Intermedial Serial Metarepresentation in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*

Asunción López-Varela
Complutense University Madrid

Camila Khaski Gaglia
Complutense University Madrid

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Asunción López-Varela and Camila Khaski Gaglia,
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Abstract: In their article "Intermedial Serial Metarepresentation in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*" Asunción López-Varela and Camila Khaski Gaglia employ a semiotic perspective in order to establish the intermedial features of the genre of the serial novel. Drawing on Marina Grishakova's distinction between "metaverbal" (an attribute of verbal texts which evoke images) and "metavisual" (an attribute of images which reflect on the incomplete nature of visual representation) the authors explore self-reflexive references as threads to storylines which capture the entire series in one emblematic recurrent image.

Asunción LÓPEZ-VARELA and Camila KHASKI GAGLIA

Intermedial Serial Metarepresentation in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*

A narrative is an account of connected events in a temporal sequence presented to audiences in spoken or written words or in a series of images and/or sequences of (moving) pictures as in cinema. All forms of narrative rely on continuity in the presentation of events. While audiences can break off at any moment and resume reading or viewing later, in the serial format continuity is interrupted by the author/producer of the narrative. These moments of stasis between episodes create a dialectic characteristic of the serial form. The serial can also use intermedial forms of reference (traditionally, letters to the editor and today comments in blogs, hashtags, or fanpages, etc.) to introduce comments on an episode that thematize and/or satirize the context of the serial and its reception. These comments may later become directly or indirectly part of the content.

In the Victorian period, audiences were encouraged to intervene in the development of stories by means of letters addressed to the authors of the serial published weekly or monthly. In his study on "The Rationale of Victorian Fiction," Lionel Stevenson explains that "When a novel was encountered through the instalments of twenty months, the readers acquired an unparalleled illusion that the time scheme of the action was equivalent to that of real life, and that the events were taking place side by side with those actually occurring in their own daily activities" (402). This also occurred in the 1940s and 1950s with popular radio serials and continues to happen with some television serials and in contemporary web fiction serials such as JukePop <<http://www.jukepopserials.com>>. Indeed, the serial seems to be acquiring popularity again in web-based formats. Thus, research on the evolution of serial forms might shed light on the impact of changing technologies in the publishing industry and the role of audiences in the entire process. The serial is generally presented in continuous (typically chronological) installments — also known as numbers, parts, or fascicles — either issued as separate publications or appearing in sequential issues of a single periodical publication. Serial publishing originated first as the marriage of images and text that sought to attract the Victorian reading public previously largely illiterate. Later on it became a strategy to avoid newspaper taxes with serials evolving as a way to fill the extra column space that enlarged pamphlet size then liable to tax (for more on Victorian serial publication, see Atlick; Dooley; Erickson; Feltes; Hughes and Lund; Jordan and Patten; Law; Patten; Sutherland).

It is important to distinguish between series and serial. The main criterion is that there are distinct types of continuity in the storylines. The series includes a systematic transition from one storyline to another with one or two characters playing the main roles and the others constantly changing (series are popular on television and usually take one story per episode). The serial encompasses one meta-story which includes several interwoven plots and storylines (a classical example is *One Thousand and One Nights* in which a storyline in serial formats is punctured by other stories). As mentioned, additions to the plot may come from the echoes of the serial's own reception in a process that incorporates media-centered and reader-centered perspectives and enables a complex intermedial paradigm between the broadcast medium (newspaper, radio, television) and its audiences.

The term "intermedia" was first used by the English composer and poet Dick Higgins in the newsletter to volume 1 issue 1 of *Something Else Press* in 1963 to describe his artistic activities in the *Fluxus* movement. Werner Wolf's categorization in "(Inter)mediality and the Study of Literature" includes intermedial reference (texts that thematize, quote, or describe other media), intermedial transposition (adaptation), transmediality (phenomena which can be represented in more than one medium because of their narratological basis), and multimodality (the combination of more than one medium in a given work such as opera and comics or the words and gestures of oral discourse). Intermedial processes include various forms of self-reflexivity, an important factor in narrative coherence and especially important in the serial format. In the study at hand we focus on Dickens's 1836 *The Pickwick Papers* and draw on Marina Grishakova's distinction between "metaverbal" (an attribute of verbal texts that evokes images) and "metavisual" (an attribute of images that reflects on the incomplete nature of visual representation) to analyze self-reflexive references as threads to

storylines which capture entire series in one emblematic recurrent "iconotext," a process that established the popularity of the serial and transformed audience reception in Europe.

