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Mankind, one of the best known Morality plays, “depends on a dense verbal texture and lively action” (King 248) for its persuasiveness. In fact, it is overwhelmingly a play about language. Its uses of Latin, Latinate English, and scurrilous words in Latin and English have attracted many comments.¹ The use of Latin especially seems to throw some light on the subject of literacy and the use of the official language (or languages) in people’s lives. For instance, New Guise, a vice in the play, tells Mankind:

NEW GYSE. The wether ys colde, Gode sende ws goode ferys!
“Cum sancto sanctus eris et cum peruerso peruerteris.”
“Ecce quam bonum et quam jocundum,” quod þe Deull to þe frerys,
“Habitare fratres in vnum.” (323-26)²

There is no vernacular translation or explanation for this passage in the text. Mankind, to whom this speech is addressed, wants to ignore it, saying, “I her a felow speke; wyth hym I wyll not mell” (327). However, it is not clear whether he is supposed to understand this Latin. And did the contemporary audience understand it? These questions inevitably lead us to ask about the literacy and social composition of the audience of the time.

In his *Memory to Written Record*, discussing a much earlier period than the fifteenth century, M. T. Clanchy argues for the spread of the culture of written documents in the thirteenth century:

by 1307 . . . literate modes were familiar even to serfs, who used charters for conveying property to each other and whose rights and obligations were beginning to be regularly recorded in manorial rolls. Those who used

writing participated in literacy even if they had not mastered the skills of a clerk. (2)

For students of medieval theatre, it is important to note that, as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, even the lowest stratum of medieval English society participated in the Latin document culture in one way or another. For us, literacy ordinarily implies the ability to write well as well as the ability to read written documents. However, “in manuscript culture reading and writing were separate skills,” and “writing documents required clerical training and special equipment” (Clanchy 47). In order to appreciate the language of a play like *Mankind*, the audience need neither to write nor to read Latin; they only have to aurally understand it.

A large number of medieval people even at village level were fairly familiar with Latin documents of broadly legal and administrative nature. Speaking of fourteenth century London, Sheila Lindenbaum reminds us that those who could not read still “would have a pragmatic knowledge of many textual forms” and that “they would be familiar with religious tracts and sermons read aloud in the household, the civic regulations recited at wardmotes, all manner of legal documents concerning property-holding and trade, royal proclamations and wills” (297). Anthony Musson also stresses the roles of those statutes read and discussed in medieval towns:

. . . royal statutes and other legal concerns were frequently proclaimed in market places and in other public places with the intention that people would listen, be informed, think about and discuss them . . . (97)

Of course, most official documents then were written and proclaimed in Latin. When read aloud, they might have also been translated and explained in English, but many commoners would not have understood some of the documents they came into contact with. Yet, whether they comprehended them or not, the common people had to deal with a variety of legal papers in which their private and public lives were recorded, and by which the authorities controlled their lives. Many of them had to ask clerks for help in composing and understanding documents, just as some of the people of Oxford asked Absolon in the *Miller's Tale*.³ Katherine L. French discusses the complex process of formulating churchwarden's accounts in the medieval parish communities in which aural performances and writing them down, and English and Latin intertwined (44-61). Significantly, French thinks that the communal use of accounts can be compared to dramatic performances in parishes (60-61). Students of medieval theatre must

bear in mind that there were various degrees of literacy, and that perhaps nearly everyone in late medieval England, including serfs, participated at least to some extent in the document culture. This essay will provide evidence that this aspect of late medieval society is clearly reflected in plays such as *Mankind* and some of the Mystery Plays.

Furthermore, legal and administrative documents were important tools with which the crown, local lords, civic governments, and ecclesiastical institutions governed people's lives: medieval men and women, their lands and their personal properties, were bound by these documents mostly written in Latin or legal French. These official papers were inseparably connected with legal courts and the professionals populating the courts, namely, judges, lawyers and various legal clerks. Some scenes of the mystery cycles show obvious reflections of the contemporary courts with their lawyers carrying armfuls of legal documents. In these scenes of trials or mock-trials, the dominant tone is parodic, sometimes verging on defiant, which, I would suggest, mirrors medieval commoners' sentiments towards the language, professionals and apparatuses of law. I shall attempt to place these scenes containing legal motifs within the larger socio-cultural context of the late Middle Ages.

