Chapter III

MORALITY AND HONOUR

MORALITY

Some believe that the concept of morality goes together with the concept of religion. “Others think that there is no relation between religion and morality. But an examination of the world’s religions shows that, without morality, religion cannot subsist. True morality covers religion for the most part” (Mahatma Gandhi 53). Whatever might be said, the plays of Behn and Sheridan deal with morality.

It is noticeable that the morality of individuals in such a society complies more or less with the standards of that society. However, individuals sometimes deviate from the norms of the society. From this point, a quick look at moral and immoral behaviour of some characters in the plays under study would give a succinct understanding of how Behn and Sheridan have discussed this theme. This section deals with two issues: the immoral behaviour of the Spaniards in The Rover and moral and immoral behaviour of the characters in The School for Scandal.

In general, Puritans before the restoration of Charles II adopted severe moral restraints by which people felt that their rights were being confiscated. Therefore, many people especially those who were exiled and one of them was Charles II, hated everything that bore the name of Puritans. Charles II and his court attempted to change the life style completely, which was opposite to that of the previous period. In contrast, dramatists had freedom to express themselves and depict what was really going on in the society especially the immoral behaviours of the upper class. From this point, Restoration drama has its features which are different from Elizabethan drama.
One of the features of Restoration drama is the concept of immorality which is condemned by many and defended by others. In fact, Restoration comedy, or Comedy of Manners, is known to be an attack and commentary on the negative behaviours of the upper class society. Hence, immorality in the plays is just a reflection of the immorality of the society. Sherburne and Bond state, “Restoration comedy is rather an anatomy of life, not more a representation than a commentary on life and on various social schematisms” (763). Thus, Restoration dramas are considered immoral for many reasons. Firstly, they expose many immoral issues like secret love affairs, sexual love, drinking, gambling, womanising, gossip, scandal-mongering, etc. Men are mostly projected as rakes and women mostly as flirts and all of them consider their behaviour as a kind of fashion. The immoral behaviours shown by the dramatists of the seventeenth century were mostly practised by the upper class. Allardyce Nicoll points out the immorality of Charles II’s society:

This fine society, thus mirrored in the comedy of manners, as it was the society of Charles II’s Court, was dilettante, careless, intent only on pleasure and amorous intrigue, so that the comedy which depicted it has an air of abandon and of immorality which is markedly different from the manlier temper of the Elizabethan stage. (British Drama 250)

Secondly, Restoration drama is known for its attack on the sanctity of the marital bond. Meanwhile, it shifts to praise free love especially the love which satisfies the characters’ libidos. Thirdly, Restoration drama contains scene and sometimes a full act which clearly indicates sexual promiscuity. Fourthly, conversation and dialogue convey too much sexual innuendoes. Fifthly, the sexual talks of the female characters on the stage and their
seductive and sexual performances were main features of the Restoration comedy. In fact, the appearance of actresses on the stage for the first time had been classified as sexual show. Therefore, many audiences attended to watch the actresses and then to try to have their ways with them since they were women of easy virtue. All these features provoked the Puritans. Therefore, they campaigned against these immoralities which had evil effects on public morals.

Jeremy Collier (1650-1726) was the first to criticise the immorality of Restoration stage. He was a clergyman of the Church of England and “In 1698 Jeremy Collier published his famous Puritan attack on the theatre, entitled *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage...*” (Hochman, 5: 539). The pamphlet was a direct attack on authors such as William Congreve, John Dryden, William Wycherley, John Vanbrugh and Thomas D’Urfey (Lessenich 276). For example, Jeremy Collier wrote about such immoralities, “Their Smuttness of Expression; Their Swearing, Profainness, and Lewd Application of Scripture; Their Abuse of the Clergy; Their making their Top Characters Libertines, and giving them Success in their Debauchery” (2; italics in orig.). Collier assumed that the purpose of drama was to teach morality and not to portray immorality, indecency and blasphemy on the British stage. He claims:

The business of plays is to recommend virtue and discountenance vice; to show the uncertainty of human greatness, the sudden turns of fate, and the unhappy conclusions of violence and injustice; ’tis to expose the singularities of pride and fancy, to make folly and falsehood contemptible, and to bring everything that is ill under infamy and neglect. This design has been oddly pursued by the English stage. (1)
As a reaction for this attack, many prominent dramatists of the Restoration period defended themselves and denied Collier’s accusation, assuming that if their plays were immoral, it was because the society was immoral. Allardyce Nicoll avers, “we condemn the society of the Restoration Court we need not thereby condemn the dramatists of that period . . .” (British Drama 251). In his turn, Leslie Stephen says, “The comedy, as it appears to us, must have been written by blackguards for blackguards” (55).

Congreve was extremely angry and responded by publishing Amendments of Mr. Collier’s False and Imperfect Citations (Summers, The Complete Works of William Congreve 171-206). Here, Congreve used examples from his own plays to refute Collier’s accusations. It was not only Congreve who denied the charge, but there were also Vanbrugh, John Dennis and Thomas D’Urfey who felt compelled to rebut. Vanbrugh devoted 79 pages to refuting Collier’s accusation. Vanbrugh’s A Short Vindication of The Relapse and The Provoked Wife from Immorality and Prophaneness is regarded as an assault on Collier.

It is worth mentioning that Behn wrote her plays before the publication of Collier’s pamphlet. In this regard, her plays are similar to the style and features of the Restoration comedy. They are filled with sexual innuendo and immoralities according to Puritans, and this is the main reason behind the violent attack on Behn and her plays.

At any rate, this part neither discusses morality and immorality in their broad meanings nor studies sexuality in the scenes, conversations and dialogues of Behn’s plays, but it provides an example of how Behn presents the Spanish male characters in The Rover, in particular, how they view marriage and sex.
The scenes of *The Rover* are set in Spain. Spanish female characters in the play pine for the freedom and yearn to exercise their rights. In fact, British women in the seventeenth century suffered in many ways, but Behn, the English female dramatist, has portrayed English women's sufferings in the shape of Spanish female characters. Instead of discussing and supporting openly the freedom of the English women, she chose Spain as the setting of her play *The Rover* which marks the barbarous treatment of the Spanish men towards women.

Behn's *The Rover* was written at the time when there was a trend of reaction to the social conservatism of the Puritans. In the period of interregnum, the norm of society obliged English women to be more conservative. This issue had been stated, for example, in *The Virgin Unmask'd*, a book published by Mandeville in 1709. *The Virgin Unmask’d* contains ten dialogues between a maiden aunt and her teenage niece. In their conversations, they discuss a diverse number of social issues and cover a wide variety of subjects especially the subjects that concern the women of the seventeenth century as marriage, love, etc. For instance, the aunt advises her niece, "Women, in strictness, should never appear in Publick but Veil’d; at least Young Women should never shew their Faces to any Men, but their nearest Relations" (Mandeville 3).

Behn depicts women's sufferings in *The Rover* in a way where they were forced to endure the maltreatment of individuals and cope with the negative customs of the society. Women were not allowed to marry their lovers. Worse than that, women were not allowed to go out and attend carnivals, but Behn infringed the norm by inviting women to cover their faces and then attend the carnival. By this, Behn indirectly exposed the negative claims of the English Puritans in which women had to cover their faces. In
truth, the roles, behaviours, cultural debate and status of Spanish women in *The Rover* suggest the same as in English society. It is worthwhile to note that intrigue drama portrayed most of the elements of the Spanish drama even if issues were not available in English society. For example, Behn discusses in her play the beating and unjust confinement of Spanish virtuous women and this issue rarely happened in Restoration period especially under the reign of Charles II. Here, Behn did not necessarily intend to comment on English society. Behn deliberately intended to discuss and expose the immoralities and negative behaviours of the Spanish male characters. Allardyce Nicoll avers that Behn “. . . has, moreover, on many occasions introduced thoughts and ideas which not only display her unconventional and modern attitude towards life’s relations, but also formed the basis for not a few moralizations in the sentimental eighteenth century to come” (*A History of Restoration Drama* 209).

In *The Rover*, Behn tries to expose the sordid immorality of Spaniards especially their irresponsible behaviours towards women. According to Behn, all the actions and behaviours of the two Spanish friends Pedro and Antonio are extraneous to the content of moral claims. They are only interested in their narrow aims, their personal interests and their pleasures and desires. She believes that these two men behave immorally towards women. Pedro does not allow his sisters to choose their mates and stands as a stumbling block in the way of their marriage. He arrogantly dominates them, so he wants to marry his sister Florinda to his friend although she does not love him. Meanwhile, he refuses to let her marry her lover Belvile. He also refuses to let Hellena marry Willmore. His refusal is because Belvile and Willmore are poor Englishmen. At the end, Pedro blesses
Florinda’s marriage to Belvile. He also reluctantly approves Hellen’s marriage to Willmore fearing for her virginity.

Further, Pedro is a lustful character. He uses his wealth for illegal activities. He spends more money for gaining a prostitute. Pedro and his friend Antonio go to Angellica while being masked, but Antonio exposes himself when he reveals his intention to sleep with Angellica and then marry Florinda. At the mention of Florinda’s name, Pedro recognises Antonio.

Antonio is rich as Pedro, so he gets the consent of Angellica to sleep with her before Pedro. Hence, they indulge in fighting and each one of them thinks that he is the most entitled person to get Angellica. However, they decide to fight a duel next day to choose the one who should be first. Immorally behaving, Pedro remains ready to marry his sister to Antonio despite the discovery. In contrast, the English cavaliers tease each other about winning Angellica, but they do not quarrel to get her as it happens between Pedro and Antonio. Pedro does not care for his sisters’ feelings and their reputations as he cares for his earthly desires. More worse is Pedro’s attempt to have sex with the confined woman in Blunt’s chamber without recognising that the confined woman is his sister.

To expose Spaniards in general and Pedro in particular, Behn makes Pedro confess about the rudeness of his people. He tells his English friends, “Sir, though I’m a stranger to you, I am ashamed at the rudeness of my nation . . .” (Rover:5.1.58-59). To emphasise the idea that Spaniards are impudent, Pedro and Antonio fight each other for trivial reasons while English men support each other even for frivolous claims. It is silly to see Pedro and Antonio fighting in order to get Angellica’s consent. Further, both friends Pedro and Antonio do not help each other when there is a fight between Spaniards
and Englishmen. English friends help each other and then win. For example, when Antonio and Willmore fight over Angellica’s picture, Englishmen help Willmore except Blunt who tarries for a while. Antonio’s men try to help him, but they are defeated. Their defeat is a sign of being cowardly.

Behn portrays Spaniards as perfidious. When they are being defeated in any fight, they may take the suitable opportunity to come back and take revenge. So, Behn appoints Belvile to expose them. Belvile asks his friend Willmore to leave Angellica’s house soon, “come, let’s begone whilst we’re safe, and remember these are Spaniards, a sort of people that know how to revenge an affront” (Rover.2.1.244-45). In contrast, Behn praises the English cavaliers. She projects the brighter side of the relationship between Willmore and Belvile. Belvile and Willmore quarrel with hands for the reason that Willmore harasses Florinda sexually. Despite the fact that Willmore infringes the friendship by harassing Florinda, Belvile forgets it and forgives him when he hears about the fight between Willmore and Antonio. Belvile quickly returns to help Willmore. In advance, Willmore stabs Antonio and escapes and Belvile is held responsible for the attack. This incident indicates that Belvile sacrifices himself for the sake of saving his friend Willmore.

