

Michael M. Wagoner

The 'Merry Tragedy' of *Henry VII* as written by 'Charles Macklin, Comedian'

Charles Macklin, the celebrated eighteenth-century actor and playwright, is now remembered as a comedian and a comedic writer; however, his first produced work as an author was the historical drama *Henry VII, or the Popish Imposter*. This was immediately condemned as a flop and, although it was published, it was never again produced. In this article Michael M. Wagoner examines the nature of the play's failure by questioning the accepted narratives of theatrical success. Specifically, he engages issues of audience reception as well as the playwright's persona to understand the combined relationship between the two dynamics that can result in a play's failure. Ultimately, both Macklin's persona and his later work secured the flop narrative in order to temper the subsequent expectations of his audiences. Michael M. Wagoner is a doctoral candidate at Florida State University, and he holds an MFA in Shakespeare and Performance from Mary Baldwin College. His research examines the performance and dramaturgy of early modern drama, and his essay 'Imaginative Bodies and Bodies Imagined: Extreme Casting in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Fletcher and Massinger's *The Sea Voyage*' will appear in *The Bear Stage: Shaping Shakespeare for Performance* (Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015).

Key terms: reception, audience reaction, persona, theatrical flops, ghosting.

WHILE scholars cannot agree on how many nights Charles Macklin's *Henry VII, or the Popish Imposter* (1746) was performed, they all more or less agree that the play was a failure, focusing on two problems: the hasty construction of the text and the audience's negative reaction to the performance. The evaluation of bad script and bad performance has rendered the only extant Macklin tragedy an unstudied play. However, the information behind the reception of this play is wildly inconsistent and, therefore, invites a more thorough consideration of the source of this failure.

Henry VII is not an ignored classic that needs resuscitation from eighteenth-century obscurity, but the story surrounding its dismissal and the repetition of that story add up to a methodology of negative perpetuation. Some of Macklin's biographers have tried to excuse or even champion some portion of the play; however, the overall discussion of this tragedy remains negative and dismissive. The bad performance and the audience's reaction seem to come both from the audience's mistaken expectations due to Macklin's public

persona and from the miscasting of important roles. By giving a history of the play and its reception, I will demonstrate how the conception of the play as a failure results from its connection to Macklin's public persona, and furthermore how Macklin's own declamation against it in his next work attempted to control reception by sealing its continuing condemnation.

In considering the issue of reception, I engage Susan Bennett's two-frame exploration of the issue of the theatrical audience. Bennett states that the theatrical event comprises two frames for the audience. The first is an outer frame that 'is concerned with theatre as a cultural construct through the idea of the theatrical event, the selection of material for production, and the audience's definitions and expectations of a performance.'¹ The outer frame emphasizes that which the audience brings to the event itself. These expectations not only come from preconceptions that any member may bring but also come specifically out of the theatre company's choice of material to present. This frame aligns with the exterior issues that the

original audience brought to Macklin's play as I will demonstrate below.

The contrasting or inner frame is 'the event itself and, in particular, the spectator's experience of a fictional stage world'.² The inner frame is the one on which most critics focus in attempting to craft ideas of reception; however, Bennett explicates that theatrical reception actually begins well before any theatrical event. While most critics of Macklin's play have focused on the inner frame alone, the outer frame engendered a reception expectation within the audience that fundamentally altered the experience of the inner frame.

Furthermore, Marvin Carlson's theory of ghosting, as derived from Herbert Blau, melds together Bennett's frames in further clarification of theatrical reception within performance. He explains that ghosting is 'the identical thing [audiences] have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context'.³ This term highlights the audience's own imaginative work in crafting the inner frame through their previous experiences brought from the outer frame. Any and all theatrical experience therefore is inherently ghosted as the inner frame confronts the outer frame, together crafting reception.

Only through studying both frames can theatre critics and historians come to understand the intricacies of what makes a performance a failure. Therefore, to consider Macklin's play as a failure, critics must not just consider the text or the few examples of reiterated performance anecdotes, but must combine those with a consideration of the theatrical persona of Macklin and the audience's expectations of the event itself to understand how the ghosts of *Henry VII* overcame the play's potential for success and ultimately doomed it for failure.