I

There are indications, such as references to a yard (561) and an "ostlere" [innkeeper] (732), that the extant Macro manuscript of *Mankind* was written for an indoor performance or at least a performance in an enclosed space like an innyard. However, critics seem to agree that it could have been played both indoors and outdoors (Lester xxxvi-xxxvii; King 247-48; Happé 60). Whether performed, for instance, in a street or an innyard, the text of *Mankind* indicates that it is aimed at a socially varied audience: Mercy addresses them, "O 3e souerens þat sytt and 3e brothern þat stonde ryght wppe" (29) and Nought, "Now, I prey all þe yemandry þat ys here" (333). Just like the Mystery Plays performed in the streets, *Mankind* seems to be, broadly speaking, another instance of medieval street theatre, designed for a wide spectrum of social groups. This appeal to a varied audience defines the play's character and is its major attraction.

If the play was performed in a street for a mixed audience, one may argue that the Latin words and phrases might have posed some problem for unlearned members of the audience. But a hint of the wider Latin literacy of the audience at the time may be witnessed in the play's text. The protagonist, *Mankind*, is personalized as a farmer "wyth [his] spade" to delve the earth (328). However, Mercy presupposes *Mankind* is capable of reciting Latin (291-3). Moreover, he

actually writes a Latin sentence on a sheet of paper:

Her wyll I sytt, and tytyll in þis papyr
 The incomparable astat of my promycyon.
 Worschypfull souerence, I haue wretyn here
 The gloryuse remembrance of my nobyll condycyon.
 To haue remos and memory of mysylff þus wretyn yt ys,
 To defende me from all superstycyus charmys:
 “Memento, homo, quod cinis es et in cinerem reuerteris.” (315-21)

As Pamela M. King (249-50) and John Watkins (772) indicate, *Mankind*, the farmer, is not just a peasant of East Anglia but a symbolic figure akin to Piers Plowman, and thus his rather impressive literacy may not be taken at face value. Yet, as a medieval farmer, whether he likes it or not, he has to attend Latin church ceremonies regularly, is occasionally exposed to legal and administrative documents, and may attend a law court once in a while. Although his literacy may be a little exaggerated, we cannot dismiss it as entirely implausible. Even though his writing skill may be somewhat far-fetched, a fifteenth-century farmer writing with a pen was plausible enough to the audience of the time for him to appear in this play. Moreover, it must at least have appeared natural that *Mankind* was capable of reciting some simple Latin prayers:

I wyll hear my ewynsonge here or I disseuer.
 Thys place I assyng as for my kyrke.
 Here in my kerke I knell on my kneys.
 Pater noster qui es in celis. (551-54)

As the instances of the boys in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* indicate, one does not need to understand each Latin word clearly in order to recite a prayer or a psalm and to understand its general meaning. In my opinion, the limited Latin used in the play would not have interfered with the understanding of street performances in the Middle Ages.

II

Mankind was certainly designed to be performed before a socially mixed audience, but what kinds of people were the playwright and performers? Understanding enough Latin to enjoy the play is one thing, but writing and acting such an often Latinate, verbally complex play is another matter. Peter Happé

writes about its authorship: “the linguistic sophistication suggests a learned author, perhaps from the university, even though the performance might have been rural” (44). Richard Axton also remarks that “one is tempted to see it as the Shrovetide *jeu d’esprit* of a group of Cambridge clerks,” and that it belongs in the tradition “propagated by worldly clerks and friars of preaching orders” (201 and 203). In his study of wills from fourteenth and fifteenth century York, John F. Friedman remarks, “what is especially striking is evidence from the wills of clerics for an interest in drama” (7). Of course such evidence from York with its vigorous dramatic activities cannot directly illuminate the situation in the area where *Mankind* was performed; yet the argument for its clerical authorship seems to me to be very persuasive. As Happé suggests, the play seems to have university connections, and is reminiscent of educational circumstances. Viewed in this context, Mercy may be taken as a learned teacher figure, teaching the rather self-indulgent student, Mankind, but his heavily Latinate classroom language is constantly ridiculed by Mankind’s bad companions:

