

**PROTAGONIST'S CONFLICT IN MICHELLE
ZAUNER'S NOVEL *CRYING IN H MART: A MEMOIR***

A THESIS

BY:

NOVIA MENTARI

Reg. No: 71190411035



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM
FACULTY OF LITERATURE
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM SUMATERA UTARA
MEDAN
2023**

**PROTAGONIST'S CONFLICT IN MICHELLE
ZAUNER'S NOVEL *CRYING IN H MART: A MEMOIR***

A THESIS

BY:

NOVIA MENTARI

Reg. No: 71190411035

**SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF LITERATURE
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM SUMATERA UTARA
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF *SARJANA SASTRA*
IN ENGLISH LITERATURE**

Supervisor,

Safitri Hariani, S.S, M.S.

Dean of the Faculty,

Head of the Department,

Dr. Purwanto Siwi, S.S, M.A.

Zulfan Sahri, S.S., M.S.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM
FACULTY OF LITERATURE
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM SUMATERA UTARA
MEDAN
2023**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. In the name of **Allah**, the most graceful, the most merciful. I want to thank **Allah** *subhanahu wa ta'ala* for his everlasting love. This thesis can be completed because of His blessings and love. Also, the writer sends *shalawat* and greetings to our beloved prophet, **Muhammad** *Sallallahu alaihi wassalam*. I thank Him for His guidance and blessings. May we all get his intercession at the end of the day.

In completing this thesis, a lot of people have provided motivation, advice, and support. The writer intended to express her gratitude and appreciation to:

1. This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, **Juman** and **Sri Danarti** Their love is very precious and no words can explain it. Their love and patience is my biggest motivation to finish this thesis. I give my deepest gratitude to them.
2. The Dean of Faculty of English Literature, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, **Dr. Purwanto Siwi, S.S, M.A.**
3. The Head of the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Literature, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, **Zulfan Sahri, S.S, M.S.** for his approval of my thesis and his advice and suggestion.
4. My supervisor, **Safitri Hariani, S.S, M.S** Thank you for the meetings, recommendations, advice, and guidance to finish this thesis.
5. All the lecturers gave and taught me knowledge in this Faculty of Literature. I came to know about so many things and also all the staff of the faculty, who helped a lot during my year of study.

6. Also, for my dearest friend, **Novi Dwi Lestari**, and **Nadya Ramadani**. It is a blessing for having such caring and loving friends in my life. I want to let them know that I love them so much.

In the last word, the writer realized that the writing of this thesis is still a long way from perfection. Therefore, they further invoke suggestions and criticisms that build for perfection and may be useful for all of us. Aamiin.

Medan, 10 July 2023

The Writer

NOVIA MENTARI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT iii

ABSTRACT v

TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study 1

1.2 Statement of the Problem 3

1.3 Objective of the Study 3

1.4 Scope of the Study 4

1.5 Significance of the Study 4

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Protagonist 5

2.2 Conflict 7

2.2.1 External Conflict 8

2.2.2 Internal Conflict 11

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design 13

3.2 Data Collection 13

3.3 Data Analysis 14

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Analysis 15

4.1.1 External Conflict 15

4.1.1.1 Difficulty of Being Mixed-Blood 15

4.1.1.2 Disputes with Her Father 18

4.1.2 Internal Conflict 21

4.1.2.1 Sadness from Her Mother's Illness and
Death 21

4.1.2.2 Pressure Due to Future Dreams 23

4.2 Findings 27

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	
5.1 Conclusion.....	28
5.2 Recommendation.....	30
REFERENCES.....	31
APPENDIXES	

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M.H., and Harpham, G.G. (2009). *A Glossary of Literary Terms, Ninth Edition*. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Altenbernd, Lynn & Lewis, Leslie L. (1966). *A Handbook for The Study of Poetry*. London: Collier-Macmillian Limited.
- Coser, Lewis Alfred. (1913). *Toward a Sociology of Social Conflict (Ph.D.)*. Columbia. University. p. vi. OCLC 310906539. Retrieved February 04, 2023.
- Darma, Budi. (1990). *Perihal Studi Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Basisi, Agustus.
- Fuadi, Ahmad. (2012). The Analysis of the Protagonist Character Novel “Negeri 5 Menara”. A *Thesis of English Literature Department of the Faculty of Adab and Humanities*. UIN Alauddin Makassar.
- Kenny, William. (1996). *How to Analyze Fiction*. New York: Monarch Press.
- Lutters, Elizabeth. (2006). *Kunci Sukses Menulis Skenario*. Jakarta: PT. Grasindo.
- Noviana, Dian. (2010). Intrapersonal Conflict of Single Women Towards Parent’s Demand to Marriend. *A Journal of Psychology*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/konflik-intrapersonal-wanita-lajang-erhadap-untuk-Noviana-Suci/b6b3a22d1ee026ae4328176dc5bfc466f7fb5e15>. Retrieved March 04, 2023.
- Nurgiyantoro, Burhan. (2007). *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Purnami, I. A. S., Sosiowati, I. G. A. G., & Darmasetiyawan, I. M. S. (2016). Psychological Condition of The Main Character as The Main Factor in Dealing with Conflict in Henry’s the Gift of The Magi. *Jurnal Humanis*, 17(1), 134-139.
- Rahmawati, Eka W. (2013). Penerapan Layanan Mediasi Untuk Membantu Menyelesaikan Konflik Interpersonal Siswa Kelas Viii-2 Smp Negeri 1 Larangan Pamekasan. *Jurnal BK UNESA*, Vol. 3 No. 1. <https://jurnalmahasiswa.unesa.ac.id/index.php/jurnal-bkunesa/article/view/3615>. Retrieved March 04, 2023.
- Sadikin, Mustofa. (2011). *Kumpulan Sastra Indonesia*. Jakarta: Gudang Ilmu.
- Sayuti, A. Suminto. (2000). *Berkenalan dengan Prosa Fiksi*. Yogyakarta: Gama Media.
- Silaen, S. (2018). *Metodologi Penelitian Sosial untuk Penulisan Skripsi dan Tesis*. Bogor: In Media.
- Soraya, K.N. (2018). An Analysis of the Main Character’s Conflict in The Fault In Our Stars Novel by John Green. A *Thesis of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education*. Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara.