Perception of a Comic Actor

Charles Macklin's successful work in comedic and outsider roles delimited his career as an actor and engendered audience expectation. Thus Francis Asprey Congreve's biography of Macklin – published almost immediately at his death – defined Macklin's

abilities with the title *Authentic Memoirs of the Late Mr. Charles Macklin, Comedian* (1798).⁴ The use of the term in the period could, of course, be applied generally to any actor;⁵ however, by yoking Macklin's memory to a genre, the early biographer participates in his public delineation.

In an examination of Macklin's years with Drury Lane, William Appleton notes that most of Macklin's early roles were comic. More importantly, when Theophilus Cibber fled to France because of debt, Macklin inherited the other actor's major comic parts,⁶ and through Cibber's intermittent absence, Macklin built up a reputation that centred on comedic characters; then in 1738 he also inherited the comedic Irish character of Teague.⁷ This role not only cemented the perception of him as a comedian, but also reminded audiences of his Irish roots.

Marvin Carlson in his analysis of Macklin notes that his roles suggested no specific generic bent; however, he later mentions that the roles are a 'variety of basically comic representation'.⁸ Significantly for the audience, Macklin was a comedic character; therefore, his comedic characters dominated his outer frame reception, which would concurrently alter an audience member's inner-frame perception of his performances.

The other important half of his early persona is the role that made him famous – Shylock, a role that further alienated audience's sympathies. In 1741, he astounded his audiences with an unprecedented portrayal of the Shakespearean character. He had researched the role and wanted to rescue it from previous portrayals that had presented Shylock as a comic buffoon.⁹ Macklin sought to rid the part of its accumulated assumptions by wearing a costume that he thought was traditional for an Italian Jew and by endowing the character with fire and passion.¹⁰

While this role garnered him fame and boosted his reputation beyond the secondary comic characters, it created a 'ghost' not only for the character, as Carlson argues, but also for Macklin's public persona.¹¹ In becoming the Shylock for his era, Macklin secured a position as an outsider; his fiery portrayal rescued Shylock from a comedic past but did

not evoke sympathy. Macklin's comedic roles coupled with his new stardom as an outsider developed a persona that did not evoke the audience's sympathy, an important trait for a tragic actor. This conflation of issues engendered a public that expected Macklin to be either a comedian or a villain – a funny man or an 'other'.

Towards the Opening Night

Before turning to the opening night itself, I will briefly outline the plot of this obscure drama and examine the historical context from which it came. *Henry VII, or the Popish Imposter* explores the political revolt surrounding Perkin Warbeck, pretender to the Tudor throne.¹² The central character, however, is the Scottish Lord Huntley, who defies the King of Scotland because of the latter's support for Warbeck. The King's advisors manipulate Huntley and force his daughter Catherine Gordon to marry Warbeck in order to save her father's life. The Scottish army then marches toward England to put Warbeck on the English throne. Huntley, with a group of Scottish nobles, arrives to help Henry VII and the English. They effectively rout the pretender and sentence him to death after a brief mishap when Catherine is mistaken for Warbeck because she has dressed as a man to escape from her husband.

The play attempts to be serious and historical, which seemed to be problematic for its initial audience. As any discussion of the play immediately highlights, Macklin meant the play to respond to the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. By playing on patriotic sympathies, he hoped to garner an audience that would support a work condemning rebellion from outsiders; Macklin wanted to capitalize on the London audience's heightened sense of xenophobia.¹³

The desire to remain topical enforced a foreshortened window for the writing of the play. John Genest uniquely claimed that both Drury Lane and Covent Garden were working on Warbeck plays,¹⁴ as the Prologue of *Henry VII* itself recounts, 'The temporary Piece in Haste was writ, / The six Weeks Labour of a puny Wit' (Prologue, 21–22). So

the situation leading up to the January premiere was this: an actor known for comedic and villainous roles was writing a political tragedy about the recent rebellion in the North with only six weeks to complete the play because the other playhouse was about to present a similar new work.¹⁵ The anticipation for the play must have been strong, the outer frame was prepared, and the audience's question of course became whether Macklin could succeed.