- MERCY. Mercy ys my name by denomynacyon.
I conseyue 3e haue but a lytyll fauour in my communycacyon.
- NEW GYSE. Ey, ey! yowr body ys full of Englysch Laten.
I am aferde yt wyll brest.
“Prauo te,” quod þe bocher onto me
When I stale a leg a motun.
3e are a stronge cunnyng clerke.
- NOWADAYS. I prey yow hertyly, worschyppull clerke,
To haue þis Englysch mad in Laten:
“I haue etun a dyschfull of curdys,
Ande I haue schetun yowr mowth full of turdys.”
Now opyn yowr sachell wyth Laten wordys
Ande sey me þis in clerycall manere! (122-34)

Nowadays’s goading request to translate the scatological sentence seems to be a parody of a school translation exercise. In fact, we can detect in *Mankind* an early indication of the “upbringing of youth” theme, recurring in many Tudor interludes. Just as in *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* and *The Disobedient Child* where playwrights show idle children reluctant to learn and wasting their time in play, “*Mankind* stresses the danger of idleness” (Watkins 772). Although not yet a full-fledged “upbringing of youth” play, *Mankind* displays the leaning towards it with its clerkly atmosphere.

III

Mercy, the tutor of Mankind, warns his protégé that the rogues will attack him in two ways: they will be “nyce in þer aray, in language þei be large” (295). There are two targets for the vices’ attacks on language: they attack both Latin and Latinate English represented by Mercy’s speeches. In other words, they are assailing the discourse of the authorities. Needless to say, there must be an element of the Shrovetide inversion of authority in this,⁴ and we may also see a professional touring company doing their best to earn the audience’s laughter and consequent applause and money. However, I believe that their humour is sustained to a large extent by the genuine sense of resentment harboured against authoritative discourse both in Latin and Latinate English, and the kind of document culture which such discourse represents. Scholars have repeatedly pointed out that the rebels of 1381 militated against official documents and the privileges of the upper classes which those documents represented. The village risings in north Surrey and Middlesex were “aimed at destruction of manorial rolls which contained the evidence of tenants’ obligations to their lords” (Hilton 140). Or in the capital:

Not only did Londoners join in the vendettas against civil servants in 1381, when insurgents issued proclamations that “everyone who could write a writ or letter should be beheaded,” but they supported Wycliffite protests against the clergy’s monopoly of religious discourse, and they attacked local office-holders for their misuse of documentary forms. (Lindenbaum 286)⁵

Since Latin was still the predominant instrument of authoritative discourse, the vices often attack it with several strategies. Because Latin represented a systematic grammar, in which English is considered to be lacking, Mischief poisons the very grammaticality of the language by making mock Latin words using its grammatical inflexion:

MYSCHIFFE. For a wynter corn-threscher, ser, I haue hyryde,
 Ande 3e sayde þe corn xulde be sauycde and þe chaff xulde
 be feryde,
 Ande he prouyth nay, as yt schewth be þis werse:
 “Corn seruit bredibus, chaffe horsibus, straw fyrybusque.”
 Thys ys as moche to say, to yowr leude wndyrstondyng,
 As þe corn xall serue to brede at þe nexte bakynge.
 “Chaff horsybus, et reliqua” . . . (54-60)

His strategy here is to appropriate not only the rigidity of Latin inflexion but also the familiar didactic Biblical metaphor of “corn and chaff” for his joke. Although performed light-heartedly, it is a desecrating act. Another type of profanity is scatology covered with Latin. One instance is the already cited passage where Nowadays provokes Mercy to translate an English scatological sentence into Latin (129-34). There are other examples where Latin directly expresses scatology:

NOWADAYS. Who spake to þe [Nought], foll? þou art not wyse!
 Go and do þat longyth to þin offyce:
 Osculare fundamentum! (140-42)

Latin is also the language of the Bible, and consequently, of God. Chester, York, and Townley Cycles begin the first pageant with God speaking in Latin: “Ego sum alpha et oo, / primus et novissimus” (Chester Play 1, 1). As Lynn Forest-Hill points out (43), Titivillus, at his first appearance, mimics God’s Latin: “Ego sum dominancium dominus and my name ys Titivillus” (475). The “Lord of lords,” or the “King of kings” which Titivillus pronounces in Latin, is a phrase often applied to God and to Christ (Forest-Hill 43).

