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WORLD ENGLISH

## THE BUSYBODY

### SUSANNA CENTLIVRE

- An important feminist work, often overlooked.
- From a wildly important writer, unjustly neglected, considered the most successful playwright of the eighteenth century.
- Includes a prefatory note by William Hazlitt published in a later acting edition.
- A perfect edition for students, accessibly priced and with notes and extra material on the author and context of the play.

*The Busybody* is the most popular comedy by the eighteenth-century playwright Susanna Centlivre. The play centres on two couples trying to form a relationship against the wills of their guardians, and in a battle of wits, playing with many conventions from theatre traditions across the continent, a conclusion is eventually reached.

Like her predecessor Aphra Behn, Centlivre was immensely successful in her day, drawing huge crowds to extended runs of her numerous plays, but the stabbing male pens of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries decried her work as being louche and dangerous, and her name slowly sunk into obscurity.

This edition, published with William Hazlitt's prefatory note and extra material on Centlivre's life and writing, seeks to highlight the dexterity with which she took on the stage.

‘[Acted] a thousand times in town  
and country, giving delight to the old,  
the young and the middle-aged.’

WILLIAM HAZLITT

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Susanna Centlivre (c.1670–1723) was a wildly successful playwright, actress and poet. Her play *The Busybody* was an overnight success on the London stage, and remained one of the few comedies in the common repertoire besides Shakespeare's until the end of the nineteenth century. Like her predecessor Aphra Behn, whose nom de plume, 'Astrea', Centlivre borrowed in her early years, her work fell into obscurity for much of the twentieth century, but, thanks to the work of feminist scholars, is returning to the page and stage.



RENARD PRESS LTD, Kemp House, 152–160 City Road, London EC1V 2NX

info@renardpress.com • 020 8050 2928

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