



**A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE IDEAL HUSBAND*  
BY OSCAR WILDE**

**Helmita, Haicha Fadella**  
Fakultas Sastra Universitas Ekasakti

**Abstract**

*This research is about the marriage crisis is reflected in Oscar Wilde's An Ideal Husband drama, what strategy is employed to maintain a marriage, and why did Oscar Wilde give concern in the marital crisis. The purpose of this study is (1) To describe the marital crisis illustrated reflected in the drama An Ideal Husband by Oscar Wilde (2) To explain the strategy in maintaining a marriage (3) and to reveal the reason why Oscar Wilde gave concern in the marital crisis.*

*The approach used is a sociology approach that the discusses an external aspects of a drama. The theory used in this research is the theory sociology of literature according to Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson which states that conflict in life, especially in every household, is a reflection of the life everyone. This study employs the qualitative method. The object of the study is An Ideal Husband play written by Oscar Wilde. The data sources are divided into two, namely primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data source is the play script itself and the secondary data sources are script text and some references related to the research. The technique of the data collection is note-taking. The technique of the data analysis is descriptive analysis.*

*The first, marital crisis is illustrated in Oscar Wilde's An Ideal Husband play are when a woman marries with a man who have important position in their work, inability someone to accept reality from their spouse in past, no children in the family, jealousy, and wife's opinion that her husband is ideal. The second, the strategies are employed to maintain a marriage are introspection, making agreement between husband and wife, and accepting reality. The third, Oscar Wilde gave concern in marital crisis because he wants to criticize the England society in that era especially in upper class society that hypocrite for many cases.*

*Keywords: Marriage Crisis, Strategy, Hypocrisy*

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**I INTRODUCTION**

*An Ideal Husband* is one of plays written by Oscar Wilde and published in 1896. It was the play of Wilde's comedy plays to be staged, and it was as a big success. This play consists of 105 pages, 4 scenes. The action of the play is completed within twenty four hours, and it takes setting in London. *An Ideal Husband* is often called a social comedy because it has both a serious social as well comedic plot line, like many comedies, it is a biting satire on the moral

of late Victorian society. Oscar Wilde writes this play to criticize the late Victorian society about their life. Victoria society is famous with power and wealth their life is full of acting and pretend to be someone else to get good image from the society. *An Ideal Husband* tells a story about a comedic stage play which revolves around blackmail and political corruption, and touches on the themes of public and private honour. This drama starts at a big, high culture party.

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## II RESEARCH METHODS

The writer focus in extrinsic element found in the drama *An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde's.

"Lady Basildon.

[Looking round through her lorgnette.] I don't see anybody here tonight whom one could possibly call a serious purpose. The man who took me in to dinner talked to me about his wife the whole time.

Mrs. Marchmont.

How very trivial of him!

Lady Basildon.

Terribly trivial! What did your man talk about?

Mrs. Marchmont.

About myself.

Lady Basildon.

[Languidly.] And were you interested?

Mrs. Marchmont.

[Shaking her head.] Not in the smallest degree" (1.5).

Marrying with an admirable husband in London is like marrying also with their work. They are busy, they do anything in politics for their career, wealth, position, and power. As a wife, woman should accept all of that. Nevertheless, they do not like with that condition. They are also less communication with their husband. It can make uncomfortable condition in their marriage relationship. They come to the party without their husband.

The fact remains contradiction. Wilde shows us by the character of Mrs Marchmont and Lady Basildon.

The one of marital crisis is when a woman married with an admirable man. They will face by some obstacles on it. Their husband is often careless and talks little. It can be seen by the characters of Mrs Marchmont and Lady Basildon when they were attending party without their husband. Wilde shows that the majority characters especially woman characters were attending party without their husband.

"Mrs. Marchmont.

Going on to the Hartlocks' tonight, Margaret?

Lady Basildon.

I suppose so. Are you?

Mrs. Marchmont.

Yes. Horribly tedious parties they give, don't they?

Lady Basildon.

Horribly tedious! Never know why I go. Never know why I go anywhere" (1.1).

Sir Robert Chiltern talked to Lord Goring about his wife. He said that Lady Chiltern would not married with his if she had known the origin of his fortune like that, the basis of his career as like that, and he had done a thing that he supposed most men would call shameful and dishonorable.

"Lord Goring.

Everything is dangerous, my dear fellow. If it wasn't so, life wouldn't be worth living...Well, I am bound to say that I think you should have told her years ago.

Sir Robert Chiltern.

