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**Neo-Slave Narrative in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*
through the Perspectives of Gender and Race**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Master Degree in Anglophone Language, Literature
and Civilizations**

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Dedication

My humble effort I dedicate to my sweet and loving father and mother .whose affection love and prays of day and night make me able to get such success and honor, along with all hard working and respected teacher.

Acknowledgment

Bismi Allahi arrahmani arraheem , all Praise be to Almighty Allah , Lord of all the worlds , most Beneficent , ever - Merciful . Peace and prayers be upon his Prophet and Messenger Mohammad . First and foremost, I thank initially and always Allah for His guidance and blessings throughout my life and for giving me strength and patience to complete this humble work. First of all, I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my supervisor Mrs. Bourcace Houda for her efforts , ideas, and her feedback .My thanks also extend to the members of the jury for having taken time to read , check , and correct this dissertation in order to make it reliable for use in further researches . I thank the staff and teachers of the Department of Letters and English Language at the University of 8 Mai 1945.

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Abstract

The thesis examines African American women's suffering through the perspectives of race and gender in Octavia Butler's neo-slave narrative *Kindred* (1979). The aim of the study is twofold. First, it discusses racial and gender oppression black women suffer from in the system of slavery in white mainstream society, particularly in the south antebellum. Second, it examines black female power and resistance among African American women in the neo-slave narrative. The approach that is used to conduct this modest study is Black Feminism, since it focuses on black women's marginalization and oppression and raises their self-awareness and self-empowerment in a racist patriarchal society. The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical framework for the whole dissertation, whereas the second and the third chapters are analytical. Thus, the thesis analyzed the perspectives of racial and gender oppression through the experiences of Butler's protagonist Dana, a young black woman who lived in ultimate freedom in California with her white husband Kevin Franklin and mysteriously plunged to the past slavery in South antebellum. Accordingly, the thesis attempts to shed light on the violent acts black women witnessed during slavery, racial power relations that existed between the oppressor and the oppressed and the facades of resistance that these women pass through to survive despite the harsh conditions in the plantation.

Résumé

La thèse examine la souffrance des femmes afro-américaines à travers les perspectives de la race et le sexe dans le récit néo-esclave d'Octavia Butler *Parenté* (1979). L'objectif de l'étude est double. Premièrement, il traite de l'oppression raciale et sexiste de femmes noires souffrent dans le system d'esclavage de la société blanche dominante, en particulier dans le sud d'avant-guerre. Deuxièmes, le pouvoir et la résistance des femmes noires parmi les femmes afro-américaines dans le récit néo-esclave. L'approche utilisée pour mener cette modeste étude est le Féminisme Noir, car elle se concentre sur la marginalisation et l'oppression des femmes noires et augmente leur conscience de soi et leur autonomisation dans une société patriarcale raciste. la thèse est divisée en trois chapitres. Le premier chapitre est un cadre théorique pour l'ensemble de la thèse, tandis que les deuxième et troisième chapitres sont analytiques. Ainsi, la thèse a analysé les perspectives d'oppression raciale et de genre à travers les expériences de la protagoniste de Butler, Dana, une jeune femme noire qui a vécu dans une liberté ultime en Californie avec son mari blanc Kevin Franklin et a mystérieusement plongé dans le passé de l'esclavage dans le sud de l'avant-guerre. En conséquence, la thèse tente de faire la lumière sur les actes violents dont les femmes noires ont été témoins pendant l'esclavage, les relations de pouvoir raciales qui existaient entre l'opresseur et les opprimés et les façades de résistance que ces femmes traversent pour survivre malgré les conditions difficiles de la plantation.

ملخص

تتناول الأطروحة معاناة النساء الأمريكيات من أصول أفريقية من خلال منظورات العرق والجنس في رواية العبيد الجدد لاوكتافيا بتلر "عشيرة" (1976). الهدف من الدراسة ذو شقين. أولاً ، يناقش الاضطهاد العنصري والجنسي الذي تعاني منه النساء السود في نظام العبودية في المجتمع الأبيض السائد ، لا سيما في الجنوب ما قبل الحرب. ثانياً يدرس قوة المرأة السوداء ومقاومتها بين النساء الأمريكيات من أصل أفريقي في رواية العبيد الجدد. النهج المستخدم لإجراء هذه الدراسة المتواضعة هو النسوية السوداء ، لأنها تركز على تهميش المرأة السوداء واضطهادها وتزيد من وعيها الذاتي وتمكينها الذاتي في مجتمع أبوي عنصري. هذه الأطروحة تنقسم الى ثلاثة فصول. الفصل الاول هو اطار نظري للأطروحة بأكملها بينما الفصلان الثاني والثالث تحليليان. يركز كل من الفصلان الثاني والثالث على تحليل وجهات نظر الاضطهاد العرقي والجنسي من خلال تجارب بطلة الرواية دانا امرأة سوداء شابة تعيش في حرية مطلقة في كاليفورنيا مع زوجها كايفن فرانكلين. تغيرت حياة دانا فجأة لتجد نفسها تغوص في الماضي وتواجه جميع انواع التعنيف في جنوب أمريكا وعليه ، تحاول الأطروحة إلقاء الضوء على أعمال العنف التي شهدتها النساء السود أثناء العبودية ، وعلاقات القوة العرقية التي كانت قائمة بين الظالم والمظلوم ، وواجهات المقاومة التي تمر بها هؤلاء النساء للبقاء على قيد الحياة على الرغم من الظروف القاسية في المزرعة.

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Introduction

Slavery was the cruelest act against humankind in the history, where Slaves were treated like chattels or animals. Among these slaves are black women who were forced to work under harsh conditions in the plantation for hours. They were recognized as genderless as such; they were tortured, sexually abused and violently deprived from all their rights. They found no refuge, but literature to express the inexpressible, to raise their voices, and share their experiences to the rest of the world.

Many African American women writers opted for literature to communicate the concerns and needs of slaves. The best black literary genre is the Slave narrative, which is considered the vital literary device for African American writers to reveal the brutality of slavery. It was established to transform the experiences and sufferings of ex-slaves and to discuss their rights and needs not only for their time, but for the coming generations as a fixed memory. Basically, this genre was extended into another literary agenda named neo-slave narrative that referred to the narratives of contemporary writers of slavery, which emerged primarily after World War II and particularly flourished in the late 1960's and 1970's. These new fictions raised the voices of slaves who want to earn their freedom from bondage. It portrayed their trials to escape from the bitterness of slavery in the antebellum i.e., before the civil right movement, where many African Americans struggle to gain their freedom. Black women slaves, for instance, passed through many barriers, and obstacles to be recognized as a group member of the society far from being dehumanized and ignored. They endured racial segregation, gender oppression, and sexual abuse under the legacy of slavery for decades.

Kindred is a neo-slave narrative that was published in 1976 by Octavia E. Butler. At first, the novel was rooted in a realistic depiction of the writer's experience in slavery. It blurs history by presenting very a realistic image of black women's issues in south antebellum, where they were living under harsh conditions, they merely could survive. It describes issues of empowering women in particular racial differences and gender oppression black women suffer from. Butler successfully portrayed the black women's suffering through modern eyes by using time traveling technique. She pictures the circumstances in antebellum by her protagonist Dana, a young black woman who was born into a freedom in 1950. But, in her twenty six birthday, she mysteriously travels through time from the twentieth back to the nineteenth century, where she became a black enslaved woman in South antebellum. Through her novel, Butler stresses that the marking of the past slavery had a great impact on present day African- American lives.

Therefore, the aim of this modest study is to show how African American Women had lived under the difficult circumstances of slavery in south antebellum. It examines racial and gender oppression in Octavia Butler's Neo-slave narrative. It also gives an overall image about Black women's suffering under the system of slavery through the protagonist's eyes. Thus, it shows how those women struggle against stereotypes, gender differences and racial oppression in an enslaved patriarchal society dominated by whites. In addition, the study focuses on the black female power and sheds light on how African American women resist and stand up in face of all the kinds of hardship and subjugation in the plantation, by focusing on Dana, the black female protagonist, who is considered the prototype of resistance and survival in South antebellum.

However, as the research attempts to examine racial and gender oppression African American women encountered in the system of slavery, and to tackle the theme of resistance and the female black power in Butler's neo-slave narrative *Kindred*, it leads us to raise many questions:

To what extent did Butler succeed in representing black women's suffering in African American Neo-slave narrative? How does Butler's novel *Kindred* demonstrate racial and gender oppression in South antebellum society? How did black females resist the harsh conditions of slavery in antebellum? What is the effect of sexual violence on black females' body? How did slavery, gender and racial oppression influence African American women's lives?

In an attempt to answer the above questions, Black Feminist theory is used because it is useful for the main aim of the study. This approach was developed in the nineteenth century, a period that recognized the necessity for solidarity among black women, especially intellectuals. Its aim is to end all sorts of oppression black women encountered in the system of slavery and to force them to search for self-awareness and self-empowerment. It also encourages many African American intellectual women to act by breaking the silence and record their experience of misery and dehumanization in a racist male dominated society. Additionally, it calls the black woman for resistance and struggle to maintain her identity as a strong, intelligent, free black woman

Butler's neo-slave narrative has attracted critics from different parts of the world, since it tackled racial and gender oppression black women suffer from and their resistance and empowerment in the system of slavery. Accordingly, a number of researchers discussed the issues of race and gender in Butler's *Kindred*. For instance, Marc Steinberg, in his article "Inverting History in Octavia Butler's Postmodern Slave Narrative", explained that Butler's novel *Kindred* relied on the antebellum slave narratives to explore many issues of slavery, basically violence, gender and racial oppression by zigzagging in the frame of the novel. Butler manifested those issues through modern eyes because they continued till the twentieth century. However, Adriano Elia, in his article "Old Slavery Seen Through Modern Eyes: Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* and Haile Gerima's *Sankofa*" emphasized that Butler's writing of her novel

Kindred was direct way to make readers feel the physical pain that most slaves suffered from. He focused on the analysis of protagonist Dana who suffered from racial and gender oppression in south antebellum. In addition, Jregory Jerome Hampton gave fundamental insights about Butler's fiction, by analyzing the complexities that surrounded race, gender and sex.

