

## Realities of the Fantasy: Violence and Trauma in Tomi Adeyemi's *Children of Blood and Bone*

Ragasree S Kumar<sup>1</sup>, Dr.Sreelakshmi N<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student, M.Phil English, Department of English, Language and Literature, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham Kochi Campus, India. [ragasreeskumar@gmail.com](mailto:ragasreeskumar@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor (Sr. Gr) and Research Guide Department of English Language and Literature, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham Kochi Campus, India. [sreelakshmi@asas.kh.amrita.edu](mailto:sreelakshmi@asas.kh.amrita.edu)

### Abstract

Young Adult Fantasy Literature is one genre that has received very little attention in academia so far. If one is to ignore the immense scholarship that has been created on the Harry Potter books, Young Adult Fantasy literature remains almost unacknowledged and without a definite definition on its own. As a result, the genres of fantasy literature and Young Adult literature have been pivotal in providing an integrated definition to this field. In basic terms, Fantasy literature means a digression from what the reader believes to be the 'real world'. "Fantasy in modern literature depends upon realism in literature: it depends upon the reader's ability to recognise a commonly acknowledged, or normal, world and to recognise descriptions as pertaining to, or failing to pertain to, normal conditions. The initial impact of fantasy is its deviation from the norm" (Apter 111). The 'fantastic' elements are employed not only to challenge the presumptions about the normal world but also to challenge the traditional narratives of it.

**Key Words:** Fantasy, Modern Literature, Adult Literature, Young, Harry Potter

In a fantasy tale, realistic and detailed descriptions are essential to build a believable fantasy world but still, a few components are left mysterious. This generally encompasses the involvement of magic or mystical creatures but the reader does not question them because they are willingly suspending their disbelief while reading a fantasy tale:

Unlike realistic fiction, fantasy does not require logic-technological, chemical, or alien-to explain the startling actions or twists of character and plot recorded on its pages; such events may be explained by magic or not explained at all. The presence of these magical or impossible elements in a fictional form (a novel or short story), in which realism and logical causality are expected, creates a tension between form and content in which the reader's "willing suspension of disbelief" can be exercised in surprising ways (Mathews 3).

Through unconventional and supernatural elements fantasy literature tends to subvert the normalities of corporeal reality, nonetheless, it also has the ability to reflect subversively on the conventional norms of culture and society. This tendency has always been there since the beginnings of this genre but got recognised only in the 1950s with the introduction of J.R.R. Tolkien's trail-blazing book *Lord of the Rings*. Only along with the significant popularity of this text that sizable quantities of fantasy texts have been produced and expounded as subversive. The penchant for writing subversive fantasy literature is increasingly visible during the twenty-first Century, especially among female authors. A substantial amount of recent works explores the effects that concerns like racism and sexism have on the female protagonist and their ways of rising beyond these constraints. In the case of traditional fantasy texts, these transgressions occur along with the appropriation of real-world cultural, historical, and social contexts. These writers use various scenarios to foreground the racial and sexual oppressions their characters face. These scenarios connect themselves with the real-world contexts and therefore act as a kind of social

commentary.

Among many scholars, this potential of the fantasy genre to act as a kind of social commentary is still contested because they believe that its withdrawal from the real world goes hand in hand with its 'escapism', or the inclination to distance itself from the unpleasant reality which they assume to be lousy. But serious fantasy scholars, on the contrary, refuse to use the term in this sense. Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy-Stories" notes that he struggles to acknowledge the contempt with which 'Escapism' is generally used and contrastingly asserts that escape is very practical as a rule.

In what the misusers are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic. In real life it is difficult to blame it, unless it fails; in criticism it would seem to be the worse the better it succeeds. Evidently, we are faced by a misuse of words, and also by a confusion of thought. Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it (Tolkien 20).

Fantasy literature, therefore, functions as a liberation from the prison of habits and conventions of the contemporary real world, and as the cultivation of the ability to imagine possibilities beyond all our limits. (Mathews 57). Many present-day texts use 'escape' as a means to show how restricting and imprisoning the 'real world' is. Be that as it may, these writings are not ordinarily utopic in character, and are not particularly aimed at providing a detour from the real world. The reality is not completely abandoned and they appropriate real-world issues to tackle them using new strategies. This may work with multitudes of topics and is subject to the social, historical, and cultural conditions during which the text is produced. Keeping up with this tradition, many present-day fantasy text writers appropriate and amplify issues like racism and sexism.

