
HYPertextUALITY IN KINGSOLVER'S *DEMON COPPERHEAD*: A POSTMODERN STUDY

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Abstract

This article intends to explore the postmodern concept of hypertextuality in Barbara Kingsolver's Demon Copperhead (2022) by applying Gérard Genette's notion of hypertextuality. This research aims to show that there is no originality in literature and any literary work can be the repetition, continuation, inspiration or mixture of previous texts. In this way, the study shows how a twenty first Century's literary work like Demon Copperhead (2022) can be the hypertext of Dickens's nineteenth-century well-known novel David Copperfield (1850). Moreover, such postmodern research widens various ways of concentration on the literary works, so that, one could interpret in what ways two texts are united and grafted which results in either parody or pastiche. This study attempts to demonstrate mostly those focused aspects in both the texts that highlight the concept of hypertextuality. Furthermore, this paper includes the analyses of both protagonists i.e. Demon and David and narration of the both novels from the perspective of main characters. The research is significant for researchers and academia to gain insight into the unique postmodern aspect of hypertextuality.

Key words: Hypertextuality, Postmodernism, Repetition, Parody, Pastiche

Introduction

Charles Dickens and Barbara Kingsolver composed their novels in different centuries and came from very different backgrounds. Their novels, *David Copperfield* and *Demon Copperhead* (2022) can be compared in many aspects that range from child labor, child abuse, poverty, class conflict, Marxism, biographical details and symbolic trends to even contradictory readings of the novels, among which hypertextuality is the focused feature of study in this research. Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* can be considered as a response to Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, in which Kingsolver makes use of Dickens' story as a basic source for her novel and rewrites an English text. The novels have been interwoven with some points of likeness as well as of differences and many aspects of Dickens' *David Copperfield* have been repeated and some are parodied in Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* that make this novel a hypertext of *David Copperfield*.

David Copperfield is a bildungsroman or coming of age novel. In that novel, the narrative started when David was still a young boy, becomes orphan and suffers under the brutal regime of his stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, and later feels the sadistic wrath of his boarding-school headmaster, Mr. Creakle at Salem House. As David gets older, he faces a slew of calamities- the loss of his adored mother and subsequent removal to London to live with strict Aunt Betsey Trotwood. He falls in love and has his heart broken twice—once by the innocent Dora Spenlow and again by the strong-minded Agnes Wickfield—and he worships both from afar like a Victorian saint. David publishes books and gets married to

Agnes. This novel is known for its well-drawn characters, the rich landscapes and themes such as social inequality, human spirit, love and friendship. It stands as one of Dickens' most-loved works, an enduring classic that has never been out of print.

On the other hand, *Copperhead* by Kingsolver is a modern-day fiction with much deeper hidden levels and stunning character revelation. The book follows the young man known as 'Demon' after his given name of Damon Copperhead, living in a small town in rural America. Damon also has unstable family and economic struggles. Notable among these is a group of his neighbors, the Peggots, and his confidant Maggot; he grows up through them in his teen years. Damon grapples with the questions of identity, belonging and purpose throughout the novel. He dives into his relationships with family, especially his mother, and examines his place in the community and lineage. Through the eyes of a gentile; as Damon matures, love, loss and self-rediscovery finally give him some semblance of peace with his past (self) and future. Here is the praise it has received to date: Long praised for its lyrical prose, vivid imagery, and controlled-point-of-view narration and pacing; nuanced in-depth examination of modern life and issues. Kingsolver's exploration of Damon's path is a rich look at the layered realities of living in rural places and being human, making it a captivating and contemplative offering.

Gérard Genette is one of the most prominent French literary theorists and critics, who has written very important works on Narratology, literary criticism and structuralism. One of Genette's works is *Figures du discours* (1970) and the first volume from his seminal series of *Figures I* (1966). This work set the scene for the later volumes of —*Figures de l'écriture* not only —*Narrative Discourse*, but also in other books in the series *Figures II* (1969) and *Figures III* (1972). Genette is also known for his work on intertextuality, paratextuality and metafiction. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1982) is a book criticizing the ideal of the author in literary reception and discussing his concept of the palimpsest. It was translated into English for posterity by Avital Ronell. According to Genette, hypertextuality involves —any relationship uniting a text B (the hypertext) to an earlier text A (the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary (Allen, pp.107-108). Allen mentions that —hypertextuality marks a field of literary works the generic essence of which lies in their relation to previous works (108). As Genette notes, —Hypertextuality, as a category of works, is in itself a generic or, more precisely, transgeneric architext: I mean a category of texts which wholly encompasses certain canonical (though minor) genres such as pastiche, parody, travesty, and which also touches upon other genres—probably all genres (Allen, p. 108). Similarly, in this research, Kingsolver creates Demon Copperhead based on the character of David. Hypertextuality also means any relationship between text A and text B. *Demon Copperhead* as text B is also related to text A: *David Copperfield*, considering the concept of Bildungsroman. Abrams also elaborates that Bildungsroman also known as 'novel of education' is a novel whose subject is —the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences into maturity and the recognition of his or her identity and role in the world (Allen, p. 132). It deals with the formative years of the main character whose moral and psychological development is depicted.

Research Questions

1. How does *Demon Copperhead* the hypertext of *David Copperfield*?
2. How do the characters of Demon and David similar and different?