This current study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical background and necessary definitions that fit the main subject of this dissertation. It explains how African American women literature developed throughout history. Furthermore, it provides definitions and origins of Slave narratives and Neo-Slave narratives. Then, it sheds light on the theory 'black feminism' which is considered as a reference for analyzing the novel's main scenes especially in chapters two and three. The chapter also provides a picture about gender and racial oppressions that black women slaves suffer from, and how they endure and resist the oppression of slavery in Neo-slave narratives.

The second chapter aims to shed light on racial oppression towards black women in Butler's novel *Kindred*. It first provides an introduction about the writer Octavia E. Butler and her novel *Kindred*. It also shows how Butler's novel is considered a neo-slave narrative subgenre. Additionally, the chapter seeks to reveal the various violent acts as a result of racism that black women suffer from under slavery. Finally, it ends by presenting the relationship existed between the oppressor and the oppressed in the system of slavery.

Moreover, the third chapter provides an image about black women's suffering due to their gender in south antebellum, by focusing on the protagonist's experiences (Dana) and her ancestor Alice. Mainly, it focuses on sexual violence that affected the lives of many black females on the plantation. Finally, the chapter examines the theme of resistance and the female

black power in the novel, by portraying Dana's resistance as one sample among black females who hardly endure the bitterness of slavery to survive in the plantation.

Octavia Butler's *Kindred* presented the reality of Black women slaves' life in the plantation, mainly their suffering, experiences, and struggle in mainstream white society. Butler's protagonist was best exemplified the racial and gender oppression that any black female suffered from in South antebellum. It accounts their bitter experiences through modern eyes by shifting in the frame of novel's time. By concentrating on the analysis of the novel's scenes and the protagonist's experiences, the picture of the black females' suffering and resistance became clearer and closer to the reader's mind.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework and Definitions

The first chapter provides a theoretical background and necessary definitions that fit the main subject of this dissertation. It presents an overview about African American women's literature and its development throughout history. It sheds light on the historical context of two main literary genres, Slave narratives and Neo-Slave narratives, by providing definitions and origins of both genres. Then, the chapter provides an overview of the theory of black feminism to help in understanding how African American women are represented in neo-slave narratives. It also gives insight on gender and racial oppressions those black women slaves suffer from since decades, and how they struggle and resist the brutality and dehumanization of slavery.

I.1.An Introduction to African American Women's Literature

In the mid of the harsh conditions of slavery, black women participated in preserving their culture and history through their words .They specified their literary products to articulate their suffering and oppression under enslavement. Accordingly, Francis Smith asserted that "African American women writers used the Word as both a tool and a weapon to correct, to create, and to confirm their visions of life as it was and as it could become"(qtd in Mitchell and Taylor 1).

Generally, the historical Context of African American literature has been developed throughout many chronological sections, where African American women writers have been played an integral part in its progress. Literature, for instance, adopted different trends that matched with the changes in the African American life. That's why it has passed through different noticeable periods that pushed African American writers to break the silence, remove barriers and stand up by themselves via their words. The sequence of events started from early period of the eighteenth Century. This era was dominated by slave narratives which reflected circumstances of enslaved people. The narratives consisted of autobiographies and memories that

are mainly written by fugitive slaves or orally recited by the slaves themselves (Miniotaitè 9). In other words, slave narratives of the eighteenth century are regarded as the first historical accounts for African Americans in the United States. For instance, Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the life of Slave Girl* was the first autobiography that published by a female slave in 1861. Since this book was written by a female slave, it harshly described the sexual oppressions that slave women faced and how they exposed and resisted the hardship and brutality of slavery.

From the mid-1820s, writers centered their writings on the autobiographical form. Daina Miniotaitè affirmed that the slave narratives of the mid-1820s that took the shape of autobiographies were designed to inspire the abolitionist movement against slavery (11-12). Basically, most of the autobiographies recited how the writer suffered in his life in order to gain the sympathy of white audience and their support too. According to Mino Thus, Miniotaitè the 1820's was a period of call and response where Black literature became an accessible space for African American people to raise their voice and call for ending slavery. It was the space for raising a call to white supremacy in specific and the entire world in general. John Brown, in his essay *Abolitionist Movement*, (Quoted in Miniotaitè 14) noted that the real demand for abolitionist movement was to cut up the expansion of slavery in southern states. By the end of Civil War in 1865, authors started to reduce their frequent needs in showing the horrors of slavery. They started in depicting their new life of freedom. In this context, the period was named by Miniotaitè as tales of progress because freedom became the most important matter of their writings (15). The best example of narrative during this period was *From the Darkness Cometh the Light* written by the Afro-American woman writer Lucy Delaney in 1891, where the struggle for freedom was the main subject matter of the story.

The post World War years had marked a great concentration in reviving African American heritage and culture. Essentially, the radical changes resulting from modern industrialism and science led to the emergence of new movement which was called the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro (Bell Bernard 93). This era was considered as the most creative and intellectual movement for African Americans to enlighten their cultural heritage that was previously seen as ashamed and ignored. Accordingly, the most prominent African American poet Langston Hughes stated that:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (2)

In other words, after the end of the World War I, the Harlem Renaissance paved the way for African American people to think about the construction of their own black identity. These years were suitable for artists in general and writers in particular to revive their works for the whole world. Thus, this movement started by a group of women writers including: Zora Neale Hurston, Gorgia Douglas, Johnson, Maya Angelou, Helene Johnson, Nella Larsen, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Effie Lee Newsome, Esther Popel, Dorothy West and many other famous African American writers who marked the history.

The 1960's was a sensitive period in American history. It was characterized by recurrent violent acts and consecutive changes; including a series of assassinations of black leaders as

Malcolm X and Martin Luther King (Miller 103). However, these turbulences affected all domains, especially black literature that responded with its own ways of changes. Accordingly, many black voices raised. Quentin D. Miller declares that one of the important trends among black Americans in the 1960s was about renaming. As they formerly called Negroes, the concept of renaming was, at this period, deeply related with the black national identity. This trend of renaming was called Black art movement, as it was known by a great solidarity among African American artists who all participated in it (104). Therefore, this change was concurrent with historical events that held a gradual development in African American affaire towards freedom. African American Women's contribution in the Black art movement was not so significant as Cheryl Clarke declares: "wherever they stood in relation to the Black Arts Movement, most black women writers of that time [1968–1978] wrote *because* of it – and still do" (Qtd in Mitchell and Taylore 120). Here, Clarke meant that African American women's contribution in the Black art movement was not substantial, but rather it was dominated by males.

In this context, the era between 1950s and 1960s marked the birth of Civil rights movement as it is noted by Giuliano Betanin. It raised the voices of the minorities including: African Americans, Native Americans and women. Significantly, there were an increase of slave narratives written by African American women that question gender issues and problems of sexuality. What was special in this period is that most slave narratives of pervious African American authors are rewritten again by contemporary authors, who tend to revive the African history of slavery. Consequently, this new literary sub-genre of slave narrative is called Neo-slave narrative (4).

Because the civil rights movement of the 1960s raised the consciousness of African American people who wanted to ensure their rights, many black writers produced neo-slave narratives as a

means to establish their identity as African American. Neo-slave narrative is composed of ‘neo’ which means something new, and ‘slave narrative’ which means the narrative that describes slaves’ suffering and experiences under bondage. Hence, the past slave narratives were revived by contemporary African American authors, who overwhelmed this sub-genre.

I.2. Historical Context of Slave and Neo-Slave Narratives

I.2.1. Slave Narrative: Definition and Origin

Literature was the tangible background where African American people defended themselves to communicate their concerns, and shared their experiences with the rest of the world. In fact, the original African Americans’ writings were mostly dominated by the slave narrative literary genre. Certainly, the Slave narrative is defined as an account of the life, or a major portion of the life, of a fugitive or former slave, either written or orally related by the slave personally (Andrews). Simply, slave narratives are vital literary grounds for African American writers, where they expressed their sufferings and discussed their rights and needs not only for their time, but for the coming generations as fixed memory.

Slave narratives were accounts of former slaves’ lives who gain their freedom, and then they transformed their experiences into the world of literature. Mainly, their main purpose was to share their testimonies with the coming generations. Kaelyn Kaoma, in his article “Child Soldier Memories and the Classic Slave Narrative: Tracing the Origins,” demonstrated that slave narratives treated themes of slavery in the first place. Basically, a slave narrative portrayed the reality of slavery and the need of abolishing it. Therefore, Kaoma stated that “the content is a series of events and descriptions that will make the reader see and feel the realities of slavery; and the form is a chronological, episodic narrative beginning with an assertion of existence and surrounded by various testimonial evidence for that assertion”(5). From one angle, he meant that

the direct intention of those texts was approximating real life of ex-slaves for present time readers. From another angle, these texts are used as testimonies and proofs to turn off slavery.

In simpler words, one can distinguish these historical accounts by deepening on their form and content. For the content, it pictured real life of people under slavery and how people survived. Most of them were designed as instruments for abolition of slavery. In particular, those wrote down before civil war were regarded as historical documents, i.e., they are considered as original documents that included important historical information about slavery. Thus, slave narratives are the primary sources that recorded the severity of slavery that many researchers and historians relied on as reliable historical texts. Subsequently, Charles T. Davis and Louis Gates stated that: “the slave’s narrative has precisely the identical documentary status as does any other account of slavery” (Quoted in GuialnoBettanin 1). Their point was significantly about the status of slave narrative as identical document for the slave life and experience under enslavement.

