands. One of many episodes in the early peripatetic career of Martin, the encounter with the brigands figures prominently in the play, occupying three episodes over two days. The first two are interspersed with scenes between Martin and Hilary of Poitiers. In the first of these Martin receives instruction from the elder cleric and is solemnly invested with the *habit d'acolite*. In the second he expresses the wish to return to convert his parents and receives benediction from Hilary. The brigands are well introduced as a lively if dangerous crew: Toutlifault ("All Blame") and Souldouvrer ("Ditch-drunk"?) first, followed by the scouts Courte Oreille ("Short Ears" from the pillory, no doubt) and Sote Troigne ("Sot Puss"). Interestingly, they are musical thieves, three songs being sung within their first fifty lines. The playwright was perhaps working from the template of the Shepherds before the Nativity for this lowly crew, but they are soon on to their larcenous work, ambushing a band of merchants. The goods are plundered and the merchants hauled off to the bandits' cave. When they return to confront the solitary Martin on his journey home we get some details of their technique. Evidently they use a whistle to coordinate a simultaneous rush to surround their victim – *Le tiers sonne ung petit siflet* (l. 3441). Martin is totally surprised, the name of Jesus escaping from his lips, and at least one thief gleefully threatens to slice open his skull – *Icy mect l'espee tout nue droit sur le mill[eu] de la teste sans y toucher, faisant bonne myne* (l. 3446). A later report mentions a halberd among their weapons. Martin is bound hands behind his back, and forcibly led off to their cave in the rocks. (Notice how

often this binding and hauling away action has been repeated in this afternoon session.) Left alone with Sote Troigne to guard him, Martin succeeds in getting the bandit to ponder his crimes and the eternal punishment awaiting him. The Fourth Brigand eventually vows “with humble heart and fervent courage” to seek out a hermitage and there repent his wicked life. He frees Martin of his bonds. Martin blesses him and they part ways.

There now occurs the first brief encounter of the demonic forces with the hero of the play. Satan, donning a *hoppelande* disguises himself as a fellow traveler and attempts to deflect Martin from his objective by tales of brigands on the road, etc. Martin suspects the motives of this stranger and, employing the sign of the cross, succeeds in flushing out the devil and forcing him to flee

The final episode of the first day of performance brings us back to the domestic situation with which the day began. It is a scene almost modern in feel, between traditional parents and a footloose son now committed to a New Age cult. Martin’s father immediately reacts, negatively, to Martin’s dress --what’s with the cassock; where’s all your manly soldier gear? He is soon cursing Martin in the name of all his pagan gods—Mahon, Jupiter, Mars, Apollo—while the Mother attempts to calm him down. The Father is perhaps the second most important role in the play in this first day of performance. More so than the Emperor Julian or the Barbarian King, he embodies demonic rage and tyranny. He is the real link between the human sphere of action and the *diableries*. His very language betrays him, even in his first scene —*Haro, haro, j’enraige* (l.217). Martin evidently slips away momentarily (like Jesus hiding himself from the enraged Pharissés?) into a *ung lieu secret, arriere de luy* (l. 3758), as the Father *prent une espee nue et fait semblant de vouloir tuer en le serchant* (l.3760) The Father’s curses reach a splendid crescendo of abuse: *Coquin, belistreaux, miserable?/ Hen, hen, voire? Haa, par ma loy/ Mieulx te vouldroit ester au grant deable!* (ll. 3768-70). He evidently exits in a rage still searching for Martin with the drawn sword, a one man *diablerie*. Martin reappears to have some quiet time with Mom. He instructs his mother on the falseness and impotence of the pagan gods and the day ends with a compact catechism taking us through the true nature of the Trinity, Adam and Eve and

the Fall of Man, the Virgin Birth, the Passion and Resurrection, ending with her exemplary conversion.

Day 2, Morning The second day of performance opens with a long sequel to the Brigands episode, totally disengaged now from the *Vita Martini*. A cantankerous group of law officers--four Sergeants, a Provost, and an Executioner (*Bourreau*)-are introduced and they evidently surprise the band of brigands at rest in their camp (no stage directions at this point). The brigands vigorously resist arrest and a lively combat ensues: *Icy les larrons se combatant aux aultres et tirent espees, faisant merveilles* (l. 4108). The brigands are captured, bound and roughly handled (evidently a hair-pull at l. 4126) by the sergeants. They are hauled before the Provost who mounts his *siege de justice*. The Second Brigand freely confesses to plundering churches of sacred vessels, relics, the *Corpus Christi* itself, as well as robbing merchants and cutting many throats in woods and fields (ll. 4169-4184). The Provost pronounces sentence: two shall be hanged and the third beheaded by the Bourreau's *grant espee*. The people of Seurre are now treated to a full-scale triple execution with state-of-the-art special effects in the form of a functioning gibbet and some sophisticated illusionism for the beheading. The realism of these theatrical executions must have been of a fairly high order, for a large percentage of the adult audience would, no doubt, have witnessed the real thing and would not likely have been content with an off-stage suggestion or mere symbolic representation. La Vigne indeed worked with a *maistre de secretz*, one Germain Jacquet from Autun (*Procès-Verbal*, p. 260)..The realism extends to the Executioner's boy stripping the corpses of their garments. This extended spectacle of judicial violence is intended to be entirely salutary. Each of the brigands confesses to his crimes and laments his fate, the second and third in the patterned form of a Complainte and a Ballad. It all has the flavor of Villon's famous "Ballad of the Hanged."