Belvile is taken hostage by Antonio’s escorts. Antonio takes advantage of his wound to appoint Belvile to take his part to fight against Pedro. He tells Belvile, “Sir, I shall rob you of the glory on’t. / For you must fight under my name and dress” (Rover.4.1.72-73). His demand to Belvile to take his role proves the opposite that he is not a man of glory and morality as he assumed. If he were a man of glory, he would fight himself. In fact, he is a coward though he always boasts before others that he is the son of the viceroy.
Antonio’s morality is questioned for the reason that he does not fight himself and the reason behind his fight is trivial. On the other hand, Pedro decides to fight Antonio not to defend the honour of his sister Florinda but for the priority of winning Angellica. This is clear when he is about to fight Belvile, believing him to be Antonio. He avers, “You’ve the advantage of me in Angellica” (*Rover*.4.2.29). Belvile is surprised to hear him speaking about Angellica and not about Florinda. He believes that they are going to fight for the honour of Florinda. So, he talks to himself, “Angellica! Or I’ve mistook my man or else Antonio. / Can he forget his interest in Florinda, /And Fight for common prize?” (*Rover*.4.2.30-32). Belvile’s wonder becomes an indication that both Pedro and Antonio are without any moral values.

Pedro is knocked off by Belvile. Thus, Pedro invites him to marry his sister, believing him to be Antonio, “You’ve redeemed my sister, and my friendship” (*Rover*.4.2.54). To attack Pedro more, Behn makes his role unbearable especially when he refuses to marry Florinda to the honest and true lover Belvile at the time of discovering that the fighter is not Antonio but Belvile. It is unacceptable to alter his decision to marry the victor after he has made a promise. Regardless, Belvile is a brave English colonel, that is why he openly challenges Pedro and insists on marrying Florinda, “she’s mine by conquest . . . I won her by my sword” (*Rover*.4.2.93-94). An act of fidelity, on one side, he insists on getting his right of marrying Florinda because he wins her by triumph. On the other side, he seeks the approval of Pedro to let him marry Florinda, he implores him, “You know I ought to claim a victor’s right. But you’re the brother to divine Florinda’s, To who I’m such a slave -- To purchase her, I durst not hurt the man she holds so dear” (*Rover*.4.2.101-04). This expression reveals Belvile’s noble
character. Anita Pacheco clarifies that Belvile is an honourable cavalier in *The Rover*,
"However, if the play's first account of sexual violence establishes an important link
between rape and male aggression, it also introduces us, in the character of Belvile, to the
chivalric conception of manliness" ("Rape and the Female Subject" 326). Belvile's terms
of debate fall on deaf ears. So, there would be a question as why Pedro is ready to marry
Florinda to Antonio but not to Belvile? It is because of the immorality of Pedro.

Belvile's statement "she's mine by conquest... I won her by my sword" takes
our attention to another moral issue. There is no place for love. The woman under certain
influences would marry the man who wins her in the battle not the man who wins her
heart. Behn depicts what was really happening in the seventeenth century in which a
woman might like to marry a rich one, a warrior, a victor, or the one who won her by his
sword but not the man she loved.

As Behn exposes Pedro, she also exposes Blunt but in a different way. Blunt is
represented as a dull English rake while Pedro as a rich Spanish daredevil. The ill
behaviour of Pedro is an indication to all Spaniards while Blunt's misconduct is only
attributed to him. In other words, Pedro's cruel behaviour is a sign for the same
behaviours of Spaniards in the eyes of English people while Blunt's dull behaviour is a
sign of his suffering.

Ironically, Blunt, who is immoral, sneers at the Spaniards. It is ironic to see him
criticising the Spaniards at the time when he himself should be criticised. He describes
Spanish women as whores, and this is clear in his rude speech to Florinda when she calls
him 'cruel' at the time of trying to rape her, he derisively replies, "Cruel?... as a galley
slave, or a Spanish whore" (*Rover* 4.5.48). This sassy reply comes when Florinda
attempts to protect her chastity, so it is he who has to be ridiculed for his immoral acts. However, his heavy sarcasm about Florinda is because she is a Spaniard. Furthermore, Blunt mocks Spaniards in Lucetta’s house. Lucetta was a wife of an “old jealous husband” (*Rover*.3.2.2.). Blunt is happy to get the wife of a Spaniard. He boasts, “I’ll show her husband a Spanish trick; send him out of the world and marry her” (*Rover*.3.2.12-13). He feels that a Spaniard is not suited to be a husband for Lucetta, so he appoints himself instead. Blunt paves the way for mocking the Spaniards, and Lucetta helps him and puts the satire of the Spaniards into action by tricking and stealing Blunt’s money. Moreover, Blunt’s decision to “marry her” is intelligently imposed by Behn to tell the audience that the worst English man Blunt is the savior of Lucetta from her odious Spanish husband, but Lucetta does not appreciate the efforts of Blunt. She compensates his nice intention by tricking him. Therefore, Blunt murmurs, “a fine lady – like whore cheat me thus, without affording me a kindness for my money” (*Rover*.4.5.7-9). Thereupon, the audience takes impressions that the Spanish characters in the play are cruel and perfidious.

Sheridan and morality: Sheridan extensively discusses the theme of morality in his plays. For example, his play *The School for Scandal* is mainly devoted to discussing morality. Sheridan’s treatment of morality is different from that of Behn’s. She discusses immorality with reference to marriage and sex whereas Sheridan discusses morality of society including marriage and sexual seduction. In short, *The School for Scandal* is about the moral and immoral behaviours of the characters, but it does not delve deep into discussing sex.
As a reaction against Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage*, Sheridan had turned the comedy away from profaneness into a comedy filled with moral appeals. In his essay "The Second Dating of Sheridan," Bernard Shaw avers that the theme of *The School for Scandal* is about morality, "It is impossible to see "The School for Scandal" without beginning to moralize. I am going to moralize: let the reader skip if he will" (Shaw and Huneker 28). Sheridan revived the old comedy of manners and reaffirmed the middle class morality but without the immorality of the Restoration plays.

To talk about morality also means to discuss immoralities of some characters. In fact, *The School for Scandal* has two distinct groups of characters: those who are scandalmongers, hypocrites and liars and those who are not. In this regard, the play has clear moral characters like Charles, Maria, Sir Oliver, Rowley, Sir Peter Teazle and Lady Teazle. The play has also immoral characters like Lady Sneerwell and her group, and Joseph. However, Sir Peter condemns the behaviour of Lady Sneerwell and her scandalous group, but he praises Joseph. Lady Teazle also condemns the school at the end when she realises the motive of Joseph and his pretence of sentiment. In the play, immoral characters are punished and moral ones are rewarded. So, the message of the play is that the scandalmongers, hypocrites and liars who attempt to destroy the reputations of the moral characters are being exposed at the end and become immoral characters in the view of all.

Sheridan is of the view that theatre has to teach people morality by moral means. Theatre should not be only for entertainment, but it must also deal with all aspects of morality. This is what Sneer, a critic in *The Critic*, suggests, "... the theater, in proper
hands, might certainly be made the school of morality; but now, I am sorry to say it, people seem to go there principally for their entertainment!” (Critic.1.1.137). Gerald Newman reports:

The critical transition between moral styles had come in the seventies, when playwrights such as Goldsmith and Sheridan alternated uncertainly between the older, essentially aristocratic social ideal of witty and insouciant urbanity, and the new bourgeois code of sincerity – of ‘English’ purity, honesty, frankness, originality, independence. (206)

Sheridan basically concentrates on the morality of society which has played an important role in the rise of social awareness of what is good and bad, and right and wrong.

In ensuing section, the complementary relationship between scandal-mongering and hypocrisy has been discussed in the light of morality. The School for Scandal opens with an exposure of such negative behaviours in the society just like the behaviour of the slanderers. The exposure of characters starts from the very beginning of the play, so audiences have clear concepts about the bad and good characters. This exposure may be regarded as clumsy but Sheridan is able to render it in a seamless way as he builds up his scenes into a smoothly consecutive pattern. 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.

Consequently, the target of writing the play is mainly to satirise the scandal and gossip. Thomas Moore states the reason for writing this play, "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 satirise some of the gossips of Bath
appears from the title . . .” (210). Sheridan cannot stifle his anger towards the reprehensible act of the scandalmongers. One can know the entire content of the play from the title which is directed to parody and satirise scandal. The scandalmongers have nothing to do except defaming others’ reputations. They do not exclude even their relatives and close friends from their scandalous gossip. This is because they have deviated from the straightway and normal life. The paradox is that the scandalmongers rank their work as the fashion of time and consider themselves the ideal and sentimental people. So, Sheridan, from the beginning of the play to the end, has criticised their works very fully and with excellent appreciation.

The scandalous gossip is mainly focused on Charles and Maria; nonetheless, they 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 which are more likely to be rooted in their inner world.

Charles is profligate, awkward and careless, but Sheridan does not criticise these negative descriptions. They are not serious from his point of view. He has dedicated his play to exposing the scandal and hypocrisy which are more serious and dangerous. Sheridan tries to make Charles the idealist, but he fails since he make him prefer spending his time in vain as in playing cards, drinking and accompanying useless and careless friends. Thus, Charles’s miserable condition with his friends and their ways of talking and sitting prove that they are out of the normal life. Because of his carelessness, he has become bankrupt. In short, his presence in the play seems to be unimportant for he
is idle. Hence, Sheridan criticises the people who spent money profligately and then they become victims of usury. Similarly, Sheridan had lived in a miserable condition especially in his early life and his last days. As a student in Harrow, he had not enough money, thus his shabby dress and hair were examples of his misery and even his Irish accent set him apart from his classmates. So, Sheridan seems to depict himself as Charles, his ideal character. Sheridan is a boozer as Charles, but he becomes worse than Charles in his last days. Charles spends his money extravagantly and later has to sell all his possessions including even the pictures of the family.

One may argue that Charles does not care about his future because he knows well that he has a rich uncle; otherwise, he would take much care of his money. In addition, Charles’s work is unknown and he just appears as a man who is only waiting for his uncle to give him money. What is known about him is that he is in love with Maria though he does not defend his love with her against the onslaught of his brother and the slanderers.

In any case, Charles enjoys many remarkable advantages despite his extravagance and carelessness. Despite being bankrupt, he is still generous with his servants and all around him. Hence, Sir Oliver is amazed to find Charles’s servant behaving as a master and imitating the life-style of the lords. To observe the behaviour of Trip, it seems that his master lives in affluence. Sir Oliver wonders, “To judge by the servants, one wouldn’t believe the master was ruined” (Sch.3.2.228). However, Trip is also seeking money from Moses for he is also in financial difficulty like his master. He 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. Moore writes about Trip’s wit, “... 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). As a reaction to the conduct of Trip, Sir Oliver expresses this position
most concisely in 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” (Sch.3.2.230).
Whether the act of Trip is known by his master or not, Sir Oliver considers his behaviour
as a sort of chaos and indiscipline. In this regard, if Charles knows Trip’s behaviour, 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 behaviour, it means that he is unaware of
what is going on around him. In both cases, Sir Oliver is upset to see the miserable
condition of Charles, so he considers him “an unnatural rogue” (Sch.4.1.239). With all
this, Trip’s behaviour portrays Charles as a humble man and not a racist.

Furthermore, Sir Oliver observes the house in which Charles lives in as the same
house his dead brother used to live in. Charles, in fact, has purchased it from his elder
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. Joseph’s immorality and Charles’s morality can be seen in their reaction
towards the insolvent relative from the side of their mother – Stanley. Stanley is a
businessperson, but he has faced a financial downfall, so he is now in a serious need of
money. He seeks help from Joseph and Charles. Joseph has given him nothing except
false promise, but Charles has given him all possible financial help despite being in a
crucial financial deficit. Charles gives Stanley one hundred pounds although he is in need
of this amount of money to pay his debts. From this point, Rowley, the honest servant of
the family, advises Charles 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”
(Sch.4.1.243), but Charles does not listen since his generosity is a part of his personality.

The first characters to appear on 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 through Lady Sneerwell on the first session.
Thus, the audience has a premature impression about Joseph in spite of his insistence and
pretense that he is a respectable and moral man. In short, he considers himself “a man of
sentiment.”