The employment of racist or sexist themes in Young Adult Fiction is not something new. In fact, many contemporary authors have drawn inspiration from authors like Tamora Pierce, Ursula Le Guin, and J.K. Rowling. These writers have been instrumental in remodeling the characteristic concept of the 'heroic figure' by deliberately incorporating female experiences into it. Pierce and Le Guin through their path-breaking novels *Song of the Lioness* (1983-88) and *Earthsea Cycle* (1990) respectively, strived to revive the andro-centric fantasy tradition through female personas who bashed the conventionally masculine nature of magic and power. Similarly, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series reinforces the idea that magical capabilities are not determined by social constructs like race and gender. Like Pierce and Le Guin, Rowling alters the conceptions of the unchallenged male protagonist by incorporating a much stronger and heroic female character in her story. It is uncontested that contemporary authors like Laura Sebastian, Alwyn Hamilton, Sabaa Tahir, and Tomi Adeyemi have drawn inspiration from the models put forward by these predecessors.

*Children of Blood and Bone* (2018) is the debut work of Nigerian- American author Tomi Adeyemi. This Young Adult Fantasy novel is the first book in a planned trilogy named *Legacy of Orisha*. The novel follows the chronicles of young heroine Zélie Adebola who tries to reinstate magic in the kingdom of Orisha after the ruling class 'Kosidáns' viciously suppressed the class of magic practitioners, 'the Maji' of which Zélie is a member. Adeyemi wrote this book over eighteen months and she was primarily inspired by novels like *Harry Potter*, *An Ember in the Ashes*, and *Shadowshaper*. Adeyemi's work also showcases the influence of West African Mythology as well as the Yoruba culture and language. The police brutality towards the Black Americans in the US has also motivated her to shape the narrative of *Children of Blood and Bone*. Many critics praised its treatment of racism, oppression, and slavery. The fictional clans Kosidan and Maji act as substitutes for the conflicting racial groups in the real world. Over and above, it is a coming-of-age story in which the characters undergo self-realisation, personal growth and thereby positively influence the

world through their actions.

The story of *Children of Blood and Bone* takes place in the fictional world of Orisha occupied by two distinct classes of people; Diviners who have the potential to transform into the magical Maji and the non-magical Kosidan. When the book opens, the readers are introduced to the bloody events that occurred eleven years before when King Saran outlawed magic in the country and commanded the killing of many defenseless diviners, including the mother of Zelig Adebola. Since then, the diviners have been ruthlessly persecuted and have been ripped off their culture. This tension between the Kosidan and Maji, with the light-skinned Kosidan tormenting and enslaving the Maji indicates issues of race, class, and other hierarchical structures which divide a nation. 'Class' basically acts as an alternative for 'race' in the book. The novel does not hesitate to show the various ways through which brutality is tied up with power. King Saran believes that to ensure the superiority of himself and his class, it is necessary to enslave the minority and threaten them with genocide. Maji tries to reclaim their identity and occasionally strikes back at the ruling class through various methods. Zelig Adebola - the protagonist of the novel - at a very young age witnessed the murder of her mother and her family getting torn apart in the hands of royal guards. However, she continues to fight with determination and tries to overthrow the existing social order to seek justice for her family. It would be fitting to say that Adeyemi has appropriated contemporary issues like *Black Lives Matter* and is offering a model to these activists through the character of Zelig.

This study of *Children of Blood and Bone* primarily employs theories of violence and trauma to analyse the different manifestations of these concepts since they form an integral part of the work. Violence is discussed here as multi-directional because when oppressive regimes inflict people with violence, the latter respond to it using the various forms of violence that are available to them. These different forms of violence are not only physical but also psychological and symbolic. The experiences of violence get registered in the victim's mind as memory and the nature of it differs from person to person. To some characters, these memories are traumatising while for some others they are a motivating factor for personal growth as well as self-liberation.