At 707 verses, nearly 7% of the entire play is devoted to the Brigands and their final comeuppance. This should not be too surprising. For the burghers of Seurre and the merchants of the now French province of Burgundy, brigandage was no minor concern. It had been long century of war, pillage, and disruption. The Burgundian Wars with their hordes of Swiss mercenaries were scarcely twenty years in the past. **4** To stage a triple execution of banditti might have seemed perfectly appropriate in a patron saint's

play designed to promote local solidarity and bourgeois values. After the beheading of Courte Oreille, as his “body” is carted off stage and the executioners head for the tavern, the very next stage picture is that of Martin praying: *Redempteur d’éternelle gloire/Plasmateur de la Trinité* (l. 4413-14).

Martin is on his way to confront the Arians in Milan. He prays for strength in the coming struggle, enumerating the vices of his doctrinal enemies: *Dectraction/Ambicion,/Orgueil, envie,/Polucion,/Derracion*, as well as *sodomyte infection* (ll.4433-4437 & 4441), that slur famously employed against the Templars two centuries past. A bell summons a congregation to hear the Arian Bishop on his cloth-of-gold draped cathedra, his Masters of theology, law and astrology by his side. There is no hint of anything untoward or parodic until the Bishop blesses the crowd with the sign of the cross: *IN NOMINE PATRIS ET FILII/ ET SPIRITUS SANCTI, AMEN/Petite pause. THEUME/NON QUALIS PATER TALIS FILIUS* (l 4565-67). Martin interrupts the homily of this *desloyal heretique*, and a full disputation takes place. The initial Arian lecture and subsequent debate last for some 280 verses. The argument is fairly technical, going over that iota of difference between *homoousia* and *homoiousia*. It probably would not have been followed very well by any but the most learned in the audience. ⁵ The important theatrical fact is that it all ends in violent abuse of Martin: *Fol estordy, glorieux loricart/Estes vous bien si arrogant cocquart* (ll. 4843-44). He is seized, stripped, bound with cords to a hook, and beaten with rods—*Icy le prennent les tirans et le despoillent, puis ilz le lent a une attaché et le batent de verges* (l. 4853). Four more stage directions call for further beating, the *Tirants* engaging in short quips as the Arian Bishop urges them on. This is a full-scale flagellation scene on the par with that of any martyr saint or Jesus himself in a *Passion*, a theatrical amplification of Sulpicius Severus’ rather generalized account: “The leader of the Arians bitterly persecuted him, and after inflicting many injuries upon him, drove him out of the city.” (chap. 6). Martin joyously embraces his martyrdom: *Mes amys, frappez hardyment!* (l. 4486). His tormentors tire themselves out and, impressed by Martin’s endurance, release him and return his garments to him. [[Add??]]

Diablerie 3 immediately follows. It serves to underscore dramatically the ultra-violence of Martin’s *Passion*, although there is, as usual, little connection to the play

proper (Lucifer does refer to Martin rejoining Hilary to become a monk). The final scenes of the morning session move into calmer waters. Martin recounts his adventures to Hilary, joins the monks at Ligugé, takes his vows, receives the habit, and a *Te Deum* is sung. The morning session ends peacefully, blissfully with Martin praying on his knees *en une chapelle en maniere d'un oratoire* (l. 5378), a stage locale that will become very important for the remainder of the performance.

Day 2, Afternoon Martin is found back in his oratory as the afternoon session opens with yet another *diablerie* (#4). Martin the new monk is now twice referred to by Lucifer, but the more interesting development occurs in the final stage direction: *Les ungs s'en vont en enffer les aultr[es] autour de l'oratoire saint Martin ou il [prie], faiscans cris et hurlemens* (l. 5516). Evidently half of the demonic crew makes a noisy pass around Martin in his oratory. This is the first instance of the *diablerie* penetrating the play proper. Might we further speculate that some of these demons lingered as silent presences around such upcoming moments such as the sudden violent illness of the Catechumen or the suicide of Hannequin le Hasardeur? The iconography of suicide almost invariably includes a demon, but the play text is silent on the matter.

