

# LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 12 : 3 March 2012

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D.

## Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar

Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

### An Introduction to the Play

*The School for Scandal* is Sheridan's masterpiece; it has strong satires on the manners of the individuals and society especially on the scandal-mongering and hypocrisy. Certainly, the emergence of *The School for Scandal* on the stage has astonished the spectators for its new sense of dramaturgy. The play remarks both Sheridan's brilliant career as an astounded playwright and the prime time of his theatrical success. It is really the most brilliant comedy which had been given to the world in eighteenth century; and it is, in fact, Sheridan's mature and great work. The brevity of dialogue is one of Sheridan's wits, and his dialogues are easy, smooth, vivacious, brilliant and sparkling throughout the play. Moore praises the dialogue and the personage of the play as follows:

The consequence of all this is, that the dialogue, from beginning to end, is a continued sparkling of polish and point: and the whole of the Dramatis Personae might be comprised under one common designation of Wits. Even Trip, the servant, is as pointed and shining as the rest, and has his master's wit, as he has his birth-day clothes, with the gloss on. (247)

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

An in-depth study for *The School for Scandal*, one can notice that there is no weak line in the conversation among characters. All lines are beautifully written in a way that most of them convey wisdom, even those lines which are spoken by the negative characters have their especial tastes and profound meanings. However, Sheridan's writings in general are known of their wit and humour. Fujimura has his view of the comic wit in Sheridan's plays. He states:

Skeptical, cynical, and sexual wit did so from a feeling that the moral and religious conventions observed by the majority of men were artificial (and unnatural), and that in refusing to recognize the sexual, malicious, and selfish nature of man, society was hypocritical. (71)

Moreover, Sheridan has boundless energy and enthusiasm to write drama in his own style. In addition to his beautiful lines, he is able to give every character a shining side. Percy Fitzgerald observes, "Sheridan was gifted with a sort of mental alchemy, which gave all the characters of the drama on which he exercised its power a golden hue" (126). For example, Lady Sneerwell who is considered the leader of the school for scandal has the ability to use the appropriate puns to attract audience or to attack someone including her friends just like Joseph. She is also intelligent enough to keep many characters under her control and to direct them to the point she likes, yet her intelligence is useless in the eyes of the audience because she uses it to destroy but not to build, to separate families but not to join them, and to spread evil but not to spread goodness.

Diametrically speaking, the play is small in size, but it is surely rich in the content. It has serious plot, astonished dialogue, extraordinary characters, prevailing and manifest wit and humour. It has also a masterpiece scene; it is the screen scene, despite some critics consider this scene unworthy. Thomas Moore reports that "By some critics the incident of the screen has been censured, as a contrivance unworthy of the dignity of comedy (249). Though Sheridan has many brilliant literary achievements, he has some shortcomings at the same time. His elaborations of the episodes in detail, his round and undeveloped characters, and the ambiguity of emotions of the characters are some of his shortcomings. The characters and the plots are sometimes deviated from their targets because they start to deal with something then change to something else.

*The School for Scandal* opens with an exposure of such negative behaviors in the society just like the slanderers' behavior. So, audiences and readers may comprehend the theme of the play at early stage. This exposure may be regarded as clumsy and unbelievable, but Sheridan is able to render it in a smooth consecutive way. The heavy exposure at the beginning of the play intimates that the plot is going to end soon, yet Sheridan is able to develop the main plot into many subplots in a magnificent piece of writing. In fact, the exposure of characters is burst out at once; there is no gradual exposure of characters. So, the audiences have got clear concepts about the bad and good characters from the very beginning of the play.

Consequently, Sheridan has vehemently criticized the scandalous gossip. The target of writing the play is mainly to scold the act of scandalmongers. Thomas Moore states the reason of

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

writing this play. He says, “The first sketch of *The School for Scandal* that occurs was written ... before *The Rivals*, or at least very soon after it; - and that it was his original intention to satirize some of the gossips of Bath appears from the title....” (210).