- Stanton, Robert. (1995). *An Introduction to Fiction*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Suhariyadi. (2014). *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra, Orientasi Penelitian Sastra*: Pustaka. Ilalang Group.
- Walliman, Nicholas. (2010). *Research Methods. The Basics*. New York: Routledge.
- Wellek, Renne, and Austin Warren. (1990). *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. (Terjemahan dlam Bahasa Indonesia oeh Melani Budiyanto. (1996) *Teori Kesusastraan*. Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya).
- Zauner, Michelle. (2021). *Crying in H Mart: A Memoir*. New York: Knopf.
- Zulfahnur, et al. (1996). *Teori Sastra*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.

APPENDIXES

A. The Biography of Michelle Zauner

Michelle Chongmi Zauner (born March 29, 1989) is a Korean-American musician and writer, best known for being the lead vocalist of the band Japanese Breakfast. Her memoir, *Crying at H Mart* spent 60 weeks on The New York Times non-fiction bestseller list. In 2022, Time named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world in the Innovators category.

From the indie rockstar of Japanese Breakfast fame, one of TIME's Most Influential People of 2022, and author of the viral 2018 New Yorker essay that shares the title of this book, an unflinching, powerful memoir about growing up Korean American, losing her mother, and forging her own identity. Michelle Zauner is known as a singer and guitarist who created shoegaze-inspired indie pop with the name Japanese Breakfast. He has won acclaim from major music outlets worldwide for releases such as *Psychopomp* and *Soft Sounds from Another Planet*. Her third album, *Jubilee*, was released in 2021 and has been nominated for two Grammys. *Crying in H Mart: A Memoir* is his first book.

In this beautiful story of family, food, grief, and resilience, Michelle Zauner proves herself to be more than just a dazzling singer, songwriter, and guitarist. With humor and heart, he talks about growing up the only Asian American child at his school in Eugene, Oregon; about his struggle to realize his mother's high and special expectations of him; about the painful teenage years; and the precious times he spent in his grandmother's small apartment in Seoul, where he and his mother spent time together, late at night, over plates of food.

Her mother was later diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer when Michelle was twenty-five. Michelle reconsiders her identity and decides to return to her mother's gifts of taste, language, and history.

B. The Literary Works

1. *Crying in H Mart: A Memoir*

A memoir about growing up Korean American, losing her mother, and forging her own identity. Michelle Zauner tells of growing up one of the few Asian American kids at her school in Eugene, Oregon; of struggling with her mother's particular, high expectations of her; of painful adolescence; of treasured months spent in her grandmother's tiny apartment in Seoul, where she and her mother would bond, late at night, over heaping plates of food.

As she grew up, moving to the East Coast for college, finding work in the restaurant industry, performing gigs with her fledgling band—and meeting the man who would become her husband—her Koreanness began to feel ever more distant, even as she found the life she wanted to live. It was her mother's diagnosis of terminal cancer when Michelle was twenty-five, that forced a reckoning with her identity and brought her to reclaim the gifts of taste, language, and history her mother had given her.

C. The Summary of *Crying in H Mart: A Memoir* Novel

Crying in H Mart: A Memoir is a story from Zauner's real life. This story tells how it feels to grow up as a Korean-American who lost her mother at an early age, the process of finding identity in a diverse environment, finding passion through the

Korean heritage within him, and cooking Korean food as a way to treat grief while returning to "roots".

Crying in H Mart: A Memoir centers on Zauner's relationship with her mother Chongmi after Chongmi's death when Zauner was 25 years old. The memoir flips back and forth in time, with chapters often starting after Chongmi's death before moving backward into Zauner's childhood memories. Chongmi was a very demanding strict woman when Zauner was a child. Zauner craved his approval and found it in their shared appreciation of the Korean food that Chongmi prepared or showed Zauner in her youth. Although their relationship was strained and even violent during Zauner's teenage years, due in part to Zauner's growing interest in music, Zauner and her mother began to grow in appreciation and understanding for one another. During this time, Zauner moved to Philadelphia to work on his music career while seeing his boyfriend Peter.

