

**AN ANALYSIS OF MARIANA'S SOCIAL CONFLICT IN
ALEX MICHAELIDES' *THE MAIDENS***

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK
IBRAHIM MALANG
2025**

**AN ANALYSIS OF MARIANA'S SOCIAL CONFLICT IN
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THESIS

Presented to

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.)

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IBRAHIM MALANG
2025**

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled "**An Analysis of Mariana's Social Conflict in Alex Michaelides' *The Maidens***" is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person responsible for that.

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MOTTO

*“You never really understand a person
until you consider things from their point of view.”*

— Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, who have always provided unwavering support and love throughout this research process. Thank you for the prayers, motivation, and endless affection that have strengthened me as their eldest child.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Ms. Asni Furaida, M.A., my thesis advisor, and to all the lecturers who have patiently guided and supported me during my studies.

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The researcher realizes that this thesis still has many aspects that can be improved. Therefore, any constructive criticism and suggestions will be gladly received. It is hoped that this feedback can help researchers to develop and refine future research. The researcher also hopes that this thesis can provide benefits and inspiration for the wider community.

The Researcher,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laila Nur Fitriani', written in a cursive style.

Laila Nur Fitriani

ABSTRACT

Fitriani, Laila Nur (2025). An Analysis of Mariana's Social Conflict in Alex Michaelides' *The Maidens*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Asni Furaida, M.A.

Keywords: Social Conflict, Resolution of Conflict, Sociological Approach

Conflict is an inseparable aspect of human life. This study aims to identify the forms of social conflict experienced by Mariana and how the conflicts are resolved in the novel *The Maidens* by Alex Michaelides. This research is a qualitative descriptive literary study and uses a sociological approach. This research applies Georg Simmel's Conflict theory. The researcher formulated two research questions: 1) What are the forms of social conflict experienced by Mariana in Alex Michaelides' *The Maidens*? 2) How are the conflicts resolved in Alex Michaelides' *The Maidens*? The analysis data was collected by identifying and classifying relevant excerpts from the novel *The Maidens*. The data were analyzed by describing and explaining the data according to the theory of Georg Simmel. The analysis results show that: 1) Mariana experienced four forms of social conflict, namely antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship. 2) These social conflicts are resolved through victory and compromise.

مستخلص البحث

فطرياتي، ليلي نور (٢٠٢٥). تحليل صراع الاجتماعي لدى ماريانا في رواية *The Maidens* لأليكس ميخائيليس. البحث الجامعي. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية مالانج. المشرقة: أسني فوريده، الماجستير.

الكلمات الأساسية: الصراع الاجتماعي، حل الصراع، النهج الاجتماعي

الصراع جانب لا يتجزأ من حياة الإنسان. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد أشكال الصراع الاجتماعي التي تعاني منها ماريانا وكيف يتم حل هذه الصراعات في رواية *The Maidens* للكاتب أليكس مايكليس. يعد هذا البحث دراسة أدبية وصفية نوعية ويستخدم المنهج الاجتماعي. يطبق هذا البحث نظرية الصراع لجورج سيميل. صاغ الباحث سؤالاً بحثياً: (١) ما هي أشكال الصراع الاجتماعي التي تعاني منها ماريانا في رواية *The Maidens* لأليكس مايكليس؟ (٢) كيف يتم حل الصراعات في رواية *The Maidens* لأليكس مايكليس؟ تم جمع بيانات التحليل من خلال تحديد وتصنيف المقتطفات ذات الصلة من رواية *The Maidens*. تم تحليل البيانات من خلال وصف وشرح البيانات وفقاً لنظرية جورج سيميل. تظهر نتائج التحليل ما يلي: (١) عانت ماريانا من أربعة أشكال من الصراع الاجتماعي، وهي الصراع العدائي، والصراع القانوني، وتضارب المصالح، والصراع في العلاقة الحميمة. (٢) يتم حل هذه الصراعات الاجتماعية من خلال الانتصار والتسوية.

ABSTRAK

Fitriani, Laila Nur (2025) Analisis Konflik Sosial Mariana dalam *The Maidens* karya Alex Michaelides'. Skripsi. Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing: Asni Furaida, M.A.

Kata Kunci: Konflik Sosial, Resolusi Konflik, Pendekatan Sosiologi

Konflik merupakan aspek yang tidak dapat dipisahkan dari kehidupan manusia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis konflik sosial yang dialami oleh Mariana dan bagaimana konflik-konflik tersebut diselesaikan dalam novel *The Maidens* karya Alex Michaelides. Penelitian ini merupakan studi sastra deskriptif kualitatif dan menggunakan pendekatan sosiologi. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori konflik sosial Georg Simmel. Peneliti merumuskan dua pertanyaan penelitian: 1) Bentuk konflik sosial apa saja yang dialami oleh Mariana dalam novel *The Maidens* karya Alex Michaelides? 2) Bagaimana konflik-konflik tersebut diselesaikan dalam novel *The Maidens* karya Alex Michaelides? Data analisis dikumpulkan dengan mengidentifikasi dan mengklasifikasikan kutipan-kutipan yang relevan dari novel *The Maidens*. Data dianalisis dengan cara mendeskripsikan dan menjelaskan data sesuai dengan teori Georg Simmel. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa: 1) Mariana mengalami empat bentuk konflik sosial, yaitu konflik antagonis, konflik hukum, konflik kepentingan, dan konflik dalam hubungan intim 2) Konflik-konflik sosial tersebut diselesaikan melalui kemenangan dan kompromi.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the introduction to the subsequent chapters of this research. This chapter contains the background of the study, problems of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of the key terms.

A. Background of the Study

One aspect of human life that cannot be separated from social interaction is conflict. As people interact, differences in interests, perspectives, and decisions can create tension, so conflict becomes a natural form of interaction (Simmel, 2009). In this study, Simmel (2009) is used to support the general concept of conflict as a form of social interaction, while Simmel (1955) is used as the primary theoretical source to classify the forms of social conflict and to analyze conflict resolution. Nurgiyantoro (1998, p. 123) states that conflict can enrich one's life experience. Conflict may occur between individuals, between groups, or within a person (Deetz & Stevenson, 1986). In sociology, this phenomenon is referred to as social conflict, which occurs within the context of social relations and is closely linked to the structures and dynamics of society.

Conflict can significantly impact a person's life, both positively and negatively. One of the negative impacts of conflict is that it can trigger criminal acts (Kirmadi, 2022). Although conflict is often associated with disorder or social breakdown, classical sociological thought presents a more nuanced perspective. According to Simmel (2009), conflict is not only destructive, but can also serve as

a mechanism for strengthening social bonds, balancing power, and stimulating social change. Lewis Coser (1957) also argues that conflict can strengthen solidarity and reinforce group structures. Thomas and Frisby (1985) further suggest that the main purpose of social conflict lies in the production of diversity and complexity in society. Therefore, conflict should not be viewed solely as a negative force, but rather as a meaningful and functional social process. Understanding this dimension of conflict opens up possibilities for wise, comprehensive conflict resolution (Sumarno, 2014).

One effective way to analyze the complexity of social conflict is through literature. Wellek and Warren (1948, p. 109) argue that literature is a reflection of real life shaped by social reality. Rohrberger and Woods (1971) similarly describe literature as an expression of people's collective experiences that transmit shared ideas and emotions. Inside the narrative structure, conflict plays a crucial role as a driving force for the development of the storyline. As Stanton (1965, p. 14) stated, if there is no conflict, a story loses its meaning and emotional resonance. Hence, literature provides a reflective medium for understanding the complexity of social conflicts.

The Maidens by Alex Michaelides is a work of literature that depicts social conflict. The novel follows Mariana Andros, a psychotherapist who becomes involved in a murder investigation at the University of Cambridge, where she once studied. Mariana returns to Cambridge after receiving a call from Zoe, her niece whom she has raised since the death of Zoe's parents. Zoe is not only present as Mariana's emotional support, but also plays a role in reinforcing the social tension

and relationship conflicts that continue to develop in the story. Mariana suspects Edward Fosca, a charismatic professor who leads an elite group of female students known as ‘The Maidens,’ as the main suspect. The conflict between Mariana and Fosca is not only personal, but also represented wider issues related to power and academic hierarchy.