Slave narrative represented a minor group like any other form of minor literature. Accordingly, this minor literature faced variety of obstacles and barriers in publishing, as well as it faced a problem of credibility. Many authors highlighted that there were standards for publishing such accounts. The form of slave narratives was fully repetitive. James Olney projected the different conventions of this genre including: the slave’s portrait, the claim ‘written by Himself’ or some variation on the title page, testimonials or prefaces written by white abolitionists, an epigraph, and appendices, which consisted of materials such as bills of sale, newspaper items, anti-slavery poems or sermons (Quoted in Kaoma 4). Therefore, James Olney explained that those narratives opened with the sentence ‘I was born’ and concluded with the descriptions of whippings, slave auctions, the difficulty of attaining literacy, the hypocrisy of so-

called ‘Christian’ slave-holders, the escape from slavery, and the taking of a new name. In simpler, those elements were common among all slave narrative texts.

A slave narrative was a dominant genre in African American literature. It was a ground for women to share their slave experiences along with men. The fact that all segments of this minority were in need of engaging in a faire discussion about the brutality of slavery leads them to produce a huge number of slave narratives. There were many black female writers who adopted this genre to analyze slavery and made sure that their experiences never be forgotten.

In his article “Black women in American literature: Slavery through Slave Narratives and Contemporary Fiction”, Ariel Moniz mentioned that the works of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Octavia Butler were eminent in reviving the slave life and dark circumstances that continued in affecting people’s life. Thus their slave narratives were tailored to understand the history of institution of slavery, where they discussed major themes that touched every single black woman in slavery. In this context, He wrote:

These authors use to keep the knowledge of slavery in the light and unburied by time...all of these women have used their writings to touch upon many issues of slavery. Their work discuss the troubles experienced within slavery, jealous mistress, sexual exploitation, intelligence as a blessing or curse, community, and motherhood as well as those extended past the abolition ,continued servitude, the pains and rewards of remembering and searching for self-worth and even issues faced and decisions made by black women in the process of writing and publication”(32).

Ariel explained almost the basic themes that black women writers had discussed in their slave narratives. Initially, their texts incorporated basic issues of slavery including sexual violence,

issues of motherhood and families, and the context of abolition of slavery that lasted for decades. In the sense of abolition slavery, many other critics had participated with their works in the eighteenth century to help in raising slaves' voice that was ignored for decades. For instance, Daina Miniotaitė, in her work *The African-American Literary Tradition*, asserted that slave narratives of early eighteenth century are divided into three major types that go hand in hand with the historical events: Tales of religious redemption, Tales to inspire the abolitionist struggle, Tales of progress.

Starting from the 1770s to the 1820s, when slave narratives generally described a spiritual journey leading to Christian redemption, as Graham Jerrey noted that these writing hold “the beliefs that salvation was freely granted by God rather than earned by humans” (Quoted in Miniotaitė 54). In simple words, redemption for African American authors was that their suffering in servitude is not going in vain, but rather is deliverance from their sins. One of the most important works in 1789 is entitled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Oloudah Equiano*. The author Oloudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa describes in his biography the pain and the suffering he passed through in enslavement, then the freedom he earned after all the misery. He considers himself as “God’s Children”. The narrator theorizes that all the good things of his life are due to the workings of divine Providence (11).

From the mid-1820s, Daina Miniotaitė noted that writers started to shift their writings towards autobiographical forms to motivate and support the abolitionist movement. One of most popular examples in African American history is Assata Shakur’s autobiography, where she vividly wrote about racism that threatened her childhood and womanhood too. Prominently, in the part of affirmation, she gave more hope for her future. Accordingly, she stated that “I believe in living ...Believe in sunshine” (I).

The last type of slave narrative was tales of progress or post-bellum. According to Daina Miniotaitė, this type took place after the end of civil war in 1865, where the focus of writers was about people's new life after they gain their freedom. Authors no longer recounted the horrors of slavery; instead, they gave importance to racial progress. One of the famous autobiographies of tales of progress is written by Booker T. Washington (1869-1915), which gave most importance to education. Washington stated that "slavery was that school which helped in preparing African American for the roles they had assume after civil war" (Quoted in Miniotaitė Daina 16). Indeed, the brutality and fierce of slavery created counterattack among this minority. This is why slave narrative predominated important role in African American literature, since it covered their suffering under slavery and rooted deeply in their heritage and culture.

I.2.2. Neo-Slave Narratives

Literary authors and critics Bernard Bell, Ashraf H.A. Rushdy and Munoz-Valdivieso Sofia highly examined and define the term Neo-Slave Narrative. For instance, Bell Bernard referred to 'neo-slave narratives' as the fictions about slavery that began to appear in the US in the sixties and seventies and the "residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom" (289). In other words, the 1960's had witnessed a remarkable shift for African American authors towards neo-slave narratives. Basically, it was the era that marked the birth of Civil right movement. Many writers embraced this literary genre to raise the voices of slaves who sought to earn their freedom from bondage. It recounted their trails and experience of resistance in the legacy of slavery. According to Munoz-Valdivieso, Bell refers to the mindset of African Americans as they struggled to release the atrocious memories of their past (43). She meant that African American writers adopt this sub-genre to detach themselves from the memory of the past by moving away from their traditional writings that tackles their suffering and tragic life.

In the same vein, Ashraf H.A. Rushdy, in his book *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (1999), defines ‘Neo-Slave Narratives’ as “contemporary novels that assume the form, adopt the conventions, and take on the first-person voice of the antebellum slave narrative” (3). In other words, Rushdy sheds light on the postmodern novels that recount the stories of the pre-Civil War era (antebellum) which pictured the cruelty of slavery.

Accordingly, Rushdy writes:

I am able to explore in some detail the social logic of the literary form of Neo-slave narrative: its origins in the social, intellectual, and racial formations of the sixties, its cultural politics as these texts intervene in debates over the significance of race, and its literary politics as these texts make statements on engagements between texts and between mainstream and minority traditions.

(Rushdy 3)

Rushdy argues that African American history produced different forms of neo-slave narratives. He also draws attention on the issue of appropriation, where the white writers steal the slave’s writing as if it is theirs. This is what pushes African American authors to shift their attention to use the first person narrator for most their contemporary writings. In the same vein, Munoz-Valdivieso, in her article “Neo-Slave Narratives in Contemporary Black British Fiction,” inserts that “neo-slave narratives are particular kinds of slavery fiction, those that recreate the first-person narrator of the original texts written by the former slaves themselves” (43). Munoz-Valdivieso means that the neo-slave Narrative writers rewrite the experiences of previous slaves in their novels by using the first-person narrator.

The critic Daina Miniotaite, in her book *The African-American Literary Tradition*, throws light up on Characters in neo-slave narratives, who witnessed slavery directly or indirectly through science fiction techniques like time traveling. According to her, these type of black writings deal with the relationships between black slaves and their masters, between a black female slave and her white master and a white mistress, and between the blacks themselves (38). What she wants to convey is that contemporary narratives shed light on the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed from different angle.

As it has been noted by Miniotaite, another characteristic of neo-slave narrative is the description of characters in the 20th century, who travel back into slavery and find many difficulties in living peacefully in this century. This means that characters in neo-slave narratives were haunted by the memory of the past, thus, they found themselves in front of challenging their historical memoire. The best example is Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* (1975), where the main character Ursa Corregidora is locked into memories of slavery because of a mother love (38). The message the author sought to deliver is that the past experiences of slaves affect the present life of their grandchildren. Yet, the mark of the past is deeply rooted in their memories, because the past still haunted them. Among contemporary African American neo-slave narratives are: Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* (1966), Sherley Anne Williams' *Dessa Rose* (1986), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), J. California Cooper's *Family* (1991), Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979) and many other works that still celebrate till today.

Neo-slave narratives emerged in the sixties mainly because this era witnessed a transformation of slavery's contemporary discourse. Thus, African American writers firmly chose to write in the antebellum slave narrative for many reasons. Firstly, they wanted to help the literary texts of slave narratives, because, before this genre appeared, the white authors wrote

their novels as if they were written from the perspective of slave. That's why neo-slave narrative made some commentaries about the usage of the white's appropriation of slave voice whether explicitly or implicitly. However, this opened the door for African American writers to comment on cultural politics in America, especially the issue of appropriation, as they used a new form of writing that was neglected for long time. Secondly, neo-slave narrative writers wanted to get back to the old literary form in which they tackle their political concerns that help in the emergence of the black movement. Importantly, the authors discussed pre-modern form where race is a prominent theme (Rushdy 5-6). Ultimately, this new literary sub-genre encompasses with the emergence of black feminism movement especially in the sixties, where the whole context of slavery had changed through a variety of historical events and social agenda at that time.

I.3. Black Feminism and the Representation of Black Women in African American Neo-Slave Narrative:

I.3.1. Black Feminism: An overview

The African American woman has been passed through many barriers, and obstacles to be recognized as a group member far from being a chattel or animal. She has endured racial segregation, gender oppression, and sexual abuse under the legacy of slavery over decades. Black women's sufferings encourage many African American intellectual women to react, by breaking the silence and recording their experiences, like Mary Church Terrell, Sojourner Truth, Anna Cooper, Amanda Berry Smith and many others. In her famous speech that entitled "Ain't I a woman?" (1851) Sojourner Truth, a former slave, abolitionist and a woman's right activist, articulated that:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (1).

Sojourner Truth portrayed how hard black women worked in the plantations. She made a call for her femininity that disappeared under the harsh condition she was living in. She explained that her mother witnessed the brutality of slavery, especially when her children were sold at a very young age. In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper published her book *A voice from the South*, where she concentrated on listening to black women to adopt changes. In her book, Cooper focused on women's suffering and misery that pushed many of them to break the silence and defend themselves. The misery was a strong push for this segment of society to get out from their silence and raise their voice that was inaudible for decades.

