Three-Deckers and Installment Novels: the Effect of Publishing Format Upon the Nineteenth-Century Novel.

James M. Keech Jr

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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THREE-DECKERS AND INSTALLMENT NOVELS:
THE EFFECT OF PUBLISHING FORMAT UPON
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL.

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THREE-DECKERS AND INSTALLMENT NOVELS:
THE EFFECT OF PUBLISHING FORMAT UPON THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

James M. Keech, Jr.
B.A., University of North Carolina, 1955
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1961
August, 1965
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ABSTRACT

The English reading public, during the greater part of the nineteenth century, encountered a new novel in a different format from the compact one-volume book of today. The latest in original fiction then appeared in three forms: the three-decker, a set of three post-octavo volumes selling for a guinea and a half; the part issue, the aggregate of several weekly or monthly installments; the magazine serial. Novelists, working under artistic limitations completely unknown today, were forced to accommodate their work to the three acceptable publishing formats, enlarging, squeezing, or pruning their material to make it fit.

Examination of the nineteenth-century novel in relation to these publishing forms, their history, development, and effect upon specific novels, reveals that they profoundly influenced the size, structure, contents, and artistic technique of the novel. Contemporary critical consideration of these effects is brief and scattered; but the correspondence, memoirs, and commentary of nineteenth-century novelists and publishers, and the internal evidence provided by the novels themselves, collectively illustrate the problems of writing for carefully specified publishing formats.

The three-volume format, created by the success of Sir Walter Scott's novels in this form, was favored by the circulating libraries;
and their immense purchasing power caused publishers to demand that authors supply novels in three volumes. The nine hundred pages, or approximately 167,000 words, necessary to fill these volumes were obtained by multiplication of characters and subplots, elaborate descriptions, digressions, superfluous dialogue, and the ingenious tricks of the printer. The three-decker frequently followed a sort of three-act structure, and it often dealt with a specialized subject matter designed to appeal to the subscribers of the circulating libraries.

The part-issue novel, originated by Charles Dickens in the early 1830's in an attempt to offer novels to the public at a cheaper price, and the serial novel, which became a significant vehicle for issuing novels with the appearance of the shilling magazines in the late 1850's, were even longer than the three-decker. Often extending to 340,000 words or more, installment novels were also padded with unnecessary characters, episodes, and wordy digressions. The set length of their component parts and the necessity of a climax in every issue frequently rendered them episodic. Often such novels were hurriedly and carelessly written. Frequently composed piecemeal during the course of publication, they offered novelists the opportunity to accentuate elements which stimulated sales and to satisfy an appreciative public's expression of the desired treatment of character and plot. In addition, subtlety in characterization was often sacrificed to the exigencies of installment publication.

These three publishing formats exerted an influence upon the
novel for almost three-quarters of a century. Although the serial, appearing in a magazine which offered the reader more for his money, had put an end to the part-issue novel by the 1880's, the three-volume format and the serial existed as important formats until the early 1890's. Only then, with the successful establishment of the one-volume novel, was the novelist offered the artistic freedom to control his material as he desired. An awareness, therefore, of the unique writing requirements of the nineteenth century and the effects they had upon its fiction can open new avenues of critical evaluation of the novels of the last century.
INTRODUCTION

During the greater part of the nineteenth century, the English reading public encountered a newly-published novel in a format quite different from the compact, and usually somewhat short, one-volume novel of today. Victorians who desired the latest in original fiction could purchase their novels in three forms, two of which are unknown today. For the wealthy who wanted bound volumes, there was the three-decker: a three-volume set of small, post-octavo volumes, resembling bound quality paperbacks of today, which sold for the handsome price of a guinea and a half for the set. For those who could afford only a shilling a month, there was the novel issued in monthly parts: a sort of literary installment plan in which novels were published in piecemeal fashion, each installment consisting of three or four chapters appearing monthly over a period of from nineteen to twenty-four months. Finally, there was the magazine serial, which was published in monthly magazines priced at a half crown in the 1840's and at a shilling by the late 1850's; ultimately the serial novel found its way into weeklies selling for pennies. Publication in the one-volume format of modern times was extremely rare, and it was usually confined to the cheap reprint, appearing usually two to three years after initial publication of the work, or to "certain special types of novels, perhaps less likely to find favor
with library subscribers -- religious novels and tales intended to appeal to younger as well as older readers. ¹

Each of these three methods of publishing original fiction had its effects, rather profound effects, upon the contents of the novel of the nineteenth century. The novelists of this century were forced to be more commercially oriented than are, perhaps, the novelists of today: many novelists could have answered the charge that they wrote merely for money in the fashion of Trollope who, having been so accused, replied cordially, "Of course I do . . . ." ² Certainly these novelists worked under artistic limitations completely foreign to twentieth-century novelists.

That they accommodate their novels to the three acceptable publishing formats was mandatory. Publishers, lending libraries, and the public demanded that they do so. Thus the nineteenth-century novelist was forced to enlarge, squeeze, or prune his material to fit the publishing form in which it would appear, and the result of these difficult processes of composition was a novel far different from that which is encountered today.

The effects of writing for a three-volume format, for example, produced a novel which was or appeared to be of great length -- obtained frequently by multiplication of characters and subplots, by elaborate descriptions, digressions and superfluous dialogue, by unabashed padding, by ingenious printing tricks. This novel frequently found itself following a sort of three-act structure and often dealt with a specialised subject matter designed to appeal to the subscribers of the circulating libraries. The serialized
or part-issue novel was even longer and was frequently rendered episodic by the set length of the component parts and the necessity of a climax in every issue; often such novels were hurriedly written, unrevised, and influenced by the closeness of the relationship of author and audience. Subtlety in characterisation was often sacrificed to the exigencies of installment publication.

No one novel, of course, exhibits all of the possible effects that writing for a particular publishing format could have upon its contents; the artistic conscience of each author and the financial considerations of each novel differed. No Victorian novel, however, should be read without knowledge of the original publishing format and some awareness of the possible effects it could have upon the novel; for almost every novel of the period can be shown to have been, in varying degree, influenced by the purely practical consideration of the publishing form the novel was to take.

Yet, unfortunately, the modern reader and student of literature is provided little insight into the problems of composition of the nineteenth-century novelist, and thus he sees few of the effects upon the novels which sprang from these unique writing requirements. First editions of three-volume novels and novels in parts are rare, expensive, and frequently unobtainable even in the libraries of large universities. Consequently, the reader of today usually meets a Victorian novel as a reprint in the publishing format of the twentieth century — the one-volume novel. The three separate volumes of the three-decker, the twenty or twenty-four monthly parts of the part-issue novel, the serialised portions of the magazine
serial are lumped together into one convenient and handy volume. Except in rare instances, no editorial indications are given in these reprints of the divisions of the novel into its component parts in the original publishing format. As Royal Gettman has said, "In sum, it is difficult for a student of fiction to recreate even the physical aspects of the first impact of a nineteenth-century novel." Consequently, the modern student reads the novel as one continuous whole, accepts it as a complete entity, and evaluates it as he would any twentieth-century novel. Thus deprived of complete criteria by which he can relate the novel to its day and find in it an artistry oriented to the needs of a different age, the modern reader either overlooks masterful solutions to difficult writing problems or labels them as weaknesses. He finds the Victorian novel long, rambling, and loosely-knit; he curses its ubiquitous digressions; he thinks of it as episodic in structure; he may bewail its too frequent passages of interminable dialogue; and he frequently condemns its characterization as limited or lacking in subtlety.

Unfortunately, the modern student receives little help from critics and literary historians. Histories of the novel rarely indicate the original publishing format of a novel, and though they may make perfunctory, general comments about the problems of writing for a particular form of publication (usually only that of publication in parts), they fail to examine the novels according to the difficulties a particular publishing format dictated to the novelist. Sources which indicate the three-volume division of three-deckers, the separation of novels into their monthly parts and serialized
portions are almost non-existent. Critical consideration of the
history and the effects of the three publishing forms upon the novel
are scattered, brief, and located in works which appeal more to
collectors of rare books and students of publishing than to students
of literature. Even critical studies of individual nineteenth-century
novelists and their works seldom mention the problems encountered in
writing for a particular publishing format.

It will be the purpose of this study to examine the nineteenth-
century novel in relation to these original publishing forms: to
trace the historical development of the three forms through the
century; to show that they profoundly affected the shape, contents,
and techniques of the novel during this century; and to examine a
selection of novels which seem to illustrate that an awareness of
the problems of writing for particular, and restraining, publishing
formats can open new avenues of critical evaluation of the novels of
the Victorians. This study is not, and cannot, be complete. The
number of nineteenth-century novelists is immense, the number of
novels seemingly infinite, and the effects of the difficulties of
publishing formats are compounded by the various shades of treatment
they received in the hands of various individual novelists. Only a
small number of novels can be examined here; yet from these few, and
the illustrations they provide of the several effects of writing for
particular formats, there can be suggested the nature of the problem
that the three publishing formats imposed upon the nineteenth-century
novel.
Footnotes to the Introduction


4 A notable exception is Kathleen Tillotson's perceptive Novels of the Eighteen-Forties.
CHAPTER I

"THREE SEPARATE AND INDIVIDUAL VOLUMES"

Most nineteenth-century readers of some affluence encountered the novels they read in the same form that Mr. Omer met the first novel written by David Copperfield: "Compact in three separate and individual volumes—one, two, three."¹ This was the three-volume novel, or three-decker, as it was called colloquially: three thin, post-octavo volumes of about three hundred pages each, frequently beautifully bound and almost always handsomely printed in large type with wide margins and heavy leading between the lines. It was a convenient, easy form for reading. The volumes were small, light, and handy, and the reader probably felt a rewarding sense of progress when the completion of a separate volume visibly marked his progression toward culmination of the whole. Relatively long in comparison with the novel of today, the three-volume novel was the radio and the television of its day, providing numerous hours of leisurely and usually thoughtless entertainment. A further advantage was that a whole family could read the same novel at once—one volume for father, another for mother, and the third for sister.

This three-volume format was, as Kathleen Tillotson states, "the commonest material form in which a reader of the eighteen-forties
met a new novel, as at almost any time in the nineteenth century. It was regarded as the standard form for the first edition of a novel, and as such it dominated the writing and publication of novels from the late eighteen-twenties to the early eighteen-nineties. This was the publishing format of the first issue of most of Sir Walter Scott's novels, of all of Jane Austen's except Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, of each of Susan Ferrier's three novels, almost all of Mrs. Gore's and all of Francis Trollope's novels. Some other novels appearing in the three-volume form were: Benjamin Disraeli's Sybil, Tancred, Lothair; Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth; William M. Thackeray's Henry Esmond; Charles Reade's It Is Never Too Late to Mend; Anthony Trollope's Barchester Towers; Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette; Ann Brontë's Tenant of Wildfell Hall; George Eliot's Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, Felix Holt; George Meredith's Ordeal of Richard Feveral, Rhoda Fleming, Harry Richmond, The Egoist; Bulwer-Lytton's Pelham, Last Days of Pompeii, Rienzi, Last of the Barons; Wilkie Collins's Antonina and Basil; Charles Kingsley's Westward Ho!; Thomas Hardy's Desperate Remedies; George Moore's A Modern Lover. The list is seemingly infinite. In addition, many novels which were first published in other formats, in monthly parts or serials, were later published in volume form as three-deckers: Captain Marryat's Peter Simple, Jacob Faithful, Japhet in Search of a Father; Mrs. Gaskell's Cranford; Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist and Great Expectations; Charles Reade's White Liss, Hard Cash, Griffith Gaunt; Anthony Trollope's Framley Parsonage, The Eustace Diamonds, Ralph the Heir; George Eliot's Romola; George Meredith's Diana of the
Crossways; Bulwer-Lytton's The Caxtons; Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White and The Moonstone; Thomas Hardy's A Laodicean and The Return of the Native.

However inclusive such lists as the above may appear, it must be noted that the three-volume format was not the only volume form of publication. The three-decker, in itself, was an artificial configuration for fiction, for most three-deckers, whose initial sales seemed to justify the venture, were reprinted a year or two later in a cheaper, one-volume reprint. The one-volume novel, however, normally signified to a reader of the Victorian age a very specialised sort of fiction--religious or children's novels--or more often a cheap reprint. William Tinsley, in his memoirs of the publishing trade, states the situation: "As a rule, in the old days, book buyers when they saw one-volume novels at booksellers' or on railway stalls, were fairly certain that most of them were reprints of two and three volume novels that were above the average in writing and interest." New novels were, of course, also published in one, two, or four volumes, but these formats were rare and generally regarded as types which deviated from the established norm. The three-decker was the standard form for original fiction, as Michael Sadleir confirms:

Taking the year 1855, as our basis for generalisation, ... we find the three-volume novel, published at 3ls. 6d., firmly established as the standard form of a novel's first appearance. There were of course new novels in two volumes and even novels in one; but such issues were governed by length and were regarded as abbreviations of the three-decker and not an alternative form.
Tinsley also echoes this opinion: "In fact, new one-volume fictions, except by important or popular authors, were little thought of by the press or keepers of circulating libraries, and, in fact, were often looked upon as mere slips or offshoots of complete books." 6

The three-volume novel was indeed the super dreadnaught of the world of Victorian publishing. The literary nickname for this phenomenon of fiction, the three-decker, was humble in origin. Its roots are nautical, 7 and the term originally referred to a warship, of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which had three decks of cannon—for example, Lord Nelson's flagship, the Victory. Later the term was employed figuratively to designate an object of great importance, especially anything consisting of three parts or divisions. Finally the term came to be applied, as literary slang, to the ubiquitous three-volume novel.

However lowly the origin of its literary nickname, the three-decker was no humble article. Its most objectionable feature, perhaps, to the man of modest means of the nineteenth century, and the most astonishing to the man of the twentieth, was the standard price of these three small volumes, a guinea and a half. The three-decker was indeed a luxury item. A price of 3ls. 6d. was undisguisedly exorbitant for a work that might be reprinted a year later in one volume priced at six shillings and eventually, in still cheaper editions, at one shilling or less. "Publishers," however, as Richard Altick has observed, "generally preferred to issue sumptuous books in small editions at high prices, rather than to produce more modest volumes in larger quantity." 8 Furthermore, the prices of new works
of literature had never been cheap in England. In the eighteenth century, the prices of books placed them beyond the means of the working class and most of the middle class: a newly published quarto volume, in 1775 for example, cost from ten to twelve shillings—the price of a good pair of pants; a volume of essays cost the same (2s. 6d.) as a month's supply of tea and sugar for a family of six. The publishers, however, had their reasons for the preference for small, high-priced editions of novels—a topic to be developed later at greater length. Such novels carried little risk of great financial loss; and the circulating libraries, where for the subscription fee of one guinea per year any reader could obtain a novel as recently published as any in the library of a lord, preferred and insisted upon the practice. The result was that the first edition, in volume form, of a new novel was reserved for the wealthy.

This fact did not go unrecognized by a sometimes outraged public. Charles Knight lamented this state of affairs in *Passages of a Working Life* (1864): "For a new work which involved the purchase of copyright, it was the established rule that the wealthy few, to whom price was not a consideration, were alone to be depended upon for the remuneration of the author and the first profit of the publisher." A critic in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1818 was more irate in remarking on the exorbitant price of eight shillings a volume charged for Sir Walter Scott's four-volume *Tales of My Landlord*, second series: "Modern publishers indeed publish for the aristocracy; and we would wish this highly popular author of Waverley to consider how many thousands of respectable readers, the prices of his books, and,
beyond all others, the price of this one, exclude from the perusal of his works.\textsuperscript{11}

Such critics had valid ground for complaint. Equated in modern values, at the present rate of exchange and book prices, a three-volume novel at 3ls. 6d. would be somewhat of a bargain at $4.41. But, as the beefsteak at seven cents a pound of the eighteen-nineties looks less a bargain to the exclaimers of the glories of the good old days when viewed in relation to the dismally low wages of that era, so does the price of a three-decker seem less a bargain when compared to the small salaries of the early eighteen-hundreds. Instead of a bargain hunter's find at less than five dollars in today's prices, the three-decker, when seen in terms of the purchasing power of the pound in its day, would be found to cost about the equivalent of from $30.00 to $50.00 today. The shillings spent on a three-volume novel in the eighteen-thirties, for example, would have also purchased thirty-one and a half pounds of butter or over fifteen pounds of meat, and thus would have provided a family of five table beer for about four and a half months.\textsuperscript{12} A London worker of some skill earned in the eighteen-thirties only about thirty to thirty-three shillings a week; a Glasgow carpenter was paid only fourteen shillings a week; and a handloom weaver only five shillings sixpence.\textsuperscript{13} In the eighteen-forties a three-decker novel cost more than a week's wages for weaving overlookers and engineers, more than two week's wages for a power loom weaver, almost a week's wages for a good mechanic; and few governesses, with their average salary of £20 per year, were affluent enough to purchase new novels.\textsuperscript{14} Even though
wages had risen by the eighteen-fifties, London shipwrights made a
weekly salary of a mere thirty-six shillings, builders' laborers
twenty shillings, ironfounders twenty-seven shillings sixpence;
workers in the cotton mills of Lancashire and Cheshire earned a
paltry nine shillings sixpence a week. The highest daily wage for
miners earned in any district during any year in the early Victorian
period was just over five shillings; and even at the end of the
early Victorian era, a grown woman in regular work made, G. M. Young
tells us, in the vicinity of ten shillings a week. In addition,
Young also informs us, "When he was forming the London police, Sir
Robert Peel found that a guinea [per week] brought him all the
recruits he wanted." Not only was the three-decker novel exclusive,
it was, to all but a very rich few, prohibitive.

Just why, and when new English nineteenth-century novels came
to be sold only in sets of three volumes priced at 3ls. 6d. is
difficult to ascertain with precision. The problem seems similar to
that of why eggs are sold only by the dozen. Certainly, the multi-
volumed novel was not an innovation of the Victorian era. A backward
glance at the eighteenth-century novel, according to the Cambridge
Bibliography of English Literature, shows that Richardson's Pamela
(1741) was published in four volumes and Clarissa (1748) in seven;
Fielding's Joseph Andrews (1742) was published in two volumes, Tom
Jones (1749) in six, and Amelia (1752) in four; Smollett's
Roderick Random (1748) was published in two volumes, Peregrine
Pickle (1757) in four, and Humphrey Clinker (1771) in three;
Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield (1766) was in two volumes, as
was Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759). Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1778) was published in three volumes and *Cecilia* (1782) in five. The first ten years of the nineteenth century, however, show a preference for novels in two volumes, and after 1810 the three-volume format seems to be the one most adopted. A count of Montague Summer's survey of Gothic novels published during the years 1800 to 1810 reveals: one novel published in one volume, twenty-nine in two volumes, twenty-two in three volumes, sixteen in four volumes, and three novels in five volumes. Table V of Charles and Edward Lauterbach, showing the distribution of volumes per novel in Dorothy Blakey's survey of the books published by the Minerva Press to 1820, illustrates the increasing tendency toward three-volume publication.

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<td>1795-1799</td>
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<td>1815-1820</td>
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Dorothy Blakey states herself: "Up to 1795 most Minerva novels were issued in two volumes; from 1795 to 1805 in two, three, or four. After 1805 the two-volume form occurs less frequently, and after 1816 the four-volume also declines in popularity. It would appear therefore that by 1820 the 'three-decker' was definitely established." Further evidence of the growing popularity of novels in three volumes is furnished by Edward Morton: "Between 1803 and the appear-
ance of 'Waverly' in 1814, out of some 420 novels of from three to six volumes each, nearly three-fifths were in three volumes at from three to six shillings a volume.22

Though a strong trend toward publishing novels in three volumes was established by 1820, there seems to be no set concept of a standard format and a standard price until the impact of Sir Walter Scott's highly successful series of novels prompted an imitation which eventually fixed the first edition of novels at three volumes priced at 31s. 6d. Scott is customarily regarded as the father of the threedecker novel:

... the immense popularity of the works of Sir Walter Scott had forced up the price of newly-published novels to a guinea and a half for the customary three volumes. . . . 23

In short, Sir Walter Scott, whose influence is everywhere in the history of nineteenth-century fiction, was responsible not only for the three-volume novel priced at 31s. 6d. but for the inexpensive one-volume reprint as well.24

After the novels were under way Scott published in the standard three-volume form at a guinea and a half, or ten shillings sixpence a volume, a form which he is said to have established and which weighed down and cramped the novel until 1900.25

... for beyond question it was Sir Walter Scott who started that terrible incubus of the three-volume novel at thirty-one-and-six—an incubus which rode the British public for some seventy years. . . . 26

Scott can not necessarily be considered the sole parent of the three-volume novel; for, to be sure, the circulating library system exercised its influence also. Scott was, however, the most influential single figure in establishing the standard combination of
both format and price, for the sweet melody of his financial success soon prompted a chorus of imitators. Sir Walter Scott, when he began writing novels, employed the then increasingly popular three-volume format. *Waverley* (1814) was a three-volume novel, and all of Scott's subsequent novels to *The Abbot* (1820), except for the three series of four-volume *Tales of My Landlord*, were in three volumes. None of these early novels, however, could be called a "standard" three-decker: all but *Ivanhoe* were in duodecimo, not post-octavo, and none of them was priced at 3ls. 6d. The distinction of being the first true three-decker belongs to *Kenilworth* (1821): it was in three volumes; it cost a guinea and a half; and it was post-octavo in size, the size of all Scott's subsequent novels and the size of almost all Victorian novels in first edition. After *Kenilworth*, all of Scott's individual novels appeared in the standard format and price, and the vogue was established which was to continue for three-quarters of a century. Table VI of the Lauterbachs, based upon the distribution of novels in the Sadleir Collection as listed in *XIX Century Fiction*, gives partial evidence of the ubiquity of the three-volume format throughout the century.27

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The acknowledgment of Scott's paternity of the three-decker novel rests not so much upon the three-volume form, which had already been established as an ever increasing practice when Scott began writing fiction, but upon the establishment of the extravagant standard price of a guinea and a half. Though novels had previously been rather high in price, Scott's publishers seemed to work under the slogan "all that the traffic will bear" when assigning prices to his work. As a result, Scott's novels raised the price of fiction by one-third within seven years. During the seventeen-seventies, novels were priced at three shillings per volume bound, and this price rose during the nineties to from four to six shillings a volume. 28 The prices set by William Lane's Minerva Press were somewhat lower: "In these thirty years [1790-1820] the price per volume rose from half a crown to five shillings and sixpence, and at the end of the period of the Minerva Press it was still rising." 29 By 1810, six shillings a volume was the rule, and during the years 1812 to 1821 prices generally ranged from six to eight shillings a volume. 30 Some sample prices from the period indicate a usual price of about six or seven shillings a volume for novels at the time Scott started writing fiction: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice (1813) cost eighteen shillings for the three volumes, Mansfield Park (1814) cost the same, and Emma (1816) cost one guinea for three volumes; 31 Maria Edgeworth's Patronage (1814) cost twenty-eight shillings for four volumes, or seven shillings a volume, and Harrington and Ormank (1817) cost twenty-one shillings for three volumes. 32
Although Scott's poetry sold extremely well at highly exorbitant prices, \(^{33}\) Scott's *Waverley* in 1814 was no higher in price than these other novels of the times; for it sold for one guinea, or seven shillings a volume, for the three volumes. \(^{34}\) *Guy Mannering* (1815), his second novel, also cost seven shillings per volume, but with *The Antiquary* (1816) the price rose to eight shillings per volume. Scott's novels were unprecedentedly popular and seemed to sell regardless of the price. Although Scott recognized the price of *The Antiquary* as artificially inflated, he did not seem to object to gouging the public as long as he got his share; in a letter to John Ballantyne in 1816 he wrote:

> Messrs. Constable & Longman wish to make the price of the Antiqu. 2l/ instead of a guinea. I have no great objection but I will not connive for nothing at their picking the pockets of the public, -- I must share like Falstaff I must have my eighteenpence I will not endanger my soul gratis. So if they charge 3/ one may go to the retailer one to the publishers & one to the author otherwise I will not boat. That sum & Waverley 4th Edition will nearly make up what I want at this next term. \(^{35}\)

Although four other novels of 1816 sold for a guinea, Edward Morton can find only one other novel of that year which sold for an equally excessive price of twenty-four shillings: Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon*. *Rob Roy* (1818), in three volumes, and the second and third series of *Tales of My Landlord* (1818, 1819), in four volumes each, sold for a similar figure of eight shillings per volume. \(^{36}\) Scott's popularity was taxed to an even greater degree when *Ivanhoe* was published in 1820, for the price rose still higher to thirty shillings, or ten shillings per volume. According to
Edward Morton, "No other novel of that year (even of four or five volumes) sold for thirty shillings; but late in the year Mrs. MacNally . . . issued a three-volume novel, 'Eccentricity' at the queer price of thirty-one shillings." Scott's next two novels, The Monastery (1820) and The Abbot (1820), for some reason, were lower priced at twenty-four shillings for three volumes; but in 1821 Kenilworth was published at a price which, at 31s. 6d. for three volumes, pushed the price of the novel to an unprecedented peak. There it stayed for seventy years. Other novels had, by this time, risen to selling prices of twenty-one or twenty-four shillings, but Scott's novel was the first at a guinea and a half. Thereafter he stuck to this price of ten shillings sixpence a volume for his novels, and the rest of the trade followed suit.

Of this epoch-making price Richard Altick has said:

Thirty-one shillings sixpence: a fateful figure.
In the beginning it reflected the premium readers had to pay if they could not do without Scott's latest romance . . . . But the evil that best-sellers do lives after them, and to apply Scott's prices to new fiction in general, as the trade proceeded to do, was an error whose consequences were felt to the end of the century. In 1823 there were only a handful of guinea-and-a-half novels, but by 1840 fifty-one out of fifty-eight new novels have this price.38

In the years 1823 to 1830 this price of a guinea and a half became more and more popular: out of a sampling of twenty-one three-volume novels issued during this period, fifteen are found to be sold at this price.39 It is with some significance that we note that Maria Edgeworth's novels, which sold for a guinea in 1814, sold with the publication of Helen in 1834 for a guinea and a half.40
In 1830, eighteen out of twenty-eight three-volume novels sold for 3ls. 6d.; in 1835, fifty-three out of sixty-four; and in 1840, fifty-one out of fifty-eight. \textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{1} As an anonymous reviewer said in The Author, "From the year 1825 to 1860 the price of half a guinea for every volume was the rule, with here and there a rare exception." \textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{2}

The reasons for the dominance of the three-volume format and guinea and a half price seem obvious: they were profitable. Sir Walter Scott had tapped the rich vein of the public's interest in romantic fiction, and the sales of his novels showed publishers where the money lay. His novels sold in unprecedented numbers for the era in which he wrote. The first edition of Waverley, for example, sold out in five weeks; there were eight editions of the novel before 1821, and the 1829 edition sold 60,000. \textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{3} With Guy Manners, the first impression of 2,000 copies was sold in two days, and 50,000 copies were sold before 1837. Rob Roy was printed in an impression of 10,000 which sold out in a fortnight, and an additional 40,000 copies had been sold before 1837. Ivanhoe's first edition of 12,000 copies was sold in a week; \textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{4} and The Fortunes of Nigel sold 7,000 copies by half past ten o'clock on the first day of sale. \textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{5} Such sales would be highly profitable even today; but in an England with a total population of 18,000,000 in 1840, of which forty percent of the adults were unable even to write their own names, \textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{6} it was, as James Hillhouse has said, "a magnificent, a unique record." \textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{7}

The extent of Scott's ability to sell becomes even more impressive when it is realized that 500 to 1,000 copies was the normal number for the first edition of a novel at the turn of the century.
J. M. S. Tompkins states: "The first edition of [Fanny Burney's] Cecilia (1782) was 2000, and Lowndes told Charlotte Burney that 500 was the common number for a novel . . . . Lowndes printed 500 of the first edition of Evelina (1778) . . . ." Geoffrey Keynes estimates that the first edition of Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility (1811) was only about 1,000, Pride and Prejudice (1813) and Mansfield Park (1814) about 1,500 each, and Emma (1816) and Northanger Abbey (1818) about 2,000 copies each. Scott at his glorious best, with what Lockhart called a "triumphant twelve or fourteen thousand," was an author from whom his publishers expected, and obtained, much.

The result of such unprecedented sales was unprecedented profits for author and publisher alike. In comparison with the prices earlier novelists received, Scott's rewards for writing were fantastic, and he materially altered the previous standard of prices for copyright. Fielding, for example, was the highest-paid novelist in the early days of the novel: he obtained £700 for Tom Jones and £1000 for Amelia. Most novelists of the age, however, made little from their books. Goldsmith earned only £60 from The Vicar of Wakefield, and Rasselas brought Dr. Johnson a mere £125. At the end of the eighteenth century, according to J. M. S. Tompkins, booksellers offered "as little as half a guinea per volume for novels in manuscript . . . . The usual payment for a library novel seems to have been between five and ten guineas . . . . Sometimes the bookseller gave as much as twenty guineas." Miss Blakey says that the hacks supplying novels to Lane's Minerva Press were
usually paid £10 to £20. Caleb Williams brought William Godwin only £84, and Jane Austen, who was never popular in her own time, received profits of £140 from Sense and Sensibility and a mere £10 for Northanger Abbey. Only the successful novelist was able to reap any large rewards from his labors. Fanny Burney received the price of £250 for Cecilia, and Robinson paid Mrs. Radcliffe the handsome sum of £900 for The Italian. Maria Edgeworth got £300 for Belinda, £900 for the first three volumes of Tales of Fashionable Life and £1,500 for the last three, £2,100 for Patronage and £1,100 for Helen. Scott, however, made them all seem paupers.

While novelists previous to Scott counted their profits in the hundreds of pounds, if they were popular, Scott counted his in the thousands. He was accustomed to high prices for his verse romances (1,000 guineas sight unseen for Marmion, £2,000 for The Lady of the Lake, 3,000 guineas for Rob Roy), and he demanded comparable fees for his prose fiction. After the initial success of Waverley, published on an equal division of profits between author and publisher, Scott could command the highest prices hitherto paid for novels. Precisely how much Scott ultimately earned on his novels is difficult to determine; but his profits were unheardof for that time. He was given an initial sum of £1,500 for Guy Mannering and £1,700 for Rob Roy. Grierson states that after Waverley until 1822, the usual method of selling Scott's novels consisted of his granting to Constable the right to print two-thirds of an impression of 10,000 copies for £3,000, and after 1822 the price of the two-thirds was reduced to £2,500. For Ivanhoe, The Monastery, The Abbot,
Kenilworth, The Pirate, The Fortunes of Nigel, Pil of the Peak, and Quentin Durwood Scott certainly realized a profit of £22,500 on copyright account.\textsuperscript{59} Woodstock brought him £8,228.\textsuperscript{60} Scott, it can be safely said, made a fortune from his novels. Cadell stated that he could have made even more: "Scott was throughout liberal to his publisher—he might have asked higher prices—if he had done so he would have got them."\textsuperscript{61}

No astute publisher could afford to pay such consistently high prices for the copyright of novels which were unprofitable, and Scott's publishers mined the rich lode of his golden novels no less successfully than did their author. Even the anonymous first novel, Waverley, unaided by the reputation its author had won with his verse romances, netted Constable, its publisher, £612 in twelve months and £1000 before the end of 1811.\textsuperscript{62} Scott himself, in a letter to John Ballantyne, estimated that a sale of 10,000 copies of Tales of My Landlord would net his publishers a profit of between £4,000 and £5,000.\textsuperscript{63} Cadell also gives ample evidence of the profits to be realized from a Scott romance: "Shakespeare if published tomorrow would only produce some £5000 at from 12 to 36 or 48 months credit and no gain, while one book of three volumes will produce nearly £10,000, and great gain, and it is this we require."\textsuperscript{64} The canny Cadell, following such faith in the profitableness of Sir Walter Scott, went on to verify this estimate by making his own fortune through the purchase of the copyrights to the novels of the Waverley series.
The Waverley novels, all in three or more volumes priced at extravagant figures, pointed the way to the promised land of wealth and fortune to other publishers and authors. It is not surprising, therefore, that Scott's publishers exploited and other publishers imitated the format and price which had proved so overwhelmingly remunerative. The Lauterbachs have analyzed the situation well:

Since the Waverley novels achieved such popularity and harvested such rewards for both Scott and his publishers, is it to be wondered at that other publishers adopted the Waverley form and took the three-decker to their hearts? To imitate this form was not so much flattery as good business on the part of the publishers. 'Money talks,' its language is imperative, and we need look no further for the raison d'être of the nineteenth century three-decker at a guinea and a half.

A wave of imitations followed in the wake of Sir Walter Scott, and the market for fiction was flooded with middling historical novels in three volumes and at high prices inspired by the success of the Waverley series. None of these novels, of course, even closely approximated the sales figures of Scott's novels, but publishers soon found that with the three-volume, high-priced format for issuing novels, huge sales were not mandatory for adequate profits. In short, publishers fell in love with the three-decker; they had discovered a sure thing. Their reasons for grasping the three-decker to their breasts are partly suggested by A. W. Pollard:

Now he [Scott] had previously been responsible for raising the price of poetry, Harzian appearing in 1808 at 3ls. 6d., and The Lady of the Lake, Rokeby, and The Lord of the Isles, in 1810-15 at two guineas apiece; and there can be no question that these were bought by the rich and the enthusiastic apart from the circulating
libraries. I think that the novels also must have had many private purchasers. When such prices were once established both the publishers and the libraries found a profit in maintaining them; the former because they enhanced profits on large sales and lessened risks on small ones, the latter because it gave them a kind of monopoly.