The opening night was the moment when the play either damned itself or was damned by the audience, yet the specifics of the performance remain unclear. Records indicate only a few verifiable particulars. First, the show opened on 18 January 1746 and had two subsequent performances, the last being Macklin's benefit as author. Because James Lacy pulled the play after this third performance and never revived the work, most critics have assumed that the short run itself indicts the play and proves that the opening night audience laughed it off the stage. Yet the financial records of Drury Lane for that season reveal a more complex story.

While the play was not successful like the revival of *The Beggar's Opera*, the opening night's earnings of *Henry VII* were £142 19s., making it the fourth highest grossing performance for Drury Lane that season.¹⁶ Additionally, the only play to earn more that season before the premiere of Macklin's play was the revival of Cibber's *The Non-Juror* in October, a play that also expounded anti-papal sentiments.¹⁷ Furthermore, *Henry VII*'s worst night was the final performance, Macklin's benefit, but even that grossed £30 19s. – more than twenty-five of the 149 performances for Drury Lane that season.

Despite the lowest gross not being an extreme, the drop in revenue between opening night and the following two (the second performance earned £41 15s. 6d.) indicates that audiences were not willing to see the play again.¹⁸ These financial records quantitatively signify how the play, despite a drop in revenue after the opening night, did comparatively well in this season and that it definitively possessed a sense of anticipation for the opening night.

With a packed house to please, the play had expectations that it needed to meet. As discussed earlier, Macklin had become a well-known theatrical persona, and his first foray into playwriting would encourage attendance. That *Henry VII* was laughed off the stage is hardly the fault of the script alone; rather it happened organically through the audience's anticipation of the play.

Importantly, the attendees seemed to expect the work of a comedian. The casting of main roles, like the playwright's persona, also confused both expectations and performance. Peg Woffington played the main female role, yet, like Macklin, audiences knew her for comedic roles. In fact, she had 'no prior experience in tragedy' and was even considered 'a great giggler'.¹⁹ Furthermore, Macklin wrote the lead role of Lord Huntley for himself. Through this character, Macklin focused the drama on a contemplation of a nobleman's duty to follow a monarch even when treacherous outsiders possess influence. Audiences came to see Macklin, like the giggling Mrs Woffington, as a comedian or an outsider. As the hero of the play, the voice for British patriotism, Macklin, an outsider himself and an actor who portrayed one, undercut the thematic impact of his story. The expectations of his persona overshadowed the merits of the work. This dissonance led to laughter.

Controlling a Theatrical Reputation

Most of the evidence of the night's performance is unclear because the accounts were published many years later. The Preface to the published text constitutes one of the earliest critiques of the play. The fact that the play was published at all is curious enough considering that Macklin only published four of his works.²⁰ Yet *Henry VII*, the failure, not only found its way to the printing house but did so in the same year as the performance.

The unique aspect of the published text is the Preface. It has no identified author, reiterates the general apologies in the Prologue, and posits knowledge of both theatre in general and this production in particular.

The writer explains that the play was meant to reflect the Jacobite Rebellion and was therefore 'hurry'd in the writing', elaborating that 'It was the six Weeks Labour of an Actor, who, even in that short Space, was often call'd from it by his Profession.' This twofold apology introduces the suggestion that the author himself was potentially ill-suited to the task as he was professionally only an actor. Furthermore, his position as actor demanded how he prioritized his time, creating an almost paradox in an attempt to elicit sympathy through explication. The statement indicates that, in order to appease the public, the actor had to act, but he also wanted to appease the public through writing a new topical play. This excuse suggests that Macklin himself wrote the Preface, since the writer emphasizes the playwright's role as an actor while hoping for the reader's sympathy. He expunges himself through crafting a self-critique – a rhetorical move that he more openly deployed in the Prologue to his next play.