Lady Sneerwell has done her best to spread scandal, therefore, she eagerly expects
its negative result to happen soon. 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 at the appropriate time. What is ironical is Lady Sneerwell’s opinion that
her work is a criticism in spite of the fact that it is invariably destructive to family
bonding and to the social life as a whole. However, Lady Sneerwell is praised for her
wicked act. For example, Mr. Snake flatters her and praises her skill which she uses to
spread a false story even if there is “. . . a little truth on their side” (Sch.1.1.192).
According to Snake, this is an advantage in favour of Lady Sneerwell.

The scandalmongers under the head of Lady Sneerwell intend to spread scandal
and gossip to harm others and destroy families. No one can ignore the fact that every
society of the world has its slanderers and scandalmongers, but the slanderers of the play are different since they have got a school to distort the reputation of the innocents.

In addition to the confirmation 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 against their friends and in their house. If they wait for a while, Sir Peter and his wife would 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 indicates. Mrs. Candour rudely challenges Sir Peter and threatens to defame his reputation as a reaction for pushing her out of his house, "we'll make the best report of you we can" (Sch.5.2.267). Therefore, their insistence to spread rumour denotes their desires to practise what they have learned.

In turn, Lady Teazle, a member in the group, gives a clear proof that the scandalmongers have got a scandal school where they learn and receive certificates. She addresses Lady Sneerwell at the end of the play, "... 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, begs leave to return the diploma they gave her" (Sch.5.3.275).

In fact, there is no school, but Sheridan metaphorically mentions the school to be able to satirise them strongly. Definitely, Sheridan has intended to give a lesson of the negative consequences of the rumour because he himself had suffered a lot during his life especially at the time of his marriage with Elizabeth Linley. Hence, there is a call in the play to punish the scandalmongers for what they have committed against innocent people. If they did not get punishment, the results would be destructive on society.
Nevertheless, these slanderers would not be punished by the court but by their own poisonous acts as Sir Peter assures, “their own venom would choke them!” (Sch.5.2.267).

Lady Sneerwell confesses of her bad work in the field of scandal, but she acquits herself from the habit of hypocrisy. Scandal is a part of her life and she is not shy of it. During her early life, Lady Sneerwell had suffered a lot from malicious rumour and backbiting and her married life was destroyed because of the scandal. As a matter of reaction, she is now revenging herself on all. She states, “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” (Sch.1.1.192). Her speech about her suffering is regarded as a way to justify her work, nonetheless, no one accepts her decision to revenge by spreading scandal since her victims are not responsible for her sufferings.

Charles has many enemies in spite of being kind and generous. Most notably, they are his brother Joseph and Lady Sneerwell. The real reason for Joseph’s enmity is that he wishes to marry Maria in order to get her property. Lady Sneerwell’s conspiracy against him is to defame his reputation in order to be able to marry him. Her fervent love for Charles can be seen in her repartee to Snake’s inquiry. Snake asks her about her interest to see Joseph succeed in winning Maria. She frankly replies, “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?” (Sch.1.1.193). Since she is old and no one wants to marry her, she has to snare Charles – the good-hearted character, and the shortest way to attract him is to keep Charles and Maria away from each other. To keep them away, Charles has to be financially ruined.
and his reputation has to be defamed. Also, Maria should marry Joseph. Then Charles would be easily attracted to Lady Sneerwell. Surely when Charles is hated by all, isolated by society and Maria has married someone else, he may agree to marry Lady Sneerwell. This is what Lady Sneerwell seeks to achieve. However, it is strange to love someone and try to destroy him at the same time. Her behaviour manifests itself as a form of sadism in which she has to torture her lover before marriage. It is also noted that she does not openly reveal her love for him, but she has done many strategies to get him though the strategies have been directed in wrong ways. Anyway, only genuine love surpasses at the end and all the false attempts prove a wild-goose chase.

To be able to marry Maria, Joseph tries with the help of Lady Sneerwell to destroy his brother financially and to destroy his reputation. Consequently, Lady Sneerwell has her goal and Joseph has his goal behind destroying Charles. Lady Sneerwell intelligently uses Joseph as a tool to fulfill her desire. 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” (Sch.1.1.193). Snake tells Lady Sneerwell that Sir Peter praises Joseph as “a man of sentiment,” but Lady Sneerwell knows well Joseph’s sentiment which is only used to con innocents and one of them is Sir Peter.

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. It is surprising 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. Joseph talks about his brother as if he is
his enemy. In fact, there is no real reason for 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. Maria is not that stupid person. 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 also 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 listen to 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” (Sch. 1.1.195). Joseph does not react, but Maria tactfully replies, “wit loses its respect with me when I see it in company with malice” (Sch. 1.1.195). Joseph is not infuriated about the talk of Lady Sneerwell and Benjamin although the talk concerns Maria and her honour. It seems he is only jealous of his brother.

Sir Benjamin in front of everybody pretends as if he does not like to publish his poems because his writings convey satires as he tells Lady Sneerwell. In fact, his poems are just nonsense and mere scandals. 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 of publishing his material by saying that they convey satires. In reality, satires are accepted and published, and only the great critics and professional authors are known for writing satires but not Benjamin who is nothing except a member in the scandalous group.
After praising Benjamin, Lady Sneerwell, Sir Benjamin, Crabtree, Candour shift their talk to slander Charles in the presence of his brother Joseph and Maria. Joseph neither stops them nor feels infuriated but pretends to defend his brother, “pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother” (Sch.1.1.201). He hypocritically utters this statement in order to satisfy Maria and to be a great man in her eyes, but Maria mocks his silly behaviour. However, he introduces himself as a true lover instead of his brother, but she rejects him and prefers Charles. Her repartee deafens him especially when she confidently points out, “I shall not feel more bound to give him up because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother” (Sch.2.2.216). Further, 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. Nevertheless, the reaction of Maria towards the onslaught of the scandalmongers against Charles is not enough. It is true that she sympathises with him but has done nothing serious to defend him. It may be due to the fact that Sheridan does not give her an opportunity to defend him.

Scandal and hypocrisy overspread at the time of Sheridan, and each one of these two shameful acts had received great censure and condemnation. Hence, Sheridan has vehemently criticised them. Hypocrisy can be seen in Joseph’s career and speech, yet he conceals his hypocrisy under the cloak of sentiment. Audience has an impression that Joseph gives sentiment its due to a high degree of absurdity. In contrast, some characters consider him sentimental while he is in fact opposite to what they say; his sentiment is only hypocrisy. In this regard, there are many instances which 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” (Sch.1.1.194). A few lines later when Snake wants to leave, he bids him an affectionate farewell, at the same time, he approaches Lady Sneerwell and warns her, “I am very sorry you have put any further confidence in that fellow” (Sch.1.1.195). When Lady Sneerwell asks him why, he replies, “… that fellow hasn’t virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy” (Sch.1.1.195). Joseph praises people in their presence but bombards them with backbiting as soon as they leave him. His hypocrisy does not have a limitation even with his brother. He apparently shows himself as a sympathiser for his brother’s financial fall, yet he is the one who wants to urge his ruin. He ironically comments, “I wish it was in my power to be of any essential service to him” (Sch.1.1.194), and in the same line, he states that Charles is fully responsible for his troubles, so he deserves to be ruined.

It is remarkable that Lady Sneerwell is the main one who has despised him from the beginning although they have helped each other. Lady Sneerwell is completely different from Sir Peter. She knows well Joseph’s personal opportunism, but she has to cooperate with him and to conceal her love for Charles at the same time. Unexpectedly, Joseph’s exposure in his library puts an end to Lady Sneerwell’s plan. His exposure leads to the reconciliation between Sir Peter and Charles which is not in the favour of Lady Sneerwell. Thus, she considers her cooperation with Joseph as fruitless. She curses herself, “I was a fool, and idiot, to league with such a blunderer!” (Sch.5.3.270). She names herself as a ‘fool’, and ‘idiot’ and these descriptive names are actually 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. Lady Sneerwell loses nothing except her dream of marrying Charles, but Joseph loses many things. He lost his brother's craving, Maria's wealth and was deprived of inheritance. In a nutshell, he is hated by all characters, so from the time of his exposure onwards no one stands by him. Joseph's loss is because of his hypocrisy which is regarded as no less than the job of scandalmongers.

Joseph has perhaps been wronged more than he should deserve. This great punishment and exclusion of society should be for Lady Sneerwell and her group. Unexpectedly, the play ends without presenting any concrete punishment against them. This is unjustifiable in the sense that Lady Sneerwell's work is a real disease in society and she is the main person who is targeted in the satire of Sheridan while Joseph's habit of hypocrisy does not harm others but defames his own personality. Nevertheless, no one can acquit Joseph from his other sins but the punishment is not expected to be in this severity.

To prove more that Joseph is wronged, it is important to analyse the time of the unexpected visit of his uncle to his house. Immediately after his exposure in his library, Sir Oliver as Stanley comes to borrow money from him in order to test him. To test him at this critical situation is considered unfair. The time of visit to Charles is different from the time of visit to Joseph. They paid the visit to Charles while he was in his ecstasy; he was singing, drinking and playing cards with his friends. So, there was no matter if there was a test at that time. However, Joseph is in his decay and this is clear in his objection for the visit, "Pshaw! Blockhead! To suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive
visits from poor relations!” (Sch.5.1.259). 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 Stanley” (Sch.5.1.258). 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” (Sch.5.1.258). So, how can Sir Oliver test Joseph while he is in unsuitable attitude? Thence, most of the audiences expect Joseph to refuse to lend money because he is in a bad temper. There is another interpretation of this allegory, since Charles is the ideal character of Sheridan, Sheridan wants him to succeed and Joseph to fail. Therefore, he puts the test episode of Joseph immediately after his exposure.

Moreover, there is another debate regarding the decision of Sir Oliver to give his whole property to the one who succeeds in the test. To give the entire property to only one of his nephews is regarded unjust in view of the audiences. Audiences expect Sir Oliver to divide his property equally between Charles and Joseph, yet he gives it only to the one who loves him more. This act presents Sir Oliver as a selfish character because he respects the one who satisfies his ego even if that one has committed many mistakes. His favouritism for Charles can best be understood in his debate with 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 games so deep.
OLIVER. But he wouldn't sell my Picture. (Sch.4.2.243-44)

Surface's family consists of three members – the two brothers Joseph and Charles and their uncle Sir Oliver. It is really immoral to see the two brothers in constant conflict. On the other hand, it is the summit of morality to see their uncle trying his best to support them. He has spent most of his life in India to collect money and then send it to them. This act is regarded to be moral because he is in fact not responsible for doing so. They are not his children, but his morality pushes him forwards to help them and then to give his entire property for the moral person.

At this juncture, it is also apt to study Sir Oliver who is never affected by emotion or by sweet words. So, he judges issues wisely and according to proofs. When he suspects something, he has to test it himself to prove it out. Although he had spent around sixteen years out of his country, he is able to recognise the poisonous work of the scandalous group as soon as he comes back to London. He knows well that the scandalous group is "a set of malicious, prating, prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time, and will rob a young fellow of his good name before he has years to know the value of it" (Sch.2.3.218). Hence, to be unprejudiced against anyone of his two nephews, he prepares a plan to test them. Before that, he intelligently directs a question to Sir Peter about the 'wild rogue' of his two nephews without naming anyone of them. By this question, he intends to know towards whom Sir Peter is biased. Sir Peter bursts out cursing Charles and praising Joseph as well as everybody praises him. In any case, Sir Peter's mind is crammed with wrong information about Charles. He accuses him of many immoral acts; meanwhile, he considers Joseph a man who "professes the noblest sentiment" (Sch.2.3.219). Sir Oliver is completely different from
Sir Peter. He uses his mind to judge such matters while Sir Peter uses his heart. Sir Oliver’s astuteness leads him to interpret the praise for Joseph and the swearword for Charles in a diametrically opposed way. He truly thinks if Charles is cursed by the scandalmongers and Joseph is praised by them, there is doubt and that means the reality is in the opposite. Meanwhile, he recounts the days of his youth. He does not turn a blind eye to his past when he was as old as Charles. Morally behaving, he does not like to believe either Rowley who stands with Charles or Sir Peter who is on the side of Joseph. Thus, he prefers to do a practical test. He wisely decides, “before I form my judgment of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts” (Sch.2.3.219). Sir Oliver is humble enough to seek counsel even from the servant Rowley because he wants to build his decision upon a thought-out plan.