In April 1836, the publishing house Chapman and Hall began releasing serialized monthly installments of a new comic series called *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*. The author — whose previous work was signed only "Boz" — was known mainly for his newspaper journalism and short "sketches" for the *Morning Chronicle*. Suddenly, the public interest for these serialized pieces grew to huge proportions. By the time of Queen Victoria's coronation in 1837, *The Pickwick Papers* had become a bestseller with up to 40,000 copies a month (see Law 14). Dickens's publishing career became unstoppable with issues of *Nicholas Nickleby* entering publication in 1838 and *Oliver Twist* almost ready by then. Fifteen of his novels were released in serialized form: six in weekly or monthly magazine serials and nine in monthly numbers. In the early 1850s after the success of his eighth novel, *David Copperfield*, Dickens became a national literary icon.

Benefiting from technological advances in printing and distribution, as well as laws which reduced taxes on paper and publication, the enormous success of serial stories contributed to the rise of literacy in Britain. The images associated with the stories and their particular layout in the magazines and newspapers also contributed to fix optical memory and enhance recognition (see Law). In the case of Dickens, they generally appeared on the left side of the issue (occasionally on the right) and frequently at the end of an episode as a way to help visualize what had just been narrated (see Patten). Established forms of typesetting and vignettes were also used as visual markers so that readers were able to scan through the various texts of a given journal in order to follow their favorite stories. Some serials had attractive and alluring illustrations with elaborated covers to catch attention. As technology facilitated their reproduction, images acquired a huge importance. However, in the case of Dickens, the impact of his language often went beyond the appeal of pictures. Coherence in the serial format works differently to the way it functions in shorter forms of narrative or in stories which are read as a whole. Although the division into chapters and episodes is already present in the novel, serial novels rely on complex processes of intermedial reference and transmediality. A comprehensive analysis of text-image coherence in *The Pickwick Papers* would require the study of several episodes, for which we do not have space here. Therefore, we focus on a particular passage where text-image interaction for the purpose of narrative coherence is clear. Indeed, this fragment becomes fundamental for the novel's plot as it centers on "Mr. Pickwick Sitting for His Portrait," a common practice in the days before photography prisoners underwent when arriving in prison and was performed by jail guards in order to be "recognized" as a convict.

Prison scenes had a significant impact on Dickens and he experienced this himself: unable to pay his debts, his father had been imprisoned in the Marshalsea debtors' prison in Southwark at London in 1824 where the rest of his family joined him soon after. Aged twelve, Dickens boarded with a family friend and worked ten hours every day at Warren's Blacking Warehouse to help pay the family's debts. He visited the prison on Sundays. Several scenes in *The Pickwick Papers* take place in the Fleet Prison, another debtors' prison and demolished in 1846, as Dickens himself indicates in the preface to the 1861 edition. Samuel Pickwick, the protagonist, is imprisoned in the Fleet for refusing to pay compensation to his landlady, Mrs. Bardell, who is suing him for the breach of promise to marry her. Mr Pickwick refuses to pay any money to Mrs Bardell's unscrupulous lawyers, Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, the objects of Dickens's satire against the legal establishment.

The novel was published in nineteen issues over twenty months and the last was double-length and cost two shillings. In mourning for his sister-in-law Mary Hogarth, Dickens missed a deadline and consequently there was no issue in May 1837. The illustration below corresponds to the end of chapter 39 of June 1837 and its reprint in 1873.

"Mr. Pickwick Sitting for His Portrait" by Phiz (Hablot K. Browne). *Pickwick Papers*. By Charles Dickens. The first image (left) is from the 1st Edition of September 1837 page 434. The second image is the 1873 redrafting published in the 1874 edition page 297. Scanned by Philip V. Allingham for [victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org) <<http://www.victorianweb.org>>. Copyright release to the authors.