The playwright now intercuts scenes of a Catechumen shepherded by Martin into his pious community with those of the desperate, foul-mouthed gambler Hannequin. The two youths are juxtaposed as opposites, but both will be worthy the miraculous attentions of the saint. The Catechumen's sudden death while Martin is away on pilgrimage leads to a poignant scene of lamentation in the monastery and the first of Martin's resurrection miracles. Saved from Limbo, the revived Catechumen is immediately baptized on stage (a "silver ewer full of pure water" is called for). Hannequin le Hasardeur resumes the vein of "tavern realism." On his second entrance, *il s'est mis le cordeau au col et lye ou il se vault pendre* (l. 5913). The gallows from the morning session is evidently recycled for this scene, since it is another "in your face" bit of violent realism. Hannequin works up to his suicide by means of a formal ballad with the refrain, *A tous les deables me commande*. He turns himself off, right before our eyes, and hangs there for quite a while (*Il se gecte a bas et demeure pendu*, l. 5941) as his parents, Le Bourgeois and La Bourgeoise, search for him. Unlike the estate laborer/slave in Sulpicius's original account, the stage suicide is a middle-class boy who

has obviously taken a walk on the wild side. The parents find the hanging body and two of their servants bring it down to compose a kind of bourgeois Pietá. The mother finds Martin on the road and begs him on her knees. Martin obliges and the much stressed Hannequin-actor can finally come back to life.

With two of Martin's major miracles in counterpoint, the afternoon session proceeds to its central concern, the election of Martin as Bishop of Tours. A considerable time is spent on this sequence. We are introduced to not only to the ecclesiastical authorities of Tours but to its municipal authorities as well, the cooperation of the two bodies modeling that of the producers of the Martin play itself. Their deliberations, executive "search," and eventual installation of their bishop, with all the pomp and ceremony thereunto, deserve a separate commentary. But before Martin is installed as Bishop of Tours there is an interesting development. At first turned down by the ascetic-minded monk, the Tourangeaux resort to trickery. *Le Rustault de Ville*, the official town trickster it would seem, offers his services. He knocks upon the door of Martin's oratory while the officials *mussent tous su lieu que saint Martin doib passé* (l. 6502). *Le Rustault* plays the desperate husband of a sick wife. He is so upset he threatens to hang himself (echoes of Hannequin). His language is extreme: *Mauldit soit ma naissance infame!* (l. 6536). Martin calms him down and agrees to accompany him whereupon the holy ambush is sprung: *Ainsi que saint Martin chemine, ilz sortent le leur embusche et le prennent* (l. 6565). The tide of clerics and citizens of Tours then sweep Martin on to the episcopal throne, more or less against his will. This is an interesting variation on the ambush-action that we have seen three times over in the Brigands episodes. In a different way from the executions at the beginning of the day, it is a salutary violence.

It is something of a new Martin on the other side of his episcopal consecration. He is no longer the simple victim and demi-martyr. He takes aggressive action. And we must view him now as "armed," more often than not, with his dalmatic, mitre and crozier. After the conspicuous display of orthodox ritual and preaching in the episcopal installation we are next presented with an illusion of orthodoxy, the plausible image of a sepulcher hung with votive images of wax (*plusiers veux de cire*) and priests chanting the office of the Martyrs and censing a tomb and adjacent altar (ll.6866-73). We are at the shrine of a nameless martyr. Martin questions the lack of a *legende* and the priests

fall back on oral tradition. Martin responds that, with such a lack of authority, this may well be *quelque fentosme...ung Anthecrist* (ll. 6917 & 6924). Martin kneels and prays for a full revelation of the “saint’s” history: *Icy subtilement sort le larron du monument en figure d’un mort atout ung linceul* (l. 6943). This zombie in a winding sheet announces he comes from Hell and confesses to a life of crime marauding with lance and shield, a renegade of the knightly class. As the creature slinks back into his tomb, the Dean cracks jokes on bogus saints: *sainct Prose...sainct Chose...sainct Je ne sçay qui* (l. 7005).