This novel depicts social conflict through the complex relationships between characters and the social structures that shape their interactions. Mariana faces social pressure and gender dynamics implied in a masculine academic environment. This tension shows how conflicts arise not only because of friction between individuals, but also because of underlying power imbalances. As such, *The Maidens* provides a rich site for exploring how social conflict operates as a struggle over values, status, and authority. However, research that specifically applies Georg Simmel’s social conflict theory to *The Maidens* and focuses on Mariana’s social conflicts and their resolution has not been found in the studies reviewed by the researcher.

The Maidens is a novel written by Alex Michaelides that was originally published in 2021, although this study utilizes the 2022 edition published by Celadon Books. This novel describes Mariana’s journey in uncovering the truth, which requires her to deal with various external conflicts. The complexity of the main character in this novel, the complicated relationship between the characters, as well as the relevance of the humanitarian issues raised are the reasons why the researcher chose this novel and encouraged the researcher to analyze the social conflict experienced by Mariana and how the conflicts are resolved.

This research aims to explore in greater depth how the theory of social conflict is reflected in the literary work chosen by the researcher. The study focuses on identifying the various forms in which social conflict appears in the novel and examining how those conflicts are resolved. In this context, the researcher seeks to reveal the presence of social conflict in Alex Michaelides' novel *The Maidens*, particularly by analyzing the form of conflict experienced by the main character and the resolution that follows.

The researcher found several previous studies that are related to the topic discussed. Several previous studies have explored social conflict analysis in the literature, using similar theories. One of the most frequently used is Simmel's social conflict theory. Putri (2020), in her study entitled *Social Conflicts in Salla Simukka's Novel As White As Snow (2015)*, identifies three kinds of social conflict, namely conflict of interest, antagonistic conflict, and conflict in intimate relationships. The study also explains three conflict resolutions, namely victory, reconciliation, and disappearance of the basic of conflict. Similarly, Hapsari (2023), in her study entitled *Social Conflict of Cassie Sullivan in Rick Yancey's The 5th Wave*, reveals three forms of social conflict, namely antagonistic conflict, conflict over-causes, and conflict in intimate relationships, which are resolved through victory and compromise. Ardan (2024), in his study entitled *The Main Character's Social Conflict in Burton's Wednesday Film Series (2022)*, found that the main character faces antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in intimate relationships, with conflict resolutions involving victory, compromise, and reconciliation. Maghfiroh & Zawawi (2021), in their article entitled *Konflik*

sosial dalam novel Aib dan Nasib karya Minanto berdasarkan perspektif Georg Simmel, identified conflict of interest, interpersonal conflict, and conflict in intimate relationships, manifested as verbal fights, sarcasm, brawls, and tension, with resolutions including coercion, mediation, tolerance, and conversion.

Another group of studies applies Lewis Coser's social conflict theory. Septiani (2023), in her study entitled *Characters' Social Conflict in Anthony Burgess' The Wanting Seed*, identified conflict involving social position, conflict of interest, and conflict of roles, with causal factors being violence, relation, and condition. Situmeang et al. (2025), in their article entitled *Representasi Konflik Dalam Film Ngeri Ngeri Sedap Menggunakan Teori Lewis Coser* using Coser's theory on the film *Ngeri Ngeri Sedap*, categorized the conflicts into realistic and non-realistic conflict. Wildan et al. (2025), in their article entitled *Social Conflict That Portrayed in The House on Mango Street Novel*, also identified realistic conflict and non-realistic conflict, showing that disappointment, sexual harassment, distrust, and jokes were common conflict triggers in the narrative.

A different theory appears in Azizah's (2023) study entitled *Social Conflict and Social Change in Colson Whitehead's The Nickel Boys*, which applies Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory. The research found that social conflict is shown through acts of discrimination resulting from differences in interests between superordinate (staff) and subordinate (students) groups at Nickel Academy. The conflict led to social change, including the removal of hierarchical structures at the institution, thereby illustrating Dahrendorf's premise that conflict drives institutional transformation.

Another study, conducted by Damayanti (2021), entitled *The Analysis of The Main Character's Conflicts in Elizabeth Rudnick's Maleficent* focuses on the conflicts Maleficent experiences and how she overcomes them. By applying Kenney's theory and Deetz and Stevenson's, it was found that Maleficent faced eight external and seven internal conflicts and used five conflict management strategies. This study highlights the significance of understanding both the types of conflict and the methods used to resolve them.

In addition, class-based theories such as those of Karl Marx and Max Weber are also employed to examine social inequality. Siahaan & Satria (2022) in their article entitled *The Reflection of Social Class Conflict in "The Notebook" Novel by Sparks* analyzed *The Notebook* using this framework and found that social class differences created gaps in status and acceptance between upper-class and middle-class individuals. The conflict, rooted in disparities of power, privilege, and lifestyle, reveals the barriers imposed by class distinctions on interpersonal relationships.

Based on several previous studies, this research has similarities with previous studies in terms of analyzing social conflict. However, the difference of this research lies in the object of study, which is the novel *The Maidens* by Alex Michaelides. Based on the researcher's search, through Google Scholar and Etheses UIN Malang up to December 2025, studies focusing on Simmel's social conflict in *The Maidens* were not found. By using Simmel's theory, this research analyzes the forms of social conflict experienced by the main character and examines how these conflicts are resolved. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute to the

sociological study of literature, particularly in understanding the representation of social conflict in fictional narratives.

B. Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study above, the problems of the study can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the forms of social conflict experienced by Mariana in Alex Michaelides' *The Maidens*?
2. How are the conflicts resolved in Alex Michaelides' *The Maidens*?

C. Significance of the Study

The results of this research are expected to provide practical and theoretical benefits. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the field of literature, especially in understanding the social conflicts that occur in novels, and is expected to increase knowledge about Georg Simmel's social conflict theory in analyzing literary works. Practically, this research is expected to be used as an additional reference for future researchers who want to examine the novel *The Maidens* or other literary works.

D. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this research focuses on the main character, Mariana Andros, in the novel *The Maidens*. This research discusses the forms of social conflict experienced by Mariana in her interactions with other characters and social authorities in the narrative, as well as how the conflicts are resolved.

This study has several limitations. First, the data are limited to conflict episodes in which Mariana is directly involved, so conflicts among other characters without Mariana are excluded. Second, only quotations that match the indicators of Georg Simmel's social conflict theory are selected as data, so the analysis is restricted to conflicts that can be classified into the forms explained in the theoretical framework. Third, each form of conflict is supported by at least two quotations to ensure sufficient textual evidence, while the discussion of conflict resolution is supported by key quotations that represent the resolution pattern found in the novel.

The researcher expects that future studies may explore other characters and other aspects of *The Maidens*, since this novel provides various issues that can be analyzed from different perspectives.

E. Definition of the Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding the meaning, the researcher provides brief definitions of key terms in this study.

1. Social Conflict: refers to opposition between individuals or groups that emerges from incompatible interests, goals, or positions in social relations. In this study, social conflict is identified through indicators such as opposition or hostility, struggles over power or status, goal incompatibility, and actions that appear verbally, physically, or through institutional processes (Simmel, 1955).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the approach and theory employed in this research. This research employs a sociological approach and utilizes social conflict theory by Georg Simmel as a framework for this research.

A. Sociological Approach

The sociological approach in literary analysis is a method that emphasizes the relationship between literature and society. Damono (1978) states that literature is a reflection of social life that cannot be separated from the values, ideologies, and conflicts that develop in society. This approach views literature not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a reflection of social structure, cultural values, and human interaction (Ghozi, 2008). Through this approach, literary works are examined in relation to the social conditions behind them.

In general, sociology is the scientific study of human behavior, social norms, and social structures. Swingewood (1972), defines it as an objective discipline that observes human life in society, such as how society is formed, functions, and persists. Within the context of literature, this approach is used to analyze the complex relationship between individuals and their social environment.

Swingewood (1972) divides the study of literary sociology into three approaches. First, the sociology of the author, which highlights the social background, ideology, and conditions that influence an author's work. Second, the

sociology of literary works, which examines the content, themes, and structure of the work as a representation of social reality. Third, the sociology of readers, which emphasizes the reception, response, and impact of literary works on society. With these three approaches, research can examine the reciprocal relationship between text, author, and reader in their social sphere.

In line with this, Endraswara (2003) asserts that literary sociology focuses on human issues, because literary works often reveal life struggles and social dynamics through the author's imagination. Faruk (1994) also states that the sociology of literature is a scientific study of humans in society, including the social institutions and processes that shape them. This view is emphasized by Wellek and Warren (1956), who see literary works as not merely products of imagination but social documents that reflect the life of society.