The self-deprecation found in the Prologue to *Henry VII* and fleshed out in its Preface finds a poignant reflection in the Prologue to Macklin's next work, *A Will and No Will* (1746), which is the last extant response to *Henry VII* from 1746.²¹ This after-piece premiered on 23 April, only three months after the short run of *Henry VII*.²² While most of the Prologue humorously queries the metatheatrical tactic of having a prologue spoken supposedly in 'the Pit', Macklin pointedly attacks himself by recalling his previous play. As the most critical of the contemporary accounts, this Prologue proceeded to ensure the play's subsequent condemnation. Macklin therefore used this piece as a means of participating in the discourse surrounding his work in an effort to control his theatrical reputation. He did so through two distinct attacks.

The first attack consists of a general evocation of Macklin as actor. It begins with the creation of the pit on the stage, transforming actors into audience members waiting on the actors to deliver the Prologue. The character Smart begins by suggesting, 'one of the players [will] come upon the stage

presently, and make an apology that they are disappointed of the Prologue, upon which Macklin . . . is to start up in the pit, as one of the audience, and bawl out that rather than so much good company should be disappointed he will speak a prologue himself' (43).

The initial suggestion is that Macklin, a recognizable actor, desires to not disappoint the audience. The creation of expectation in these suggestions emphasizes the manner in which Macklin begins controlling his audience through manipulation of expectations, an effort to avoid the fate of *Henry VII*. But Smart's suggestion sets up his friend Rattle's attack: 'I fancy it is to be done like the wall or the man in [the] moon in *Pyramus and Thisbe*; Macklin will come in dressed like the pit, and say "Ladies and gentlemen, I am the pit / And a prologue I'll speak if you think fit"' (43). This response crafts an even more preposterous example by asserting Macklin's own imbecility as inept actor and implicitly as inept writer.

Beyond the humour of the literal interpretation, Macklin creates a more profound connection by invoking *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In doing so, he offers himself as a writer along the lines of Shakespeare, but he aligns himself with the rude mechanicals to sustain the air of self-deprecation. He abuses himself in order to lower expectations, while indicating his desire for recognition of his writing by mentioning Shakespeare – on Shakespeare's birthday no less. In doing so, he creates a surface attack with subtle connections to praise his own writing.

The second attack about *Henry VII* itself is often cited as a source for its failure. The character Snarlewit arrives and adds the most caustic voice to the critique. After giving a brief historical justification for the convention in question, Snarlewit recounts Macklin's hypothetical answer: 'If they don't laugh at it as a good prologue, I am sure . . . they will laugh at me, for its being a bad one – so that either way they will have their joke' (46).

In this witty response attributed to 'Macklin', Snarlewit sums up the purpose of this conceit-filled Prologue. In crafting a prologue based on the convention that dis-

cusses and expounds the convention, he will ultimately be judged either as witty and receive positive acclaim or as ridiculous and garner negative laughter. But as the point of a farce – and ostensibly its prologue – is to incite such a response, Macklin proves that he is a masterful enough writer to entrap the expectations of the audience. As the audience may have been predisposed toward comedy during his tragedy, he will now utilize that deportment to his own benefit by writing the reaction into the work itself.

'Author-ity' over the Audience

He thus takes from the audience the control which they took in his previous performance and asserts his own author-ity. This movement demonstrates the dynamic nature between outer and inner frames of theatrical reception. Here, Macklin subverts a potential outside/in correspondence and fluidly changes the dynamic to inside/out.

Despite this subtle move, the Prologue's attack builds. After hearing that Macklin has written the main piece, Rattle queries whether Macklin can write at all, and Snarlewit exclaims, 'Write! Ay, and damnably too, I assure you! Ha! Ha! He writ a tragedy this winter, but so merry a tragedy sure was never seen since the first night of *Tom Thumb the Great*' (47).