Attention turns from false, folk Catholicism to the remnants of paganism. Martin and his companions Severus and Gall confront *le Prince du Temple Antique* and four “gentiles” who are kneeling, chanting to and censuring statues of Jupiter, Mars, Apollo and Saturn. Martin upbraids them for their *ydolatrie...broillerie...mahommerie diablerie* (ll. 7066-71). In heated dispute, the Prince threatens to put out Martin’s eyes and *icy saint Martin s’en fuyt cacher et le prince tire son espee pour le tuer* (l. 7101) Martin disappears *soubz terre* by means of some sort of trap as the Prince lunges at him with his sword. Martin is soon seen behind them on his knees praying for assistance and *Dieu* (Christ) sends Gabriel and Michael to his aid: *Ilz descendent de paradis, une espee en leur main et rompent tout, et les chevaliers les regardent faire, faisant les esbahis* (l. 7151). The angelic “shock and awe” tactics result in easy conversion of all the pagans.

Day 3, Morning The final day of performance continues the theme of the violent destruction of pagan sites. Three Priests are sacrificing a sheep to Jupiter: *Eulx estans a genoulx, ilz offrent l’autel ung aignel* (l. 7279). Editor Duplat for some reason designates them as *saronides* (Druids) although there is nothing particularly Celtic in their pantheon or ritual. Martin confronts them, upbraiding them for their perversity. No need for angelic “back up” now. By simply kneeling and praying Martin effects the most elaborate stage spectacle to date: *Icy soudainement le temple et les ydolles cheent par terre et se font en bisme* (l. 7299). The trap system we noted on the day previous is no doubt employed here to effect a complete swallowing up of the temple ruins. The First Priest seriously threatens Martin with his great sacrificial knife (*Icy tire son grant [cosuteau] et le prent, faisant semblant de luy voul[oir] coppe la teste*, l. 7306), the last

such gestures in the play. The other two priests, however, are awed by the destruction and are easily swayed by Martin's arguments. Somewhat anticlimactically, the First Priest relents and is converted along with his fellows.

There follows a quick series of healing miracles that exactly follow the sequence of Sulpicius Severus, chapters 16 through 19 – a paralytic girl is restored by chrism and the sign of the cross, a demoniac is exorcized, a leper is cleansed by Martin's kiss, and another girl, suffering from a deadly fever, is healed by means of a secondary relic, a letter from Martin, placed on her chest. The middle two miracles present particularly interesting spectacle elements. *Le Desmonyacle*, a servant of the lord Tetradius, is introduced as shackled hand and foot (*enferré par les piedz et [par les] mains*, l. 7480). Despite his restraints, the actor is called upon to thrash about mightily: *Il se demayne, faisant diablerie* (l. 7494). Two of Tetradius' servants restrain him, but they greatly fear his terribly gnashing teeth. The demoniac actor's special turn is enhanced by a snatch of lewd song: *Touchez moy la. Et puis, commant?/Ou deable sont ses amoureux* (ll.7550-51). He is evidently restrained on a bed, for as Martin conjures the devil out of him: *Icy doit avoir ung petit diableteau sortant de son lit, et s'en va en effer, cryant et brailant come ung deable* (l. 7574). The sudden appearance of this howling little imp might be evidence for my earlier suggestion, that personnel from the *diableries*, by this point in the performance, have “bled” into the play proper.

Le Ladre, of course, must also present a spectacle of horror, the more realistic the better. The kissing of the leper is an important iconographical moment, replicated by Francis, most famously, some nine hundred years later. Martin is drawn to the Leper's lament and taking pity on him, *baise le ladre et soubdain la laderie chiet jus du visage* (l.7663). I would interpret the latter part of the rubric as a “leprosy” facial shell or half-mask shucked off by the actor during the embrace, theatre “magic” at its simplest and most effective.

With Martin's extraordinary *virtu* established by this sequence of miracles, the playwright can proceed to a mystical set-piece, the most elaborate since the Dream of St. Martin back in Day 1. A full episcopal High Mass is celebrated on stage (minus the actual words of consecration) and at the moment of elevation, unbeknownst to Martin, a

“whirlwind of fire” is seen glowing above his head: *ung tourbillion de feu subtilement fait sans toucher à sa tête et y demeurer une petite espace de temps, radiant et escalinant, puis s’en aller et perdre par subtil moyen* (l. 7854). It must have been an extraordinary bit of stage machinery and pyrotechnics, for the Angel Gabriel confidently proclaims this as a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Diablerie 5 follows in which the crew of infernals now actively plot against Martin. Proserpine will be set on him *en forme de Venus* (l. 8040). Sulpicius mentions in chap. 22 that the devil had appeared to Martin in the guise of several Roman gods, among them Venus, but sexual temptation was never an aspect of the *Vita Martini*. The playwright seems, rather, to be borrowing from the iconography of “The Temptations of St. Anthony” here. He has the image in mind of the grand lady approaching the solitary in his cell: *Elle se met en guise de dame bien parée et bien acoustée, fors que devers les pieds* (l. 8046). The halting gait of her no doubt cloven feet is a nice touch. Proserpine approaches Martin praying in his oratory claiming she has come from God to reward Martin for all his sufferings: *Dieu m’y transmet pour te donner plaisance/ Resjoissance et doux esbatement....Je suis du tout à ton commandement* (ll. 8065-69). She sings sweeter than a siren; she is every inch a princess whether “clothed or naked.” Proserpine flatters and cajoles but Martin will have none of it. The diablesse is soon fleeing back to her comrades who beat her soundly in their rage and disappointment. *Deables, deables*, commands Lucifer, *frappez dessus, frappez!...Icy la batent et tempestent toute* (ll. 8112-14).