Black feminist discourse emerged in nineteenth century, where women started to be aware about the real meaning of freedom. Accordingly, Bell Hooks demonstrated that Black women, in this period, did not struggle for sexual liberation only but rather attempt to gain their freedom in all domains (14). He gave an overall definition of black feminism, which aimed to obtain gender and racial equality to eliminate all forms of oppression. In her book *Race Gender and*

Educational Desire Why Black Women Succeed and Fail, Safia Miraza defined Black feminism as “ a body of thought seeks to reconfigure the complexities of black female marginality in an intersectional analysis where race, class, gender, and other social divisions were theorized as lived realities”(3). Her definition embodied different layers of oppression that women fought against. Yet, this intersectional theory is what classified the different reasons of Women’s oppression.

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberley Crenshaw (1989), rearticulates concerns about black female marginality in mainstream .It reveals the everyday lives of black and ethnicized women who are simultaneously positioned in multiple structures of dominance and power as gendered, raced, classed, colonized, sexualized ‘others’(Heridi 3). It means how a person or group of persons is affected by a number of discriminations. In simple words, intersectional analysis to understand the particular way in which sexuality ,gender ,and race have historically been used to justify racist violence and repression

I.3.2. Racial and Gender Oppression of African American Women

Racial and gender oppressions were basic issues that black female fought against, especially in the turn of the period of 1970’s and 1980’s. Female African American literary products of this period were dominated by Neo-slave narratives, which tackle feminist concerns like sexuality, racial differences and gender equality. According to Mitchel and Daniel, this era was known as Black Women’s literary Renaissance (29). Black feminism movement fought against the oppression that black women received. It help in overcoming the intersecting patterns of discrimination; i.e., racial violence and gender oppressions and other issues that these women faced. The intersectionality of race and gender oppression over black women were eminent issues that slavery provides.

Historically, a real vivid example about the harassment of slavery and gendered oppressions were during the trips that bring slaves to the new world on ships. Black women, for instance, were kept without being chained unlike black men who were shackled; so that the white slaver could practice delightedly their power on them and could exercise his brutality and exploit black women without any fear of harm. However, Black female slaves were moving freely towards the ships, where they became easy target to be abused and distorted physically by any white male. At first, all slaves on the ship were branded with a hot iron. For example, ‘cat o’ nine-tails’ was a type of multi tailed flail that used for severe punishment by the slavers to scourge the slaves who cried out in pain or resist the torment. Women were deprived from all their clothes, lashed, raped and tortured by a slaver (Hook 33).

As a consequence to these sexual violent acts, many African women were pregnant and forced to persist pregnancy without any care to their food or any assistance; unlike what they used to in their own communities where African women had been received much care during pregnancy. So, the brutality on the board of the ships was both physically and psychologically harmful on the black woman. An example of racial oppression is about the African couple Ruth and Jacob Weldon, who experienced the horrors of the basely branded and scarred, till it would seem as if the very heavens might smite the infernal tormentors with the doom they so richly merited. De bell Hooks wrote in his book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*:

Annals of history record that the American slave ship Pongas carried 250 women, many of them pregnant, who were squeezed into a compartment of 16 by 18 feet. The women who survived the initial stages of pregnancy gave birth aboard ship with their bodies exposed to either the scorching sun or the freezing cold. The

numbers of black women who died during childbirth or the number of stillborn children will never be known (33).

From the well known pictures of oppression of slavery towards black women were found in the plantations where women worked. For instance, black female slaves could do the same tasks or even more than black men did on any plantation farms. Most of the time, black women worked longer hours in the fields than black men, as they plowed, planted, and harvested crops. This is why slave owners believed that women are good workers than their husbands, and they were easy to capture them to farm in the colonies. Despite their efforts and hard working, the slave females were beaten harshly like men without exception (Hooks 40). However, not all black women are exploited in the fields, some of them were forced to work in the white household where they cook, nurse and wash. They received a less harsh treatment by house owners, but they were the more who suffer most from the brutality because they were all time in front of the endless demands of their white masters and mistresses. Accordingly, Mungo White, an ex-slave from Alabama, recorded the circumstances, where his mother was working; he said “her task was too hard for any one person. She had to serve as maid to Mr. White’s daughter, cook for all de hands, spin and card four cuts of thread a day, and den wash. Dere was one hundred and forty-four threads to de cut. If she didn’t get all dis done she got fifty lashes dat night” (Quoted in Hook 41).

The traumatic sufferings of black women were promptly related to their sexuality, involving rape and other forms of sexual violation. Black females were exposed to sexual abuse between the ages of fourteen and sixteen as it was witnessed by a female slave autobiographer, Harriet A. Jacobs in her autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, when she announced that “the slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear. The lash and the foul

talk of her masters and his sons are her teachers. When she is fourteen or fifteen, her owner or his sons, or the overseer, or perhaps all of them, begin to bribe her with presents. If these failed to accomplish their purpose, she is whipped or starved into submission to their will” (79). Black female narratives usually teach young girls about the sexual education by providing them with little information about their bodies. For example, they teach them from where babies are coming and other subjects about sexual discourse; as well as they warn them about the possibility of sexual harassment. The past hold very tragic memories for African American women, as they unfortunately still suffer from the marks of the past in present day.

I.3.2. Slave Resistance and the Black Female Power

The critic Bernard Bell referred to the fictions about slavery which began to appear in the US in the sixties and seventies as Neo-slave narratives. Those narratives became integral part of the political and social changes in the country. It goes with the African American Black power movement, where people recognize their rights and start to show their resistance against the prejudices of the period. It is important to acknowledge that the “theme of the sixties” was revolution and resistance. However, Stokely Carmichael catches upon the meaning of black power as “a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is call for black people to define their own goals” (quoted in Hooks 81). He demonstrates the importance of this era in raising the consciousness among African American people, especially women, about resistance and black power. This black power stands for a call for resistance against all sorts of oppression and violence. It was a call for self-determination. Basically, this era marked a huge deviation towards African American art and literature. Although African American women were doubly oppressed in the mainstream society

as blacks and females, they were known by their great solidarity in defending their needs and concerns and claiming their own rights.

One of the most prominent African American literary works that portrayed black women's resistance and power is *Assata: An Autobiography* by Assata Shakur . The book told the story of one of the most important African American women leaders in black power movement in the period between 1960's and 1970's. Her life was a series of struggle along with the main stream society. The author described the inequality between blacks and whites. This led her to involve with various student organizations aimed at improving the college experience for black students. Later, she joined the Black Panther Party (BBP), whose aim to defeat racism and empower black people. Her experience as a combatant black woman inspired many African American women writers of her time, as Anne Moody and Angela Davis who published their biographies in 1974. Two years later, Ishmael Reed published *Flight to Canada* (1976), a novel that told the story of three escape slaves who sought for racial and cultural freedom. It discussed significant themes of that era.

The turn of the period of 1970's and 1980's marked the flowering of African American literary products written by women that tackle female Black power and resistance as the basis of their narratives. Among the famous authors who left their imprint in history was Toni Morrison. Her novels *The Bluest Eyes* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), and *Beloved* (1987) remain the most prominent works since she placed too much emphasis on African American history, as projecting females' experience in slavery, their resistance and empowerment. However, the most inspiring neo-slave narratives that drew too much attention on black women slaves' resistance and empowerment is *Kindred* (1979) by Octavia E. Butler. Butler initially constructed the novel to project how black women resist racism they experience on a daily basis.

She was inspired by the story of her mother, who was hardly exploited in the farms. Concerning this, she explains her purpose behind writing the novel:

My mother did domestic work and I was around sometimes when people talked about her as if she were not there, and I got to watch her going in back doors . . . I spent a lot of my childhood being ashamed of what she did, and I think one of the reasons I wrote *Kindred* was to resolve my feelings, because after all, I ate because of what she did. . . . *Kindred* was a kind of reaction to some of the things going on during the sixties when people were feeling ashamed of, or more strongly, angry with their parents for not having improved things faster, and I wanted to take a person from today and send that person back to slavery (quoted in Behrent 798).

To conclude, this chapter sheds light on African American Literature written by women. It investigates how literature gives voices to voiceless African American writers in general and women in particular .The chapter shows how slave narratives recorded not only women's sufferings in the enslavement bondage, but also how they resist and stand against the white masters in the antebellum south. The period of the 1960's was witnessed a development of an eminent literary sub-genre which is called Neo-Slave Narrative. This last was highly valued since it portrayed the slave trials to flee towards freedom in the south, since the American South was the epicenter of slavery. African American literature played a major role in fighting slavery. It gave voice to the voiceless. Prominently, slave narratives portrayed people's suffering and how they endured slavery throughout history. It vividly made readers imagine how hard people survived in the harsh conditions of slavery. It also described how people flee from slavery where they recite their experiences in this new sub-genre. However, neo-slave narratives prescribed

how people planned to flee from the brutality they witnessed. Yet, African American literary products by black women are considered as historical documents since they recite black women's suffering and struggle throughout history to gain their rights and freedom.

Chapter two: Racial Oppression towards African American Women in Octavia E. Butler's Neo-Slave Narrative *Kindred*

The second chapter generally focuses on racial oppressions towards African American women and how they are represented in Octavia E. Butler's novel entitled *Kindred* (1979). It provides an Introduction about the writer Butler and her novel. It makes a reference to the novel as a Neo-slave narrative. Furthermore, the chapter concentrates on applying the Black feminism theory to examine the theme of racial oppression on black women due to their blackness. Particularly, it analyzes the protagonist's suffering and the brutality she faced in her time traveling trips to antebellum South. It also examines how racial differences of the protagonist and her ancestors manifest in the recurrent violence acts during slavery throughout the novel. Finally, the chapter uncovers racial power relations existed between the oppressor and the oppressed in the novel.