Therefore, the sociological approach to literature allows us to understand literary works as the result of the relationship between the conditions of the author and what is written in the text and its readers. Literature is not merely an entertainment or aesthetic expression, but also a mirror of social reality, a means of criticism, and a medium for conveying cultural values. Therefore, analyzing literary works through this approach will reveal how the text keeps traces of conflicts, ideologies, and norms of the society behind it.

The sociological approach is highly relevant to analyzing the complex social structure at Cambridge University in the context of *The Maidens*. This novel is not merely a murder mystery, but also depicts an academic environment controlled by

strict hierarchy, reputation, and power dynamics. For example, the relationship between Edward Fosca and 'The Maidens' clearly shows the power imbalance between a lecturer and his students. This shows how academic charisma can be manipulated to reinforce dominance. The roles of the Dean and the police also represent institutional authorities that seek to maintain order and protect the university's reputation. By applying a sociological perspective, this study reveals how social institutions, power, and academic norms trigger and shape the conflicts experienced by Mariana Andros.

B. Social Conflict Theory

According to Georg Simmel, conflict is a natural and inevitable part of social life. Simmel saw conflict as not only negative, but also positive. Simmel (1955) explains that conflict can actually be a way to unite differences. Although it often appears in the form of opposition or elimination of the opposing side, conflict can still produce new arrangements in society. Conflict can function as a social adhesive that strengthens relationships within groups, while distinguishing them from other groups (Simmel, 1955). In other words, conflict should not be understood as a threat to social order, but as a means that keeps society moving and developing. No society is completely free from conflict, as tensions are natural in social life.

Conflict in social life is called social conflict, where two or more parties are involved in differences in interests, desires, or views (Elly, 2013, p. 347). This shows that in social life there are no individuals who really have absolute

similarities, either in terms of ethnicity, goals, or interests. According to Surbakti (1992, p. 109), conflict occurs because interest groups, organizations, institutions, and social classes do not always have aligned and harmonious goals. Differences in the distribution of power and authority between groups are also factors that trigger conflict.

1. Forms of Social Conflict

Georg Simmel classifies social conflict into four forms, namely antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship. To strictly distinguish between these categories and ensure data validity, the researcher establishes specific indicators for each form of conflict as presented in the table below:

Table 1. Indicators of Simmel's forms of social conflict

No.	Forms of Conflict	Key Indicators	Operational Definition
1.	Antagonistic conflict	Direct hostility, intent to undermine, violence	Efforts to destroy, defeat, or bring down the opponent directly through physical or extreme verbal aggression. The goal is the destruction or domination of the opponent.
2.	Legal Conflict	Police involvement, official investigation, formal questioning, formal report or complaint, sanction, charge, decision by authorized institution using procedure	Disputes resolved through objective mechanisms, legal frameworks, or legitimate authority figures (e.g., police, dean).
3.	Conflict of Interest	Goal Incompatibility	Conflicts that arise due to opposing goals, needs, or

			desires (e.g., status, reputation, access) without the intention of destroying the other person.
4.	Conflict in an Intimate Relationship	Affective / Emotional Bond	Disagreements that occur between individuals who have close emotional bonds, characterized by trust or dependence, feelings of betrayal or disappointment, intense emotional reactions, and threats to the continuity of the relationship.

Source: Synthesized from Simmel (1955)

One quotation is coded into one primary category based on the dominant indicator. If an episode contains another aspect, it is mentioned as a secondary aspect without being counted as new data.

a. Antagonistic Conflict

Antagonistic conflict, according to Simmel, is the most violent form of conflict because it is characterized by direct hostility and the specific intent to destroy the opponent. This form of conflict arises when two or more parties come face to face with conflicting interests, so that each tries to prevent the other from achieving goals. Since each party not only has different goals, but also actively prevents the other from achieving them, this conflict often develops into violent and extreme opposition. Therefore, in social life, antagonistic conflict tends to be considered unfavorable and avoided as much as possible.

This conflict can also arise when there is a common goal that can only be achieved by one of the parties, so the relationship is competitive and contentious.

In this situation, there is no unifying element because each party tries to prevent and even destroy its opponent, either physically, psychologically, or socially (Soekanto & Yudho, 1986). Simmel (1955) emphasized that antagonistic conflict is basically rooted in human dissatisfaction with basic needs, both physical and mental. Therefore, this conflict is often difficult to avoid in social life.

However, Simmel also saw that these conflicts are not solely destructive, but can stop when the parties involved reach a saturation point or realize that protracted conflicts no longer provide benefits. In other words, antagonistic conflicts reflect extreme social dynamics, but remain part of the mechanisms of a society that is constantly moving and changing.

b. Legal Conflict

Legal conflict is a form of social conflict involving parties facing off in the realm of law, with the realization that resolution must be based on rational considerations. In accordance with the operational definition, this conflict relies on formal processes and authority figures. In this conflict, the conflicting parties both recognize the authority of the law as the basis for reaching a just decision. Legal conflicts are seen as absolute, objective, and pure conflicts, because the claims submitted by each party are considered valid and supported by strong evidence. Therefore, legal conflicts are not based on personal emotions or grudges, but on claims that are considered legitimate and based on strong evidence (Simmel, 1955).

The absolute nature of legal conflict indicates that the resolution process cannot be influenced by factors outside the law, so what is sought is formal truth

and justice. Although this conflict appears restrictive, Simmel sees that its existence is important in maintaining social order, as the law provides a settlement framework that is acceptable to all parties and prevents disagreements from developing into more destructive forms of conflict.

In this study, legal conflict refers to conflicts managed through formal procedures and authorized institutions, especially when police involvement or official investigative processes are present, while internal academic disputes without such procedures are classified based on other dominant indicators.

c. Conflict of Interest

Conflicts of interest occur when personal goals, needs, or desires are incompatible with those of others in a social relationship. According to Simmel, this conflict is distinct from antagonistic conflict because it focuses on the clash of goals or incompatibility rather than a direct desire to destroy the opponent. Even so, conflicts of interest can also be influenced by personal factors, for example, when one's feelings or choices make judgments less objective (Soekanto & Yudho, 1986). In essence, this conflict arises because there are conflicting relationships, interests, and decisions. If personal interests and common interests can be separated, conflicts usually do not last long. However, if the two are mixed, the conflict can create tension regarding who gets access or rights to a specific goal. Thus, conflicts of interest show how social interactions are often characterized by a tug-of-war between self-interest and common interest, which can either strengthen or weaken relationships in society.

d. Conflict in an Intimate Relationship

Conflict in intimate relationships is a form of conflict that occurs between two individuals who are emotionally close, such as a married couple or lovers. The distinguishing criterion here is the presence of an affective or emotional bond. Although intimate relationships are often identified with harmony, Simmel emphasizes that conflict remains inevitable because emotional closeness makes both parties mutually involved in various aspects of life. This form of conflict tends to be more intense because it touches the deepest feelings, and can even involve self-denial.

According to Simmel (1955), sincere relationships are better able to deal with conflict, as they do not need to avoid disagreement in order to maintain a pseudo-peace. In contrast, couples who lack trust in the foundation of their relationship often go to great lengths to avoid conflict. In addition, past experiences can also influence how one deals with conflict in intimate relationships, such as hurt feelings carried over from previous experiences (Soekanto & Yudho, 1986). Thus, conflict in intimate relationships reflects how emotional closeness not only produces happiness, but also opens up space for disagreements that can ultimately strengthen or weaken the bonds of the relationship.

2. The Resolution of Social Conflict

This section discusses the resolution of social conflicts according to Georg Simmel's conflict theory, which categorizes them into four forms: victory, compromise, conciliation, and irreconcilability.