The rapid split-scenes between Martin’s oratory and Hell-mouth continue. The follow-up by devil Burgibus is somewhat anticlimactic, witness the rather noncommittal stage direction, *Il s’en va vers saint Martin en telle forme qu’on vault* (l. 8147). This is Sulpicius chap. 22 where the Devil upbraids Martin for having forgiven so many reprobates, Martin famously replying that even the Devil could obtain God’s forgiveness if he truly repented. Burgibus flees troubled, confused and weakened by such a demonstration of *amour singulier et tendre* (l. 8221 – Sulpicius’ “presumptuous loving kindness”). Like Proserpine he is beaten by his own comrades. *Frappez dessus tour hardiment!* roars Sathan (l. 8231) as the failed tempter howls and the whole crew pours back into Hell. The spectacle of the devils pounding on each other must have been

particularly satisfying combining our lust for clown-show violence with the theological point that Evil is ultimately impotent and self-defeating.

On the road again with Severus and Gall to visit the Emperor, we have Martin's final resurrection miracle of the Widow's son and the on-stage baptism of four pagan witnesses to the miracle. At the imperial palace the Emperor (here *Constantin* rather than the historical Valentinian II) decries Martin in the distance and orders his Porter to shut the gate on him. Martin and company withdraw to pray for his change of heart, whereupon Christ sends down Gabriel. Evidently the Archangel obliterates the barrier, for Martin and his disciples effortlessly penetrate to the Emperor's throne room. Martin hails him and the Emperor rails, *Malle mort et malle santé!* (l. 8749). There follows another "sudden" and "subtle" pyrotechnic: *Note qu soubz le siege de l'empereur doit avoir du feu subtilement et soubdaynement alumant, incontinent qu'il aura dit ce que dessus, lequel s'enfuyra, cryant et braillant* (l. 8752). I do not see how an Emperor leaping up from his "hot seat" could be played other than comically. His language here is comic-demonic: *Haro, haro, haa! Qu'esse cy?/Le feu me brusle, le feu m'art* (ll.8753-54). The Emperor is suitably humbled, confessing to his pride and arrogance, and formally signs Martin's petition – *Il signe la lectre* (l. 8789). He offers Martin gifts and money – *une coupe d'or bien bonne/et des escus cent et cinquante* (ll. 8793-94) which Martin refuses bidding him, rather, remember the poor. On his knees, the Emperor begs for blessing: *Donnez moy par devocion,/En disant une pastenostre,/Votre humble benediction* (ll.8824-26), and Martin obliges.

An unusual interpolation ends the Third Day's morning session, the setting up of a realistically portrayed law case. *L'Usurier*, Pierre le Sourd (more morally than physically "deaf" apparently) brings an action against Claude le Gente to claim a house and vineyard supposedly forfeited by her deceased husband. Matters resume before a Judge early on in the afternoon session. The Usurer seems to have it all going his way—with a forged document, and his word against a mere woman. Claude, in desperation, resorts to an extreme measure. She throws down her gage demanding trial by combat: *Pour ce que mentez par la gorge,/Vella mon gaige de bataille!* (ll.9062-63). We seem to have entered fabliaux country. Boorish Pierre accepts the lopsided challenge. It is perhaps safe to speculate that the predatory Le Sourd has also been casting a lecherous

eye on the attractive blonde widow throughout the proceedings. Claude is definitely in a tight place and so recruits St. Martin, who accompanies her back to court. We have the no doubt amusing moment when Le Sourd re-enters *tout armé*. In order to get at the truth, Martin proposes that they all repair to the grave where he instructs all to kneel as he conjures up the spirit of Claude's dead husband. No feat of necromancy, this *Mort Ressuscité* is clearly a blessed spirit, the opposite stage manifestation of the false martyr of Day 2. The dead husband reveals the truth of the situation clearly exposing the Usurer's perfidy. Martin refuses any compensation, the perfect *pro bono* lawyer, and the villain is hauled off to prison bringing to an end this most unusual of Martin miracles. Nothing remotely resembling it can be found in Sulpicius Severus, or in Gregory of Tours' five books of *Miracles of the Bishop St. Martin*. One must conclude it is a complete invention on the part of Andrieu de la Vigne. The playlet, moreover, serves as counterpoint to that of the Brigands over Days 1 and 2. Both units no doubt reflect La Vigne's legal/rhetorical training and general middle-class orientation. Together these two courtroom dramas comprise over 10% of the entire St. Martin play. If we add the scenes of nuclear families in distress (the parents of Hannequin le Hazardeur, of the paralytic girl, etc.), not to mention Martin's own domestic scenes, the percentage is considerably higher. For all its pomp and spectacle, its moments of mysticism or cosmic mayhem, *Le Mystère de St. Martin* remains, at heart, a bourgeois drama.