II.1. Introduction to the Author and her Work

Octavia Estelle Butler was born on June 22, 1947, in Pasadena, California. She is considered one of the great writers in African American history. She began writing when she reached the age of ten. At the age of twelve, she gave high interest in science fiction. Butler's inspiration in the world of literature was revealed by the circumstances of her relatives; particularly, her mother who was hardly exploited in the farms. Her mother was one example from many African American women who suffered from the brutality of slavery.

Butler's skillful contribution to the world of literature began in 1976 with her first novel *Pattern Master*, and then followed by *Kindred* in 1979, which is considered as a master piece in the African American's account. Her novel *Kindred* revealed the different lesions of slavery that

African Americans suffer from. Octavia Butler died on February 24, 2006, after falling near her home in Lake Forest Park, Washington.

Octavia E. Butler's novel *Kindred* was published in 1976. It described the terrifying period of slavery in the South antebellum. The overall structure of the novel is consisted of six fragmented parts, which bounded with one another by the protagonist recurrent time traveling trips. The plot took place between two societies in two different periods of time. The story began at Dana's, a black young girl, twenty sixth birthday, when Dana decided to travel to California with her white husband, Kevin. Their trip was almost safe until they started unpacking. Dana felt dizzy that consequently ended with the loss of her conscious, then her body disappeared from the house. Mysteriously, she woke up to find herself in front of drowning boy in Maryland, where she jumped to the water and rescued him without even knowing his name or identity. When she got him out, the boy's parents appeared. His father did not thank her for saving his boy, but rather he pointed a riffle towards her in order to kill her. She felt afraid, and then she got another dizzy spell that lifted her to her home in Maryland. She understood nothing of what happened to her, since it was like a dream for her.

With days passing, Dana started to get a recurrent dizzy spells that each time took her to Maryland to save that boy who's name Rufus. The second time she travelled back she found Rufus standing in front of terrifying fire that was setting in drapery of his chamber. She carefully turned off the fire, and then she asked him to help her to find a refuge for hiding him from his father. Accordingly, he brought her to one of the slave's house called Alice. This last suspected to be Dana's ancestor. When Dana was hiding in the wood besides Alice's house, she was caught by patrollers, who beat her fiercely and attempted to rape her. Suddenly, she felt dizzy and disappeared to get back home. After couple of days home, she received another call from Rufus.

Where she felt dizzy and disappeared. The special event in this trip was that Kevin went in company of Dana. The couple found themselves in a forest, where Rufus was lying in the ground with his broken leg. Rufus was accompanied by Nigel a young slave, whom Dana asked to bring help from the plantation. Thereafter, the couple stayed in the plantation, where Dana stayed in company of slaves, while Kevin stayed with Mr. Weylin (Rufus's father).

The days sequenced in the plantation and Dana was asked by the boy's parents to teach Rufus how to write and read. She was frequently read for Rufus stories and books. One day, she borrowed a book from Weylin's library. Unfortunately, he thought that she stole it, that's why he started beating her severely until she felt dizzy then getting back home. While Kevin trapped in the plantation, Dana received a call from Rufus. She arrived to the plantation to find a violent fight between Rufus and Alice's husband Isaac, where Isaac was about to kill Rufus because he attempted to rape Alice. Dana cleverly calmed down Isaac after she convinced him to flee with Alice from the plantation to gain their freedom outside. While the couple fled, Rufus was bleeding and his body was so weak, but Dana helped him to go home. In their way home, Dana asked Rufus about Kevin. He told her that he traveled to Maryland. Yet, Dana asked help from Rufus to send a letter to Kevin to tell him that she is there waiting for him. He promised her to do so, but in return he asked her to convince Alice to make a sexual relationship with him. Since Alice and Isaac were caught after they flee, Alice was bought by Rufus and Isaac was killed. After few days, Rufus failed in sending a letter while his father did. Eventually Kevin appeared and the couple met again after a period of separation.

Dana and Kevin decided to run away from the plantation. While they were planning for escape, Rufus caught the two and started shooting them. Dana felt afraid and got dizzy, and then the couple lifted home fortunately together. A couple of days passed, Dana and Kevin were

home. One day, she received a call from Rufus. She went back to find herself in a rain storm with the Weylin's house in the distance. She moved her eyes searching for Rufus, who was lying in the mud. She dragged him to house. She took care of him until he healed. After eight days in the plantation, Tom Weylin had a heart attack and died. Alice was pregnant from Rufus.

After few days, Dana discovered that Rufus sold one of the closest slaves to her named Sam. She felt angry; she took a knife and slit her wrists in bath water. This was what dragged her back home. Dana woke up in her own bed with her wrists heavily bondage and Kevin was sleeping besides her. The last trip of Dana towards the plantation was tragic. Since Alice hung herself because Rufus told her that he sold her children while he didn't, Dana decided to take revenge for Alice. She prepared to kill him, as she went to the kitchen where he followed her. He attempted to rape her. Suddenly, she took a knife and skinned it into his side then in his back. She pushed his body away, but her arm remained clamped in Rufus' body. She went back home while her arm stacked in the past it was cut down. Eventually, the novel ended with such violent acts and it opened with the narrator Dana's repentance about the lost of her arm and a part of her life in antebellum.

II.2. *Kindred* as a Neo-Slave Narrative

Octavia E. Butler successfully revealed the history of slavery in her novel *Kindred*. Butler presented the bitter experience of African American women who lived in bondage during slavery. Like many other contemporary works of neo-slave narratives, Butler illustrated the horrors of slavery through the portrayal of her protagonists' experiences in the South antebellum. Butler's main character, Dana, a Black female who raised up in freedom in 1950, became enslaved in her twenty-sixth birthday in 1976. She was born in freedom in California, but her life turns upside down by the unexpected time traveling trips to antebellum South. There, she found

herself surrounded by the cruelty of slavery. She was living with her counterpart of marriage Kevin, a white man in California. Their life was normal as a couple; they loved each other regardless to the reality that they are racially different. Dana never identified herself as she had different origins or racially different. On her twenty-sixth birthday, she plunged ambiguously to a plantation where she found herself in the early 1800's in Maryland.

The main purpose behind Butler's use of the neo-slave narrative genre was basically to remember events from the past of slavery. The critic Bernard Bell noted that Neo-Slave Narratives are, "residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom" (Rushdy 3). Bell's definition denotes that characters within neo-slave narrative novels are characterized by the act of escape from servitude towards freedom. This was basically what happened to the protagonist "Dana" through her recurrent time traveling from the plantation in the South towards California, i.e., from bondage to freedom. Particularly, through the use of the time traveling technique by Butler, this what made *Kindred* unique comparing to other neo-slave narrative literary texts. From other angle, Ashraf Rushdy defines neo-slave narratives as "fictional accounts of slavery; they depict historical tales of enslavement from African Americans" (3). He means that neo-slave narratives, as for instance *Kindred*, was literary products that portrayed the history of slavery and the suffering of people who were living under the harsh conditions of enslavement.

This is what Butler successfully treated via projecting on African American women's suffering under bondage, typically, through her protagonist Dana and her ancestor Alice who received brutality from the white oppressor Rufus. For instance, Dana was beaten several times in the plantation, the first time by the patrollers who caught her in the second section of the novel ('The fire'), and the other time by Mrs. Weylin, Rufus's mother. However, each time her life was

putting in danger as she escaped through her repeated dizziness. She was faced with many trials of rapping .However, Alice was born and raised in slavery; she witnessed more brutality and dehumanization in the plantation, as she was raped by Rufus and the result was a baby. Additionally, the novel evidently demonstrates family separation which scattered African American families as a result of slavery. For instance, the white character Rufus deported Alice's children to take revenge from her because she refused him. The novel also depicts African Americans who suffered abuse from the white slave masters, including both genders; as for example Alice's husband Isaac, who was hardly beaten and dehumanized in the plantation by the white master.

Butler, the contemporary writer, provides, through her neo-slave narrative *Kindred*, new visions of America's antebellum slavery, and gives a valuable insight on how black women resisted and challenged the subordinated experiences of slavery. Accordingly, Sandra Y. Govan claims that "Butler treats the recurring themes of casual brutality, forcible separation of families, the quest for knowledge, the desire to escape, the tremendous workloads expected of slaves as efficiently as any of the narrators or documentary histories discussing the slavery experience (Quoted in Steinberg 468). Thus, *kindred* shows how African American women suffer through physical, sexual, and gender oppressions in slavery bondage. Rushdy explains that neo-slave narratives highlighted more historical memory rather than the history itself .In other words, he means that those contemporary narratives do not concentrate on rewriting historical events only, but on making reference to history of slave sufferings through memory. Particularly, he emphasized the strong relationship between memory and history in the novel through the female protagonist Dana. Accordingly, he noted:

Dana Time travel is less important to the way she defines herself and her place in history than her narrative versions of that time travel. A narrative version in which memory is the most important means of transportation ...Dana's act of memory ...is more than a farming device for narrating her story. Her memory is performance of history, a performance of such potency that it incorporates her into the past. (137)

Basically, memory in Butler's novel constructs the past experiences of slaves in general and the traumatic slave memories of the protagonist Dana in particular. The novel started by a prologue where Dana was retelling to Kevin what happened to her arm. She was remembering scenes of her last encounter with Rufus which was a double tragic meeting (Rufus' death and the cutting of her arm). In this context, through the prologue, Butler puts the reader in front of remembering the brutal remarks of past slavery on present people's life.

According to Steinberg, Butler found neo-slave narrative as a space to explore issues of violence and oppression via concentrating on form and content. Steinberg noted that "Butler's neo-slave narrative, at least in part, takes place in the relative present. As such, it more clearly blurs history and the present (though the neo-slavery novel by convention imposes the past onto the present)" (467). More clearly, he meant that Butler's fusion of ideas in her novel through the fragmented form and the time travel technique was highly skillful, since she made the reader come closer to past events by the shift between past and present. Butler's fusion of ideas through the fragmented form was not randomly chosen; instead, the shift between past and present was to explore past slavery and its effect on present characters and their several attempts of liberation. Through the non-linear form and time travel technique, Butler's neo-slave narrative exposes the misfortunes of slaves in the plantation and how they defended their rights and needs.