Sir Oliver is actually a man of honour since he is not a broker as Charles thinks. When he and Moses meet Charles, Moses introduces him, “this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honour and secrecy – and always performs what he undertakes” (Sch.3.3.233). Sir Oliver also mocks the false honour – the honour of speaking. For example, when Sir Oliver, Moses and Charles are bargaining about the prices of pictures, Charles raises a picture of two brothers and considers it valuable because the two brothers were in parliament. So, it is funny to see Charles speaking about the value of honour at the time of selling it. Sir Oliver ironically says, “That is very extraordinary, indeed! I’ll take them at your own price, for the honour of Parliament” (Sch.4.1.240).

From this, one can say that Sir Oliver does not wrong any of his two nephews in the matter of test. Sir Oliver is a man of experience. He does not appreciate a person for his appearance but for his morality. Therefore, he tests his nephews in order to
differentiate between good and bad, positive and negative, and appearance and reality. He cannot test them in his real personality. Yet, he is able to test both when he has changed his appearance. To test Charles, he pretends to be a broker, Mr. Premium. To test Joseph, he pretends to be Mr. Stanley, the needy relative of the brothers. In this period of time, the brothers expect the arrival of their uncle Sir Oliver. Nevertheless, they meet Mr. Premium according to Charles and Mr. Stanley according to Joseph. In short, they misinterpret Sir Oliver’s real personality. Therefore, both of them try to push him out lest their uncle knows their misbehaviour. They do not realise that they try to expel their uncle. Hence, the reality of Sir Oliver is disclosed by the appearing of Sir Peter, Teazle and Rowley. The two brothers cannot identify their uncle before this time since he disguised his identity in order to achieve the test. But when they recognise him, reality and his real character fall upon them like a thunderbolt.

To be fair, Sir Oliver is unbiased and both tests are of approximately equal merit. He visits his two nephews without considering their suitable time. His main concern is to test them so that he can judge who deserves 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. To sum up, Joseph is the one who puts himself in a critical situation. So, he deserves what has happened for him. In contrast, Charles is a victim of conspiracies and his bankruptcy is justified for his benevolence. Consequently, Sir Oliver prefers Charles for his benevolence and gratitude.

Moreover, Sir Oliver notices Charles’s goodness and his true love for him especially when he refused to sell his picture. Sir Oliver insists on buying his picture and offers Charles the same price for 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" (Sch.4.1.241). This act holds the heart of Sir Oliver, so he aside praises him, "The rogue's
my nephew after all!" (Sch.4.1.241). Then he adds, "I forgive him for everything!" (Sch.4.1.241). Sir Oliver also clarifies Charles's frank personality, "you are an honest
fellow, Charles" (Sch.4.1.241). Stuart M. Tave clarifies that Sir Oliver does not give his
property to Charles as a reward for his refusal to sell the picture but because Joseph does
not deserve it for his misdeeds, "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).

Moreover, Sir Oliver has the right to give his property to the desired and
deserving person. It is his wealth, so he can give it to whom he prefers. At least, this is
acceptable from the viewpoint of Sheridan. In truth, Sir Oliver intended to divide his
wealth equally between the two brothers, but he has changed his decision at the time of
discovering the real personality of Joseph. Sir Oliver complains of Joseph to Sir Peter and
Rowley:

> You know what he has already received from my bounty; and you know
> also how 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. (Sch.5.3.273)

Even Sir Peter who is regarded as Joseph's main supporter has changed his mind about
him. He confirms the validity of Sir Oliver's speech and avers that he himself "... found
him selfish, treacherous, and hypocritical" (Sch.5.3.273).
Joseph does not react against his uncle's decision of depriving him of the inheritance. He only tries to use his hypocritical words 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. However, he tries to do the last conspiracy against his brother. He, Lady Sneerwell and Snake have fabricated a false story that “Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honour” to Lady Sneerwell (Sch.5.3.270-71). Joseph is regarded by many as stupid for he does not care for himself but gives all his efforts to support Lady Sneerwell, his real enemy. Nevertheless, this fabrication is disclosed at the appropriate time. Rowley, the man of morality, has done his best to defend Charles and to justify and find excuses for his lavishness. As he shares in putting the plan of test, he also discloses this fabrication against Charles 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. At the end of the play, however, reality succeeds at its goal and appearance disappears.

The theme of reality and appearance is very noticeable in The School for Scandal. The contrast between reality and appearance can be understood through the behaviour of a character, how he wants to appear and what he intends to do. Reality and appearance are running simultaneously in the play in the sense that some 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 as a person. Before others, he sympathises with his brother while in reality he tries his best to destroy
him. Thus, most of the characters are cheated by his appearance and one of them is Sir Peter. Sir Peter admires him and disregards Charles. If he props their real action instead of their appearance, surely he may 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 praises him while, in reality, she despises him. Paradoxically, the more Lady Sneerwell loves Charles, the more she likes to ruin him. Further, Joseph, Lady Sneerwell and her group delude others that they are straight and respectable characters, but in fact, their hidden works convey evil influences. Charles is also surrounded by scandalous gossip and 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, but she realises his well-natured character in Joseph's library. However, Sir Oliver and Rowley are the only characters who do not deceive or are being deceived by appearances. Sir Oliver wants to judge his nephews himself. He listens neither to Rowley's praise for Charles nor to Sir Peter's admiration for Joseph, but 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 reveals his real identity, he may get different behaviours from the brothers, and the result will be in the favour of Joseph because he is a professional 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.
It concludes from the discussion that morality is invariably linked with honour, hence the next section makes a foray into that area.

HONOUR

Honour springs out from the soul, spirit and morality of a person. Honour is a kind of dignity, integrity, honesty, virility, courage and generosity which elevates men and women to the rank of appreciation, esteem and reverence. However, “Honor is a term not easily defined and one more easily misunderstood than understood in our urban, industrialized, atomistic society” (Wagoner 157).

Nowadays, there is no difference between the honour of a man and a woman, yet honour was mostly linked to men in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries especially when men were in the battlefield. In that time, women were accused of dishonour for a simple mistake that they had committed. Thus, many plays had dealt with the issue of honour. Erika Fischer-Lichte writes about the dramatic characters in the plays of the seventeenth century:

The dramatic characters . . . in the seventeenth century are saints and sinners, gentlemen of honour and tricksters, with personalities which are constant or cunning, always ready to defend their honour, to lie, to deceive, even to kill for it; eager to bear public witness to their religious belief, to fight for it and, if necessary, to suffer and die for it. (96)

In this regard, the six plays under study have discussed honour which is related to men or women. Honour of a man can be traced in his moral conduct and in his insistence on getting his lover. A woman’s honour lies in her loyalty to her lover or husband, in her obedience to her parents and in her respect to the norms of the society. Many people
agree that the honour of a woman can be seen in her marriage. Edmund Paley avers, "Marriage is honourable, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (107). It is noticed that women like to satisfy their sexual desires as men, but they think too much about their honour. It is also noticed that the dishonourable women in the plays are frauds, thieves or sensualists while the women who preserve their honour are surely noble and respectable women.

The aspect of honour has gone through many changes over the centuries. People in the past gave much consideration to the value of honour. To be an honourable man means also to fight a duel to death. With the progress of civilization, many people started to overlook its value and regarded it as an old-fashioned remnant.

Besides this, duelling for the sake of honor was popular in Europe after the famous challenge between Charles V, King of Spain and Francis I, King of France. There was a treaty between the two countries, but Francis annulled the treaty by declaring war on Spain in 1528. The Spanish King Charles V accused Francis of rude behaviour. Hence, the Spanish King challenged Francis to a duel. Francis accepted the challenge, but the duel never happened since making arrangements was too difficult. This incident influenced the manners of Europeans, so rivals and foes were ready to duel to death but never lose honour. They believed that it would be better to die with honour than to live with shame. Francis Markham says, "It [honour] is so near a neighbor unto man's life, that he is ever a counted cruel to himself, that is careless of his Reputation... for dishonour is more to be feared than death, and Honour more to be desired than life" (1).

Duels for the sake of honour spread in France. Therefore, Charles IX issued an ordinance in 1566 to punish to death the one who would participate in a duel. Nevertheless, the idea of duel continued in different parts of Europe until the eighteenth century. Duel for the sake of honour was intensely popular in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries especially in Restoration period after the English Civil War. The practice of duel stopped in the reign of Queen Victoria (1819 – 1901). In this regard, many English plays of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mainly focused on the honour that was concerned with love and marriage. C. L. Barber avers that there were more than two hundred plays written between 1591 and 1700 referring to honour in England (48-51). In general, honour had become an essential part of the personality especially in the early modern England. J. A. Sharpe states that “...the social attitudes current in early modern England...” towards the “...considerations of honour, good name, and reputation were of central importance to that society” (1).

Most often, honour was valued in the loyalty for the king as it was widespread among cavaliers and royalists who supported the Stuart monarchy in the seventeenth century. When a cavalier was willing to risk his life for the sake of the king, it was regarded as an honour. Loyalty to a friend was also a way of honour. Abel Boyer points out, “...the Rules of Friendship are so very nice, that where many pretend, few are able to perform ’em. A true Friend’s Motto is, that he would sooner suffer for our Honour, than be reliev’d by our Fault” (129; italics in orig.). However, a friend must not think to love or marry his friend’s lover; otherwise, they would turn into enemies. For example, Philander and Alcippus in The Forced Marriage were close friends, but when Alcippus marries Philander’s fiancée, they become enemies. Every one of them thinks much about
honour and shame. Philander attempts to get back his fiancée unless it is considered a shame. In contrast, Alcippus attempts to keep his wife and if he cannot do it, it will also be dishonourable. Colin Richmond claims, “Men of honour could (and did) lie, cheat, deceive, plot, treason, seduce, and commit adultery, without incurring dishonour” (199), but they are not allowed to violate the sanctity of their marriage. Diane Jacobs-Malina also states, “Honor is the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes plus the positive appreciation of that person in the eyes of his or her social group” (25–26).

In fact, the theme of honour is a broad subject and covers many stages of a person’s life. It can be seen in power, richness, manhood, loyalty, sexual reputation, love, marriage, etc. This part does not cover a broad range of subjects related to honour, but it discusses honour which corresponds roughly to love and marriage through analysing some texts from the plays *The Forced Marriage*, *Abdelazer* and *The Rivals*. It is worth mentioning that the plays under study focus on honour that serves love and then leads to marriage. For example, in *The Forced Marriage* and *The Rivals*, Philander and Absolute try their best to marry their partner, but when they are about to fail, they decide to fight a duel in order to preserve their honour.

Honour is sometimes a double-edged sword. In *The Forced Marriage*, the three main characters Alcippus, Philander and Erminia confront each other for the reason of honour. Every one of them feels that he/she is doing the right action. Alcippus has a prominent position in which he is a commander of “twenty thousand fighting men,” so he proudly boasts of his “Honour” (*F.M.1.1.3*). The King promotes him to be the General of the Army. By this promotion, he gets new honour. Therefore, he feels absolutely confident to betroth Erminia, the daughter of the former General. If he has remained an
ordinary officer like others, he may not have dared to ask the hand of Erminia. To clarify more, since his honour is not equal to the honour of the King, he does not think to betroth Gallatea, the King's daughter, although she is fond of him. When he knows that Gallatea insists on marrying him, he changes his mind towards his wife Erminia and starts thinking of Gallatea as a wife.