Day 3, Afternoon By the last session of the performance, the playwright has completely integrated the *diablerie* with the larger action of the play. I would suggest, again, that the iconography of St. Anthony Abbot has influenced the Martin play. Sulpicius mentions that devils, at times, plagued his Martin (chap. 22). He may well have appropriated this motif from Athanasius' influential *Life of Anthony* as a requirement for his own hero, but Sulpicius recounts no specific scenes of a demonic swarm, and certainly nothing like Anthony's being lifted into the air by demons. A short devil scene at the start of the session, a truncated *diablerie*, ends with another full assault upon Martin in his oratory. The devils brandish weapons such as Burgibus' gaff or grappling hook (*grappin qui point et pique*, l.8927) --*Icy s'en viennent le deables*

jusques a l'oratoire de saint Martin qui sera en priere, hurlans, cryans et braillans, mais ilz ne luy toucheront point (l. 8945).

As the demonic assaults heat up, there are more interventions on the part of the Divine. After the Claude la Gente episode is concluded Christ sends Gabriel and Raphael to converse with and comfort the beleaguered Martin. Meanwhile the devils are busy with their most elaborate plot. They are tricking out Satan in a *precieux vestement*, crown and scepter for an appearance as Christ the King: *Ilz l'abillent en ung roy triumpgant et gorgias* (l. 9425). They compliment him with royal imagery drawn from the Bible. *Tu es plus flairant que cyprès*, flatters Berith (l.9434). The temptation to turn this moment into a kind of “drag act” is irresistible. Masks are not mentioned. The Satan actor possibly substituted his devil mask for a gold one or played bare-faced. At the oratory Satan claims he comes as an answer to all Martin’s prayers, ironically referring to *l’Ennemy*, and flattering Martin’s piety: *Car tu es plain de sainteté,/De grant devocion parfonde/et de parfaicte charité* (ll. 9467-69). With such a splendidly turned out Divinity standing before him, Martin should therefore fall down and worship: *Martin, doncques sur ce te dis/Que tu me face reverence,/Car je suis Dieu de paradis,/Pere de lal divine essence* (ll. 9498-9501). Martin immediately sees through him, however, calling up the image of the Suffering Servant that he himself had earlier embodied: *Quant Dieu fut au pillier batu,/Il ne portoit pas telz harnois* (ll. 9510-11). Satan flees at the sign of the cross and runs crying like a spoiled child back to Lucifer.

Private then yields to public as Martin emerges from his cell to celebrate another stage Mass. It is apparently All Saints’ Day (*aux vierges, aux saintes et aux saintes*, l. 9541). This second episode of a naked beggar is one of the more dramatically satisfying passages in the whole work, both psychologically and dramaturgically sophisticated. La Vigne follows Sulpicius *Dialogues*, chap. 27 fairly closely. Amidst the elaborate preparations for the episcopal High Mass, the Dean, the Treasurer, the Church Warden, and two bell-ringing Clerks have not noticed the entrance of a naked wretch begging, *Ou que l’on me donne/Quelque habit, car je suis tout nu* (ll. 9571-72). (This Beggar enters at l. 9552, 892 verses from the end of the play whereas *Le Povre Saint Martin* of the Charity had entered at l.1526 on Day 1 – they a veritable bookends). This second Beggar accosts Martin as he enters the sacristy area and Martin passes him on to his