When? When we were engaged? Do you think she would have married me if she had known that the origin of my fortune is such as it is, the basis of my career such as it is, and that I had done a thing that I suppose most men would call shameful and dishonourable?

Lord Goring.

[Slowly.] Yes, most men would call it ugly names.

There is no doubt of that" (2.11).

Some woman cannot accept their husband just as they are. They wanted to look for the perfect and ideal husband. They cannot accept the reality from their spouse in their past. They think that when marrying with a man who has all characters that they want, they will be happy. The fact remains contradiction. Everyone has their own strengthen and weaknesses. They, however, also have their bad memories in past. It becomes a problem if woman cannot accept the past of their husband, we live in the present and the only reality we have is now. It is not the past. Life must go on and the past will always learn us to stronger and not to do something wrong like that again. Wilde here shows by the bad memories in the past of the character Sir Robert Chiltern. His wife Lady Chiltern cannot accept the reality of her husband at first.

Lady Chiltern loves her husband so much. She supports her husband when he is faced by secret problem in his past. She is always there

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when her husband who always need her. She regards that Sir Robert Chiltern in an ideal husband. She always says that her husband is the ideal one. She cannot accept the reality in her husband's past. Wilde shows in the first and second act of his play. A woman that cannot accept her bad memories in past of her husband has close relationship with a woman who has opinion that her husband is the ideal husband, we must know that no one in this world is perfect, including the ideal husband, who makes her the ideal only his own wife, who feels that her husband has absolutely no shortage. From where many husbands argue that if he should keep any meeting of what has happened in his past, they are afraid that their wives will not accept the bad things they did in the past.

The marriage condition without children yet is reflected in marriage relationship between the main characters Sir Robert Chiltern and Lady Chiltern. Sir Robert Chiltern said that perhaps if God had been sent them children, his wife might have been kinder to his. He also said that God had given them a lonely house. Lady Chiltern had cut his heart in two.

“Sir Robert Chiltern.

My wife! Never! She does not know what weakness or temptation is. I am of clay like other men. She stands apart as good women do pitiless in her perfection - cold and stern and without mercy. But I love her, Arthur. We are childless, and I have no one else to love, no one else to love me. Perhaps if God had sent us children she might have been kinder to me. But God has given us a lonely house. And she has cut my heart in two. Don't let us talk of it. I was brutal to her this evening. But I suppose when sinners talk to saints they are brutal always. I said to her things that were hideously true, on my side, from my stand-point, from the standpoint of men. But don't let us talk of that” (3.140).

The conflict in marriage is not always about love, Wilde also tells us that money and power becomes the one of many conflicts that will face for the marriage couple. Lady Chiltern asked why her husband should it be. She said that they had no need of money. Money that came from a tainted source was degradation. She also said that power was nothing in itself. It was power to do well that was fine that and that only.

“Lady Chiltern.

It can never be necessary to do what is not honourable, or if it be necessary, then what is it that I have loved! But it is not, Rober, tell me it is not. Why should it be? What gain would you get ? Money? We have no need of that! And money that comes from a tainted source is a degradation. Power? But power is nothing in itself. It is power to do good that is fine that, and that only. What is it, then? Robert, tell me why you are going to do this dishonourable thing!” (1.276).

Money and Power becomes conflict between spouses. It is especially if they marry with a man or a woman who has admirable roles in their society. Here, Wilde shows that money and power becomes one of the family conflicts in London society in Victorian era.

A wife should support their husband in many conditions especially when they are in bad condition. Then a couple can love each other and face the hardships of life together. Lady Chiltern said that she felt that night she had saved her husband from something that might had been a danger to his, from something that might had made men honor their less than they did. She knew that and for that she loved her husband. Sir Robert Chiltern asked for his wife to love his always, Robert say, “Oh, love me always, Gertrude, love me always!” (1.363). Alike common marriage couple, Sir Robert Chiltern and Lady Chiltern is faced by several problems. One of the problems comes from Mrs Cheveley. She suddenly comes in their life by brought Sir Robert Chiltern's secret and faults in his past.

“Mrs. Cheveley.

[Contemptuously.] The letter you wrote to Baron Arnheim, when you were Lord Radley's secretary, telling the Baron to buy Suez Canal shares a letter written three days before the Government announced its own purchase.

Sir Robert Chiltern.

[Hoarsely.] It is not true” (1.237).