However, while Simmel recognizes these four forms, an examination of *The Maidens* reveals that conflict resolution primarily takes the form of victory and compromise. The forms of conciliation and irreconcilability are notably absent from the data. This occurs because the novel centers on a murder investigation. The protagonist, Mariana Andros, and the antagonist engage in social relationships motivated by suspicion, the pursuit of truth, and the need to survive. This creates a hostile social atmosphere that favors domination in the form of victory or strategic negotiation as seen in compromise, rather than the restoration of emotional bonds inherent in conciliation. Also, irreconcilability is not found because the nature of the thriller genre drives the conflict towards a decisive conclusion, rather than leaving the conflict in a state of unresolved separation. Therefore, although this chapter explains all four theoretical forms for conceptual completeness, the analysis in this study will focus on the forms found in the text.

a. Victory

Victory in Simmel's perspective is understood as a form of conflict resolution characterized by the victory of one party over the other. In this situation, the conflict ends not because of a mutual agreement, but because one party manages to dominate and subdue its opponent. According to Simmel (1955), victory in conflict is one way to create social certainty, because the losing party is forced to accept the conditions determined by the winning party. However, victory can also create new tensions, especially if the losing party harbors dissatisfaction or resentment. Thus, while victory can bring a decisive end to a conflict, it does not always guarantee harmonious social relations in the future.

b. Compromise

In contrast to victory, compromise emphasizes reaching common ground between conflicting parties. Both parties are willing to reduce some of their demands or interests to obtain a solution that is considered fair. This model allows for the sustainability of social relations as neither party is completely disadvantaged. With compromise, neither party fully wins or loses, but both obtain results that are considered fair and balanced. In Simmel's view, compromise is one way to maintain social balance, as this form of resolution brings stability without the need for absolute domination (Simmel, 1955).

c. Conciliation

Conciliation is a form of conflict resolution that focuses on restoring social relations after a conflict. The main goal is not just to find a middle point, but to rebuild trust and repair bonds that were damaged. The conciliation process usually takes place through admitting mistakes, apologizing, or creating a new, more peaceful atmosphere. In Simmel's view, conciliation arises when both parties realize that continuing hostilities will only worsen the social situation, so they choose a path to improve relations. In this way, the conflict not only ends, but can also become a turning point that strengthens the relationship in the future (Simmel, 1955).

d. Irreconcilability

Irreconcilability refers to a situation where the conflict cannot be resolved, and the parties involved decide to separate or maintain a distance without reaching

any agreement. According to Simmel (1955), this form occurs when the contradictory elements are so strong that no unification is possible. Instead of forcing a resolution that might cause further damage, the parties accept that their differences are permanent. In this state, the relationship may dissolve entirely, or the parties may coexist with a mutual understanding that the conflict remains unsettled.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter describes the methods used by the researcher in conducting research. The method in this research consists of four components, namely research design, data sources obtained, data collection, and data analysis. The use of this method aims to enable the researcher to structure the research in a detailed and structured manner.

A. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method within the framework of literary sociology. This method was chosen because the data used in this study consists of words, phrases, and dialogues from novels, rather than numerical data. This descriptive method allows researchers to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of social conflicts depicted in the text.

In applying this design, the researcher identified, classified, and analyzed the data contained in the novel *The Maidens* by Alex Michaelides. The main focus was to analyze the social conflicts experienced by the main character, Mariana Andros. In the analysis process, the primary output involves categorizing the data into four forms of social conflict (antagonistic, legal, interest, and intimate relationship) and their subsequent resolutions (victory and compromise) based on the theory of Georg Simmel (1955). This study aims to provide a comprehensive explanation of how social interactions and conflicts are constructed in literary works.

B. Data Source

The data are words, phrases, sentences, and dialogues from Alex Michaelides' novel *The Maidens*. While the novel was originally published in 2021, this research utilizes the International Paperback Edition published in October 2022 by Celadon Books / St. Martin's Paperbacks (ISBN 978-1-250-88116-8). This edition consists of 372 pages, divided into six parts and 83 chapters. Consequently, all page numbers and textual references in this thesis refer to this specific edition.

C. Data Collection

In collecting the data, the researcher takes several steps.

1. The novel *The Maidens* was read repeatedly to ensure contextual understanding prior to coding. In this step, the researcher performed a close reading to comprehend the narrative structure and the flow of the story.
2. The researcher identified and highlighted specific episodes in the novel that depict social conflict between the main character and other characters.
3. The highlighted sections, consisting of narration and dialogue, were extracted as raw data for analysis.
4. The extracted data were coded using the specific indicators from Georg Simmel's theory. This classification covers the forms of social conflict, namely antagonistic, legal, interest, and intimate, as well as their resolutions, which include victory, compromise, conciliation, and irreconcilability.

5. Finally, the researcher cross-checked the selected data with the first and second research questions to ensure that the quotations were relevant and sufficient to answer the problem formulation

D. Data Analysis

Data Analysis is the next step after collecting the data.

1. To begin with, the researcher categorized and chose the data that was relevant to the problem of the study.
2. Next, the researcher performed peer checking to validate the data. This was done by discussing the data classification with the thesis advisor to minimize subjectivity and ensure the coding aligned with the theory
3. The researcher analyzed and interpreted the valid data based on the social conflict theory by Georg Simmel (1955), demonstrating the social conflict experienced by the main character in the novel and how the conflicts are resolved.
4. The researcher described the analysis results and wrote the conclusion.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter includes data analysis based on research questions. The researcher established the study by analyzing the main character of Alex Michaelides' novel named *The Maidens*, Mariana. First, this chapter identifies the forms of social conflict experienced by Mariana. Second, it explains how the conflict was resolved based on Georg Simmel's theory.

A. The Forms of Social Conflict Experienced by Mariana

Based on Simmel's theory, social conflict is divided into four forms, namely antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship. In *The Maidens* by Alex Michaelides, the researcher found that the main character, Mariana, experiences four forms of social conflict. The result of forms of social conflict is explained below.

The following table summarizes the distribution of data used to analyze the forms of social conflict experienced by Mariana in the novel.

Table 2. Distribution of forms of social conflict

No.	Forms of Conflict	Number of Data	Character Involved	Page Number
1.	Antagonistic Conflict	6	Mariana, Fosca, The Maidens, Henry, Zoe	178-179, 232, 287, 305-306, 314-315, 358
2.	Legal Conflict	2	Mariana, Inspector Sangha, Dean	315-316, 321
3.	Conflict of Interest	2	Mariana, Fosca	283, 318
4.	Conflict in an Intimate Relationship	5	Mariana, Zoe, Sebastian	46, 47, 217, 333, 348-354
Total		15		

1. Antagonistic Conflict

Antagonistic conflicts involve direct opposition between parties who seek to obstruct or even defeat or destroy the opponent. Simmel (1955) emphasizes that this form of conflict arises when differences of interest turn into active hostility and efforts to undermine the opponent's existence, often escalating into extreme confrontation. In Alex Michaelides' *The Maidens*, the main character, Mariana, experiences several antagonistic conflicts.

a. Conflict between Mariana and Edward Fosca

In the novel *The Maidens* by Alex Michaelides, the social conflict between Mariana and Edward Fosca becomes a major focus in Mariana's attempt to uncover the truth behind a series of murders in Cambridge. This conflict depicts hostile feud driven by a mutual intent to undermine each other, where Mariana strives to expose and destroy Fosca's reputation as the killer, while Fosca uses his charisma to intimidate and counter her accusations. The conflict between Mariana and Edward Fosca escalates as Mariana constantly suspects Fosca's role in a series of murders in Cambridge, making a destructive confrontation between them inevitable.

The antagonistic conflict between Mariana and Fosca is clearly visible when Fosca violates Mariana's personal boundaries. Instead of engaging in a professional relationship, Fosca engages in inappropriate and intimidating behavior. This moment shows that from the beginning their relationship was marked by tension, manipulation, and conflict.

*Before she could stop him, he leaned forward—
 And he kissed her on the lips.
 It only lasted a second. By the time Mariana could react, he had already pulled
 back.
 Fosca turned and went through the open gate. Mariana heard him whistling as he
 walked away.
 She brushed away the kiss with her fist.
 ‘How dare he?’
 She felt as if she had been assaulted—attacked; and that he had won somehow,
 succeeded in wrong-footing, intimidating her.
 As she stood there, feeling hot and cold in the morning sun, burning with anger.
 (p. 178-179)*

The data above shows the antagonistic conflict between Mariana and Fosca, characterized by direct hostility and boundary violation. Fosca’s act of kissing Mariana without consent is not a sign of closeness. Referring to Simmel’s indicators, this action reflects the ‘intent to undermine’ the opponent. Mariana’s reaction shows resistance and escalation, she brushes the kiss away, feels attacked, and becomes burning with anger, which indicates that the interaction has shifted from tension into direct opposition.

According to Simmel’s theory of social conflict, antagonistic conflict arises when two parties confront each other directly with the intention of suppressing or weakening the other party. Through her inappropriate physical actions, Fosca tries to dominate Mariana, while Mariana strongly resists and feels threatened. This scene emphasizes the destructive nature of their conflict, aimed at bringing down and weakening the other party.

