

necessity of some plain English without incurring the suspicion of heresy.⁶

This argument that the use of Latin and Latinate diction in *Mankind* represents a Lollard anti-Latin sentiment is at first sight attractive. After all, the modern reader or spectator often experiences the Vices' mock Latin as more memorable and more entertaining than the aureate style of Mercy and the virtuous Mankind. On the other hand, the only surviving copy of the play was probably copied by, and certainly in the possession of, a monk named Hyngham who also (wrote and) owned a copy of *Wisdom*.⁷ This is noteworthy for three reasons. Firstly, it is perhaps unlikely, though by no means impossible, that a monk would (copy and) own a text with Lollard overtones. Secondly, Hyngham was a monk at Bury St Edmonds, the monastery of John Lydgate (died c.1450), who coined both the adjective *aureat* and the aureate style. So it seems entirely plausible that Hyngham (and/or the playwright and other readers or spectators of *Mankind*) would have appreciated the aureate, Lydgatean diction of the virtuous characters.⁸ Norton-Smith's analysis of Lydgate's aureate style stresses the importance of the importation of Latin nouns and adjectives from the liturgy or the Vulgate for 'artistic, rhetorical ends', which fits the use of Latinate diction by Mankind and Mercy in the play very well.⁹ Thirdly, Hyngham (copied and) owned *Wisdom* too, which also uses some Latinate diction and Latin, e.g. 'Off yowr name þe hye felycyte | No creature knowyt full exposycyon' (25–6) and *Sapiencia specialior est sole* ('Wisdom is more beautiful than the sun', 27), without a hint that such language might be controversial.¹⁰ Although *Wisdom* is not as aureate or Latinate as *Mankind* it seems plausible that Hyngham at least did not object to, and possibly even enjoyed, such language. Moreover, it is likely that any medieval audience would have been more familiar with, and consequently have felt far more at ease with, Latin and the aureate style than most modern ones.¹¹ I do not intend to assess the whole corpus of East Anglian drama but it is indeed evident that Latinate, aureate diction and Latin are frequently used, often by virtuous characters in a perfectly *bona fide* way. For instance, in the N.Town Play Ysaias claims to be 'Replett with Godys grett influens' (N.Town 7: 2) and says 'by spyryte of prophecie' (N.Town 7: 3) *quod virgo concipiet | Et pariet filium, nomen Emanuel* ('that a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, named Emanuel', N.Town 7: 9–10).¹² There is extensive use of Latin by Mary, translated by Elizabeth, in 'The Visit to Elizabeth' (N.Town 13) and Jesus opens 'The Woman Taken in Adultery' with *Nolo mortem peccatoris* ('I desire not the