Review of the Literature

Dickens' *David Copperfield* is one of the finest and widely read novel and it has several adaptations as well. The novel provides ample opportunities for thematic connections and juxtaposition with other literary works. It has been adopted in films, short movies and dramas. Even before the sound film appeared, —there were almost 100 cinematographic adaptations of Charles Dickens' novels (VULPE, 2018, p. 43) that is the reason it has been a rich novel regarding its adaptations in films. One example of *David Copperfield* is where, —critics often see *Moon Palace* as a postmodern novel with strong resemblances to the picaresque, but I think it has a much stronger bond to the bildungsroman (Iversen, 2007) despite of the fact, that it is considered a postmodern novel.

Adriana Cristina Vulpe's article provides a concise overview of theories about adaptation, proposing a new critical template for understanding the practice as cultural translation. More than 100 years of cinema and the film industry is somewhat progressive but cinematically not from a stylistic perspective when it is over 85% of Oscar 99% of TV mini-series, 70% of television films are based upon popular books, meaning mainstream movies sell again literary stories. Adaptation has always been central to the process of film-making; the history of film-making itself starts with —Charles Dickens' literary works adapted into silent movies (Vulpe, 2018, p. 42). The first adaptations of his works, silent films include *Bleak House* (1901) and *A Christmas Carol* a short film, were among the earliest silent movies and these extant versions are currently copyrighted. Before the arrival of sound film, —there were nearly 100 cinematic adaptations of Charles Dickens' novels (VULPE, 2018, p. 43).

Furthermore, a prequel to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) exorcises the spirit of Bertha Mason, as she is collectively known in antebellum England...the madwoman in the attic. *Ulysses* (1920) by James Joyce is a hypertext of Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* first written in 1488. While placing the story in early 20th century Dublin, it follows a formal structure similar to and with themes mirroring those of an ancient epic. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966) by Tom Stoppard is a hypertext of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and in 1990, a film was also made on same title and story. Loosely based on *Hamlet*, the film follows two minor characters from that play and dives into existential issues, providing a different point of view to an already familiar story. Bridget Jones, serving as that novel's Mr. is a modern-day Elizabeth Benet and Mark Darcy. Depth of meaning is the result which surrounds literary texts with intertextual connections. It means for authors to interact, respond and reinterpret existing texts in ways that inform their readers by providing a unique perspective.

Thus, *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver is a wonderful example of the usefulness of hypertextuality in modern literature. The novel reframes and repurposes story and temporal family tree of *David Copperfield* (1850). *Demon Copperhead* does indeed demonstrate a form of what Genette refers to as hypertextuality in relation to Dickens, existing on the one hand as a sequel to it and on the other as something distinctly different. Although, a small review of literature has explored both the central role *David* plays in Dickens's oeuvre, as well as its imprint on Victorian literature to which it belongs and what consequences his work had for fiction after him; but none reflect upon Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* from Postmodernist literary perspectives specifically hypertextuality. While *Demon Copperhead* is identified as a modern version of *David Copperfield*, no detailed analysis exists on how Kingsolver's novel operates the hypertext to Dickens' hypotext. Most other research considers thematic parallels and character comparisons in the two books, but

does not explore a detailed intertextuality that exhibits postmodern hypertextuality—which includes parody and pastiche. Moreover, there is almost no consideration of what Kingsolver’s adaptation might say about postmodernism that originality in literature is not everywhere but an illusion and all texts are reduplications of others. Therefore, this research attempts to fill these research gaps exploring how Kingsolver’s narrative structures and character progressions constitute the thematic foundation within *David Copperfield*.

Materials and Methods

This research is qualitative in nature and uses textual analysis as method of analysis. Researcher has collected data by selecting excerpts from Kingsolver’s text to demonstrate how characters are related to Dickens’s *David Copperfield*. Researcher then analyze these passages and themes around hypertextuality and some concepts connected with this umbrella term such as pastiche, parody and intertextuality. In literature, Hypertextuality refers to the relationship between texts where a new text (the hypertext) is based on or connected with one original document (called the hypotext). This concept deals in intertextuality which is frequently creative, adaptive or copied. It often takes shape as an adaptation, parody or pastiche (such as novel sequels and prequels), commentary within other works of fiction, the blending of genres on a level higher than that aforementioned above like those united by revisionist history where historical figures are recast in sympathetic modern lights. The idea was first introduced by the literary theorist Gérard Genette in his book, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1997) where he categorized various types of trans-textual relationships. According to Gerard Genet:

—by hypertextuality I mean any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of a commentary. The use of the metaphoric —grafted and of the negative determination underscores the provisional status of this definition. To view things differently, let us posit the general notion of a text in a second degree ...: i.e., a text derived from another preexistent text (Genet, 1997, p. 5).

A hypertext phenomenon often adapts or transforms its hypotext. This may involve setting, characters, plot and themes being shifted in some way from the source material but there must be a traceable connection between this new work and its base. Several hypertexts also interact with their content in humorous fashion by parodying or satirizing the component works as a whole. These texts can extend and expand an existing storyline by either providing sequels, furthering a storyline into the future; or prequels wherein they explore events that happened before those detailed in the original text. Most hypertexts remake a classic story, by recontextualizing them or developing character and setting into the context of another narrative.