As Pollard states, the three-decker novel was a commodity with a high profit potential, if it sold well, and a low financial risk, if it did not. A small expenditure of capital was needed to publish a novel, since first editions of novels during the nineteenth century were generally small. During the first quarter of the century, for example, a common circulating library novel was rarely published in an edition which exceeded 1,250 copies. Only in the case of exceptionally salable authors, or authors of established reputation, such as Scott, Disraeli, or Dickens, were first editions large. The average sale of popular works during the decade of 1840 to 1850 was 500 to 2,000 copies, most of which were purchased by book clubs and the circulating libraries. The first edition of Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* (1852), as an example, consisted of 2,500 copies—a number which John Dodds calls "an extraordinary sale," made possible because of the popularity of the author. The first editions of G. P. R. James averaged only 1,000 to 1,500 copies; and Anthony Trollope's early novels illustrate the lack of faith publishers placed upon fledgling authors: the first edition of *The Macdermats of Ballycloran* (1847) was 400 copies and of *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (1848) only 375 copies. Of eleven novels listed by Royal Gettmann in his study of the house of Bentley, published
between 1861 to 1864, the editions run from 500 to 5,000 copies; the average is about 1,900 copies per novel. The effect of these small editions has been stated by one publisher, Mr. Marston, who in 1891 fondly remembered the low financial risk of the three-decker in an age when it was rapidly dying: "The three-volume form . . . is, or used to be, less speculative, because the original outlay on a small edition of three volumes is less than the necessary outlay on a large edition in one volume."

The cost of publishing these small editions of three-decker novels ran somewhere in the vicinity of one-fourth to one-third the list price of the novel. Scott, for example, in a letter of 1819 to Washington Irving explained English publishing costs and profits to the American: the cost of print, paper, and advertising amounted to about one-third the whole price of the edition, the allowance to the retail trade amounted to another third, and thus one-third was left as net profit to be divided between author and publisher. Anthony Trollope, in a letter to a lady novelist in 1876, gives a more detailed expense account of publishing costs:

You would wish to limit Chapman to 600 copies. That means (after free copies) a sale of 550. He now gets 15/- each for three-vol. novels. The total realized would be £412: 10:-. The expense of a three-vol. novel (including paper, printing, and advertisements) with some few extra publishing expenses is about £200. This does not leave him enough to pay you a fitting price, let alone his own profit. If you only sell 600 copies, I do not think he could give you above £150, which is a very small sum.

According to Royal Gettmann, sample publishing costs to the firm of Bentley, when advertising expenditures were normal, were: £235 for
an edition of 500 copies of *Too Good for Him*, £335 12s. 5d. for an edition of 1000 copies of *The Three Clerks*, and £57 14s. 4d. for an edition of 2,250 copies of *Nancy*.  

In addition to these costs, a publisher had other problems, for he had to give a discount on the list price of the novel to the lending libraries and the booksellers of the retail trade. These discounts were handsome and varied according to the purchaser, the number of copies purchased, the novel, and the business climate of the times. Scott mentions an allowance of one-third to the retail trade in his letter to Irving. Trollope, as we have seen, stated that Chapman would realize only fifteen shillings on a three-decker novel carrying a list price to the public of 31s. 6d. Gettmann finds that in 1850 George Bentley sold fiction to Mudie's Library at twenty shillings for a three-volume novel; later in the century the prices were still lower: about fifteen shillings in 1875. "On one occasion [1881]," Gettmann states, "Mudie informed Bentley that he would buy at 12s. a copy or not buy at all." According to Trollope, with a book assured of a big sale by the reputation of the author, such as Disraeli's *Lothair*, the publisher would get 17s. 6d. of the 31s. 6d. list price. Because of such discounts, the publisher of fiction only realized from about one-half to two-thirds of the list price of a three-decker. Though the discount varied, it was always there to be reckoned with.

Yet, even with his costs and discounts, a publisher would not necessarily have to sell a complete edition in order to turn a profit, for his costs were still relatively low and his receipts per
novel large. Let us use Trollope's figures for a hypothetical example. If a publisher could persuade his author to accept an agreement of equal divisions of profits on his novel—a standard practice with publishers, especially when dealing with unknown authors,—he would have to sell only enough copies to cover publishing costs in order to break even. With the edition of 600 copies, costing £200 to print, from which the publisher received fifteen shillings per novel, only 266 copies, or less than half the edition, would have to be sold to prevent a loss. With a smaller discount, the number of copies sold could be even less. What publisher today would not be glad to be able to break even with a sale of a novel as small as 266 copies? Using Gettmann's examples of Bentley's costs, and again supposing a profit sharing agreement between author and publisher and receipts of fifteen shillings per novel, only 447 copies of an edition of 1,000 would be necessary to be sold to counter the cost of £335; and only 766 copies of an edition of 2,250 would be necessary to recoup the publishing cost of £57 h. Other even more common business arrangements between author and publisher, such as outright or partial purchase of copyright or payment of royalties, made it necessary, of course, for the publisher to sell more copies of an edition in order to recover the payment to the author. Publication is, and always has been, a largely speculative business; but the high-priced three-volume novel did much to lower the risk of such publication.

In addition to the low-publishing-cost, high-receipts ratio, a three-volume novel could be promoted at the same total advertising
cost as a one-volume novel, yet the rewards were three times as
great as for one volume. For instance, at the same time Mudie was
paying Bentley twenty shillings for a three-decker, he paid only
6s. 8d. for single-volume novels. A one- or two-volume novel
would have to sell many more copies than a three-decker in order to
nullify costs. Thus Bentley once advised Thomas Haliburton that
"the expense of advertising a one-volume book reduced the profit to
nothing." Mr. Chatto of the firm of Chatto & Windus, in an inter-
view in 1894, echoed the sentiments of Mr. Bentley:

Unless an author's popularity is sufficiently
great to insure sales like those commanded by
Disraeli, the first edition of whose 'Endymion'
reached 15,000 copies at a guinea and a half.
Is it likely that if he had published in one-
volume form his profits would have been so
great? Why, to have obtained the same result
with a six-shilling book 100,000 copies would
have had to be sold.

It was for reasons such as these that publishers liked three-
volume novels, and in their dealings with authors they practically
demanded manuscripts long enough to fill the three post-octavo
volumes. As Royal Gettmann has said, "... the shortness of the
manuscript made the difference between profit and loss to the pub-
lisher." Richard Bentley's difficulties with the severely short
manuscript of Adeline Serjeant's The Story of a Penitent Soul illus-
strate the problems of the short novel. Though his contract with
Miss Serjeant specified two volumes, Bentley was handed a manuscript
sufficient for only one, and which could not be padded to two with-
out drastic results in the quality of the novel. Reluctantly, he
decided to publish the novel in one volume, but the circulating
libraries refused to purchase the novel in that format; and Bentley was ultimately forced to print the novel in two small, sub-standard, crown-octavo volumes at a greatly reduced price. This practice cost Bentley more than £111 of what he would have made with a two-volume novel at the standard price and even more of what he could have realized from a three-decker novel. It was because of such problems authors received letters such as Richard Bentley wrote to Susan Ferrier in 1852:

I wish I could induce you to give to the public another work of fiction; at no time within twenty years has there been a greater dearth of really good stories than at present. If three volumes should appear too arduous an undertaking, the public would be glad to receive two, or even one volume, although, of course, they might not be so advantageous to your publisher.84

With less popular authors, Bentley could be even less solicitous in making his desires known, as his concluding statement of an offer to Charles Gibbon testifies: "The work I presume is in three volumes."85

The primary reason, however, that publishers preferred the three-volume novel was that a ready market was always available for it in the form of the numerous circulating libraries throughout the nation. If Sir Walter Scott can be called the father of the three-decker, certainly the circulating library can be called its mother; Scott may have sired it, but it was the circulating library that lovingly nurtured it for over half a century. So thoroughly did these libraries clasp the three-decker to their bosoms that, frequently, the three-decker novel was referred to as the "library novel," and both public and the publishing trade alike understood
that fiction in three volumes was designed to be purchased, not by
the man in the street, but by the proprietors of the libraries.
William Tinsley, the publisher, firmly stated that the three-volume
novel was especially printed for purchase by the circulating librar­
ies; and in his memoirs, he even expressed surprise when a large
number of the public (about eighty readers) unexpectedly bought a
novel by A. E. Rowcroft at the full purchase price:

Strange as it may seem, I can prove that I sold
more copies of Mr. Rowcroft's book at full
price--that is, at thirty-one shillings and
sixpence--than I did of all the three-volume
novels I ever published, for it was a rare
event indeed for readers to purchase newly-
published three-volume novels. In fact, three-
volume novels were published for lending
libraries . . . .

The history of the lending library dates well back into the
eighteenth century. Booksellers who would rent books, in order for
readers to circumvent the high purchase prices, appeared as early as
1725. Such circulating libraries sprang up at the popular watering
places, and by the 1740's were firmly rooted in London. Plomer,
in the Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers, gives an index of
circulating libraries in England during the years 1726-1775. This
index lists four libraries at Bath during this period and ten librar-
ies in London. William Lane opened his Minerva Library in London
in 1770 as an outlet for the novels from his Minerva Press; it con-
tained over 17,000 titles by 1802. To further increase sales for
the novels he published, Lane stimulated the growth of circulating
libraries in outlying towns by offering to stock a complete library.
His prospectus of 1791 stated that he could supply: "Complete
circulating libraries, . . . from One Hundred to Ten Thousand Volumes. The giant among the spreading circulating library system came to be Charles Edward Mudie, who set up his library in New Oxford Street, London, in 1852. He managed to outstrip his competitors by charging only one guinea per year for a subscription instead of the usual two. Through extensive advertising, branch libraries, efficient and rapid service to readers in the country, he drove several less-efficient rivals to bankruptcy and came to have a position in the booklending trade comparable to that of General Motors in the automobile business today. Not only could Mudie, at times, dictate format and prices to publishers, but he could also dictate the contents of novels by refusing to stock on his decent shelves any novel he considered disreputable. Thus, through such scruples and purchasing power, the rather puritanical Mudie came to be appreciated by his age as a watchdog of literary morality.

The existence of such power lies in the fact that the circulating libraries had a near monopoly over the distribution of new works of fiction to the public. During the first half of the nineteenth century, for example, as revealed by the Report from the Select Committee on Public Libraries of 1849, there was only one public library in England with unrestricted admission: Manchester's Chetham Library. Even here a borrower had to pay a fee, for as John Dodds says, "There were no free lending libraries in Great Britain of any kind."

In addition, fiction was expensive. Even reprints of novels were rare and costly until the late 1840's. In 1845, the chances
for cheaper re-issue of a three-decker which had completed a successful run were slender unless the novel had been published by Bentley, Colburn, or Blackwood—the "three front-rank firms with proprietary series of cheap copyright fiction." Yet, even if a book was published in one of these firms' series of cheaper editions, the price was never less than five shillings and was usually six shillings.

Not until late in the 1840's, with the advent of The Parlor Novelist series (1846), The Parlour Library (1847) of Simms & M'Intyre, and Routledge's Railway Library (1849), was the trend toward cheap, one-shilling reprints of novels established.

The prices of new novels in first edition were, of course, excessively high to the public at large and placed them beyond the means of all but the very rich. The circulating libraries welcomed the standard exorbitant price of a guinea and a half because it forced people to patronize, not the bookshop, but the library. Few people, as we have seen, could afford the purchase price of new novels. It was a situation which did not go without criticism, and an angry devotee of fiction complained in 1845:

The keepers of circulating libraries—these gin palaces of the reading world—were willing, nay, they preferred, to pay a large price for a novel, and to have it confined steadily to three volumes in quantity, because this cut off all chance of much individual purchase, and threw the whole mass of readers into their hands. Thus, both publishers and library-keepers, soon saw their mutual interests, and have maintained the three-volume and £1, 11s. 6d. system boldly and profitably . . . 95

The circulating libraries also welcomed high list prices for novels for the very good reason that they didn't have to pay them.
It was the list price, that pocketpicking guinea and a half, which prodded the average reader into Mudie's establishment in New Oxford street. The libraries on the other hand, as we have seen, purchased novels at huge discounts on the nominal price. In large lots, these discounts sometimes amounted to as much as one half the list price.

It was this practice of discounting that enabled Mudie, for example, through strenuous bargaining with publishers, to set his subscription rate at a low enough figure to attract hoards of middle-class readers.

Mrs. Oliphant tells us:

These were the days [the 1850's] when the three-volume novel was in the height of its ascendancy, and no profane imagination had so much as thought of displacing it. But Mr. Mudie was more or less of an iconoclast, and though it had not then entered into his mind to attempt such a revolution as that carried recently into effect by the agency of the company which has succeeded him,—the conversion of the time-honoured three volumes, dear to every older reader, into the often shabby and closely printed one,—he worked very strenuously at the thin edge of the wedge, by demanding a great reduction in the price when he gave such vast orders as the above [1000 copies of Adam Bede].

Mrs. Oliphant goes on to relate that books were sold to Mudie like loaves of bread, in baker's dozens—thirteen for the price of twelve; this in addition to the already generous discounts. Though John Blackwood was one publisher who fought against giving these discounts to the leviathan Mudie, who eventually swallowed up all of the lending libraries of London, except that of W. H. Smith and Sons, he was forced to compromise and eventually gave in to the purchasing power of Mudie by granting a discount of ten percent off the list price for lots of 500 copies of Adam Bede.
In addition to the high list price for fiction, which forced readers to become book borrowers instead of book buyers, the lending libraries also preferred the three-volume format for the issuance of novels. In fact, the circulating library system probably carries more responsibility for the creation of the multi-volumed novel, especially the three-decker, than any other agency or author. The reason is simply that it also increased profits. Because of the subscription rate system of the circulating libraries, a multi-volumed novel represented more profit potential than one in a single volume.

As Michael Sadleir has pointed out, "Circulating library subscriptions were for so many volumes at a time; to get a novel in two or three volumes required a higher subscription than to get one in a single volume." A yearly subscription at Hodges's Library, Cheapside, Sherborne, for example, was eighteen shillings; this merely entitled a reader to borrow one volume at a time. These rates, of course, varied from place to place and from year to year. The annual fee for one volume at a time was fifteen shillings in Bath in 1789; at Lane's Minerva Library in London, the rate was one guinea in 1798 and two guineas by 1814. Mudie's standard subscription rate was one guinea per year. These annual subscription rates, however, entitled a book borrower to only one volume at a time, that is, one-third of a three-volume novel. Consequently, to read a three-decker in toto meant three separate visits to the library, or the payment of a higher subscription fee. To be entitled to borrow a full set of three-volumes, for example, at Hodges' Library required the reader to pay thirteen more shillings. At Mudie's he had to pay
a three-guinea subscription. Correspondingly, if a reader desired even more volumes he had to pay even higher fees. Lane's Library had five classes of subscriptions, and in 1822, for example, for a cost of around five guineas per year, a first class subscription would entitle one to borrow as many as twenty-four volumes in town or thirty-six in the country.

In addition to the fees paid by subscribers, circulating libraries also rented books to nonsubscribers at so much per volume per day. In the late eighteenth century, for instance, nonsubscribers paid fourpence a day for new volumes, a penny a day for old volumes at Alexander Todd's library at 2, St. Patrick's Square, Edinburgh. At Hodges' circulating library the rates for nonsubscribers were graduated according to the cost of the borrowed book: twopence for a volume costing three shillings sixpence, half a guinea for a book costing a pound. Potentially, then, a library could earn three times as much from a three-volume novel as it could from a one-volume novel, whether by the day or by the year. Thus it was that libraries liked the high-priced, three-volume novel. An anonymous reviewer in the Times has summarized the situation well:

. . . as the circulating libraries got an even firmer grip on the public . . . it paid both library and publishers to spread a story over as many volumes as possible and to keep nominal prices high. Library subscriptions were on the basis of so much per annum per volume, and nominal published prices were subject to a heavy discount in such quantities as only a library could use. By multiplying novel-volumes and pricing them handsomely, publishers helped the libraries to extort high subscriptions, and virtually destroyed booksellers' competition by making fiction too costly to tempt outright
buyers. This method of exploitation became standardized by the late [eighteen-]twenties in the shape of the three-decker at 3ls. 6d. . . .107

Thus it was that both publishers and circulating libraries discovered early in the nineteenth century that the three-decker was good for business, and together the two financial interests formed a sort of unofficial partnership, that of manufacturer and distributor, that practically decreed three volumes and a guinea and a half price for each novel published. Publishers, even if they had wanted to, could not have departed from the system; they had to conform to the pressures of the circulating libraries simply because there was not, except in the sale of such rarities as Walter Scott's novels, any other large and predictable outlet for those high-priced novels which carried so little financial risk. Tinsley, in his Random Recollections of an Old Publisher, for example, ignores the general public as an outlet for the sale of novels, especially in his comments upon Miss Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret. He implies that the libraries were a publisher's only source of profit: "... we had exceptional advantages of disposing of a large number of copies of the book. In fact, for the space of months, it was for us a good race between Mr. Mudie and the Library Company, Limited, as to which should purchase the larger number of copies."108 Similarly, George Moore was told that his A Modern Lover could be published only if he promised to pay his publisher any loss incurred in publication—"that is," he said, "if Mudie and Smith refused to add the book to their libraries or bought too few copies to defray the expenses of printers' bills."109 No publisher, obviously, counted
upon the public for his sales.

The circulating libraries, on the other hand, were good markets indeed. As Richard Altick has said, "Publishers could afford to be indifferent to the fact that they had priced their wares out of the individual buyer's reach; so long as libraries took a substantial part of an edition, their profit was safe." Circulating libraries did frequently take the greater portion of an edition. The percentage of novels among their stock was huge—eighty-five percent, for example, of the books in stock in ten lending libraries of Winchester were fiction—and the libraries had to buy in large quantities in order to satisfy the demand by their thousands of subscribers for the latest novels. As early as the 1770's, the circulating libraries were often accustomed to purchasing almost half of an entire edition; Dorothy Blakey states: "According to Mrs. Griffith in Genuine Letters of Henry and Francis (1766-70), the booksellers declared that out of an edition of a thousand copies 'the Circulating Libraries . . . take off Four Hundred.'" The circulating libraries were certainly the publishers' best customers, especially the Select Library of Charles Edward Mudie which seems to have been not only the best customer of the House of Bentley, but of most other London publishers as well. Of those who subscribed for Mrs. Henry Wood's The Channings, for example, Mudie purchased 1,000 copies. W. H. Smith and Sons, the second largest subscriber, took 104 copies, and all the other London libraries and booksellers together subscribed only 479 copies of the novel. Some other large initial purchases by Mudie were: 1,000 copies of Froude's History of England and 1,500 copies of Anthony
Trollope's Autobiography; 1,000 copies of Adam Bede and 1,500 copies of the three-volume edition of The Mill on the Floss (when the twelve-shilling two-volume edition was published, Mudie took 250 copies immediately, 250 more a week later, and an additional 400 copies in the following two months); 1,500 copies (plus 1,500 more later) of Disraeli's Lothair, 2,500 copies of Macaulay's History of England, 2,500 copies of Tennyson's Enoch Arden.

Joseph Shaylor comments that not only were the libraries large customers, they were virtually insured customers as well. "There was then [the middle of the nineteenth century] an arrangement," says Shaylor, "between certain publishers and the libraries by which the latter bought at least a fixed number of every novel issued by the former. This sale nearly covered the cost of publication, and generally relieved the publisher from any possibility of loss." Such an agreement would certainly be a boon to any publisher, and would make the risk of publishing a novel almost nonexistent. Whether such agreements between publishers and circulating libraries were widespread, however, is doubtful. Tinsley in his memoirs never mentions any, and Gettmann's investigation of the affairs of the Bentley publishing firm indicates that Bentley's position was not nearly as financially secure as Shaylor indicates.

Not only were the libraries the publishers' best market for novels, but they also offered them the additional advantage of free advertising for their novels. The libraries solicited subscribers in magazines and journals, and in their advertisements they listed the number of copies of several recent novels which they had in
stock. Such recognition not only brought the name of a novel before the public eye, but also offered a testimonial of its popularity which could stimulate sales to other libraries and perhaps even to the public. Mrs. Oliphant describes the practice quite adequately:

Mr. Mudie himself carried a very flowing sail in those days [the 1850's], giving the best of advertisements to a book by announcing the number of copies of it he had in circulation in his libraries, and doing more, perhaps, than any other agency in existence to make a name; or at least to ensure a sale. He began with "100 copies of So-and-So at Mudie's Library" (My own first production was honoured so, and I confess it seemed to me in those days that the patronage of Mudie was a sort of recognition from heaven), until at the time of "Adam Bede" he had risen to 1000, thus giving an immediate proof of immense circulation and demand equally flattering to the writer and conducive to further triumphs. 119

It was for such reasons as these—their great buying power, their advantageous free advertising, their under-the-counter commitments to purchase fixed quotas of novels—that placed the circulating libraries in a position to pipe the tunes to which the publishers danced. What the libraries wanted in the form of format, price, and contents, the libraries usually got. And the lending libraries wanted three-decker novels. George Moore, for example, related a conversation with Byron Webber who stated, late in the century, that the libraries of Mudie and Smith wanted only three-deckers:

"... their money is in the thirty-one-and-sixpenny novel and it is a closed burrow. Even the two-volume novel enters with difficulty." 120 A severe critic of the system expressed himself in 1844:

It is an avowed fact, that the publishers of the day will purchase the copyrights of only such works as "the libraries will take"; which
libraries, besotted by the mystic charm of three volumes, immutable as the sacred triad of the Graces or Destinies, could negative without a division such a work as "Vicar of Wakefield" were it now to undergo probation. 121

An example of the dictation of form by the libraries is Adeline Serjeant's The Story of a Penitent Soul. Since the manuscript was extremely short, Bentley decided to publish the novel in one volume; but the libraries of the provinces indicated a refusal to purchase any novel under two volumes. Thus, even though printing of the one-volume form had already begun, Bentley bowed his head to the wishes of his masters, cancelled the edition, and ultimately issued the novel in two volumes. 122 The libraries had won a clear-cut victory, as they did in almost every attempt to attack the standard form and price.

Their power is, perhaps, best indicated by the several attempts to break the artificial convention for issuing fiction. Experiments in issuing original fiction at lower prices and in fewer volumes, such as Smith, Elder's Library of Romance (1833-1835), Chapman & Hall's Monthly Series (1845-1848), Routledge's Original Novels (1855-1859), and the First Class Library (1861), 123 all failed because the circulating libraries brought pressure against the pioneering publishers. Smith, Elder's Library of Romance, perhaps, best illustrates the process. It was the first attempt at publishing original fiction at a low price, six shillings a volume, and its prospectus ambitiously stated that the library would "neutralise the mischievous prejudice which prevails in the trade against works in less than three volumes" by giving as much matter in each volume as
was contained in two volumes of the ordinary three-volume novel. The first volume appeared in January 1833; and by April, with the fourth volume of the series (John Galt's *The Stolen Child: A Tale of the Town*), a new prospectus indicated that the circulating libraries had expressed their powerful displeasure:

> It has been suggested to the proprietors by the Circulating Libraries, that the volumes of *The Library of Romance* are inconveniently long, and should be rendered capable of being divided into two, so as to enable them to supply their subscribers with the usual quantum of reading at a time. This appears to be nothing more than reasonable; and it has therefore been determined that in the future each volume shall be divided into parts or books, so as to admit of its being bound up, at the option of the possessors, into separate volumes. To effect this more easily, the work will be sold to the Libraries in sheets as well as bound.  

As Michael Sadler says: "This bold adjustment of plan was nothing less than a surrender to the dictatorship of the Circulating Libraries. It completely stultified the original challenge to 'the mischievous prejudice against works in less than three volumes' . . . and proved that the Libraries were masters of the situation." Further concessions to the libraries appeared in the issue of June, 1833. The Editor's Preface stated that henceforth publication would be bi-monthly, instead of monthly as before, so that the libraries' profits would not be jeopardized by a new novel pushing an old one off the shelf before its popularity had run its course. The series came to an end in August, 1835, and even an illustrated version of the *Library of Romance* in 1837 could not bring success. Thus the noble experiment designed to shatter the artificially high
price of fiction ended. Naively, perhaps, the publishers had expected the retail booksellers to support the venture by persuading their individual customers to buy instead of borrow; reluctantly they came to realize that a successful initial circulation of books depended upon the goodwill of the lending libraries and that it would suffer in accordance with any displeasure these organizations suffered. During the next few years, other publishers, laboring under the same delusion that the public would buy if only novels were priced cheap enough, attempted similar enterprises and suffered similar failures. The libraries were unconquerable.

Oddly enough, the circulating libraries that, in their tenacious preference for the three-volume format and price, were primarily responsible for the success of the three-decker were also deeply involved in its demise at the end of the nineteenth century. When the circulating libraries in 1894 turned their backs upon the noble vessel, it was doomed; and funeral music, such as Kipling's poem "The Three-Decker," subtitled "The three-volume novel is extinct," was indeed in order. For all practical purposes, the convention of the three-decker novel died in 1894.

The three-decker, however, had been listing heavily long before Mudie and Smith delivered the broadside which was to sink it. The reasons for the diminishing strength of the old practice of issuing novels are several. First among them, perhaps, was the increased literacy of the general population, for the rate of illiteracy in England had been reduced from forty percent in the 1840's to a mere five percent in the 1890's. This rise in literacy, brought about
through the creation of free public schools and free public libraries, created a vast, almost untapped market for new fiction. The great increase in population had made even more millions available as readers. The ability of publishers to reap their profits through volume sales at lower prices was in existence. The huge "unknown public" of the penny-novel journals—"a public unknown to the literary world; unknown, as disciples, to the whole body of professed critics; unknown, as customers, at the great libraries and the great publishing houses; unknown as an audience, to the distinguished English writers"—which Wilkie Collins had estimated as comprising three million readers in 1858, was merely waiting to be reached as a market. In 1879 Anthony Trollope commented, in similar fashion, on the increased literacy of the public: "The number of those who read novels have become millions in England during the last twenty-five years. In our factories, with our artisans, behind our counters, in third-class railway carriages, in our kitchens and stables, novels are now read unceasingly."

Not only were there more people capable of reading novels, there were more people in a position to buy them, for the real income of the average English family had, during the fifty years between 1850 and 1900, risen by seventy to eighty percent. The working class men who had earned twenty shillings per week in 1851 could expect a salary of thirty-two shillings in 1881. "Their extra pennies and shillings," says Richard Altick, "translated into a wider consumers' market for printed matter, did much to stimulate the book trade's quest for cheaper materials and more efficient
manufacturing techniques. Manufacturing costs came down and were thus less responsible for high book prices. Although volume printing at low prices was still more hazardous than the small editions of the honorable vessel of the libraries, it was now feasible; and more and more enterprising publishers, as they discovered the new market, found it profitable.

More novels began to appear in cheap reprints. Scott's novels, for example, which had founded the precedent for the cheap five-shilling reprint with Cadell's edition in 1829, came to be sold for as little as threepence when their copyright expired. From 1850 on, the cheaper, six-shilling and one-shilling reprints, rare in earlier days, were issued by several publishing firms. Richard Altick has described the situation:

As a rule, so long as demand for the original edition continued at the libraries and the booksellers', a reprint was out of the question; and even when a book was no longer called for at the libraries, reprinting was delayed until the unwanted copies found buyers in the secondhand market. Some more aggressive houses, though, exploited the initial success of a book by issuing a less expensive reprint within a year or two, as happened with George Eliot and Trollope. 133

As a greater number of these aggressive publishing firms issued cheap reprints soon after the first edition, the libraries increasingly felt the pinch for profits.

Such editions were not likely to endear themselves to the circulating libraries, however much the public liked them, for the simple reason that they cut into their profits by reducing the value of their stock. Since the London libraries, when the demand for a
novel had ceased and its run was over, disposed of its used copies at reduced prices to the libraries in the country and to the public, any new edition, selling at prices closely approximating the prices the libraries received for secondhand copies, made resale difficult. In addition, cheap reprints enticed readers into the bookshops, not the library, and thus reduced the demand for the novels for which the libraries had paid such handsome prices. Since the libraries made more money on a novel with a long run of popularity, because the libraries would have to expend less capital for new novels, any cheap reprint which decreased the demand for a novel on the shelves of a library thus shortening its life was an anathema. Géttmann has described an instance in which Mudie was severely pained by the issuance of a cheap reprint soon after initial publication:

One of the reasons for the diminishing profits of the circulating libraries was the fact that they were obliged to stock hundreds and even thousands of copies of a best-seller and that when the demand fell off—as it was likely to do so just as suddenly as it rose—they had on hand so much waste paper. For example, Mudie was angered and hurt when Mrs. Humphry Ward and Smith, Elder without warning issued a six-shilling reprint of Marcella within three months of the original edition, thus making worthless his 1750 copies of the three-decker. 134

In addition to the cheap reprints, which made hazardous the life of a three-decker on circulating library shelves, more three-volume novels were being published than ever before. This too made the huge purchases of three-deckers by the libraries more precarious, for the new novels could catch on, and in the public clamor for the latest best seller, the old best sellers were left to gather dust
on the shelves. There was probably nothing more disheartening to
the proprietor of a circulating library than to see his five hundred
or a thousand copies of a novel, purchased at a cost of £375 to £700
and popular as blazes for a couple of months, go ignored in the
demand for a new novel which he would have to fill with the expendi­
ture of several hundred more pounds for an adequate number of copies.
Thus it was that Arthur Mudie, who had taken control of the library
from his father, cried out in 1894: "During these last two or three
years we have had more outrageous 'booming' of certain 3 vol novels
which will not be known in another spell of a few short months.
These have affected the amount we can spend on books." "Give us
good books," Mudie demanded of Bentley in 1884, "... very good
books only . . . and let your aim be in the direction of better
books and fewer." A similar comment was made by Mr. Murray in an
interview in 1894; he stated, "... the excessive multiplication of
books which marks the time is not a matter for unmixed satisfaction."
"The shortness of the lives of books," he went on to say, "is . . .
one of the most striking features of the era. Books are taken up in
haste, read carelessly, thrown aside, and forgotten. It was not so
when books were scarcer, or the means of obtaining them less easy
than today." "

Such risks as these—new and rapid cheap reprints and a deluge
of short-lived novels—made the existence of the three-decker pre­
carious to the lending libraries, and thus, since it had ceased to
be profitable, it was destined to disappear. A further hazard to
the existence of this artificial convention was the proved success,
in the late 1880's, of several one-volume novels. George Moore and
his naturalistic novels in single volumes has been credited by
tradition with sounding the death knell of the three-decker novel. When Moore's A Modern Lover was published in the three-volume format
at a guinea and a half in 1883, Smith's library received complaints,
such as those from two ladies in the country who objected to the
scene in which Gwennie Lloyd poses in the nude for the painter Seymour.
With the novel's virtue in question, both Smith and Mudie banished the
novel from their moral shelves, and, though they carried the novel,
they hid it out of sight under the counter and would allow it to
circulate only upon special request. Moore was infuriated and
wrote to Mudie in reply to his actions: "I, at least, will have done
with you; for I shall find a publisher willing to issue my next book
at a purchasable price, and to enable me to appeal direct to the
public." Moore did as he threatened. Anticipating Mudie's ban
upon the naturalistic revelation of theatrical life in A Mummer's
Wife, Moore persuaded his publisher, Visetelly, to issue the novel
in 1885 in a single volume priced at six shillings. The public's
reaction to the venture has been described by Richard Altick:

Instead of proving futile, as previous defiant
gestures had, this one started a new trend: one
house after another began to issue new books at
6s. In the late eighties and early nineties the
"library novel" still made its appearance, like
an ancient dowager tottering to the ball, but
its doom could be read in the fact that the pub­
lishers, responding to pressure from the libraries,
often cut its list price to 5s. or 6s. a volume.

The cheap edition of original fiction, often attempted and
always a failure, had finally proved a practical proposition for the
publishing industry. The one-volume novel had proved, at last, that it could sell in the volume necessary for adequate profits. According to its author, George Moore's *Ester Waters* (1884), for example, sold 24,000 copies.\(^{112}\) The sale of Rider Haggard's novels also proved the feasibility of the cheap, one-volume novel. *She* (1887), printed in one volume at six shillings, sold 30,000 in the first three months of sale; *Allan Quatermain* (1887) sold over 10,000 copies at six shillings before publication; *Nina's Revenge* (1888), a one-volume novel selling for two shillings sixpence, sold 20,000 copies of the first issue of 30,000 on the day of publication.\(^{113}\) And a bookseller observed in 1894:

> If I sought for an argument in favor of books being issued at moderate prices, I would point to the great success which has recently attended the issue of new novels at a selling price of 6s., in place of 3ls. 6d. The sale of many of these books has been enormous, some 20,000, others 10,000 copies in place of a limited edition of 1,000 copies in the three-volume form.\(^{114}\)

Thus the three-decker novel was clearly doomed. The increased production of new novels and the rapid-fire publication of cheap reprints had weakened the once boundless affection the circulating libraries held for three-volumes. The proved success of the one-volume novel provided an alternate publishing format which freed publishers from their dependence upon the lending libraries and freed the lending libraries from the necessity of spending huge sums in order to stock the expensive three-decker. The coup de grace was administered to the leaky old vessel, the three-decker with its seventy years of gallant service, by the libraries themselves in
June of 1891. At the end of the month, the two great circulating libraries of Mudie and W. H. Smith and Sons sent ultimatums to the publishers which demanded concessions that would guarantee the libraries an absence of competition with the traditional three-decker by the cheaper one-volume editions. The circular issued to publishers by W. H. Smith and Sons said:

For some time past we have noted with concern a great and increasing demand on the part of the Subscribers to our Library for Novels in Sets of Two and Three Volumes.