When they too much arguing, Lady Chiltern decides to separate with her husband. It is not easy to say that word because she loves her husband. She still loves her husband. Even though at first, Lady Chiltern is jealous with the relationship between her husband and Mrs Cheveley. She thinks that she should save her husband for the woman like Mrs Cheveley. Every problem in marriage relationship will make their love much stronger than before if every individual can face all obstacles together.

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Lady Chiltern believes that she and her husband can get through all the problems that exist in her marriage, she just does not want Mrs Cheveley to win just like that, for her husband is his life, then whatever happens to her husband, he will try to help solve it. Sir Robert was very unwilling to divorce in his marriage, he loved his wife very much, then Sir Robert tried to admit all his mistakes he made in the past, in his heart very uneasy because always haunted by guilt by keeping a big secret.

At first he did not know what to do, he was very confused, he was afraid Lady Chiltern would be angry at him, so he asked his friend Lord Goring opinion to help him overcome all the problems that are in his nature, without thinking lord goring helped him, because Lord Goring is ex-lover Mrs Cheveley so he very know who Mrs Cheveley in the past, Lord Goring tried to trick Mrs Cheveley and threatened him, if he did not want to give evidence of Sir Robert's agreement with Baron Anheim when in the past, then he would leak also that his past Mrs Cheveley was a thief, one of whom he once stole an expensive brooch. Eventually Mrs Cheveley hands over evidence of past evil Sir Robert to Lord Goring, because he does not want anyone to know his bad past.

Oscar Wilde said that in marriage, both of couple marriage should introspect, making agreement, and accept not only strengthen but also the weaknesses from their couple. It is because there is no people can be perfect. They live with strengthen and also their weaknesses. So that they should support, share, and face many problems together. They also can face the hardships of life during the time period they live together. It can be seen by the dialogue between Lord Goring and Sir Robert Chiltern. Lord Goring asked for Sir Robert Chiltern for told his wife the whole thing. Secrets from other people's wives were a necessary luxury in modern life.

“Lord Goring.

My dear Robert, it's a very awkward business, very awkward indeed. You should have told your wife the whole thing. Secrets from other people's wives are a necessary luxury in modern life. So, at least, I am always told at the club by people who are bald enough to know better. But no man should have a secret from his own wife. She invariably finds it out. Women

have a wonderful instinct about things. They can discover everything except the obvious” (2.1).

Sir Robert Chiltern said that he could not tell his wife. It would have made a life long separation between them and he would have lost the love of the one woman in the world he worships. A couple should share everything so that there is no anything hidden. They should accept what the reality is because we live in the present. By sharing everything will make marriage couple more believes. By accepting the reality also make every couple marriage have deeper love. If there is no anything hidden, every marriage couple should try to find solve of every obstacle and marital crisis in their relationship.

Lady Chiltern said that she knew Mrs Cheveley and her husband does not know yet. They were at school together. Mrs Cheveley was untruthful, dishonest, and evil influence on everyone whose trust of friendship she could win. Lady Chiltern hated and she despised her. She had been stolen things, she was a thief. She was sent away for being a thief.

“Lady Chiltern.

That woman who has just gone out, Mrs. Cheveley, as she calls herself now. She seemed to taunt me with it. Robert, I know this woman. You don't. We were at school together. She was untruthful, dishonest, an evil influence on every one whose trust or friendship she could win. I hated, I despised her. She stole things, she was a thief. She was sent away for being a thief. Why do you let her influence you?” (1.325).

Sir Robert Chiltern said to his wife that what she told his may be true, but it happened many years ago. It was best forgotten. Mrs Cheveley might have changed since then. No one should be entirely judged by their past.

“Sir Robert Chiltern.

Gertrude, what you tell me may be true, but it happened many years ago. It is best forgotten! Mrs. Cheveley may have changed since then. No one should be entirely judged by their past” (1.326).

Lady Chiltern is always forgiving her husband. She knows that it was her husband's past. Every people ever do their mistake, we are also like that. By forgiving our spouse, it is a proof of real love. Among family members has different opinion in some cases. If one of them cannot accept the differences, it will be a conflict in family. Lady Chiltern say, “[taking his hand] because I loved you” (4.189). Wilde shows the

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different opinion between Sir Robert Chiltern and his wife Lady Chiltern. It becomes one of the conflicts in their family.

Lady Chiltern judged Mrs Cheveley was a dishonest woman when they were at school together. In Sir Robert Chiltern's opinion no one should be entirely judged by their past. Lady Chiltern say, "[Sadly.] One's past is what one is. It is the only" (1.210). Way by which people should be judged. It becomes the contradiction opinion.