Furthermore, —Hypertextuality is the condition of any text that secretes as a matrix another text from which it derives (Genette, 1997). Hypertextuality can take the form of direct references, or it can be intertextual echoes and thematic parallels between texts. Hypertext, according to Genette, includes —quotations; plagiarisms; allusions; deconstructions; readings that are misreadings and rereadings; readymade [sic] references (Genette, 1997, p. 1). These various forms of hypertextuality show the complexity of intertextual relations. Roland Barthes, another major figure in literary research created a definition of what is it about:

—... there can be no doubt that narrative is a hierarchy of instances. To understand a

narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in —stories, to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative —thread onto an implicitly vertical axis; to read (to listen to) a narrative is not merely to move from one word to the next, it is also to move from one level to the next ... It is proposed to distinguish three levels of description in the narrative work: the level of —functions ..., the level of —actions ... and the level of —narration ... (Barthes, 2000, pp. 259-260).

The whole area of palimpsestic forms of *transdoing* or redoing may seem rather manifold, difficult and complex yet can be summarized under hypertext. Genette well-defined hypertext as, —What I call hypertext ... is any text derived from a previous text either through simple transformation, which I shall simply call from now on transformation, or through indirect transformation, which I shall label imitation (Genet, 1997, p. 7). It is notable that here Genette first formally launches towards a term of translation as to —a linguistic transposition, influencing or not alter in content, feeling and meaning cognition or any other semiotic characteristics from the original text. Genette barely mentions the term in Palimpsests, along with different locations about translation as general issues. Translation generally lines up with other phenomena whose meanings the process is also thought to similarly be in, —the sole aim of a translator ... is to say —the same thing as the hypotext in another language, in verse, or in more compact form; such transpositions are thus in principle purely formal (Genet, 1997, p. 294).

There have been several critical angles to hypertextuality such as its potential implications for textual interpretation, writing, and cultural significance. Hypertextuality is seen by some scholars as a form of intertextual dialogue that enhances the reading experience and as a narrative that challenges ideas related to originality, textual authority, or even literary interpretation. In studies of hypertext in contemporary literature, some scholars have argued that it contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of literary traditions, while others claim it challenges understandings about authorship and creativity. In short, hypertextuality refers to texts influenced by or drawing on other texts as intertext. By working their own narratives in and out of literary traditions through direct reference, thematic parallel, and intertextual echo, authors push against the conventions of genre while creating chains throughout literature.

Moreover, Genette describes the framework of hypertextuality in terms of two main processes: metamorphosis and imitation. Metamorphosis changes a hypotext for the purpose of a new narrative, whereas imitation borrows elements from the hypotext within the hypertext. These processes allow for a richer understanding of the intertextual relationships and patterns establishing meaning from texts in various works. Reading *Demon Copperhead* in this framework casts the novel as a reworking of, and dialogue with, nineteenth-century literature.

Data Analysis

The first chapter of *Demon Copperhead* introduces us to the protagonist, Demon, and sets the stage for a complex and challenging upbringing. The name of the main character *Demon Copperhead* provides a hypertextual element presented within the novel the name —Demon is a striking and immediate connection to Dickens' classic novel, *David Copperfield*. The opening paragraph establishes Demon's entry into the world as a struggle. We learn he is born into poverty, with his drug-addicted mother barely conscious during his birth. —First, I got myself born. A decent crowd was on hand to watch, and they've always given me that much: the worst of the job was up to me, my mother being let's just say out of it

(Kingsolver, 2022, p. 1). The protagonist is describing his birth in a sarcastic and humorous way, implying that he took initiative in being born. The phrase —decent crowd is ironic, as it is unlikely that a crowd was present at his birth. This harsh introduction suggests a potential Bildungsroman and a coming of age story. The challenges Demon faces from the outset, like his strained relationship with his mother and the harsh realities of his environment, likely play a role in shaping his growth throughout the novel. As a —kid born to the junkie is a junkie. He'll grow up to be everything you don't want to know, the rotten teeth and dead zone eyes, the nuisance of locking up your tools in the garage so they don't walk off, the rent by the week motel squatting well back from the scenic highway (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 1). Demon as a cynical and observant young boy. His internal monologue reveals a sharp wit and a critical eye towards the adults around him. Notice how he describes the paramedics as a —monster-truck mud rally and the grocery store cashiers who perpetuate the myth of copperheads as —blessing his heart.

Additionally, his fascination with superheroes like Wolverine suggests a yearning for a powerful and just figure who can intervene and change his circumstances, —Me though, I was a born sucker for the superhero rescue. Did that line of work even exist, in our trailer-home universe? Had they all quit Smallville and gone looking for bigger action? Save or be saved, these are questions. You want to think it's not over till the last page (p. 2). Demon's Superhero fantasies hints at a yearning for a better life, —I wasted more hours up in those woods than you'd want to count, alongside of a boy named Maggot, wading the creek and turning over big rocks and being mighty. I could go different ways but definitely a Marvel hero as preferable to DC, Wolverine being a favorite (p. 3). Demon's mother emerges as a complex and unreliable figure. We see her through the lens of Demon's narration, which portrays her as struggling with addiction and possibly mental health issues. Her contrasting stories about Demon's birth cast doubt on her credibility and suggest a troubled past. Notice how Demon himself questions the validity of her narrative, —Mom had her own version of the day I was born, which I never believed, considering she was passed out for the event (p. 4). This creates a sense of mystery and leaves the reader questioning what Mom's true motivations might be, she is struggling with drug addiction and more she tells false stories about Demon's birth. —The day she failed to show, it fell to Nance Peggot to go bang on the door, barge inside, and find her passed out on the bathroom floor with her junk all over the place and me already coming out (p. 5). And —Mom had her own version of the day I was born, which I never believed, considering she was passed out for the event. Not that I'm any witness, being a newborn infant plus inside a bag. But I knew Mrs. Peggot's story. And if you'd spent even a day in the company of her and my mom, you would know which of those two lotto tickets was going to pay out (p. 5). Moreover, she tells false stories about Demon's birth, —Mom had her own version of the day I was born, which I never believed, considering she was passed out for the event. Not that I'm any witness, being a newborn infant plus inside a bag. But I knew Mrs. Peggot's story. And if you'd spent even a day in the company of her and my mom, you would know which of those two lotto tickets was going to pay out (p. 6).