Hussein Bulhan in *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* describes violence as "any relation, process, or condition" by which an individual or a group "violates the physical, social, and/or psychological integrity of another person or group" which "inhibits human growth, negates inherent potential, limits productive living, and causes death" (135). Violence not only embodies physical infringement but also includes emotional and symbolic connotations. Violence is first pronounced in the relationship between the two classes of people in Orisha; the dark-skinned 'Diviners' and the pale-skinned 'Kosidan'. The story begins with the remainder of King Saran's 'Raid' eleven years ago which slaughtered all the white-haired Maji who practiced magic. Due to his blind Xenophobia, the King also murdered many Diviners who have not yet transformed into the Maji - stripped them off from their roots so as to prevent their uprisings in the future. He also stole the magical scroll which can help restore the magical powers of any Diviner who touches it and thereby help them to connect with the Gods. This genocide is reminiscent of real-world issues like the Holocaust wherein ethnic groups were mercilessly massacred with absolutely no regard for their human rights. Adam Jones in his work *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (2006) writes about the four essential psychological elements that motivate Genocide- narcissism, greed, fear, and humiliation. "What motivates génocidaires? I see four psychological elements as essential: narcissism, greed, fear, and humiliation" (Jones 262).

King Saran is seen overwhelmed by all these four elements as far as his relationship with the Diviners is considered. First of all, his narcissistic tendencies become visible when he looks down upon the dark-skinned Diviners as 'Others'. Their skin colour is one of the many other reasons for the overpowering hatred directed towards them. Also, King Saran believes that he and his class are superior because of the Power they hold- the power to practise unimaginable violence and to extinguish an ethnic community as a whole. The greed for unchallenged power is also

accompanied by a fear of the magical capabilities of the Maji. Greed is not just the desire for material goods beyond those necessary for survival. It is intrinsically linked to the hunger for power, domination, and prestige. The renowned sociologist Max Weber has noted that “Man does not strive for power only in order to enrich himself economically. Power, including economic power, may be valued ‘for its own sake.’ Very frequently the striving for power is also conditioned by the social ‘honor’ it entails.” (Jones 263). This becomes visible in the story from time to time in the form of Xenophobia. He makes sure that the Diviners do not get out of their deplorable conditions and thereby restricts them from mobilising against the royalty. King Saran also makes his son Inan and daughter Amari train in combat so that they are equipped to protect their supreme positions in case of any uprisings. This shows that the King is constantly living in fear and is determined to tackle any resistance from the part of the Diviners. Both of these conflicting classes had been engaged in many a revolt even before the infamous Raid and in one such attack, Maji - the ruling class then, was able to harm King Saran’s family and many other nobles. This humiliation is what keeps the King motivated to oppress the Diviners with all his might. King Saran and his group of followers, therefore, acts as a classic example of ‘Collective Pathological Narcissism’ and the criteria for which is summarised by philosopher Sam Vaknin as follows:

The group as a whole, or members of the group... feel grandiose and self-important... obsessed with group fantasies of unlimited success, fame, fearsome power or omnipotence, unequalled brilliance, bodily beauty or performance, or ideal, everlasting, all-conquering ideals or political theories.... firmly convinced that the group is unique. ...require excessive admiration, adulation, attention, and affirmation – or, failing that, wish to be feared and to be notorious...feel entitled. They expect unreasonable or special and favorable priority treatment. They demand automatic and full compliance with expectations...They rarely accept responsibility for their actions ...are devoid of empathy. They are unable or unwilling to identify with or acknowledge the feelings and needs of other groups (Jones 263).

Narcissism in the context of the novel can justly be called ‘collective’ because even though it originates from the King, it is now shared by the whole group of Kosidans who religiously believe in their infallibility. It is ‘Intergenerational’ because the history of conflict between the classes is shared between generations. it was started by the royal ancestors and has been going on for years by conditioning the younger generations from a very tender age. It is also ‘pathological’ because the hate spreads very easily especially when the other group possesses something highly desirable and dangerous at the same time - in this case, ‘the Magic.’ Excessive hate can make one go blind and can meddle with one’s intellect. When the King learns that his own son Prince Inan has magical capabilities, he blindly kills him with rage and without any second thought even though he was loyal to his father’s cause:

When the magic leached from their blood, their white hair disappeared as a sign of their sin. Over generations, love of the maji turned into fear. Fear turned into hate. Hate transformed into violence, a desire to wipe the maji away (Adeyemi 15).