Alcippus and Philander are colleagues and friends, but Philander feels humiliated to see the woman he loves marrying Alcippus. So, he decides to defend his honour with his sword. Philander is known for his bravery as Alcippus and both are well-known warriors. Philander respects his father and subserviently obeys him, yet he disapproves his decision to let Alcippus marry Erminia. He talks about his father in a challenged tone, "though he were my God as well as King, / I would instruct thee how to disobey him" (F.M.1.4.29). Then, he threatens to take revenge against Alcippus, "Justice and Honour on my Sword shall sit, / And my Revenge shall guide the lucky hit" (F.M.2.1.32). What is important here is his insistence to get Erminia back whatever the sacrifices it may entail. He feels that where Erminia is, his honour will ever be. In fact, he has incomparable privileges and would be the King soon, but they would be nothing without Erminia. At the same time, he will lose nothing if Alcippus has got the position of the General, but he believes he loses his honour and lover when Alcippus takes Erminia. Therefore, he threatens to kill him at the time of marrying Erminia while he supported him at the time of promotion. If Philander feels that the new position of Alcippus is his own; surely, he will not allow him to get it. To clarify more, suppose if Philander heard a rumour that Alcippus dreams to get the throne; of course, Philander's behaviour would be different from his behaviour in the case of promotion.
In turn, Alcippus feels his honour has been distorted because his wife Erminia loves Philander. He becomes sure of her love for Philander at the time when she refuses to share with him the bed. He, in many ways, tries to convince her to forget Philander; when he fails, he consults Pisaro. Pisaro advises him to marry Gallatea and to leave Erminia. Alcippus is convinced of Pisaro’s suggestion since he will get more honour by marrying Gallatea, the daughter of the King, yet he still loves Erminia. He tells Pisaro, “I have a kind of war within my soul, / My Love against my Glory and my Honour” (F.M.3.1.71).

The two rivals Philander and Alcippus are fighting each other for the honour of Erminia. So, Erminia would have her own interpretation for what is going on. In fact, she tries in many ways to convince her father of the legality of her request to marry her lover Philander, the one who will add to “our Honour . . . too great a weight” (F.M.1.3.28) instead of marrying the man she does not love. Unfortunately, her father does not listen to her. He insists that she must marry Alcippus since the King gave his consent. Angeline Goreau claims that Erminia is “. . . blackmailed by their [her father and Philander’s father] contention that their honor depends on hers” (Reconstructing Aphra 127).

Indeed, Erminia is a fulcrum between the two friends her husband Alcippus and her lover Philander. She loves Philander, but she is obliged to marry Alcippus. As an honourable act, when she hears that her husband and her lover confront each other, she screams, “I die if those two Rivals have encounter’d” (F.M.2.7.61). She does not like anyone of them to be harmed. Philander is astonished to hear her speaking eagerly about Alcippus in spite of their mutual love. She wisely assures him that she loves him too, but she feels it is her duty to ask about her husband at this time, “Sir, ’tis but just you should
excuse my fear, / Alcippus is my husband, and his safetie / Ought to become my care” (F.M.2.7.62). Then she mollifies Philander and calms his anger by telling him that she keeps her vows to him as well. Because she is a woman of honour, she is able to do her marital duty towards her husband in a proper way. Also, she remains loyal to Philander by keeping her virginity. It is worth mentioning that many women and men may run to satisfy their sexual desires out of their wedlock. Erminia does not allow even her husband to have an affair with her since she is in emotional attachment with Philander.

In brief, Erminia is torn between love and honour, between her love for Philander and her duty to her husband and father. She wants to behave according to the honourable codes of her society, but she is passionately in love with Philander. Her love with Philander clashes with the norms of the society where the girl is not allowed to disobey her father and refuse the order of the King. To keep her honour with the society means to lose her lover and to remain an obedient wife to a husband whom she does not love which is just like an execution. However, she is able to maintain her honour and love at the same time.

In contrast, Philander himself is in a similar condition. He feels torn between duty and love and between honour and subservience. His duties towards his father the King, the General Alcippus and the society are in conflict with his love for Erminia. People also hold him in contempt for seeking a married woman. Yet, he cannot leave Erminia because they are in love like twin flames as he complains to Alecander, “Our Souls then met, and so grew up together, Like sympathizing Twins” (F.M.1.4.29). Moreover, he feels as if he is betrayed and dishonoured by the act of Alcippus. Nevertheless, Erminia and Philander choose love instead of duty. Since they preserve their honour, they get
consent and respect of all. So, they can be regarded as victors in the field of love and honour. At the end of the play, honour and love, and duty and desire are reconciled and harmony is therefore restored.

In short, *The Forced Marriage* is a kind of conflict of honourable will between Erminia’s supposed husband Alcippus and her future husband Philander. Their conflict cannot be resolved easily since Erminia felt divided in loyalty between two men. Behn is able to adjust the play in the proper time to be in favour of the desired men and women. Therefore, she makes Erminia take up her role to resolve the matter. Behn believes that honour can be judged through good behaviour and morality of a person and not through gender. Therefore, all women in *The Forced Marriage* are presented as honourable characters even if they differ in judging and assessing what is going on around them. In contrast, Behn attacks in *Abdelazer* the honour of the lustful Queen and her wicked lover Abdelazer who both claim honour while they work against it by committing many crimes. The Queen and Abdelazer have different interpretations of honour. Thus, honour is lost between their lustful desires and their evil whims. Meanwhile, she praises the honour of the Christians who flock together against Abdelazer including the Queen’s children Philip and Leonora; Philip for his courage in the battlefield and Leonora for her resistance towards Abdelazer when he attempts to rape her.

According to Behn, honour is how to protest against injustice and it is not just a slogan. Some of Behn’s female characters are prostitutes; however, they do not give up their honour. For example, Angellica in *The Rover* feels proud of her honour. She sees her honour as Willmore’s honour. Therefore, she requests him to marry her. Angellica’s work as a prostitute is necessary to get food. Therefore, Behn praises her in many ways
and considers her a woman of honour. When a woman gives up something important for something trivial, it means that she loses her honour even if she is from a royal family. The best example of this sort of women is Queen Isabella. Queen Isabella imposes her love on Abdelazer. Then she reminds him that she sacrifices her honour in order to get his love. In fact, she loses both her honour and Abdelazer’s love. It is known that Abdelazer does not love her, but he only uses her as instrument to achieve his goals. Further, her love for him is illegal and immoral since she is a married woman with three children. She does not care about losing her husband, children, country and honour as she cares about Abdelazer. For her heinous lust, Philip charges her of committing treason. Therefore, he abhors himself to be a son of her and detests the motherhood in general. Then he strongly chides her and recounts some of her crimes as she gave up her ‘self,’ ‘honour’ and ‘vows’ in order to “wanton in yon Sooty Leacher’s arms” (Abd.1.2.8). She reproaches him for dishonouring her. Philip keenly replies that it is not he who dishonours her, it is “That Dog you mean, that has dishonour’d you, / Dishonour’d me, these Lords, nay and all Spain; / This Devil’s he, that” (Abd.1.2.8). However, she treats her son Philip as an enemy and not as a son. She, for example, weeps in front of Abdelazer and instigates him to revenge on Philip for the reason that “With one bold word he has undone my Honour” (Abd.4.1.47). The truth can be told, her honour is ruined by herself for committing unforgivable crimes, so there is no need to preserve her already lost honour.

To sense the importance of honour in the field of battle means to get victory over enemies. Philip is about to be defeated, so some of his honest officers advise him to withdraw his remaining army and to save his life, but he refuses to listen to them. Instead,
he rushes to fight and to spur his army to die “a glorious death” for the sake of defending Spain (AbdA.4.1.49). As a result, he is about to win the battle. At this moment, Abdelazer rushes to the Queen to seek help. The Queen finds it an appropriate time to get rid of her son Philip who always defames her honour.

Abdelazer, the enemy of the Spanish royal family, is intelligent enough to evoke the honour of Queen Isabella and incite her against her son Philip. He convinces her to use her magnetism to bring Mendozo and his army from Philip's side to his side. The Queen cannot order Mendozo to leave the army of her son and to support Abdelazer in spite of her status as a queen, but she seduces him by the way of rendering herself as a wife and the kingdom as a gift. Her way in convincing Mendozo is absolutely dishonourable. She requests him, “Shall you preserve the only man I hate, / And hate with so much reason? let him fall / A Victim to an injur'd Mothers Honour” (AbdA.4.1.44) Mendozo still waits for a convincing reason to meet her request.

It is worth mentioning that Mendozo was in love with the Queen, but she neglected him when she loved Abdelazer. Thus, Mendozo grumbled about her willful neglect and felt as if his honour was being hurt. The Queen did not give him any consideration at that time, but she is now in need of his help. Mendozo is still fond of the Queen. So, he is unable to resist the Queen's coquetry and temptation. He believes that it is an opportunity to regain her love and to preserve his honour at the same time by standing against the bastard Philip and by implementing the orders of the Queen. Indeed, he leaves his dear friend Prince Philip and ignores his duty as the Cardinal when he hears that Philip is a bastard. He states:

Whilst I behold him as my Native Prince,
My Honour and Religion bids me serve him;
Yet not when I'm convinc'd that whilst I do so,
I injure Spain. *(Abd.4.1.47)*

He has obediently achieved the demands of the Queen for the reason that he believes he preserves his honour by fulfilling the Queen's wish. He asserts his view about his blind obedience to the Queen, "My Honour ever taught me to obey" *(Abd.4.1.48)*. Further, it is an opportunity to prove his love for her. He tells her and Abdelazer, "Though Love and Honour I have always made / The business of my life" *(Abd.4.1.48)*.

Philip is actually affected by the treason of Mendozo; therefore, he decides to flee to Portugal to seek help. Under the suggestion of Mendozo who is now on Abdelazer's side, he and Abdelazer raise the slogan of peace. Because Philip is a man of honour, he agrees. They have caught him in an ambush. Surely, if Abdelazer and Mendozo did not surprise Philip, Philip would seek help from Portugal and launch new military attacks.

Mendozo charges Philip of treason because his ears are poisoned by the Queen and Abdelazer. He feels that Philip is ineligible to get the throne of Spain. So, he reproves him at the time of capturing him, "Traytor, and Bastard, I arrest thee of High Treason" *(Abd.4.1.50)*. Mendozo believes that he is doing his duty by capturing the traitor on the one side and by helping the Queen and Abdelazer on the other side. He does not realise the fact that it is he who commits treason by withdrawing his army and putting it in the side of the real enemy of the legitimate heir of the kingdom. By this treason, Philip is only captured. If Mendozo stands with Philip and does not commit treason, Philip will win the battle and then get rid of Abdelazer.
After capturing Philip, Abdelazer incites the Queen to say that the father of Philip is Mendozo. This plan suits Queen Isabella who promises Mendozo to marry him after capturing or killing her son. When the attendees persist to hear her revelation about the real father of Philip, she pretends to abandon her honour for the sake of the reality:

That I might hide the blushes on my Cheeks;
But when your safety comes into dispute,
My Honour, nor my Life, must come in competition.
I'll therefore hide my eyes, and blushing own. (*Abd.5.1.52*)

In fact, her speech is a proof that she is really a woman without honour for the reason that this story is also false.

At any rate, she accuses Mendozo of having sex with her; hence, he is the real father of Philip. Mendozo denies her allegations, but it is useless at this time. Mendozo becomes sure that he is a victim of the Queen’s wicked plot, so he admonishes himself of being stupid to believe such a woman like the Queen. He regrets that the honour he seeks is no longer available. At this time, he realises the guile of women. However, he has nothing to do except rebuking her for not carrying out her promise.