Sheridan cannot stifle his anger towards this reprehensible act, and his hatred can be seen from the title of the play. One can know the entire content of the play from the title which is a remarkable attack on scandal. Scandalous gossip in society is a dangerous and harmful disease. The scandalmongers do not exclude even their relatives and close friends from their gossip. They malign and denigrate the reputation of their friends and relatives. They have nothing to do except defaming others’ reputations; it is because they are deviated from the straightway and normal life, considering themselves at the same time the ideal and sentimental people. The paradox is that the scandalmongers rank their work of gossip as the fashion of time. So, from the beginning of the play to the end, Sheridan has criticized their works in infinite ingenuity.

### **Charles is the Main Target of the Scandalmongers’ Attack**

The scandalous gossip is mainly focused on Charles. Nonetheless, Charles and Maria do not lift a finger against the conspiracies which are being hatched against them. Meanwhile, they try to relieve the sufferings of others at the time of being bombarded with charges, and this, however, presents them as negative characters. It is expected from the main characters to react positively in order to get their rights, yet they are of peaceful minds; nevertheless, they have got victory at the end of the play.

Remarkably, Charles is profligate, awkward and careless, but Sheridan does not criticize these negative descriptions because they are not serious from his point of view. He has dedicated his play to expose the scandal and hypocrisy which are really more serious and dangerous. Sheridan tries to make Charles the idealist, yet he is not so because his life has been spent in vain as in playing cards, drinking and accompanying useless and careless friends. His miserable condition with his friends and their ways of talking and sitting prove that they are out of the normal life. Also, his presence in the play seems as if he is idle. As a result of Charles’s carelessness, he has become bankrupt.

Similarly, Sheridan has lived in a miserable condition especially in his early life and his last days. As a student in Harrow, he has not enough money, and his shabby dress and hair are examples of his misery even his Irish accent sets him away from his classmates. So, Sheridan might depict himself as Charles, his ideal character. Sheridan is a boozier as Charles, but he becomes worst than Charles in his last days.

However, Sheridan criticizes those people who spent money profligately then they become victims of usury, just like Charles. Charles has spent his money extravagantly; then, he has to sell all his possessions to get his sustenance. Regardless, Charles is regarded by all as the kind-hearted character, yet he cannot manage his life because he is still enjoying wine and gambling despite his complete bankruptcy. Therefore, Sir Oliver is astonished to see him selling

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

all possessions of the family; though, Charles justifies his act by stating, “To be sure! When a man wants money, where the plague should he gets assistance, if he can’t make free with his own relation?” (3.3.[259-60]) Because Charles has been indulged in drinking and playing cards with his friends, he is about to lose the basic sustenance, so he sells even the pictures of the family.

Remarkably, one may argue that he does not care of his future because he knows well that he has a rich uncle; otherwise, he will take much care of his money. In addition, Charles’s work is unknown, so he appears as a man who is only waiting for his uncle to give him money. It is known that he is in love with Maria, yet he does not defend their love against the onslaught of his brother and the slanderers.

In any case, Charles enjoys many remarkable advantages. Despite he is completely bankrupt, he is still generous even with his servants. Sir Oliver, Charles’s uncle, is amazed to see the servant behave as a master and imitates the life-style of lords. To observe the behavior of Trip, it seems that his master lives in affluence. This matter is reported by a wise man, Sir Oliver. When he sees Trip’s conduct, he remarks, “To judge by the servants, one wouldn’t believe the master was ruined” (3.2.[6-7]). In reality, Trip is also seeking money from Moses. It seems that he is in financial difficulty like his master.

Whether the act of Trip is known by his master or not, Sir Oliver considers his behavior as a kind of chaos and indiscipline. In this regard, if Charles knows Trip’s behavior, it means he is indifferent of his life because there is no difference between his life and the life of a servant. If he does not know Trip’s behavior, it means he is a blimp because he does not know what is going around him. In both cases, Sir Oliver is upset to see the miserable condition of Charles, so he considers him “unnatural rogue” (4.1.[24]). Anyway, Trip wants to get money on the basis of annuity, but he has nothing to give as a deposit except some trivial things like old clothes of his master. As a reaction to the conduct of Trip, Sir Oliver utters a famous aphorism which can never be forgotten: “if the man [servant] be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed” (3.2.[57-58]). With all this, Trip’s behaviour portrays Charles as a humble man and not a man of apartheid.