Demon Copperhead: the Hypertext of David Copperfield

Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* functions as a hypertext of Dickens' *David Copperfield* thematically, characters' development and narratively. Within their environments, they both definitely go through the struggle and figure out how to maneuver within a world and on some of the same issues they face: identity, family relationships and societal pressures. As in *David Copperfield*, which is told in the first person by its titular hero, so is *Demon Copperhead*'s examination. It almost reads as though you are in the mind of Damon, making

this a reflective story in line with the way Dickens did his own novel. *David Copperfield* has a lot going on, but it is more David's personal odyssey of beating things like abuse, neglect and money problems to go from riches to rags than anything else. As —That is, it just means that everything I have ever done in my life I tried to do with all of my heart (Dickens, 1850, p. 447). Numerous setbacks also beset *David Copperfield*, his journey is fraught with abuse, neglect and poverty. David's statement demonstrates his willingness to strive at everything in life with all that he has. As, —tried to do with all of my heart implies an effort towards integrity in his actions and decision making. The words 'all of my heart' speak to the depth and purity with which David puts his all into what he is doing.

To compare to broader themes and connections, the inner-working of *David Copperfield*'s journey is about survival, personal success when the odds are against you deepens into a life story well resonant with humanity as a whole. These themes are connected throughout many facets of David's life. The hypertextual way recognizes the communication among themes and contexts within a narrative. As much as Demon can seem to be a steely-man, he also battles addiction, substance abuse and the very real drug that is commercialization; neglect of all kinds including systemic and familial; personal loss at every stage. His development shines through his resolve to live and discover areas of victory in the face off insurmountable odds. He says, —I refuse to be just another dirt floor kid, living out his days in the holler with nothing more than a tombstone and scars (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 320). The characters also share the same external struggle that endangers their safety and personal development. In his abandonment or negligent mistreatment possibly by both the system and family, we can see that David's experiences with ego flaming glass echo the system of neglect demon. They underpin these individuals' will to survive and ability to establish worthwhile existences defying all odds. Demon's fight to stay alive and never see himself as a victim characterizes his pursuit of redemption, satisfaction and closure. *David Copperfield* takes this journey of self-rescuing and so does each, in their turn those with whom he mingles. —The wonder is that you could start life with nothing, end with nothing, and lose so much in between. That's the truth about people like us, if you want the real story. We don't start with much, and we don't end with much, but we lose everything in between. And still, we go on. That's the wonder of it (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 429). This quote highlights the struggles and resilience of people who face adversity and loss throughout their lives. Despite starting and ending with little, they experience significant losses and hardships in between, yet they continue to persevere.

David realizes that his family, friends and neighbors have great importance in the shaping of a man. He says, —but there is no such disparity in marriage as the unsuitability of man and wife upon a broader ground (Dickens, 1850, p. 220). Through the hypertext Dickens reveals the themes of relationships, societal roles, and personal growth. David perceives the great importance of man's influence of a family, friends, and neighbor. Both David and Demon are heavily reliant in life on their relationships with other people. David's growth, development, and becoming as a man are nurtured and led by a family, friends, and a close-knit community. —It's safer knowing more about people than they know about you (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 181). This quote highlights the importance of knowledge and understanding in navigating social relationships and the world at large. It suggests that having insight into others can provide a sense of control and protection in a complex and often unpredictable world.

Both books explore the themes of influence and choice in the characters' lives. Kingsolver and Dickens use their books to comment on social norms and expectations of the

time, as well as on the social and interpersonal aspect of influence on humans. The book presents the characters and their respective influences with David and Demon, and the reader is prompted to contemplate how children learn from their parents or other people who have formal or informal authority over them. Demon and his incredibly messy, lacking normal family unit relationships actually help demonstrate why human connection is so very powerful. It is shown how his encounters with friends and mentors, as well foster families define not only the experience but also affect Ricardo's resilience. —Ms. Pyle is the one who taught me a book can be so much more than something to pass time with. She convinced me that I am more than a kid from the hills (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 102). This particular quote reminds everyone how an education can provide a way out. With Ms. Pyle's confidence in his potential, Demon is sent to confront societal stereotypes that have pushed him further into darkness than he can rise on his own and this prepares him for what the future may hold making space within himself to really believe nothing but the sky is the limit.