By titillating the value of honour, Abdelazer gets rid of Philip and Mendozo by one stroke and then he wins Spanish sympathy and support. When the Queen assumes that her son Philip is a bastard, she defames both her son’s honour and her honour. So, Spaniards are about to choose Abdelazer as a new King instead of the illegitimate Philip.

In truth, Mendozo does not deliberately commit treason. He is only deceived by the sweet words of the Queen, so he becomes a victim like the rest of the royal family. Treason has often been discussed in tragedies more than in comedies. Treason can be
mostly seen in betraying the state affairs into the hands of a foreign power. To help the enemies is regarded as the greatest treason. Treason may happen within the family and among friends. Philip is defeated because of treason, and Abdelazer is also murdered at the end because of treason. In fact, no one can expect the play to end in favour of Philip and his people since they are in prison, and the kingdom goes to Abdelazer who is really the De facto ruler. Abdelazer is able to defeat his enemies one after another though they are powerful and are in their country. Unexpectedly, he has lost everything at once and without fight and it is because of the treason of Osmin who released Abdelazer's enemies – the prisoners Philip, Mendozo and Alonzo.

From the point of dishonour, Abdelazer is regarded by the Spaniards as a slave and not as a son of a king. According to him, he is equal to the sons of the Spanish King. So, he has the freedom to do whatever he likes and to enjoy his life as it suits the sons of the king. No one can ignore the fact that he has a respectable position in the army of Spain, but if his father remained the King, he would get considerably more importance than his present position because he would be on the top of the royal pyramid.

On the other hand, Abdelazer considers his Moorish friends slaves. He uses the word “slave” many times either to curse his friends or to degrade them without paying attention to the reality that many Spanish people also call him a slave. Therefore, it is unreasonable to hear him talking about slavery while he is a slave in the eyes of others. Indeed, Abdelazer does not appreciate the honour of his friends although they are from the same country, they are officers in his army and, in short, they are his main supporters. Since Abdelazer considers only his honour and does not give any consideration to others' honour, his friend Osmin conspires against him at the end.
As Abdelazer underestimates the honour of his friends, Philip and the other Spanish lords disdain Abdelazer. They consider him a slave and often degrade him in front of others. Moreover, Philip gets very angry when he knows that his mother engages in a sexual relation with the black Moor, Abdelazer. The black person is a symbol for slavery in Behn’s time. Gallagher in her article “Oroonoko’s Blackness” notes that “… the word ‘black’ distinguishes the bodies of people who can be bought and sold from those of people who cannot” (245). In Abdelazer, the word ‘black’ does not necessarily denote slavery in the proper sense of the term, yet in many plays of Behn’s day, it is a derogatory adjective that is often put before the word ‘Moor’ as an indication to Moorish Muslims.

It is simply unreasonable to classify people according to their skin colours. It is illogical to consider the one who has a black skin to be inhuman. However, all nations are humans, they bleed the same, hurt the same and feel the same. In Behn’s time, England was primarily a white-based system, so it did not allow many blacks to fit in higher-ranking positions. It was because the society’s view towards blacks had been shaped according to the rulers’ inclinations.

In this regard, Philip may forgive his mother if she has a relation with one of the Spanish lords, for example, with Mendozo, the Cardinal. Indeed, the Queen has an illicit relationship with Mendozo, but Philip does not even mention it. Quite the opposite, Philip cannot believe that his mother is fond of Abdelazer. He reproaches her, “But as you have abus’d my Royal Father, / For such a sin the basest of your Slaves” (Abd.1.2.8). It is because he considers Abdelazer, “Poor angry Slave” (Abd.5.1.70). Mendozo later considers all Moors slaves whose only task is to die in the service of their master, “And
those all Moors, the Slaves of Abdelazer" (Abd.2.2.24). One can understand what Spanish Lords want to say by repeating the derogatory word ‘slave.’ They mean that all Moors are slaves to Abdelazer and since Abdelazer is a slave, he and all his people are slaves to Spaniards. Thus, Philip’s revenge becomes two-fold for the reason that his enemy is a slave. According to Spaniards, it is unacceptable to see the slave dare to face a noble man! In one of his threats, Philip declares that, “I’le wear my Sword to th’ Hilt, but I will find / The subject of my Vengeance. / Moor, ’tis for thee I seek, where art thou Slave?” (Abd.4.1.45).

Behn does not emphasise the blackness of the Moor as a sign for his crimes. She presents Abdelazer as vengeful not because of his blackness but because he wants to revenge against the killer of his father. Derek Hughes notes:

> Behn seems to have been actively uninterested in using the nascent racism of her time. As noted, Lust’s Dominion, the source of Abdelazer, is dominated by explicit contempt for the black African. Behn omits this to the point of removing not only the polarity between Negro and white but even the words themselves. (Versions of Blackness xxii)

Abdelazer refuses to remain forever a slave to Philip and his people. He believes that he and Philip are sons of Kings in spite of their different complexions. He states, “Although my skin be black, within my veins / Runs blood as red, and Royal as the best” (Abd.1.1.5). After the murder of Ferdinand, Abdelazer openly tells Alonzo and the other lords that he would not remain a slave, “And can you think, that after all my Toy’s / I wou’d be still a Slave! to Bastard Philip too!” (Abd.3.3.38).
Abdelazer has his own interpretation of honour. He evaluates honour from the point which serves his narrow interest. At the beginning of the play, he complains to Florella that he is going to lose his honour because of the intransigence of Philip and Mendoza who insist on snatching from him all his posts. His speech signifies what is in himself as if he seeks help from her. It is right that Florella was in love with the King, but Abdelazer married her on the command of the former King. However, she is now married. Therefore, she does not like to ask the King to help her husband. At the time when she feels that her husband is in danger, she intervenes and asks the King to stop the judgment against her husband. Hence, the King stops his trial in response to her request.

Unfortunately, Abdelazer mocks the King's forgiveness. He believes that the King forgives him neither for his loyalty nor as sympathy and respect but because "he loves my Wife so well" (Abd.1.2.12). In reality, Abdelazer treats his wife as one of his instruments in achieving his scheme of crime; it is because their relation is not based on mutual respect, trust, understanding and love. Joyce Green MacDonald clarifies Philip's view about the marriage between Abdelazer and Florella. He states:

Philip's belief that marriage to Abdelazer is no marriage at all evolves from the belief that under a properly rigorous Spanish domination the Moor would not have been regarded as a proper partner; because he cannot be, Florella can be no honest wife. (157)

In fact, Abdelazer is completely different in his dealing with Florella from Abdelazer's dealing with Leonora. Ferdinand listens carefully to Florella, respects her and fulfills her desire. Abdelazer does not listen to the entreaty of Leonora. He puts a condition that she has to surrender to his desire if she wants Alonzo to be released. He
also speaks in a harsh way with Leonora while the King speaks in a seductive way. In addition, Abdelazer enjoys boasting about his achievements in front of Leonora. He reminds her that he is the one who nominates her to be the Queen. So, she has to return his favour by the way of marriage. He does not give any consideration to the meaning of the word ‘queen,’ that is why he forces her to carry out his orders in spite of her position as a queen. When she refuses to marry him instead of Alonzo, he tries to rape her.

Abdelazer does not give any respect to the honour of others. He furtively talks about the honour of his wife, but when he becomes the de facto ruler of the Kingdom, he tries to rape Leonora. Leonora defends herself and exclaims, “Oh take my life, and spare my dearer Honour!” (Abd.5.1.64). She prefers to die instead of discrediting her honour, while Abdelazer is ready to sacrifice his honour in order to get her. He requests her, “... command my life, my soul, my honour!” (Abd.5.1.66). In the end, he loses everything while Leonora maintains her honour, preserves her loyalty to her lover Alonzo and sacrifices herself in the service of the kingdom.

Abdelazer exploits his positions in a wrong way. He has now three powers: he is the General in the army, he makes himself the Cardinal of Spain and he is the only authorised one who can give orders. In short, he is the one who dominates the kingdom and not Leonora. However, his first position was given to him by the old King, but the last two positions were usurped by him.

Indeed, King Ferdinand is an angel in comparison to Abdelazer. The King does not force Abdelazer’s wife, Florella, to have sex with him, but he tries many ways to convince her of his love. Consequently, Abdelazer perniciously takes advantage of the love affair between his wife and the King to get rid of both. He is indeed a man without
honour for the reason that he sacrifices his wife in order to maintain his life and honour. He asserts, “Then my own life or Honour; and I’ve a way / To save that too . . .” (Abd.3.1.28). Through reminding his wife of her “Honours safety” (Abd.3.1.29), he intends to instigate her to kill the King if he enters her lodging.

In turn, the Queen tries her best to defame the honour of Florella in order to be alone to Abdelazer. Hence, she facilitates the match between Florella and her son King Ferdinand and distributes spies to bring her the news of the expected match. By this act, she intends to expose the match between her son and Florella. When she makes sure that her son enters Florella’s lodging, she sends her woman Elvira to bring Alonzo to tell him about the adultery which is going to be committed by his sister. A married woman who commits adultery does not only defame her honour but also the honour of her husband. Jon P. Mitchell avers, “Shame is directly related to honour, in that a reduction of the shame of a household’s women becomes a direct reflection on the honour of its men. The man whose wife is adulterous, or who fails to demonstrate the virginity of his new bride, is dishonoured” (424). In this regard, Queen Isabella intends to instigate Alonzo to kill his sister. Meanwhile, she wishes to dishonour Abdelazer and spark his hatred against his wife in order to find no one except her. This means that she does not care about her son’s honour who is now the King.

In contrast, Alonzo regards the honour of his sister as own, “. . . her Honour’s mine” (Abd.3.2.32). He does not believe that his sister may commit adultery since he is confident that she respects her husband and will not betray him whatever happens. At the beginning, Alonzo completely supported Abdelazer and vehemently opposed the judgment of Mendozo and Philip. He felt that if Abdelazer’s honour was violated, his
honour would also be violated. He mollifies Abdelazer, “But Sir, my Honour is concern'd with yours, / Since my lov'd Sister did become your Wife; / And if yours suffer, mine too is unsafe” (Abd.1.2.11). Alonzo sympathised with Abdelazer when all Spanish characters decided to trial him without a clear condemnation. At the time when he discovers the wicked personality of Abdelazer, he turns to be his enemy, fights against him and spares no effort to help Philip for his “... Gratitude and Honour” (Abd.5.1.62).

In fact, the Queen decides to get Abdelazer for herself by dishonouring him through the love-match between his wife and her son, and it is also an opportunity to murder Florella. Her plot is revealed in her speech to the audience after murdering Florella. She proudly tells them that she “Destroy'd thy Murdress, and my too fair Rival” (Abd.3.3.35). In spite of all her shameful crimes, she still believes that she is a woman of honour.

Florella is the victim of the play. Her husband Abdelazer and Queen Isabella conspire against her. King Ferdinand also assaults her in her lodging, yet she preserves her honour. She reminds the King of his responsibility as a king who has to preserve her “honour” (Abd.3.3.33), safeguard his subjects and not enslave them. The whole role of Florella ranks her as a woman of sagacity as well as a woman of honour. Thus, she does not commit any adultery though the attacker is the King – her former lover. She behaves as a sober-minded woman with him. She gives him a lesson on the illegality and immorality of his behaviour. Then she decides to commit suicide instead of killing the King. Therefore, the King reacts, “Hold! I command thee hold thy impious hand, / My heart dwels there, and if you strike I dye” (Abd.3.3.35). Allegorically, he reminds her that his heart is with her, and if she kills herself, he will die too. This is what really happens
even if it is by another device; the King's mother stabs Florella to death and Abdelazer immediately kills King Ferdinand. This indicates their mutual love. The last words of the King are directed to praise Florella. He does not talk about the affairs of his country, his family or his death, but he talks about his love for Florella.