Furthermore, Sir Oliver observes the house in which Charles lives in as the same house of his dead brother who used to live in. Charles has, in fact, purchased it from his brother Joseph with all its furniture including the pictures of the family. Therefore, Sir Oliver is pleased to see his nephew Charles keeping the house of the family; meanwhile, he despises Joseph for selling it.

Charles has also another remarkable feat which attracts Sir Oliver’s attention; it is his generosity. Charles gives Stanley one hundred pounds although he is in need for this amount of money to pay his debts. In his turn, Rowley the honest servant of the family advises him to keep the money instead of giving it to Stanley. Rowley’s advice becomes a famous proverb for generations: “Be just before you’re generous” (4.1.[170]), but Charles does not listen because his generosity is mixed with his soul.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

## **Lady Sneerwell as an “envenomed tongue of slander”**

The first characters appear on the stage are Lady Sneerwell and her accompanying slanderers. She starts exposing Joseph, the hypocrite of the play. Sheridan has not kept Joseph's personality secret; he exposes him on the tongue of Lady Sneerwell. So, the audience has a premature impression about Joseph in spite of his insistence and pretense that he is a respectable and attractive man; in short, he considers himself “a man of sentiment.”

Lady Sneerwell has done her best to spread scandal; therefore, she is eagerly expecting the negative result of her gossip to happen soon because she does not like her effort to go in vain. Thus, she spends her time in planning when and how to attack her victims. The strategy of this group in spreading scandal is to gather information about their victims, add fabrications and attack them in the appropriate time.

What is ironical is Lady Sneerwell's opinion that her job is a kind of criticism in spite of the fact that it is invariably destructive to family bonding and to the social life as a whole. Unexpectedly, Lady Sneerwell is praised for her wicked act. Mr. Snake, for example, flatters her by confirming her skill which she uses to spread a complete false story even if there is “a little truth on it.” According to Snake, this is an advantage in favour of Lady Sneerwell. Snake States, “Everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or a Look than many can with the most laboured detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it” (1.1.[28-31]).

Diametrically, the scandalmongers under the head of Lady Sneerwell are intended to spread scandal and gossip to harm others and to destroy families. No one can ignore the fact that every society of the world has its slanderers and scandalmongers, yet the slanderers of the play are completely different because they have got a school to distort the reputation of the innocents. In addition to the proof of the title of the play that Lady Sneerwell and her group have got a school for scandal, there is also another proof; it is the meeting of the whole scandalmongers in Sir Peter's house where they start fabricating baseless stories. It is really an effrontery to fabricate stories at the victim's home who is actually their friend. If they wait for a while, Sir Peter and his wife will surely appear in excellent health. However, their jobs are not a matter of passing time, rather it is a role of a school as the title suggests. Mrs. Candour threatens to defame Sir Peter's reputation as a reaction for pushing her out of his house. She warns him, “Well, well, we are going - and depend on't, we'll make the best report of you we can” (5.2.[163-64]). They have rudely challenged him in his house to tarnish his character. Therefore, their insistence to spread rumours denotes their desires to practise what they have learned.

In her turn, Lady Teazle, a member in the group, gives a concrete proof that the scandalmongers have got a scandal school where they learn and receive certificate. She addresses Lady Sneerwell at the end of the play:

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

... let me also request you to make my respects to the **scandalous College**, of which you are president, and inform them, that lady Teazle, licentiate, beg leave to return the **diploma** they granted her, as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer” (5.3.[194-97]).

In fact, there is no school, but Sheridan intentionally mentions the school to be able to criticize them strongly; this is, however, the summit of Sheridan’s vitriol.

Indeed, Sheridan has intended to give a lesson of the negative consequences of the rumours because he himself has suffered a lot during his life especially in his marital stage. Consequently, scandalmongers’ wicked jobs have created rages; therefore, they are in the eyes of some people criminals. Hence, they should be punished for what they have committed against innocent people. If they do not get punishment, the results will be destructive on society. Nevertheless, these slanderers will not be punished by the society, yet they will be punished by their own poisonous acts as Sir Peter assures, “their own venom would choke them!” (5.2.[170]).