Appleton uses these lines to indicate that Macklin 'was aware of his own inadequacies' (76), but he does not consider the larger goal of the Prologue. This line concedes that the first play did not go well as a tragedy, but Appleton misses the manner in which the construction of the Prologue here makes its condemnation of the first play. In bringing into discourse these critiques of himself as author, especially of tragedy, Macklin not only participates in the dismissal of his earlier play but actually perpetuates it, as evidenced by Appleton's usage. Appleton does not quote the next line when Smart adds, 'I was at it and a merry tragedy it was! And a merry audience' (47). The image of the 'merry audience' supports, perhaps even corrects, the initial idea of the 'merry tragedy', as Macklin points his finger

at the audience. While he is now assured of getting their laughs through either good or bad means, he characterizes the mindset of the opening night audience. They were not in the mindset for a serious drama, but as discussed above and corroborated here, the audience was ultimately predisposed to see comedy in Macklin's work.

The Prologue then enters into a specific discussion of the play as Snarlewit asks, 'Pray sire, what do you think of Lady Catherine Gordon's letter to her father Lord Huntley, that began "Honoured papa, hoping you are in good health as I am at this present writing"'? There was a style for tragedy' (47). However, this line does not exist in the published text, where Catherine's letter begins, 'Sir, I have broke the Bond of Duty with the best of Fathers' (61).

While such discrepancies may stem from Macklin's habit of revising plays after performance,²³ the speed at which the text was published suggests that rewriting may not be the source of misrepresentation. Rather, I offer that Macklin in this moment participates in the broad misrepresentation that critics had used and would continue to use to slander his work. In giving such an account, he charges the audience as being the direct cause of his play's failure; they misremembered the night and spread the impression that the play was ill-written and ill-performed. He becomes a member of his own audience and assumes the power of the inner frame within the construction of his work's reception.

Through the construction of this prologue to highlight his failures as an author, Macklin as author of these dispraises takes control of the audience response in a way that not only gives him back his authorial voice after the audience's insistent control of *Henry VII's* opening night, but also sacrifices the reception of his first work to retain or rather obtain a status as a theatrical writer.

The Persistence of Perceived Failure

The later critiques of *Henry VII* mostly rehash the issues espoused earlier. Only an article in *The Monthly Review* about James T.

Kirkman's *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin, Esq.* offers any new insight. This anonymous piece notes three specific occurrences from the opening night performance that demonstrate the creative memory that Macklin indicated in his Prologue to *A Will and No Will*. The review remains a unique source of information about that opening night, yet both it and the memoirs that it reviews were published over fifty years after the performance.

The review throughout criticizes both the memoirs and Macklin himself, often emphasizing that Kirkman is too kind to his subject. His discussion of *Henry VII*, the most detailed discussion of the play until Appleton's account in 1960, critiques the writing as 'vulgar', 'ridiculous and absurd', and adds, 'We still remember a few of the causes of mirth, at the representation of this serious drama.'²⁴ Of the three particular moments he recounts, in the first the King knighted a messenger because of his good news. In the second, a character announces, 'I go but to return.' And in the third, audience members yelled for Peg Woffington to run when she was a captive, which caused her to have a giggling fit.²⁵

None of these incidences are in the published script, and all of them occur because of the direct interaction of the audience. In the first, the audience began yelling 'Knight him' to all subsequent messengers; with the second, they started asking if that character would come again any time he went to leave. In the final episode, the audience provoked its own laughter by telling Woffington to run. While the review highlights some absurdities, it also points toward the audience's expectation of a comedy. Finally, *The Monthly Review* ends:

No one chose to hiss a loyal attempt during a rebellion: but on the second night the playhouse was abandoned, and the piece was represented to empty benches. It did not reach a third night; though the author's liberal biographer has given it six.²⁶

The reviewer here reveals the limits of his memory. He attempts to correct Kirkman's exaggerated account that the play received

six nights of performances by stating that it only received two. Yet the financial records as well as Macklin's first biography by Francis Congreve (1798) indicate that the play received three performances. Although the receipts from the second two performances were low, the indictment of its playing to empty benches is an exaggeration. But the description has proved insidious since it has insinuated itself into recent accounts. The entry for Macklin in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* practically plagiarizes this version, until recently reading: 'Although the play's loyal stance ensured that it was not hissed from the stage, it was taken off after two unsuccessful performances.'²⁷ After I contacted the editors to alert them to this mistake, they have changed the number of performances to three; yet, the recurrence of this erroneous account illustrates the effect that the one review has had and points to the general agreement that has been perpetuated about the play, an agreement to which Macklin himself contributed.