Chongmi's cancer diagnosis brought Zauner's world to a halt when he returned to his home in Eugene, Oregon. She thought she would have a chance to repay her mother for all this time, and she was eager to make Korean food that her mother loved so much. She was hindered by the severity of his mother's symptoms, which were so bad she had to be hospitalized early until Zauner stayed. Her lack of access to her mother's upbringing was compounded by the arrival of his mother's friend, Kye, who took over most of the upbringing despite Zauner's mixed feelings. Zauner's father, meanwhile, proves ill-equipped to deal with his wife's illness, which creates a growing rift between Zauner and his father.

When the chemotherapy did not work, Chongmi chose to discontinue the treatment; she watched her sister go through 24 rounds of chemo and still die young from cancer. The family plans a trip to Seoul so Chongmi can see her other sisters

and his home country. The trip was a disaster, as Chongmi fell ill and had to be hospitalized for several weeks; this motivated Zauner to insist that she and Peter marry as soon as possible, and Peter agreed. The wedding was held in the family's backyard, and Chongmi was excited about the planning and ceremony, even though she couldn't stay the whole night.

Not long after, Chongmi's strength weakens, and she succumbs to his illness. Afterward, Zauner and her father plan a vacation to Vietnam to distract themselves, but the trip turns disastrous as old wounds emerge; Zauner ditches her father at dinner and goes to sing karaoke with strangers, and while she is empathetic to his father's struggles, she is unwilling to forgive his failures as a father and a husband. After that trip, he was in a drunken car accident, and within a year he had sold the family home and moved to Phuket to be with another woman, further cementing his relationship with Zauner.

After her mother's death, Zauner and Peter stayed around to help Eugene sort things out and plan his next move. It was at this time that Zauner started writing and playing music again, eventually recording *Psychopomp*, the first Japanese Breakfast album. She and Peter decide to return to the East Coast, but before that, they travel to meet Zauner's aunt, Nami Emo, in Seoul. The trip was healing, especially because Zauner connected to Nami through the food she and her mother used to share.

Back home, Zauner worked hard to learn more traditional Korean cooking, turning to a popular Youtuber named Maangchi to perfect his technique. She started making kimchi every month, going through the painstaking process as a kind of therapy. When her father sold the family home, she sent Zauner her mother's kimchi fridge, which she found contained hundreds of candid photos from her childhood, a testament to the relationship between mother and daughter.

The memoir closes with the successful reception of *Psychopomp*, which Zauner wrote in honor of her mother and which allowed her to tour Asia. Seoul was the last stop on the tour, and Zauner saw the evening as a celebration and continuation of her mother's spirit. She closes the book with scenes of her and Nami Emo singing the karaoke pop songs Nami used to sing with Chongmi growing up, affirming Zauner's connection to her family and Korean heritage.

D. The Characters of *Crying in H Mart: A Memoir Novel*

1. **Michelle Zauner:** She is the memoir's author. A musician, she is twenty-five and living on the East Coast when she learns of her mother's cancer diagnosis and moves back home to Oregon to care for her. When Zauner is a teenager, she and her mother argue frequently, and Zauner acts out boldly. She even moves out of the house and lives with a friend for a brief time. Though she was ashamed of her Korean heritage as a child who wanted nothing more than to assimilate into American culture, her relationship with her mother in her final months of life, and her connection with her mother's sister Nami after Chongmi's death, cause Zauner to take pride in her identity and wish she had appreciated it earlier.
2. **Chongmi Zauner:** she is Michelle Zauner's mother. Born in Seoul, South Korea, she has a close but sometimes tense relationship with her only daughter. Chongmi ultimately dies from pancreatic cancer. She is described as having exacting standards and imposing them on her daughter. Most importantly, though, Zauner highlights her mother's cooking and her personal food preferences.

3. **Michelle Zauner's father:** she is a white, Jewish-American man who met and married Chongmi while working in Seoul. Though he is industrious and a reliable provider for the family, when Chongmi becomes sick, it turns out that her husband is not fully equipped to care for her. Michelle resents his inability to think about or execute any of the caretaking tasks on which Chongmi relies. His irresponsibility also leads her to wonder whether they will have a relationship after Chongmi's death.
4. **Nami:** Nami is Zauner's aunt and Chongmi's elder sister, and she lives in Seoul with her husband, Emo Boo, and their son, Seong Young. When she was young, Zauner visited Korea with her mother each summer, and she remembers staying at Nami's apartment in the city and enjoying her trips. Zauner develops a closer relationship with Nami after Chongmi's death.
5. **Peter:** He is Michelle Zauner's husband, whom she meets while living in Philadelphia. She is drawn to his goofy laugh and personality. Peter serves as a constant source of strength for his wife when she loses her mother and also later joins her band. In her acknowledgments at the end of the book, Zauner thanks him "most of all."