Archdeacon. The imperious cleric, however, brushes off the naked man, who manages to find Martin again in solitary meditation before Mass. Martin is chagrined that his request was ignored and gives the Beggar his own outer garment. He now sits in his chasuble with nothing on underneath but his shirt –Martin *luy donn[e] sa robe et puis il affable son mantea[u] sur sa chemise* (l. 9627). When the Archdeacon urges the Bishop to begin Mass, Martin delivers the cryptic line, *De chanter ne veulx entreprendre/Si le povere n'est revestu* (l. 9636-37). The Archdeacon is nonplussed until Martin reveals to him his embarrassing situation. This is a detail not found in Sulpicius and renders the Archdeacon's next actions even more reprehensible. Asked to buy a new tunic for the Bishop before he can proceed with Mass, the Archdeacon exits in a pique and soon encounters *Le Frippier* hawking his second-hand clothes in the street. The Archdeacon gets the peddler down from 8 to 5 *solz* for a ratty old garment that is far too short. He returns to Martin *et luy gecte a ses pieds comme par despit* (l.9693). The on-stage congregation, like the audience itself, is waiting in anticipation for the great ceremony to begin. Martin humbly dons the inadequate tunic and, bare armed, proceeds to celebrate High Mass. Incense, liturgical music prepare us for the miraculous– *quant Martin lievera les bras pour dire:GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO, les bras tous nudz. . .deux anges subtilement et soubdaynement luy apporteront deux pongnetz de drap d'or et pierre precieuses* (l. 9715). The “subtlety” of this effect of clothing Martin in bejeweled cuffs of cloth-of-gold was managed by manipulation of curtains about the altar, the Angels appearing and disappearing “suddenly.” Martin stands in the ritual moment of the Gloria as a kind of living reliquary. The Dean, the Chanter, other officials, even the Archdeacon extol the miracle as this second mystical Mass comes to an end.

What remains is Martin's passing. In Paradise Christ recognizes Martin's martyrdom, all his *payne, travel, vexacion/Grandmisere et tribulacion* (l. 9772-73) and sends Gabriel and Michael to the oratory to prepare Martin for his end. Martin gathers his distraught disciples together to comfort them and bids them make plans for a new bishop. Before Martin's actual death throes, however, we have the outrageous rubric: *Nota qu'en ce passage conviendra jouer la farce* (l. 9879). This would be *Le Meunier de qui le diable emporte l'ame en enfer* which was not in fact performed at this point, having already served to placate the crowd when there was a rain delay on the intended

first day of performance (*Procès-verbal*, p. 261) A cuckolding play grafted on Rutebeuf's old fabliau of *Le Pet au villain*, the farce would have juxtaposed a fat, disgusting Miller on his supposed death bed who defecates his "soul" into the devil Berith's sack, with the solemn preparations for a great saint's holy death. (Such a design really tests our appreciation of medieval aesthetics.) If performed in its intended place, the farce would also have served as the last gathering of the demonic crew--Lucifer, Satan and Proserpine meet and beat Berith on his return-- deflating them completely and scatologically as they are left, literally, holding the bag.

The detailed spectacle of the perfect Holy Death forms the penultimate sequence of the *Mystère*. The Martin actor now demonstrates fever and trembling. He is dressed in sackcloth (*une robe de mort*, l. 9903) and laid on a bed of ashes. Martin asks to be turned face up so that he may behold the sky. In a final diminuendo of the *diablerie*, Satan appears at the death bed. Again closely following Sulpicius, the playwright refrains from a swarm of devils to focus on a one-on-one final combat. Satan is confident and gleeful to see his enemy down, but the prostrate Martin easily bests him with the Word

The deathbed scene continues --solemn viaticum, torches and candles, lamenting disciples in antiphonal chorus, Martin's final homily. Christ now sends from Paradise a contingent of six Angels and six Virgin saints to gather up Martin's soul, singing a Rondeau in praise of *Martin, le bon catholique* (l. 10232). How the "soul" of Martin is represented is not clear from the rubrics. *L'ame* seems to be referred to as an object, a doll of some sort or, perhaps, a child actor all in white.

We should be at the end of the play, but the monks of Ligurgé now show up to claim the now "pontifically" laid out corpse. A more or less polite disagreement ensues, the staff of Tours cathedral naturally claiming Martin for themselves. We have the Dean, the Official and the canons against the Abbot, Prior and the monks. The Dean suggests they all kneel down to pray their offices and seek guidance lest the argument get out of hand. The Poitevins weary first and fall asleep. The Official of Tours mocks their lack of zeal: *Ses moynes illec assistans/ Comme pourceaux sont endormys* (ll.10,384-85). He and the Dean spirit away Martin's body *en une eglise ou aultre part, a milleur*

avantage (l. 10398). The Poitier monks awake to find a vanished corpse. Short lines of surprise, distress, and anger give the scene an almost comic tinge – *Quel dueil!...Est il vray? Voire. Quelz finesse!...Quel trayson* (ll.10403-05 & 10417). The Abbot eventually reconciles himself and his monks to their loss and they process off, joined now by the entire cast chanting, one would suppose, the *Te Deum*.