The ruling class imposes harsh rules and unbearable taxes on the Diviners and this is one of the major strategies they employ to keep them at the most deplorable state. The Diviners are economically as well as culturally exploited, threatened, and sometimes enslaved by the state. The class distinction that is visible here is reminiscent of how the Colonial masters treated their colonies during European Colonialism. The perpetrator in the Kingdom of Orisha is not a foreign power but a class of people who thinks of themselves to be superior. The colonizers always made sure that the subjects are economically drained and thereby strategically demobilised as Franz Fanon examines:

When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies, the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you

are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich (Fanon 40).

Systemic Violence is used as a tool to enforce barbarian laws onto the subjects by the ruling party and those who do not conform are punished in different ways. When young Zelig showed her discomfort against the heavy tax burden, the guard threatened to rape her:

He grips my thigh with a rough hand. "I'll start with this one." My skin grows hot as I gasp for breath, clenching my hands to hide the trembling. I want to scream, to break every bone in his body, but with each second I wither. His touch erases everything I am, everything I've fought so hard to become (Adeyemi 12).

The nature of violence is self-perpetuating and cyclical because the colonized knows that the possession of power is invariably tied with the practice of violence. The white man employed violence as a tool to annihilate the values, tradition, and individuality of the native as well. After a certain point, the persecuted will begin to strike back using the very same tool that once subjugated him. He realises that resorting to violence can invariably guide him towards decolonisation and restoration of what has been taken from them:

The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters (Fanon 40).

Mama Agba is a senior woman in the village who secretly teaches the girls self-defence. She has witnessed the Raid and its aftermath and her testimonies keep the memories of the Maji alive. Mama Agba is not a Diviner but she has devoted herself to the cause of the little girls and trains them in combat with staff. "Mama Agba is a Kosidan, an Orishan who doesn't have the potential to do magic. Before the Raid, we believed the gods chose who was born a diviner and who wasn't, but now that magic's gone, I don't understand why the distinction matters" (Adeyemi 17). This act of defiance by Mama Agba and the secret training by the girls are examples of violence committed against the royalty. Wole Soyinka with reference to dictatorial regimes writes in *Climate of Fear: The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World* that "open questioning may be suppressed, open debate may be restricted or prohibited by the state or the party of power, but the functioning of the mind, its capacity for critique -even self-criticism - never ceases" (126). The training of the girls by Mama Agba however is not aimed at inducing physical harm to the enemy nonetheless, it still stands out as the ultimate act of resistance and self-liberation. Every day before training starts, the girls recite these words like a ritual: "It avoids rather than hurts, it hurts rather than maims, it maims rather than kills—the staff does not destroy." (Adeyemi 16) Mama Agba however does not encourage the unleashing of vicious violence due to her past experiences. She witnessed the brutal massacre of the majis as well as the potential of violence to bring in unimaginable destruction. The memories of this traumatic event prevent her from the glorification of violence of all means. Alternatively, she prepares the young girls to resist any unjust atrocities directed towards them but without indulging in bloodshed.

A traumatic event can have a cataclysmic effect on the physical, mental and emotional facets of an individual. Most often the victim ends up having a fractured personality because trauma unsettles the mind, restricts emotional well-being and tampers with personality development. Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer defined trauma in their path-breaking work *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) while observing that any unpleasant occurrence that induces disturbing responses can be traumatic. According to them, "any experience which calls up distressing affects – such as fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain – may operate as trauma" (Freud, Breuer 6). Psychoanalyst Robert Stolarov concentrated on the permanent impact trauma has on its victims. He argued that trauma survivors undergo "a catastrophic loss of innocence that permanently alters one's sense of being in

the world” (Stolarov 16). The experience of trauma therefore can have an everlasting impression on the emotional and psychological plane of an individual. Shoshana Felman in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* argues that the act of ‘Witnessing’ has a lasting effect on the subject’s life. Since witnessing is hardly avoidable, people who go through traumatic events are doomed to carry the memories forever. The power of memory is so intense that even the witness becomes a victim of trauma even if he/she was not the actual subject of the event. Felman, therefore, outlines ‘witnessing’ as a “historical crisis” that becomes, “in all senses of the word, a critical activity” (Felman&Laub 206).