To meet their requisitions, we are committed to an expenditure much out of proportion to the outlay for other kinds of literature.

Most of the novels are ephemeral in their interest, and the few with an enduring character are published in cheap editions so soon after the first issue that the market we formerly had for the disposal of the surplus stocks in sets is almost lost.

You may conceive that this state of matters very seriously reduces the commercial value of a Subscription Library. We are, therefore, compelled to consider what means can be taken to improve this branch of our business.

As a result of our deliberations, we would submit for your favorable consideration:

1. That after December 31 next the price of novels in sets shall not be more than 4s. per volume, less the discount now given, and with the odd copy as before. You will please observe that the date we name for the alteration of terms is fixed at six months from the end of this current month, in order that your arrangements may not be affected by the suggested alteration.

2. In respect to the issue of cheaper editions, and the loss to us of our market for the sale of the best and earlier editions of novels and other works, through their publication in a cheaper form before we have had an opportunity of selling the surplus stock, we propose that you will be so good as to undertake that no work appear in a cheaper form from the original price until twelve months after the date of its first publication.145

The circular of Arthur Mudie was more direct in stating the new terms:
Owing to the constantly increasing number of novels and high-priced books, and of the rapid issue of the cheaper editions, the directors are compelled, in the interests of the business, to ask the publishers to consider the following suggestions:

(i) That, after December 31, 1894, the charge to the library for works of fiction shall not be higher than 4s. per volume, less the discount now given, and with the odd copy as before.

(ii) That, the publishers shall agree not to issue cheaper editions of novels and other books, which we have taken for library circulation, within twelve months from the date of publication.

The directors have no wish to dictate to the publishers, but in making these suggestions they point out the only terms upon which it will be possible in the future to buy books in any quantity for library use.

Within a few days of these circulars, their restrictive demands were echoed by the booksellers who went even further in requesting the issuance of novels in a six-shilling format. The publishers who received these demands were cowed by the threatened loss of purchases by the libraries; and they, in turn, addressed the authors who supplied them with novels and stated that since publishing profits were to be reduced twenty percent, so would be the amount paid to authors for the copyright of new novels. The immediate, and predictable, reaction by the authors was rebellion. The managing committee of the Author's Society met on July 23, 1894, and demanded that the artificial three-volume format of the novel be abandoned, for they felt that both author and publisher would enjoy a larger profit with editions which were large and cheap, rather than with the present system of multiple volumes, high prices, and small editions which virtually exhausted the market. The resolution of the Author's Society stated:
The Council, after taking the opinion of several eminent novelists and other members of the Society, and finding them almost unanimously opposed to the continuance of the three-volume system, considers that the disadvantages of that system to authors and to the public far outweigh its advantages; that for the convenience of the public, as well as for the widest possible circulation of a novel, it is desirable that the artificial form of edition produced for a small body of readers only be now abandoned; and that the whole of the reading public should be placed at the outset in possession of the work at a moderate price.147

Everybody had turned upon the three-decker at once, and the queen of the circulating libraries was dethroned. Arthur Mudie, in a direct reversal of the policies of his father, went even further than his circular in condemning the format. In a letter of July, 1894, he wrote to George Bentley:

My own feeling (ever since I have known our business) is directly against the three volume novel. It serves no useful purpose whatever in our business and I shall be heartily glad and much relieved if the gods (i.e. the publishers) will give us the one volume novel from the first. In every possible way it suits us better and I very long ago ventured to think that it would benefit English fiction.148

In December, 1894, Mudie emphatically declared that he was done with the three-decker and would not admit it to his shelves upon any terms:

My creed as to the One Volume novel is very easy to state—I don't believe in any other form of fiction for the circulating libraries & I never did at any time believe in any other! The Three Volume novel does not suit us at any price so well as the One Vol. and upon the old terms is no longer possible.149

For all practical purposes the three-volume novel was extinct. The
bulky three-decker was replaced by the slim corvette, the one-volume novel of today. When The Publishers' Circular sent an inquiry to Chatto and Windus on the subject of Mudie's and Smith's circulars and their plans in relation to it, the publishing firm replied that it was their intention "to make the first issue of our library novels in future to the public at the uniform rate of 6s. per volume." A. D. Innes and Company, in reply to the same inquiry, replied:

Our own impression is that the reduction in the returns will make it no longer worth while to issue novels in 2 and 3 volume form. Since a library circulation will not make an ordinary novel pay in 1 volume form, publishers will only take the risk in the case of books which they expect the ordinary public to buy and keep.

Although the House of Bentley intended to publish fiction in two forms in 1895, the old three-volume form at a reduced price of from fifteen to eighteen shillings and a single volume at six shillings, in order to determine the public's preference, only two of the fifteen novels they published in 1895 were in three volumes. Of the rest, one was in two volumes, and twelve were in the six-shilling, one-volume format. Other publishers publishing one-volume novels at "popular prices" in 1895 were Smith, Elder and Company, Hutchinson and Company, William Heinemann, and T. Fisher Unwin.

A chart compiled by Joseph Shaylor indicates the progression from three-volume to one-volume novels during the years from 1884 to 1891 and the swift cessation of the three-volume form after 1894:
[In] 1884 there were published 193 [three-volume novels]

- 1885    
- 1886    
- 1887    
- 1888    
- 1889    
- 1890    
- 1891    
- 1892    
- 1893    
- 1894    
- 1895    
- 1896    
- 1897

194, 184, 185, 165, 169, 160, 162, 156, 168, 184, 52, 25, 153

The comments of Edward Morton indicate an even more speedy departure

of the format:

A scrutiny of the book-lists of the Athenaeum
will show how rapidly the end came. In 1891, 1892, 1893 and the first six months of 1894, the Athenaeum listed 86½ novels at six shillings
or more; of these two-fifths were ten-and-six
a volume (almost one-third of these were in
two volumes at a guinea), and a little more
than half were in one volume at six shillings.
In the second half of 1894, there were only
twelve in three volumes at thirty-one-and-six,
eleven in two volumes at a guinea, and 128
(more than three-fourths) in one volume at
six shillings . . . . In the first six months
of 1895, nearly nine-tenths of the novels were
in one volume at six shillings, and not one at
ten-and-six a volume. In the second half of
1895 there was just one at thirty-one-and-six,
Miss Braddon's "Sons of Fire"--the latest one
I have found. 154

The three-decker was dead; and it had been replaced by the one-
volume novel at six shillings, such as Marie Corelli's The Master
Christian, whose pre-publication printing was 75,000 copies, a far
cry from the 1,000 to 1,500 copies of the heyday of the three-
decker. 155 In the sixty-four years between Kenilworth and A
Mummer's Wife, the three-decker had cut a mighty wake through the
stormy seas of nineteenth-century publishing. Many millions of readers, when her reign was over, could look back upon her nostalgically as did Kipling and regard her, "spite all modern notions," as "the only certain packet for the Islands of the Blest."\(^{156}\)

The three-decker novel had ruled the day, and her reign was long, lordly, and absolute. Three generations of readers had found her costly and almost unapproachable; three generations of authors found that she demanded, not only homage, but complete obeisance as well.
Footnotes to Chapter I


2 *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, p. 22.

3 All information for numbers of volumes per novel is taken from the Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, ed. F. W. Bateson, *III* (Cambridge, 1940), a sometimes unreliable source (Walter Scott's three-volume *Kenilworth*, for example, is listed as first appearing in four volumes). An accurate, but limited source, is Samuel de Ricci, *The Book Collector's Guide* (New York, 1921).


6 *Recollections*, I, 56.


9 Ibid., p. 51.

10 Quoted by the Lauterbachs, p. 280n.

11 "Tales of My Landlord" (anon. rev.), *Blackwood's Magazine*, III (August, 1818), 571.

12 Altick, p. 276.

13 Ibid., p. 276.


15 Altick, p. 286.
16 Young, I, 47.

17 Ibid., p. 33.

18 Ibid., p. 129.


20 Lauterbachs, p. 302.

21 Dorothy Blakey, The Minerva Press, 1790-1820 (London, 1939), p. 272. Though these novels Miss Blakey discusses were in three volumes, none of them cost the standard guinea and a half price of later years; no novel published by Lane from 1810 on ever sold for more than seven shillings a volume.


24 Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher, p. 46.


27 Lauterbachs, p. 302.


29 Blakey, pp. 95-96.

30 "The price of the Novel—1750-1894" (anon. art.), The Author, V (1894), 98. See also: Altick, p. 260.


33 The Lay of the Last Minstrel sold 15,050 copies at twenty-five shillings; Marmion sold for 31s. 6d. in the first edition; The Lady of the Lake sold 20,300 copies at forty-two shillings the first year (Altick, pp. 262-263).
31. The prices of Scott's novels, unless otherwise noted, are from Edward P. Morton, "News for Bibliophiles," p. 331.


38. The English Common Reader, p. 263.


40. Slade, p. 199.

41. Morton, p. 331.


43. These and all other figures for the sale of Scott's novels, unless otherwise noted, are from William C. Van Antwerp, A Collector's Comment on His First Editions of the Works of Sir Walter Scott (San Francisco, 1932).


47. The Waverley Novels and their Critics, p. 248.


49. Jane Austen, pp. 4, 8, 12, 15, 19.

50. This and previous figures for copyright prices are from W. H. Bruford, Germany in the XIII Century (Cambridge, 1952), p. 279.


52. Ibid., p. 9.

53. Keynes, pp. 5, 18.

54. Tompkins, p. 9.
55Slade, pp. 91, 130, 147, 199.
56Van Antwerp, pp. 18, 22, 30.
57Ibid., pp. 189, 100.
58Sir Walter Scott, Bart., p. 47.
59Van Antwerp, p. 128.
60Ibid., p. 139.
61Quoted by Grierson, p. 46.
63Letters, I, 519.
64Quoted by Grierson, p. 207.
66A. W. Pollard, "Commercial Circulating Libraries and the
67Altick, p. 263.
68The Age of Paradox, p. 362.
69Ibid., p. 365.
70A Victorian Publisher, p. 140.
71"A Symposium of Publishers," The Publishers Circular, LXI
(Nov. 10, 1894), 550.
72Letters, VI, 45-46.
73Quoted by Michael Sadleir, Trollope, A Commentary (New
74A Victorian Publisher, pp. 125-127.
75Ibid., pp. 131-132.
76Ibid., p. 132.
77The Letters of Anthony Trollope, ed. Bradford A. Booth
78See Gettmann, pp. 103-108.
79 Ibid., p. 132.
80 Ibid., p. 241.
82 A Victorian Publisher, p. 241.
85 Quoted by Gettmann, p. 242.
86 Random Recollections of An Old Publisher, II, 333.
87 Altick, p. 61.
88 Summers, p. 62.
89 Blakey, pp. 113, 121.
90 For a brief survey of Mudie's career, see Altick, pp. 295-296.
91 Dodds, p. 375.
92 Ibid., p. 375.
93 Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction, II, 146.
95 "New and Cheap Forms of Popular Literature" (anon. art.), Eclectic Review, Ser. 4, XVIII (1845), 76.
96 Mrs. M. Oliphant, William Blackwood and His Sons, II (London, 1897), 458.
97 Ibid., II, 459.
98 Ibid., II, 460.
99 XIX Century Fiction, II, 171.
100 Summers, p. 70.
101 Altick, p. 217.
102 Summers, p. 70.
104 Blakey, p. 116.
105 Tompkins, p. 3n.
106 Summers, p. 70.
108 Tinsley, I, 59.
110 Altick, p. 263.
111 Gettmann, p. 45.
112 Blakey, p. 119.
113 Gettmann, p. 260.
115 Oliphant, II, 458, 461.
123 For brief histories of these publishing ventures, see Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction, vol. II.
Ibid., II, 170.


Ibid., p. 171.


Gettmann, p. 263.


Altick, p. 306.

Ibid., p. 306.

Ibid., p. 298.

Gettmann, p. 258.

Ibid., pp. 259-260.

Ibid., p. 259.


An exception is John A. Holden, *The Bookman's Glossary*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1931), p. 120. In his entry under "Three-volume Novels" Holden says, "This format was abandoned in the 90's after an attack on the method of publishing made by Hall Caine whose 'Manxman' [1894] was published in one volume after the big circulating libraries had refused to handle the book." This is an opinion I can find echoed nowhere else.


Gettmann, p. 256.

Altick, p. 312.


David Stott, "The Decay of Bookselling," Nineteenth Century, XXXVI (1894), 937.


Ibid., p. 7.

The Incorporated Society of Authors and The Three-Volume Novel, "The Publishers' Circular, LXI (July 28, 1894), 80.

Gettmann, p. 259.

Ibid., p. 260.


Ibid., p. 8.

Gettmann, pp. 261-262.

The Fascination of Books, pp. 310-311. Shaylor does not indicate the source for his figures.


Altick, p. 313.

Rudyard Kipling's Verse, p. 330.
CHAPTER II

STRETCHING THE SUBJECT TO THE CANVAS

Once the financial interests of the circulating libraries and the publishing industry had united and crystalized into a common preference for the three-volume novel, the concept of what constituted a novel also tended to become standardized; and publishers requested and authors were forced to produce the standard item. If any Victorian reader had been asked to define a novel, for example, he would probably have replied that it was a work of fiction printed in three volumes of about 300 pages each. This is what he saw on the shelves of the booksellers and received at the lending libraries. A random glance, for instance, at several of the novels listed in Michael Sadleir's XIX Century Fiction will reveal what the Victorian saw when he brought home a novel. Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Pelham (1828) he would have seen as a novel divided into volumes of 330, 316, and 368 pages. He would have discovered Wilkie Collins's Basil (1852) in volumes of 300, 304, and 302 pages; and Walter Besant's Bells of St. Pauls (1889) would have provided volumes of 312, 316, and 304 pages of leisurely reading material. A look at some other novels in the Sadleir collection reinforce the impression of the publishing trade's rather rigid adherence to volumes of 300 pages:
If the question had been asked a publisher or an author, the answer would have been even more detailed, rigid, and mechanical; for there is much evidence to indicate that those actively involved in the production of fiction came to regard the novel in extremely explicit terms as a fixed entity of established length. As early as 1819, for example, Sir Walter Scott thought in fixed terms of three volumes as he described *The Monastery* as "A New Novel of the right cast—3 volumes."¹ Royal Gettmann's examination of the business agreements of the Bentley publishing firm reveals numerous contracts which specified that an author was to produce "a book in three volumes, post octavo."² Authors were contracted to produce, not amorphous works of art limited only by the artist's social, intellectual, or aesthetic purpose and by his material, but shaped works which would fit within the publicly accepted physical framework of three volumes of 300 pages per volume. Even more specific negotiations of the Bentley firm can be cited which reveal the restrictions placed upon novelists: Gleig was to write three volumes of 320 pages each for *The Chronicles of Walthan*, and Mary Shelley was to produce three volumes of at least 320 pages each for *Perkin Warbeck*.³ Bentley's first contract with Dickens (August 22, 1836) stated that

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<tr>
<td>R. D. Blackmore</td>
<td><em>Lorna Doone</em></td>
<td>332</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Bronte</td>
<td><em>Jane Eyre</em></td>
<td>304</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>312</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benjamin Disraeli</td>
<td><em>Sybil</em></td>
<td>316</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>328</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Gaskell</td>
<td><em>Ruth</em></td>
<td>298</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Gissing</td>
<td><em>New Grub Street</em></td>
<td>308</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hardy</td>
<td><em>Return of the Native</em></td>
<td>304</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Meredith</td>
<td><em>The Egoist</em></td>
<td>340</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Thackeray</td>
<td><em>Henry Esmond</em></td>
<td>344</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dickens was to write an untitled novel (Oliver Twist) consisting of "three volumes of 320 pages each, and 25 lines in each page."  

Perhaps even more telling of the settled thinking of authors and publishers is the seemingly vague requirement in James Morier's contract for Uncle Abel for "the usual number of pages."  This could only indicate that the concept of the structure of the novel had become so fixed that everyone, author, publisher, and public, knew what "the usual number of pages" was. If Morier had been in doubt, however, George Bentley could have been minutely specific, as he was in a letter to an unknown author in 1883 when he stated that "a novel consisted of 920 pages with twenty-one and a half lines on each page and nine and a half words in each line"—in other words, a novel of slightly more than 188,000 words.  

Bentley was by no means the only one who held such a rigidly precise notion of the constitution of a novel. A writer's manual, The Author's Printing and Publishing Assistant (1829), for example, informed fledgling, would-be novelists that the novel was a book of three volumes of 300 pages each, in which each page consisted of twenty-two lines of eight words per line; Hints and Directions for Authors in Writing and Publishing Their Works (1842), another similar manual, instructed writers to compose their three volumes with 300 to 324 pages to the volume and twenty-six lines to the page.  

The established authors needed no such advice, however; like the publishers, they knew the physique of a novel. Anthony Trollope, for instance, not only knew what his publishers expected of his
novels, but was conscientiously proud of the fact that he never shortchanged them by producing short measure. Trollope's conception of the typical novel volume indicated that, to him, the three-decker consisted of 198,000 words: "Sir Harry [Hotspur of Humblethwaite] was published in [its American edition] in one volume, containing something over the normal 300 pages, with an average of 220 words to a page—which I had settled with my conscience to be the proper length of a novel volume." It is interesting to note that Barchester Towers contains 198,738 words of story text, almost precisely what Trollope regarded a novel to be. Perhaps Trollope could be so exact because his financially-oriented artistic conscience, operating within the limits a set concept imposed, compelled him to count every word:

My page has been made to contain 250 words; and, as words, if not watched, will have a tendency to straggle, I have had every word counted as I went. In the bargains I have made with publishers I have,—not, of course, with their knowledge, but in my own mind,—undertaken always to supply them with so many words, and I have never put a book out of hand short of the number by a single word. I may also say that the excess has been very small. I have prided myself on completing my work exactly within the proposed dimensions.

Because of such integrity and methodical planning, Trollope knew precisely how to fit his stories into the pre-ordained framework. Thus it was that, with over two-thirds of The Bertrams having been completed, Trollope realized within precise limits how many more pages were necessary to complete the novel; for in a letter to E. Chapman in 1859 he said, "I send you in two parcels, the two first
vols of The Bertrams corrected--& the second portion of the 3 vol. up to page 260--of MS. There will be 35--or 40 more--which will give it ample length.\textsuperscript{11}

Not all novelists, however, were possessed of Trollope's scrupulous conscience and mechanical capacity for methodical planning. Therefore problems were created for the publisher when an author delivered a manuscript too short or too long for the established framework of three volumes. A short manuscript could, of course, be printed in two volumes as were Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton, Charlotte Bronte's The Professor, and Thomas Hardy's Under The Greenwood Tree; but publishers were reluctant to jeopardize their profits by doing so. It was for such reluctance, presumably, that Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, insufficient in length to complete three full volumes, was published in a three volume set which included Anne Bronte's Agnes Gray as a filler to occupy a third volume. This combination of novels to make a set was not the usual practice, however, in dealing with manuscripts deviating from the desired limits, and ordinarily authors were admonished by their publishers either to enlarge or cut such manuscripts. Such was the penalty for careless planning, and a painful one it was. Sir Walter Scott, for example, contracted for the publication of his novels before finishing them, and not infrequently before even beginning them, as he did in accepting Cadell's offer, in March, 1828, of \textsterling\textsuperscript{24,200} for a Novel in 3 vols by next November--the same sum for one in April or May, 1829--and a like sum for one in November of the same year.\textsuperscript{12} This practice created trouble for Scott with the second series of Tales
of My Landlord (The Heart of Midlothian). His contract with Constable called for a novel in four volumes, but the rate at which he ran through his plot barely gave him material enough to fill three. To satisfy Constable, Scott had to extend the novel to the agreed-upon length by means of extra padding, as Grierson says with "a 'coda' which is a sad anticlimax." The artistic character of the novel was changed, but its physical dimensions were acceptable.

Short manuscripts were the usual irritating thorn in the flesh of authors and publishers, as we shall see later; but not uncommon was the overly long manuscript, and woe to the author who produced one. William Tinsley, the publisher, once offered to appraise the original draft of a novel by an acquaintance, but found it much too bulky for the conventional format. "Upon looking at it," Tinsley said, "I found there was enough matter for six volumes instead of three." Thus it was that Tinsley returned the novel to the author with the awesome request that it be shortened by almost one-half. The author's agony in complying with such a request can only be imagined. Tinsley had even more problems with the manuscript of Lewis Wingfield's first novel:

I published, I think Mr. Wingfield's first fiction of any length and pretensions, called "Slippery Ground," In fact, the length of it did not admit a doubt, for the original MS. was more than double that of the ordinary three-volume novel, and the cutting it down was no end of trouble and, I am afraid, vexation to Wingfield; for he had built up his book in an ingenious manner, but regardless as to whether an extra hundred thousand words made it more or less "wordy." The consequence was that he could not easily reduce it in any one particular place or chapter, so had to go
through it page by page, and shorten myriads
of speeches, dialogues, and descriptions. Even
then it was almost as long as "David Copperfield,"
but I am afraid not quite as interesting. 15

Susan Ferrier was another who experienced the painful necessity
of shaving pages from a manuscript, for her publisher, William
Blackwood, wrote her in 1817 about the novel Marriage: "In the mean-
while I send you the whole of the first volume fairly copied. The
printer tells me it would make about 140 such pages as 'Tales of My
Landlord,' 'Rob Roy,' &c. This, you will see, is nearly a hundred
pages too much." 16 The novel ultimately was published in the standard
three volumes.

Such incidents reveal how the rigid concept of the structure of
a novel overrode any pretensions an author might have about artistic
integrity and natural structure. If necessary, artistry was sacri-
ficed to the more practical considerations of fitting the work to
the conventional format—as Trollope said, in regard to Anna Caroline
Wood Steele's forced condensation of a novel, "the divine afflatus
has to suffer, when pecuniary views force themselves forward." 17 As
a result, the whole character of a novel could be altered by the
process of pruning or inflating to fit a mold which was set, rigid,
immutable.

The mold was large. Although a few loquacious writers might be
troubled by the problem of too many words, the majority of authors
were faced with the dilemma of too few. The three-decker novel, all
nine hundred pages or more of it, was usually a long book by modern
standards, and it had to be filled with its quota of words. The
Englishman of a hundred years ago did not mind the length. Nine hundred pages meant to him that he was getting his money's worth for the guinea subscription he paid to Mudie or the guinea and a half he paid the bookseller. He lived at a slower pace than we do today; with no radio, television, or cinema, the three-decker with its romance, its sentimentality, its sensation was his Western, his soap opera, his mystery; and the more he got for his money, the better he liked it. A reader of Victorian novels today, however, has a somewhat different attitude toward them, and one of the cardinal virtues he needs in their appreciation is patience. Michael Sadleir has appropriately said, "The modern reader must be prepared to make allowance for the length to which mid-Victorian authors were compelled to write by the exigencies of the market."

What was the "length to which mid-Victorian authors were compelled to write"? Perhaps the most accurate answer would be merely a vague "plenty." Though the concept of three volumes was fixed, the number of words needed to fill them was not. One need only look at the previously-cited requirements for a three-volume novel to see the divergence of opinion: Bentley stated that a three-decker consisted of 188,000 words; Trollope said 198,000; The Author's Printing and Publishing Assistant defined it as 158,000; and Hints and Directions for Authors in Writing and Publishing Their Works stated 199,000 words. In addition, A. P. Watt stated in 1895 that the usual length was from 127,000 to 130,000. Nevertheless, though opinion varied as to the exact length of a novel, all of the above projected word-limits, it can be seen, demanded a reasonably
lengthy novel. Even the smallest estimate, 127,000 to 130,000 words, exceeds, for example, the total number of words of a novel the length of *Huckleberry Finn*.

A more accurate conception of the length of a three-decker can be gained by looking at the novels themselves. Here too, however, there is variation. Charles and Edward Lauterbach, using an electrical word counter whose accuracy was verified by actual count of sample novels, found, for example, one three-volume novel with as few as 67,150 words of story text (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*) and one novel with as many as 284,178 (Allan Cunningham's *Paul Jones*). In spite of such atypical novels, however, the median length of a typical three-decker was found to be an extended 168,000 words, or slightly greater than the length of Scott's *Guy Mannering*. Perhaps a glance at a random sample of novels from the more than a hundred examined by the Lauterbachs will illustrate the three-decker's great and varying length:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Novel</th>
<th>No. of words of story text</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Trollope</td>
<td><em>Barchester Towers</em></td>
<td>198,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie Collins</td>
<td><em>Basil</em></td>
<td>125,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Georgiana Fullerton</td>
<td><em>Grantley Manor</em></td>
<td>133,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hardy</td>
<td><em>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</em></td>
<td>151,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Kingsley</td>
<td><em>Westward Ho</em></td>
<td>246,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Caroline Lamb</td>
<td><em>Glenarvon</em></td>
<td>151,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Walter Scott</td>
<td><em>Guy Mannering</em></td>
<td>160,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Henry Wood</td>
<td><em>East Lynne</em></td>
<td>251,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Austen</td>
<td><em>Sense and Sensibility</em></td>
<td>120,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James M. Barrie</td>
<td><em>The Little Minister</em></td>
<td>114,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Besant</td>
<td><em>The City of Refuge</em></td>
<td>104,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir A. Conan Doyle</td>
<td><em>The White Company</em></td>
<td>153,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Ferrier</td>
<td><em>The Inheritance</em></td>
<td>197,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Meredith</td>
<td><em>The Ordeal of Richard Feverel</em></td>
<td>195,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hughes</td>
<td><em>Tom Brown at Oxford</em></td>
<td>212,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Moore</td>
<td><em>A Modern Lover</em></td>
<td>119,085</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
George Gissing | Born in Exile | 159,605
Charles Reade | Hard Cash | 260,498
Rider Haggard | Colonel Quaritch | 119,604
William Thackeray | Henry Esmond | 188,310

All of these novels, it will be noticed, are well over 100,000 words. Thus, though a novelist did not have to regiment his prose within any rigidly confined limits, he knew that he would be called upon to produce, as a minimum, a considerable number of words. This encumbering task confronting an author when he began a novel has been accurately described by Anthony Trollope:

In writing a novel the author soon becomes aware that a burden of many pages is before him. Circumstances require that he should cover a certain and generally not a very confined space. Short novels are not popular with readers generally. Critics often complain of the ordinary length of novels,—of the three volumes to which they are subjected; but few novels which have attained great success in England have been told in fewer pages. The novel-writer who sticks to novel-writing as his profession will certainly find that this burden of length is incumbent on him. 21

Since it was more profitable to publishers to issue works in three volumes than in two, the publishers, in turn, made the lengthy novel more profitable to authors. Their offers were like the proverbial tantalizing carrot dangled before the horse. A three-volume manuscript brought an author a considerably higher payment than a short one; Bentley, for example, offered Kinglake £250 for a book in one volume, but twice that sum for a novel large enough to be printed in two; 22 he offered Haliburton £250 for a manuscript sufficient for three-volumes, but only £150 for two volumes. 23 Rhoda Broughton reluctantly accepted £750 for Second Thoughts in 1879 when she
found it impossible to enlarge its two volumes with a third for which she would have received an additional £400.24

Since a novel in three volumes was worth, at times, twice the remuneration brought by one in two volumes, little is it to be wondered therefore that authors produced the larger article. If they miscalculated and their copy fell short, a little stuffing was necessary to fatten the golden goose. Mrs. Gore, for example, in sending the manuscript of *Castles in the Air* to Bentley, remarked that if her draft of 313 pages was insufficient for a third volume of 300 pages, she would enlarge it. "I greatly dislike a short volume," she said.25 Bulwer-Lytton was once informed that the publisher's reader had discovered that the third volume of *The Last Days of Pompeii* would make only 260 pages of printed copy. The tricks of the printer could produce the equivalent of twenty more pages, but Bulwer-Lytton had to supply the extra twenty pages necessary for a volume of the required 300 pages. Since the third volume when printed contained 310 pages, it is evident that Bulwer-Lytton, somehow, agonizingly supplied the padding necessary to construct a "respectable" volume.26 Mrs. Samuel Carter Hall was another novelist confronted with the painful problem of supplying additional pages to a supposedly completed novel. Her publisher demanded that she provide as many as an additional 100 pages for each of the last two volumes. The fact that a year elapsed between the time of the request and the date of publication of the novel suggests, as Royal Gettmann has observed, that Mrs. Hall was compelled to provide full measure.27 Another example is George Gissing, who was once forced
to write the next to the last chapter of *Born in Exile* in two days because the manuscript was deficient in the quantity of words demanded by the three-volume format. 28

Perhaps one of the best examples of an author tyrannized by the lengthy convention of the three-decker was Rhoda Broughton. The one-volume tales she published from 1892 onwards testify that the three-volume format was totally unsuitable to her talents; and only in the outer physical shape can the books she published in her earlier period, the twenty-five years previous to 1892, be called three-deckers. Her problem with the length of the three-volume novel is typified by a letter she wrote to Richard Bentley in 1867:

> I am sorry to say that your father and I have been utterly unable to come to an agreement about *Not Wisely* [but too Well]. He offered me £250 for it and insisted on my padding it out to a three-vol. novel... I could not make up my mind completely to spoil my tale for the sake of a little additional profit to your father. 29

In short, the length required by the three-decker was too much for Rhoda Broughton. Michael Sadleir has appraised her situation aptly:

> The unfortunate author was only too conscious of the tyranny of the serial and three-decker convention, but was forced to submit to it, in order to earn the larger payment which a full length fiction could command. She had to add ten chapters to *Cometh Up as a Flower*; she cried out against the publisher of *Not Wisely* for stretching the tale over three volumes; it needed all Bentley's patience and ingenuity to space out *Red as a Rose is She, Goodbye Sweetheart, Nancy, Joan, and Alas!* to the format required by the Circulating Libraries and by his author's needs for money. 30

That such length and the not infrequent, frenzied attempts to
supply it at all costs were unnecessarily artificial can be seen by the existence of the cheaper, one-volume reprint. Not only was the three-decker reprinted in a single volume after the multi-formed edition had exhausted its run, but it often was severely condensed in the process. Novels reprinted in the Standard Novels series of Colburn and Bentley, for example, were frequently compressed, emended, and altered, and sometimes completely rewritten to fit the smaller format. Trollope's novel *The Three Clerks* was condensed for its first reprinting in one volume, and Bentley wanted it cut by another 100 pages in order for it to appear as one of the Standard Novels. Trollope wrote to Richard Bentley, in August, 1859, in regard to the proposed abridgement:

> When you were about to bring out your 5/- edition of *The Three Clerks* [the one-volume reprint], I reduced the book by about 60 pages, and I fear I should find it impossible to put out 100 more [for re-issue in the Standard Novels series]. It gives more trouble to strike out pages, than to write new ones, as the whole sequence of a story, hangs page on page—There is an episode—a story of some 40 pages in the three vol edit., which I would put out if that would suit you—But even that w'd require some care as it is alluded to in different places.

The artificiality of length is further illustrated by the forced abridgement of one of Anna Caroline Wood Steele's novels (probably *Gardenhurst*) for reprinting in a cheaper edition. Chapman requested that she eliminate thirty-two pages from the novel for the five-shilling edition. Trollope, writing to console her in her labors, explained that the task was not as odious as it seemed, for once he was forced to cut as many as sixty-four pages from a novel. He
went on to explain how and why such alterations had to be done:

The 32 pages—(he does not ask why)—need not be elided in one place, nor even in 30 places, but it may be possible that by going through the work you might find passages the omission of which would not do material damage.

Now on to Chapman & his reasons;—which are reasonable . . .

Of course in all cheap editions the margin of profit is comparatively small and depends upon a large sale. But if the expenses be much greater than that generally incurred, the small margin of profit suffers much. Now the paper for an extra two sheets—viz 32 pages, and the extra setting up, of course costs money—and in a 5/- volume this cannot be remedied by closer printing, as it can in the 2- or 3 vol- edition. Again one of those volumes if too thick & fat loses in attractiveness of appearance, & all that tells on the sale. So much I say that you may know that your own interests as well as Chapmans would be served by reducing the matter.34

Another writer found to cut synthetic length from the three-volume edition was George Gissing, who acknowledged the necessity of doing so in a letter to Henry D. Davray, a French critic, in 1901:

Of course you are right about the superfluities to be found in both of them [the novels New Grub Street and Born in Exile]. The fault is partly due to their having been written when English fiction was subjected to the three volume system . . . . However, in the case of New Grub Street, this defect is remedied in the French translation; almost a third of the novel has been cut out.35

The superfluities omitted from the novel totaled more than sixty pages, most of which consisted of unessential dialogue.

Artificial or not, writers had to produce novels within the standard limits of length: the 900 pages, the average 168,000 words. Perceptive critics often recognized much of the extraneous matter that was used to fill these three-volume novels for what it really
was—padding. To get the meat, those who devoured three-deckers had also to consume a filling quantity of stuffing. The reviewer of Walter Scott’s *Tales of My Landlord*, second series, was probably not alone in his sentiments and in his suspicions:

The fourth volume is rather de trop, as the French say, and we believe most readers wish that the greatest part of it had been spared . . . . We have some suspicion, that our good friend Mr. Constable wished a fourth volume in the way of trade, that he might, with more show of justice, charge the exorbitant price of £1, 12s. for a book which in former times would have been sold for little more than half that price.  