The relationships David cherishes and experiences contribute to his finding of who he is amongst it all. Same medium interactions like Demon's encounters with mentors or foster families are critical to the effort of self-improvement and resilience building. He says, —We both lay back down, and she looked at me in the eyes, and we were sad together for a while. I'll never forget how that felt. Like not being hungry (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 114). This quote captures a rare moment of emotional connection and intimacy between Demon and his mother, June. Despite their complicated relationship, they share a moment of understanding and empathy, which is a rare and precious experience for Demon. She said —don't ever be pregnant during the lead-up to Halloween because it will put you off candy corn for life. I told her thanks for the advice (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 85). This quote showcases Demon's wife, Emmy's, humorous and lighthearted personality. She offers playful advice and Demon appreciates her wit and wisdom. Further, both novels are about personal growth but more than that they do it through relationships. Ultimately, both novels showcase the significance of your relationships to get you through hard times and help you grow as a person. Through this comparative examination, readers learn more about how literature illustrates the changeful landscape of what it means to be human and confirms that tutelage combined with secondary education are forever influential in a person's ultimate fate.

Moreover, the hypertextual dynamics are also expressed by means of parody and pastiche. This research argues that parody permits Kingsolver's critique and dialogue on the original text along with her own insights into current events. Kingsolver uses parody and pastiche to create a hypertextual conversation with the original text of Dickens. These strategies generate a palimpsest which layer on top of *David Copperfield*, and interpret one special response to current events (Hutcheon, 2000; Kingsolver, 2022). Parody mimics a work in jest, often to depict characteristics of its themes or characters or style. Kingsolver adopts requiem as the position of parody to underscore current curbs and honor to Dickens for pursuing evaluation from Victorian society. These novel critiques the workhouse system and orphans. David's time working in the warehouse of Murdstone and Grinby, for example, is a cutting glimpse at child labor. Kingsolver might (nail it to a wall) by drawing satirical attention toward the better-care-through-chemistry foster system of today and then segueing into opioids. Demon's assertion, that —The system should have saved ones like me but it just made us even worse (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 105), parallels David's experience while fitting a more modern era of events within the novel. Mr. Murdstone, David's abusive father which David describes his —fishy eyes and a smile that is like —ghosts of smiles gone by, but such awful shadows (Dickens, 1850, p. 13).

Pastiche is an artistic imitation or style of somebody else's work, done in a way that honors and celebrates the source. Kingsolver mimics this format. *Demon* begins by reminiscing about where he comes from, continuing the text in a similarly emulative fashion, —I was born in Lee County; smack dabbin' Appalachia or thereby to hear folks talk (Kingsolver 2022, p. 11). The Story of David is like a rock solid, who fought back on the lapses to win success and recognition. He says, —I know to be the strong part of my character, if it has any strength at all (Dickens, 1850, p. 590). *Demon Copperhead*, alongside the fraught adventure of her own journey. He says —I will not be another dirt-floor child in the holler, would-be tombstone and wounds (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 320). This echoes David's resolve to be more than his conditions.

Furthermore, characters such as Agnes Wickfield and Mr. Micawber who serve to support David in ways both tangible and non-tangible. David calls Agnes his —angel (Dickens, 1850, p. 218). Kingsolver comes up with copy characters. For example, Ms. Pyle teaches *Demon* the value of books and self-respect, —Ms. Pyle is one what've shown me a book can be more than something to kill time with (p. 102). This is to showcase Agnes being the backbone of David. Thus, The dual approach encourages an extensive intertextual conversation between the two works, and a testament to Dickens's themes which can still be addressed and repackaged for modern audiences. Along with that, intertextuality is the interrelation of all verbal or textual texts—one text referring to another, including a transformed repetition (imitation) by words and original meaning updated at the moment. Intertextuality is used to interpret *Demon Copperhead* vis-a-vis *David Copperfield*. Ms. Pyle is a transformative figure for *Demon*. Ms. Pyle is the only teacher who has gotten through to this young man in over ten years; —Ms. Pyle is the one who taught me a book can be so much more than something to pass time with (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 102). These parallels prove to be the positive mentors in David's life e.g., Mr. Micawber and Agnes Wickfield. The title of the book itself answers this question, and so does *Demon*. Again, this recalls Dickens' beginning. David has his own private raises near Blunderstone to think about what he remembers of being born. In the title, intertextuality emerges with Dickens's text as Kingsolver reinvents its themes, characters and narrative to speak in response to contemporary concerns. By using intertextuality in this way, Kingsolver both pays homage to a literary classic while also deepening her own narrative with contemporary views and issues. This examination reveals how intertextuality enriches literary conversation, uniting texts across temporal and historical bounds to cultivate a fuller comprehension of each novel in light of the social issues that they investigate.

Character Analysis of *Demon Copperhead* and *David Copperfield*

Kingsolver molds her modern novel *Demon Copperhead* on Charles Dickens's classic *David Copperfield* with a similar, yet unique twist in theme and structure. In *David Copperfield* -- David is given an equally troubled family to be born into. His father, however died before his birth and his mother had remarried an abusive man called Mr. Murdstone. As, —I was born at Blunderstone, in Suffolk. Or _there by', as they say in Scotland. I was a posthumous child. My father had not held them the whole time, they were in his arms when this wild and whirlwind birth of mine happened; six months back to light in this world (Dickens, 1850, p. 1). Similarly, *Demon Copperhead* (Damon Fields) is also born into poverty in the rural Appalachian region of America and raised by a drug-addicted mother with an absentee father. —First, I got myself born. There was an acceptable audience to witness the performance, and they have always been willing participants, —the really bad bit went down alone, my mother

had better things [read as less important] on her mind; let us call it disconnected (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 1).

