
Oppression, Possession, And Violence: Kindred Analysis

In the novel, *Kindred* by Octavia Butler, the perspective of the author was told through Dana, the protagonist of the novel. It initially started as she found herself in a dangerous situation where she needed to save a boy, named Rufus, which is in imminent danger. Little that she knows, she has some ancestral connection with him. The story continues as it explores the issues of racism and slavery. As it creates an opposition to the reality of what she is accustomed to. She then shares her story about her thoughts and feelings while she was forced to travel in the past and experience the oppression, possession, and violence of being black in the antebellum south.

Back when the United States of America is relatively a new nation, the idea of one's liberty and equality as proposed to all men is only applicable to the white male of a certain background. As the leader of a "new free world," the question of racial ideology was barely discussed and put into consideration because back then "[r]epressive societies always seemed to understand the danger of wrong ideas". Therefore, the legal and political virtue of the United States (U. S.) constitution was something that was estranged when Dana first traveled back in the past. Additionally, back in the 1970s the legal and social condition of people of color is upheld by the law and somewhat embraced by society. The problem of color made it a little bit harder for Dana to grasp the idea of slavery when she was put into a situation where she only read and sees it before rather than experiencing it firsthand.

Dana was caught first handed in the complex web of slavery. It exploited the people of color to inhumane conditions. However, women, in particular, experienced worst because they were raped, humiliated, and threatened to sell or sold their child(ren) which oppressed their self-respect and rattle their emotional and spiritual well-being. Oppression in slave life is an effective way of keeping the black consciousness severely constraint, especially for women. As Dana narrate in the novel when "[Alice] went to him. She adjusted, became a quieter more subdued person. She didn't kill, but she seemed to die a little." At first, Alice was resisting Rufus because she was married to Isaac. However, Rufus was still trying to force himself to her. In the end, when she became a fugitive for running away with a slave and Rufus bought her freedom, she then becomes submissive to Rufus' desire which leads to her emotional oppression. Alice's vulnerability has played a part in Rufus' oppression on her act of subjection with him.

Another factor that played in the web of slavery is the act of possession. This is besides the actual ownership of slaves as part of a property. In the novel, Rufus' love for Alice and afterward Dana is overcome by his desire to possess them and controlled them to submission. His understanding of love is different in a way because of how he was brought up in an era where his role in society is based on power and status in life. Even when they were childhood friends, the truth about their existence includes the reality that he was a master and she was a slave. Dana described it in the novel when she asked, "Rufe, did you manage to rape that girl? He looked away guiltily." Rufus understands that he did something wrong. However, the norm as society dictates at that time tells otherwise for it is a social standard as evidenced by Tom Weylin's action as well. This creates complex evidence of Rufus' character as both destructive in nature and confusion to what love really is.

As Dana continues to rationalize herself to what Rufus is becoming as an adult, she still tries to influence him to be less violent. "I thought of Rufus and his father, of Rufus becoming his father. It would happen someday in at least one way. Someday Rufus would own the plantation. someday, he would be the slaveholder, responsible in his own right for what happened to the people who lived in those half-hidden cabins." Dana is trying to influence Rufus in a way to make him change his perspective versus what society intends him to think and act. Additionally, violence, as described in the novel, is beyond the brutal action on slavery treatment but as seen towards the end between Rufus and Dana. When Dana rationalized her situation she understood, "[a] slave was a slave. Anything could be done to her... I could accept him as my ancestor, my younger brother, my friend, but not as my master, and not as my lover." It leads her to remember her modern sensibilities about slavery and that it is terrible and should not be tolerated. Therefore, she fought back even when she knew that it will be the end of Rufus but her chance to freedom. In the end, Dana and Rufus' emotional inner conflict ended up having a detrimental effect on Rufus' life and the other on Dana's loss of limb. Dana's attention to her present situation and what her future taught her allows her to resolve her inner conflict. This leads her to understand and accept Rufus' complex character and his wanting for love leads him to act as an oppressor, possessive and violent that leads her to a cruel truth that ended in violence. Her act of violence is her way of freeing her connection with Rufus and vice versa. Unsettling as it may seem, dealing with the past is something that helps us deals with the future even when it's undesirable.