II.3. Violence as a Matter of Racism towards African American Women:

Racially motivated violence is highly supported by racism. It comprised a total rejection of humanity to people who are victims and belong to different subordinate social groups (Joyce 191). In simple words, violence among different social groups is deeply rooted in the concept of racism itself, where people are taught to distinct themselves and judge others according to many physical appearance .The major distinction is based on a skin color. African Americans suffered from dehumanization and oppression over decades mainly of being blacks. Slavery had deprived people from all their rights. It implanted the horror between black men, women, and children. *Kindred* portrayed the bitter experiences of slaves under the harsh conditions in the antebellum plantation. Particularly, Butler reveals African American women's suffering under enslavement. She projects women's social and racial abuse and violence through the female protagonist Dana, who was born free in California then she time traveled back mysteriously to the South antebellum to witness all forms of oppression .

Violence is considered an essential theme in slave narratives of antebellum. In her novel *Kindred*, Butler represents all facets of violence in a very sophisticated manner. She obviously implies it as a part of the narrative itself. However, she depicts how black characters challenge slavery and violence by running away, as she explicitly implies violence as synonymous to escape (Steinberg 470). For instance, Dana finds out a refuge in her recurrent flight from the plantation when her life was in danger for many times.

The patrollers, who caught Dana aside from Alice's house, were so cruel with her. They thought she was a fugitive slave, that's why they started beating her with non-humanistic manner. She couldn't absorb the pain because it was the first time for her to witness such thing.

Although Dana came from the present where she was living with white husband Kevin in a white mainstream society in South California , she had never received a racial violence or racial insults as she had witnessed in the plantation with past slave sufferings and oppressions. To confirm this point, Adriano Elia reports, in her essay “ Old slavery seen through modern eyes: Octavia E. Butler’s *Kindred* and Haile Gerima’s *Sankofa*” , a passage from her interview with Octavia E. In the passage, Butler said about her novel *Kindred* that she “was trying to get people to feel slavery” (Quoted in Elia 22).

Butler portrayed the brutality of old slavery through modern eyes. Dana gave a picture of slavery by traveling back to antebellum for many times to make readers at the first place feel the pain of those people who were deprived from their pity rights of being humans. It was not their fault of being blacks, no one of them chose to belong to this minority. Racism was a strong weapon to defeat this segment of society and brought them in face of all sort of abuse. One could not deny the violence Dana received from slaveholding Margaret Weylin, Rufus’ mother ,who was one of Dana’s main enemy on the farm. Margaret was treating Dana with special hatred because of her race (Steinberg 471). The protagonist hardly resisted this oppressive character , because Margaret was feeling jealous of Dana who was literate and educated her son despite that she was a slave. in addition, Dana worked as a householder , this means that she was very close to Margaret in daily routine, so it’s obvious that Dana would counter face daily oppression. Concerning this, Dana narrated:

I kept my canvas bag there and went there to avoid Margaret Weylin when she came rubbing her fingers over dustless furniture and looking under rugs on well-swept floors. Differences be damned, I did know how to sweep and dust no matter what century it was. Margaret Weylin

complained because she couldn't find anything to complain about. That, she made painfully clear to me the day she threw scalding hot coffee at me, screaming that I had brought it to her cold. (Butler 81)

Although Dana was not permanent inhabitant in the farm, she tasted the bitterness of slavery for each time traveling trip .Alice, who was Dana ancestor, and her husband Isaac were severely tortured. Although they were good workers in the farm, they perceived much of the oppressor's violence. Dana recorded the night she spent in Alice's house, when the patrollers unreasonably broke her house and hit her husband fiercely, as such:

Four of the riders dismounted and went to hit and kick the door. When no one answered their pounding, two of them began trying to break it down. It looked like a heavy door—one more likely to break the men's shoulders than it was to give. But apparently the latch used to keep it shut wasn't heavy. There was a sound of splintering wood, and the door swung inward. The four men rushed in with it, and a moment later, three people were shoved, almost thrown out of the cabin. Two of them—a man and woman—were caught by the riders outside who had dismounted, apparently expecting them. The third, a little girl dressed in something long and light colored, was allowed to fall to the ground and scramble away, ignored by the men. She moved to within a few yards of where I lay in the bushes near the edge of the clearing. (Butler 92)

For general discussion, these violence acts were not only directed to individuals of this minority, but in fact they are pointed to all blacks. Octavia Butler begins her novel with Dana's repentance: "I lost an arm on my last trip home. My left arm. And I lost about a year of my life

and much of the comfort and security I had not valued until it was gone” (Butler 9). Here, her purpose is to put the reader in front of how the effects of slavery and racism in the past continue to the present and how people endure the harshness of slavery and its bitterness they immolate with their bodies and life.

II.4. Power Relations: The Oppressor and Oppressed Relationship

The novel’s scenes were tied together through time traveling technique. Dana’s first mysterious travel to the plantation was like a dream to her. She didn’t realize that her existence of that time when Rufus was drowning was necessity for her survival. For Steinberg, the novel highlights how strong the relationship between the oppressor, Rufus, and the oppressed, Dana, who were tied one to another. In a very sardonic way, Dana needed her oppressor to ensure her own birth (17). In other words, Dana did not drag to the past coincidentally for the sake of rescuing a white boy or to do him a favor, but rather she went there to guarantee her survival, since Rufus was her ancestor. For this context, she said: “Was that why I was here? Not only to insure the survival of one accident-prone small boy, but to insure my family’s survival, my own birth” (Butler 29).

Dana received much violence and oppression from Rufus who beat her many times, despite the fact that she was the one who helped him. Additionally, Butler made a strong relationship between the oppressor Rufus and Kevin the white man, Dana’s husband. Accordingly, Robert Crossley states that Butler, in her novel, “ingeniously suggests parallels between Rufus Weylin and Kevin Franklin: their facial expressions, their language, even after a time their accents merge in Dana’s mind so that at times she mistakes one for the other”

(Robert Crossley “introduction”) . For this reason, Dana claimed that “the words echoed strangely in my head. Kevin had said something like that to me once. I opened my eyes again to be sure it was Rufus” (Butler 213-14). The similarities between Rufus, the white oppressor, and Kevin, the white husband, illustrated the domination and the power given to the white authority in bondage. Butler’s intention in identifying Kevin with Rufus may lead Dana to forgive Rufus, even when he attempts to rape her (Steinberg 471). Thus, one can say that Butler’s implication of the similarities between the oppressor Rufus and the protagonist’s counterpart of marriage was like a chain for the survival of one another.

In her article, “The personal is Historical :Slavery, Black Power, and Resistance in Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*”, Megan Behrent affirms that Butler engages in a debate within the Black Movement about the possibility of interracial solidarity with white activists. Butler explains why she gave her protagonist a white husband instead of a black one. Accordingly, she said “ I gave her that husband to complicate her life” (Qtd in Behrent 815). Actually, Dana’s life is complicated in general with her time traveling trips to antebellum Maryland. However, this affects her interracial relationship with Kevin to a certain extent.

Dana’s survival in antebellum was due to her interracial relationship she developed with Rufus, because there was a mutual need for the existence for each other. This was clear when Dana rescued Rufus from the fire and he helped her to hide from his father. With the different time traveling trips of Dana, Rufus got surprised of her marriage with a white husband. In one encounter of Dana and Rufus, he said to her that her marriage was “against the law”, but she declared that: “it isn’t where we come from (61). With the different time traveling trips of Dana, Rufus got surprised of her marriage with a white husband. In one encounter of Dana and Rufus, he said to her that her marriage was “against the law”, but she declared that: “it isn’t where we

come from” (61). Rufus saw their marriage as something illegal, since the interracial marriage, in antebellum, did not legalised yet. In particular, Dana was called “slave market”, as one of her coworkers told her “with typical slave market condor that he and I were the weirdest looking couple she had ever seen” (61). Basically, the kind of the relationship of Dana and Kevin held a sense of anxiety especially with the time shift between past and present, where she got confused between her husband and Rufus and other time between him and the patrollers. Although Dana and her husband were racially different, they were harmonic couple who could manage their life like any other couples. Despite the difficulties they faced they felt the passion to each other.

Butler’s neo-slave narrative *kindred* covered much of the reality African Americans were suffering from. It gave a valuable insight on how slavery in South antebellum affected black women in particular. It made the reader engaged in past oppressive acts, power distributions between the oppressor and the oppressed, and many other racial issues. Through her skillful storytelling technique that based on zigzagging in the time and place, Butler succeeded in revealing the past non-humanistic acts that undergone under the power of slavery, showing how these acts are still witnessed in nowadays. This feature is what gave the novel the flexibility and uniqueness among many African American works.

Chapter Three: Gender Oppression, African American Female Power and Resistance in Butler's *Kindred*

The third chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part sheds light on African American women's oppression on the basis of their gender in antebellum South represented in Butler's novel *Kindred*. Particularly, it places too much emphasis on the protagonist Dana and her ancestor Alice who endure gender oppression under slavery. The chapter gives an image about the violence acts black women witnessed during slavery, and how they struggle against stereotypes that constructed their black female body. It also shows how sexual violence is considered as the most problematic issue in the novel, since all slave women were sexually abused by the whites. However, the second part investigates the facades of resistance that the protagonist passes through to survive in the plantation, as well as the female black power.

III.1. The African American Woman as a Victim of Gender Oppression

III.1.1. Slavery and the Black Female Body

Black women were constantly struggling against stereotypes that coped with their bodies and sexuality. These issues were eminent problems for many African American women writers, who wanted to change the perception of their bodies in a white mainstream society. Butler, in her novel *Kindred*, successfully projected the black female body as a source of gender and racial violence. Since the novel was deeply rooted in black feminist theory, her work empowered black women's social issues. She investigated the strength of the relationship between the protagonist's body and violence acts, especially rape, during the era of slavery.

