

A Vindication of Contractual Equality in Susanna Centlivre's "The Busy Body" and "A Bold Stroke for a Wife"



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Grin Verlag Dez 2010, 2010. Taschenbuch. Book Condition: Neu. 209x147x13 mm. This item is printed on demand - Print on Demand Titel. - Seminar paper from the year 2004 in the subject English - Literature, Works, printed single-sided, grade: 2,0, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, language: English, abstract: Introduction Under the aspect of portraying eighteenth-century contracts, this paper is to examine connections and interrelations of Susanna Centlivre's comedies *The Busy Body* (1709) and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718). Centlivre (1669-1723), author of nineteen plays, several poems, and love letters (*Lock 13*), was the only playwright, male or female, with four plays among the most popular repertoire offerings of the eighteenth century (Anderson 25) and with that one of the most successful female playwrights ever after. Her comedies mentioned above, have enjoyed long-termed continuance in theatre and reflect her attitude towards the institution of marriage and the connoted contractual opportunities and restrictions for the persons concerned. The intention of this paper is to engender historical marriage laws and widespread ideas, to take a reference to the social critic William Hogarth's etching and engraving *The Marriage Contract* (1745), and to point out how and to what extend Centlivre's comedies mirror her personal but also prevalent opinions in that period of time. It is striking all through reading *The Busy Body* that, with the help of rhetorical skills, masquerade, and contracts, her protagonist Miranda converts her ambiguous legal status into a much better legal economic security, whereas in *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, Centlivre chiefly mirrors her actual frustration, when it comes to common-law marriage reforms. The thesis of this paper is that the playwright consistently had a negative view on the institution of marriage but temporarily a rather positive view on British liberalism and contractual developments, which...



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