The inflated nature of the fiction of the times was also recognized, and heartily condemned, by a vehement critic in the *Eclectic Review* in 1845 who complained:

You must dissolve the spell which has attached to the three-volume novel. You must put fiction into its natural size and shape; a story must not be compelled to be drawn out, spite of its own internal substance, to nine hundred and ninety pages. It must not, if but of a slim shape, be stuffed and padded out with words to the bulky bigness of three volumes. It must be suffered to run on, or to end, just as nature and sense, and not as the circulating library dictates. This would, of itself, be a most brilliant improvement in fiction writing; and what a relief in fiction reading! Instead of a writer saying to himself, "How in the world am I to spin this little story out into a great one?" he could have only to think of the subject-matter itself. And what a change should we then have in these compositions! What a simple, true, natural, and energetic eloquence; for the writer would live in his subject, embody his spirit in it, and become, instead of prosy and prolix, clear, vivid, and vigorous.

As these critics have demonstrated, a sizable quantity of unnecessary ink went into the composition of a typical three-decker
novel, and a modern reader can select almost any three-volume novel of the period 1820-1894 and find in it a multiplicity of unrequired ingredients. Almost all authors, consciously or unconsciously, had to widen their sights when approaching three-volume fiction. Trollope's charge against the novels of Walter Scott, that there was in them "an infinity of padding," is a kind of universal observation, applicable to almost any novel of the last three-fourths of the century. To write three-deckers, an author had to pad his material. A skillful novelist could, of course, successfully integrate the necessary extra words into his overall design, and his novel would appear merely lengthy; with the neophyte, the padding can be clearly extraneous. Whatever the skill of the writer, however, the length had to be there; and Trollope, with his usual frankness, candidly and appropriately described the profession of authorship as the "padding trade."\(^39\)

But how to produce 900 pages? how to successfully combine length with artistic intent? in short, how to pad? These were the questions confronting the writer who desired to pen a novel. The answer has been provided, as might be expected, by one of the most professional authors of them all, Anthony Trollope:

"But," the young novelist will say, "with so many pages before me to be filled, how shall I succeed if I thus confine myself; how am I to know beforehand what space this story of mine will require? There must be the three volumes, or the certain number of magazine pages which I have contracted to supply. If I may not be discursive should occasion require, how shall I complete my task? The painter suits the size of his canvas to his subject, and must I in my
art stretch my subject to my canvas?" This undoubtedly must be done by the novelist . . . . By studying proportion in his work, he may teach himself so to tell his story that it shall naturally fall into the required length. 40

Stretching the subject to the canvas—this was the secret behind the composition of a three-decker novel. A novelist of the nineteenth century had to think big. He had to select a basic plot situation which would not only lend itself to extended narration, but one which would provide ample elbow room for the inclusion of multiple subplots, a teeming, thickly-studded array of characters, elaborate and lengthy descriptions, circumlocutory dialogue, and, not infrequently, pure undisguised digression.

One of the best methods of stretching the subject of a three-decker's immense canvas seems to have been the employment of the life-history type of basic plot situation: the leisurely narration of the chronological development of one, or more, characters from birth, or early childhood, through a long period of years and terminating in a fixed formation of character, a resolution of besetting difficulties, or a marriage. The fictional biography or autobiography was not, of course, invented by novelists of the nineteenth century, but was seized to heart and adopted from a long and ready-made tradition stemming from the Jacobean pre-novels, such as Jack of Newbury and Thomas of Reading, the rogues' lives of Defoe, the picaresque wanderings of Fielding's Tom Jones, the novel of manners of Fanny Burney's Evelina, and Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility. In addition, Scott, with his series of lives of famous historical figures from the romantic past, had shown how the life
chronicle could be utilized as the narrative vehicle which aptly suited the needs of the three-decker novel. The Victorians, finding this kind of plot situation particularly amenable to the demands for length placed upon them, used it to their hearts' delight.

Consequently, one is struck by the ubiquity of the life-history or autobiographical novel in the Victorian era. This is not to say that this kind of plot was seized by authors with a cold, mechanical calculation as a mere device to insure adequate length. They were artists with a story to tell, as well as sell, and the life history was probably grasped with as much, if not more, unconscious intuition as to what was suitable as it was with reasoned consideration as to what would work. However the biographical framework was brought to mind, it is evident that biographical subject matter was used and used frequently. One has only to consider the rarity of novels developing a single, self-contained intense or dramatic situation to see, in contrast, the frequency of the autobiographical or biographical plot in the nineteenth century. The biography is everywhere: Jane Eyre, Villette, Rothelan, Basil, Mary Barton, Ruth, Henry Esmond, Cloudesley, Wuthering Heights, Coningsby, Ravenshoe, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Adam Graeme, The Mill on the Floss, Romola, Adam Bede, Lorna Doone. The list could go on and on. When one adds to the roll the number of biographical novels issued in parts or as serials, such as Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Pendennis, and Vanity Fair, which were afflicted by an even greater necessity of providing length, the true importance of this type of plot to the authors of the period can be seen.
Obviously, the fictional biography provided an ideal solution to the problem of stretching the subject. It offered, first of all, a narrative period covering a great number of years: from the birth of the protagonist to the point where, in his twenties or thirties, his character had been formed or his troubles had been solved. If the author chose, the narrative period could be extended even further to consider the hero's later years, as Thackeray did in *Henry Esmond* and Mrs. Oliphant in *Memoirs and Resolutions of Adam Graeme*. Secondly, the scope of the fictional biography furnished the opportunity to include numerous incidents or episodes, as many as needed to fill three volumes; and all of them were provided a sort of inherent unity by happening to the central character and contributing to his catalogue of experience or development of character. In addition, the life chronicle type of plot made provision for the inclusion of many characters of minor importance, from feeble grandmothers and garrulous governesses to a parade of actual historical figures, as in the novels of Sir Walter Scott. The personal histories of these minor characters could be reviewed if necessary, and the frequency of their appearance in the novel was governed only by the ingenuity of the author and the requirements of length. It was also possible in the biographical novel to introduce elaborate descriptions of natural scenery, especially of the old manor or family estate; and if the central character was made to travel, the possibilities for description of the places or conditions in which he lived increased in proportion to his wanderlust. Finally, if these opportunities for padding proved insufficient, the biographical novel supplied room
for digressive moral commentary by the author upon the mistakes or misfortunes of the hero as he traveled the long three-decker road from birth to maturity.

The adoption of the strange, fascinating life story of James Annesley (1715-1760) as subject material for fiction by authors of the nineteenth century, and its treatment in their hands, is indicative of how aptly the life history was suited to the requirements of the three-volume novel. At least three novelists were indebted to the Annesley story for the plots of novels: John Galt's Rothelain, William Godwin's Cloudesley, and Charles Reade's The Wandering Heir. Annesley's life was an understandable choice of subject, for, in itself, it was stranger than fiction. He was the son of a baron, Lord Altham, who became persuaded that the boy was the son of his mistress and not his wife. Annesley was, therefore, subsequently abandoned and left to wander the streets. Upon the death of Lord Altham, Annesley's uncle, Richard, assumed the title and, in an attempt to eliminate any rival claim, had the boy kidnapped and sent to America where he served as an indentured servant for fourteen years. Annesley eventually returned to England, killed a man, was tried and acquitted, and finally brought suit of ejectment against his uncle. The trial, which lasted fourteen days and became the longest on record at the time, resulted in a verdict for Annesley, but his uncle immediately obtained a writ which set aside the verdict. Unable to secure funds with which to pursue his case further, Annesley died before obtaining the title.

This was the sort of plot nineteenth-century novelists embraced
with passion. It was sensational and exciting, and it offered the necessary potential of padding. Unlike the modern novelist, who would, most likely, have seized upon the inherent drama of the trial and relegated historical background to flashbacks, Galt, Godwin, and Reade utilized the expansive elements of the situation: the scheming of the uncle, the long period of obscure childhood of the missing heir, and the possibilities these provided for the introduction of various characters and attendant subplots. All three novels introduced a multitude of characters and incidents from their authors' imaginations. Galt, for example, in his novel created an accomplice for the uncle, a mother for the heir, a benevolent Jew moneylender to befriend the mother, and a band of Scottish warriors. He introduced to the original source new incidents such as two wars, a period of captivity for the heir in addition to the kidnapping, a threat of trial for treason, and an on-again-off-again repentance by the uncle. Godwin invented a narrator, who must tell his own irrelevant life story before beginning that of the missing heir; a foster parent for the heir; the education of the heir; his subsequent capture by Italian brigands; capture of the bandits by the police; the trial of the heir who was mistaken for one of the robbers; and the eventual repentance of the uncle. Reade adhered closer to the actual facts of Annesley's life, even using the names of real people for his characters; yet he too found it necessary to amend his original source by adding a love story. None of these three novelists were willing to accept the facts of James Annesley's life for the drama inherent within them; they all, with the partial exception of Reade
whose novel can be called fictionalized history, found it necessary to emend, to invent, and to expand the basic plot situation into the long historical chronicle so adaptable to the demands of the three-volume system of issuing novels.

The frequent employment of the fictional biography as the basic situation around which to build a novel left its mark upon those novels which used it. It resulted in the creation of a form of stock beginning: the initial pages (sometimes even the whole first chapter) which established the birth of the central character, his social background and parentage, and which briefly narrated his passage from swaddling clothes to an age where he was aware of life and sensitive to the problems he was to encounter in the remainder of the novel. It was an opening to a novel which imparted the kind of information perhaps best illustrated by the first sentences of Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham*: "I am an only child. My father was the younger son of one of our oldest earls, my mother the dowerless daughter of a Scotch peer . . . ."\(^4\)

This type of brief introductory biography was particularly common in the novel which represented itself as an autobiography. One of the most characteristic beginnings of the nineteenth-century three-decker novel, for example, was that of the opening line of Mrs. Oliphant's *Adam Graeme*: "The first thing which I can record concerning myself is that I was born."\(^4\)\(^3\) Despite the ridiculous banality of the statement, it illustrates what must have been recognized by the readers of its day as almost a standard beginning for the ubiquitous first-person novel; for it was echoed, at the
beginning of the first volume, in numerous novels of the century.
For example, Marryat's Jacob Faithful opened: "Gentle reader, I was
born upon the water . . . ." Godwin's Cloudeley began: "The
story which I now take up the pen to relate, derives no interest
from myself. I was born in the middle, or I might rather say, the
humbler walks of society . . . ." The initial sentence of G. P. R.
James's Henry Masterton was, "I opened my eyes to the light of day,
on the shores of that part of the British Channel where the narrow
seas which interpose France and England first show an inclination to
spread out into the Atlantic Ocean," and his De L'Orme commenced,
"I was born in the heart of Bearn, in the year 1619 . . . ." In
similar fashion, William Godwin began Mandeville with the sentence,
"I was born in the year 1638." So conventional a feature did this
type of opening gambit become in nineteenth-century fiction that
Marryat could, in the opening page of Japhet in Search of a Father,
attempt to startle and arrest the reader's attention by going counter
to the established tradition. "Those who may be pleased to honour
these pages with a perusal," said Marryat, "will not be detained
with a long introductory history of my birth, parentage, and educa-
tion."

The utilization of the biographical or autobiographical method
of narration was one means of extending the limits of a basic plot
situation to fill the required dimensions. There were many others.
The three-decker novel, for example, could be stretched by the simple
expedient of multiplying the number of characters and subplots. An
author had merely to surround the figures of his primary plot with
a host of subordinate characters—uncles, aunts, cousins, friends, family servants, acquaintances, petty public officials. They could be described; their relationship to the central characters explained; they could be involved, in a minor capacity, in the main plot; they could be given lines to speak; and the novel could grow, puffed up like a balloon, larger and longer. An author had only to break his narrative stride for a moment, as Marryat did in the sixth chapter of *The King's Own*, and introduce, let us say, a grandfather:

We must, however, be allowed to recapitulate a little in this chapter, previously to launching our hero upon the uncertain and boisterous sea of human life. It will be necessary, for the correct development of the piece, that the attention of the reader should be called to the history of the grandfather of our hero.

Thus the reader was presented with a new character, a new situation, new possibilities for description and narration, and ultimately a longer novel.

To the writer of three-volume novels, the art of expanding his basic plot by means of the multiplication of characters and subplots was almost mandatory. It was, for example, one of the first lessons that the master of the multi-peopled novel, Anthony Trollope, would have the young novelist learn in order to stretch his canvas:

Though his story should be all one, yet it may have many parts. Though the plot itself may require but few characters, it may be so enlarged as to find its full development in many. There may be subsidiary plots, which shall all tend to the elucidation of the main story, and which will take their places as part of one and the same work,—as there may be many figures on a canvas which shall not to
the spectator seem to form themselves into separate pictures.\textsuperscript{51} Trollope's \textit{Barochester Towers} is a perfect illustration of the successful application of the principle. Its characters are multitudinous: Bishop and Mrs. Proudie, Reverend Obadiah Slope, Dr. Grantley, Reverend Septimus Harding, Mrs. Eleanor Bold, Mr. and Mrs. Quiverful and the fourteen little Quiverfuls, Reverend Francis Arabin, the Thornes, and the Stanhopes--Madeline, Charlotte, Dr. Vesey, and Bertie. Its subplots are plentiful: the succession to the bishopric of Barchester; the appointment of warden of Hiram's Hospital; the succession to the deanship of Barchester; the fate of the traditional formal ritual in the parish; the forced return of absentee clergymen; Mrs. Proudie's jealousy and quarrel with Mr. Slope; Signora Madeline's flirtation with Mr. Slope; Mr. Slope's courtship of Eleanor Bold; Bertie Stanhope's courtship of Eleanor; Mr. Arabin's courtship with Eleanor. With this bountiful supply of characters and great sufficiency of situations, Trollope's golden cornucopia of methodical narrative skill and persistence created a novel of just under one-fifth of a million words. The method worked.

The method worked equally well for other novelists also, so well, perhaps, that Bradford Booth has observed that its influence pervades most novels written under the three-volume system. "Padding of the core situation," Booth comments, "is probably inherent in the three-decker novel."\textsuperscript{52} Padding through the creation of multiple characters and episodes has been noticed in the work of John Galt, for example, whose artistic talents, unfortunately for him, were
best suited to the short novel. Royal Gettmann has described Galt's problem with creating adequate length and its solution:

He was at his best in the straightforward chronicle which ironically unveiled typical characters and which pictured life in a limited setting. He lacked a feeling for critical situation and therefore had difficulty in framing a plot. When he undertook to fill out three volumes, he went astray with secondary characters and tangential or irrelevant episodes.53

William Godwin's Cloudesley and Mrs. Oliphant's Adam Graeme are also illustrative of the awkward search for length through the employment of irrelevant episodes and characters. These two novels, each obviously and unskillfully enlarged by means of forced intrusions of character and sudden shifts in narrative direction, reveal the degree to which unity of action in the three-decker novel sometimes suffered as the result of the requirements for length. Not infrequently, as these two three-deckers illustrate, there were lumps in the padding.

The first third of the first volume of Godwin's Cloudesley (pp. 1-92), for example, is completely unrelated to the primary plot, which develops the story of Julian, a young nobleman who is denied his rightful inheritance by the schemes of his unscrupulous uncle, Lord Danvers. Godwin, however, manages to delay the appearance of his hero until the second volume is well under way, and he keeps Julian waiting in the wings while he concentrates upon the involved and irrelevant stories of subordinate characters. For example, though the narrator, Meadows, states at the beginning of volume one that his story derives no interest from himself, this non-interest
requires ninety-two pages to run its course. Godwin has Meadows relate his background and his adventures as a young man in eighteenth-century Russia; in the episode the reader is given a detailed account of Russian political history, the love affair of a friend of Meadows, a love affair of Meadows himself, Meadows' rise in political affairs, his quarrel with the chief minister of the empress, and his subsequent flight to the safety of his homeland. All of these experiences are pure padding and completely extraneous to the basic plot; in addition, they place a misleading significance upon the narrator, whose importance to the novel as an active character is so negligible that he does not appear again in the novel until the final third of the last volume. Despite Meadows' lengthy history, his function in the novel is merely to serve as listener to Lord Danver's account of his and Julian's biographies (I, 117 to III, 216), which begin after Meadows' return to England.

Even in these accounts, however, secondary characters and events loom large and bulky. The hero, Julian, for example, is not even born until the thirty-first page of the second volume. Godwin contrives to fill the pages previous to this with other irrelevant capsule histories: Lord Danvers, of course, must relate the facts of parentage, background, and childhood; fifty-one pages are devoted to a resume of the political activities of Colocotroni, Julian's grandfather, and to the wooing of Irene, Julian's mother. Colocotroni's affairs, however, have no effect upon the central plot; Irene's function seems merely to give birth to Julian; and both characters die after their possibilities of providing material for padding are
exhausted. After two-thirds of the first volume is completed, the
title character Cloudesley, a servant to Lord Danvers and foster
father to Julian, finally appears. His past life must also be
reviewed briefly. After a few more irrelevancies, Julian's biography
finally begins on page 76 of the second volume. Here too, extraneous
matter makes its presence felt, such as Chapter XIII of the second
volume which relates the history of Florence during the years
1670-1723. Thus in this novel, the whole first volume and almost a
third of the second consist of unadulterated padding—superfluous
characters and action necessitated by the spacial requirement of the
three-volume format.

Mrs. Oliphant's Memoirs and Resolutions of Adam Graeme of
Mossgray is another awkward novel in which subtlety in introducing
secondary plot and characters is absent. Two-thirds of the way
through the first volume (p. 187ff.), Mrs. Oliphant invents a
completely new set of characters and plot complications. Book I,
for example, is a first-person narrative of the history, friendships,
and loves of Adam Graeme extending from birth to old age. Suddenly,
however, Mrs. Oliphant shifts in her narrative method from the first
person to the omniscient point of view and introduces into the novel
the Oswalds—father, mother, daughter, and son—and their differences
with the Buchanans. The new material concerns the rather predictable
amatory affair of young lovers separated by family enmity; Mr.
Oswald and Mr. Buchanan, business partners in youth, quarreled and
parted in anger; later Oswald's son falls in love with Buchanan's
daughter, and the ill feeling between the families prevents any
marriage. All this, of course, is completely foreign to the previous narrative of the central character, Adam, and bursts upon the reader without any preparation in the previous pages of the volume and without much connection with Adam's affairs in the latter pages of the novel. Not content with this new plot, however, Mrs. Oliphant compounds the narrative material by adding still another character and another subplot: a woman Adam once loved requests on her death bed that Adam assume the guardianship of her daughter. Thus in the last third of the first volume, the novel takes a completely new tack in the progression of the narrative, and only the presence of the central character connects the new material with what was related previously. The unity of action vanishes with the introduction of these new characters and subplots and reveals what was frequently true of the three-decker novel: that its plotting was amorphous and that the story was usually one which could seemingly go on forever through the addition of character and incident.

The employment of the expandable situation, such as the biographical or autobiographical plot, and the padding of this core situation with the addition of minor characters and secondary episodes were two major methods of insuring that a three-volume novel reached an adequate length. By using them, not only chapters but, at times, whole volumes could be created. In addition, however, there were other devices of the padding trade, whereby, with the creation of a paragraph here, a page there, the distended canvas could be filled. Tinsley indicated those areas of a novel where such incidental padding was usually employed when he revealed that
Wingfield, in reducing *Slippery Ground*, had "to go through it page by page, and shorten myriads of speeches, dialogues, and descriptions." With unnecessary or extended passages of description, circumlocutory and superfluous dialogue, needless digressions upon trivia, the three-decker could be eked out, as it were, word by word to prodigious size. In isolation, such padding seems insignificant and almost unnoticeable; but the cumulative effect, the combined weight of hundreds and thousands of extra words, was of extreme importance to the author pressed to deliver full measure. Like the padded basic plot situation, padded description, dialogue, and digression are inherent in the three-volume novel. The ability to create such padding effortlessly was recognized by writers as a valuable asset. Scott had it, and Trollope was a master of the craft. Minna Featherstonhaugh, however, was an author who lacked the talent, and she once lamented bitterly her deficiencies in a letter to Bentley:

I am alas! so painfully deficient in the art of "spreading out,"—if you know what I mean? For instance, a near neighbour of mine here is Mrs Edward Kennard, who has written a certain lot of novels, which everyone affirms to be rubbish; still she always makes 3 vols: out of the slightest story,—& she often tells me that: "if her hero is merely going to take an afternoon stroll for sake of his digestion, she can pad the process out into two or three chapters!" The result is: that, . . . her books, though such spun-out rubbish that we none of us can do more than read a page or two (that we may tell her we've done so)—one of steady value in the market on account of their orthodox length. And I envy her cordially her talent for "making much out of little . . . ."55

Superfluous or unnecessarily long description was one method
of "making much out of little." It was an excellent method. Some
description was always needed, or appropriate, and an author had
merely to string out this description beyond what was ordinarily
required. A few extra paragraphs here and there, and the novel grew
bit by bit; and the evidence of padding would be neatly hidden behind
a pretense of providing local color, or mood, or atmosphere. The
padded description would seem just so much more paint upon an en-
larged canvas, just one more small portion of a larger design which
consequently was recognizable as padding only to a critic consciously
searching for such. An illustration is a lengthy description, in
Chapter III of Book II in Mrs. Oliphant's Adam Graeme, of the melan-
choly twilight of an April night. Although wordy and excessive, the
description seems justified under the pretense of providing an atmos-
phere in accordance with the melancholy mood of the hero. The
atmosphere is established, the hero is rendered satisfactorily melan-
choly, and two full pages are successfully added to the novel in the
process. Such excessively lengthy description is frequently to be
found in fiction written for three volumes.

Frederick Marryat, for example, was able to augment the basic
action of his plots with partially, often completely, irrelevant
information gained from his own nautical experience. In The King's
Own there are many long, detailed passages describing seafaring
facts and customs: flogging, the appearance of a man-of-war in the
midst of battle, smuggling between France and England (and a whole
chapter irrelevantly devoted to the biography of a smuggler), the
religious practices of sailors, life in the after-cabin of a vessel
during rough weather, an epidemic aboard ship, the wreck of a frigate against a reef. These descriptive digressions contributed handily to the overall word total of the novel, and there is little wonder, as W. L. Courtney says in the introduction of the Sterling Edition of the novel, that: "Our author is fond of these little disquisitions."

Other novelists were also fond of such little disquisitions. Few writers, perhaps, were more generous with their description than was William Godwin in *Cloudesley*. His catalogue of the features of Irene Colocotroni, for example, is more than adequate, and illustrates how profusely excessive description in the three-decker could be:

... I may therefore reasonably describe her, as she was seen by us when this paroxysm of agony had passed away. She stood before us in the lustre of that beauty which is seen in the frailest and more delicate moiety of the human species, when born beneath a glowing sun. She could not be more than nineteen years of age. The first thing that struck the beholder was the extreme regularity of her features, so that the eye wandered over the whole countenance without meeting with a single harshness which might disturb its enchanted gaze. Her forehead was low and broad, yet arched, and, being for that reason in a considerable degree concealed with the hair, a double interest was given to the eyes, which thus became in a certain sense the sole interpreters of the mind. These were full and round, the dark holes dilating with innumerable rays, and fixed in a liquid heaven of the deepest, purest blue. The sweeping arch of the upper lid gave a peculiar look of nobleness and openness to the countenance. There seemed, so to speak, full room for the thoughts to come forth, and display themselves. Her nose was broad at the root, and, descending straight from the forehead, terminated in due season in a rounded point. Her smile was tender and full; and, while it possessed extraordinary powers of expression, disturbed less the shape of the lips.
than the smile of an European, which most frequently widens in lines into the cheek. Her chin, which was round and turned up, formed as it were a base to the entire countenance. Her cheeks were not full and prominent, but on the contrary seemed to withdraw, and thus to place the features striking in relief. Her complexion was brown and glowing, and, on any sudden emotion, her eyes and lips and cheeks simultaneously partook of the same suffusion, each with a hue peculiar to itself, yet blending into one delicious whole. Her figure was smaller both in size and fulness than that of the beauties of the North usually are, while it was at the same time more defined in muscular appearance, more airy in effect, and compact in the entire whole.\(^{57}\)

This is full description indeed, especially for a very minor character whose physical appearance is not of the slightest importance to the story.

Godwin, however, was adept at expounding upon the trivial and providing description which was not needed. He devoted, for example, one whole chapter to character analysis of Lord Alton, the dead father of the hero, and in doing so required a full eleven pages to accomplish what could have been stated in one page or less. He required over a page and a half to describe a romantic mountain valley\(^{58}\) and another equally lengthy space to do justice to the beauties of a waterfall;\(^{59}\) neither of these two geographical features, however, have anything to do with the plot.

In addition to his utterance of the unnecessary, Godwin demonstrates another method whereby description could be padded: repetition of similar thoughts in different phrasing. Godwin never seemed content to say a thing simply, or to say it only once. The reader is told a countless number of times in Cloudesley, for example, that
that the hero, Julian, represents human intellect in perfection.

Godwin stated, within a thirty-page interval, that: "The ingenuity of Julian was truly extraordinary"; "He was inventive . . ."; "He is exceedingly ingenious." One paragraph begins with this same thought stated five different ways:

His understanding is of a very extraordinary nature. He comprehends every thing, and retains every thing. What would be a severe trial and a task to others, is sport to him. He has an unquenchable desire to know, and whatever is presented to him that is new, instantly rouses all his faculties. He learns, because learning is a passion in him . . .

In addition, the possibilities for description in a three-volume novel were increased with every shift in setting. A trip to the continent by the hero, for example, could provide many new opportunities for description of natural scenery or historical background. To an author worried about length, these opportunities were seldom overlooked. In Cloudesley, Godwin's characters were world travelers; and there are in the novel, therefore, descriptions of a Russian empress and a minister of state, an Italian poet of Florence, a mountain valley in Austria, and a picturesque waterfall in the Appennines. Lady Georgiana Fullerton, for example, began Grantley Manor with a description of the English landscape surrounding the manor. She then sent the heroine's father to Italy and discussed, "the influence of its brilliant skies--the magic of its natural beauties--the memories of the past." This was followed soon after with specific details of the enchanting scenery of the Piazza delle Erbe at Verona. When the central characters remove themselves
to London, the smells, the sights, the sounds of the city provide matter for description, as does a subsequent tour of the continent. Though none of this description is strikingly excessive, it does, through the gradual accumulation of words, sentences, and paragraphs, contribute materially to the fullness of the novel.

An even greener pasture for the production of padding in a three-volume novel was the dialogue. With an almost endless flow of words, characters could be made to patter on about trivia or their own irrelevant interests, filling up page after page. The well-lubricated jaws of characters in three-volume fiction often seem to be made of tireless steel; and Samuel Clemens's caustic comments about the dialogue written by James Fenimore Cooper are particularly applicable to much of the fiction produced under the three-decker system. Cooper's novels were partial products of this system: he took Scott's *Ivanhoe* as the guide for the proper length of a novel in writing his first book, *Precaution*, and hence produced two volumes of about 90,000 words each; and he wrote his novels not only for American publication, but with an eye on publication in England as well, where they were actually published in full sets of three volumes of 300 pages each. Cooper, like any English novelist, wanted to produce length; and padded dialogue was, to Clemens's discomfort, one of his methods:

The conversations in the Cooper books have a curious sound in our modern ears. To believe that such talk really ever came out of people's mouths would be to believe that there was a time when time was of no value to a person who thought he had something to say; when a man's mouth was a rolling-mill, and busied itself all
day long in turning four-foot pigs of thought into thirty-foot bars of conversational railroad iron by attenuation; when subjects were seldom faithfully stuck to, but the talk wandered all around and arrived nowhere; when conversations consisted mainly of irrelevancies, with here and there a relevancy, a relevancy with an embarrassed look as not being able to explain how it got there.

What is true of Cooper's conversations is true of the dialogue of other three-volume novelists as well. George Meredith, for example, while working as a reader for the publishing house of Chapman and Hall from 1860 to 1895, frequently objected to the dull dialogue and its excessive length created by the three-volume system. Typical comments of his on submitted manuscripts were: "chiefly done by indifferent talk"; "worked out chiefly in flimsy dialogue"; "the evolution of the story is in dull dialogue"; "we have the 3 vols. eked out with sawdust dialogue in the known manner." Henry D. Davray, the French critic, noted the padded dialogue of George Gissing's New Grub Street and Born in Exile and criticized "bien des pages ou l'action traine et s'attarde en d'inutiles dialogues." Appropriately, in preparing his novels for publication in French translations, Gissing omitted or shortened ninety passages of dialogue totaling more than sixty pages in The Unclassed; and over four-fifths of the deleted material in New Grub Street was idle, unnecessary talk. Anthony Trollope was also well aware of the tendency of authors to pad their novels with irrelevant conversation. He rejected the practice and advised young novelists to do likewise:

There is no portion of a novelist's work in which this fault of episodes is so common as in the dialogue. It is so easy to make any two persons talk on any casual subject with
which the writer presumes himself to be conversant! Literature, philosophy, politics, or sport, may thus be handled in a loosely discursive style; and the writer, while indulging himself and filling his pages, is apt to think he is pleasing his reader. I think he can make no greater mistake.

Few novelists followed Trollope's advice, however; for dialogue offered novelists an excellent opportunity for padding. In the first place, it required fewer words to fill a page with dialogue than with regular narration or description; for if the conversation consisted mostly of short phrases or sentences, many lines would contain less than a full quota of words. In Francis Trollope's *The Vicar of Wrexhill*, for example, a sample full page of text contains 171 words; a full page of dialogue contains 151 words, or almost twelve percent fewer words. In Georgiana Fullerton's *Grantley Manor*, a full page of text consists of about 160 words, and a full page of dialogue consists of only 123, a decrease of twenty-three percent. In Mrs. Oliphant's *Adam Graeme*, the percentage of words on a page of dialogue is twenty-five percent less than on a full page of text: 151 words on a full page and 113 on a page of dialogue. The more dialogue in a novel, the faster the pages of the manuscript were filled.

In addition to the spatial advantage of dialogue, it also enabled a writer to include irrelevant or superfluous words. Under the guise of issuance from a garrulous character, a torrent of words could be produced which spilled over from page to page, quickly flooding chapter after chapter. In Godwin's *Cloudesley*, for example, though dialogue is for the most part rare and the author relied primarily upon digression and description for his padding, at
auspicious moments of great solemnity, characters will demonstrate that long-winded and pompous verbosity so suited to the completion of novels of 900 pages. The following declaration is made by a young girl after gazing for a time in "agonized silence" upon the body of her murdered father:

My father! My father! best of parents! most excellent of men! is it possible? shall I never see those eyes again? shall I never hear that voice? Oh, he was the first of created beings. All that was left of Greece, dwelt in that bosom. He lived but for others. In his youth he led the levies of his countrymen, and drove out the Turks. In his age he was the adviser of all, the friend of all. What treasures of wisdom and learning dwelt in that head; while all the virtues were congregated in that heart! His voice fell upon the ears of mankind, like the music of an angelic host. All that was kind and lovely, combined with the most penetrating sagacity, beamed in his eye. I have sat from morning to night under the instruction of his speech, and never was wearied. He never said to me an unkind word. I lived but in him, and was all his care. And now, Oh God, I implore thee, let me die with him!

And can he be thus cut off? cut off by the hands of a villain, who sought to destroy him by false accusations, who drove him into exile, and whose malice was never satisfied till with his weapon he had pierced his heart. It is too much! Too much of sorrow was heaped on that aged head. But lately he was compelled to seek refuge in a strange land. Thither he was pursued by infuriated savages, his property laid waste, his house burned to the ground. And now, the most abandoned of men, the author of all his adversities, has found, and has murdered him. God of heaven, has thou seen, and dost thou suffer all this?

It does not require many such outcries of boundless filial affection and sorrow to fill a volume.

Georgiana Fullerton's Grantley Manor also illustrates how effectively the conversations of garrulous characters could insure
full volumes. The novel is staffed by a talkative gaggle of cackling characters. A verbose grandmother, for example, rambles on about the virtues of ignoring one's children or reveals her prejudice against the French. One of the heroines once delivers a three-and-a-half page panygeric in celebration of the Saint Bernard breed of dog. The other heroine and her lover delight in long-winded moral discussions on such topics as true love, the nature of dignity, prejudice, strength of character, will power. The prattling governess, Mrs. Dalton, however, best illustrates how the irrelevant provides matter for filling pages. One conversation, for instance, begins with Mrs. Dalton asking the heroine a question:

"Well, my dear, have you seen young Mr. Neville?"
"Yes! Have you, Mrs. Dalton?"
"Indeed I have, my dear; and had some conversation with him too."
"Where? When? How could you have met him?"
"Why, the fact is, my dear, I wanted a Colchicum Autumale to complete the collection of Melanthaceae which Miss Flummer describes in the fifth chapter of her little, 'Botany made easy.' It is six weeks since we read that chapter together, dear; you know you do not take much to botany, yet I never saw you so pleased before with any work upon it, as with those first chapters of 'Botany made easy.'"

Here Margaret gave a sudden jerk, which was not calculated to make her maid consider her task as "Hair-dressing made easy."
"Yes, yes, it is a very nice little book, but did not you find ——"
"Yes, my dear, a very fine specimen, indeed; but not exactly the same as Miss Flummer ——"
"O, do leave Miss Flummer alone; I hate the very sound of her name. Was it in the garden you met?"
"No, dear, in the churchyard; it grows under the old elm."

This discourse covered one and a half pages in the novel, and Miss
Fullerton managed to pad the conversation for four more pages. This was the stuff that three-deckers were made of.