In *Children of Blood of Bone*, the readers can come across quite a number of characters who are survivors of trauma. However, a traumatic past can influence the present of the victim in innumerable ways which are beyond normal perception. Kai Erikson in Cathy Caruth’s anthology *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* put forward the concept of ‘Individual trauma’ and ‘Collective trauma’. He explains, “By individual trauma, I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defences so suddenly and with such a brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively. By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (Erikson 187). Individual trauma is an attack on the person’s personality whereas collective trauma is a blow to the social framework which disrupts the functioning of the whole society. In the novel, the whole of the Maji community suffers from Collective trauma because of the unspeakable amount of horror that was committed to them in the past. They continue to endure the various consequences of these events in the present because the trauma gets passed on from generation to generation. The young Diviners have a rootless existence in Orisha, they live in fear and suffer from loss of identity. The Majis ruled the land of Orisha once but the Systemic violence and the subsequent Collective trauma reduced them to a dysfunctional society. Apart from this, various characters in the novel are survivors of discrete traumatic experiences which alters their personalities in different ways.

The protagonist Zelig Adebola was very young when she witnessed the gruesome death of her mother. She is a victim of childhood trauma and the reason behind it is indicated at the beginning of the novel itself. The prologue of the novel reads:

I hear the myths she would tell me at night. Tzain’s laughter when they played agbön in the park. Baba’s cries as the soldiers wrapped a chain around her neck. Her screams as they dragged her into the dark. The incantations that spewed from her mouth like lava. The magic of death that led her astray. I think about the way her corpse hung from that tree. I think about the king who took her away (Adeyemi 1).

These lines set the tone of the novel and the readers are made aware of the traumatic memories that haunt Zelig. She grew up thinking about the ways through which she can seek justice to her lost family and shattered ancestry. She detests violence and tries to stay away from it because a victim of trauma often tries to avoid all trauma-related cues. In Zelig’s case, unrestrained violence is what robbed off her childhood and wounded her mind. Therefore, when Zelig sets out on the mission to bring back the magic, she purposefully refrains from committing physical violence under any circumstance. She was even ready to renounce her mission when she witnessed the destructive power of magic.

The Raid by King Saran is the most blood-soaked event in the history of Orisha. The memories of genocide often result in the creation of a collective experience of trauma which is intergenerational. Therefore, it is necessary for the witness to the actual event to create a version of it so as to remain as a testimonial to later generations and thereby promote healing of the community. According to Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, one of the ways to recover from the trauma experience is to get vocal about it through testimony. When the victim speaks in the first person, a huge burden of traumatic truth is liberated from him/her. Felman points out that the testimony appears to be “composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be

constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference.” (Felman&Laub 5) Mama Agba witnessed the Raid and she transmits her memories of the event to the girls who secretly train with her. Even though it ended in bloodshed, the girls are more than fascinated to listen to the chronicles of their ancestors like a fairy tale:

Though we’ve all heard this story at one point or another—from Mama Agba, from parents we no longer have—hearing it again doesn’t take the wonder away from its words. Our eyes light up as Mama Agba describes maji with the gift of healing and the ability to cause disease. We lean in when she speaks of maji who tamed the wild beasts of the land, of maji who wielded light and darkness in the palms of their hands (Adeyemi 19).

The testimonial speech is a fabric of scattered memories and not a complete articulation of events because the traumatic event itself is not fully registered by the victim when it actually occurs. The stories of Mama Agba function as testimonials and the little girls become the ‘listeners.’ It is through the process of listening that the episode comes to life. The listener thus becomes the shared owner of the traumatic occurrence and “comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that the trauma victim feels” (Felman&Laub 58). When the trauma victims get vocal about their ordeal, the burden of truth that they hold gets disseminated and thereby promotes healing. Therefore, it is safe to assume that Mama Agba and the young girls who listen to her testimonials are taking part in this shared experience of ‘Collective healing.’