David is mistreated and neglected by his stepfather Mr. Murdstone as well as by his harsh sister Jane, —Mr. Murdstone was all that time and doubtless other times, a vessel of hatred. So, and when he opened his eyes to follow me — as I knew they slept on him so soon!) It was Mr. Murdstone who answered with his shadowy smile. I beneath their scaly arches, he said in his fishy eyes, man told me to do it for him. Your name is to be Trotwood Copperfield (Dickens, 1850, p. 13). These lines from text conveys the intense neglect and challenges Demon had to go through. A demon tossed aside and tormented by her mother's various boyfriends and foster homes. —I was raised like an untamed herb, untested and not groomed until the world decided to crush me (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 45). The character has sustained severe psychological damage which may from more than one source. It exposes a rootlessness, an absence of permanency or security experienced while his mother's relationships. This is the first insight into a likely turbulent home life that her role model, and other briefly featured men of questionable intentions, have played (and most probably still play) in Demon's formative years. Listing foster homes indicates that he has gone through the child welfare system and adds to an image of a lack of consistent loving care. I grew up as a wildflower, unexamined and unwieldy until the world set in on top of me. These lines paint a clear picture of the huge absence and suffering of Demon. Metaphors in —untamed herb vividly describe himself as unfinished product of nature, abandonment and abuse clearly framed end-to-end sounds like a thriller. One of a boy who has been failed, over and over again by the adults tasked with keeping him safe- shaping his life for many years to come. Similarly, through his friendships, especially with Agnes Wickfield and the madcap Mr. Micawber, David finds comfort and advice in those around him. —She is my guardian angel and me, I am just a poor wanderer without her (Dickens, 1850, p. 218).

From Dickens' *David Copperfield* this image shows how Agnes feels about her relationships and it tells us the inner feelings of this protagonist. David seeks the comfort in those around him with some help from Agnes Wickfield and Mr. Micawber. They are mentioned here because of the huge effect they have on David's life. David's emotional and moral development was heavily influenced by friendships. David seeks solace in his friends. In other words, he draws strength and wisdom from his trusted companions. Guardian angel a metaphor for Agnes Wickfield as David's rock. Agnes is portrayed as a guardian and guiding angel giving David strength in more ways than one. The epithet —poor wanderer which David applies to himself reflects his insecurity and sense of directionlessness in the absence of Agnes. In the sense that he is only like this because she was his compass. Agnes mostly traces in the precipice of being that essential divine version of woman who hovers over David's life. As a —guardian angel, she apparently immerses Rohan within her own world buoying him with direction and reason. Their power over David's emotional health and psychological development is immeasurable. Mr. Micawber, character who, while madcap in description provides helpful lessons and advice for David It is probably that this character represents a reflective figure for hope and perseverance, demonstrating how someone who suffers can still offer more comfort. The friends who help him, the people with whom he feels at home and moral peace play a very important role in Dickens's consideration of his hero. Agnes Wickfield's persona being the other guardian angel is so significant as how one person can have such a profound effect on another.

Demon Copperhead, throughout his life, forms important relationships with people who advocate for and mentor him; a teacher like Ms. Pyle and even a coach that sees

potential in this young man. —Ms. Pyle was the one who introduced me to the idea that a book could be more than something you do while waiting for whatever it is else there is to do — but —morell just as in depth, or substantive. She made me think I could be more than just a hillbilly kid. (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 102). Demon parallels David as he tries to escape suffering addiction and poverty in the hope of a brighter future. —I was not going to be just another nigger from the holler with only scars and a gravel (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 320). This quote in Kingsolver’s work draws comparisons between the struggles faced by Demon and those of *David Copperfield*; issues such as resilience, dealing with hardship and seeking a better life. David embodies the demon as he attempts to run from a life of addiction and poverty in search for something better. They are both portrayed as battling against huge adversities in their life: poverty and personal turmoil, to seek a way out into the world better than they were. Demon struggles to break free from addiction and poverty, reflecting the harsh life David had out there in society. —If a mother is lying in her own piss and pill bottles while they’re slapping the kid she’s shunted out, telling him to look alive: likely the bastard is doomed. Kid born to the junkie is a junkie (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 1). This quote illustrates the devastating impact of addiction on families, particularly children born to addicted parents. It suggests that the cycle of addiction can be perpetuated through generations.

When Demon says —I’m not going to be just another, it shows that he is defiant against the expectations of low-class white trash, but rather will aspire high. He does not want to be represented only by his struggles and surroundings. These are the words that signify both physical scars, emotional pain and all other things Vanquisher has faced. ‘Grave’, referencing his sure death, and ‘scars’, for all that has scarred him in the past. They show Demon’s determination to battle the obstacles that shape his life and forge a future unhinged from the misery and constrictions of his past. These words from Kingsolver speak a beautiful message of hope and triumph. Kingsolver has competing impulses in the novel, at once working to derogate Demon while also making him an inheritor of a great tradition. She puts Demon on a continuum with *David Copperfield* but does not pick: is he more endless than relentless? Demon’s flat refusal to be —scars and a gravel, gives us a glimpse of his fighting spirit, he does not want just an existence; merely suffering in silence. —Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show (Dickens, 1850, p. 113).

Showing the flaws of their worlds beyond just being battle arenas, both texts critique society at large where Robert Louis Stevenson was most angry about child labor while in many arcs orphans are noted for various social ills like class disparity and problems with foster care. Dickens indicting social injustice in Victorian England using David’s story as the voice. —Nobody give them [young children] a chance that way—nobody ever fails it but there, in the smallest world they have their being, doing hurt unto others with nothing at all yet to set against it and never anywhere more finely seen or so deeply felt than injustice (Dickens, 1850, p. 38).