In similar fashion, Mrs. Trollope, in *The Vicar of Wrexhill*, had no trouble in filling her three volumes; for she used as her title character an unscrupulous clergyman who always speaks with the sanctimonious prolixity of the evangelist. As the other characters in the novel become converts to his wordy religiosity, the dialogue frequently comes to resemble a contest of pulpit oratory. A sample conversation, for instance, goes as follows:

"You seem hereunto, cousin Stephen, to have managed this excellent business, which by God's providence I have been enabled to put into your hands, with great ability; and, by a continuation of mercy, I am not without hope, that you will, as I heretofore hinted, bring the same to good effect."

"There is hope, great and exceeding merciful hope, cousin William, that all you have anticipated, and peradventure more too, may come to pass. A blessing and a providence seem already to have lighted upon you, cousin, in your new ministry; for into this vessel which the Lord and your cousinly kindness have set within my sight, you have poured grace and abounding righteousness. Surely there never was a lady endowed with such goodly gifts, who was more disposed to make a free-will offering of them to the Lord and to his saints, than this pious and in all ways exemplary widow."

"Your remarks, cousin, are those of a man on whom the light shines. May the mercy of the Lord strengthen unto you, for his glory the talent he has bestowed! And now, with the freedom of kinsmen who speak together, tell to me what are the hopes and expectations to which your conversation with this excellent and already very serious lady, have given birth?"

And so the conversation goes. It continues onward in this particular instance for thirteen additional pages.
Chapter XV of the first volume of this same novel offers further evidence of the page-filling qualities of dialogue by demonstrating how several pages can be made out of nothing more than idle chit-chat. In a drawing room, several characters discuss topics of religious trivia: the best hymn for the semi-weekly Sabbath, the qualifications of a former vicar, the proper age for instilling the doctrine of regeneration into a child, the propriety of yoking religious themes to secular tunes. None of this conversation, though it covers some twenty pages, advances the action at all: no new information is given the reader, no hitherto unknown traits of character are revealed, no new complications of plot are realized nor any old ones magnified. Rather, it is a display of prolixity justifiable only by the requirement of filling three volumes.

Description and dialogue were natural components of a novel, present in varying degree in all fiction; and as such their presence in a novel, however irrelevant or excessive, was justifiable. Some padding, however, in three-decker fiction is clearly extraneous. The digression, taking the form of an omniscient author's or narrator's moral commentary on the actions or motives of the characters, amused reflection on fate and life in general, or gossipy relation of trivia, is ever present in the three-volume novel. An author merely paused in the narration of the action, related his own vaguely pertinent reflections on a topic suggested by the action, and then continued with his story, having successfully padded his story sometimes to the extent of several hundred words. Godwin illustrates the practice perfectly in *Cloudesley* when the narrator,
contemplating his unlawful usurpation of his nephew's title and property, suddenly stops and muses upon the equality of man under God:

In fact however I felt no compunctious visiting of soul. I had considered every thing, and nerved my spirit to the decisive act. I said to myself, Here is the subject concerning which my proceedings are to be exercised, a new-born child! There is no essential difference between the son of a King and a peasant. Their joints and members are the same. The account of the muscles which an anatomist may reckon up, is equal in the frame of one and the other. The accident of birth alone makes all the difference. Why is this man born to the throne of all the Indies, while that springs into life the son of a negro slave? He can find no cause. It is time and chance that happeneth to all. The great master of the workshop of nature, "maketh of the same clay one vessel to honour and another to dishonour."

He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen,
Let him not know it, he is not robbed at all.

This child, bred as the son of a peasant, may in all probability be happier, than if he were lord of thousands, and the hereditary member of the parliaments of two mighty realms . . . .

The plan that was concerted between me and Clouesley required the instant removal of the infant. We resolved that Irene and her child, apparently deceased a few hours after the birth, should be inclosed in the same coffin . . . .

Clouesley has a plentiful number of such wordy and digressive comments. Godwin, for example, devotes two and a half pages to the observation that power corrupts those who possess it, one page on man's inability to discover an ideal person, another full page on the moving sorrow of a beautiful woman, a page and a half on the value of courage in a man's character, one page on the "dreadful practice of dueling," one page on the necessity of accepting the worst fate has to offer, and another page on the mutual attraction
of similar personalities.  

Lady Georgiana Fullerton's Grantley Manor offers additional evidence of the ubiquity of the digression in three-volume fiction. Lady Fullerton discussed such topics as the nobility of the poor, the effect of Italy on the traveler, the inability of the artist to satisfy his inspiration, impulsive speech, the nature of a young girl's room. One of her typical digressions is a ridiculously irrelevant commentary on the way people write:

Margaret went to the library to write her note . . . . In the silver inkstand in the library, there were three pens that had been used before, two black smeared, and one white one. Margaret chose the last. There is a peculiar way in which people set about writing one of these important notes—a note that sets you thinking of the moment when it will be received, and the person who will read it. Generally, like Margaret, they select a new pen; they take just ink enough and not too much, for fear any word should be illegible; a fear that never seems to occur to them in ordinary cases (what a blessing for their correspondents if it did); and then they so carefully weigh the difference between two nearly synonymous words, and it becomes a matter of consequence whether they are their correspondents "very truly" or "very sincerely" or whether they should begin with a familiar "Dear," or an impressive "My dear." Then the direction never seems clear or distinct enough; and those long-tried and well-trusted means of conveyance, letter-bags or letter-boxes, mail-coaches or mail-trains, all at once assume an awful character of insecurity, and no sort of confidence is felt that they will perform their part in that particular instance. Margaret, however, had a simpler process to depend upon for the transmission of her letter . . . .

Adam Graeme, by Mrs. Oliphant, contains similar digressions of even greater length. Chapter II of the first volume, for example,
is prefaced with a quotation from Wordsworth: "Shades of the prison-
house begin to close/ Upon the growing boy;/ But he beholds the light
and whence it flows--/ He sees it in his joy." Mrs. Oliphant's
narrator begins the chapter, "I do not quite agree with Wordsworth," and, for the following five pages, irrelevantly tells the reader
precisely why he does not agree. The following chapter begins with
two and a half pages of musing on another Wordsworthian quotation
proclaiming the child's closeness to nature. A few pages later, Mrs.
Oliphant manages to occupy three more pages with a disquisition on
the bitter sorrow of mourning for the dead. There are also in the
first volume three-page comments upon the necessity of ruling one's
spirit and upon the nature of ideal generosity and truth. By means
of these scattered, irrelevant digressions, Mrs. Oliphant was able
to add over sixteen pages, or more than five percent of the total
length of the first volume, to her novel.

The tyranny of the three-decker's artificial length fostered
these digressions. Most novelists included them in their works, but
few were so bold as to admit it. Frederick Marryat, however, openly
confessed in _The King's Own_ that he was padding his novel with
irrelevant digression. In the second volume Marryat stated:

> It's a very awkward position to have to write
> a chapter of sixteen pages, without materials
> for more than two; at least I find it so. Some
> people have the power of spinning out a trifle
> of matter, covering a large surface with a
> grain of one; like the goldbeater, who out of
> a single guinea will compose a score of books.
> I wish I could.79

Marryat, however, was too modest; for he proceeded to pad his novel
by spinning out his own trifle: he discussed the habits of an ant which inhabits his cabin and feeds on cockroaches supplied by the author. This, somehow, leads to a whole sequence of following digressions, one after another, concerning the author's grandmother, his uncle, his cousin, and an odd dream about his own burial. This verbal rambling finally brings the obvious remark, "But I have digressed sadly from the concatenation of ideas. The ant made me think of my grandmother, my grandmother of my uncle, my uncle of my cousin, and her death of my dream . . . ." All is not over, however, for Marryat then proceeds with another digression concerning the behavior of animals aboard a man-of-war. Finally, after several thousand words have been added to the novel, there is the apology:

I could mention many instances of this kind, but I shall reserve them till I have grown older; then I will be as garrulous as Montaigne. As it is, I think I hear the reader say, "All this may be very true, but what has it to do with the novel?" Nothing, I grant; but it has a great deal to do with making a book, for I have completed a whole chapter out of nothing.

Marryat, by means of excrescences, had indeed composed a complete chapter out of nothing, almost 3,000 words of padded nothing.

Bulwer-Lytton, however, has probably provided the ultimate example of the ridiculous possibilities of padding with digression. As the Lauterbachs have pointed out, a chapter of Volume III of Paul Clifford (1830) represents the epitome in manufacturing a chapter "out of nothing." The chapter consists of a heading ("Chapter III"), a quotation of one line, and a salutation of three words ludicrously emphasized with 10th exclamation points.
As Charles and Edward Lauterbach have observed, "There were, however, much more subtle ways of padding than merely excess wordage." The tricks of the printer could materially fill the volumes of a three-decker with the addition of no words at all. By means of large type, wide margins, heavy leading between lines, excessive chapter divisions and the inclusion of quotations, prefaces, and footnotes, a short manuscript could be inflated with gaseous addenda to occupy the same space filled by a large manuscript; and it is these rather illegitimate methods of padding which explain the seemingly paradoxical printing of manuscripts of 67,000 words and 284,000 words in the same set format of three volumes. Many a short manuscript was stretched to the three-decker's canvas by merely thinning the paint, as Charles Reade implied in a letter to Bentley concerning negotiations for Christie Johnston: "... I will send you over what I have already written and will produce a work which you can print as one honest vol. or 2 dishonest ones."

In essence, the entire three-volume system of publishing novels was dishonest, as witnessed by the one-volume reprint. Comparison of these reprints with their multi-volumed first editions clearly demonstrate that a novel-buyer of the nineteenth century, when he paid 31s. 6d. for a new novel, bought mostly paper and binding. The one-volume reprint of Oliver Twist, for example, was a compact book: 291 pages with fifty-one lines, or 552 words, upon each page; the three-volume format of the novel, however, had been printed with an inflated 950 pages, each containing only twenty-four lines or 178 words per page. Reade's Hard Cash was even more vacuous in its
three-volume edition. Though the reprint squeezed 1133 words upon each of its 260 pages, the first issue of the novel contained 1,090 pages with only 250 words upon the page. The Lauterbachs have made similar comparisons with eleven other three-volume novels. They found that in all of the one-volume reprints the number of pages had been reduced considerably and the number of words per page greatly increased. In addition, the size of the type in the reprints was smaller for nine of the eleven books; and the size of the leading between lines was reduced about four-fifths of that in the original three-volume forms.

Thus it was, if an author himself could not fatten his novel through his methods of padding, the printer could enlarge the book with his own techniques: large type, heavy leading, and wide margins. Many a page of a three-decker, therefore, seems to be an ocean of white sprinkled with a few flotsam jots of print. The typical page of an average novel, for example, would carry only about twenty lines per page; and the line would consist of six, seven, or eight words. In addition, Gettmann has noted, "Some of the three-deckers carried as much as six points (a twelfth of an inch) of line leading and had margins which considerably exceeded the printed space in area." Trollope protested this practice of making volumes out of nothing:

How could it injure me if they stretched my pages by means of lead and margin into double the number I had intended. I have heard the same argument on other occasions. When I have pointed out that in this way the public would have to suffer, seeing that they would have to pay Mudie for the use of two volumes in reading that which ought to have been given in one, I have been assured that the public are pleased
with literary short measure, that it is the object of novel-readers to get through novels as fast as they can, and that the shorter each volume is the better.\textsuperscript{89}

Only once, he maintained, when a publisher printed a two-volume magazine serial of his in book form in three volumes, did a publisher get the better of him in the matter of volumes.\textsuperscript{90}

So intense was Trollope's abhorrence of empty volumes that he once refused to allow Alexander Strahan to publish a volume of his tales (probably \textit{Lotta Schmidt and Other Stories}) in an inflated format. In writing to Strahan, Trollope said:

\begin{quote}
I have always endeavored to give good measure to the public—The pages, as you propose to publish them, are so thin and desolated, and contain such a poor rate of type meandering thro' a desert of margin, as to make me ashamed of the idea of putting my name to the book. The stories were sold to you as one volume and you cannot by any argument be presumed to have the right of making it into two without my sanction to the change.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

Though the book had already been printed in two volumes, Trollope demanded that it be reprinted in one, even offering to share the expense of the reprinting.

Few novelists, however, were as scrupulous as Trollope; and the three-decker was frequently printed with its "poor rate of type meandering thro' a desert of margin." If type, lead, and margins could not be expanded enough, still other methods were available whereby little could be made to pass for much. A simple expedient was merely to increase the number of chapters in a novel. Each new chapter division added a page or more to the volume. In a three-decker novel, the chapters seldom began at the top of a page, but,
rather, near the middle or below. A full page of text of Thackeray's Henry Esmond, for example, contains twenty-five lines per page, with an average of 200 words to the page; the title pages of chapters, however, contain, on the average, only sixteen lines or approximately 110 words per page. John Galt's Rothelan contains twenty-two lines on full pages of text, but only eight or nine on the title pages of chapters. In this fashion, the title page of a chapter could add half a page of nothing to the volume. On the average, another half page was added by the final page of a chapter. Seldom did the last page of a chapter contain a full page of text. Usually, it contained only a half a page, and frequently only a few lines. Chapter XIV of Volume II of Henry Esmond, for example, contains only four lines, or twenty-eight words, on the final page. John Galt's Rothelan has a chapter which ends on a page of three lines containing a mere fifteen words. In Marryat's Japhet in Search of a Father, Chapter IV of the first volume ends on a page which includes two complete lines of text and one word of a third, for a total of a scanty seventeen words. Although a full page of text of Lady Georgiana Fullerton's Grantley Manor held twenty lines, twelve of the novel's twenty-two chapters contain less than ten lines upon the final page, and one-third of the final pages hold less than six full lines.

The Lauterbachs, in their survey of over a hundred three-deckers, found that the median number of chapter divisions in a three-volume novel was forty-five. Any large increase in this number, therefore, can be regarded, in most instances, with strong suspicions of padding. George Borrow's Lavengro (1851), which has the equivalent of eighty-
three blank pages within its 100 chapters, is an excellent example.

Another is Maryat's *Japhet in Search of a Father*. The novel was originally published in the *Metropolitan* as a serial with no chapter divisions (an American pirated edition was published at its completion, however, in nineteen chapters). When the novel finally appeared in volume form in 1836, it contained seventy-nine chapters, and was thus padded to the extent of almost eighty pages.

In addition to such chapter chopping methods, the first page of a chapter could be padded even further. The inclusion of a quotation, a few slightly-relevant lines of poetry or mildly-pertinent lines of pretentious prose, could frequently take up the greater portion of a chapter's first page. For example, the title page of the first chapter of Mrs. Oliphant's *Adam Graeme* contains a poetic motto, from Wordsworth, of eight lines (fifty words); this leaves room for only three lines (twenty-three words) of story text upon the page. In like manner, the third chapter of Book II begins with an even longer quotation of fourteen lines (ninety-eight words); there is but one line of text (six words) upon the page. The total effect of the numerous quotations at the head of chapters in Mrs. Oliphant's novel was to add the equivalent of thirteen full pages to the three volumes.

Obviously, such quotations could contribute heavily to the adequacy of a three-decker manuscript; and they were habitually used by authors whose inventiveness was of a lower order. Susan Edmondstone Ferrier, for instance, employed 111 quotations, totaling 2,931 words, in *The Inheritance*. Since the average number of words per page in this novel is 198, these quotations contributed the
effect of fifteen pages to the novel. In their examination of 105 three-volume novels, the Lauterbachs discovered nineteen in which the chapter quotations total more than 1,000 words. The most notable examples among this group are Thomas Hood's *Tynan Hall* (1834)—3,112 words; George Borrow's *Lavengro*—2,824 words; Rosina Bulwer's *The Budget of the Bubble Family* (1840)—2,682 words; Edward Granville's *Rattlin, the Reefer* (1836)—2,358 words; Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*—2,009 words; Frederick Marryat's *Japhet in Search of a Father*—1,829 words and *The King's Own*—1,884 words.

Closely related to this method of padding by quotation, was another ingenious device employed to insure the publication of volumes of standard length: the preface. The use of lengthy and unnecessary prefaces could, at times, add thousands of words to a slim manuscript. Eleven of the 150 novels examined by the Lauterbachs, for example, have fat, long prefaces which exceed 1,000 words. William Harrison Ainsworth's *Crichton* (1837) contains a preface of 5,715 words; the preface to George Eliot's *Romola* (1863) contains 3,150; and Leigh Hunt, in *Sir Ralph Esher* (1832) outdid them both in prolixity with a preface of 6,082 words. An odd curio in this catalogue of novels padded by prefaces is Sydney Owenson Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806). In addition to its preface of 3,403 words, this three-decker is padded in a rare, but novel, way. Morgan added footnotes to his book. These notes, on twenty-one percent of the pages, totaled 12,383 words, or over one-tenth of the entire story text.

The nineteenth-century three-decker novel was, in most instances,
a padded, inflated article. It was like a dandy, clothed in a
gorgeous, expensive garment padded at the shoulders, hips, and calves,
and wearing elevated shoes. Outwardly it was imposing, but inwardly
it frequently was poor and thin. The three-volume format, however,
influenced the contents of the nineteenth-century novel in other ways.
Since it had to be published, usually, in three volumes, it came to
be regarded not so much as a complete entity, but as the composite
of three separate volumes, three distinct units each having its own
structural function. John Galt, for example, was chaffed by the
standard format; and he suffered under the admonition of his pub­
lisher, Blackwood, to compose Sir Andrew Wylie "With a beginning, a
middle, and an end, according to the most approved fashion." A
beginning, a middle, and an end: this was the accepted structure of
a three-decker, a structure so similar to that of a three-act play
that the three-decker was frequently modeled after the drama.
Marryat, for example, actually described his novel The King's Own
in terms of the drama:

Our novel may, to a certain degree, be compared
to one of the pantomimes which rival theatres
annually bring forth for the amusement of
holiday children. We open with dark and solemn
scenes, introducing occasionally a bright image,
which appears with the greater lustre from the
contrast around it; and thus we proceed, until
Harlequin is fairly provided with his wand, and
despatched to seek his adventures by land and by
sea. To complete the parallel, the whole should
wind up with a blaze of light and beauty till our
dazzled eyes are relieved, and the illusion dis­
appears, at the fall of the green curtain, which
like the "FINIS" at the end of the third volume,
tells us that all is over.102

Because of the required format and its obvious similarity to the
drama, the three-decker was oftentimes composed to fit a sort of three-act structure. Kathleen Tillotson has noted this peculiarity of construction of the three-decker: "... the three-volume form matched a formal literary design: in many novels the structural divisions are as clear as the three acts of a play."  

Jane Austen's novels in three volumes demonstrate this three-act structure. Royal Gettmann has pointed out the structural pattern of *Pride and Prejudice*:

... the first volume concluded with Bingley's departure, Elizabeth's rejection of the Rev. Mr. Collins, and Mrs. Bennet's disappointment ... the second volume leaves Darcy humbled and Elizabeth humiliated and uncertain, and that the third opens with the journey to Pemberley. To be sure any attentive reader of *Pride and Prejudice* may sense the symmetrical, almost syllogistic structure of the book without the aid of this editorial information ...  

The structure of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, though written as a weekly serial, also benefited from the three-volume impact on structure. Dickens envisioned the novel's eventual appearance in book form as a three-volume novel; and he accordingly divided his book into three equal stages, each consisting of a grouping of twelve of the weekly parts, enough to fill one volume of a three-decker. The first stage ends with Pip's departure for London, and the second ends with his discovery of his mysterious benefactor. Thus, the first two stages end on a note of suspenseful anticipation of the following stage, and each covers a distinct period of Pip's life: youth and formation of expectations; adolescence and corruption by expectations; maturity and redemption by rejection of expectations.
By means of composing with one eye upon eventual three-volume publica-
tion, Dickens, therefore, managed to impart a structural symmetry to this book that is rarely found among his usually sprawling novels written for serials or monthly parts.

An analysis, by means of plot summation, of William Godwin's Cloudesley and Lady Georgiana Fullerton's Grantley Manor will further illustrate the typical tripartite design of a three-volume novel. Each novel is arranged according to a three-act structure in which each volume narrates a specific segment of the plot. The first volume introduces the characters, delineates their background and personality, and ends with a suspenseful foreshadowing of the basic conflict. The second volume defines the conflict and presents its various ramifications, and the volume concludes with the most exciting complication of the conflict suspensefully unresolved. The final volume resolves the conflict, at a heart-stirring climax, to the cheerful satisfaction of the characters and the reader.

The first volume of Cloudesley, for example, relates the ante-
cedent history of the narrator, Meadows, for the first third of the volume; the last two-thirds gives the background of Lord Danvers: his and his brother Arthur's adventures on the continent, his brother's marriage, and Arthur's subsequent death in a duel. Since Arthur goes to his reward leaving his wife eight months pregnant, the novel concludes with suspenseful concern for the fate of the unborn heir and anticipation of the following volume. Volume II establishes Lord Danver's heinous usurpation of his nephew's title and property: when Arthur's wife dies in childbirth, Lord Danvers,
announcing that the child died also, actually sends him into obscurity as the adopted child of Arthur's bitter and unscrupulous servant, Cloudesley. The remainder of the volume traces the education and growth to noble young manhood of the missing heir, Julian; and it ends with the provocative promise of a reformed Cloudesley to visit Lord Danvers and demand the return of the princely Julian's rightful due. Volume III reveals that this promise is a mere device to create an artificial suspense in the previous volume, for the threat is forgotten. The volume continues the adventures of Julian: his falling into the hands of a band of bandits, their accidental killing of Cloudesley, and the band's eventual capture, in which Julian is mistaken for one of the brigands, is tried, and sentenced to death. The novel is climaxed by Julian's release, his Uncle's repentance and resignation of the usurped title, and Julian's happy succession to it. Thus the novel, it can be seen, follows a distinct structural pattern: Volume I, background; II, statement of the problem and complication; III, resolution of the problem--the blueprint of the three-act play.

The basic function of each of the three-volumes of Grantley Manor is identical. The first volume introduces the characters and their backgrounds: Colonel Leslie; his friendship with Walter Sydney; Leslie's first marriage; the birth of a daughter, Margaret; her love for Edmund Neville; Leslie's second marriage to an Italian, a Catholic; and the birth of another daughter, Ginevra. Volume II reveals Ginevra's secret marriage to Neville, whose father has threatened to disinherit him if he marries a Catholic, and complicates
the situation with assorted difficulties. The last volume develops the problem to a climax at which Ginevra, dying of brain fever, is reconciled to her repentant husband through an open acknowledgement of the marriage; and the novel ends with Ginevra's recovery, Margaret's marriage to Walter Sydney, and a state of absolute bliss for all.

The three-decker system, it can be seen, went beyond merely fostering a propensity in authors to pad their novels. In such typical novels as Cloudesley and Grantley Manor can also be observed a structural pattern necessitated by the need for publishing books in three volumes. In addition to promoting this three-act structure, however, the three-decker system of library novels also exerted an influence on the selection of subject matter as well. Kipling's poem in honor of the three-volume novel, "The Three-Decker," implies its limited range of acceptable subject material; and indicates, in the second through the fifth stanzas, that the three-decker was possessed of a domestic tameness which, with stereotyped characters and plots, celebrated the virtues and values of God, morality, and country:

Fair held the breeze behind us—'twas warm with lovers' prayers.
We'd stolen wills for ballast and a crew of missing heirs.
They shipped as Able Bastards till the Wicked Nurse confessed,
And they worked the old three-decker to the Islands of the Blast.

By ways no gaze could follow, a course unspoiled by Cook,
Per Fancy, fleetest in man, our titled berths we took,
With maids of matchless beauty and parentage unguessed,
And a Church of England parson for the Islands of the Blest.

We asked no social questions—we pumped no hidden shame—
We never talked obstetrics when the Little Stranger came;
We left the Lord in Heaven, we left the fiends in Hell.
We weren't exactly Yussuf's, but--Zuleika didn't tell.

No moral doubt assailed us, so when the port we neared,
The villain had his flogging at the gangway, and we cheered.
'Twas fiddle in the foc's'le--'twas garlands on the mast,
For every one got married, and I went ashore at last.

I left 'em all in couples a-kissing on the decks.
I left the lovers loving and the parents signing cheques.
In endless English comfort, by the country-folk caressed,
I left the old three-decker at the Islands of the Blest!

The three-decker was a very moral article, and it was kept that way by Mudie and the proprietors of other circulating libraries.
Since the success of a novel depended, in almost all cases, upon the sizeable purchases of the libraries, they were in an excellent position to demand conformity to the conventional and non-controversial; and it was necessary to the business interests of the libraries that fiction be properly moral. They had discovered that they could not afford to offend their subscribers by allowing novels on their shelves which were of questionable taste. The criterion for purchase by the libraries was: "Would you or would you not give that book to
Novels which did not satisfy the requirement, such as Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *The Morals of Mayfair* by Mrs. Anne Edwards, George Moore's *A Modern Lover*, and certain tales by Charles Reade, were, of course, excluded from the libraries' decent shelves. This sort of unofficial censorship has been described by F. Alan Walbank:

Once a novelist was "made," however, it was necessary for continued success to go on writing the circulating library type of novel, and woe betide anyone who came under Mudie's ban! Publishers, realizing that the public would not readily buy when it could borrow, found a sounder investment in the author who conformed and, indeed, hardly dared to issue a book which would injure their connection in such an extensive market. Mr. Mudie soon had a host of imitators and the system spread to such an extent that middle class taste practically swamped all other. One result of this can be seen in the subjects chosen by mid-Victorian popular novelists, usually those affording a taste of high life and sensation-without-sex.

Since the libraries refused to accept any novel they deemed offensive to young unmarried women, publishers were timid. Few were willing to challenge the position taken by the libraries, and most publishers refused to publish novels which they felt would be objectionable to the libraries unless such novels were revised and the objectionable portions excised. George Moore's report of a conversation with the publisher Tinsley concerning *A Modern Lover* is indicative of such timidity:

"I [Moore] mentioned the name, *A Modern Lover*, and he replied that the name would attract a great many readers, but he feared that the libraries might take exception to it, especially if there were a divorce, or a woman living apart from her husband, or a husband living apart from his wife. "The libraries are essentially domestic, they
have established a censorship, and this is possible because novels are not published at popular prices as with you in France. In France a novel costs three francs and a half, and here the novel is printed in three volumes and costs thirty-one-and-sixpence.\footnote{108}

Tinsley told Moore that he would have his novel evaluated and that "by the deletion of a few passages I may get it passed into both libraries [Mudie's and Smith's]."\footnote{109} Even with deletions, however, the libraries refused to stock Moore's novel openly upon their shelves.

Many novelists, who wished to treat life realistically, encountered similar experiences. Michael Sadleir indicates that the morality imposed by the three-decker system placed certain restrictions upon the subject matter and treatment of the novels of Rhoda Broughton: the necessity of ending sensational incident in unconvincing calm, and an unwillingness "to carry her love-stories to the lengths of sexual irregularity which they obviously require."\footnote{110} Mary Elizabeth Braddon was another who had to give the public of the libraries what it wanted. Says Sadleir:

If her public and the taste of the day would have tolerated it, Miss Braddon would have made good use of a greater freedom. In nearly every one of her plots there is a situation which would normally have arisen out of, or would normally develop into, some sexual irregularity. But it never does. An unconvincing twist is given to the story, and the impermissible is avoided. But the novelist would obviously have had it otherwise. She knew the world, and that a smug insistence on maidenly virtue, manly continence, and general irreproachable domesticity was hopelessly at odds with the sort of actuality she pretended to describe. Unfortunately, while editors, publishers and public wanted stories of high life and crime, they would not stomach high-livers and criminals as they really were.\footnote{111}
The reader of the twentieth-century, therefore, must accept in
the three-decker novel an insistence upon virtue; modest villainies,
carefully selected and dutifully punished; passion tempered with an
improbable morality; and propriety. Even Trollope had his troubles
with this middle-class morality. He was forced to remove objection-
able material from *Barchester Towers*, for, in writing to his pub-
lisher, William Longman, he said:

I now send your reader's list with my observa-
tions and I feel inclined to think that you will
be contented with what I have done. I have
complied completely with by far the greater
number of his suggestions and have done so in
part with all but three. I have de bon coeur
changed all the passages marked as being too
warm. And I believe in every case have struck
out the whole of what was considered objection-
able.112

The ridiculous degree to which super-cautiousness was exercised in
judgment of the objectionable is further implied by additional con-
cessions of Trollope to Longman's reader. Trollope wrote to Longman,
"At page 93 by all means put out 'foul breathing' and page 97 alter
'fat stomach' to 'deep chest,' if the printing will now allow it."113

To an age accustomed to the freedom of language in a *Ulysses* or
*Tropic of Cancer*, the decorous preference for "deep chest" seems
hopelessly quaint; but to the novelist of the nineteenth century,
"fat stomach" and similar crudities were matters of much concern.

Perhaps Trollope was agreeable to his publisher's wishes
because, possessed of the same middle-class concept of morality as
his readers, he honestly believed that fiction should be virtuous.
In his *An Autobiography*, Trollope continually insisted upon the
morality of his own novels, expressing the concept that they were, in part, sermons which taught the lessons of "true honour, true love, true worship, and true humanity." To Trollope, the novelist should be a preacher:

... the novelist, if he have a conscience, must preach his sermons with the same purpose as the clergyman, and must have his own system of ethics. If he can do this efficiently, if he can make virtue alluring and vice ugly, while he charms his readers instead of wearying them, then I think Mr. Carlyle need not call him distressed ...

In addition to the squeamishness of Mudie and the pedestrian morality of his subscribers, another factor was also partially responsible for the carefully controlled, timid subject matter of the three-decker: the woman novelist. There is some truth in the traditional view that the three-decker, "the queen of the circulating libraries" in Walbank's terms, was written for women by women. Charles Reade, for example, once complained that the small circulating libraries, which refused to accept his novels, carried only "ladies' novels." During the 1830's and 1840's, twenty percent of the novels published by Bentley were written by women, and by the 1870's and 1880's the percentage had more than doubled. So thoroughly did these female novelists intrude into the market for fiction that Royal Gettmann concludes: "To run the risk of being more specific it might be said that for the period 1865-85 a three-decker was a novel written by Mrs. Henry Wood, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, or 'Ouida'."

Consequently, such novels occupied themselves with scenes from
domestic life, sentiment, and love, all of which were governed in
their treatment by feminine gentility, in addition to the respect
for public morality. Walbank has said, for example:

At first, women writers resorted to suspense in lieu of violence and dealt rather in sentiment than shock. Their plots were, at times, rather humdrum affairs of prolonged misunderstandings, but, as counterweight, they had unique command of the domestic scene . . . . Children, servants, governesses, embroidery and reading by lamplight, details of dress and deportment form the background to acutely observed scenes at the dance, dinner-party or bazaar. 118

Because of such feminine interests and daintiness in choice of subject matter, because of the morality of the public and the criteria of the circulating libraries, constant pressure was exerted upon the novelist to avoid or severely modify extreme realism. As a result, three-deckers were tame, orthodox, and, at times, monotonously similar. It is with some validity that a critic, of the Saturday Review in 1859, criticized the result of novels "constructed with a view to certain well-established tastes." "We know," he said, "the rules of the course, the names, weights, and colours of the riders, the prizes which are to be run for; and we could, at most stages of the proceeding, bet with all but infallible accuracy on the result of the race." 119

This, then, was the three-decker: a novel of three volumes, 900 pages, and a price of a guinea and a half. It was padded by all the ingenious devices a frantic author could devise: rambling biographical plots, multifarious characters, attendant subplots, elaborate descriptions, extended dialogue, and open, undisguised digression.
In the words of Kipling, "It took a watch to steer her, and a week to shorten sail." If the author himself could not make his book fit the set format, the printer could. With large margins, heavy leading, excessive chapter divisions, quotations, and prefaces, the three-decker was puffed up to adequate size. In addition, the three-volume novel was affected in other ways by its format and by those who trafficked in its popularity. Three volumes lent themselves to the utilization of a three-act structural pattern. Since it was commercially created and oriented, its subject matter was of great concern to the proprietors of the lending libraries and the public. Accordingly, the three-decker was domesticated and restricted in its range of subject and incident. It was framed, tamed, and, in short, popular with almost everybody.
Footnotes to Chapter II

1^Letters of Sir Walter Scott, V, l43.
2^A Victorian Publisher, p. 232.
3^Ibid., p. 232.
4^Lauterbachs, p. 270.
5^Gettmann, p. 232.
6^Ibid., p. 232.
7^Ibid., p. 233.
9^Lauterbachs, p. 290.
11^Letters, p. 44.
12^Grierson, p. 207.
13^Ibid., p. 165.
14^Random Recollections, I, 240.
15^Ibid., II, 30-31.
16^Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 141.
17^Letters, p. 89.
19^See Gettmann, p. 233.
20^These and all subsequent figures for word length of novels are from the Lauterbach's, "The Nineteenth Century Three Volume Novel," pp. 290-295.
22Gettmann, pp. 239-240.
23Ibid., p. 242.
24Sadleir, Things Past, p. 108.
25Gettmann, pp. 238-239.
26Ibid., p. 235.
27Ibid., p. 236.
28Ibid., p. 251.
29Sadleir, Things Past, p. 100.
30Ibid., pp. 85-86.
31See Gettmann, pp. 48-49.
32Trollope, Letters, p. 48.
33Ibid., p. 89.
34Ibid., pp. 89-90.
36"Tales of My Landlord," p. 571.
38Letters, p. 342.
39Ibid., p. 85.
40An Autobiography, p. 199.