Then their conversation continues, with little debate, increasing the tension between them. This scene shows how Mariana is increasingly convinced that Fosca is a manipulative and dangerous figure, thus emphasizing the conflict between them.

"We're not talking about me."

"Oh, but we are—we're one and the same."

She frowned. "We're not. Not at all."

"Oh, Mariana." He laughed. "You don't seriously believe I'm murdering my students? It's absurd. That's not to say a few don't deserve it." He laughed again—and his laugh sent a shiver down Mariana's spine.

She stared at him—feeling she had just glimpsed who he really was: callous, sadistic, entirely uncaring. She was getting into dangerous territory, she knew. (p. 232)

The data above shows antagonistic conflict because Fosca's statement and laughter function as intimidation and an attempt to destabilize Mariana's moral stance. This opposition shows an intent to undermine. The situation makes Mariana feel threatened and realize that she is dealing with something dangerous. Mariana's firm rejection shows direct opposition, and her reaction of fear indicates escalation, because the interaction shifts from debate into a threatening confrontation. This form of interaction fits Simmel's definition of antagonistic conflict, which is a direct opposition in which each party not only has different views, but also tries to negate the position of their opponent.

The conflict reaches its peak when Mariana, overcome with rage, physically attacks Fosca. This moment signifies the tipping point where their verbal and psychological confrontation turns violent. Mariana attacks Fosca after receiving a postcard that she thinks is from Fosca. The postcard contained a quote from the Ancient Greek play *Electra* that implied a death threat against Mariana.

With all of her strength, she struck him in the face.

Fosca reeled backward. "Jesus—"

But before he could catch his breath, Mariana punched him again. And again.

He raised his hands to protect himself—but she kept hitting him, pummeling him with her fists, shouting.

"You bastard—you sick bastard—" (p. 314-315)

The data above shows the climax of antagonistic conflict between Mariana and Fosca. This episode marks escalation from verbal and psychological confrontation into physical violence, which is a strong indicator of antagonistic conflict. Mariana's attack is not just an outburst of emotion, but an accumulation of frustration and tension that can no longer be transmitted through words. Mariana's efforts to seek justice clash with Fosca's manipulative and often evasive attitude. This action also reflects accumulated tension, because earlier intimidation and domination by Fosca have pushed the conflict toward an extreme point. Therefore, this scene represents the sharpest form of antagonistic conflict in line with Simmel's concept of direct opposition that becomes destructive.

b. Conflict between Mariana and Zoe

The antagonistic conflict between Mariana and Zoe is one of the most significant conflicts in *The Maidens*. Mariana initially comes to Cambridge because of a request from Zoe, her niece, who is in shock due to a murder case that happened to one of her friends. Mariana, who works as a therapist, fulfills her niece's request. Mariana's intention to calm and protect Zoe develops into further involvement. She takes part in investigating the case, trying to find out who the real culprit is. However, this investigation leads to new suspicions about Zoe. Their warm relationship slowly turns tense. Mariana began to suspect that Zoe was involved in the murder case, while Zoe felt increasingly cornered by these suspicions. Their conflict reaches its climax when Mariana investigates the trail around the folly and the riverbank, then Zoe suddenly tries to attack her with a knife.

Zoe stared at Mariana, breathless, holding a knife. Her eyes were red and full of tears. (p. 356)

Mariana felt a sudden force to her back.

She was knocked to the ground, with Zoe on her back. Mariana struggled, but Zoe used all of her weight, pinning Mariana down in the mud. The earth was cold and wet against Mariana's face. And she heard Zoe whispering in her ear.

"Tomorrow, when they find your body, I'll say to the inspector I tried to stop you, that I begged you not to investigate the folly alone—but you insisted..."

Zoe climbed off Mariana and flipped her onto her back. She loomed over her, raising the knife. Her eyes were wild, monstrous. (p. 358)

The quotation above shows antagonistic conflict between Mariana and Zoe because the confrontation escalates into direct physical violence and an intention to defeat the opponent completely. According to Simmel, antagonistic conflict is characterized by direct hostility, full of emotion, and contains attempts to bring each other down. In this scene, Zoe physically attacks Mariana with the intention of killing her. This attack is no longer limited to differences of opinion or suspicion, but has taken the form of real violence. Zoe even prepares an alibi to cover up her actions. Based on Simmel's perspective, the scene is characterized by antagonistic conflict, which is the sharpest form of opposition. At this point, one party no longer seeks a middle ground but rather seeks to defeat its opponent completely. For Simmel, this form of conflict arises when social interactions can no longer be mediated.

c. Conflict between Mariana and The Maidens

In her efforts to uncover the truth behind the Cambridge murder case, Mariana tries to approach The Maidens, a group of elite female students who are fiercely loyal to Professor Edward Fosca. Their strong and almost unwavering loyalty prevents Mariana from gaining their cooperation, making them an obstacle in her investigation. Later, Mariana tried to open a discussion space through a group

therapy session in the Old Combination Room, hoping to make them see the other side of Fosca's figure and to uncover any hidden truths. However, before the session began, Mariana had felt an atmosphere of hostility and intimidation from the members of the group.

Later in the group therapy session, Mariana challenged the group's perception of Fosca, questioning his role as a father figure. However, the Maidens responded with anger, voiced their opposition explicitly.

Natasha let out a heavy, irritated sigh. "This is such bullshit," she said with a strong Russian accent. "It's obvious what you are doing."

"You're trying to make us say something bad about the professor. To trick us. To trap him."

There was a sudden passion in her voice, a burning resentment.

"You're very angry, Natasha," she said. "I can feel it."

Natasha laughed. "Good—because it's directed at you." (p. 287)

The data above shows the antagonistic conflict. Mariana triggers an antagonistic conflict by questioning Fosca's role, causing the Maidens to react with hostility. Natasha accused Mariana of trying to trap them into saying bad things about Fosca. The accusation is delivered in an angry tone, which was later confirmed by her statement that the anger was actually directed at Mariana. This reaction reflects the group's strong rejection of any outside views that threaten their perception of the professor. According to Simmel's theory, antagonistic conflict occurs when the conflicting parties not only have different points of view, but also actively obstruct and attack their opponents. In this scene, antagonism is clearly evident through the hateful words and total rejection of Mariana.

d. Conflict between Mariana and Henry

Henry is one of Mariana's therapy patients in London. Their relationship was initially professional, but then Henry developed an excessive emotional dependence on Mariana. This dependence grew into an obsession. While Mariana was in Cambridge investigating a murder case, Henry suddenly showed up in front of her holding a knife.

*Henry emerged from the darkness. He stared at her. He had a horrible look in his eyes; not entirely rational, slightly manic...He was holding a knife, about seven or eight inches long.
Mariana tried to sound calm and unafraid. "Henry? Please put down the knife."
He didn't answer. He just stared at her.
A hysterical tone crept into his voice. "You abandoned me, Mariana. You—you sacrificed me." (p. 305-306)*

The data above demonstrates the antagonistic conflict between Mariana and Henry. Henry's appearance with a knife in his hand conveys a direct physical threat, and his irrational gaze emphasizes that his emotions and hatred have reached an extreme hostility. Mariana tries to calm the situation by asking Henry to put down his weapon, but Henry does not respond. Instead, he verbally attacks her with an accusation by saying that Mariana has '*abandoned*' and '*sacrificed*' him. Henry's actions illustrate the escalation of the conflict from psychological tension to potential physical violence. Simmel emphasized that antagonistic conflict is the most intense form of conflict because it involves an intent to harm or destroy. In this scene, the conflict that was initially emotional develops into a real threat, thus demonstrating the character of antagonistic conflict at its highest intensity.

2. Legal Conflict

Legal conflict is a social conflict that occurs when claims, accusations, or opposing interests are processed through legitimate authority and formal

procedures. According to Simmel (1955), legal conflict differs from other forms of conflict because its resolution is no longer determined by personal emotions, but by rational considerations, evidence, and legal legitimacy. Legal conflict is characterized by a rational resolution through legal mechanisms, so that the resulting decision is objective and recognized by both parties. In this study, legal conflict is identified when the conflict is handled through formal procedures by authorized institutions, especially when police authority, official investigation, or threats of charges and sanctions are present. In the novel *The Maidens*, a form of legal conflict is apparent when Mariana must face the campus and the police due to her actions that are considered to have crossed the line.

a. Mariana Called to the Dean's Office

One form of legal conflict arose when Mariana was called to the dean's office after her actions caused a commotion by punching Professor Fosca. The presence of the dean and the Chief Inspector indicates that the matter has moved from a personal confrontation into a formal process that requires an official explanation.