These and other provocative yet jocular uses of Latin and the vernacular make us wonder how risqué or harmless they sounded to the contemporary audience, including those who occupied positions of power. After the Great Rebellion, the Wycliffite heresy, and Arundel’s *Constitutions*, the social atmosphere regarding the uses of the language was poisoned. Even Reginald Pecock, a polemist on the side of the Church, was accused of heresy and people could be prosecuted for owning *The Canterbury Tales* (Hudson 94). Yet Nicholas Watson speculates that the religious drama was not targeted “perhaps because it was performed (not read), predated 1409, and was a civic, as well as ecclesiastical, product” (344). If so, I would be tempted to suggest that the authors of *Mankind* and the Towneley Cycle where the social satire is quite pronounced, may have ingeniously marshaled the dramatic medium to voice common people’s resentments, which they would have been too afraid to do in other written media.

The vices’ assault on official discourse is effectively combined with their satire on the system behind the discourse in the scene of the mock trial (662ff.). As a parody of a trial in a Morality Play about the salvation of a soul, it is a parody of the Last Judgement, yet it is also constructed with the contemporary vocabulary used in medieval trials.⁶ *Mankind*’s name is written in New Guise’s “bok” (663), a parody of the Book of Account which God examines at the Last Judgement, as well as of a book of records which lawyers consulted in a medieval court of law. The familiarity of this both religious and legal image is attested in

the Last Judgement pageant in the Mystery Cycles, which is discussed later. It is, also, along with “pilgrimage,” one of the most significant images in *Everyman* (104, 136, 187, 419-20, 502). In that play, Death says to Everyman, “On the thou must take a longe iourney; / Therefore thy boke of counte with the thou brynge” (103-04). Later, one of the vices, Goods, says to the sin-stained Everyman, “Thy rekenynge I haue made blotted and blynde [illegible], / That thyne accounte thou can not make truly—” (419-20). The *mischief* of Goods to “blot” Everyman’s book finds an interesting echo in *Mankind*. The vices including Mischief are parodying the role of medieval lawyers and court clerks:

NOUGHT. Holde, master Myscheff, and rede þis.
 MYSCHEFF. Here ys blottybus in blottis,
 Blottorum blottibus istis.
 I beschrew yowr erys, a fayer hande! (679-82)

Again, this smacks of a Latin inflexion exercise, but also with the blots and a fair hand, it is a parody of scribal writing practice at court. Soon after this, Mischief ridicules the whole ceremony of the court procedure:

MYSCHEFF. Take hede, sers, yt stoude you on hande.
 Carici tenta generalis
 In a place þer goode ale ys
 Anno regni regitalis
 Edwardi nullateni
 On 3estern day in Feuerere—þe 3ear passyth fully,
 As Nought hath wrytyn; here ys owr Tulli,
 Anno regni regis nulli! (686-93)

G. A. Lester writes in his footnote to the lines (42): “the Latin . . . is a bowdlerized version of the opening formula of a manorial court record, perhaps alluding to the deposition of Edward IV in 1470.” It certainly can raise a good laugh, but I believe we should not overlook people’s resentment which sustains this kind of humorous expression, the resentment which is not simply against Latin and documents in Latin, but also the system and power behind the language and its documents. These mock trial scenes in drama can be considered as a satiric appropriation of official documents. M. T. Clanchy writes that, as early as in 1267 or even earlier, Peter of Pecham wrote a parodic charter in which the Devil makes a pact with the rich (86).