52. G. P. R. James, *De L'Orme* (London, 1830), I, 1.


60. Gettmann, pp. 236-237.


62. I, 1h2-1h5.

63. I, 220-221.

64. III, 138-140.

65. II, 92, 111, 123.

66. II, 122.


69. Ibid., I, 62, 74, 85.

66 Gettmann, p. 255.
67 Ibid., pp. 252-253.
68 An Autobiography, p. 199.
70 See I, 108 and I, 76.
71 See I, 175 and I, 121.
72 I, 201-203.
73 Grantley Manor, I, 112-113.
74 The Vicar of Wrexhill, II, 109-110.
75 Cloudesley, II, 34-36.
77 Grantley Manor, I, 107-108.
78 Adam Graeme, I, 19.
79 Sterling ed., p. 238.
80 Ibid., p. 243.
81 Ibid., pp. 244-245.
83 Ibid., p. 272.
84 Gettmann, p. 235.
85 Ibid., p. 234.
86 Ibid., p. 234.
88 "A Victorian Publisher," p. 234.

90. Ibid., p. 279.


92. *Henry Esmond*, II, 26h.


94. *Japhet*, I, 6h.

95. See Lauterbachs, p. 275.

96. Ibid., p. 274.

97. Ibid., p. 275.

98. See Table II, pp. 290-294.


100. Ibid., p. 277.


103. *Novels of the Eighteen Forties*, p. 23.

104. *A Victorian Publisher*, p. 250.


107. Ibid., pp. 10-11.


109. Ibid., p. xviii.


111. Ibid., p. 79.

113 Ibid., p. 31.
115 Ibid., p. 185.
116 See Gettmann, p. 248.
117 Ibid., p. 249.
118 Walbank, p. 15.
119 Quoted by Gettmann, p. 245.
CHAPTER III

TWO THREE-DECKERS: JOHN GALT'S ROTHERLAN
AND WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY'S HENRY ESHEOND

The three-deckers examined thus far have been seen only in
fragments lifted from the context of their novels as illustrations
of those particular features that the three-volume format brought to
the nineteenth-century novel. There has been cited a long description
here, excess dialogue there, here a digression, there an unnecessary
chapter division, as if these peculiarities of the three-decker were
isolated segments of these novels, separate and immediately preceiv-
able padded inserts, as obvious as foam rubber pads on the counter
of a lingerie store. None of these detached illustrations can, how­
ever, suggest by itself the complexity of the various influences of
the three-volume format upon one individual novel. A three-volume
novel was, of course, a complete entity, conceived and composed as
such. The length and padding were merely part of a larger design,
either consciously or unconsciously, skillfully or awkwardly, woven
into the fabric of the whole. Thus it is necessary to examine a
complete three-volume novel, to unravel its various ordinary and
peculiar threads, in order to observe the totality of influence the
three-decker format could exert upon a single novel. For this
purpose, two novels have been chosen, one from the earliest period
of three-volume influence, one from the height of its authority; one rather obscure, the other fairly well known; one rather awkward, the other skillfully composed. Together, John Galt's *Rothelan* (1824) and Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* (1852) demonstrate, in part, the complexities involved in writing a novel under the three-volume system and the different patterns this system of publication could create.

Though Galt's *Rothelan* when published in 1824 sold for a guinea, rather than the thirty-one shillings sixpence which later became the standard price, the novel did make a rather awkward attempt to follow the popular three-volume form. Volume I contained eight pages of prefatory material (title pages, dedication, advertisement) and 299 pages of story text. Volume II contained two title pages, a title page for Part III, and 306 pages of text. Volume III, however, was an odd compilation of several items. The volume contained two title pages and a title page for Part IV; the conclusion of the novel (pp. 3-98); a postscript (pp. 99-111); a title page for a brief collection of tales, "The Quarantine or, Tales of the Lazaretto"; an introduction to the tales (pp. 117-120); three tales (pp. 121-202, 203-278, 279-311); and six pages of additional advertising for books recently published by Oliver & Boyd and George Whittaker.

The composite nature of the third volume was certainly not typical of the ordinary three-volume novel, and it bears witness to the fact that *Rothelan* was a reluctant three-decker. First of all, Galt's talent was unsuited to the length required by three volumes. "He was," says Gettmann, "at his best in the straightforward
chronicle which ironically unveiled typical characters in a limited setting. He lacked a feeling for a critical situation and therefore had difficulty in framing a plot. In addition, Rothelan was a hurriedly written novel which Galt would have preferred to have printed in two volumes. During the composition of the novel, business affairs called Galt to London. The novel was, therefore, rapidly concluded, and the unrevised manuscript sent to D. M. Moir with a plea for aid in revising the proofs. The manuscript (about 110,000 words, far less than average length for a three-decker) was found to be too short for the profitable three-volume format; and since, Galt said, it was "physically impossible to finish Rothelan to the extent required in the allowed time," additional material had to be added. The "advertisement" in the first volume of the novel warned the reader what to expect: "The Manuscript of Rothelan not proving sufficient to fill three volumes, three additional Tales have been added, forming part of a design which the Author has some intention of hereafter completing." The addition of these three extraneous tales enabled the novel to fill three complete volumes. These three tales, "The Physiognomist," "The Improvisatore," and "The German's Tale," were loosely placed within a framework provided by a four-page "Introduction" which represented the stories as being told by refugees from a plague in Malta. The three tales have absolutely no artistic connection with the novel itself; they are mere excess filler, added to satisfy the need to form three volumes of the approved length. Jennie Aberdein, in commenting upon this obvious and awkward arrangement, has said:
We see in this book best of all how hard Galt found it to wind up his Pegasus for a three-volume flight. The mechanism ran down completely, early in the third volume, which had consequently to be filled out with three short tales, one of which, *The Physiognomist* is an unacknowledged extract from *The Majolo*.5

Galt, recognizing the deficiencies of his manuscript in regard to length, originally desired that the novel be published in two volumes. The book would have made two tidy volumes, but convention and the profit motive demanded three. Galt lamented the external pressures which forced him to publish in three volumes within the novel itself. In a lengthy tirade in the second volume he complained:

> Though at this particular season, most desirous of sending out two rather than three volumes, we are told that the public is such an unconscionable hydra, that it would now be just as likely to buy a ten-tomd tale of householdry, in the Richardson style, as a biform historical romance. The poor public, we suspect, is in this, as in many other instances, blamed very unjustly; for we have uniformly observed, that the fashion and form of things are much less considered by it than the substance. Not but that in the management of the circulating libraries, for which all judicious authors now expressly write, there may be some advantage to having books, which, by being in three or more volumes, can be placed with proportional profit in as many different fair hands.6

This outburst and its related digressive material, it might be pointed out, were sufficient to add three badly needed pages to the second volume.

Though Galt deplored having to pad his novel, he did it; and he was taken to task by the critics for doing so. An anonymous reviewer in *The British Critic* recognized Galt's obvious attempts to fill three volumes and condemned the practice heartily:
The only rarities of which Rothesan can boast, are, first a very candid confession in the advertisement that the object of its author was to fill three volumes . . . . This is taking matters coolly. The volumes are contracted for: the publishing day has arrived—the Crusaders are "preparing for publication," nay, they are actually "in the press." If Mr. Galt waits another week, the market will be lost—so off goes Rothesan, "a romance in three volumes," barely long enough to fill up two of them. The naivete with which this business is communicated to the reader renders it entertaining.

This disturbed critic observed only the obvious: the irrelevant tales and tangential material of Volume III. Rothesan, however, was vigorously padded in other ways in order to satisfy the format's requirements of length. Though the novel itself covered only two and one-third volumes, there is a full range of padding to be discerned in the book.

Like many a three-decker, Rothesan benefited in length by the biographical nature of its plot. It traced the life of its hero for over two decades, from infancy to young manhood; and this scope can, perhaps, best be seen in a brief plot summary. In Volume I, Edmunde de Crosby, Lord of Rothesan, is killed in the Scottish wars of the fourteenth century soon after returning to England with his Florentine wife and young son. His brother, Sir Amias, instigates rumors that deny Edmunde's marriage, branding Lady Albertina an adulteress and her son Rothelan a bastard; since she has no evidence to prove her marriage, she is unable to prevent Sir Amias from seizing his brother's property. Lady Albertina's son is kidnapped by her unscrupulous brother-in-law and given to a peasant family to be reared. Lady Albertina then flees and is befriended by a rich Jewish money-
lender, Adonijah. Through the efforts of Adonijah, young Rothelan is found and, years later, becomes a page of Lord Mowbray. In the Scottish wars, however, he is again kidnapped by agents of his uncle and sold to the Scots. In Volume II, during a later invasion of England by the Scots in which young Rothelan participates, he is captured as a rebel by the English. Ransomed by Adonijah, Rothelan is re-united with his mother, quarrels with his uncle, and flees for his safety to France. Lady Albertina and Adonijah appeal to the Bishop of Winchester to redress the wrongs done her and her son by Sir Amias; and he is called before the Bishop, repents of his crimes, but does nothing to redress them. In France, Rothelan encounters Sir Mowbray, again becomes a page, and returns to England. There he engages the wrath of the Earl of Lincoln by wooing his daughter. At the end of the volume, the witnesses to Lady Albertina’s marriage are summoned from Italy, but they arrive in London dead, killed by the plague aboard ship. Volume III opens with an account of the plague’s devastation of England. Hubert Neville, whom Sir Amias persuaded to kill Rothelan’s father years ago, suddenly appears after years of concealment. Now repentant, Neville threatens Sir Amias with exposure; and he obligingly kills himself. Lady Albertina’s and Rothelan’s rights and property are restored, and the novel ends with Rothelan’s marriage to the daughter of the Earl of Lincoln.

This is not a tight, unified plot. Rather, it is an aimless extension of a core situation, based loosely upon the life of James Annesley, to which have been added numerous episodes and characters.
There are, for example, in this novel fifteen well developed characters of major significance: Sir Amias; his wife; his daughter; Ralph Hanslap, Sir Amias's henchman; Lady Albertina; Rothelan; Adonijah; his brother; Sir Mowbray; King Edward III; the Earl of Lincoln; his daughter; Gabriel de Glowr and his wife, the Scottish captors of Rothelan; Hubert Neville. Given time enough, Galt could have extended his story to the required three full volumes by involving these (and perhaps other) characters in additional episodes. There are certainly numerous irrelevant subplots already. Galt found many additional words in such episodes as a lengthy resume of Edward's claim to the French throne (I, 149-158), his romance with the Countess of Salisbury (I, 252-279), the quarrel between the citizens of Musseburgh and Gabriel de Glowr (I, 229-241; 280-299), the establishment of the Order of the Garter (II, 242-252). All of these episodes are completely foreign to the primary plot, and their only justifiable function is to establish the authenticity of the historical background of the novel. When one counts the number of pages they covered, one senses that Galt wrote with a need for pages, not background, for none of these scenic episodes effectively evokes the atmosphere of the fourteenth century. They function primarily as remotely related historical footnotes to the action.

Once, for example, Galt frankly admitted that he was padding his novel by the multiplication of these episodes. In the first chapter of Part V, he began with three pages of personal digression stating that he would like to produce a novel in two volumes, but the publishing trade required that he expand his novel to three
This artificial need, Galt implied, forced him to add the
plot complication which followed in the chapter:

... there is not one of our readers, be he ever
so courteous, or she ever so kind, that would not,
at this juncture, rather hear what immediately
resulted from the contrition of Sir Amias de
Crosby, than all that could be said relative to
this most impertinent personal digression. But,
unfortunately, that is the very thing which our
author does not furnish the means of supplying.
On the contrary, he opens the fifth part of his
Chronicle with an account of the arrival in
London of the Lady of Falaside, riding, as we
have already described, on a pillion behind
Robin-the-louper,—a circumstance, in our
opinion, of no particular interest ... .

The rest of the chapter, also, is "of no particular interest," for
Galt interrupted his narrative flow and introduced into his plot the
irrelevant episode of Lady Falaside's discovery of a minor secret
which could cause difficulties for the hero Rothelan. Later, in the
third chapter of the fifth part, Galt re-introduced this artifically
created problem in order to create another chapter of unnecessary
dialogue and spun-out development of insignificant asides. By this
completely irrelevant wrinkle to his plot, however, Galt was able to
add two chapters (a total of twenty-five pages) to his novel.

One of the major methods whereby Rothelan was stuffed out in an
attempt to complete a full set of volumes was excessively long, and
often needless, description. In the novel, the story is represented
as based on an ancient manuscript which Galt is transcribing, pruning
in the process. In the first volume, Galt stated, tongue in cheek,
that he would not delay the movement of his novel by relation of the
elaborate descriptions found in the source. Here is one of his
The chronicler's description of King Edward's departure from Westminster is so full of life, spirit, and gallantry, that we shall not attempt to trace even the outline. Scenes of chivalry, and the pride, pomp, and panoply of war, accord not indeed with our domestic pencil. The colours on our pallet consist of the universal elements and properties of the heart, and the merit of the subjects on our canvass must be found in something more endearing and enduring among mankind, than the fashions of the draperies, or the ornaments and architecture in the background. Need we then be emulous to imitate those things which we regard but as the subordinate, when the more delicate and difficult present a far nobler scope to our best endeavours? Instead, therefore, of transcribing what is related of the composed dignity with which the Knights set forward, manifesting, by the fortitude of their aspect, how justly experience had instructed them in the chances of war,—or of the curvetting of the squires, ambitious to be thought bolder than they felt,—or of the important looks of the young pages, so big with the greatness of the occasion,—or of the alehouse visages of the grooms, and the ribaldry of their farewells to their companions among the on-lookers;—instead of these things, or of the courageous shouts of the soldiery and of the people,—or of the waving of the pennons,—or of the glittering of breast-plates,—or of the answering of trumpets,—or of wives clinging to their husbands, as they reluctantly dragged themselves from their embraces,—or of fond maidens that stood so far aloof, sighing, that for modesty they might not so cling to those who were as dear to them,—or of aged fathers silently shaking hands with blithe and brave sons;—instead of transcribing all that is said of these, we must entreat the courteous reader to imagine for himself in what manner the most peerless pen hath set them forth . . .

Since this passage covered two and a half pages of text, Galt's courteous readers needed little imagination to supply what his description omitted.

A similar use of description is found in the third volume.
(pp. 3-7). Obviously pressed by the need to fill pages, Galt began the volume with over four padded pages of minute description of the ravages of the plague. In the same meticulous fashion as Defoe in his treatise upon an imaginary London Plague, Galt ran the gamut of the unpleasant results of a great pestilence: mothers casting away their infected children; the abandoning of prisons, markets, farms, churches, homes; the wild roaming of abandoned and starving domestic animals and pets; the funeral carts and gaping common graves. Though the description is effectively vivid, it is nonetheless un-needed and appropriately lengthy.

Perhaps the most ridiculously obvious of Galt's padded descriptions is found in the second volume. Here, under the guise of fidelity to his imagined source, Galt included a completely irrelevant and minutely comprehensive description of a woman (a very minor figure) at her spinning wheel. The episode serves no function in the narrative. It is not relevant to the action. It is never mentioned again, and it is not related to anything that precedes or follows it. It is not even local or background color. It existed merely for itself and the two padded pages it could fill:

The method of her spinning, says our author (digressing with his usual freedom from the subject immediately before him), was, in a wonderful and mystical manner, making her, in seeming to the eyes of young grammarians, had any such been looking, as one of those three solemn sisters, who twine, mete, and mingle the threads of mortal destiny.

First, by some cunning of craft, she held with her left thumb and forefinger a rowan of carded wool to the point of the spindle, and then gently touching the periphery of the wheel with her right hand, the spindle twined in upon
itself a portion of the wool; thereupon she gave
the rim another more vehement sweeping touch,
stepping at the same time backward with her left
hand awfully aloft, drawing out the thread at
arm's length as she moved, and singing a melodious
ditty, the wheel all the while humming in unison,
and the spindle, like a greedy snake that hath
made some gross bird its prey, drawing in the
bombastious rowan, and growing thicker and thicker
in the middle as it fed.11

In Rothelan, Galt's descriptions were lengthy, prolix, and
frequently unnecessary. They did, however, contribute heavily to the
overall word total of the novel, and they seem to be created expressly
for this purpose. Galt was a skillful spinner of "bombastious rowan"
himself, and he was able to weave even more superfluous words into his
frequent digressive comments.

Galt was a master of the irrelevant digression, which he would
insert, suitably lengthened and adorned by ornate expression, wherever
the opportunity presented itself. A typical Galt digression is a
masterpiece of prosy superfluity, stating the unnecessary in ten
times the needed words. For example, there is a passage of nothing
in the first volume which added eleven lines, or half a page, to
the novel:

The exact spot at which they embarked is not
particularly mentioned, but, according to the
best opinion we have been able to form on the
subject, it was near, on or about, the very
place where the east wing of the Customhouse
now stands. Some antiquaries whom we know and
respect, both on account of their acumen and
erudition, are not agreed as to this, nor is
it, after all, of primary consequence that they
should, the main fact being indisputable; namely,
the embarkation of the lady, the Jew, and the
friar . . . .12

In brief, they embarked.
This sort of prolixity permeated the novel. Galt needed no excuse for digression, just an opportunity. Thus, for example, the first appearance of a character, a Jew, once provided the occasion for the equivalent of one page of irrelevant introductory commentary:

As it is an understood thing that the Jews must be converted to Christianity before the world is destroyed, we submit to the consideration of mankind whether all schemes and associations, having for their object the conversion of that stiff-necked people, ought not to be deprecated as being of a tendency to hasten on the end of the world. How far this is a desirable consummation, every man may determine by the state of his own business and bosom. However, we must not enlarge here on that important topic, lest we subject ourselves, in the opinion of some of the learned and logical, to the charge of making irrelevant digressions, farther than by observing, that this truth has been suggested by comparing the effects of the philanthropic anxiety of these times for the souls' health of the Jews with the condition and character of one Adonijah, a money-scrivener...

It is the presence of such a phrase as "lest we subject ourselves... to the charge of making irrelevant digressions" that indicates that Galt was fully conscious of his padding and was creating it purposefully. "But this is no place for personal adventures," he once said on another occasion, after he had devoted over a full page to a digression upon a personal experience. Such comments seem Galt's shamefaced apology for his half-hearted compliance to the demands of the three-decker form of publication.

In addition to these admissions of purposeful padding, the great number of digressions in the novel testify to the demands placed upon the author by the necessity of filling three volumes. Digressive comments abound in Rotheland; and the following chart, listing only
digressions which exceed half a page in length, gives full evidence of the extent a novel could be padded with irrelevancies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Digression</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Subject of Digression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 p.</td>
<td>I, 52-53</td>
<td>the conversion of the Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 pp.</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>the unfitness of people for their tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 pp.</td>
<td>101-103</td>
<td>the difference between knavery and crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 p.</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>the location of an ancient site of embarkation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/4 p.</td>
<td>206-207</td>
<td>the original name of a character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 pp.</td>
<td>222-223</td>
<td>a personal experience of the author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 p.</td>
<td>II, 41-42</td>
<td>the nature of parental love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 p.</td>
<td>55-56</td>
<td>experience and its lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 pp.</td>
<td>104-111</td>
<td>the errors in Scott's Redgauntlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pp.</td>
<td>122-124</td>
<td>the correspondence of nature to man's emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 pp.</td>
<td>177-180</td>
<td>the three-decker system of publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 p.</td>
<td>199-200</td>
<td>the Jewish qualities of the Scots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 pp.</td>
<td>212-252</td>
<td>the founding of the Order of the Garter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 p.</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>a sonnet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pp.</td>
<td>300-302</td>
<td>life insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 p.</td>
<td>III, 29-30</td>
<td>a song, complete with bars of music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 p.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>man is an unchanging creature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 pp.</td>
<td>69-70</td>
<td>a song, complete with music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description and frequent digression were the usual and most productive methods of padding employed by Galt in attempting to stretch *Rothelan* to three volumes. Seldom did he make use of the practice of including lengthy and largely irrelevant passages of dialogue; however, the first chapter of Part III (I, 149-158) shows that the technique was not unknown to him. It is a chapter of pure padding. The chapter relates the debate within the council of Edward III over the waging of war with France—a completely irrelevant episode. Since the war plays an extremely small role in the novel, it is wholly unnecessary that the reader comprehend Edward's reasons...
for waging it. It is still less necessary that he have detailed analysis of the King's ministers' arguments in debate upon the issue. Galt, however, supplied his readers with a full transcription of the arguments. Consequently, the chapter impedes the narrative and prods the reader into skimming through ten lagging pages. Basically, what Galt did in this chapter with his dialogue of ministers would be analogous to a modern reporter's citing the full debate in Congress over a controversial bill merely to state that the bill was passed; for in this chapter, one finds the characters Robert Count D'Artois, the Earl of Norfolk, the Earl of Suffolk, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, the Earl of Warwick, and King Edward each speaking his lengthy piece. The fact that none of these medieval rhetoricians, except King Edward, is ever heard from again in the novel, however pleasing this may be to the reader, proves their irrelevance to the plot. They are not characters, but names, mouthpieces for passages of unnecessary dialogue that were created merely to ensure a novel of adequate length.

_Rothelan_ also made good use of the craft of the printer. A full page of text, for example, contains only twenty-one lines; and there are, on the average, less than eight words per line. The number of words upon a full page of text, therefore, is only 160 to 170.

In addition, the novel employed far more than the usual number of chapter divisions (forty-five for a typical three-decker). _Rothelan_, though it occupies only two and one third volumes, contains a total of seventy chapters, over half again as many as normal. Volume I, for example, contains thirty-one chapters within its 299
pages, for an average chapter length of only nine and six-tenths pages per chapter, or less than 1,500 words. Volume II contains 309 pages divided into twenty-nine chapters. Volume III, in the ninety-eight pages of the novel itself, contains ten chapters. Since each chapter heading began with the chapter number, the title of the chapter, a quotation and a statement of its source, most chapters begin at a point at least two-thirds down from the top of the page. Moreover, rarely does the last page of a chapter contain more than a half page of type (the average number of lines on the last page of chapters in the first volume, for instance, is only ten). Thus, the division of Rothelan into seventy chapters added a total of at least thirty-five empty pages to the novel. In similar fashion, the novel was additionally divided into six parts, each of which (except the first) had its own separate title page containing the part number on one side and nothing on the other. This artless expedient added ten more blank pages to the novel.

The employment of quotations to head the title pages of chapters also contributed to the overall length of Rothelan. In the first volume, for example, a total of 132 lines of poetry are quoted. These, in addition to the chapter title, separating spaces and statement of source of quotation, occupy the equivalent of 227 lines of text, or ten and a half pages. Volume II contains 132 lines of quoted poetry, the equivalent of 203 lines of text, or nine and a half pages. Volume III contains 40 quoted lines, the equivalent of sixty-four lines of text, or three pages. Quotations of poetry, therefore, contributed twenty-three pages toward the completion of
Rothelan, it is obvious, is a thoroughly padded novel. Long, rambling plot, extra episodes and characters, excessive description, irrelevant dialogue, garrulous digressions, printer's stratagems: all the methods of padding are present in this novel, and they were all necessitated by the demands for length imposed by the three-volume format. They contributed nothing to the novel except length. The padding severely weakened this novel; and, for the most part, the villain was the required publishing format. The padding was crudely handled, to be sure; but had the necessity of providing length not been mandatory, Galt and Rothelan would have benefited greatly from the increased artistic freedom. The result certainly would have been a better, though shorter, novel.

Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* (1852), a later and a much more carefully constructed three-decker, demonstrates, on the other hand, that the three-volume format did not necessarily demand inferior fiction. *Henry Esmond* has its weaknesses, to be sure, and in part these weaknesses did result from writing for a specialized format; but the novel, on the whole, does manage to surmount successfully the difficulties presented by three-volume publication. Though perhaps excessively lengthy and slow moving to the modern reader, *Henry Esmond* fitted Victorian taste, and Trollope even regarded it as "the greatest novel in the English language." Almost all modern critics regard it as the most unified and carefully constructed of Thackeray's novels. Unlike Thackeray's other novels, *Henry Esmond* was written as a unit, and not in parts; and when published in
February 1852, the novel was a typical three-decker, selling for thirty-one shillings sixpence. The first volume was 344 pages long and contained, in addition to the text, a title page, a dedication to Lord Ashburton, a table of contents, a preface, a title page and an introduction to Book I. Volume II, including title pages for the volume and novel and a table of contents, contained 319 pages. Volume III, with similar prefatory material, contained 324 pages.

Henry Esmond, in comparison with the average three-volume novel, was a long book: 188,310 words by actual count. Thackeray, accustomed to the great length required by the part-issue or serial-ized novel, had no difficulty in filling three volumes. Unlike Galt, Thackeray followed the procedure of Trollope and stretched his subject to his canvas; and, as a result, Henry Esmond does not display the awkwardly obvious padding to be seen in Rothelan. Thackeray insured the adequate length of his novel by seizing upon a plot of almost limitless proportions—a biographical historical pageant. The novel traces the life of the title character from the age of twelve to middle age; and even the earlier and later periods of his life receive treatment through flashbacks and the "Preface." It was an easily expandable basic situation, governed in length only by the number of incidents and experiences the author desired to include. Since a three-volume novel was desired, the episodes in Henry Esmond are numerous. There is no concentration upon a particular phase of Henry Esmond's life, but rather the novel enumerates various incidents throughout the full range of Esmond's growth to maturity. Thackeray relates his background, his religious education, his vast
reading and education, his life at Cambridge in Volume I. In Volume II, he depicts Esmond's obtaining a commission in the army, his love for Beatrix, his experiences in battle. In Volume III are seen his retirement from the army, his efforts at literature, his unsuccessful plot to restore the Pretender to the throne, his marriage to Rachael, and his removal to America. All of Esmond's experiences, from the age of twelve to thirty-five, are presented to the reader in a full range of detailed episodes, many more than would be produced in a typical novel of the twentieth century.

It is futile, of course, to speculate on what kind of novel Thackeray would have written without the demands of a particular publishing format before him. He was inventive, garrulous, and naturally long-winded; and even without the demands for length, *Henry Esmond* would probably have been a long novel. One doubts, however, that it would have been as long as it was. The history of Esmond would probably have been greatly condensed, with a stronger focus placed upon the major events in his life and the trivial and minor ones (such as Esmond's life at Cambridge, his meeting with Addison; his several campaigns in the army, traced, as Gordon Ray has observed, "in almost wearisome detail") his attempts to become a man of letters) greatly abridged or omitted. Thackeray had no such freedom, however; his novel had to be long, and consequently his subject was stretched to fit the requirement.

The wide boundaries of Thackeray's plot can be seen by the number of characters, both major and minor, in the novel. Characters abound in *Henry Esmond*. There are in the novel, for instance,
thirteen characters of major significance and three additional characters of a semi-important nature. These major characters are Henry Esmond, Rachael Castlewood, Francis Esmond Castlewood, Beatrix, Thomas Esmond, Isabel Esmond, Father Holt, Richard Steele, Tom Tusher, Frank Esmond, Lord Mohun, General Webb, and Prince Eugene. Rachael Esmond Warrington is of importance in the Preface and in relation to the notes added to the text; and Captain Westbury and the Duke of Hamilton also play somewhat significant roles in the novel. Unlike many of the characters in Galt's novel, who suddenly appear and disappear, with little or no relation to the actions, Thackeray's major characters are all successfully integrated into the plot. They all figure in Esmond's adventures and contribute to his maturity. None seems unnecessary; and compared to the army of major characters present in Thackeray's part-issue novels, who periodically appear and disappear according to the needs of the monthly installment, there seems, in comparison, a praiseworthy economy of character utilization in Henry Esmond.

In addition to this squad of major characters, there is a company of minor characters important enough to speak at least one sentence in the novel. There are thirty-two minor characters with speaking parts:

Mrs. Worksop  
Blaise  
a saddler's apprentice  
Madame Victoire  
Bryan Hawkshaw  
Earl of Warwick  
Mr. Atterbury  
Marquis of Blandford  
Joseph Addison  
Papa Pastoureaux  
Mrs. Tusher  
an officer in the army  
Mr. Corbet  
Nancy Siewwright  
Captain Macartney  
prison keeper's wife  
Duchess of Marlborough  
Mr. Boyle
Only with a few of the historical figures does the attention and space accorded them seem unjustified by their necessity to the action.

*Henry Esmond* was a heavily peopled novel. With this multitude of characters and the wide boundaries of a biographical plot in which to work, Thackeray had ample materials with which to fill three volumes.

The historical setting, extending from the reign of William and Mary through the days of Queen Anne, offered Thackeray other materials with which to fill his enlarged canvas: the fictional creation of actual historical personages. Some of these, the Queen, the Pretender, General Webb, and the Duke of Marlborough, for example, are successfully integrated into the action of the novel and made necessary to the plot. Others, however, are functionally somewhat unnecessary, and their presence can be justified only on the pretense of providing color and background to the historical setting. One suspects, however, that their appearance in the book was primarily due to the necessity of providing an acceptable method of filling pages.

The literary figures from the past incorporated into *Esmond*, Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, and Dr. Swift, are almost wholly irrelevant to the plot of the novel. They do provide historical background, of course, but all of them could have been eliminated
from the novel without any appreciable effect upon the action. Joseph Addison, for example, is introduced in an episode in Volume II (Chapter XI) merely to provide background color for the setting. Almost a complete chapter, over nineteen pages, is devoted to a portrait of him and to a reading of his poem, the "Campaign", on the battle of Blenheim. He is never active in the novel again. In similar fashion, Jonathan Swift appears in Volume III (pp. 138-142) in a five-page incident which is completely foreign to the action. Thackeray simply draws an irrelevant vignette of Swift, picturing him as a sycophant and a cantankerous snob. Once his name is used to provide historical accuracy to the setting, Swift also is never heard from again. Richard Steele, however, plays a considerable role in the novel. Thackeray used Steele primarily as an historical figure whose reputation added background to the plot, but Steele is also used for the purpose of filling pages. He emerges as one of those garrulous characters whose speech could contribute much to the completion of long three-volume novels. Steele's scholarly disquisitions and friendly personal anecdotes not only added humor and historical color to Henry Esmond, but they had the additional advantage of, unobtrusively, occupying large areas of space. Thus, there is padding in Thackeray's novel, but it is padding seemingly subordinate to other motives than the mere necessity of length. Addison, Swift, and Steele are historical figures whose place in the setting can not be questioned. Unfortunately, their place in the action is not secure. The attention devoted to them is not commensurate with their importance to the plot. Only Steele is successfully
integrated into the action, and even his appearances in the novel seem forced, the result of accidental meetings. For the most part, however, this weakness goes unnoticed in the liveliness and richness of the portraits drawn of them and in their contributions to the historical accuracy of the setting. Even when Thackeray pads, he does it gracefully.

The author's own apparent garrulity was also responsible for fringe padding in the novel. Thackeray's wordy personal digressions frequently added to the novel's length; and, since the novel is related in first person by the title character, the verbosity of these digressions is, artistically, partially justified by the loquaciousness of the narrator. Unlike Galt's digressions, Thackeray's ramblings are always relevant, serving generally to place an individual problem or circumstance of the characters within a universal framework. In Volume I, for instance, when the Castlewoods' marriage is jeopardized by Rachael's loss of her beauty, the narrator is made to project this situation upon a universal screen by commenting upon the ultimate disappointment of any man "who marries for mere beaux yeux." The fact that this digression covered a page and a quarter, however, suggests that the padding in Thackeray's digressions is not so much irrelevant as it is merely excessive in length. For example, in commenting upon Rachael's actions when her husband's ardor for her has cooled, Thackeray requires over a page (208 words) to complete a simple comparison:

What were this lady's feelings when forced to admit the truth whereof her foreboding glass had given her only too true warning, that with her
beauty her reign had ended, and the days of her love were over? What does a seaman do in a storm if mast and rudder are carried away? He ships a jury mast, and steers as he best can with an oar. What happens if your roof falls in a tempest? After the first stun of the calamity the sufferer starts up, gropes around to see that the children are safe, and puts them under a shed out of the rain. If the palace burns down, you take shelter in the barn. What man's life is not overtaken by one or more of these tornadoes that send us out of the course, and fling us on rocks to shelter as best we may?

When Lady Castlewood found that her great ship had gone down, she began as best she might, after she had rallied from the effects of the loss, to put out small ventures of happiness; and hope for little gains and returns, as a merchant on "Change," indolent pauperism pati, having lost his thousands, embarks a few guineas upon the next ship. She laid out her all upon her children . . . .

This is the sort of digression one finds in Henry Esmond: relevant, but unnecessarily long.

At the very beginning of the novel, for instance, Thackeray discusses, in the introduction to Book I, the concept of history behind the creation of the novel: "history familiar rather than heroical." This material, approximately 1200 words in length, covers seven pages. It could have been stated in one terse paragraph. Throughout the novel, Thackeray comments discursively upon such topics as a bride's realization of the commonplace abilities of her husband; the unappreciative regard people display toward true love and affection; the ephemeral nature of love; the discord in a house without love; a wife's discovery of her intellectual superiority to her husband; the husband's position in the family; a man's unrealized potential; the scars left by grief; the power of pretty bright eyes; the brutality of war; the worthlessness of pride and
ambition. Each of these reflections occupy, on the average, a page in length; and their presence in the novel, we may feel sure, was encouraged, at least in part, by the requirement of filling three volumes. Unlike Galt's digressions, however, the digressions of Thackeray are never superfluous; for his wise and gentle commentary is not only relevant to the situation, but it increases the reader's appreciation of the humor or pathos of the action through his identity with the universal problems and emotions of the characters. And again, in comparison with the digressive commentary found in the part-issue novels, Thackeray's disquisitions here are sparse indeed. Such novels as The Virginians, which demanded twenty-four parts of 11,000 words each, show heavy abuse of Thackeray's natural digressiveness; Esmond, however, practices a considered economy of wordy asides.

