

“Keep reaching out your hand”: Accepting death and trauma in *A Court of Silver Flames* and *Under the Whispering Door*

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Abstract

This paper is discussing the similar approach to death and trauma in two recently published American adult fantasy novels: *A Court of Silver Flames* (2021) by Sarah J. Maas and *Under the Whispering Door* (2021) by TJ Klune, which are, as will be argued, trauma novels.

After having unexpectedly lost their lives, both protagonists were brought back to life, however, not as a human. They are coping with their shared trauma from death, no longer being human, and abusive childhood. Yet, they still exist as outsiders in a close community after having lost everything important they had. In addition to death and loss, the protagonists repeatedly experience trauma due to denial of agency in decision-making and freedom of movement, which is a key theme in both novels. Moreover, this paper aims to answer the underlying question of both novels: Are they redemption stories? Because the protagonists are not conventionally good people, and in the process of trying to learn to live with their trauma, they are also forced to reflect on their past actions, accept the consequences, and at the end of the story, they are expected to follow the traditional redemption arch and right their wrongs. Their journey to accepting themselves and their trauma then becomes their journey of redemption.

Keywords: agency; abuse; acceptance; death; guilt