Despite Charles is kind and generous, he has got enemies. They are his brother Joseph and Lady Sneerwell. The real reason of Joseph’s enmity is because he wishes to marry Maria in order to get her property, and Lady Sneerwell’s conspiracy against him is to defame his reputation to be able to marry him. Anyway, Lady Sneerwell has suffered a lot in her life. So, she intends to spread scandal as a matter of reaction. In general, Lady Sneerwell had suffered from malicious rumour and backbiting, and her marriage life was destroyed because of the scandal, so she is now revenging. She compassionately remarks:

...I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself, in the early part of my life by the **envenomed tongue of slander** I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation. (1.1.[32-36])

Noticeably, she confesses of her bad work in the field of scandal, but she acquits herself from the habit of hypocrisy. Actually, scandal becomes a part of her life, and she is not shy of it. However, her speech about her suffering is regarded as a way to justify her work, but it seems no one accepts her decision to revenge by spreading scandal because her victims are not responsible for her suffering.

Paradoxically, Lady Sneerwell loves Charles and dreams to marry him; meanwhile, she works hard to destroy him. It is strange to love someone and try to destroy him at the same time, but it is a kind of sadism; she has to torture her lover before marriage. In fact, she aspires to marry Charles, but it is impossible to marry him if his honour is not ruined. In fact, she is old, and no one wants to marry her; hence, she has to snare Charles, the good-hearted character; and the shortest way to attract him is to differentiate between him and Maria. To force him to leave Maria, he should be financially ruined, and his reputation should be defamed. Also, Maria should marry Joseph, then Charles will be easily attracted to Lady Sneerwell. Surely, if Charles is hated

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*



by all, isolated by society and Maria has been married, he may agree to marry Lady Sneerwell. This is what Lady Sneerwell seeks to achieve. Her fervent love for Charles can be seen in her repartee to Snake's inquiry. Snake asks her, "Yet still I am more puzzled why you should interest yourself in his success [Joseph's success in winning Maria]" (1.1.[62-3]). She frankly replies:

How dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto through shame have concealed even from you? Must I confess that Charles, that **libertine**, that **extravagant**, that **bankrupt in fortune and reputation**, that he it is for whom I am thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything? (1.1.[64-9])

## **A Convergence of Interest between Lady Sneerwell and Joseph**

In his turn, Joseph is seeking help from Lady Sneerwell to destroy his brother and to smash his love with Maria to be able to marry her. Consequently, Lady Sneerwell and Joseph have their own goals, and Charles has his goal of life. Charles decides to marry Maria and not anyone else. To achieve all these wicked purposes, Lady Sneerwell intelligently uses Joseph as a tool to fulfill her desire, and she helps him not because she respects him but to succeed in her plan. In fact, she dislikes him, and this is clear in her statement, "I know him to be artful, selfish, and malicious - in short, a sentimental knave" (1.1.[73-74]). Snake tells Lady Sneerwell that Sir Peter praises Joseph as "a man of sentiment," Lady Sneerwell knows well Joseph's sentiment which is only used to con innocents. She comments, "True, and with the assistance of his sentiments and hypocrisy he has brought Sir Peter entirely to his interest with regard to Maria" (1.1.[79-81]).

In the house of Lady Sneerwell, and when she and her group are in a scandalous session, Joseph enters. A little bit later, Maria joins them. Maria joins them in order to avoid the visit of Sir Benjamin and his uncle to her guardian's house. No one can believe that Joseph gets upset because Maria did not meet Benjamin. He claims that she did not like to meet him because Charles was not with him. Unbelievably, Joseph talks about his brother as if he is his enemy despite there is no real reason of his hatred against his brother except jealousy and the property of Maria.

Lady Sneerwell takes advantage of the presence of Maria to justify her ill-work. She tries to convince her of the legitimacy of her work, but Maria is not that stupid girl, she knows well Lady Sneerwell and her wicked work. Thus, she keeps herself away from Lady Sneerwell's scandal and venomous gossip. Lady Sneerwell tries another way to convince Maria to love Joseph. Maria knows the personalities of both, so she does not positively respond.