It is worthwhile to note that Ferdinand uses the expression "my Florella" more than her husband Abdelazer despite his limited role in the play. Ferdinand uses this phrase around fifteen times while Abdelazer uses it only around seven times and once calls her "my dear Florella" (Abd.3.1.29) because he is in need of her help to kill Ferdinand. Abdelazer's seven uses of "my Florella" are simply regarded as hoax to mislead others of his love for her.

In short, Florella maintains her honour and chastity since she does not surrender to the desire of King Ferdinand, while the Queen, on the contrary, sacrifices her honour, reputation and family in order to commit adultery with the Moor.

It is worth mentioning that maintaining honour sometimes requires to have a duel with the rival in order to win the lover. From this point, all the six plays under study denote the importance of the duel. Since duel is a matter of honour, Sheridan discusses the issue of duel in his three plays. All the duels are to defend the honour of love and are not for anything else. In The Rivals, the duels are decided to be held between Absolute and O'Trigger on the one side and between Bob Acres and the so-called Beverley on the other side. Because Beverley and Absolute are only two names of the same person, Faulkland takes the place of Beverley. However, when duels are about to happen, they are stopped at the appropriate time as the play is a comedy. In The School for Scandal, the scandalmongers spread false news that there is a duel between Sir Peter and Charles
regarding the honour of Lady Teazle. This hearsay is fabricated by Lady Sneerwell and her group in the house of Sir Peter. *The Spanish Armada* in *The Critic* contains many elements of duel and intrigue. Don Ferolo Wiskerandos who was the son of the Spanish admiral and the prisoner fought a duel with the Captain of the ship, and each one of them wanted to preserve the honour of Tilburina, the daughter of governor of Tilbury Fort. Both fell in love with her, so they fought a duel for the defence of their honour and to determine the winner. In this play, the duel actually occurred because it is a tragedy play which has been discussed in a comedy.

In a nutshell, Sheridan was obsessed about the duel because he had a real experience in this field. So he reflected it in his plays. However, Anne Parker refers to the duel in *The Rivals*, “in *The Rivals* the duel becomes and effective comic device . . . [it] exemplifies the basic rivalry between the sentimental and the witty modes, and the dangers to which both are subject” (18). Philip Rush, in turn, affirms “that in the reign of George III (1760-1820) 172 duels were recorded, in which 69 men were killed and 96 wounded, 46 of them desperately” (61).

Honour related to love has come to manifest itself more clearly in *The Rivals*. Matthews writes about how Sheridan portrayed himself in the play:

... his earliest biographer, Dr. Watkins, suggests that the plot of the ‘Rivals’ was taken from life, having been suggested by his own courtship of Miss Linley and the ensuing duel with Captain Mathews. And his latest biographer, Mrs. Oliphant, chooses to identify Miss Lydia Languish with Mrs. Sheridan. (75)
As a matter of honour, Sheridan prevented his wife, the professional singer, from singing though they were in need of money. Cheryl Turner points out, "Despite being desperately in need of money, Sheridan refused to allow Elizabeth to continue [singing] ..." (69). Brander Matthews writes about Sheridan's honour, "His nice sense of honor led him to withdraw his wife from the concert-stage as soon as they were married" (58). Matthews adds, "Already, in his 'Maid of Bath,' had Foote set Miss Linley and one of her suitors on the stage; and surely Sheridan, who would not let his wife sing in public, would shrink from putting the story of their courtship into a comedy" (75). Also, William Frances Ainsworth writes about Sheridan's honour in this matter:

The talents of his wife might indeed have produced a liberal competence; but with a manliness that did him great honour, he refused to sanction her appearance in public after she had formally become his wife — a determination which sturdy old Johnson applauded with hearty admiration. (710)

Sheridan was harbouring feelings of jealousy towards his wife. Thomas Moore states:

But in love, as in everything else, the power of a mind like Sheridan's must have made itself felt through all obstacles and difficulties. He was not long in winning the entire affections of the young Syren, though the number and wealth of his rivals, the ambitious views of her father, and the temptations to which she herself was hourly exposed, kept his jealousies and fears perpetually on the watch. He is supposed, indeed, to have been indebted to self-observation for that portrait of a wayward and morbidly
sensitive lover, which he has drawn so strikingly in the character of Falkland. (45-46)

A person sometimes needs to fight a duel to defend his honour. Sheridan had fought duels twice to defend the honour of Elizabeth Linley. Matthews reports, “It has been suggested, though, that in the duel scene Sheridan profited by his own experience on the field of honor . . .” (75). Sheridan was seriously wounded in his second duel with his adversary Mathews. After the duel, Sheridan was honoured while his rival Mathews was completely dishonoured as it was discovered that he was wearing an armour. Thus, Sheridan has depicted his experience in The Rivals.

In The Rivals, Sheridan discusses honour from the viewpoints of rivals. Under this part, the honour of each of the three rivals – Absolute, O’Trigger and Acres is examined in detail. Each one of them considers winning Lydia as honour that must be preserved at all costs. O’Trigger considers himself a man of honour, but others see him as a conceited man. On the contrary, though Absolute is a man of honour for many reasons, he does not like anyone to talk too much about his honour. His servant Fag once praises his honour as “. . . your honour had already enlisted five disband ed chairmen, seven minority waiters, and thirteen billiard-markers” (Rivals.2.1.55). Absolute is aware of the value of honour. He believes that honour can be appreciated and not counted. Therefore, he orders Fag, “. . . never say more than is necessary” (Rivals.2.1.55). As a kind of duty, Fag insists on showing his master’s honour as “an obligation” (Rivals.2.1.55). In fact, Absolute belongs to a remarkable family which has high moral standards. He is also a Captain in army and his father is a famous baronet. So, he feels that there is no need to praise his honour for
he actually is an honourable person. In contrast, Fag thinks he must praise his master since it is morally right.

Absolute and his servant Fag live peacefully. At the time when Absolute cannot face and stand against his angry father, he vents his anger on Fag. Fag, in turn, rages at an errand boy. Fag affectedly reveals this issue in his soliloquy, "Sir Anthony trims my master; he is afraid to reply to his father — then vents his spleen on poor Fag! When one is vexed by one person, to revenge oneself on another, who happens to come in the way — is the vilest injustice!" (Rivals.2.1.67). Absolute behaves rudely with Fag only when he is in rage; otherwise, they seem to be friends rather than a master and a servant.

Absolute does not need to boast of his honour before his servant Fag while his friend Acres struts around trying to get the attention of his servant David. However, Absolute depends on the reputation of his honour when needed. He also evokes the honour of others when he wants something from them. Thus, he intelligently flatters Mrs. Malaprop. He tells her that he wishes to marry Lydia in order to get more honour since Lydia is her niece, "... my principal inducement in this affair at present is the honour of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop" (Rivals.3.3.78). Mrs. Malaprop is overjoyed to hear him flattering her with sweet words and therefore she replies, "Sir, you do me infinite honour" (Rivals.3.3.78), then she indulges in praising herself and her sophisticated language. Her reaction towards Absolute’s flattery is different from Absolute’s reaction towards Fag’s flattery. Absolute admonishes Fag for praising his honour while Mrs. Malaprop wants to hear more. This gives an impression that the one who seeks compliment is the one who is suffering from the shortage of honour. This hypothesis is affirmed by Absolute when he reads his letter which he had sent to Lydia. In the letter, Beverley, who is Absolute,
glorifies and describes himself as a man who “. . . has universally the character of being an accomplished gentleman and a man of honour” (Rivals.3.3.79). This is considered an indirect message to Mrs. Malaprop that he is a man of honour.

Jack Absolute and Acres are friends and rivals for the hand of Lydia. Absolute does not inform Acres that they are both seeking the same woman and leaves him in his folly. To leave a friend in his blindness, subjects for some possibilities. It is maybe because Absolute is not jealous, or there is no danger from the side of his friend Acres. Absolute once leaves Acres expressing his admiration of Lydia without trying at least to change the topic of speech. He also tries to tease him more and more. When Acres invites Absolute to meet him at night to drink to the health of Lydia, Absolute accepts the offer. Absolute’s deportment leaves the audience perplexed whether he is not jealous, or whether he wants to apply the wisdom which says ‘actions speak louder than words.’ So, he does not care for Acres’s words; he is sure he would get Lydia at the end whatever happens. It is maybe he wants to test both his friend Acre and Lydia, or he might want to see his friend suffer. Apparently, he tells Faulkland that he enjoys teasing Acres and hears him complain about Beverley, “it ridiculous enough to hear him complain to me of one Beverley, a concealed skulking rival” (Rivals.2.1.57). To bear in mind all the events of the play, it seems that Absolute does not like to expose his real personality. Meanwhile, he tells Faulkland that he would reveal himself gradually and at the appropriate time. Unexpectedly, Absolute finds himself obliged to expose himself under the pressure of his father and Mrs. Malaprop. Sheridan dramatically exposes Absolute in this particular time in order to justify his disguise as Beverley and to render him as the best-desired suitor who defies the odds in order to get Lydia.
Acres interprets honour in the form of dress and imitation. He does not only want to fight to preserve his honour but also wants to dress well to show his honour. Thus, he is known for his foppery and O'Trigger is known for his conceit. Acres wears the most foppish dress and stands before his servant David in order to receive admiration. David is astonished to see his master in this foppish dress, yet he compliments him, then in a slip of tongue, he links his strange dress to his honour, “... your honour's favourite, would blush like my waistcoat” (Rivals.3.4.85). This indicates the false meaning of honour. In fact, honour is not how to dress suitably for a given event or how to be in fashion but, rather, how to get a good reputation. Acres is pleased to hear David's compliment, so he assures him, “there's nothing like polishing” (Rivals.3.4.85), he means the honour after wearing new dress. Sheridan makes David understand the word “polishing” in its literal sense; therefore, he adds, “So I says of your honour's boots; but the boy never heeds me” (Rivals.3.4.85). This is an implicit indication that Acres does not get the desired honour because his servant sees his honour as “honour's boot.” In addition, Acres intends to keep pace with up-to-date fashion by practising French dances. Unfortunately, he cannot dance well, so he blames his legs. It is humorous when he complains of his legs which are “... true-born English legs – they don't understand their curt French lingo!” (Rivals.3.4.85).

His foppish appearance and his standing before his servant to extract admiration depict him as a funny man. However, he starts dancing French dance but fails to command it. He wants to dance in order to attract Lydia, then he intends to fight a duel to preserve her honour. It is funny to see him unable to dance well in a relaxed atmosphere, then how he can fight a duel although he has no experience in this field! Auburn points out, “Bob Acres, lovable coward that he is, is made also into a comic butt in terms of his
understanding and literacy; the emphasis shifts toward the farcical, away from the high comic” (“The Pleasures of Sheridan” 259).

Absolute has to defend Lydia from O'Trigger, and O'Trigger sees Absolute as his real rival for the hand of Lydia, so they decide to fight duels to preserve their honour. Under the slogan of honour, Acres also decides fights the so-called Beverley. Every one of the three members tries to win Lydia by sword. Absolute and O'Trigger are of course brave and men of broad experiences in the field of duel. None of them fears the other; therefore, they rush to the battlefield without any consideration to their lives.