At the time of the Great Rebellion, such appropriations may have become

quite common. Steven Justice remarks that the rebel leaders used English consciously to counter the official Latin and French, and that they used the formats of royal letters and other chancery documents with the difference that they were written not in Latin or French but in English (67-68). Such appropriation did not stop with language and documents; according to Paul Strohm's study of chronicles, the rebels imitated not only authoritative documents but other ceremonial formats of the ruling classes such as swearing allegiance to their leaders and wearing uniformed liveries (39-40). Strohm remarks that the chroniclers, who were writing from the viewpoint of the authorities, seem to have been profoundly upset about such provocative appropriations of the symbols of authority. Those who rebelled against the crown in the fifteenth century continued the provocative exploitation of official discourses. David Grummitt, who studied the documents left by Jack Cade and his rebels of 1450, states:

Cade's letters of safe conduct . . . were self-conscious appropriations of royal authority, mirroring the form and content of royal signet letters (even down to Cade's mock regal sign manual), and signalled the same claim to the public authority as had been made by the rebels in 1381. Similarly Cade sent written instructions to the local officers, as well as issuing proclamations and executing justice on those who disobeyed them. (111)

It seems that in drama as well as in actual historical events, commoners defiantly appropriated official written discourses.

IV

Trials, medieval or present-day, apparently have close links with drama. Kathleen S. Berry in her *Dramatic Arts and Cultural Studies* writes, "a courtroom itself is a text and institution; so are law and forensic medicine" (97). This "text" typically generates multiple readings (Berry 78) since the court as a system is essentially based on the different interpretations of the same *facts*, testimonies and laws. Just as in the court, members of the medieval theatrical audience such as *Mankind's* "souerens" who are seated and "brothern" who stand (29) may often have had widely different understandings of the play. A trial, especially a trial with a jury, shares important features with theatre: the defendant may be compared to a protagonist, the prosecutors or plaintiff to his or her enemies, the defending advocates to his or her friends, and the jury to the audience. The modern jury, just as the modern theatre audience who are separated by the proscenium arch from the stage, is a group of silent observers confined to their predetermined seats.

But the medieval jurors were often personally involved in the defendants' lives. As Richard Firth Green says, they were not expected to objectively assess the evidence which they came into contact with for the first time in a trial; "they were chosen because of their probable knowledge of the parties and circumstances surrounding the case" (132; see also 104-05). Moreover, just like the audience of the medieval street theatre, the jurors actively took part in the trial procedure:

Indeed it is the duty of the [medieval] jurors, so soon as they have been summoned, to make inquiries about the facts of which they will have to speak when they come before the court. They must collect testimony; they must weigh it and state the net result in a verdict.

(Pollock and Maitland 2: 625; see also Dobbs 31)

As lively interactions are bound to occur between actors and audience in popular street theatre everywhere, medieval jurors "could be asked questions and could raise them" (Baker 62).

Now, if a real trial is so much like drama, Alexander Leggatt points out, fictional comedy is "full of mad laws and crooked lawyers" and "legal documents are ominous" (54), reminding us of the rebels' dislike of official documents in 1381. As Robert Potter suggests, ever since Greek drama there have always been close and multi-faceted relationships between trials and Western dramatic arts (129-41). It must be no coincidence that the English legal system and English drama developed nearly simultaneously, sometimes using the same sites, i.e., the royal and aristocratic courts, courts of regional lords, Inns of Courts, various ecclesiastical establishments and so on (Potter 134), and makers and audiences of plays and most of those working in the legal system were frequently the same sort of people, that is, religious or secular clerks.

Historians of early English drama have traditionally focused on the Church as the most important site and resource in the creation of English drama. Yet, the Church and its various clerks were frequently inseparable from legal hierarchy, and the canon law court with its wide ranging jurisdiction on every "moral" aspect of people's lives may have made the medieval ecclesiastical trial akin to a "morality" play at least in spirit.⁷ It seems to me, therefore, that we need to pay far more attention to the legal aspects of drama than we have so far done.

Discussing the trial motifs in medieval drama, one cannot escape the many legal allusions in the four Mystery Cycles. In fact, the whole passion sequence of each Cycle can be seen as a continuous court drama and, depending on how a reader or a member of the audience sees it, a stinging satire on the legal establishments of late medieval England (Potter 130-32). Given the limited space

and scope of this essay, however, I would like to focus on another essential court drama, the Last Judgement pageants.