Typically issued on the last day of a given month, the first two numbers of *The Pickwick Papers* featured four illustrations by Robert Seymour and 24 pages of text (March 1836 chapters 1-2 and April 1836 chapters 3-5). When Seymour committed suicide, R.W. Buss illustrated the third issue with two images and 32 pages of text (May 1836 chapters 6-8). For the fourth issue, Buss was replaced by H.K. "Phiz" Browne, who then continued to work for Dickens. Dickens describes the "sitting for a portrait" scene at the Fleet prison as follows: "'Sitting for my portrait!' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Having your likeness taken. Sir,' replied the stout turnkey. 'We're capital hands at likenesses here. Take 'em in no time, and always exact. Walk in, Sir, and make yourself at home.' Mr. Pickwick complied with the invitation, and sat himself down, when Mr. Weller, who stationed himself at the back of the chair, whispered that the sitting was merely another term for undergoing an inspection by the different turnkeys, in order that they might know prisoners from visitors. 'Well, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'then I wish the artists would come. This is rather a public place' (*Pickwick Papers* 433-34; unless otherwise specified, all quotations are from the original 1836-37 edition). There are some differences between the images which may have been motivated by Phiz's redrafting in 1873 of his original steel engravings (May 1837) to woodcuts for the 1874 Household Edition. In the latter, Phiz chose to include seven prison officers instead of six. Pickwick and Sam Weller are no longer in the center surrounded by the jailers and the Dutch clock is visible in both images, but the birdcage is not visible in the later one. Dickens describes the majority of the turnkeys as "stout" and "surly-looking," and lists only five present at Pickwick's "sitting": "Pickwick was aware that his sitting had commenced. The stout turnkey having been relieved from the lock, sat down, and looked at him carelessly from time to time, while a long thin man who had relieved him thrust his hands beneath his coat tails, and planting himself opposite, took a good long view of him" (433). In the the 1837 steel engraving, the "long thin man" is on the left, surveying Pickwick from the side, standing like a policeman would. In the 1873 woodcut, he is sitting on a stool in the centre of the image, studying Pickwick his posture not as threatening. In the 1837 image the large barred windows are prominent while the 1873 emphasizes a heavy iron-studded door behind the stout jailers. In both scenes Pickwick captures the attention of onlookers.

In his commentary on *The Victorian Web*, Philip V. Allingham suggests that "Pickwick seems more relaxed and less nervous in the 1873 woodcut, holding his hat jauntily on one knee and maintaining the sort of erect posture one would expect of a person sitting for a portrait," so that "The overall effect of the 1873 revision is Pickwick's occupying a less constricted space, and not being studied quite so closely" (<<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/phiz/pphe/41.html>>). However, even if Pickwick is not in the center in the second image, most of the jailers — bigger and heavier than in the earlier image — examine him from above. Pickwick is still under inspection from all sides of the room:

"A third rather surly-looking gentleman, who had apparently been disturbed at his tea, for he was disposing of the last remnant of a crust and butter when he came in, stationed himself close to Mr. Pickwick; and, resting his hands on his hips, inspected him narrowly, while two others mixed with the group, and studied his features with most intent and thoughtful faces" (433).

Dickens's words encourage the reader's visualization of the scene through verbs such as "wincing": "Mr. Pickwick winced a good deal under the operation, and appeared to sit very uneasily in his chair: but he made no remark to anybody while it was being performed — not even to Sam" (433). Pickwick's discomfort is captured in both images in the 1837 and 1873 texts: in the latter engraving Phiz shows Pickwick's uneasiness in the way he sits and smiles, an apparently polite, over-relaxed poise, his hat in his left hand resting over his knee in sign of deference, while all the other men remain with their hats on their heads. Sam Weller is described as reclining "upon the back of the chair, reflecting, partly on the situation of his master, and partly on the great satisfaction it would have afforded him to make a fierce assault upon all the turnkeys there assembled, one after the other, if it were lawful and peaceable so to do" (433). Sam knows that Pickwick can pay his fine and leave the prison whenever he decides, but his casual confident posture and smiling face serve to emphasize the tension of the scene. Text and images complement each other also with regards to the allusions to the act of painting in the episode, a kind of meta-narrative allusion. Further, in order to keep certain threads in the audience's recollections and maintain active long-term memory while introducing simultaneously new elements, the serial format interweaves stories which relate to the main plot. Their function is to highlight concrete aspects of it or play against the readers' expectations. In the case of *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens developed the main plot around the adventures of the travelling members of the club. The reader's attention was directed alternatively to interpolated fantastic and sometimes obscure, cruel tales. In this way Dickens created simultaneous and parallel worlds with touches of both reality and fiction.