These lines in the *David Copperfield* express his great worry about children and their sufferings. ‘Nobody never gives them a chance that way’ reveals that the society does not give kids proper opportunities for growing and being successful. A lack of systemic care and compassion to invest in young lives. ‘Nobody ever fails it but there’ means that this negligence can be widespread and one size fits all. This is a sweeping statement, suggesting consistent failure to just help children with anything they do. Small World alludes to the small and self-contained universe where children dwell. Their realm is tight, limited to local family and environs where they most feel life. Children have not yet got the tools or

resources what absorbed has been done dreadful they ever. They do not have the necessary tools or maturity to defend themselves, nor is a certain knowledge of what it that plagues them. —Never anywhere! more finely seen, or so deeply felt! the sense of injustice never perhaps loomed so overwhelmingly large to young minds. They are much more vulnerable to taking injustices into their worldview, and those experiences form what we believe about ourselves in the world. In Dickens beautifully brings to our eyes the sorrows of children—the loss and trodden down—innocence as they are stripped of opportunity, marked by injustice. He hammers home how such experiences are profoundly damaging and have a lifetime of consequences for the youth involved, further highlighting why kindness - both from individuals on a micro, one to one scale all the way up through macro policy levels advocating care institutional change - is so needed in development and growth of children. All of which shows that Dickens himself has always been a part of the battle for social justice and children's welfare, an artist who can be found in his stories. Similarly, Kingsolver illuminates the opioid epidemic and how pockets of poverty on purpose plus troubles facing rural kids. —The pills came before everything went to shit. You could not live in Lee County and not see it! (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 200). Also, *Demon Copperhead* takes place in a fictitious contemporary rural Appalachia, where it tackles real world modern issues such as the opioid crisis, systemic poverty and America's failing foster care system. —Right in the middle of Appalachia, it was impossible to live or work anywhere in Lee County and not see it: The addiction, the poverty, the feeling of having been left behind by everyone else! (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 27). These words by Barbara Kingsolver actually paint quite the picture for what's going on in Appalachian darkness. It was impossible to live or work anywhere in Lee County and not see it, right in the middle of Appalachia: a staggering amount suggests that opioids were once prescribed there for every one person living within its borders.

The poverty that comes out of this considerable amount is not just a brief break from the wallet but can remain, and have effects on housing, health care education, safety and etc. throughout many years to come. This —dusted by the margins of society! highlights a feeling shared across socio-economic and political experience. This sentiment summarizes life in much of rural and poor America. It serves as a stark condemnation of the social and economic circumstances in Lee County, arguing that addiction is but one manifestation of poverty amidst an immutable confluence between drug abuse and general neglect. By examining addiction, poverty and absence she illuminates structural problems and the requirement for assistance. It's a beautifully illustrative representation of the fact that marginalized communities are not juxtaposed and playing it out against their larger conversations is how all these vulnerabilities interconnect over economic, social and health considerations.

On the other hand, Dickens criticizes the workhouses and debtor's prisons of his time as well as the scant opportunities available to those living below that poverty line. —But, in the meantime, _In that small world where children have their beings; there is nothing so finely perceived and wisely felt as injustice! (Dickens, 1850, p. 38). Dickens writes that this world is just the small and tiny space in which children live. This is their _small world' the one immediately around them, largely composed of family and school life. The child lives very wide away in this limited space, where he perceives his senses or emotions. They couldn't have the wider view an adult had, but they did absorb every bare-knuckled reception. Dickens understands that children possess a heightened ability to recognize injustice emotionally. With the words, —finely perceived! and —wisely felt!, a thought of ease in detecting injustice follows....in children these are some of our most pure moments. —Charles Dickens...

seriously old guy, dead and a foreigner, but Christ Jesus did he get the picture on kids and orphans getting screwed over and nobody giving a rat's ass. He wrote it all down, too. The whole damn mess. And people still read it, still get all teary-eyed and shit. But do they do anything about it? Hell noll (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 340). This quote comments on how society often acknowledges the struggles of marginalized groups (like orphans and vulnerable children) but fails to take action to address the issues. The speaker references Dickens' writing, which exposed social injustices, but notes that even today, people often respond with sentiment rather than action.

In *David Copperfield*, he emphasizes the fact that all of these structural injustices fall on children first being perhaps the most disenfranchised and de-legitimized members of society. The severe lack of opportunities for the impoverished is a recurring motif in Dickens' writings. By telling the stories of children, he shows you how deeply etched systemic injustice should make your heart quake and crumble at all that was denied future generations. And in *David Copperfield*, Dickens employs the innocent perspective of children to paint broad injustices widespread during his age. It is a powerful scene that captures the psychological pain that abuse and neglect induce in children—it operates as both social commentary on institutions of society, but also plea for understanding. Dickens retains a piper like magnetism for social workers in his grasp of the moral clarity and emotional depth children are capable of, an interest consistent with broader concerns towards bringing about justice to those in society. On the other hand, Kingsolver tackles modern systemic afflictions,—the opioid epidemic, weak healthcare and social service inefficacies. The system should have saved ones like me but it just made us even worsel (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 105).