Princess Amari, the king’s daughter, becomes a victim of trauma due to her mistreated upbringing in the royal palace. King Saran has never been a loving father to his children. He wanted to raise his kids to be prodigies- skillfully trained in warfare and combat- the kind of those who can successfully curb the Maji’s advances. Saran often made Princess Amari and Prince Inan fight each other in order to test their abilities. As a young girl, these events had a deep and everlasting impact on Amari’s emotional well-being. She says, “My heart beats in my throat as I slow before Father’s throne room, the room I fear most. The first place where he ordered Inan and me to spar. The home of so many of my scars.” (Adeyemi 38) The wounds inflicted on Amari are not just to her body but also to her mind. Her already traumatised psyche gets another blow when she witnesses her best friend’s death at the hands of her father. Binta was a diviner handmaiden and she was taken to the king to test out the efficacy of the ancient scroll that can convert diviners into magical Maji. The moment when Binta’s hand touches the scroll she begins to transform, and the King kills her instantly. Amari - the young princess witnesses this and it was more than what she can process: Blood pools around Binta’s innocent face, dyeing her white locks red. Its copper smell wafts through the crack in the door. I stifle a gag. Father yanks off Binta’s apron and uses it to clean his sword. Completely at ease. He doesn’t care that her blood stains his royal robes. He doesn’t see that her blood stains my own hands (Adeyemi 44).

She begins to question the unjust actions of her father but is too afraid and incapable to confront him. She has turned into a fearful girl due to her restricted freedom of thought and expression. However, a determination to resist grows in her and decides to perform one of the worst treasons that could possibly be committed in Orisha. She steals the highly protected ancient scroll from the commander’s room and flees the palace. Amari refuses to think about the consequences that her actions might invite because she was emotionally overwhelmed by the traumatising event that she witnessed. This sudden occurrence stimulates her dormant self-consciousness and consequently fills her with a yearning for action.

On the other hand, the actions of King Saran are controlled by his traumatic memory of loss and humiliation. The Majis were the born rulers of Orisha and an early attack between Kosidan and the Maji resulted in the killing of the King’s parents. The memories of his ancestors are traumatising to him and to cope up with it, he constantly looks for ways to avenge them:

Before you were born, the maji were drunk with power, always plotting to overthrow our line,” Father explains. “Even with their insurgency, my father fought to be fair, but that fairness got him

killed. There isn't a noble in Orisha who doesn't know of the slaughter Father endured at the maji's hands. A carnage that would one day be avenged by the Raid(Adeyemi 75).

The traumatic experience of King Saran has altered his personality and transformed him into someone with no control over his emotions. He is so much fixated on the vanquishment of the Diviners that he fails to acknowledge any other sorts of emotions and feelings. He raised his son and daughter in absolute strictness and they were forced to train in combat even if they did not want to. Due to harsh training sessions, the children often ended up having injuries but were neglected. When Princess Amari ran away with the ancient scroll, the King charged her with treason, and no emotional ties stopped him from doing so. Similarly, when he realised that his son Prince Inan has magical capabilities, he executed him in the blink of an eye without any feeling of remorse. The traumatic experience has taken over the personality of King Saran permanently and therefore he shows no signs of healing anywhere in the story.

Each character deals with traumatic memory differently. While some change for better whereas some others change for worse. For Adeyemi, the female characters seem to do a better job while coping with violence and trauma rather than the male characters. Zelie is not motivated by blind hate, unlike King Saran. She believes that the only way to reclaim their lost honour is by restoring magic in Orisha. During the course of her mission, she undergoes a great deal of personal growth and at some point, even doubts her motive when she realises that unchecked magic can be dangerous. Mama Agba has gained a whole lot of wisdom from her traumatised past. She no longer believes in class distinctions and does not hesitate to defy the existing barbarian system. Through her testimonies, she keeps the memories of the dead alive and also helps the young girls to learn from her experiences. Princess Amari appears to be a fearful girl at first but transforms into a fierce character when she openly detests her father for his cruelty and joins Zelie in her mission. She leaves the palace due to her personal trauma but it facilitates her character development and transforms into a warrior princess. King Saran, on the other hand, succumbs to his trauma and has caught himself in the self-perpetuating cycle of violence.

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