As in *Everyman* and *Mankind*, the image of the account of life recurs in the Last Judgement pageants. It is commonly called “reckoning” or simply “account.” Thus in the York pageant of *The Last Judgement*, the second angel says to the souls, “. . . rise vppe and geue rekenyng” (95), and the first *Anima Mala* deploras, “Appertly may we se them [i.e., their own wicked acts] wreten” (132). However, these pageants interest us particularly because the heavenly court of law seems to be constructed with the images and words of its earthly counterparts. The Chester *Webstars Playe* is simply set up as a trial with two sides of advocates (the angels and devils), a judge (Christ), and the defendants (human souls). Before the Judgement of God, the first devil comes to the court to claim his booty, talking like a legal prosecutor:

Those that be synnfull in thy [Christ’s] sight,
to reacon there deedes I am dight
to proove these men for myne. (513-15)

The second devil has also come as a lawyer to “spute” with the Justice, that is, to make a legal disputation, based on “wrytten” documents:

Naye, I wyll *spute* with him this
that sytteth as high justice,
and yf I see he be righteous
soone I shall assaye.
And other he shall, forsooth iwysse,
forsake that of him *wrytten* ys
or these men that have donne amysse,
deeme them us todaye. (549-56; my italics)

However, in a court of law, he must dispute in Latin, and is justly proud of his linguistic competence which he is eager to demonstrate:

. . . for speake Latten well I can,
and that thou shall soone see.

“Filius hominis venturus est in gloria Patris, Patris sui cum angelis suis, et tunc reddit unicuiquam secundum opus suum.” (563-64).

Just as every human being, whether high or low in estate, must attend the court of the Last Judgement, most, if not all, late medieval people also may have had to be present in some of the secular and ecclesiastical courts in their locality. For instance, “all tenants were expected to attend the manorial court and the heads of tithings and four villeins from each vill were required to be present at the court of the hundred. Both courts were held on a three-weekly basis” (Musson 95). Also law courts of local lords and sheriffs, and ecclesiastical courts involved the frequent participation of local residents. Simple Latin such as the above may have been comprehensible for many, but, as in these plays, much English was presumably used for them to understand the general gist of the proceedings. Anthony Musson thinks “it would be reasonable to suppose, indeed it would be common sense in the case of a poor villager, that the vernacular was used if a meaningful and effective exchange were to take place between the bench and parties or witnesses” (169). Yet court records continued to be written in Latin. Thus, the first demon follows what his colleague has just said in the previous quotation, again speaking some Latin (573-80), yet he also adds: “. . . which wordes to clearkes here present / I wyll rehearse” (579-80). Although there are no “clearkes” amongst the characters assigned with speeches, we can surmise from this that there are a few court clerks busily composing Latin documents on the stage.

Despite its being incomplete and short, the N-Town “Judgement Day” also contains some legal vocabulary. The first demon, again a lawyer figure, here rejects the call for mercy, saying that the bad souls’ sins are “wrytyn,” yet interestingly, not in parchment but on their bodies:

Mercy? Nay, nay, they xul haue wrake!
 And þat on here forehed wyttness I take.
 For þer is wretyn with letteris blake
 Opynly all here synne. (75-78)

According to the archangel Michael, God in N-Town will “appose” [interrogate] the souls, and unlike the courts of the earthly tyrants, there will be “no glose” [deceit] in His court (10-11).

In the Towneley Cycle, the Last Judgement is, as in the other pageants of the cycle, more clearly medievalized than in the other cycles; the “Judgement” in Towneley is distinctly modelled after an earthly court of law in the Middle Ages. The pageant begins with laments of cursed souls, followed by speeches by Jesus the judge and an angel, apparently Michael, separating with his sword the bad and good souls. Yet the major part of the pageant is taken up by speeches, often

comical, of the devils including Tutiullus (spelled as such in this pageant) acting as lawyers who discuss the upcoming local court session in a somewhat business-like manner:

- [2 *Demon.*] It sittys you to tente
 In this mater to mell
 As a pere in a parlamente,
 What case so befell.
 It is nedefull
 That ye tente to youre awne,
 What draught so be drawne;
 If the courte be knawen,
 The iuge is right dredfull.
- 1 *Demon.* For to stand thus tome
 Thou gars me grete.
- 2 *Demon.* Let vs go to this dome
 Vp Watlyn strete. (174-86)

Like medieval public prosecutors who are about “to fence,” or to defend, against the accused, the first and second devils make themselves ready for the task equipped with bagfuls of books and documents such as “rentals” and “brefes” [summons or writs]:

- [1 *Demon.*] Bot fast, take oure rentals;
 Hy, let vs go hence,
 For, as this, fals
 The great sentence.
- 2 *Demon.* Thai ar here in my dals.
 Fast stand we to fence
 Agans thise dampnyd sauls
 Without repentance,
 And iust.
- 1 *Demon.* Howso the gam cokys,
 Examyn oure bokys.
- 2 *Demon.* Here is a bag-full, lokys,
 Of pride and of lust:
 Of wraggers and of wrears
 A bag-full of brefes,
 Of carpars and cryars,

Of mychers and thefes . . . (196-212)

The passage is a humorous reflection of actual courts of law in the Middle Ages. The legal devils are making ready their "tolys" (257) of the trade: they also prepare their "bill" [charge] (224) and "rolles for to render" (238). The Last Judgement is, in a sense, the greatest opportunity for these fiendish lawyers to display their expertise; therefore, as the second devil says, "Sir, all clerkys of oure scolys / Ar bowne furth theder" (259-60).

The pageant can also be considered significant in its satirical depiction of the legal system: after all, only the devils, and not any angels, are lawyers in this pageant. The devils themselves seem to embody the suspicion which people may have felt towards the law and court. The second devil has a roll of "bakbytars / And fals quest-dytars" [slanderers and false witnesses] (270-71), and despite being a lawyer, he says, "The drede of God is away / And lawe out of lande" (278-79). Yet, the satire is, as in *Mankind*, most effectively expressed at the appearance of Tutiullus. Here this devil seems to be a young, cunning, and impertinent legal clerk and a servant of the other two devils. He reveals a curious mixture of dubious qualifications: he is the devils' "chefe tollere" or tax-collector, their "court-rolлар," or keeper of manorial records, and significantly, a "master Lollar" (309-11). Later, he again says to the other devils, "Thus toke I youre tax, / Thus ar my bookys blekyt" (356-57). His work as a tax-collector recalls the fact that in *Mankind* the vices collect tolls from the audience just before the appearance of Titivillus.⁸ He is as much a legal clerk as the other devils are: again he has "a roll of ragman" [legal documents] and of "breffes" (326 and 328), and is conversant with "of cowrte thew" [ordinance of the court] (335). Thus we can assume that he, a clever devil, is in his element in contemporary courts of law.

Moreover, Tutiullus is devilishly skilled in language. Like minor legal clerks in medieval England, Tutiullus reads out lists of defendants, namely, the sinners to be eternally damned, in front of the infernal lawyers. Possibly saterizing contemporary legal and administrative systems, the Towneley author includes in the list, amongst other sinners, "rasers of the fals tax / And gederars of greyn wax" (413-14).⁹ Tutiullus also names "fals iurars" and "fals dedys forgars" as his sinners (527 and 531). As at trials, he declares his name and his role in Latin:

Mi name is Tutiullus;
 My horne is blawen.
Fragmina verborum,
Tutiullus colligit horum;

Belzabub algorum,
Belial belium doliorum. (363-64)¹⁰

Hearing these lines, his master says with appreciation that Tutiullus knows “of gramory / And somewhat of arte” (365-66), a praise which may have been received with a touch of sarcasm since it is delivered by a devil. Whether spoken by Mercy in *Mankind* or Tutiullus in the Towneley “Judgement,” these Latin speeches seem to get on the audience’s nerves to some extent. Even though the satire is not as sharp as in the pageants in the Passion sequence of the Towneley Cycle, the playwright is again inclined to ridicule the pomposity of those who use Latin and abuses of the earthly legal system.

These Last Judgement pageants conclude the huge Corpus Christi Cycles. Figuratively, they are the last chapter of the voluminous *book* comprised of the testimonies of various phases of divine and human history.¹¹ After all, these pageants and their source, the Apocalypse of John, conclude the ultimate *book* for medieval people, the Bible. These pageants occupy the pages in which the sentences delivered to the human race are inscribed. As the book of human history, or the book as the *imago mundi*, is being closed, the *theatrum mundi* comes to a close and the last pageant wagon disappears into the darkness of the night.