Unexpectedly, Sir Benjamin and his uncle follow Maria to Lady Sneerwell's house. In this regard, Joseph is not ready to hear anything good concerning his brother, yet he hears Lady Sneerwell introducing Benjamin to Maria and beautifully praises him as a man who "is a wit and a poet" (1.1.[150]). However, Joseph does not react, but Maria tactfully replies, "wit loses its respect with me when I see it in company with malice" (1.1.[151-52]). Joseph is not infuriated

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

about the talk of Lady Sneerwell and Benjamin despite the talk is concerning Maria and her honour. It seems he is only jealous of his brother.

Before all, Sir Benjamin pretends as if he does not like to publish his poems because his writings convey satires as he told Lady Sneerwell. In fact, his poems are a mix of nonsense, and they are a kind of scandal. So, no one agrees to publish them despite the great compliment of his uncle, Crabtree. Nevertheless, Benjamin has to find a way to conceal the refusal by saying that they convey satires. In reality, satires are accepted and published, and only the great critics and intellectual authors are known of writing satires but not Benjamin who is nothing except a member in the scandalous group.

After a while of praising Benjamin, Lady Sneerwell, Sir Benjamin, Crabtree, Candour shift their talks to slander Charles at the presence of his brother Joseph and Maria. Joseph does not stop them or at least to be infuriated, but he pretends before Maria of defending his brother: “pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother” (1.1.[342]). He hypocritically utters this statement in order to satisfy Maria and to be a great man in her eyes, but Maria mocks his silly behavior. However, he introduced himself as a true lover instead of his brother, but she rejects him and prefers Charles. Her repartee resounds and deafens him especially when she confidently points out, “whatever my sentiments are of that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother” (2.2.[217-19]). Then she cannot tolerate the intolerable gossip about Charles. So, she rushes out of Lady Sneerwell’s house while the brother remains there to enjoy listening to the vicious reports about his brother.

Meanwhile, the reaction of Maria is not enough towards the onslaught of the scandalmongers against Charles. It is true, she is affected by the rumour spreading against him, and she is very sympathetic about his condition, but she has done nothing serious to defend him. Possibly, it is because Sheridan does not give her an opportunity to defend him.

### **Joseph is the “smooth-tongued hypocrite.”**

Overall, as well as Sheridan has vehemently criticized the scandalous gossip, he has also criticized the hypocrisy. These two works were overspread at the time of Sheridan, and each one of these two shameful acts had received great censure and condemnation. Actually, Joseph’s wicked personality has been mastered by his false sentiment. Hence, the characters have got an impression that Joseph gives sentiment free even when it is unnecessary. In fact, he is opposite to what others are saying; his sentiment is only a kind of hypocrisy. In this regard, there are many instances show Joseph’s hypocrisy; for example, at the very beginning of the play when he is with Lady Sneerwell and Snake, he praises Snake, “it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr. Snake’s sensibility and discernment” (1.1.[94-95]). A few lines later when Snake wants to leave, he bids him an affectionate farewell, “Sir, you very devote”, but he, at the same time, approaches from Lady Sneerwell and warns her, “I am very sorry you have put any further confidence in that fellow” (1.1.[123-24]). When Lady Sneerwell asks him why? He replies, “that

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*



fellow hasn't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy" (1.1.[131-32]). Joseph praises people in their presence, but he bombards them with backbiting as soon as they leave him. His hypocrisy has not got limitation; even with his brother, he apparently shows himself as a sympathizer for his brother's financial fall, yet he is the one who wants to urge his ruin. He ironically comments, "I am sure I wish it was in my power to be of any essential service to him" (1.1.[109-10]), at the same line he states that Charles is fully responsible for his troubles, "even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves" (1.1.[111-12]).

It is remarkable that Lady Sneerwell is the main one who has despised him from the beginning although they have helped each other. Indeed, Lady Sneerwell is completely different from Sir Peter; she knows well Joseph's ill character, but she has to cooperate with him and to conceal her love for Charles at the same time. However, there is an unexpected circumstance stands against her success; it is Joseph's exposure in his library which is regarded the main reason of her failure. His exposure leads to the reconciliation between Sir Peter and Charles which is not in the favour of Lady Sneerwell. As a reaction to their reconciliation, she comments about her cooperation with Joseph as fruitless: "Oh, I was a fool, and idiot, to league with such a blunderer!" (5.3.[5-6]). She rightly names herself as a 'fool', and 'idiot' and these descriptive names are so appropriate for her; so it is she who discloses her real character.

