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The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret (Broadview Literary Texts)

Susanna Centlivre

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Susanna Centlivre's play *The Wonder* (1714) was one of the most popular works on the eighteenth-century English stage. Set in Lisbon, the plot interweaves two romantic intrigues around one "secret": the heroine Violante is hiding her best friend, Isabella (who is the sister of her own lover, Don Felix) from Isabella's father who wishes to marry her off to a rich but decrepit old merchant. Because she is sworn to secrecy, Violante cannot reveal Isabella's whereabouts, nor can she explain to Felix why Isabella's new lover, a dashing British soldier, happens to be about the house, prompting Felix's intense jealousy. Centlivre's critique on the tyrannical patriarchs in the world of the play is at the same time a veiled critique of similar conditions in Augustan-era Britain.

This Broadview edition includes contemporary responses (by Richard Steele and Arthur Bedford), biographical accounts, selections of Centlivre's poetry, and early nineteenth-century criticism (by Elizabeth Inchbald and William Hazlitt).

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