Through examining the extant evidence, this study has explored ways in which audiences not only shape the reception of a play for one night but can do so for many years to come. Beyond the audience, Macklin as author further secured the work's reiterated condemnation without scrutiny. Through the Prologue for *A Will and No Will*, Macklin addressed the audience's response based on their expectations of him as an actor. He acknowledged that they found him humorous, so he chose to employ a mode of writing that would co-opt their ability to act up at his shows. Through embracing comedic genres, Macklin accepted the general public's assessment of him as a comedian, but furthermore employed his ability to write around their reactions and retain control of his content.

His attempt to control reception proves a perhaps unique instance of Bennett's frames of theatrical reception in its open attempt to reject the cultural associations of the outer frame by presenting novel material in the inner. However, the reaction led him to craft a new inner, which embraced the assumptions and also realigned the power dynamic between the two frames, one not leading to

the other but both working together in a dynamic. By taking back control of his work's reception, Macklin united himself with his audience. He accepted their judgement, but found a way to control that judgement through mediating expectations.

Notes and References

1. Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: a Theory of Production and Reception* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 1–2.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: the Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 7.
4. Francis Asprey Congreve, *Authentic Memoirs of the Late Mr. Charles Macklin, Comedian* (London: J. Barker, 1798), via Google Books. James Kirkman omitted the denomination in his biography of 1799, but he added 'Esq.' after Macklin's name, allowing for his memory to extend beyond the confines of his theatrical roles. Notably, the same nomination of 'Esq.' appears on some of the published texts of *The Man of the World*, a more successful Macklin play. Finally, in 1804 William Cook once more used the generic nomenclature of 'comedian' to his biography of Macklin. See William Cook, *Memoirs of Charles Macklin, Comedian* (London: James Asperne, 1804), via Google Books.
5. A generalization that the *Oxford English Dictionary* attributes to Dr Johnson: 'comedian, n.', *OED Online*, Sept 2013.
6. William Appleton, *Charles Macklin: an Actor's Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 37.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
8. Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, p. 84.
9. Appleton, *Charles Macklin*, p. 44–5.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
11. Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, p. 84–5.
12. All quotations from the play are from Charles Macklin, *King Henry the VII, or The Popish Imposter* (London: Francklin, Dodsley, and Brotherton, 1746) from *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, via Gale Cengage Learning. All subsequent citations of the play are given parenthetically in the text.
13. Perhaps then an internal failure of the play is its appeal to Britishness and not Englishness. The use of a Scottish lord as the main character may also have been to the distaste of the London audience.
14. John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage, from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*, Vol IV (Bath: H. E. Carrington, 1832), via Google Books, p. 179.
15. Genest's note reads, 'There are now . . . two plays, near finished, on the story of Perkin Warbeck, one by Macklin, the other by Elderton: the former for D[rury] L[ane] the latter at C[ovent] G[arden]', but Ford's Perkin Warbeck has got the start of them at Goodman's Fields' (p. 179). Covent Garden never staged a Perkin Warbeck play, nor does a play by the mysterious Elderton exist. *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors* has an entry for Elderton that reads, 'see Elrington'. If that is true, the two possible candidates are Ralph and Richard Elrington, yet neither wrote any plays. See Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*, Vol. V

(Carbondale; Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p. 74–5.

16. The only three occasions that season that earned more in one night were: the third night of *The Non-Juror* (26 Oct., earning £146 10s.), the command performance of *The Recruiting Officer* (6 Feb., earning £151 0s. 6d.), and the premiere of the new harlequinade after *The Constant Couple* (3 March, earning £156). All accounts come from Milhous and Hume's transcript of the account book for this season at Drury Lane, though all calculations are my own. See Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, 'A Drury Lane Account Book for 1745–46', *Theatre History Studies*, X (1990), p. 67–104.