Conclusion

We, as the modern audience and readers, cannot but be enormously entertained by the comic energy of the vices and their ridicule of the stiff language of Mercy in *Mankind*. However, critics generally agree with David Bevington, who writes in the introduction to his edition of the play:

. . . the author’s allegiances are clear. However engrossing the scatological humor and scurrilous profanity of the rogues may be, these tempters are unmistakably evil and foolish. Their eventual comeuppance is both sure and richly deserved (902).

Or, regarding the uses of language, Lynn Forest-Hill thinks that the play “condemns disparagement of the language” (100). Is it so simple? *Mankind* certainly takes advantage of the “morality play” format, but the vices, like cancerous outgrowths, are in the process of expanding in their own right and taking over the play. I feel it is difficult to state that “the author’s allegiances are clear”; in my opinion, the playwright can safely place social criticism in a morality play as the fleeting

theatrical format may have given them a safe vehicle to convey somewhat risky messages. Besides, I note that critics, despite their repeated references to the contemporary audience, tend to stress the authorial decisions and neglect the role of audience participation in the process of both performance and script-writing.¹² Theatrical works are created nearly as much by the audience as by the writers and other play makers. The constant imagining of the audience and rewriting after performances in consideration of the audience's reactions make these works cooperative products to a large extent.

Even with my limited observations on *Mankind* and the "Last Judgement" pageants so far, we have been able to glimpse how widely legal and clerkly vocabulary penetrates late medieval drama. I think that this evidence indicates the medieval audience's general familiarity with legal terms and procedures. As I have suggested, late medieval audience and playwrights shared the culture of legal documents and procedures. Moreover, the ironic uses of such legal and documentary jargon and especially of Latin in some medieval plays point to a certain degree of antagonism towards the power yielded by such symbols of the power of law and administration. If we look at the larger contexts of the period, this antagonism might also be detected in some of the counter-documents made by the rebels of 1381. Drama has always been, and still is, situated at the crossroads of aural and written culture, and fertilized by the two elements. To conclude, the written culture of documents in courts and religious institutions was widely disseminated among the general populace in the later Middle Ages. This fact must surely have given a certain impulse and twist to the way that the early English drama developed.

Notes

¹ Studies especially noteworthy in this respect are those by Clopper, Dillon, and Forest-Hill.

² The editions used in this essay are listed in the "Works Cited" section. The quotations from *Mankind* are from Eccles, and those from *Everyman* are from Cawley.

³ Cf. "Many obscure Londoners on the lower rungs of the economic ladder - most notably the city's hundreds of parish clerks - depended for their livings on literate skills" (Lindenbaum 287).

⁴ On the relationship of Shrovetide festivity and *Mankind*, see Gash.

⁵ The passage quoted by Lindenbaum is from the *Anonimale Chronicle*, printed in Dobson, 160.

⁶ G. A. Lester, in his note to l. 664, writes, "Here the parody is of a manor court, with implications of the Last Judgment" (41). Anthony Gash sees in this mock-trial a

festive inversion of Bakhtinian nature (87-88).

⁷ On the matters over which medieval canon law court exerted its power, see James A. Brundage, especially Chapter 4 "Canon Law and Private Life," 70-97.

⁸ In Towneley, even one of his master devils, when impressed by Tutiullus's verbal skill, says, "Had I bot a penny, / On the wold I warte" (367-68).

⁹ "greyn wax" was "a fine levied by the Exchequer, named after the seal of green that was affixed to the document" (a note to the line in Stevens and Cawley's edition). One of the major grievances raised by Jack Cade is the abuse of authority of the central government by local officials under the guise of the writs sealed with the green wax of the Exchequer (Harvey 83). Harvey prints Cade's original petition (186-91; see especially 187).

¹⁰ The lines in Latin are not numbered in the EETS edition of the Towneley Cycle.

¹¹ An interesting parallel may be drawn between the Mystery Cycles and *The Canterbury Tales*. The former is concluded with the Last Judgement pageants; *The Canterbury Tales* consists of the various *witness accounts* followed by the Clerk's solemn "judgement." On the legal nature of *The Canterbury Tales*, see E. A. Dobbs.

¹² A notable exception is Anthony Gash's thought-provoking article. See especially 74-76.

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