Here Sir Robert tries to convince his wife Lady Chiltern not to be easy to punish someone just because of his past, because outside the knowledge Lady Chiltern, Sir Robert also have a bad past, he is afraid to tell the truth to Lady Chiltern because he thinks Lady Chiltern will not easily accept and forgive it all. Sir Robert sees a hatred from his wife's eye to Mrs Cheveley, he does not want his wife to hate his either, as she hates Mrs Cheveley because of her past.

"An ideal husband! Oh, I don't think I should like that. It sounds like something in the next world"(4.365). Then she said that a man can be anything what he likes also what he chooses, and then saying, "He can be what he chooses" (4.366). Mabel Chiltern just wants to be a real wife to her future husband that is Lord Goring. "All I want is to be, to be... oh! a real wife to him" (4.389).

In the last act, Wilde wants to show that there is no ideal husband but there is a real husband. People live with strengthen and their weaknesses. Nobody is ideal in this world. There is no an ideal husband. It is a real husband with strengthen and weaknesses. By introspection, making agreement, supporting, trusting, forgiving, and accepting our spouse, it will make good, great, and happy marriage. Wilde shows in the character of Mabel Chiltern that there is no ideal husband. She said that an ideal husband is like something in the next world. Mabel Chiltern say. The woman should be like Mabel Chiltern did for becomes a real wife to a real husband, it can be seen by the dialogue between the

characters of Mabel Chiltern and Lord Caversham, by his play, Wilde criticizes the folly of expecting an ideal standard for man and woman. It is because how much people improve in the outside, the fact remains that there is no ideal man and woman.

Wilde argues that in fact the marriage crisis that occurs in a household is not a difficult thing to overcome, it's easy, just by mutual acceptance of deficiencies and accept the past, then all can be overcome, because divorce is not the right solution to deal with a marriage crisis, if the marriage can still be maintained, it must be maintained. Many of the victoria era societies are hypocritical in all respects, one example is that women in that era were very happy if they could marry top class men in the hope that they could live happily in wealth, but what they really felt was loneliness, lack of attention from their husbands, because their husbands are always busy with their business or politics. This is reflected in the dialogue by Vicomte De Nanjac, he said "[Approaching.] Ah, the English young lady is the dragon of good taste, is she not? Quite the dragon of good taste" (1.230) , Obviously in these words, Wilde quipped the young women in England at that time through a dialogue between Mabel Chiltern, Vicomte De Nanjac and Lord Goring.

According to Wilde, young women in England in the era of most of them want ideal husbands, and without them knowing, when they have got what they want, yet they still feel there is less, especially the attention and affection of her husband itself , because their husbands can only meet the needs of his wives in terms of material. Here Wilde wants to remind us not to always give priority to matter, because there is no perfect husband, who can give material, attention, and also love. then look for a simple partner but want to understand everything we want from him, no matter the amount of money they have, the most important thing is the mutual filling, mutual couples who initially lack as much as make it like an ideal partner.

### III CONCLUSIONS

1. There are five marital crisis is illustrated in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* play. The first marital crisis is when a woman marries with a man who has important position in their work.

The second marital crisis is inability someone to accept reality from their spouse in past. The third marital crisis is no children yet in the middle of family. The fourth marital crisis is

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jealousy. It is the common problem in marriage relationship.

2. There are three strategies are employed to maintain a marriage. The first strategy is introspection. By knowing mistake from every individual should make solve of the problem clearly. Then the second strategy is making agreement between husband and wife. After knowing all problems, introspection, finding solves, and then a couple should make agreement so that the mistake in the past will not repeat again. The last strategy is accepting reality.

#### IV SUGGESTION

The writer recognize that this study only covers from the aspect of external, especially in the perspective of sociology as well as culture and does not include internal aspects such as analyzing the theme, the characters of the main characters, plot, background and others, while the internal aspect of a literary work that serves

3. Oscar Wilde give attention in marital crisis because he wants to criticize the England society in that era especially in upper class society that hypocrite for many cases particularly in marriage cases. Wilde wants to show that there is no ideal husband but there is a real husband. A real husband with strengthen and weaknesses. Wilde describe by the character of Sir Robert Chiltern. A woman should become a real wife for a real husband.

as a structure in a literary story itself that will be an interesting topic if the analysis as well. Thus, the writer hope for those who have the desire and love of literary works to be motivated to develop other aspects especially in analyzing this drama, in order to be useful to increase their knowledge of drama in English literature.

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