Chief Inspector Sangha appeared. He stared at Mariana, stunned—as if he were looking at a crazy person. “What the hell is going on?”
Soon afterward, Mariana found herself in the dean's office, and was asked to explain her actions. She sat across the desk from Chief Inspector Sangha, Julian, the dean—and Edward Fosca. (p. 315-316)

The data above is coded as a legal conflict because the conflict is managed through authorized institutions and formal questioning. Mariana was called to the Dean's office to explain her actions in front of the Dean, Chief Inspector Sangha, Julian, and Professor Fosca, which indicates a procedural handling of the case rather

than a private dispute. In Simmel's perspective, this conflict reflects a legal conflict because the problem is placed in a rational framework, no longer in the emotional realm. Mariana was faced with a claim that was considered legitimate, because her actions had disturbed order and thus required a legal mechanism.

b. Mariana Facing the Police Authority

Another form of legal conflict emerged when Mariana confronted Chief Inspector Sangha, the head of the Cambridge murder investigation. Mariana was under immense pressure from Chief Inspector Sangha because she was deemed to have crossed the line, from unsubstantiated accusations to physical assault on Fosca. He also warned that Mariana could be arrested and charged with obstructing justice.

There was silence. Chief Inspector Sangha spoke firmly. "Mariana. You've repeatedly tested my patience. You've made totally unsubstantiated accusations against Professor Fosca—not to mention physically assaulting him. He's perfectly within his rights to press charges."
She tried to interrupt, but Sangha kept talking. "No, enough—you need to listen to me now. I want you gone by tomorrow morning. Away from this college and Professor Fosca—away from this investigation—away from me. Or I will have you arrested and charged with obstructing justice. Is that clear? Listen to Julian, okay? See your doctor. Get some help." (p. 321)

The above data shows a clear legal conflict because it explicitly involves legal authority and threats of formal sanctions. Sangha not only reprimanded her but also specifically listed the violations committed by Mariana. These violations included accusing Fosca without evidence, committing physical violence, and interfering with an official investigation. These accusations are valid claims.

In addition to emphasizing Mariana's guilt, Sangha also threatens formal sanctions. He states that Fosca has the right to prosecute Mariana and asserts that

Mariana will be arrested and charged with obstructing justice if she remains in Cambridge. This threat demonstrates how legal authority is used to restrict Mariana's freedom of movement. From Simmel's perspective, this conflict is considered a legal one because both are placed within a legal framework, no longer a private sphere, and its resolution is directed toward a rational, law-based mechanism, where claims and evidence form the basis for decisions.

3. Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest is a form of social conflict that arises when a person's individual goals or needs are incompatible with those of another in a social relationship. According to Simmel's social conflict theory (1955), his conflict is triggered by goal incompatibility, where the achievement of one person's objective necessarily obstructs the fulfillment of the other's. Unlike antagonistic conflict which focuses on destroying the opponent, this conflict centers on the clash of specific desires. In the novel *The Maidens* by Alex Michaelides, this conflict appears between Mariana and Professor Fosca. Mariana wants to uncover the truth, while Fosca tries hard to protect his reputation and personal secrets.

The conflict between Mariana and Professor Fosca becomes evident when Mariana accuses Fosca of hiding important information. This creates tension rooted in incompatible goals; Mariana seeks access to the truth, while Fosca seeks to keep the information controlled.

"It makes me wonder, Professor," she said, with a slight frown, "what on earth it is that you're so desperate to hide?" Fosca smiled. "I'm not trying to hide anything. Let's just say I wish to be there, to protect my students." "Protect them? From what?" "From you, Mariana," he said. "From you." (p. 283)

The quote above is coded as a conflict of interest because the dominant indicator is goal incompatibility related to access and control of information. Mariana wants to uncover the truth about what Fosca is hiding, while Fosca tries to protect his secrets. This is in line with Simmel's social conflict theory that the achievement of one person's goals obstructs another's. This shows that Mariana's goal is obstructed by Fosca's effort to control the situation and protect what he wants to keep hidden. As a secondary aspect, Fosca's statement that he needs to protect his students from Mariana also contains direct hostility. However, the primary tension in this episode remains the clash of goals and the struggle over access, so it is not counted as a separate antagonistic data.

The conflict of interest between them grows when Mariana thinks she has found Fosca's true motives. Mariana believes that Fosca's protection claim is only an excuse, and that his real interest is to avoid losing status and reputation.

Mariana looked him in the eyes. "Because Tara was your lover. And then something happened—she discovered you were sleeping with the others?—and threatened to expose you—and then what? You'd lose your job, and this elitist academic world that you cherish; you'd lose your reputation—you couldn't let that happen. You threatened to kill Tara. And you then carried out that threat. Unfortunately for you, she told Zoe first ... And Zoe told me." Fosca stared at her. His dark eyes glinted in the light like black ice. "That's your theory, is it?" (p. 318)

The quote above is coded as a conflict of interest because it explicitly presents Fosca's personal interests that are at stake, such as his job, academic status, and reputation, which directly clash with Mariana's goal of uncovering the truth. Mariana's success in exposing the case would threaten Fosca's position, while Fosca's protection of his career would block Mariana's attempt to reveal the truth.

This matches Simmel's idea that incompatible goals create obstruction between parties. As a secondary aspect, the confrontation also shows hostility through Fosca's cold reaction, but the dominant issue is the clash of interests related to career and reputation, so it remains categorized as conflict of interest.

4. Conflict in an Intimate Relationship

Conflict in an intimate relationship is a form of conflict that arises in relationships that are close and full of emotional attachments, such as between spouses, families, or people who have strong personal attachments. According to Simmel (1955), emotional closeness opens up opportunities for conflict because both parties are intensely involved in each other's lives. The closer the relationship, the greater the potential for conflict. This conflict is often sharper than other conflicts because it touches the realm of feelings and involves trust, affection, and belonging.

In *The Maidens*, this form of conflict is seen in Mariana's relationship with Zoe, her niece, and with Sebastian, her late husband. Their closeness is not only in the form of a close relationship as a family, but also creates conflict that reflects Simmel's view of conflict in intimate relationships.

a. Conflict between Mariana and Zoe

The conflict in an intimate relationship between Mariana and Zoe is rooted in their family ties as aunt and niece. However, this closeness is filled with suspicion and doubt. Mariana feels that Zoe is hiding something, while Zoe thinks that Mariana is too protective and stubborn. This conflict continues to develop, from

trust issues to serious accusations, finally reaching its most painful point when Zoe reveals the secret of her relationship with Sebastian. This situation reflects Simmel's view that the closer a relationship, the greater the potential for conflict.

The conflict between Mariana and Zoe began to surface when their conversation turned to suspicions about Professor Fosca. Zoe thinks Mariana is too stubborn and refuses to listen, while Mariana feels attacked by Zoe's sudden accusations. This discussion quickly turns into a heated argument, marking the first significant crack in their relationship.

"If there's something you want to say to me—just say it."

"There's no point. I know the more I try and talk you out of this thing about Professor Fosca, the more you'll dig your heels in. You're so stubborn."

"I'm not stubborn."

"I don't understand what's going on here, Zoe. I don't understand what you're trying to say. What thing with Fosca?"

"You tell me."

"What? I'm not attracted to him—if that's what you're suggesting!"

She was aware her voice was raised; a couple of students across the bar heard her and looked over. For the first time in as long as she could remember, she and Zoe were teetering on the edge of an argument. Mariana was feeling irrationally angry. (p. 217)

The quote above shows conflict in an intimate relationship because it occurs within a close family relationship where emotional closeness and trust shape the interaction. The conflict begins when Zoe accuses Mariana of being 'stubborn,' which then provokes a defensive reaction from Mariana. When Zoe implies that Mariana has feelings for Fosca, Mariana reacts with an outburst of anger, characterized by her raised voice and the feeling of being irrationally angry. This intense emotional reaction shows how disagreements in close relationships have a much deeper impact. This scene aligns with Simmel's theory that conflict in intimate relationships tends to be sharper because it is rooted in emotional

closeness, where criticism or suspicion from someone close has a far greater impact than it would from a stranger.