At the end of the play, Joseph has been exposed, and his claimed sentiment becomes false slogan. He is offended more than Lady Sneerwell because Lady Sneerwell loses nothing except her dream of marrying Charles, but Joseph loses many things. He has been deprived of inheritance, he will not marry Maria, he loses her wealth, and he also loses his brother's craving. In a nutshell, he is hated by all characters, so from the time of his exposure onwards, no one will stand with him. Joseph's loss is an indication to his dirty work which is considered as no less than the job of scandalmongers.

## **Is Joseph an Oppressor or Oppressed?**

As one of Sheridan's shortcoming in this play, Joseph has been perhaps wronged more than he should deserve. This great punishment and exclusion of society should be for Lady Sneerwell and her group. Unfortunately, the play ends without presenting any concrete punishment against Lady Sneerwell. This is unjustifiable in the sense that Lady Sneerwell's work is a real disease in society, and she is the main one who is intended in the attack of Sheridan while Joseph's habit of hypocrisy does not harm others, but defames his own personality. However, no one can acquit Joseph from his other sins, but the punishment is not expected to be in this severity. If the punishment is because of his other misbehaviors, just like seducing Lady Teazle to have an immoral relation with him, or because of his enmity to his brother, then one can accept the punishment.

To prove more that Joseph is wronged, it is important to analyze the time of the unexpected visit of his uncle to his home. Immediately after his exposure in his library, Sir Oliver as Stanley comes to borrow money from him as a kind of test. To test him at this critical

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

situation is considered unfair. However, the time of Charles's visit is different from the time of Joseph's visit especially in the suitability of time. They pay a visit to Charles while he is in his ecstasy; he is singing, drinking and playing cards with his friends. So, there is no matter if there is a test at that time. Conversely, they pay a visit to Joseph whereas he is in his decay. This is clear in Joseph's objection for the visit: "Pshaw! Blockhead! To suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor relations!" (5.1. [5-6]). He also adds, "I'm in a rare humour to listen to other people's distresses! I shan't be able to bestow even a benevolent sentiment on Stanly" (5.1.[13-14]). So, Sir Oliver comes abruptly without a prior appointment as Rowley remarks, "... I doubt you are come a little too abruptly. His nerves are so weak, that the sight of poor relations may be too much for him" (5.1. [18-19]).

We are human beings, and when one is in troublous condition, he cannot afford even his children. So, how can Sir Oliver test him while he is in unsuitable attitude! Indeed, most of the audiences expect Joseph to refuse to lend money; it is not because he is stingy or does not like to help others but because of his current perplexed mood. In fact, Charles is the ideal character of Sheridan, so Sheridan wants him to succeed while he wants Joseph to fail; therefore, he deliberately puts the incident of the test immediately after the time of his exposure.

Moreover, there is another argumentative matter; it is the decision of Sir Oliver to give his whole property to the one who succeeds in the test. To give the entire inheritance to only one of his nephews is regarded unjust. He should divide his property between Charles and Joseph equally. It is well-known that there is no one in the world may accept the idea of giving the inheritance on the basis of love. There are restricted rules forbid this unlawful work if one really wants to do so. Here is the same; it is not normal to deprive Joseph from inheritance because he is unthankful for his uncle. Indeed, this act presents Sir Oliver as a selfish character because he, as it is clear, respects the one who satisfies his ego even if that man has committed many mistakes. This is clear in the argument between Sir Oliver and Moses:

MOSES. Well, Sir, I think as Sir Peter said, you have seen Mr. Charles in high glory; 'tis great pity he's so extravagant.

OLIVER. True, but he wouldn't sell my Picture.

MOSES. And loves wine and women so much.

OLIVER. But he wouldn't sell my Picture.

MOSES. And game so deep.