This passage is a scathing indictment of contemporary institutional collapse. The context of the novel about opioid addiction demonstrates how systemic failures create an environment conducive to widespread dependency and its tragic effects. —What's an oxy, I'd asked. That November it was still a shiny new thing. OxyContin, God's gift for the laid-off deep-hole man with his back and neck bones grinding like bags of gravell (Kingsolver, 2022, p.100). This quote illustrates the novel's exploration of addiction and the opioid crisis, as well as the protagonist's growing awareness of the world around him. Instead of attempting to mend the issue, our system often makes it worse by not fostering and managing support correctly. Unhealthy health systems make insufficient provision for treatment and prophylaxis. People in need of vital care are not being treated, resulting in further ill health and protracted distress. If social services are inefficient or distributed poorly, they may not support individuals and thus leave them to continue perpetuating a cycle of poverty, neglect or marginalization. However, these responses are inadequate for two reasons: first, they do not go deep enough into the root of issues and second, they either fail to provide real help at all or only offer inconsequential assistance. —Ms. Annie said all God's children have to take a shit, but you'd never know it from the way they treat the ones that clean it up. She actually said shit. You can see why I was so gone on her! (Kingsolver, 2022, p. 251). This quote highlights the novel's themes of social inequality and the struggles of marginalized communities. This makes the criticism human, hammering home that this system failure is actively destroying real people. It highlights the human price of systemic failure and apathy. The line —made us even worsel is a metaphor on how systemic failures efface quality of life. In consequence, far from restoring or stabilizing lives the system instead locks people into a downward trajectory strengthening and confirming their difficulties.

This novel provides a powerful indictment of the contemporary culture that has allowed systemic failures to flourish. The lyrics highlight the difference between what health

and social services are supposed to do, versus how they actually behave: especially in regards with the opioid crisis. The critical is tempered by its personal nature, an incredibly human way of illustrating the weakness and neglect in a system that not only does not support us but actively makes things worse for those it's meant to serve. This analysis highlights the reform and support deficiencies that are contributing to these serious problems. —Certain pitiful souls around here see whiteness as their last asset that hasn't been totaled or repossessed. They'll do anything to hold on to it, even if it means they have to choke the life out of their own kids. I knew a woman like that once. She was a sight to behold, all right. She'd have sold her own mother down the river if it meant she could keep on thinking she was better than the rest of usll (p. 386). This quote critiques the notion of white privilege and how some individuals cling to it as a source of identity and power, even if it harms others. The speaker describes someone who prioritizes their perceived superiority over the well-being of their own family.

The story of David's gradual rise from poverty and insecurity is narrated with a series of relationships that prove to be formative experiences on his journey towards socioeconomic redemption. —I mean to say that whatever I have tried, I've always tried my best good with heart and soull (Dickens, 1850, p. 647). The hero in these lines seem to vow himself that whatever he does, will do it with the best of his intentions. So how do these factors into the journey of David and Dickens' thematic exploration. He was illustrating his commitment to being completely earnest and sincere whenever faced with something new. This little —tried my best goodll implies a moral obligation to follow through with what is right as tried by his capabilities of doing so along an ethical line. This expression points to the depth of David's devotion. It infers that this not only his physical effort, but also the emotional and morale energy he pours into things as well -a sort of totality in actions. As a young child growing up, *David Copperfield* represents the most dramatic change in transformation as he ascends from poverty and vulnerability to adulthood. These challenges, failures and learning curves has been a part of his journey. David comes of age through the relationships he builds with other characters. Through his troubled early life and the intervening environments of Mr. Micawber or Agnes Wickfield and others in other stages of incipience; each persona shapes him to walk on a journey toward redemption and self-realization. David's path is an economic master narrative of pursuing a redeemer, going from rags to being a self-made man full social success. It is an example of his resilience and determination to rise out of hardship that he will do whatever it takes to make the best for himself. David's adherence to a code of conduct that is based on his values, despite the consequences he may face as a result.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at the hypertextual levels of Gérard Genette in Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead*. This reading elucidated how *Demon Copperhead* functions as a hypertext to *David Copperfield*, capturing the complexities of how Kingsolver's novel parodies and pastiches Dickens's work. When comparing characters and narrators within these works, we see certain themes as well some narrative structure that persistently remains between different times in literary history, cultures even which might help strengthen the concept of postmodernity with its emphasis on novels as non-originals. This research not only adds to the understanding of Kingsolver's novel but also widens potential ways in which literature can be analyzed going forward by applying a postmodern framework. Findings reveals that Kingsolver's protagonist Demon resolves his identity and development amidst a narrative structure which both recalls and playfully revises Dickens' David. The early experiences of Demon highlights that identity is significantly influenced by social relationships. The

research then investigates the parodic and pastichic dimensions of Demon's engagement with David. Furthermore, Kingsolver's text speaks to matters of class and family which were among the greatest concerns of Dickens' work then places them in a new context; a modern Appalachian setting that highlights some very old truths. This approach acknowledges the original text and deconstructs it by demonstrating its multiple interpretations, reflecting postmodernism's intertextuality and play with these supposed edges of any given paratexts. It also illustrates that *Demon Copperhead* encapsulates the rules of hypertextuality since Kingsolver's account persistently refers to, re-represents or pastiches Dickens' bildungsroman *David Copperfield*. Conclusively, using Genette to analyze the text helps us appreciate Kingsolver's text as a literal palimpsest (a rich tapestry of references and rewritings), reinforcing our post-modernist understanding of literature not monolithically but dialogically. This perspective challenges scholars to see how new works transform and are influenced by past creations in profound ways, opening our eyes to a wider view of the literary world.

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