As illustrated by the images, the most basic relation between episodes is achieved by means of the characters. The features of the members of Pickwick Club are distinctive, easy to visualize and memorize. The author has sometimes been accused of creating caricatures, but the truth is that those features that readers remember best in Dickens's fiction are the physical particularities, ticks, and ways of speaking of his personages. The images that accompanied the episode contributed to the memorialization of the peculiar Dickensian types, catching attention because caricatures exaggerate a person's most recognizable features. Each character in *The Pickwick Papers* is thus drawn comically and often with exaggerated traits. The most memorable — Samuel Pickwick, Esquire — is a kind and wealthy old gentleman and the founder and perpetual president of the Pickwick Club and described as a round-faced, clean-shaven, portly gentleman wearing spectacles. He holds an idealistic and utopian vision of the world, benevolent and philanthropist, unaware of deceptive people around him. The comic situations in the novel arise from Pickwick's naiveté and from a series of compromising and embarrassing incidents which are a direct consequence of his unsuspecting, unworldly nature. Much like *Don Quixote's* Sancho Panza and other shrewd servants such as Tom Jones or Roderick Random, the astute Sam Weller appears in chapter 10 working at the White Hart Inn in the Borough and is taken on by Pickwick as a personal servant and companion on his travels. He is a source of proverbs and advice delivered with a strong Cockney accent. These two characters are among the reasons for Dickens's great success; a "meta-visual/metaverbal" "iconotext" that remained imprinted in the memory of his audiences (Grishakova 315).

Referring to Yuri Lotman's work, Marina Grishakova points out that only an approximate equivalence between discrete language units and continuous semantic entities can be drawn because visual and verbal languages are mutually untranslatable (see Lotman 9-10 qtd. in Grishakova 313): "Potentially, any verbal or visual text is an 'imagetext' or 'iconotext,' where either iconic or symbolic signs predominate and both kinds of signs are in a state of more or less explicit mutual tension ... The metaverbal text (e.g. an ekphrastic text, cine-novel, or graphic poetry) reflects on the incomplete nature of verbal medium by probing the limits of verbal representation and appealing to the visual forms (graphic elements, real or virtual film shots, works of art, dreams, hallucinations, mental imagery, etc.) ... The metavisual text reflects on the incomplete nature of visual representation by juxtaposing image with verbal message and revealing their discrepancy" (Grishakova 314-15).

Effective communication requires several modes of sense perception to locate things in space and time. In recorded (past) events where participants do not share the same spatiotemporal coordinates, deictic pointers to the original happening are used. The image, like the description, is based on a static temporality that contrasts with the action present in narration. The contemplative stasis of description is important for recollection: it captures attention and fixes it in the eye of the mind much like an image. Research in cognitive semiotics has shown that humans internalize knowledge not just in narrative form in recollection but also in the form of *Gestalt* images (see López-Varela). The term "point of view" is really a semiotic structure both metaphoric and metonymic. Dickens's iconotext structure captures attention and helps recollection in a deictic manner. Contemporary cognitive models are based on the assumption that abstract reasoning is grounded on physicality. Thus, human language works as a kind of container, a sealed pipeline, through which people transfer mental content in the form of words (again like containers) in order to get thoughts and feelings across to others who extract this mental content. Words are organized in propositional sets in the form of mappings and correspondences based on similarity across conceptual domains (metaphors), mappings within a single domain (metonymic) corresponding to processes which establish contiguity, for instance cause-effect relations and image-schematic or pre-conceptual topological representations (see Geeraerts and Cuyckens).

Intermedial metarepresentation, as Grishakova suggests, reveals the tensions among these components and highlights the incapacity of a separate medium to capture the multimodal nature of perception. Indeed, in terms of *Gestalt* psychology, the brain is seen to work in holistic self-organizing processes which complete the perceived information even before full perception is accomplished. These findings were formulated in the principle of psychophysical isomorphism, theorized as correlations between conscious experience and cerebral activity. For example, the human eye may not see objects in their entirety but perceive an aggregate of parts. It has been found that mechanisms such as mirror-neuron structures serve to copy information across perceptual regions (see Zlatev; Zlatev, Racine, Sinha, Itkonen). In the case of metalanguage, "Whereas the metavisual text refers to an inadequate or virtual verbal counterpart of the visual representation, the excess of verbalization in the metaverbal text is meant to compensate for a lack of visual representation — what the narrator and the characters are trying but unable to see, or what they are only imagining to be real" (Grishakova 323). Thus, Dickens's text is also illustrative of the intersubjective (shared) relations which construct characterization. For instance, Pickwick's character is revealed by his relationship with Weller. Initially he is no more than his valet, but during the time in the prison their friendship grows stronger and he becomes almost like a son to Pickwick. In the episode described above, the prison warden gives both characters a tour of Fleet Prison. Pickwick is appalled by the terrible conditions of the rooms, much like coal bins, where entire families with young children live. In an effort to protect Sam, Pickwick sends him to sleep at a nearby inn and when he returns the following morning he insists in releasing him for the time being. Several plot lines begin to develop from this episode contributing to new adventures following the typical serial format. In one, Sam comes up with a plan to help Pickwick and in another Pickwick discovers that Alfred Jingle, a travelling actor from the club and his servant Job Trotter are incarcerated in the worst and poorest part of the prison. Another has to do with Mrs. Bardell's lawsuit and with the mercenary plans of her lawyers.