The next intimate conflict between Mariana and Zoe occurs because of an external threat. After receiving a threatening postcard from the killer, Mariana decides they must leave Cambridge immediately for their safety. But this decision meets strong resistance from Zoe. The conflict happens because they have different reactions to the danger. Mariana wants to run away to protect her family, while Zoe wants to stay and fight.

*"We need to get you out of here. Now. We need to go to London." ...
 "No." Zoe shook her head. She had a fiercely stubborn look on her face. "I'm not a child. I'm not going anywhere. I'm staying here, like you said—we're going to fight. We're going to catch him." (p. 333)*

The quote above shows a conflict in an intimate relationship because the disagreement involves authority, care, and independence within a close relationship. The dialogue shows a sharp disagreement between Mariana and Zoe. Mariana tries to use her authority as an aunt to control the situation. She treats Zoe like a child who needs to be saved. However, Zoe refuses to listen. She asserts her independence by insisting that she is *'not a child.'* Based on Simmel's theory, conflict in intimate relationships is often intense because it involves the whole personality. In this case, the conflict is not caused by hatred, but by concern and ego. Mariana acts out of love and fear for Zoe's safety. Meanwhile, Zoe acts out of pride and wants to prove her bravery. This difference creates tension in their relationship. Mariana feels ignored, and Zoe feels underestimated. So, they argue because they care about the situation in different ways, which is a key trait of intimate conflict.

The conflict reached its peak when Mariana found a hidden letter. This moment shifts their conflict from a simple argument into a deep personal betrayal. At first, Mariana confronts Zoe because she suspects the letter connects her to the murders. However, the confrontation reveals a much more painful truth about Mariana's late husband, Sebastian.

"I found the letter."

"Did you read it?"

Mariana nodded and whispered, "Yes."

There was a flash of fury in Zoe's eyes. "You had no right!" ...

Mariana struggled to find the words. "That you had something to do with these murders ... That you and he ... are somehow involved—"

[...]

"Who wrote the letter, Zoe?"

Zoe stared at her, her eyes full of tears. She spoke in a whisper.

"Sebastian, of course."

"You're lying," she said.

"No." Zoe shook her head. "I'm not. Sebastian wrote the letter. He wrote it to me."

"That's not true. He—" Mariana struggled to find the words. "Sebastian— didn't write this."

"Of course he did. Wake up. You're so blind, Mariana."

I've been in love with Sebastian ever since I can remember... And he loved me."

... "You have to face it, now. Open your eyes. We were lovers." (p. 348-354)

The data above shows the sharpest stage of intimate relationship conflict between Mariana and Zoe because it involves privacy, trust, and betrayal within a close family bond. It starts when Mariana invades Zoe's privacy by reading her letter without permission, which constitutes a boundary violation and makes Zoe react with 'fury.' This episode then escalates because Mariana's suspicion and Zoe's response shift the argument from a practical issue into a personal confrontation.

At first, Mariana suspects the letter links Zoe to the murders, but the truth hurts much more. Zoe admits she had a secret affair with Sebastian, Mariana's late husband. This revelation instantly shatters their relationship. Simmel (1955) argues

that conflict in close relationships is intense because it involves deep emotional bonds. This disclosure functions as betrayal and produces trust rupture, because it damages Mariana's trust in Zoe and also threatens Mariana's memory of her marriage. Zoe's statement that Mariana is blind increases escalation because it attacks Mariana's personal dignity and emotional position. In line with Simmel's view, conflict in intimate relationships becomes sharper when emotional closeness and trust are broken, because the relationship itself becomes the main stake of the conflict.

b. Conflict between Mariana and Sebastian

Mariana also experienced conflict in an intimate relationship in her marriage to her husband, Sebastian. This conflict came from their different life plans and ways of seeing things as a couple. Simmel (1955) argued that this kind of conflict is not a bad thing, but rather something unavoidable because of emotional closeness. This occurs because intimacy involves two individuals in all aspects of each other's lives, and this deep involvement naturally creates friction where personal desires and expectations collide.

The first significant conflict between Mariana and Sebastian was a fundamental disagreement about their plans and when to start a family.

He desperately wanted children—a boy and a girl—to complete the picture of the family he had in his head. And while Mariana also wanted kids, she wanted to wait. She wanted to finish her training and establish her psychotherapy practice—which might take a few years. (p. 46)

The data above is a form of conflict in an intimate relationship. This conflict is a major clash regarding their life goals in marriage, where Sebastian wants to

have children immediately, while Mariana wants to prioritize her career first. There is a collision between two different personal desires. This is in line with Simmel's view that the closer a relationship is, the more things there are to agree on, and the more open the opportunity for conflict due to disagreement in the relationship.

The conflict between Mariana and Sebastian does not only arise in major, long-term issues. The same pattern of conflict is also seen in short-term decision-making, as shown in the following data.

She bullied Sebastian into taking two weeks off, in August, for a trip to Greece... Sebastian wasn't keen—he had a lot of work lined up and didn't want to leave London. (p. 47)

The data above also shows conflict in an intimate relationship. This conflict arises because there is a clear difference in their desires as a couple. Mariana wants to go on a vacation to Greece, while Sebastian is not interested due to work demands. The word '*bullied*' indicates that Mariana is not simply inviting or discussing, but using emotional pressure to get him away. This is in line with Simmel's view that conflicts in intimate relationships tend to be more intense and personal. The above data involves personal power dynamics in the form of coercion. This shows how even everyday decisions can create conflict.

B. Conflict Resolution in *The Maidens*

This section examines how social conflicts are resolved in Alex Michaelides' *The Maidens* by applying Georg Simmel's theory of social conflict. The analysis reveals that the conflicts are resolved through two primary mechanisms based on Simmel's theory: victory and compromise. The other forms,

conciliation and irreconcilability, were not found in the data. This is due to the nature of the novel as a murder mystery, where the interactions are driven by suspicion, survival, and legal enforcement, creating a hostile atmosphere that precludes the restoration of relationships (conciliation) or unresolved separation (irreconcilability). Therefore, the following discussion focuses on how victory and compromise are depicted in the narrative.

1. Victory

The first and most dominant form of conflict resolution in this analysis is victory. According to Simmel (1955), victory occurs when a conflict between parties is ended by the domination of one party over the other. As a result, the losing party has no choice other than to accept the decision made by the winning party. The winning party gets what it wants, while the losing party must accept its fate unconditionally. Analysis of the data in the novel shows that Mariana experiences both sides of this resolution. She plays the role of the dominant party in some conflicts, but in other situations, she is positioned as the party that must accept defeat.

a. Victory over Edward Fosca

The first manifestation of this resolution was seen in Mariana's victory over Edward Fosca. This victory came as a response to the conflict of interest and antagonism between them. After a long conflict marked by hatred and attempts to bring each other down, the conflict ends with Mariana's victory. Although Mariana's accusations of murder were not proven, she still won the conflict by

exposing Fosca's sexual misconduct scandal, which led to the destruction of the professor's reputation.

Inspector Sangha joined her and sat down on the bench. "You'll be glad to know," he said, "Fosca has been fired. Turns out he was sleeping with all of them. Morris confessed to blackmailing him—so you were right. With any luck, they'll both get what's coming to them." (p. 362)

The data above clearly shows Mariana's victory over Fosca. Inspector Sangha's statement, '*so you were right*,' is clear evidence that Mariana's suspicions were correct all along. This victory immediately destroyed what Fosca had been desperately protecting, namely his career and reputation. The fact that Fosca was fired shows that he no longer had any power and had to accept a total defeat. According to Simmel's theory, victory serves to end a conflict by eliminating the opponent. In this situation, even though Mariana's accusation that Fosca was the murderer turned out to be wrong, she still won because she succeeded in proving Fosca's sexual misconduct scandal. This was enough to destroy Fosca's status and academic reputation, which he was very proud of. He could no longer evade or seek reconciliation.

b. Victory over Zoe

This victory comes as the final answer to the antagonistic conflict that culminated between Mariana and her niece, Zoe. After the truth was revealed, the situation escalated into a physical confrontation in which Zoe tried to kill Mariana. This conflict was finally resolved through Mariana's absolute victory.

For the first time in her life, Mariana didn't go to Zoe's aid. Instead, she pulled out her phone. She called for the police. All the time, Zoe kept screaming, screaming—until, eventually ... her screams merged with the wail of an approaching siren.