Henry Esmond proclaims its indebtedness to the three-decker tradition in still another way; its structure illustrates the three act framework often found in three-volume novels. The three-volume format, automatically dividing a novel into thirds physically, encouraged authors consciously to compose their books with each volume as a distinct structural division. Thackeray obviously thought of Henry Esmond in terms of divisions into separate volumes, for a letter of February 26, 1852, reveals Thackeray purposefully creating in Volume II a contrasting mood to that of Volume I: "Miss Bronte has seen the first volume and pronounces it 'admirable and odious.' Well, I think it is very well done, and very melancholy too; but the melancholy part ends with Vol. 1, and everybody begins
The result of such planning was a well-organized novel which follows the pattern of the three-act play—introduction, complication, resolution—by division of the hero's life into the tripartite segments frequently found in three-volume, biographical novels—childhood, manhood, and maturity. The first volume of *Henry Esmond*, for example, shows Esmond as a youth. The first half relates his meeting the Castlewoods; a flashback of his family's background, his early education, and the death of his father. The turning point, a minor climax, occurs halfway through the volume with the smallpox epidemic, the loss of Rachael's beauty, and the collapse of the Castlewoods' happy marriage. The action slowly begins to build, tracing Esmond's duties as a tutor, his life at Cambridge, and the visit of Lord Mohun, and is climaxed with the duel in which Lord Castlewood is killed. The novel ends on a note of suspense designed to carry the reader over to Volume II, leaving him wondering about the nature of the secret revealed on Lord Castlewood's deathbed, Rachael's reaction to her husband's death, and Esmond's fate for his participation in the duel.

Volume II traces Esmond's manhood. The first third of the volume narrates his brief imprisonment, his commission in the army, the review of the facts of Esmond's birth and the revelation of his secret right to Lord Castlewood's title, his first taste of combat. The turning point in this volume occurs at the end of the first third of the volume with Esmond's reinstatement at home and his falling in love with Beatrix. The rest of the volume carries Esmond
through his military campaigns; and the climax occurs, after Esmond's return to England and reaffirmation of his love for Beatrix, at the end of the volume when Beatrix reveals her engagement to Lord Ashburnham. This sudden and seemingly highly significant development, revealed on the last two pages of the volume, ends the volume with the suspenseful promise of a wedding in Volume III. That this is a purely artificial climax, prompted by the three-volume format and designed only to create the suspense necessary to carry the reader to the following volume, seems obvious. Not only is there no marriage in Volume III, but Beatrix's engagement is not mentioned until page 85; and there it is conveniently dismissed in a few words.

Volume III concludes the novel with the maturity of Esmond and the resolution of his problems. He resigns from the army, resumes his adoration for Beatrix, and is disappointed again with her engagement to a duke. The last two-thirds of the volume relates Esmond's futile attempt to put the Pretender, Prince Eugene, upon the throne of England; and the volume reaches a climax when Esmond's enchantment with Beatrix is exploded by her affair with Prince Eugene. The volume is concluded with Esmond's marriage to Rachael.

*Henry Esmond* thus emerges as a beautifully unified novel, quite different from Thackeray's usual productions sprawling through twenty or twenty-four episodic monthly numbers. Unlike the usual hodge-podge of characters and episodes to be found in Thackeray's novels in parts, *Esmond* is a well-knit novel and demonstrates that, to a writer of talent, the three-decker format did not necessarily produce inferior fiction. Actually, Thackeray seems to have
benefited from the imposed conditions, for they were indeed more lenient than those of the installment novel with its required segments and frenzied periods of forced composition. The external physical framework of three volumes produced in *Henry Esmond* a well-wrought internal symmetry, superior even to that of his magnificent *Vanity Fair*.

In comparison of the two novels, *Rothelan* and *Henry Esmond*, the former certainly one of the worst and the latter probably the best three-decker ever written, it can be seen that the totality of effect of the three-volume format was ultimately determined by the skill and genius of the author. There were initial requirements to be met in writing a three-decker, length, three units of narration, and conservative selection and treatment of subject matter, but the final excellence of the novel was determined by the author himself. His talent and experience determined whether the novel's length was to be produced by skillful selection of a plot expansive enough to fit the format or by piecemeal padding of episode, dialogue, description, and digression. His own sense of proportion determined if a novel was to straggle, like an exhausted snake, aimlessly through three volumes or if it was to be organized in a symmetry of proportioned segments. To an author like Galt, whose skill lay in the creation of individual scenes and character, the three-decker could be a nightmare. To a novelist like Thackeray, fully at home in the expanse of 900 pages, the format could impose beneficial restrictions. The only regret is that the novelists of the nineteenth century were not free to choose a format which suited their
individual talents and interests. They had, because of pressures from publishers, the public, and librarians, to produce three volumes, and not all of them were suited to the demands of the format.
Footnotes to Chapter III

1 _A Victorian Publisher_, p. 252.


3 _Ibid._, pp. 141-142.


6 _Rothelan_, II, 178-179.

7 "Rothelan," _The British Critic_, N. S., XXII (1824), 625.

8 See above, p. 155.

9 _Rothelan_, II, 179-180.

10 _Ibid._, I, 188-190.

11 _Ibid._, II, 97-98.

12 _Ibid._, I, 140.

13 _Ibid._, I, 52-53.

14 _Ibid._, I, 223.

15 _Autobiography_, p. 156.

16 _Lauterbachs_, p. 291.


19 _Ibid._, I, 198-199.

20 _Ibid._, I, 27.

22 Anna Ritchie, "Introduction" to Henry Esmond, Biographical ed. (New York, 1899), cxxiii.
CHAPTER IV

NOVELS ON THE INSTALLMENT PLAN

Throughout the nineteenth century, the three-volume novel was a luxury item, kept purposefully exorbitant in price by publishers and the powerful circulating libraries because of the profits it returned. To the average middle-class citizen, it was prohibitive; and he was forced to borrow rather than buy. The Victorian reader of modest means, however, was not absolutely denied proprietorship of new fiction, for during the 1830's and late 1850's two attempts were made to lower the high cost of original fiction: part-issue and serialization—novels on the installment plan, whereby the expense was made less painful to the pocket book by being spread out over a long period of time. To a matron or working man given palpitations of the purse at the thought of paying thirty-one and six for the frivolous pleasures of fiction, the weekly expenditure of pennies or the monthly payment of a shilling for a small portion of a new novel created neither anguish to the conscience nor torment to the budget. With the introduction of these inexpensive formats, the latest novel could become the property of almost everyone.

The first of these successful attempts to lower the high cost of original fiction, part-issue publication, created a new format for
the composition of novels, a form much more short-lived than the
three-decker, but, during the period of its popularity, no less
important. This method of publication involved the issuance of a
novel in fragments: twelve to thirty-two or more monthly or weekly
pamphlets containing assorted advertisements, one to four chapters
of text in from twenty-four to thirty-two pages, wrapped in colorful
illustrated covers of bright blue, buff, yellow, or green and selling
for a shilling or less. Sometimes the final portion was a double
number, of twice the normal length, which sold for twice the usual
monthly price. Since the cost of these monthly numbers was nominal,
a reader could obtain a novel, frequently more than a third longer
than a three-decker, for a total price one- to two-thirds less than
that of the princely volume edition. In January, 1843, for example,
a reader with a yen to be amused and a shilling to spend for the
purpose could have satisfied his desire with Part I of Dickens's
Martin Chuzzlewit. For his money he would have received, wrapped
in paper covers of bluish green, thirty-two pages, or the first three
chapters, of the text, two engravings of scenes from the novel, and
commercial requests for patronage by "Thomas Harris & Son, Opticians
to the Royal Family," "Doudney Brothers, Fashionable Tailors,"
"Wyld's Globes," and "Porr's Life Pills." In November, 1856, he
could have obtained Part I of Thackeray's The Virginians, consisting
of the first four chapters of the novel, two illustrations and
advertisements for books, baby bassinets, handbags, wigs, umbrellas,
cutlery, and cod-liver oil.

The creation of this new format for the publication of original
fiction had its origins in a fortunate accident rather than in a consciously studied attempt for originality; for it was, primarily, a modification of an existing format used for other purposes than the issuance of new fiction. The part-issue format used by Dickens and Thackeray, an honorable vehicle for the publication of serious fiction after the 1830's, sprang from two old, but rather disreputable, ancestors.

The first of these was the cheap part-issue of reprints of popular works. Its history is fairly ancient. According to R. M. Wiles, "Books had been published in parts as early as the last quarter of the seventeenth century, but it was not until a few works advertised in the *Tatler* (1709-1711) had proved successful that the possibilities of developing the piecemeal publishing of books into a thriving business began to be recognized." The first book of any appreciable size to be re-issued in numbers was Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises, or The Doctrine of Handy-words* (1678), and the second was Henry Care's *History of Popery* (1678-1683), issued in 240 consecutive parts. Few books, however, were issued prior to 1725; but during the following years, the experiment became a steady practice based on numerous successful ventures. The Knoptons, for instance, were said to have cleared between eight and nine thousand pounds from the publication, in both monthly and weekly parts, of Rapin's *History of England*. At least 300 separate works were reprinted in parts during the fifty years prior to 1748, and so firmly established was the practice by 1742 that Fielding satirized piecemeal publication in Book II of *Joseph Andrews*. 
During the latter half of the eighteenth century, Smollett's *History of England* was sold in sixpenny weekly numbers; and the most popular works of the times published in parts were "annontated and illustrated Bibles, histories of England and London, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, lives of Christ, and the writings of Flavius Josephus." Many of these were illustrated, and probably the engravings stimulated sales more than did the text. Novels were also reprinted in parts, in series such as the weekly numbers of Harrison's *Novelists' Magazine* (1780-1788); Cooke's edition of the British Novelists (1792), issued in sixpenny numbers; and Mudford's *British Novelists* (1810-1817). Other cycles of novels were *Legends of Terror*; and *Tales of the Wonderful and the Wild*, consisting of forty twopenny numbers in Volume I (1826) and thirty threepenny numbers in Volume II; *The Story Teller* (1827-1828), consisting of the reprinted fiction of Banim and Scott in weekly parts; and its sequel, *The Story Teller; or Minor Library of Fiction; The New Casket* (No. 1, Jan. 8, 1831) and *The Penny Story Teller* (No. 1, Aug. 1, 1832) by W. Strange; *The Penny Novelist* (No. 1, Aug. 3, 1832).

The second ancestor of the part-issue format of the Victorian age was somewhat more fashionable. This type of publication consisted of original material, often of architectural or topographical nature, which was expensively priced and elaborately illustrated: "raffish colour-plate books of the Tom and Jerry type." These part-issue publications were primarily picture books; the artist was, for the most part, the more important figure in their creation, and they contained, as Altick has stated, "just enough letterpress to give
continuity to the entertaining illustrations." These books sprang into existence during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, after the repeal of the law taxing newsprint had stimulated the expansion of periodical publications. Examples of these finely illustrated predecessors of Dickens's novels were Dr. Syntax's Tours by William Combe, and the farces by Pierce Egan, such as the extremely popular Life in London; or the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorne, Esq. and His Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom, Accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in Their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis, devoted to description of the sporting life of the early 1800's, accompanied by illustrations by Cruikshank, and published in one-shilling monthly parts. Other writers who produced works in this genre have been described by Earle Davis:

Theodore Hook contrived attractive rogues who rambled through society managing to get into constant amorous difficulties and comic situations; Robert Surtees constructed tales of sporting adventures and misadventures with gun, rod, and reel. These writers were published in weekly or monthly installments. They depended greatly upon illustrations and comic drawings, having kinship with the comic strip serial writers of the twentieth century, or even the so-called comic books. It was Egan, Hook, and Surtees that Dickens first surpassed.

Both of these two forms of part-issue publication were regarded as low and inferior types of publications until late in the 1830's and thought unfit as vehicles for issuance of serious fiction. To a nation accustomed to the lordly standard of the three-volume novel, they indicated cheap, unimportant reprints or frivolous joke books, evanescent as smoke and just as weighty. This ill favor suffered
by these early utilizations of the part-issue format can be seen in a review of Dickens's fiction, in the Edinburgh Review of 1838, which expressed the opinion that Dickens's work would suffer because it had adopted an unglamorous format; the reviewer regretted that many readers would think this of Dickens:

He has put them forth in a form attractive, it is true, to that vast majority, the idle readers—but not one indicative of high literary pretensions; or calculated to inspire a belief of probable permanence of reputation. They seem, at first sight, to be among the most evanescent of the literary ephemerae of their day—mere humorous specimens of the lightest kind of light reading.

It was Dickens's *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836-1837) which was to end the artist's dominant role in part-issue publication, to make it a fitting and acceptable format for the novel, and to influence the publication of fiction for the following fifty years. In November, 1835, the artist Robert Seymour suggested to the publishing firm of Chapman & Hall the publication of a "series of cockney sporting plates," a collection similar to those Seymour had fashioned for a previous book, *The Squib Annual*. Chapman replied that "they might do, if accompanied by letter-press and published in monthly parts"; and another typical picture book seemed in the offering. After unsuccessfully attempting to secure the services of another writer to compose the rather unimportant letter-press, Chapman offered the job to Dickens, a journalist who had composed a series on cockney life in the *Monthly Magazine* and *Morning Chronicle*. Dickens has described the offer:
The idea propounded to me was that the monthly something should be a vehicle for certain plates to be executed by Mr. Seymour; and there was a notion, either on the part of that admirable humorous artist, or of my visitor, that a Nimrod Club, the members of which were to go out shooting, fishing, and so forth, and getting themselves into difficulties through their want of dexterity, would be the best means of introducing these. I objected, on consideration, that although born and partly bred in the country I was no great sportsman, except in regard to all kinds of locomotion; that the idea was not novel, and had already been much used; that it would be infinitely better for the plates to arise naturally out of the text; and that I would like to take my own way, with a freer range of English scenes and people, and was afraid I should ultimately do so in any case, whatever course I might prescribe to myself at starting. My views being deferred to, I thought of Mr. Pickwick, and wrote the first number."

The rest is familiar history. The Pickwick Papers first appeared in March, 1836, in green wrappers, priced at one shilling a part, and containing twenty-four pages and four illustrations. The publishers' hopes for its success were modest, and only 400 of the 1,000 copies printed of the first number were bound; sales seemed to justify this pessimism, and only 500 copies were first printed of the second number. Seymour died between the first and second numbers, and Hablot Brown was engaged to do the plates for the remaining numbers, whose contents were altered to include eight more pages of text, but only two illustrations. With the appearance of the delightful Sam Weller in the fifth number, Dickens's letter-press captured the public fancy, and the novel quickly became the phenomenal success that was to launch Dickens on his career and establish a new method of publishing original fiction. By the time the fourteenth
part appeared, 20,000 copies were not enough to satisfy public demand; and the booksellers were besieged with requests for back issues. The announced circulation of part seventeen was 26,000 copies and that of the last two numbers was 29,000 copies.  

The *Pickwick Papers* was published in a total of twenty numbers, bound in nineteen monthly parts (the last part was a double number priced at two shillings). A new format for the novel was thus established, for with such a success behind him, Dickens continued to write for this mode of publication which was to become his and, in variations upon the form, Thackeray's trademark. Eight of Dickens's novels adopt the same uniform pattern: twenty monthly shilling numbers, bound as nineteen, with thirty-two pages and two illustrations. The public embraced these later novels with a passion equal to their ardor for *Pickwick*. Fifty thousand eager customers spent their shillings for the first number of *Nicholas Nickleby* and each number thereafter; the average sale of *Dombey and Son* was 30,000. Though no part of *Martin Chuzzlewit* reached a sale higher than 23,000 copies, *Bleak House* sold in the vicinity of 35,000 copies per number; and Part I of *Edwin Drood* reached a sale of 50,000 copies. The early sale of *David Copperfield* was 25,000 copies, and the circulation increased as the novel became popular. The second number of *Little Dorrit* sold 35,000 copies.

The gold-lined pockets of Charles Dickens and his publisher must have seemed the ultima Thule of success to the world of Victorian publishing, for they prompted, as was to be expected, imitation. Publication in parts was recognized as an excellent
method with which to part the public from its pennies and shillings; for pennies and shillings, in volume sales, ultimately added up to pounds. Thackeray, G. P. R. James, Charles Lever, William Harrison Ainsworth, Anthony Trollope and others used the part-issue mode of publication, with numerous variations in length, for many of their most famous works. All of Thackeray's major novels, with the exception of Henry Esmond, were issued in parts: Vanity Fair appeared in twenty monthly shilling numbers; The Virginians in twenty-four; and Pendennis and The Newcomes in twenty-four numbers, issued as twenty-three with the last a double number at two shillings. Trollope's part-issue novels appeared in a variety of forms: Orley Farm, Can You Forgive Her, and The Way We Live Now were issued in twenty monthly parts priced at a shilling each; The Vicar of Bullhampton was published in eleven monthly parts, priced at a shilling, with the last part a double number at half-a-crown; The Last Chronicle of Barset and He Knew He Was Right appeared in thirty-two weekly parts selling for sixpence; Ralph the Heir was issued in nineteen monthly parts priced at sixpence. Lever's Our Mass; Jack Hinton, the Guardsman; and Tom Burke of "Ours" were published in thirty-five parts. Augustus Mayhew's Paved with Gold was issued in thirteen monthly parts, as was Robert Smith Surtees's Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour, Ask Mamma, and Plain or Ringlets. His Mr. Renford's Hounds appeared in twelve monthly parts. The part-issue format, in modified form, even found its way in original non-fiction, for Cardinal Newman's Apologia was issued in eight weekly parts and Browning's The Ring and the Book in four fat monthly
Novels on the installment plan were popular with almost everyone. Authors liked the format because it meant money in their pockets, money which was often received during the course of composition, and because the problems of piracy were lessened. Publishers liked the format because it offered some freedom from reliance upon the favor of the circulating libraries, and, of course, because it was profitable: costs could be distributed over the long period of publication, and the advertisements included within each monthly or weekly number meant an extra source of income. The public liked the format because it was inexpensive, because it tantalized them with the suspense of waiting for successive issues, and because it eliminated any weak-willed, self-indulgent turning to the final chapter to determine the outcome: as Lord Montfort of Disraeli's *Endymion* said, "I like books that come out in numbers, as there is a little suspense, and you cannot deprive yourself of all interest by glancing at the last page of the last volume." 20

Only the sour voices of a few disgruntled literary critics, feeble flat notes in a chorus of affection, indicate that admiration of novels in parts was not universal. The *North British Review* protested in 1855 that, "art will not endure piecemeal generation." 21 *Fraser's* complained in 1840 of "Novel-writing in scraps against time," and in 1851 of "the monstrous anomaly of a twenty-month's labour and a piecemeal accouchement." 22 The unfriendly critics, however, were outnumbered by admirers of the form, and part-issue publication enjoyed its popularity until the 1870's.
In comparison with the seventy-year lifetime of the venerable three-decker, the part-issue format was relatively short-lived, a brief but brilliant comet's flash across the heavens of Victorian publishing. Born in the mid-eighteen-thirties, its brilliance was already waning thirty years later. The reasons for its demise have been best stated by Graham Pollard:

The original success of part issues was achieved at the expense of the half-crown magazines on the one hand and the literary circulation of guinea and a half novels on the other. But serialization possessed the advantage over part issue in that it capitalized the goodwill of a successful novel; thus Hard Times (April 1st to August 12th, 1854; published August, 1854) is said to have doubled the circulation of Household Words. This would have an influence on the future earnings of the magazine which would not end, as a part issue must, with the termination of the installments of the story. So that when the part issue no longer had advantage over the magazine in price, it dropped gradually out of use...

The shilling magazine killed part-issue publication.

The success of part-issues had led to the serialization of fiction in shilling magazines such as the short-lived Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine (1845-1907) and The Cornhill Magazine (1860 - ). To the reader with a shilling to spend they offered, simply, more for the money. Not only did such magazines offer him his installment of a novel, but they provided the reader much more besides. In the first issue of The Cornhill Magazine, for example, the reader received quite a bargain for his shilling: the first installments of two novels, Trollope's Framley Parsonage and Thackeray's Lovel the Widower; the first of a series of "Studies of Animal Life" by George Henry Lewes; "The Chinese and the Outer
Barbarians" by Sir John Bowring; an article by Thornton Leigh Hunt on his father; extracts from Captain Allen Young's private journal written during the expedition of the Fox to the Artic; an article by General Sir John Burgoyne; and poems by Mrs. Archer Clive and "Father Prout." With such a banquet for a shilling, it is little to be wondered at that the days of the one-dish dinner, the part-issue novel, were limited. Readers flocked to the magazines. One hundred and twenty thousand of them, for instance, purchased the first issue of The Cornhill Magazine and an estimated 500,000 people read it. The average sale of the magazine during the period of Thackeray's editorship was an enviable 85,000 copies per issue. 24

Such sales cut deeply into the market for part-issue novels, and even attempts to reduce the price were unsuccessful stopgap measures. Trollope gives some insight into the fall of the part-issue format through the description of an unsuccessful venture of his in part-issue publication:

In 1866 and 1867 The Last Chronicle of Barset was brought out by George Smith in sixpenny monthly numbers. I do not know that this mode of publication had been tried before, or that it answered very well on this occasion. Indeed the shilling magazines had interfered greatly with the success of novels published in numbers without other accompanying matter. The public finding that so much might be had for a shilling, in which a portion of one or more novels was always included, were unwilling to spend their money on the novel alone. Feeling that this certainly had become the case in reference to novels published in shilling numbers, Mr. Smith and I determined to make the experiment with sixpenny parts. As he paid me £3000 for the use of my MS., the loss, if any, did not fall upon me. If I remember right, the enterprise was not altogether successful. 25
By 1870 the part-issue was virtually dead. Trollope's The Vicar of Bullhampton, issued in eleven monthly numbers priced at one shilling in 1869-1870, was a failure; as Sadleir tells us, "The Vicar, presented in an unpopular form, fell flat." In the last years of the dying part-issue format, a new variation of the form was attempted by William Blackwood, who altered the conventional form by issuing George Eliot's Middlemarch (1871-1872) and Daniel Deronda (1876) in eight, stout, octavo, monthly parts priced at five shillings each. The ventures were immensely successful, and similar formats were used in the publication of Bulwer-Lytton's The Parisians (1871) and Trollope's The Prime Minister (1876). These experiments failed to revive the failing format, however, for they were too expensive for the man in the street and they owed their success, in part, to the favor of the lending libraries. Pollard states: "This experiment was . . . successful because the parts were sufficiently expensive to be handled by the libraries; but it is doubtful how far it would have succeeded with authors less famous than George Eliot, and it could not compete with the 1 s. magazines." After 1876 no first-rate novels were published in parts, but the existence of such publications as Black's Sunrise (1881-1882) and Laurence Oliphant's Altiora Pato (1883) indicate that the format persisted a few years more and died a lingering death.

The second successful attempt to lower the cost of original fiction was the shilling magazine serial, not exactly a new format for the issuance of novels but one, because of its extreme popularity during the last half of the nineteenth century, of importance in the
history of the novel. The origins of serialization are old, extending back to the second decade of the eighteenth century. The stamp tax of 1712 (Act of 10 Anne, C. 19) delayed the development of serials featuring original fiction; for the act defined any writing which was original or of immediate interest as news, thereby subjecting it to the tax imposed upon newspapers and rendering it prohibitively expensive. The act did, however, stimulate the serialization of previously printed novels. The law imposed a half-penny tax on newspapers in half-sheets and a penny tax on whole sheets, but it said nothing of papers filling a sheet and a half. Publishers, therefore, shrewdly attempted to avoid the tax by swelling their papers to one and a half sheets or more, thereby qualifying as pamphlets. Serialized fiction was frequently used as filler to effect the increased size of newspapers such as the British Mercury and the Original London Post. Thus it was, for example, that a serialized version of Arabian Night's Entertainment appeared as padding in Parker's London News and its successor, Parker's Penny Post. Frequently these novels used as filler were abridged (e.g., Robinson Crusoe in the Original London Post, Oct. 7, 1719 - Oct. 19, 1720), and some were strangely altered with new titles and new names for characters in an attempt to circumvent the copyright law. In 1724, however, this tax-dodge was eliminated by a revision of the law, and serials ceased to be used as filler for newspapers.

Serials were also a feature of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century magazines. According to Robert Mayo, "Fiction of some sort was found in four hundred and seventy different periodicals
published between 1740-1815. Some, it is true, published only an occasional story, or the summary of a new novel, but others devoted as much as one-half of their contents to fiction. In several magazines, reprinted fiction in serial form became a regular feature, and several were devoted to serials exclusively. Novels by Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and others were reprinted in The Novelist's Magazine and its sequel The New Novelist's Magazine (1780-1787). Smollett managed to have even an original novel serialized. This was The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves, which appeared in The British Magazine (1760-1761) of which Smollett was then an editor; and it thus became the first piece of long original fiction written expressly for publication in a periodical. Pollard conjectures that, since the Commissioners of His Majesty's Revenue expected only reprinted fiction in magazines, Smollett's story probably went undetected and thus untaxed. Other monthly magazines, selling for a shilling or less, featured serialized abridgements of Gothic romances. Among them were Thomas Tegg's The Marvellous Magazine and Compendium of Prodigies and Radcliffe's New Novelist's Pocket Magazine of Entertainment and Delight, both started in 1802, The Tell-Tale; or, Universal Museum, started in 1803.

As Mayo points out, the word installment has little meaning in relation to these eighteenth-century serials, for serialization was irregular; and narratives were issued in rather arbitrary and inconsistent portions: "Some magazines printed unbroken narratives of ten to fifteen thousand words, whereas others divided stories of a thousand words or less into several parts." The art of serialize-
tion belongs to the nineteenth century.

The serial proper was, in part, a product of a new tax law. Not until 1819 and the passage of another Stamp Act (Act of 60 George III, C. 9) could original fiction be serialized without duty. The new law defined a newspaper as a periodical published more often than once in twenty-six days; a monthly magazine, therefore, could not be considered a newspaper and could employ original fiction without being liable to the stamp duty. The half-crown magazines, such as Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1817-), The New Monthly Magazine (1814-1884), The London Magazine (1821-1829), and Fraser's Magazine (1830-1882) began to use original compositions, including original stories. John Galt's Ayrshire Legatees, for instance, appeared as a four-part serial in Blackwood's Magazine in 1820, and thus it became, in the words of Robert Mayo, "the first serial novel of real merit written expressly for publication in a popular miscellany since Smollett's Sir Launcelot Greaves (1760-61)." The first periodical to make serialized fiction a regular feature was The Metropolitan Magazine (1831-1851), which began with Chamier's Life of a Sailor and Marryat's Pacha of Many Tales. "By 1840," says Pollard, "the serial story was a regular, and often the most important, feature of all the half-crown monthly magazines."

At first, these serial stories were shorter works than the novel, appearing in installments which varied from four to ten or twelve in number. Thackeray's Shabby Genteel Story (1840) was such a narrative, a long short-story completed in six installments. Soon, however, there appeared the longer work: The Metropolitan Magazine

Novels appearing in the half-crown magazines, however, never enjoyed much influence. They never sold in great numbers nor extensively encouraged the production of serial fiction, for they were in no position to compete with an advantage over the three-decker and certainly not the novel in parts. They offered no reduction in price from that paid for bound volumes; for, as Walter Phillips has observed, "A four-instalment story could hardly be printed otherwise than in a single volume; a twelve-instalment story would make two volumes or three. Inasmuch as these periodicals sold at half crown the copy, there was no notable variation of the general trade price of 10 and 6 the volume." The half-crown magazines did, of course, offer other matter in addition to fiction, which made them somewhat more of a bargain than three-deckers; but priced at a figure equivalent to about $2.50 the copy in today's money, they too were designed for the well-to-do. It remained for the shilling magazines to produce volume sales of serialized novels and thus popularize this publishing format.

The real period of influence of the magazine serial began in the late 1850's with the appearance of one-shilling magazines such as *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1859 and *The Cornhill Magazine* in 1860. Serial fiction during this era received a mighty impetus from the
creation of new periodicals: during the year 1859, William Rutland informs us, "no less than one hundred and fifteen periodicals for the publication of fiction in serial form came into existence in London alone." Since the reader received much more in an issue of a magazine than merely an installment of a novel, and received it at a price he could easily afford, serial novels sold at the expense of novels in parts and the half-crown magazines. They sold well (The Cornhill Magazine had a permanent subscription list of 80,000 to 90,000), and they paid well (Trollope was given £2,500 by The Cornhill Magazine for the serial rights to The Small House at Allington). The serialized novel had arrived. All the major novelists of the Victorian period had novels issued in serial form. The list of early contributors to The Cornhill Magazine, for example, reads like a Who's Who of nineteenth-century fiction; for the magazine carried the serials of Thackeray, Trollope, George Eliot, George Meredith, Mrs. Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, and Charles Reade, to name a few.

Serial fiction became even cheaper when the weekly periodicals also began to serialize novels. Dickens, who had transformed the medium of part-issue publication into a popular and profitable format for the issuance of fiction, was also to have his effect upon the magazine serial. The foundation of Household Words (1850-1859), a 2d. weekly, was to create an even greater audience for the novel, for it was the first extremely cheap publication to feature original material. In it, for instance, were issued Mrs. Gaskell's Cranford, Lizzie Leigh, North and South and Dickens's Hard Times;
its sequel, All The Year Round (1859-1895), also a 2d. weekly, published Dickens's Great Expectations and Tale of Two Cities, as well as Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White, No Name, and The Moonstone.

The penny weeklies also began to carry serials. The first to do so was The London Journal with Charles Reade's White Lies in 1856, but others, such as The Welcome Guest and The Home Journal, quickly followed suit.

With the creation of the inexpensive periodical, the shilling monthly, and the weeklies selling for pennies, the serial became an established mode of publication. Until novels in volume form became cheap enough for the common man to purchase, the magazine serial was a significant format for the publication of serious fiction. The one-volume novel at inexpensive prices and the growing concept of the sanctity of art at the end of the century ended, for all practical purposes, the practice of writing specifically for serialization, though the form of publication still exists today. It, and the short-lived novel in parts, exercised a considerable influence over the composition of novels throughout most of the nineteenth century. Like the three-decker, they imposed limits upon artistic freedom. Like the three-volume format, they established criteria to be met in the process of fitting a product to an established mold. Just as did the three-decker, they posed problems of length, narrative pace, and structure which need to be examined.
Footnotes to Chapter IV


2. Ibid., p. 79.

3. Ibid., p. 5.

4. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

5. Altick, p. 56.


8. K. Tillotson, p. 27.


13. All information and quotations relevant to the genesis of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* are derived from John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, I (London, 1904), 67-68.

14. Quoted by Forster, I, 68.

15. See Thomas A. Hatton and Arthur H. Cleaver, *A Bibliography of the Periodical Works of Charles Dickens* (London, 1933) for the circulation figures of *Pickwick Papers*. Forster states (I, 184), in a possible exaggeration, that as many as 40,000 copies were required of the fifteenth number.

were written.

17 All figures for the sales of Dickens's novels are taken from Altick, p. 384, unless otherwise noted.

18 Dodds, *Age of Paradox*, p. 367.

19 Forster, *II*, 225.


27 "Serial Fiction," p. 263.

28 See Graham Pollard, pp. 256-257.


30 Wiles, p. 33.


33 Mayo, p. 5.

34 See Graham Pollard, pp. 257-259.


41. Ibid., p. 264.
CHAPTER V

"THIS DETACHED AND DESULTORY FORM OF PUBLICATION"

The narrative methods demanded by part-issue and serialized novels were, for the most part, identical. Each format required a certain number of installments, usually of a set number of pages each; and the plot had to be expansive enough to insure full development of all the installments. Each monthly or weekly part had to be interesting within itself; and with each form of publication, the reaction of the buying public could be watched with a close eye and changes made along the way to better suit the product to public taste. Each format prompted little preliminary planning, extemporaneous construction, and eleventh hour composition. The best summary of the several problems confronting the novelist who wrote for part-issues or serials is that of John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson:

Writing in serial involved maintaining two focuses. The design and purpose of the novel had to be kept constantly in view; but the writer had also to think in terms of the identity of the serial number, which would have to make its own impact and be judged as a unit. Incident and interest had therefore to be evenly spread, since "the writer . . . cannot afford to have many pages skipped out of the few which are to meet the reader's eye at the same time." Chapters must be balanced within a number in respect both of length and of effect. Each number must lead, if not to a climax, at least to a point of rest; and the rest between numbers is necessarily more extended than
what the mere chapter divisions provide. The writer had also to bear in mind that his readers were constantly interrupted for prolonged periods, and that he must take this into account in his characterization and, to some extent, in his plotting. 

Since each novelist writing for the part-issue or serial format was subjected, for the most part, to identical conditions and requirements, the novels written under these conditions tend to evidence similar effects. The distinctive skills and personality of the individual writer, of course, produced variations and differences. No two authors produced identical novels, just as no two cooks create identical omlets. But, just as the chef, when called upon to do so, must produce, not scrambled or fried eggs, but an omlet; so too the novelists, when under contract, had to produce novels suitable for publication in segments. We can, therefore, observe a similarity within the individuality of composition, and make several generalizations about the effects upon fiction of the serial and part-issue formats.

The results of writing installment novels appear to be these: great length and selection of subject material suitable to satisfy it; concentration upon the individual number, with resultant chopping or padding to fit the frame, balance within the part, exciting action in every issue, and a suspenseful conclusion; working conditions which fostered hurried writing, piecemeal composition, and response to public reaction; characterization suitable to interrupted reading.