Why La Vigne would choose to end his opus with this bit of *furta sacra* is not at all clear. For all the genuine miracles portrayed on stage, this “miracle” by trickery seems almost bathetic. Is it partisan? Did Seurre, in Burgundy, particularly favor Tours over Poitiers, or was it a question of the town’s secular canons vs. the local monks? Does the sudden “disappearance” of Martin’s body serve any larger purpose? It remains a curious denouement. Perhaps the scene was simply meant to serve as a mildly comic bridge to the official and definitely farcical afterpiece, *La Moralité de laveugle et du boiteau* which depended on the powerful relic of Martin’s body passing through the town.

To wrap up this cursory survey/production analysis of a very long play: there have been plenty of lapses of dramatic tension but flashes of psychological truth as well; long passages of prayer and pious homily but also vivid scenes of violence and other stage action. Into his three days of performance the playwright has built in broad parallel structures:

- a.) trial and execution of the Brigands over against law case of Claude la Gente.
- b.) the holy necromancy of the false martyr/that of the husband of Claude
- c.) the two Masses of St. Martin
- d.) the two pagan temples destroyed
- e.) the imp expelled from the Demoniac/soul of Martin gathered up from his body.
- f.) two back to back resurrections/the quartet of healing miracles
- g.) and most particularly, the two scenes involving the naked Beggar: the Charity at Amiens with its mystical Dream near the beginning of the work, and the episode of the too-short tunic and the clothing of Martin by the Angels very near the end.

Scenes of Martin as victim of violence yield to scenes of Martin exploding false religion and the wiles of the Devil. Throughout the work we have observed patterns of gestical echoing, the dramatist's equivalent of the poet's image clusters: ambushes, the action of binding and leading away, blades waved at Martin's head, bourgeois parents wringing their hands and then thanking the saint on their knees, as well as Martin's own repeated gestures of kneeling and praying, blessing and baptizing with that ubiquitous "silver ewer with pure water," confronting verbal abuse with gestures of patience and humility, and so on. The *diableries*, at the beginning indulged in for their own sake for the most part, are gradually integrated into the play. They supply the personnel for Sulpicius' accounts of demonic interaction from the exploded disguises (the traveler, Venus, Christ the King) to the diminuendo of Satan's last appearance at Martin's death bed.

Four of the six performance sessions clearly build to peaks of dramatic interest, which are also major points in the career of the saint:

Morning, Day 1 building to the triad of Charity/Dream/Baptism

Morning, Day 2 to Martin's profession at Ligugé under Hilary

Afternoon, Day 2 to Martin's installation as Bishop (the half-way point)

Afternoon, Day 3 to the second Mass of St. Martin and his Death

The sessions which do not have such a strong "arc of action" nevertheless have strong counterpunctual incidents – Afternoon, Day 1, the Barbarian invasion and the Brigands; Morning Day 3, the first Mass of St. Martin ("whirlwind of fire") and the Emperor's burning throne. La Vigne was competently balancing theatrical, liturgical, and biographical elements. Our conclusion: the playwright very well managed his pious entertainment and successfully kept his audience glued to their scaffolds. If Bob Potter had been there he would, no doubt, have appreciated the heap of violence and horror, the little bits of sex and scatology. I am sure he would have stayed there, engaged and entertained, to the very end.

Notes

- 1 To this end I will be cross referencing La Vigne's primary source, the late 4th century *Vita Martini* by Martin's disciple Sulpicius Severus for changes, amplifications, and omissions. A supremely "theatrical" incident, the Miracle of the Pine (a cut-down sacred tree instead of falling on Martin twists around to crash on the pagans), for example, is not included in the play even though it was often represented in the visual arts. La Vigne does not seem to be particularly indebted to the derived Martin vita in the *Golden Legend*. A full French translation of Sulpicius, *Vie et miracles de monseigneur saint Martin* was printed in Tours in 1496 but was probably too late to have been of use to him. As a high level bureaucrat and "rhetorician," La Vigne would no doubt have been able to handle the original Latin.
- 2 La Vigne would seem to have his moments, however, although I am not in a position to evaluate his many displays of metrical virtuosity. No commentators have remarked upon the fact that, with the delay of the original performance date (July 4), La Vigne had some three months to revise and augment his play script.
- 3 See esp. J. Fontaine "Sulpice Sévère a-t-il travesty saint Martin de Tours en martyr militaire?" *Analecta Bollandiana* 81 (1963): 31-58.
- 4 The original performance date for the play, Martin's summer feast of July 4, was postponed due to "the rumor of war and the great number of soldiers who came to Seurre." The second projected date, "after the fair at Sier," was also postponed "again for some bad rumors of war current at the fair" (*Procès-verbal*, pp. 259-60).
- 5 Whether this was a simple display of historical knowledge or was meant to reflect on some current doctrinal controversy needs to be investigated.

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