The critic Gregory Jerome Hampton, in his book *Changing Bodies in The fiction of Octavia Butler*, explored that the most problematic theme in Butler's *Kindred* was the black female Body. He highlighted how black female body caused many oppressive acts throughout history. He defined the body as "The body matter because it extends far beyond flesh and bone, the body becomes a boundless edifice for the articulation of difference" (xii). Basically, from this definition, one inferred that the black female body is what constitutes that distinction between the self and the other. In the slave discourse, the distinction between masters and their slaves was based on their bodies. Black females endured slavery with most parts of their bodies. For instance, the protagonist Dana witnessed the direct bitterness of slavery via traveling back in time to antebellum. She recited what she had passed through in her memory since she was a writer. In her final trip, she lost an arm. Dana recorded "I lost an arm on my last trip home. My left arm and I lost about a year of my life and much of the comfort and security. I had not valued until it was gone" (Butler 9). Adrian Elia noted "Dana experience in slavery causes for her a psychological trauma. Due to the brutality she received by the oppressor" (23). Basically, the protagonist suffered from inner complexities due to the cruelty she faced. Actually, Dana was one example among many other black females who still trapped with the marks of the past.

The character Dana traveled through time and space, where she witnessed events during the period of slavery in south antebellum. Ultimately, the novel was rich with narration about the struggling of African American slaves. Since Dana was a writer who recited her mysterious life basing on her own experience and memory, she narrated the different forms of Black women's deprivation and suffering in South antebellum. Essentially, Dana recounted the physical and emotional oppression of women and the brutality of slaveholders on their slaves; she said:

Weylin punish a field hand for the crime of answering back. Weylin

ordered the man stripped naked and tied to the trunk of a dead tree. As this was being done—by other slaves—Weylin stood whirling his whip and biting his thin lips. Suddenly, he brought the whip down across the slave’s back. The slave’s body jerked and strained against its ropes. I watched the whip for a moment wondering whether it was like the one Weylin had used on Rufus years before... I watched and listened and longed to be away. But Weylin was making an example of the man. He had ordered all of us to watch the beating—all the slaves. Kevin was in the main house somewhere, probably not even aware of what was happening. The whipping served its purpose as far as I was concerned. It scared me, made me wonder how long it would be before I made a mistake that would give someone reason to whip me. Or had I already made that Mistake? (Butler 92)

Substantially, the harsh attack of Mr. Weylin on his slave was mainly due to his physical body. When the slave answered back his master the clash occurred, because such acts were seen as contradiction between the master body that was supposed to be the stronger and the slave who’s supposed to be voiceless. English professors Japtok and Jenkins explored the notion of human contradictions in Octavia E. Butler’s *Work* were poverty and social injustice, as She seeks always to treat such issues in her writings. When they recorded an interview with her she demonstrated that: “write about human differences all human differences make the acceptable”(3). These differences were the basic reasons for human oppression. Butler and many other black female writers sought hardly to overcome these variation and established equality among this ignored segment of society.

In Butler's *Kindred*, the body of the character Alice was the center of brutality she received from her master, Rufus. Although they were racially different, her body was sexually attractive for him. The novel sheds light not only on Alice's body, but the protagonist's too. The couple Dana and Kevin was also racially different, but they were married. Yet, Butler denoted another façade of interracial relationship in her novel. She sought, as many other African American women writers, to correct the perception of black female body, where there was a sexual attraction between two different genders that descended from different origins.

Dana's turning back to antebellum for six times was built upon fulfilling the need of Rufus. Actually, memory played an important role in recreating historical events. It pictured how black women suffered from gender oppression, mainly because they were not recognized as human beings. As Butler suggested, one of the goals of *Kindred* as neo-slave narrative was to re-present historical memory in a way that acknowledged the impact of slavery not just on isolated individuals but on entire families and networks of kin (quoted in Liza 057).

The white master Rufus' several calls for Dana place her in series of dangerous trials. For instance, in her first trip that entitled 'the river', she was caught by Rufus's father who attempted to kill her. However, in the section that entitled 'The fire', Dana was about to die because the patrollers caught her. She recorded:

I dragged myself from beneath his heavy body and tried to stand up. Halfway up, I felt myself losing consciousness, falling back. I caught hold of a tree and willed myself to stay conscious. If the man came to and found me nearby, he would kill me. He would surely kill me! But I couldn't keep my hold on the tree. I fell, slowly it seemed, into a deep starless darkness. (Butler 42)

Dana's body was strong evidence for the cruelty of slavery. The marks of the past affected the present life of the protagonist, especially the scars and the missing part of her body.

III.1.2. Sexual Violence

Sexual violence was the act of a forced rap and sexual abuse that many black females suffer from since decades. Dana, for instance, was not the only figure who received brutality in the novel. Her ancestor Alice confronted a sexual abuse from her master Rufus, who noticed the similarities between Alice's physical appearance and Dana. Dana physically assimilated her ancestor Alice. Their faces were too close to each other, which made Rufus getting closer to Dana. After Alice's death, Rufus wanted to make a sexual relationship with her. Despite the fact that she was married, the presence of Dana had facilitated the relationship between the two. This was obvious when Dana wanted to text Kevin via Rufus; in return this last wanted to use Dana as a tool to make a sexual relationship with Alice. In a conversation between Dana and Rufus, he demanded from her to convince Alice to sleep with him, Dana recorded:

You want her to get hurt? [. . .] All I want you to do is fix it so I don't have to beat her. You're no friend of hers if you won't do that much!" Of hers! He had all the low cunning of his class. No, I couldn't refuse to help the girl—help her avoid at least some pain. But she wouldn't think much of me for helping her this way. I didn't think much of myself. (Butler 163–64)

Dana's ancestor Alice was one of the main examples who suffered from sexual violent acts from her master Rufus. For instance, rape is considered a type of sexual violence that many African American women are victims of. Here in the novel, Rape was the most problematic issue related to Black female body. Ironically, Butler built the present basing on past incidents between slaveholder (Rufus) and enslaved (Alice). To insure the existence of the present (Dana),

Marc Steinberg explained” that Dana’s needed her oppressor in order to guarantee her own birth and life in the future was cruel irony” (468). Dana’s transportation to the past made her wonder, “Was that why I was here? Not only to insure the survival of one accident-prone small boy, but to insure my family’s survival, my own birth” (29). It’s obvious that the past and present are concisely tied upon Alice’s Body.

Rape, in the novel, is depicted as the cruelest act of sexual violence. Accordingly, Megan Behrent affirmed in her article “The Personal is Historical: Slavery, Black Power and Resistance in Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*” that “rape for Dana is not worse than death” (816). Yet, in fighting back against the patroller’s attempt to rape her, Dana realized that she could made both herself and her ancestors in even greater danger:

I would have used your knife against that patroller last night if I’d had it. I would have killed him. That would have ended the immediate danger to me and I probably wouldn’t have come home. But if that patroller’s friends had caught me, they would have killed me. And if they hadn’t caught me, they would probably have gone after Alice’s mother. They . . . they may have anyway. So either I would have died, or I would have caused another innocent person to die. (Butler 51).

Most interracial sexual relationships were built on rape and violence in the novel, especially those between the couple Alice and Rufus, as opposed to the lovely relationship between Dana and Kevin. Marc Foster; in his Article “Do I Look like someone You Can Come Home to Form Where You Maybe Going?:Re-Mapping Interracial Anxiety In Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*,” explored the nature of Kevin and Dana’s Interracial relationship, which was a pure of sexual violence. It seemed clear that the couple held a feeling of love for one another, since their desire was exhibited in a variety of ways. Particularly, in the first meeting of the two, Dana said “I

Brought him home with me when it was over, and right was even better” (57). Actually, the affection of love was mutual. Another significant scene was after a long separation between Kevin and Dana; she said “new lines and all, he was so damned beautiful” (185). Kevin shared the same love for Dana. She recorded how Kevin felt when Dana was beaten harshly after they flee in the plantation: “He was so careful so fearful of hurting me” (190). The couple Dana and Kevin’s love was apparent and their relation was clear. Unlike Alice and Rufus whose relation was seeing more from the angle of sexual violence and hatred.

Rape was one of the cruelest crimes that black females’ body confronted. Ironically, rape was a decisive point in *Kindred* that insured the existence of Dana in the present. Actually, black feminism at first was established to defend the sexual violence that many African American women suffer from. The critic Bell Hooks demonstrated that Black women in the nineteenth century did not struggle for sexual liberation only but rather they attempt to gain freedom in all domains (14). For sure, this movement aims to obtain gender and racial equalities, create strong bonds and raise awareness among African American women.

III.2. The Black Female Power and Resistance

Butler’s novel *Kindred* was published in 1976, during an era which was dominated by black power movement. The period was marked by resistance and self awareness among African American people in general, and women in particular. Thus, Butler, in this novel, purposefully concentrates on presenting the theme of resistance via the protagonist Dana who fought in the plantation to survive. “Paradoxically, her survival depends on Keeping Rufus alive” (Behrent 7), who is her great-grand father. What is mysterious in the story is that Dana’s central role was to help Rufus raping Alice to insure her survival. In one of Rufus and Dana’s encounters, she justified her unkind action as the following: “Was that why I was here? Not only to insure the

survival of one accident-prone small boy, but to insure my family's survival, my own survival? . . . If I was to live, if others were to live, he must live. I didn't dare test the paradox" (Butler .29).

Butler placed Dana at a sensitive role of accepting the history through time travel technique. She insured her survival at the expense of Alice and Rufus's sexual relationship (Steinberg 468). At the beginning, she understood nothing, but rescuing the small white boy. However, the truth was a bit complicated. Dana's role becomes increasingly troubling as she attempts to mediate between a master Rufus and the slave Alice.