17. As an interesting comparison, when Cibber's play first premiered this season, it had a seven-night run, and grossed a total of £650 2s. 18d., indicating a major hit. Yet the later performances were not as financially strong, with one only earning £24 15s. Despite the economic downturn in profits for this play, it continued to be performed throughout the season, while Macklin's lapsed into obscurity.

18. Compare for instance *The Beggar's Opera*; its first three performances that season earned £229 6s. 6d. total.

19. Appleton, *Charles Macklin*, p. 76; 'Art. XIII. *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin, Esq.*', *The Monthly Review or Literary Journal, Enlarged*, ed. Ralph Griffiths, XXX (1799), p. 313, via Google Books.

20. Edward Abbott Parry, *Charles Macklin* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1891), p. 196.

21. All quotations of the afterpiece are from Charles Macklin, *A Will and No Will*. in Richard W. Bevis, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Drama: Afterpieces* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 37–75. All subsequent citations are parenthetical in the text.

22. Arthur H. Scouten, ed., *The London Stage 1660–1800, Part 3: 1729–1747*, Vol II (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), p. 1235.

23. Appleton, *Charles Macklin*, p. 76.

24. 'Art XIII', p. 12–13.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 313.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Robert Shaughnessy, 'Macklin [Melaghlin, MacLaughlin], Charles (1699?–1797)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), originally accessed online 17 Oct. 2013, modified May 2014, and accessed later 6 Feb. 2015.

John Russell Brown

1923–2015

It is with a great sense of loss that we honour the memory of John Russell Brown, who died on 26 August 2015 at the age of ninety-one. John was a most enthusiastic and youthful Contributing Editor of *NTQ* from the time the journal appeared in a swanky new cover in 2003 – a cover that he looked forward to seeing on every new issue almost as much as he awaited our contents to see where we were going next. We will always be grateful for his unflagging support.

John was, first and foremost, a distinguished scholar of Shakespeare who, throughout his illustrious career, insisted that Shakespeare was not about texts as literature but texts meant for performance. But he did not go so far as to accept that directors had the right to bend the texts to their artistic will: he believed in the sanctity of textual exactitude. Shakespeare's texts could not be tampered with, and such a book as *Free Shakespeare* (1974) made it clear that, for him, stage freedom had its limits: the stage could interpret as it wished, providing living, corporeal interpretation gave the musicality and visual power of Shakespeare's language their due.

His accomplishments were many. He worked with Peter Hall at the National Theatre for some fifteen years as his literary adviser, influencing this director's approach. He also directed several productions himself, perhaps the most successful of them being *They are Dying Out* by Peter Handke at the Young Vic in 1976. A fully engaged teacher at the Universities of Birmingham and Sussex, and then at Michigan in the United States, he tested his ideas on directing and performing Shakespeare with his students; and his ever-open desire to grasp theatre practice eventually led to his edited *Directors' Shakespeare* (2008) and *Actors' Shakespeare* (2011), two wonderful volumes to crown a lifetime of editing plays by Shakespeare and Webster and writing monographs and countless articles. He handed over the forthcoming third volume of his trilogy, *Designers' Shakespeare* – new ground, when in his eighties – to one of his former North American students, characteristically bridging past and future.

The Editors

Maria Shevtsova adds: The scholar was a man whose perfumed roses from his Kent garden were one of the greatest delights of my life. His taste for probing conversation over an elegant meal was a reminder of an era I never knew and could only imagine, where academic thought enjoyed the peace of mind to think. For his example of how it might be done, I will be eternally thankful.

Simon Trussler adds: I met John through the late Clive Barker, *NTQ*'s first co-editor, and earlier a colleague of John's in the emergent Drama Department at Birmingham. As Clive happily acknowledged, without John's support it is unlikely that Clive – a 'scholar clown' without a degree – could have entered the world of academic drama which they both distinguished.