In cognitive studies *deixis* is the mechanism that establishes these kinds of relations at different spatiotemporal levels (see López-Varela). Grishakova explains that the main deictic centre in narrative is the authorial narrator who may adopt a character's vision in a kind of hypothetical focalization. In metaverbal texts verbal icons are blueprints for creating images, that is, they are signs of verbalized perceptions with a minimal spatiotemporal location within the storyworld: "The first-person homodiegetic narrator, who occupies an intermediary position between the author and the character, embodies tension between word and vision, mimetic and diegetic aspects of representation. The narrator's "specular desire" for "full vision" is impeded because of the limited access to knowledge: it stimulates the resistance of the visual to the verbal, a suspense or blockage of verbalization. The latter entails an increasing degree of textual indeterminacy" (317).

The following words, from Dickens's opening of chapter in *The Pickwick Papers*, make it clear that Pickwick is inscribed in the text as an immortal character from the onset of "the first ray of light" (1).

His inscription via the inspirational light of the creator, Dickens, takes place by means of Boz, "the editor of these papers" — a pseudonym that mediates between the work and the author — in charge of laying out the "proof" — and suggests the condition of realism: "The first ray of light which illumines the gloom, and converts to dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which the earlier history of the public career of the immortal Pickwick would appear to be involved, is derived from the perusal of the following entry in the Transactions of the Pickwick Club, which the editor of these papers feels the highest pleasure in laying before his readers, as a proof of the careful attention, indefatigable assiduity, and nice discrimination with which his search among the multifarious documents confided to him has been conducted" (1). Grishakova posits that the impersonal extradiegetic third-person narration such as the voice Dickens uses in *The Pickwick Papers* comprises indices of the narrator's simulated "presence" in the storyworld: "Hence the authorial narrator's 'quasi-sensory' perception duplicates the 'physical' vision of the character and simulates the narrator's presence within the storyworld" (317).

The story of the initial publication of *The Pickwick Papers* brings to the fore other interesting aspects which relate the metaverbal and the metavisual. Dickens began to write the serial novel after the London publishers Chapman and Hall commissioned a series of Cockney sporting plates from the illustrator Robert Seymour: there was to be a club the members of which were to be sent on hunting and fishing expeditions into the countryside in 1827-28. Their misadventures were to be depicted in Seymour's comic plates and Dickens would supply the description to explain them and connect them into a sort of picture novel like the ones fashionable at the time. It is not clear exactly how it came about that Dickens took the leading role and Seymour was compelled to illustrate what Dickens had already written. Dickens's public success in the initial episodes transformed a genre made up mostly of images into a serial novel. Seymour provided the illustrations for the first two installments before his suicide. Robert Buss illustrated the third, but Dickens did not like his work. The remaining instalments were illustrated by "Phiz" who continued to work with Dickens for all his novels.