OLIVER. But he wouldn't sell my Picture. (4.2. [1-7])

## **Sir Oliver's Wise Judgment**

In this regard, Sir Oliver does not feel that he wrongs anyone of his two nephews in the matter of test. Sir Oliver is a man of experience, so he does not estimate a person due to appearance. That is why he has to make a trial to differentiate between false and correct characters; in other words, between the appearance and reality. Sir Oliver cannot test his nephews in his real character. Meanwhile, he is able to test both when he has changed his

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

appearance. To test Charles, he pretends as a broker, Mr. Premium, and to test Joseph, he has to disguise in another different appearance, he decides to be Mr. Stanley, the needy relative of the brothers. After the test, the brothers are expecting the arrival of their uncle Sir Oliver, yet they meet Mr. Premium according to Charles and Mr. Stanley according to Joseph. In short, they misinterpret Sir Oliver's real character. Therefore, both of them try to push him out lest their uncle knows their misbehaviors. They do not realize that the man trying to expel him out is their uncle. However, the reality of Sir Oliver is disclosed by the appearing of Sir Peter, Teazle and Rowley. The two brothers cannot identify him before this time because he was disguised in different appearance in order to achieve the test. But when they recognize him, the reality and his real character become like thunderbolt for the brothers.

To be fair, Sir Oliver is unbiased and both tests are of noble descent. He pays his two visits for both brothers while he does not know and care of their psychological attitudes. His main concern is to test them, then he can judge who can deserve his wealth. Moreover, Charles is not in his best attitude at the time of the test. He is financially ruined and his agony has been increased by the time of selling even the pictures of his ancestors; certainly, he is not in a good condition. To sum up, Joseph is the one who makes his unsatisfactory collapse. So, he deserves what has happened for him; meanwhile, Charles is the victim of conspiracies and his bankruptcy is justified because of his benevolence. Sir Oliver is a well-known benevolent man that is why he loathes Joseph for being a man out of benevolence and gratitude.

Furthermore, Sir Oliver notices Charles's goodness and his true love for him especially when he refused to sell his picture. Sir Oliver insists to buy his picture and offers Charles the same price of all other pictures, but Charles does not budge one iota in his refusal to the offer. He says, "I'll not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in" (4.1. [99-101]). This act holds the heart of Sir Oliver, so he aside praises him, "The rogue's my nephew after all!" (4.1. [107]). Then he adds, "I forgive him for everything!" (4.1. [106]). Sir Oliver also clarifies Charles's frank personality, "you are an honest fellow, Charles" (Shc.4.1.[120]). However, Charles becomes an heir because he simply refuses to sell his uncle's picture. Stuart M Tave is of bold view that "As for Surfaces, we can forgive Charles because his virtue is shallow in a shallow convention, but not Joseph because his hypocrisy is ineffectually likeable and there is a stronger tradition hovering over him" (406).

Contrary to the view that Sir Oliver makes an error when he gives his whole property to Charles, Sir Oliver has the right to give his property to the desired and deserved person; it is his wealth, and he can do with it whatsoever he likes. At least, this is acceptable from the viewpoint of Sheridan. Diametrically, Sir Oliver has already intended to divide his wealth equally between the two brothers, but he has changed his decision at the time of discovering the real character of Joseph. Sir Oliver openly exposes Joseph's character before all:

Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley, too, look on that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my bounty; and you know also how

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

gladly I would have regarded half my fortune as held in trust for him. Judge then, my disappointment in discovering him to be destitute of truth, charity, and gratitude. (5.3. [103-08])

Even Sir Peter who is regarded as Joseph's main supporter has changed his opinion about him. He confirms the validity of Sir Oliver's words, "Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration if I had not myself found him selfish, treacherous, and hypocritical" (5.3. [109-11]).

To emphasize the idea that Joseph deserves what has happened for him, see his reaction after his exposure. He does not react against his uncle's decision of depriving him from the inheritance. He only tries to use his hypocrite method to justify what he had done, yet he is not serious in extracting his right.

In fact, Joseph loses his honour, and he is completely shattered at this discovery, but he has to do the last endeavor with the help of Lady Sneerwell. He tries to defame his brother's honour by fabricating a false story that "Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honour to your ladyship" (5.3. [30-31]). He along with Lady Sneerwell and Snake have fabricated a false story in which Charles is morally committed to her. This is an evidence of Joseph's latent malice, he has to do the last-ditch conspiracy against his brother. He is really a stupid man because he does not care for himself, but he gives all his effort to support Lady Sneerwell, his real enemy. He addresses Charles, "Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and lady Sneerwell's injuries can no longer be concealed" (5.3. [166-67]).

