

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that Rin's psychological transformation is not a random descent into madness, but a systematic erosion dictated by Dacher Keltner's Power Paradox. To understand her trajectory, a precise distinction must be made: trauma creates Rin's rage, war gives her justification, and oppression shapes her ambition. But power transforms these pressures into catastrophic action. While her background provides the motivation for her actions, it is the acquisition of power that fundamentally rewires her psychology. The text shows that Rin initially gains influence through empathetic strategies and social intelligence by surviving Sinegard through grit and bonding with the Phoenix through shared pain. However, once she attains significant military and shamanic authority, the paradox takes hold. Her increased power leads directly to reduced empathy, where she begins to view civilians and soldiers as strategic objects rather than human beings. This is followed by a dangerous spike in impulsivity, causing her to disregard military counsel and the warnings of her master. Ultimately, this psychological decay culminates in moral disengagement, allowing her to reframe a horrific genocide as a necessary strategic sacrifice, thereby answering how the Power Paradox operates as the internal engine of her character arc.

Building upon this psychological corruption, the study establishes that Rin's internal decay directly generates the Aristotelian tragic structure. Her psychological shift is not merely a character trait but as functions for her *hamartia*. This study defines Rin's tragic flaw as her power-induced moral blindness: the mistaken belief that absolute destructive power can be controlled and morally

justified when used for revenge and national survival. Because her empathy has eroded and her impulsivity has peaked, she is psychologically incapable of seeing the fatal flaw in her plan to wield the Phoenix. This specific error in judgment triggers the *peripeteia* at the Battle of Golyn Niis. While analysing the destruction of Mugen as a reversal of fortune in no way excuses or romanticizes the moral horror of the act, structurally, this is the moment her victory mutates into her defeat; she saves her nation but annihilates her own humanity. This structural collapse is finalized by her *anagnorisis*—the horrifying recognition when she asks herself if she is a "goddess or a monster" and realizes her power has controlled her, rather than the other way around.

Finally, the research concludes that Rin transcends classical limitations to function as a modern tragic hero within a Neo-Aristotelian framework. Aristotle traditionally required tragic heroes to hold high social or noble stature. However, applying the Neo-Aristotelian perspective of the Chicago School, Rin achieves tragic stature not through lineage, but through the sheer magnitude of her actions and the causal unity between her character and the plot. Every major plot point in *The Poppy War* is a direct externalization of her internal psychological state; her tragedy is self-constructed rather than forced by external fate. Furthermore, her tragic outcome represents a modern evolution of the genre. Unlike classical heroes who find peace in death, Rin's downfall is her survival. Her "damnation" is the eternal burden of her power and the irreversible loss of her moral identity, proving that a war orphan in a contemporary setting can evoke the same profound *catharsis* as a fallen king.

Synthesizing these three findings, this thesis ultimately argues that *The Poppy War* redefines classical tragedy for a contemporary era by replacing the concept of external "fate" with the internal, psychological laws of power. R.F. Kuang constructs a narrative where the ancient

rules of Aristotle are not broken, but rather updated through the lens of modern psychology. The novel serves as a structural proof that the most terrifying aspect of power is not its capacity to destroy enemies, but its corrosive ability to dismantle the human conscience. By proving that the acquisition of power inherently leads to a loss of empathy and a false sense of moral justification, the thesis demonstrates that Rin's tragic downfall was psychologically inevitable from the moment she chose to yield the fire of the Phoenix. Thus, Keltner's Power Paradox and Aristotelian tragedy are not just compatible frameworks; when combined, they provide a comprehensive and devastating explanation for how good intentions are structurally corrupted in the pursuit of absolute power.

5.2 Suggestions

Based upon the results of this research study as well as its constraints, potential areas for investigation have been suggested for future research:

1. Expansion to Trilogy Analysis: This research study is based solely on the first book of the trilogy. Therefore, it is recommended that future investigations include an examination of Rin's development throughout all three books: *The Dragon Republic* and *The Burning God*. An Aristotelian complete action will most certainly be enhanced by examining her overall progression, particularly regarding how the "Entitlement" phase of the Power Paradox manifests when she assumes direct political and military leadership.

2. Analysis of Gender and Tragic Heroism: Although this study has examined the structural and psychological components of Rin's fall into tragedy; future analyses may wish to examine the intersection of her feminine characteristics with her achievement of violent authority. Such an analysis could provide further insight into the "modern female tragic hero" archetype.