Alice was in front of many rape trials from her master Rufus. Although she resisted him for many times, he raped her by force which caused an increasing hatred. Because she couldn't endure the sexual oppression she faced, she fled from her numerous rape trails several times. Therefore, the act of running away or escapism became a survival strategy for most Black women to resist the subjugation of the whites. The sexual violence from Rufus cost Alice's body. Because at the end she committed suicide, she freed her soul from the oppression she faced. Despite the fact that Alice was not a resistant character in comparison to Dana who could survive, Alice's several attempts to flee were a kind of resistance. The turning point in her bearing was when Rufus robbed her children, she did nothing but sacrificing herself to cut down her sufferings. Dana recorded the way she found Alice hanging herself, she said:

I saw that someone was hanging there. Hanging by the neck. A woman.

Alice. I stared at her not believing, not wanting to believe ... I touched her and her flesh was cold and hard. The dead gray face was ugly in death as it had never been in life. The mouth was open. The eyes were open and staring. Her head was bare and her hair loose and short like mine. She had never liked to

tie it up the way other women did...Her dress was dark red and her apron clean and white. She wore shoes that Rufus had had made specifically for her, not the rough heavy shoes or boots other slaves wore. It was as though she had dressed up and combed her hair and then . . . (Butler 248).

The tragic event of Alice's death was a turning point in Rufus' life, because he lost a lover and a mother for his child. Actually, all members in the plantation affected.

One can say that the time of writing the novel was a sensitive era that marks the growth of black movement which resisted slavery and oppression. When Dana went to Alice to deliver Rufus's message, Alice respond angrily, saying, "I ought to take a knife in there with me and cut his damn throat . . . Now go and tell him that! Tell him I'm talking 'bout killing him" (249). Yet, Alice was a patient character who endured all sorts of oppression, but; she was deeply sought to revenge from her master Rufus who raped her and forced her sexually.

The protagonist, Dana, was considered as an ideal example for a Black women's resistance in antebellum. In their analysis of the novel, Angelyn and Danille argued that "Dana can be read as a heroic figure for saving Rufus and family, even though her success is dependent upon the sexual affair"(20). Dana resisted slavery as long as she traveled back to antebellum. She saved Rufus in return to guarantee her existence in the present. In fact, the traveling time technique used by Butler was a means of resistance for Dana, the black female heroine of the novel. Accordingly, the critic Marc Steinberg asserted that Dana struggled for her survival in her several time traveling to the past. Although Dana resisted hardly to survive in antebellum, by the end of the novel she felt weak. In other words, when she felt that she became weak in the

antebellum, she began to realize as many slaves did, the difficulty of black resistance and empowerment in the front the white slaveholders (468).

One example of Dana's resistance is "her control over her name-her desire to be called Dana instead of Edana" (Steinberg 469). Accordingly, Sandra Y Govan claims that "the implicit struggle for power revolves around explicit conflicts of will and contests of survival a heroine endures" (quoted in Steinberg 469). What he means is that most of Dana's struggle in slavery was built upon her awareness of becoming an object of possession in both the past and in the present. Steinberg explains "Dana's psychological dispossession is mirrored by the actual loss of a body" (470).

The problem of possession was recurrent in the novel. This is obvious when Kevin traveled back to antebellum, he was asked by Mr Welyin: "Does Dana belong to you?" Because she was his wife, Dana in a way belonged to him and this possession occurred in both the past and the present. This is basically appeared in Kevin's response: "In a way.... She's my wife" (60). At this point, Steinberg noted that "Butler uses Kevin to extend into the present a classic type of human ownership in western civilization-the marital exchange"(470). Dana refuses to be owned by any one, especially by her husband Kevin who symbolizes for her a white authority. In one conversation between the two, Kevin said to her "I'd let you type my manuscripts", Since Kevin was writer he wanted to exploit her for his own business. However, Dana resisted doing so because she saw herself as an independent person who did whatever she wanted, without any restraints from any one.

Critic Steinberg reveals that Butler saw Kevin as a villainous character. She implied that Kevin was silently carrying a sense of guilt towards enslavement that pictured the concept of

servitude in the antebellum South. He emphasized that the line between slavery and marriage was complicated, especially when Dana's friends and family, oblivious to her time travel, confused the markings from her beating by Rufus, her white slave owner, with the marks she suffered from spousal abuse in her marriage to Kevin. Dana's cousin said, "I never thought you'd be fool enough to let a man beat you" (116). In specific, there is rapprochement between the two characters Rufus and Kevin. In one conversation with Rufus, Dana claimed, "The words echoed strangely in my head. Kevin had said something like that to me once. I opened my eyes again to be sure it was Rufus" (213-14). The Similarities between servitude and marriage was noted by Steinberg as: "western marital contract posits woman as possession in terms largely of a man's notion that his wife's body is an extension of his own"(470). That is to say control over female's body consisted of many aspects including sexual control. Alice, claimed that her body is not her own, but Rufus's- "He paid for it, didn't he?" (167). what he paid for is not only an object for his sexual gratification, but also an outlet for his violence and a living vessel over which he theoretically held psychic dominance. The universe presented in Butler's novel is a decidedly violent one where it was witnessed the frequent scarring of characters (470-71). Critic Steinberg explained that physical possession of the protagonist and her ancestor Alice was one basic issue that both characters powerfully resisted and fought against.

Dana's other form of resistance was her refusal of calling her Edna instead of Dana by Kevin. By this, she resisted begin Kevin object basically. On the other hand, Alice was the one who devoted her body to Rufus because he bought her. Because she couldn't endure the brutality she received, she freed her soul from her hearted body by suicide. Dana's resistance for servitude was reflected not only in her thoughts, but also in her body that consort with her ideas. She left

part of her body to cut her relation with the past. She decided to leave her arm to gain her freedom, better than losing her whole life in such oppressive circumstances.

African American women's searching for self-Identity is considered an act of resistance and female black power in Butler's novel *Kindred*. For instance, the protagonist, Dana, found herself in front of a time trip in searching of self identity and self awareness. Accordingly, she raised up questions about the secret of being chosen to travel to this particular period of time with this selected segment of society, where she tried to identify herself with people there. Dana wondered: "Was that why I was here? Not only to insure the survival of one accident-prone small boy, but to insure my family's survival, my own birth" (29). Dana's mysterious trips pushed her to wonder about the reason of being dragged to antebellum. She was in front of many questions as: what identified her with this society. The link between herself and her ancestral birth was unclear, till she discovered that Rufus was the one who gave birth to her ancestor. Yet, she worked hard to save him each time he was in trouble to insure her own birth.

In the section that is entitled "The Fight", Alice functions as a mirror for Dana. Butler constructs remarkable similarities between the two. By explaining more, the two women were physically alike, Dana is too close in visage to Alice, because Alice was Dana's ancestor. These similarities are what made Rufus felt sexually close for both of them. The two girls hated Rufus' mother because she was so tolerant with all slaves in the plantation, but Dana was the most who had received the worst treatment. Both were interested with white men, Dana by choice and Alice by necessity. Dana, on one hand, was the one who had chosen by the writer to receive part of history, she was the one who had pointed to rebirth the suffering of her ancestors and the slaves' previous life to visualize it to modern eyes. On the other hand, Alice was born as a slave; it was not her choice to be black or to receive slavery. Yet, one could not deny that her existence

as a slave in that period of time was necessity for Dana's birth as a free person. Although they came from different generations, they were so identified with each other. In other words, Alice's existence in Dana's life facilitated Dan's journey for self-discovery and self-awareness.

The time or the decade was so important in shaping the identities of the black characters in the novel. Dana, for instance, a free Black woman who was educated and married with a white man, was living a comfortable life in California that she didn't know it's real value till she lose it in Antebellum. In this context, Dana said: " I lost about a year of my life and much of the comfort and security I had not valued until it was gone" (9). In contrast, Alice was enslaved, illiterate and dispossessed from all rights, because she was born in society where she was not treating like human being. In simple words, the societies from where the main female black character of the novel grow were responsible in shaping their identities.

Drawing upon the traditional slave narrative, Butler explored issues raised by the Black Power movement through depicting the forms of resistance, particularly among women, who had much to teach Dana about survival and strength. Thus, the novel commented on the present as much as the past. The marks of the past slavery were still bounded people, in particular, the African American people who still suffered from the verbal and physical oppression. Butler recreated the past through modern eyes by giving much importance to black female experiences and suffering, especially in antebellum South, because they were doubly oppressed on the bases of gender and race. Despite the brutality that faced African American women they marked a significant change in their faith. They created their own agenda to be visible. They came into the light after a real struggling that cost them many lost. Yet, African American women were and still glorifying the suffering and resistance of their ancestors as a source of their current blessings and power.

Conclusion

The present research aims to blur the boundaries of race and gender that slavery set out in south antebellum. As such many studies have discussed these two perspectives through different literary texts. The present study provides a unique investigation for those two perspectives basing on Butler's *Kindred* , since the protagonist pictures for us the harsh conditions of black women in past slavery through modern eyes. Particularly, she made reference on how black women struggle to defend their deprived rights and needs, and how they had contributed in the establishment of freedom black women lived in nowadays.

The traumatic issue of slavery and its condition last for many decades which pushed many African American theorists to establish black feminist movement. . This movement was established as a ground to eliminate all stereotypes that black women suffer from, and encourage black women to struggle, resist and get power from their misery. This research applied this approach, because female black characters of the narrative resist racial and sexual violence in a white patriarchal society. The protagonist herself was a rebellious character since she was hardly survived in the plantation. Her character was a direct depiction of the black female power, because despite she was a slave she resisted the white society.

Kindred was one of the literary works that raised the awareness among African Americans in general and black women in particular. It showed for the coming generation how valuable their history, culture and heritage. Prominently, the novel was designed not only to portray the suffering of ex-slaves ,but also to create a sort of sympathy from southern readers, to make an act from the whites to reduce the violent acts they practice among slaves.

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