However, this fabrication is disclosed in the appropriate time. Rowley, the man of morality, has done his best to defend Charles and to justify his lavishness. As he shares in putting the plan of test, he also discloses this fabrication by giving Snake double the amount he has received from Lady Sneerwell in order to tell the truth. Thus, the appearance of Lady Sneerwell on the stage assuming that she and Charles are in love has been disclosed by Snake who narrates the reality. Accordingly, reality overcomes false appearance at the end of the play.

## **Appearance and Reality**

The theme of the appearance and reality is very noticeable in *The School for Scandal*. The contrast between appearance and reality, however, can be understood in the character's behaviour, how he wants to appear and what intends to do. Appearance and reality are running simultaneously in the play in the sense that the normal people are fooled by appearance.

In short, Joseph is considered a sentimental figure while he is a hypocrite and a liar. He also deceives Lady Teazle by introducing himself as a true lover while he loves Maria. Even his love for Maria is false because he loves her wealth not her identity. Before others, he sympathizes with his brother while in reality he tries his best to destroy him. Therefore, most of the characters are cheated by his appearance and one of them is Sir Peter. Sir Peter admires him

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

and disregards Charles. If he props their real action instead of their appearance, surely he will get the correct clues of their personalities.

However, Lady Sneerwell and Rowley know well Joseph's wicked character, but Lady Sneerwell has benefited greatly from his help to achieve her own strategy. She apparently respects him while in reality she despises him because she knows his ill-nature. She also tries her best to ruin Charles, but she is in fact fond of him. Really, Joseph, Lady Sneerwell and her group delude others that they are straight and respectable characters while their hidden works convey evil. Charles is also surrounded by gossip, and he is accused of having an affair with Lady Teazle in spite of the reality that his brother is the one who has indulged in a suspecting affair with her. Lady Teazle believes that her husband is an old careless boor while Joseph is a "man of sentiment." However, she realizes the opposite in Joseph's library; her husband is well-natured character while Joseph is a "smooth-tongued hypocrite" (4.3.427).

However, Sir Oliver and Rowley are the only characters who do not deceive or being deceived by appearances. Sir Oliver wants to judge his nephews by himself, so he neither listens to Rowley's praise for Charles nor Sir Peter's admiration of Joseph. He verifies both brothers by applying real tests. Strangely enough that Sir Oliver cannot judge his nephews in his real character, so he has to change his appearance to be able to fulfill the test. Surely, if Sir Oliver abides by the reality and shows himself as the real uncle, he may get different behaviors from the brothers, and the result will be in the favour of Joseph because he is an experienced hypocrite. Anyhow, he succeeds to perform his test adequately at the time of changing his appearance. So, reality and appearance confront each other; and if one is useful, the other is ultimately harmful, and vice versa.

=====

## References

### Primary Sources

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley. *The Rivals, The Critic and The School for Scandal*. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Eric Rump. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1988.

### Secondary Sources

Fitzgerald, Percy. *The lives of the Sheridans*. London: R. Bentley, 1886.

Fujimura, Thomas H. *The Restoration Comedy of Wit*. Princeton: Princeton Up, 1952.

Moore, Thomas. *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan*. 4 ed. 2 vols. London: Longman, 1826.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of *The School for Scandal*

Tave, Stuart M. "Sheridan Studies." *Modern Philology* 95.3 (1998): 404-408.

=====

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar  
Department of P. G. Studies & Research in English  
Kuvempu University  
Jnana Sahyadri  
Shankaraghatta-577451  
Shimoga District  
Karnataka  
[alfasli1976@yahoo.com](mailto:alfasli1976@yahoo.com)

Dr. Rachel Bari, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Department of P. G. Studies & Research in English  
Kuvempu University  
Jnana Sahyadri  
Shankaraghatta-577451  
Shimoga District  
Karnataka  
[rachelbari@rediffmail.com](mailto:rachelbari@rediffmail.com)

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 3 March 2012

Mohammed Sagheer Ahmed Al-fasly, Ph.D. Scholar and Rachel Bari, Ph.D.

Complementary Relationship between the Scandalmonger and the Hypocrite: A Case Study of  
*The School for Scandal*