In the preface to the 1861 edition, Dickens inscribed himself as author in a clearer way explaining that Boz was his signature in the *Morning Chronicle* and a nickname of a younger brother named Moses (in honor of the Vicar of Wakefield), which when pronounced through the nose eventually became Boses, hence "Boz": "a very familiar household word to me, long before I was an author" (*Pickwick Papers*, 1861 edition, xiii). As in his first serial, *Sketches by Boz*, the young Dickens is conscious of his role as textual engraver: "It would require the pencil of Hogarth to illustrate—our feeble pen is inadequate to describe — the expression which the countenances of Mr. Calton and Mr. Septimus Hicks respectively assumed, at this unexpected announcement" (*Sketches by Boz* 178). Oscillating between parody and social reform, between Boz and Pickwick, Dickens the author is captured in the multiple voices and meta-images of his pluri-discursive text: "In a scientific spirit of observation" (*Pickwick Papers* 1), Pickwick's light is sent around the country to watch, to study, and to report and this is what Dickens finds a few years later: "I have found it curious and interesting, looking over the sheets of this reprint, to mark what important social improvements have taken place about us, almost imperceptibly, even since they were originally written ... legal reforms have pared the claws of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg; a spirit of self-respect, mutual forbearance, education, and cooperation, for such good ends, has diffused itself among their clerks ... the laws relating to imprisonment for debt are altered; and the Fleet Prison is pulled down!" (*Pickwick Papers*, 1861 edition, xiv).

Indeed, Dickens's meta-language designates a cognitive social task with Pickwick as focalizer. As J. Hillis Miller observes, Phiz's illustrations catch and magnify his radiance, calling attention to his round bold head, his shining spectacles, or his beaming smile. Pickwick's light even helps "to bring into visibility objects and people in what are often dark and enclosed interiors" (104). Even the city of London, including its dark prison, seems to exist only as a fuzzy combination of locations — buildings, squares, inns, streets — which come to life and acquire reality under Pickwick's light. This becomes obvious in the paragraph described above — "Mr. Pickwick sitting for his portrait" — where Pickwick shines equally whether in the center of the room or sitting in one of the corners. Visual descriptions, such as these and other mechanisms such as variations in point of view, narrative voices, and stories within stories are examples of self-nesting generative processes. In serial novels, the transposition of

one story into another transforms a non-serial episode into a serial story made up of several episodes. Serialization allows a detailed focus on descriptions and dramatized presentations of everyday events. The characters' lives become familiar to the audiences, providing models of behaviour and social engagement, as Dickens desired. Suspense, witty conversations which make people laugh, and the melodramatic situations in *The Pickwick Papers* help trigger the public's affective responses.

Meta-language refers to the mappings between formal logic, expressed in natural language, and algorithms, and thus to language used to make statements about statements in another object language, that is, embedded or "nested". Meta-language is a language formally, naturally, and fixed in an object language, an idea put forth by Douglas Hofstadter in his book *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, where he analyzes the characteristics of self-reflexivity in various media. Some taxonomies (i.e., biological species in Linnaeus's classification) are examples of metalanguages divided in several levels which represent various degrees of abstraction (see Hunter). Coded systems such as hypertext are also examples of nesting structures. Rather than building on linear (active) narratological relationships, certain recursive (static) loops create nesting structures which reduplicate messages.

The following lines suggest how the serial exploits the self-nesting device to turn the narrative into a recurrent generative process that weaves storylines and characters into deeper and more complex layers of diegesis. We have chosen part VIII, October 1836 (chapters 21-23 pages 211-24 in the 1st edition), where the first frame level is the storyline that tells of Pickwick's and Weller's errands. In chapter 21, Pickwick goes to visit Bardell's lawyers. While they wait, they overhear conversations about the firm's unlawful practices. Then they go to a tavern where they meet Wellers's father after which they go in search of Pickwick's lawyer, Perker. His charwoman tells them that Perker's clerk is at a nearby tavern and they go there. The clerk, Peter Lowten, introduces Pickwick to his colleagues and they settle down to hear some stories by a half-crazed man named Jack Bamber who begins by telling of dead bodies and ghosts. These storylines are therefore nested within the main plot, creating folds in the narrative without disrupting it. Bamber's last story is the tale of a perverse client. Imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea debtors' prison, a man called Heyling watches his wife and child wither and die and swears vengeance on the two men who placed the family in prison: his own father and his father-in-law. When his father dies, Heyling becomes rich and is released. One day he finds his brother-in-law drowning while his father-in-law pleads for help and Heyling lets the man drown. Later he buys his father-in-law's debts and begins to persecute him legally, reducing him to destitution and, eventually, death.

