

*"A Little Like Me:" Perceiving the Past in Octavia Butler's Kindred*

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Kindred is both a neo-slave narrative and time travel narrative that follows Dana Franklin's journey between 1976 and early 1800s America, intrinsically linking the past and the present. This narrative forces Dana to travel to antebellum America and ensure her family's lineage as she becomes caught between the needs of her slaveholder great-great-grandfather Rufus Weylin and slave Alice, her great-great-grandmother. This paper focuses on the ways in which Dana resists the similarities she observes between the past and the present, particularly in terms of how she perceives both her ancestors and her modern life. I argue that Kindred's time travel narrative serves as a metaphor to illustrate that our perception of the past is shaped by present ideologies, and that Dana's identification with Rufus rather than Alice denies a black, matriarchal connection while upholding the white, patriarchal narratives that shape both the present and the past. Therefore, relying on a history that valorizes the white patriarchal narrative often blinds us to the ways in which the racist policies and ideals of antebellum America influence modern America as well.