However, the roles of Bob Acres and Sir Lucius O'Trigger are provided for laughter and mild satire. They do not have any important role in the play except to show the bright side of Absolute. This story takes our attention to the alleged honour in which they are ready to sacrifice themselves to preserve it. Under the defence of honour, O'Trigger is able to drag Acres to a critical dilemma, and O'Trigger himself goes to fight a duel with Absolute in spite of the fact that Lydia does not love any one of them. For this clumsy decision, they are going to jeopardise themselves because Absolute is a well-known colonel. Bob Acres who is not an experienced fighter is completely influenced by the idea of defending his honour and the honour of his ancestors. Brander Matthews writes about Acres, “Squire Acres is a country gentleman of limited intelligence, incapable of acquiring, even by contagion, the curious system of referential swearing by which he gives variety to his speech” (67). O'Trigger exploits Acres’s simplicity and instigates him to fight to defend his honour. To incite him more, O'Trigger quotes many honourable privileges of his family and intelligently stresses on the value of honour in order to push Acres into the duel.
Before leaving Acres, O'Trigger incites him to send a challenge letter to the so-called Beverley. Then, he tells him that he is ready to carry the letter, “I would do myself the honour to carry your message.” Since he is really a cocky man who feels his honour is better than the honour of Acres, he does not like to take the letter although it is he who offered to take it. Therefore, he finds an excuse to dissociate himself from his offer to take the letter, “but, to tell you a secret, I believe I shall have just such another affair on my own hands” (Rivals.3.4.88). It is because he feels dishonoured to carry Acres’s letter. If Acres thinks wisely, he will discover that there is no need to fight because the so-called Beverley has done nothing wrong against him. Beverley tries to betroth Lydia as Acres himself tries his luck. Fortunately, Lydia accepts Beverley and rejects Acres, so it is not the mistake of Beverley. It is very clear that the real reason behind inviting Acres to the duel is to fulfill O'Trigger's aim by leaving Acres and Beverley to fight each other. Surely, one of them would be killed and the other would not dare to marry Lydia when he becomes a killer. Moreover, O'Trigger does not tell Acres the name of his rival and the real reason for fighting a duel; he falsely claims that his honourable fight is just to defend his country. This claim is false since the real goal is to remove Acres and Beverley from his way to marry Lydia, and in his turn, he has to face Absolute.

Acres and his servant David go deeply in discussing the value of honour and its importance (Rivals.4.1.89-92). It is important to go through some of their discussions to understand their opinions towards the value of honour. As a remarkable act of David, he is upset to know that his master has decided to fight a duel under the instigation of O'Trigger. Acres does not listen to him. He has been influenced by the lessons of O'Trigger, so he decides to continue in his way to a duel in order to defend his honour,
"But my honour, David, my honour! I must be very careful of my honour" (Rivals.4.1.89). David agrees that one has to defend his honour when there is need, but in return, honour should not be a way to endanger one's life. According to David, it is silly to kill or to be killed under the slogan of honour. Therefore, he believes that it is better to live than to be killed while seeking for false honour since honour is just like "a marvellous false friend" (Rivals.4.1.90). David also thinks that the person who dies under the slogan of honour would surely receive only worms in grave while the honour would pass to his enemy, the victor. Acres does not agree with him, he thinks that "... honour follows you to the grave" (Rivals.4.1.90). David wisely replies that the grave is the place where one can stay without honour.

Instead of thanking David for his wise tips, Acres accuses him of being "a coward," so he decides not to listen to him, otherwise, he would disgrace his ancestors. David remains firm and reminds him again that the best way to keep the ancestors' honour is to stay alive instead of dying so early, "the surest way of not disgracing them, is to keep as long as you can out of their company" (Rivals.4.1.90). At any cost, it is rare to find such a servant as David who tries his best to prevent his master from risking his life. His sincere loyalty can also be seen in his tears when he argues with his master. Through their discussion regarding honour, David is more rational and logical than his master. He is sure that his master is weak to face his enemy. But foolishly, Acres does not listen to David as he listens to O'Trigger because David is just a servant while O'Trigger is a master.

Further, Acres himself proves David's opinion that he is weak when he asks Absolute to make an awful image about him in order to scare his supposed rival,
Beverley. Acres prays and urges Absolute to spread news that he is a man of incomparable courage, so no one dares to fight against him. Acres asks him, "Jack if Beverley should ask you what kind of a man your friend Acres is, do tell him I am a devil of a fellow" (Rivals 4.1.92). By this, he wishes to create a scary atmosphere in order to intimidate his rival Beverley, so he would not dare to face him, fearing his courage. He also adds, "... and if that frightens him... perhaps he mayn't come. So tell him I generally kill a man a week" (Rivals 4.1.92). Absolute sneers at his stupid act, but he ironically assures him to spread frightful news about him as "Fighting Bob" (Rivals 4.1.92). Bob Acres is overjoyed to hear this scary phrase from Absolute, so he insistently asks Absolute to tell Beverley that he does not like to kill him. This technique is sometimes useful especially with enemy, but it is useless here because Absolute is his rival. By this behaviour, Acres exposes himself as a cowardly fighter.

Whatsoever, Absolute takes the letter from Acres to hand it to the so-called Beverley who is in reality Absolute while O'Trigger refuses to take it. This story shows Absolute's honour, O'Trigger's conceit and Acres's absurdity. It is strange to see Acres rendering himself as a man of remarkable courage while he does not have any experience in this field. He praises his power in order to scare his rival while in reality he is not a professional fighter. So, his honour is just in words, and words are not enough to prove the opposite of his real honour. Indeed, his honour is not like that of Absolute. Therefore, Acres wishes to compensate the lack of his honour by speaking pompous words of courage.

In the battlefield, O'Trigger starts making some practical preparations to be ready to fight a duel while Acres trembles out of fear especially at the time when he listens to
O'Trigger's instructions. Practically, O'Trigger measures the distance of duels. Meanwhile, he does not agree upon Acres's suggestion to make the distance more than forty yards to be far away from the adversary. He compels him to face his adversary openly. O'Trigger's practical preparedness worsens the situation from the point of view of Acres and puts more pressures on him. To make the matter worse, O'Trigger asks Acres to recommend his last wish. Acres's heart beat increases when he hears this speech in the battlefield, but O'Trigger pacifies him by adding that he would take his dead body to his city to be buried there, or he prefers to bury him "... here in the Abbey? I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey" (Rivals.5.3.116). As Acres is trembling out of fear, O'Trigger from time to time reminds him, "consider your honour" (Rivals.5.3.117). Acres is shocked to see his rival approaching. At his critical moment, he regrets to give more consideration for his honour, yet O'Trigger still incites him, "Your honour your honour. Here they are" (Rivals.5.3.117).

Acres is now in a critical situation. He does not know what to do and how to escape from this fatal situation, yet he waits for the fate to interfere. The end of this serious fight is dramatically solved when Acres has got an unexpected escapade by refusing to fight none except Beverley. When Absolute shows himself as Beverley, Acres flies with joy to find another excuse from this deadly dilemma by refusing to fight his close friend.

Before starting the duel, O'Trigger tells Sir Anthony, "Your son, sir, insulted me in a manner which my honour could not brook" (Rivals.5.3.119). Sir Anthony is a man of honour, so he knows well the value of honour that is why he chides his son, "Jack, how durst you insult the gentleman in a manner which his honour could not brook?"
In fact, Absolute is obliged to defend his honour because O'Trigger challenges him to a duel though there is no love between O'Trigger and Lydia. O'Trigger does not meet Lydia but corresponds with Mrs. Malaprop, believing her as Lydia. In addition, Absolute tries in many ways to avoid the duel, but O'Trigger insists on meeting him in the battlefield. Therefore, Absolute decides, "But for this lady, while honoured with her approbation, I will support my claim against any man whatever" (Rivals.5.3.120). When Sir Anthony hears this speech especially when he realises that his son has the right to defend his honour, he stands firm with him and supports him in his decision to duel and die for his honour.

In the light of what has been discussed above, there can be no doubt that honour in The Rivals has three defenders: Absolute, Acres and O'Trigger. Every one of them attempts to preserve his honour by defending his love for Lydia. Intelligently, Sheridan creates in each character a different interpretation of honour. The three characters are different in their behaviour, morals and moods, so their interpretations of the value of honour are also different. What makes this plot more important and interesting is that the three rivals fight for a single lady, she is Lydia. Lydia does not love any one of these rivals because she is spiritually, emotionally and morally fond of a man who has been fashioned according to her romantic interest. The man whom Lydia hopes to marry is actually one of the three rivals, it is Absolute who deserves honour for he truly loves Lydia and wins her heart even if it happens under a disguise.

The duel between Sheridan and his rival Mathews can be clearly defined through the study of Absolute’s demeanour with his rival O’Trigger. Absolute’s demeanour in the battlefield is quiet and timid. Before fighting the duel, Absolute is welcomed by Lydia to
betroth her when he is in his pseudonym, Beverley. When he comes officially in his real personality as Captain Absolute, he becomes a rival for himself as Lydia loves Beverley and not Captain Absolute. So, these contradictions engender too much fun but with much nonsense.

Jack Absolute is the hero of the play although he does not have heroic qualities. In short, he is waiting for Lydia to throw herself in his lap. To attract her, he pretends to be Beverley. This gives us an idea that he cannot convince her to love him in his real personality, so he has to disguise himself in another personality to woo her. Further, when Lydia refuses to marry him for he is not Beverley, he does not react seriously towards her refusal. He only tries to persuade her by some sweet words, but she totally disregards to pay attention to his speech. Thus, he leaves her at a loss of command.

To extinguish his anger, he starts snarling and threatening to cut off the head of the one he will meet next. He threatens, “I never was in a worse humour in my life! I could cut my own throat, or any other person’s, with the greatest pleasure in the world!” (Rivals.4.3.101). Unexpectedly, he meets O’Trigger, his rival. O’Trigger challenges him to fight a duel, yet Absolute does not cut his head as he threatens. Instead, he tries his best to calm O’Trigger agitation. Later, when he is on his way to meet O’Trigger in the appointed place of the duel, he comments on Bath’s anti-duel, “A sword seen in the streets of Bath would raise as great an alarm as a mad dog” (Rivals.5.2.112). Absolute’s speech indicates that the wearing of swords in public places was forbidden, yet he is going to fight a duel against O’Trigger.

When they meet in the battlefield, Absolute seems to be a defender and O’Trigger a striker. It is because O’Trigger is the one who invited him to the duel, measured the
distance of the duel, suggested the place, and encouraged and ordered Acres to fight, while Absolute has nothing to mention except his response to the challenge. Although Absolute is a Captain in army and has a strong personality, he does not initiate violence but only responds to it. Through reading the play, one may have got a feeling that O'Trigger is braver than Absolute. Thomas Moore observes, “Among the various ingredients supposed to be mixed up in the composition of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, his love of fighting is the only one whose flavor is very strongly brought out” (141-42). Moreover, Absolute at the battlefield assures O'Trigger that he does not like to have a duel with him for there is no reason. This is, however, an indirect request for O'Trigger to stop the fight. He also tells him that he is ready to apologise if he has committed any mistake.

The researcher does not intend to show the flaws and wrongdoings of Absolute since he is, in fact, the one who seems perfectly normal and praised by Sheridan and all scholars. In addition, he is a man of honour. Nevertheless, a simple analysis of Absolute’s behaviour leads us to know more about Sheridan’s main characters, and then to be able to study Sheridan’s attitude to honour.

Absolute is regarded as a parallel character to Sheridan. Thus, Sheridan could not make Absolute brave enough to start the initiatives because Sheridan himself knew well his real power and bravery. If he made Absolute a more powerful character in the play, it would not present reality since Sheridan himself was not a soldier but a lover who was entangled in a duel with an experienced fighter.

To conclude the chapter, just as the concepts of morality and honour are interdependent, likewise they have received different interpretations by writers, however,
they are important aspects in the plays of Behn and Sheridan. Their importance depends on how much individuals behave morally and honourably towards each other, how much men respect women and facilitate the difficulties that face them, and then how much men and women conform to these standards. Men and women attempt to behave morally and honourably, yet in many ways, they infringe morality and honour as they clash with their desires of marriage and sex. Both sexes wish to marry their lovers and then to have sex in legitimate ways, when they fail, they turn to use immoral ways to force women to marry undesirable men or to use money to convince the partner. At such a time when they cannot marry for love, they turn to sacrifice their honour by having sex out of wedlock.

To understand the importance of morality and honour in relation to marriage and sex, the ensuing chapter, therefore, deals with the themes of marriage and sex.