The nested stories provide a play between the different levels of the narrative. Chapters 21-23 deal with the mercenary effects of law, one of Dickens's favourite topics and one he was acquainted with from his years as a law clerk himself. Pickwick and Weller meet Weller's father just before they get to the second tavern. Although Weller has not seen his father in two years, they are on friendly terms. Bamber's tale is a story of father-son negative relationships about the vengeful use of the law to seek revenge. All these story-threads complement the main plot and even anticipate new storylines, for Weller also provides some information on Jingle and Job Trotter, who will appear in the next adventure. Here Dickens begins to weave two separate but related plot lines together: Jingle's schemes to marry for money, and Bardell's plan to get money out of Pickwick. The episode also anticipates that Pickwick's battle against dishonesty, fought on several fronts, might lead him unjustly to prison as happens in episodes 39-40 just discussed. Further, there is another element that creates and disrupts narrative coherence. This is the fact that Heyling's story comes immediately after two other stories about ghosts. One takes place at Clifford's Inn where a tenant shuts himself up in his bedroom closet and takes a dose of arsenic: the room is given to another man and one night he finds himself staring at the dead man in the closet. The other story is about "one of the most ancient inns, that had been shut up and empty for years and years before" where another tenant, again a law clerk, is haunted by an apparition: "'In this room,' replied the apparition, 'my worldly ruin was worked, and I and my children beggared. In this press, the papers in a long, long suit, which accumulated for years, were deposited. In this room, when I had died of grief, and long-deferred hope, two wily harpies divided the wealth for which I had contested during a wretched existence, and of which, at last, not one farthing was left for my unhappy descendants. I terrified them from the spot, and since that day

have prowled by night — the only period at which I can revisit the earth — about the scenes of my long-protracted misery. This apartment is mine: leave it to me" (213-14).

Heyling's story, narrated right after this, connects with the topic of ruined families and the law. One of the listeners, a man who smokes a cigar makes the following remark: "That ain't bad, if it's true"; Bamber's reply is described as follows: "'IF!' exclaimed the old man, with a look of excessive contempt. 'I suppose,' he added, turning to Lowten, 'he'll say next, that my story about the queer client we had, when I was in an attorney's office, is not true either — I shouldn't wonder'" (214). The play between fiction and reality is again another mechanism to introduce self-reflexive duplicity in the narrative. There are even more narrative layers to the complex network of storylines, as Heyling also suffers from hallucinations that can be considered as extremely brief visual dream scenes that punctuate his own story.

The above examples show one of the most interesting aspects of the serial genre, that is, the play between intermedial metarepresentations and self-reflexive nesting structures and their role in capturing attention, maintaining recollection, and enhancing anticipation. Anticipation allowed the reader's imagination to run free, increasing suspense and enabling a dialogue between the story and its public which gave rise to a strong circulation of speculations and critiques of all kinds transforming the reading experience into an intense social activity much like debates on today's social networks. This expectancy, generated by the time lapse between issues had the power, in some cases, to change the fate of some popular characters or the development of the entire story. Weller's reply to Pickwick in chapter 23 hints at this process: "'But when is this to be done, Sam?' inquired Mr. Pickwick. 'All in good time, Sir,' replied Sam. 'Whether it was done in good time, or not, will be seen hereafter'" (242).

In conclusion, the study of serialization in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* enables us to focus on reading as a mode of both cultural consumption and production since audiences also define the relative values of texts. It is interesting to see how a particular literary work enters into circulation and how literature — despite the claim of intellectuals to situate it outside economic interests — enters the marketplace of cultural capital. Many factors contributed to make *The Pickwick Papers* such a success. They range from the impact of serialization on the status of literary works to the part played by illustrations in the serial and targeting audience reception, and, finally — although we are not able to follow this thread in the present study — to the connections between the book industry and advertising, bearing in mind that both Pickwick and Weller became icons used in a great number of products and services following the success of the serial (see, e.g., Williams).

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Author's profile: Asunción López-Varela teaches English literature and cultural studies at Complutense University Madrid. Her interests in scholarship include semiotics, intermediality studies, and cultural studies. In addition to numerous articles, López-Varela's recent book publications include the edited volumes *Cityscapes: World Cities and Their Cultural Industries* (2013) and *Real and Virtual Cities* (with Mariana Neț, 2009) and the special issues *Intermedial Studies and World Literatures* in the *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* (2013) and *Semiotics and World Cultures* in *Cultura: Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology* (2012). E-mail: <alopezva@filol.ucm.es>

Author's profile: Camila Khaski Gaglia is working towards her doctorate in English literature at Complutense University Madrid on the links between reception and aspects of intermediality in Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* and in serial novels. E-mail: <ckhaskigraglia@gmail.com>.