Zoe was taken away in an ambulance, accompanied by two armed police officers. ... Nonetheless, Zoe was charged with attempted murder; further charges were to follow. (p. 360)

The data above clearly shows Mariana's victory over Zoe. This was the absolute end of their conflict. Mariana called the police and had Zoe arrested. The sentence '*For the first time in her life, Mariana didn't go to Zoe's aid*' shows Mariana's drastic change of attitude towards Zoe. She decided to stop protecting her niece. Even though Zoe screamed hysterically, Mariana remained unmoved. She let the police take over and arrest Zoe. According to Simmel's theory, victory occurs when one party succeeds in making its opponent completely helpless and no longer has the power to fight back. In this situation, Zoe suffered a total defeat.

This victory also resolved all major conflicts between them. First, it ended the series of murders in Cambridge. By arresting Zoe, the mystery of the true killer was finally solved, and the terror stopped. Second, the direct threat to Mariana's life ended because Zoe was arrested. Third, the pain caused by Zoe's betrayal and secret affair was answered with the prison punishment that awaited her. Zoe had no choice but to accept her defeat. Thus, Mariana won this conflict by using the law.

c. Victory over Henry

This resolution serves as the answer to the antagonistic conflict between Mariana and Henry. Previously, as shown in the conflict data, Henry emerged from the darkness and threatened Mariana with a knife. He looked manic and accused Mariana of sacrificing him. The situation was dangerous and irrational. However, it ended with Mariana's victory. The conflict is resolved when Henry is arrested by the police and removed from the scene.

Morris called for the police, and Henry was then arrested, but Mariana insisted he needed psychiatric care—and he was taken to the hospital, where he was sectioned. He was prescribed antipsychotic medication and Mariana arranged to speak to the consultant psychiatrist in the morning. (p. 307)

The data above clearly shows Mariana's victory over Henry. This moment is a direct response to the antagonistic conflict in which Henry threatened Mariana with a knife. The conflict ended because Mariana managed to completely neutralize the threat. She called for help, and the police immediately intervened to stop Henry. As seen in the data, Henry is 'arrested' by the police. This action marks his total defeat.

According to Simmel (1955), victory is achieved when the opponent is rendered unable to fight back. In this case, Henry is physically detained and removed from the scene. He loses his freedom and his ability to attack Mariana. Furthermore, because he was taken to the hospital, he was under strict supervision and became increasingly helpless. Mariana won this conflict because she survived the attack and ensured that Henry was confined in a place where he could no longer hurt her.

d. Victory of the Legal Authority

This resolution settles the legal conflict between Mariana and Chief Inspector Sangha. As noted in the previous part, Mariana's interference in the investigation had already angered the police. The tension finally peaks when Sangha uses his authority to stop her. Mariana realizes she cannot win against the institution. Consequently, the legal authority achieves a total victory, forcing her to retreat because she is powerless against the law.

She tried to interrupt, but Sangha kept talking. "No, enough—you need to listen to me now. I want you gone by tomorrow morning. Away from this college and Professor Fosca—away from this investigation—away from me. Or I will have you arrested and charged with obstructing justice. Is that clear? Listen to Julian, okay? See your doctor. Get some help."

Mariana opened her mouth—and choked back a scream, a howl of frustration. She swallowed her anger, and sat in silence. There was no point in arguing further. She lowered her head, indignant but defeated.

She had lost. (p. 321)

The data above clearly shows the victory of the legal authority. Inspector Sangha ends the conflict by using a strong threat. He warns that he will arrest Mariana and charge her with '*obstructing justice*'. This threat works because it leaves Mariana with no other choice. Based on Simmel's theory (1955), victory is achieved when one party is forced to stop resisting. In this case, Mariana gives up completely. The phrase '*she had lost*' confirms that the conflict ends with her defeat. She realizes that '*there was no point in arguing further*' because Inspector Sangha has superior power. So, she suppresses her anger and remains silent. In the end, the legal authority achieved a total victory and successfully removed Mariana from the investigation.

2. Compromise

Another form of resolution in Simmel's theory is compromise. This is different from victory because it involves negotiation rather than total defeat. Simmel (1955) explains that this is achieved through an exchange of values. Here, each party agrees to give up some of their demands to reach a settlement. The conflict ends not because one side is defeated, but because both agree to meet in the middle to avoid more problems. In *The Maidens*, Mariana uses compromise when

she realizes she cannot force her will on others, especially in her close relationship with Zoe, her niece.

This compromise resolution serves as the answer to the conflict in an intimate relationship regarding Zoe's safety. Previously, Mariana insisted on taking Zoe to London immediately after receiving a threat. However, Zoe stubbornly refuses and wants to stay to find the killer. This creates a deadlock between Mariana's desire to protect her niece and Zoe's desire to be brave. The conflict is finally resolved when both parties agree to lower their egos and make a deal.

*"We need to get you out of here. Now. We need to go to London."
 "No, listen." She appealed to Mariana. "Let's check the folly—just in case. Where I saw him hide the knife. And if we don't find it, then ... we go to London, okay?"
 ... She thought for a second. "Go and have a shower, get out of those wet clothes. And I'll meet you in your room in twenty minutes."
 "Okay." Zoe nodded, looking pleased. (p. 333-334)*

The data above clearly shows the compromise resolution. Zoe offers a negotiation that she will agree to go to London, but only after they check the folly for evidence. Mariana accepts this condition. She tells Zoe to get ready and agrees to meet her in twenty minutes. According to Simmel (1955), compromise happens through the exchange of demands. In this situation, Mariana sacrifices her wish to leave immediately for the sake of the agreement. In return, Zoe gives up her stubbornness to stay in Cambridge and promises to go to London afterwards. By exchanging these concessions, the tension disappears. The conflict is no longer about winning or losing, but about finding a solution that works for both of them. Mariana gets the assurance of Zoe's safety, and Zoe gets the chance to investigate. This agreement ends the argument and restores harmony in their relationship.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter serves as the closing part of the study, containing conclusions and suggestions. In this chapter, the researcher presents the main summary of the analysis related to the social conflicts experienced by the main character, Mariana, in the novel *The Maidens*, and how these conflicts are resolved. The conclusion is divided into two parts according to the research problem. Meanwhile, suggestions are offered for readers and future researchers interested in exploring topics related to this study.

A. Conclusion

Based on the first research question, which explored the forms of social conflicts Mariana experienced in the novel *The Maidens*, it was found that there are four forms of social conflict in accordance with Georg Simmel's theory. The forms of conflict are antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship. First, the antagonistic conflict occurs between Mariana and several parties, namely Edward Fosca, whom she suspects as the killer; Zoe, who is revealed to be involved in the crimes; The Maidens, a group of students she views with suspicion; and Henry, her therapy patient, who threatens her with violence. Second, legal conflicts arise in two situations: when Mariana is called to the Dean's Office due to her interference, and when she faces the Police Authority, which threatens to arrest her for obstructing the investigation. Third, a conflict of interest appears between Mariana and Professor Fosca. Fourth, conflict in an

intimate relationship occurs with Zoe regarding safety and secrets, and with her late husband, Sebastian, regarding future plans.

The second research question examines how Mariana resolves these conflicts. The findings indicate that Mariana used two ways to resolve her conflict: victory and compromise. Victory was observed in four specific resolutions, namely victory over Edward Fosca, victory over Zoe, victory over Henry, and victory of the legal authority. Meanwhile, a compromise was reached with Zoe. In this situation, both parties negotiated and lowered their egos to agree on a plan regarding their safety.

Beyond these specific findings, this study highlights significant sociological implications related to power dynamics in academic settings. The conflict in *The Maidens* clearly illustrates the power hierarchy between lecturers and students, where academic reputation and authority, as seen in Professor Fosca, are used to dominate the social structure. Furthermore, the interventions of the Dean and the Police demonstrate institutional mechanisms of social control, which serve to restrict individual actions and restore order. Ultimately, the novel reflects that social conflict is not merely a personal struggle but a manifestation of broader social forces involving institutional power and the maintenance of established boundaries.

B. Suggestion

For future researchers who are interested in analyzing *The Maidens*, the researcher suggests applying different theories, such as a psychological approach. Since this research focused on social conflict, it would be interesting to analyze

Mariana's internal conflict. Future studies could use theories about grief or trauma to understand how Mariana's mind affects her actions. Additionally, researchers could focus on the causes of conflict. It would be beneficial to examine how Mariana's past experiences or her background shape the problems she faces. By looking at these aspects, future research can provide a more complete understanding of the character and the story.

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