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Critical Reading #1

In Octavia Butler’s sci-fi short story “Bloodchild,” a young adolescent male named Gan undergoes a passage of rite where he willingly accepts his fate to be a reproductive surrogate for a Tlic, named T’Gatoi, in exchange for his family’s safety. The message I feel Butler was trying to encapsulate upon the reader is one of interdependence, even if it’s coming from two different species. In the short story, it was made clearly that the alien race, Tlic, can’t reproduce on their own, and humans can’t survive on this foreign planet on their own, so they make a quid pro quo. Human surrogate, typically male, for Tlic in exchange for protection and nurture. Gao and T’Gatoi underwent this scenario which ended with them forming some loving symbiotic relationship ensuring their survival in the future. Butler’s intended memo became quite evident through her use of literary devices which contain her use of diction, imagery, and point of view.

A first example of how Butler presented her message effectively was that she employed the use of diction throughout her short story. Throughout the story “Bloodchild,” Butler seemed very careful to choose words that evoke some sort of emotion or behavior that is a byproduct of an emotion. An example of Butler evoking a careful use of diction in the short story is a conversation where Gan was talking to T’Gatoi during the procedure of implanting eggs inside him for the sake of his sister’s safety. He asks her “Do you care? … Do you care that it’s me?”. What makes this seemingly ordinary dialogue powerful is that the tone it can induce. This quote carries a tone of sincerity through Butler’s choice of words which adds to the element of some romantic relationship between Gan and T’Gatoi which thus ties back to the concept that those two depend on each other for their imminent survival in the future. Through Butler’s mastery of diction, it helps supplement to her message of interdependence.

A second example of how Butler expressed her message efficiently was how she utilized imagery throughout her sci-fi story. Within Bloodchild, one of the strongest literary tools Butler had devised was her immense use of imagery which provokes tons of vivid images as you read throughout the short story. With her adept use of diction, the imagery that was invoked throughout the science fiction story created a sense of clarity for the reader of what was taking place as if they were present in the moment. The imagery was so provocative that as a reader I felt fully immersed into every detail that took place in the story especially at the portion where Gan experiences Bram Lomas conceives these alien worms. Butler’s use of imagery helped create a vision for the reader to look through as Gan and T’Gatoi form a symbiotic bond which leads to their interdependence of one another.

The final example of how Butler conveyed her message capably was in the manner of her deploying the use of a point of view throughout the story. From the beginning to the end of the story, the reader is not at an omniscient perspective, but rather in the perspective of the young adolescent Gan. What makes this literary device so great compared to the others mentioned is the uniqueness that stems from it. Everything that the reader senses from either the imagery or the diction is also shaped the first-person perspective by Gan. Being placed in a first-person view as Gan makes the reader see the story in a unique way which a third-person view wouldn’t be able to captivate. What makes Butler’s message of interdependence so strong is that in Gan’s perspective that is what his relationship to his Tlic, T’Gatoi, is a symbiotic connection ensuring their well-being in the future.

In conclusion, Octavia Butler had proclaimed her message conclusively through her well-versed usage of literary devices such as imagery, diction, and point of view which in return created a big spectacle for the reader to be absorbed into throughout the story. Ranging from the captivating imagery creating vivid images to the crafted diction evoking emotions had helped form a unique point of view where the reader is completely encapsulated within the story leading them to being able to fully grasp Butler’s message of interdependence.