The most noticeable of these products of specialized format is that which causes the average undergraduate student to groan with
the anguish of outraged indolence when assigned to read a novel by Dickens or Thackeray: its length. That the part-issue and, usually, the serial novel was long is evident to everyone. Trollope himself commented that, during the first half of the century, "Novels had grown to be much longer than those of the old well-known measure [the three-decker]. Dickens had stretched his to nearly double the length, and had published them in twenty numbers."\(^2\) Lovett and Hughes have made a similar observation about the effect of installment fiction: "There is no doubt that this practice reacted adversely upon the structure of the novel, which grew to portentous length."\(^3\)

The success of *The Pickwick Papers*, of course, mapped the trail which other novels in parts were to follow. The age was at that time already accustomed to the three-decker novel, and its 900 pages or average of 167,000 words; Dickens and his publisher, in attempting to provide the public more for its money, pushed the length of a part-issue novel in twenty numbers to over 300,000 words. The first numbers of *Pickwick* contained four illustrations and twenty-four pages; upon the death of Seymour, however, the number of plates was reduced to two and the number of pages, presumably in an attempt to compensate for the reduction in illustrations, was increased to thirty-two. Thus, with the fourth number, *Pickwick* was issued in parts averaging 16,000 words in length; and Dickens's novels in parts, following the same format, reach 320,000 words. Other writers and publishers, in order to compete, had to offer similar value for the customer's shilling.

Publishers, therefore, demanded of authors not merely novels,
but novels of a length suitable for issuance in parts or serials. A novel was usually not written and then submitted to a publisher for acceptance and division into parts, but rather an established author contracted to supply a certain number of parts and then had to deliver full measure. Thackeray, for instance, in the contract for *The Newcomes* with Bradbury and Evans, promised to produce a book in twenty-four numbers, like *Pendennis*. George Bentley, in requesting a novel from Rhoda Broughton for serialization in the *Temple Bar*, made the requirement for length quite obvious: "I shall be glad if it would be longer than the last two novels by you, as the Readers of *Temple Bar* are accustomed to a story extending to twelve months." Trollope also has given evidence that the payment for fiction was predicated, in part at least, upon length. He was paid, he said, "£600 for the quantity contained in an ordinary novel volume [about 60,000 words to Trollope], or £3000 for a long tale published in twenty parts, which is equal in length to five such volumes." Frequently, publishers were not above haggling over payments when manuscripts were not suitably lengthy. Dickens's contract with Bentley in 1836 gave Dickens £20 a month for editing the *Miscellany* and another £20 for a sixteen-page contribution to each issue; Bentley, Gettmann tells us, deducted "small sums from his stipend if they did not amount to sixteen pages." Trollope also had once a similar problem. His agreement with Bradbury and Evans called for a book, to be serialized in *Once A Week* and of the same length as the *Claverings*, for which he was to receive £2,800. The story when delivered, however, was shorter than required, and Trollope's payment
was subsequently lessened by mutual consent to £2,500.\(^7\)

Serial and part-issue novels were therefore long. There was, however, no generally recognized set number of words which had to be produced, as there was for the three-volume novel. Length was determined by a variety of factors: the number of parts initially decided upon, the number of pages within the individual part, and the particular editorial policy of a magazine for which a writer produced a novel for serialization. The part-issue novel in twenty parts, usually of thirty-two pages the monthly number, averaged from 300,000 to 320,000 words. David Copperfield is an estimated 319,000 words in length; Bleak House about a thousand more; Vanity Fair is well over 300,000 words. Trollope's Orley Farm is an estimated 313,000 words and Can You Forgive Her about 300,000. A novel in more parts, such as Thackeray's Pendennis, The Newcomes, and The Virginians, issued in twenty-four numbers of thirty-two pages each,\(^8\) was longer: The Virginians contains over 340,000 words. Trollope's The Last Chronicle of Barset, the aggregate of thirty-two weekly parts of twenty-four pages, contains an estimated 350,000 words.

The novel written for appearance as a serial in a magazine was usually considerably shorter. Trollope, for example, in trying to sell The Small House at Allington to George Smith, remarked that as a serial the novel would run for twenty months, but as a novel in parts for only sixteen months.\(^9\) The novel contains about 240,000 words. In addition, there was much variation in the number of issues a serial would run, and so there is great diversity in the length of serial novels. Trollope's Nina Balatka, which ran in seven issues
of Blackwood's Magazine from July 1866 to January 1867, is merely a long short story of from 75,000 to 85,000 words. Phineas Finn, on the other hand, a novel running for twenty months (Oct. 1867 - May 1869) in St. Paul's Magazine, is about 260,000 words. The approximate length of some other serial novels are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Novel</th>
<th>No. of Parts</th>
<th>No. of Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trollope</td>
<td>Framley Parsonage</td>
<td>16 monthly</td>
<td>197,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trollope</td>
<td>Small House at Allington</td>
<td>20 monthly</td>
<td>240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trollope</td>
<td>Belton Estate</td>
<td>9 monthly</td>
<td>173,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trollope</td>
<td>The Claverings</td>
<td>16 monthly</td>
<td>197,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickens</td>
<td>Great Expectations</td>
<td>36 weekly</td>
<td>182,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Gaskell</td>
<td>A Dark Night's Work</td>
<td>9 weekly</td>
<td>66,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins</td>
<td>The Moonstone</td>
<td>32 weekly</td>
<td>193,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins</td>
<td>No Name</td>
<td>45 weekly</td>
<td>270,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rarely, it can be seen, was a serial novel shorter than a conventional three-decker, since a serialized novel would be published in volume form after serialization. Neither serials nor part-issues, though novels were written for initial publication in these formats, was regarded as the definitive format.

Another factor affecting the varied length of serial novels was the editorial policy of the magazines in which they appeared. Some editors required uniform installments; others did not. Bentley, as we have mentioned, decreased Dickens's stipend if his manuscript of Oliver Twist was short of the amount required to fill sixteen pages of the Miscellany. During Thackeray's editorship of The Cornhill, novels usually appeared in installments of set length (installments of Framley Parsonage never vary more than 1,000 words from an average length of 12,000 words); during Leslie Stephen's association with the magazine, things seem to be different. Stephen's letter to Thomas
Hardy, concerning the second and third numbers of Far From the
Madding Crowd, then appearing in The Cornhill, indicate that Stephen
thought of the length of the serial number in rather vague terms:

As printed the February number takes 29
pages. This is rather long and I propose to end with chapter 8 i.e. or page 26; where I think there is a better break.
The March number will then have 4 pages added to it, and would have to end either with Chap XV, wh. would make 23 pages or with Chap XVI wh. would make 32 pages. I think, as at present advised, that the first break would be the best; but I might have to go on with the other.10

Dickens, as editor of All the Year Round, seems to have allowed
great freedom to his contributors. The Woman in White was printed in forty installments which vary in length from four to nine pages.11

No Name was printed in installments running from a low of 4,400 words to a high of 8,000; The Moonstone in installments from 4,400 to 8,600; and Mrs. Gaskell's A Dark Night's Week in installments varying from 4,100 words to 13,200 words. Lucas, the editor of Once A Week, allowed similar freedom to George Meredith with Evan Harrington; Gettmann states, "There is no indication that Lucas fixed the number of installments or demanded regularity in their length."12 The novel appeared in thirty-six weekly parts, ranging in length from three to twelve pages.

Even though serial and part-issue novels varied in length, they almost always had to be long, three-decker length or better for subsequent issue in bound volumes. Like the writers of three-volume novels, an author of installment novels was faced with problems of providing adequate length, and if he was writing a novel in twenty or
more parts, he was confronted with the necessity of creating a novel 100,000 words longer than a three-decker. It was no easy task to accomplish. Trollope's criterion for composing three-volume novels, stretching the subject to the canvas, was intended to be equally appropriate to the construction of novels in parts.

The rule was applied; for the same methods which were employed to obtain the required 900 pages of the three-decker were also utilized in the construction of installment novels: multiplication of the number of characters, selection of a basic situation of limitless proportions, and proliferation of incident. The more installments to be filled, the greater the amount of vegetables and water put into the stew.

The first consideration for the installment novelist was the selection of a foundation for action expansive enough to fill the number of installments set before him. The more inflation this basic situation could endure, the more characters and events that could be included. Tight unity and concentration upon one intensely dramatic conflict were impossible. Consequently, authors, probably with an unconscious realization of the practical, seized upon plots which developed from picaresque journeys, fictional biographies, family chronicles. Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, reflecting his inexperience in the new and then unfamiliar format, is little more than a loose series of adventures (especially in the early numbers) of a crew of rambling characters; so loose is the unity of the novel that several irrelevant short stories, such as "The Stroller's Tale" of Part II and "The Convict's Return" of Part III, can be inset in the novel.
with little disruption in narrative movement.

Not until Dickens's seventh novel (Dombey and Son), as Kathleen Tillotson points out, did he achieve a relatively tight unity of action and design. Yet even here the design is such that the action is stretched to fit the publishing form. The novel takes the reader, from the time he meets Florence at the age of six in Part I, through the greater part of the lives of several characters to the point when Florence is a grown woman with a child of her own in Number XIX-XX. David Copperfield, in similar fashion, narrates the life of the central character from birth to middle-age; and Thackeray's Pendennis follows an analogous plan of design. Vanity Fair, The Newcomes, The Virginians, and Trollope's Barchester novels are all chronicles of the lives of various sets of characters. These are the types of blueprints suitable for the construction of novels in 200,000 to 300,000 words. Trollope's description of the structure of part-issue novels is an accurate generalization:

The nature of the tale as originated by him [Dickens] was altogether unlike that to which the readers of modern novels had been used. No plot, with an arranged catastrophe or denouement, was necessary. Some untangling of the various knots of the narrative no doubt were [sic] expedient, but these were of the simplest kind, done with the view of giving an end to that which might otherwise be endless. The adventures of a Pickwick or a Nickleby required very little of a plot, and this mode of telling a story, which might be carried on through any number of pages, as long as the characters were interesting, met with approval.13

Into this apparently endless plot, the installment novelist introduced characters by the train load. Novels in parts required
interesting action in every issue, and numerous characters provided
the opportunity for multiple complications of action and variety of
episode. Dickens, for example, helped insure the adequacy of inci-
dent and overall length of *Pickwick Papers* by the use of 300
characters and sixty incidents. Thackeray's *The Newcomes* also
operates on a large scale, achieving its length through the following
of an English family, as Gordon Ray comments, "in all its ramifica-
tions through four generations." Thackeray utilizes literally
scores of characters which have a place in the novel because of
connections with the Newcome family and which are given a page or
two in the narrative. In *Pendennis*, Thackeray frequently goes
astray with his numerous secondary characters (such as the Claverings
in Part VII, their cook in Part VIII, Captain Shandon and the
Bungay's in Part XII, and Huxter in Part XVIII), giving major focus
for a brief period to these tangential personages and thus padding
out the parts in which they appear to sufficient length. Thackeray's
*Henry Esmond*, standing in contrast to his novels in parts, also
serves as an interesting illustration of the multiplication of
character in long part-issue novels. *Esmond* was the only novel by
Thackeray written for publication in three volumes. "This," says
John Dodds, "helps to explain why it is only half as long as *Vanity
Fair*, *Pendennis*, and the later novels. It has fewer characters and
therefore less elaboration of minor collateral figures . . . ."

In the installment novel, the numerous characters appeared and
disappeared in turn, like rabbits in a magician's hat, whenever
their authors had need of them. Frequently, minor characters were
accorded unmerited attention in the early numbers of a novel so that, if a new episode or turn of plot became needed later in the story, these minor characters would be available for service from their off-stage position in the wings. In Thackeray's Catherine, for instance, Catherine's child, born and put out to nurse in the second number, was such a character. She was apparently forgotten until the fourth installment (some six years later in the story) where she became useful to the author and was consequently re-introduced into the narrative. 16 Mr. Wopsle of Great Expectations is similarly employed, appearing prominently in the second weekly number, briefly in the sixth, eighth, ninth, and eleventh numbers, and then passing out of sight until Number XIX where the erstwhile clerk suddenly appears as an incongruous Hamlet. Not infrequently, such a character developed at some length in the early stages of a story would be forgotten or abandoned to the limbo of unneeded characters. Colonel George Washington, a significant figure in the early numbers of Thackeray's Virginians, for example, becomes useless to the novel after a shift in setting from America to England and thus vanishes from the narrative.

Thus, with expansive situation and proliferation of character, the installment novelist stretched his subject to his canvas. He had to paint murals, not miniatures, and he filled his composition with multiple characters, scenes, and episodes. The result of such methods of composition upon the nineteenth-century novel was what Percy Lubbock has called, in reference specifically to the novels of Thackeray but also applicable in part to most other novels written
under serial influence, the "panoramic" novel: "broad expanses, stretches of territory, to be surveyed from edge to edge with a sweeping glance," "great general, typical impressions of life, populated by a swarm of people." The installment novel, therefore, tends to depict not merely the intense realization of a strong central character or small coterie of characters, but also the whole climate of an era. *Vanity Fair* captures the totality of society on the fringes between the English upper-middle class and aristocracy; *Framley Parsonage* reveals the collective religious and political ethos of a complete English county; *David Copperfield* depicts the vitality of English life, schools, workshops, and prisons, one step lower on the social scale than that treated by Thackeray. These novels, and others like them, because of their size shuttled back and forth between the trivial and the important, the insignificant and the weighty, painting on their enlarged canvases the vast phantasmagoria of an age.

In addition to his concern for the overall design of a novel, the writer of installment fiction had also to think in terms of the individual part. Since the installment novel made its impact collectively, month by month or week by week, it was judged not upon the whole in one fell swoop, but upon the cumulative strength of individual issues. The part itself, therefore, was of major concern to the novelist. We find, for example, Samuel Phillips taking especial preparation with the numbers of Caleb Stukely: "I particularly desire to finish the 5th part with great care," he wrote to Blackwood, "and ask you to postpone the publication of Part 5 till
Similarly, Samuel Warren prided himself on the skillful execution of the individual number; he wrote to Blackwood about *Ten Thousand a-Year*: "I am of opinion that in the new Part—What shall I say?—I have pleased myself every atom as much as ever." Trollope, in a letter to George Smith about *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, reveals his concern for the structure of the number:

But it is essential, in reference to the proposed 30 numbers, to be prepared for . . . a division if it be contemplated. It would not be practicable to divide 20 numbers into 30 equal parts, unless the work be specially done with this intent. I commonly divide a number of 32 pages (such as the number of "Orley Farm") into four chapters each. If you wish the work to be so arranged as to run either 20 or 30 numbers, I must work each of the 20 numbers by six chapters, taking care that the chapters run so equally, two and two, as to make each four into one equal part or each six into one equal part—There will be some trouble in this, but having a mechanical mind I think I can do it.\(^2\)

Thackeray also, John Lester states, often concentrated upon the part, planning ten of *Vanity Fair*’s nineteen parts, ten of *Philip*’s twenty, nine of *The Virginians*’s twenty-four, and six of *The Newcomes*’s twenty-three parts as specific units of narration.\(^2\)

Since serial and part-issue novels were frequently composed during the course of publication and not before, often with a minimum of preliminary planning and only a hazy outline of character and situation to go by, this piecemeal, extemporaneous writing induced a greater concern for the part than for the whole. Dickens and Thackeray were particularly prone to such methods of composition. Dickens’s early novels (*Pickwick, Nickleby, Oliver Twist*) were very sketchily planned; but by the time of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens was aware of
the dangers and announced in the original preface to the novel: "I have endeavoured in the progress of this Tale, to resist the temptation of the current Monthly Number, and to keep a steadier eye upon the general purpose and design." The full quota of number plans for the novels from Dombey to Edwin Drood testify to increased preliminary planning in Dickens's later novels. Thackeray also constructed his novels in piecemeal fashion. As Geoffrey Tillotson comments:

> Thackeray wrote his novels part by part, as the printer printed them, and as the reader read them. He therefore saw the parts, most of them, before there was a whole to see; some of the parts may have been seen before the whole was even foreseen, or foreseen with any distinctiveness.

This concentration upon the segments of a novel, whether by intent or because there was nothing else to concentrate on, encompassed several problems which had to be considered in each installment. First, a part had to be of a set number of pages, and so many words would be needed to fill them. Secondly, a balance of action, tone, or character was desirable within the number. Finally, there was a necessity to entertain the reader in every issue and to induce him to purchase the next installment for more of the same.

The first of these concerns was the rigidly fixed length of most installments. If a novel was published in parts, and usually if serialized, there was a set number of pages to fill. The purchasers of David Copperfield and Vanity Fair expected, not twenty-five pages one month and thirty-nine the next, but thirty-two pages in every issue. Trollope's "Working Table," his schedule for writing for The Claverings (serialized in The Cornhill Magazine, 1866-1867),
indicates this methodical author's awareness of the serial installment's fixed length. Trollope divided his schedule into nineteen periods of composition, corresponding to the sixteen monthly installments and with three periods of inactivity. For each installment, Trollope planned to produce precisely forty-eight pages of manuscript, each page to contain 260 words: a set length of 12,000 words per number.

Few writers, however, were as methodical as Trollope, and frequently there were difficulties in producing enough words. Trollope himself imagined the agonies of adding to a completed, but deficient, installment:

> I have seen work come back to an author from the press with terrible deficiencies as to the amount supplied. Thirty-two pages have perhaps been wanted for a number, and the printers with all their art could not stretch the matter to more than twenty-eight or -nine! The work of filling up must be very dreadful.  

The process of "filling up" copy of adequate length led, of course, to padding: expanded episode, prolonged description, introduction of irrelevancies, digressive commentary. The following passage from Marryat's *Japhet in Search of a Father* (serialized in the *Metropolitan Magazine*, 1834-1836) shows how the pages of a number could be filled with words which merely took up space; for Marryat's rambling wordiness enabled him to say in two pages what could have been stated in one sentence:

> The little that was known of me at this time I will however narrate as concisely, and as correctly, as I am able. It was on the _____ I really forget the date, and must rise from my
chair, look for a key, open a closet, and then
open an iron safe to hunt over a pile of papers—it
will detain you too long—it will be sufficient to
say that it was on a night but whether the
night was dark or moonlit, or rainy or foggy, or
cloudy or fine, or starlight, I really cannot tell;
but it is of no very great consequence. Well, it
was on a night about the hour I'm puzzled, it might have been ten, or eleven, or
twelve, or between any of these hours; may it might
have been past midnight, and far advancing to the
morning, for what I know to the contrary. The
reader must excuse an infant of there again
I am at a nonplus; but we will assume of some
days old—if, when wrapped up in flannel and in
a covered basket, and moreover, fast asleep at
the time, he does not exactly observe the state
of the weather, and the time by the church clock.
I never before was aware of the great importance
of dates in telling a story; but it is now too
late to recover these facts, which have been
swept away into oblivion by the broad wing of
time. I must therefore just tell the little I
do know, trusting to the reader's good nature,
and to blanks. It is as follows: -- that, at
the hour of the night the state of
the weather being also I, an infant of a
certain age was suspended by somebody or
somebodies at the knocker of the Foundling
Hospital.26

This was, indeed, the creation of installments out of nothing.

Dickens also was troubled from time to time by too few words.
Dickens wrote his novels on uniform sheets of paper, which he called
slips, measuring $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches; and he relied on the
supposition that thirty of these slips, in his normal handwriting,
would fill a monthly number of thirty-two pages.27 Because of
deletions and corrections, however, this process was never more than
a rough guide, and he frequently miscalculated what was needed to
complete a number. "Fancy my having under-written number sixteen by
two and a half pages—a thing I have not done since Pickwick,"
Dickens wrote to Forster in 1865 during the publication of Our Mutual Friend. Dickens's memory of his deficiencies, Butt and Tillotson point out, was a bit faulty, for he had also under-written by two pages the sixth part of Dombey and the sixteenth part of Bleak House. He had experienced difficulties with Part II of Nicholas Nickleby; and he wrote Forster: "I could not write a line till three o'clock and have yet five slips to finish, and don't know what to put in them, for I have reached the point I meant to leave off with." To the tenth part of Little Dorrit Dickens had to add a long paragraph describing the welcome Mr. Dorrit received upon his release from prison, and he found that the number was still short by more than half a page. Butt and Tillotson feel also that Dickens used the several inset tales of The Pickwick Papers as an attempt "to eke out his numbers" rapidly by employing some stray short stories he probably had lying in his desk.

Thackeray, like Dickens, had problems with providing enough matter to complete a number. For example, when Part VI of The Newcomes proved too short, Thackeray sent three pages of additional material to his publisher to fill up the number. The publishers, however, added the material to Number V, and Thackeray was still faced with the dilemma of what to do with the short fifth installment. "If you can see how to fill up 3 pages of your own noble invention," he wrote to Percival Leigh, "just going goose-step as it were and making the story pretend to march . . . pray do write them."

Thackeray experienced difficulties with the numbers of Vanity Fair also. Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson state:
In the second number of the novel, Thackeray seems to be almost admitting that he is padding; for he says, after a long, fanciful, irrelevant passage (omitted from the 1853 volume edition), "In a word, this chapter about Vauxhall would have been so exceeding short but for the above little disquisition, that it scarcely would have deserved to be called a chapter at all." In Part XIV also, the charge of padding would be hard for Thackeray to refute. Chapter 147 is devoted to tracing the history of Lord Steyne's family and the streak of insanity which runs through it. It contains 3,400 words almost wholly unnecessary to the novel in terms of Lord Steyne's function. Thackeray was fond of developing at length the slightly relevant genealogies or histories; and these, along with many of the familiar disquisitions and personal comments which interlace his narrative, seem motivated by the necessity of filling up space. It is significant that Thackeray's revision of *Vanity Fair* for publication in volume form consisted primarily of pruning: great blocks of digressive commentary and trivial dialogue were omitted.

A rather ingenious method of Thackeray for padding a short monthly part was the use of large page-filling illustrations to accompany the chapter headings in his monthly numbers. The larger the illustration, the fewer words to the page. Thackeray wrote his illustrator of *The Newcomes*, for example, "The copy for No X is
rather scarce—there should be a tolerably large cut in the first chapter: and, if possible, in all the others." To Mrs. Brookfield, Thackeray frankly confessed that he sometimes padded *Pendennis* with large illustrations.

Even Trollope, upon occasion, was troubled by installments which were too short. In a letter to Edward Chapman concerning *Orley Farm* he wrote: "I send back No 1—which you may not consider quite complete as far as I am concerned. You shall not have such trouble with the others." He had a similar problem with Part I of *The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson* (*Cornhill Magazine*, 1861-1862); he wrote George Smith:

> I find I have given uncommon short measure for the first number of B. J. & R.—barely over 15 pages. I hate short measure as I do poison; but I hate inserting little bits to lengthen a chapter. Will it suit if I make some other number somewhat longer? If the exigencies of the magazine require 16 in the next number, I will do you another page."

Since an installment of a novel was usually of a fixed length, authors were not only faced with the dilemma of providing too little, but also with the perplexity of providing too much. Dickens frequently was unable to cram all that he wanted to say within the confines of the monthly installment. Forster states that Dickens confessed the restraints of the numbers of *Pickwick Papers*: "His difficulty in *Pickwick*, as he once told me, having always been, not the running short, but the running over." In all but seven of the nineteen parts of *David Copperfield* Dickens produced too much: as much as ninety-six lines of print in Number XI, and fifty lines in
Number IX. With Dombey and Son each of the first four parts was overwritten, in amounts extending from one to six pages. Dickens's early exuberance for the novel, for example, resulted in a first number that was overwritten by nearly one-fifth. To create a part of standard length, Dickens decided to transfer the long last chapter of Number I (concerning Solomon Gills) to the next part and to write a new and shorter final chapter for the first number. Forster advised against this procedure, and Dickens cut the overwritten part to the required size. In the course of the abridgment, Forster says, "He had to sacrifice a passage foreshadowing his final intention as to Dombey." In Number III, the restrictions in space forced Dickens to omit a planned party at which Miss Tox's uncle (a magistrate who, though named in Chapter V, never appeared in the novel) was to introduce Major Bagstock to Mr. Dombey. A description of Dombey's offices and Mr. Carker were also to appear in the number and were likewise omitted. Other amputated portions of Dombey are Dombey's analysis of Florence's refusal to view her new brother and his painful admission that Paul had channeled too much of his affection toward Florence. Nothing vital was omitted by these cuts in the novel, but, as Butt and Tillotson comment, "The book as we now have it is weaker by some distinct loss of emphasis."

Dickens found the weekly serial even more restrictive than monthly parts, for the greater brevity of a weekly installment made full development within the number much more difficult. Dickens felt severely cramped in the weekly serial. "The difficulty of the space," he said about Hard Times, "is crushing. Nobody can have an idea of
it who has not had an experience of patient fiction-writing with some elbow-room always, and open spaces in perspective." In Barnaby Rudge several passages were deleted and sent to obscurity as a result of such restrictions, and in Hard Times short installments created brief chapters and "an economy in detail, noticeable throughout the novel and especially obvious if the opening chapters of Hard Times are compared with the opening chapters of Bleak House."

When faced with the necessity of pruning his parts, Dickens generally chose to sever comic elements rather than the serious elements closely related to the major action and theme. Butt and Tillotson point out:

In Dombey Miss Chick, Miss Tox, and Major Bagstock originally had longer parts; so had Skimpole in Bleak House II and Honeythunder in Edwin Drood V; and in David Copperfield, Chapter xxi, he had to remove a capital scene in which Steerforth successfully exerted his charms upon the lugubrious Mrs. Cummidge and entered into a league with her to be lone and lorn together."

Other novelists also labored under the restrictions imposed by the individual number. George Meredith mutilated his novels in order to fit the requirements set by the periodical editor: he omitted a dozen chapters and abridged several others in trying to fit Diana of the Crossways to the serial format of The Fortnightly; and, according to Mary Ellen Chase, he "left out chapters in One of Our Conquerors that it might be passed through the Fortnightly Review in seven issues." The realization that the individual installment was a separate unit of narration, an entity fixed in length and separated from the
one that followed by a specific duration of time, tended to produce a structural design within the number itself, rather than the novel as a whole. It was the installment which met the reader's eye all at once, and not the complete novel; and frequently, to the novelist himself, the whole of the novel was merely a hazy outline while the installment was an immediate reality. Because of these conditions, the monthly number, and not infrequently the weekly number, became arranged around a controlled balance of different plot threads, groups of characters, or narrative moods. Even with his first part-issue novel, for example, Dickens seemed to be striving for variety within the monthly number; for the inset tales within the numbers of Pickwick are characterized by melodramatic seriousness in contrast with the fanciful frivolity of the tale proper. That Dickens realized the advantages of balanced mood is evidenced by his reply to a suggestion of Forster:

But I have no question that what you suggest will be an improvement. The strongest place to put it in, would be the close of the chapter immediately before this last one. I want to make the two first chapters as light as I can, but I will try to do it solemnly, in that place.\(^52\)

Thackeray also gives evidence of consciously planning a contrast of mood in the first number of Pendennis; he wrote to Mrs. Brookfield:

One of the Miss Smiths told me a story wh. is the very thing for the beginning of Pendennis, wh. is actually begun and in progress--This is a comical beginning rather; the other, wh. I did not like, was sentimental; and will come in very well after the startling comical business has been played off.\(^53\)

Balance was usually accomplished within the installment,
especially by Dickens in the novels following Nicholas Nickleby, by alteration of one plot thread with another. Earle Davis has described the process in relation to Dickens:

What the critics have begun to discern in the later novels of Dickens is his tendency toward a kind of revolving plot arrangement, with several strands of action woven around a central theme. When he could manage it, Dickens emphasized a different technique of narration for each of these separate sequences, thereby securing contrast and alteration, but still getting a unified plan by the central intention of his novel.

This balance, or alteration of plot sequences, may be seen by examination of the early numbers of Dombey and Son, the first novel of Dickens to exhibit a successful planning of design or theme. Unlike Pickwick, for example, Dombey has a core unity provided by the theme of Mr. Dombey's pride and the resultant neglect of Florence; and around this is woven the shifting plot elements. These plot elements are centered in sets of related characters: Dombey and Paul (later replaced by Edith after the death of Paul); Walter, Uncle Sol, and Captain Cuttle; Major Bagstock and Miss Tox. Carker and Florence are utilized as free agents, shifting back and forth among character groupings, cementing the groups together through inter-action, and preventing the boundary lines between groupings from becoming too rigidly fixed. Balance within the monthly numbers is accomplished by alternate concentration upon one of these character groupings and its related plot elements.

Part I (Chapters I-IV), for example, devotes the first three chapters to the introduction of the characters in the Dombey-Paul-Florence motif, and the final chapter balances against these the
introduction of Walter, Uncle Sol, and Captain Cuttle. Part II
(Chapters V-VII) returns to the Dombey-Paul-Florence grouping in
Chapter V; interaction is achieved between the two when Florence is
brought into the Walter-Sol-Cuttle grouping in Chapter VI; and the
last chapter of the number levels the balance beam by concentration
on Miss Tox and her hopes for marriage with Mr. Dombey. In Part III
(Chapters VIII-X), Chapter VIII sends Paul to school; Chapter IX is
concerned with the financial difficulties of Walter-Sol-Cuttle; and
Chapter X is an amalgam of the various groups: Major Bagstock intro­
duces himself to Dombey, and Walter comes to borrow money from Dombey.
In Part IV (Chapters XI-XIII), there is a balance between the affairs
of Paul at school in Chapters XI and XII and the affairs of Carker
and Walter in Chapter XIII. The alteration of plot threads continues
in Part V (Chapters XIV-XVI): Chapter XIV relates Paul's illness and
his leaving school; Chapter XV shifts to a discussion between Captain
Cuttle and Walter of his impending trip to the Barbados; and in
Chapter XVI, there is a return to the Dombey-Paul grouping with
narration of Paul's death. The same procedure of alteration of focus
upon character groupings continues throughout the novel; for in the
sixth number (Chapters XVII-XIX), as Butt and Tillotson point out,
Chapter XVIII, dealing with Florence's attempts to win her father's
love, was originally intended to open the number but was probably
shifted in order to achieve balance by avoiding two consecutive
chapters dealing with Captain Cuttle and Walter.55

Balance of action within installments is a feature of Dickens's
other novels also. An obvious contrast of humor and seriousness was
planned for the tenth number of David Copperfield, as can be seen by the notation on the plan for the installment: "First chapter funny Then on to Em'ly." Earle Davis has made a detailed analysis of the balance within later installments of the novel:

In balancing and contrasting his action, Dickens often devotes a chapter in each installment to his three main plot sequences, or at least to two of them. The average reader, finding the story printed straight through in book form is not aware of this practice. The fourteenth installment, for example (Chapters XL, XLI, and XLII), devotes the first chapter to Mr. Peggotty's account of Emily and Steerforth, the second to David's courtship of Dora under the auspices of her maiden aunts, and the third to Uriah's exposure of Annie's apparent lack of love for Dr. Strong. The forty-second chapter ends with a letter from Mrs. Micawber, complaining of her husband's deterioration since he has worked for Uriah Heep, a circumstance which brings in the third main plot and rouses the reader to renewed fears about Uriah's evil intentions concerning Agnes.

In Number XVII, the balance is accomplished by alteration, in successive chapters, of Mr. Micawber's determination to reveal Heep's roguery, Emily's discovery by Rosa Dantle and then Mr. Peggotty, and Mr. Peggotty's and Emily's emigration to Australia. In Number XVIII, Davis observes, "Dickens achieves three contrasting climaxes. In Chapter LII, Heep is exposed; in LIII, Dora dies; in LIV, Aunt Betsey's fortune is restored, and the Micawbers get ready to emigrate to Australia . . . ."58

Dickens even managed to balance action within the brief weekly serial installment. The weekly number of Great Expectations, serialized in All The Year Round, consisted usually of two rather than three chapters; and Dickens achieved his balance through a focus
upon different plot threads in each chapter. In Number I, for instance, Chapter I relates Pip's meeting with Magwitch on the marsh, and the second relates the background and details of Pip's life at the Gargery's. In Number II, the balance is achieved between narration of Pip's return to the marsh with food for Magwitch (Chapter III) and the Christmas dinner at Joe's (Chapter IV). Number XVI is balanced by means of the contrast between Pip's visits to Wemmick's and Jaggers's; and Number XVII achieves equilibrium through the contrast, in alternate chapters, of Joe's visit to Pip in London and Pip's return to his home town.

Though balanced parts are to be found throughout the later novels of Dickens, they are more rare in the novels of Thackeray. *Vanity Fair*, however, was masterfully constructed according to this principle. Myron Taube, in a study of the structure of the novel, concludes: "Within each monthly number and throughout the novel, contrast is the principle Thackeray uses to develop *Vanity Fair*." The major contrast is that between the Amelia and Becky stories, and the monthly parts are frequently balanced by alternate concentration on each. In the first number, for example, there is balanced contrast between Amelia's patient love for George Osborne and Becky's active scheming to ensnare Joseph Sedley. Numbers III and IV revolve around the contrast of the Sedley and the Crawley families. In Number V, Becky loses favor with Miss Crawley after marriage to Rawdon, and Amelia loses favor with George's father after the Sedley financial failure. Numbers VI and VII develop the contrast between the secret marriage of Becky and Rawdon, Amelia and George. In Number XI, the
uncomfortable poverty of Amelia is shown in contrast with the luxurious poverty of Becky and Rawdon, living handsomely on nothing a year. Number XIII reveals the contrast between Becky's casual treatment of her son and Amelia's tender love for hers. In Number XIV, there is balance between Becky's finest hour and the lowest ebb of Amelia's condition.

Another aspect of installment fiction which led to concentration upon the individual part was the necessity of providing interesting, exciting action in every issue. Each installment of a novel had to stand or fall upon its own individual merits. A novelist had, therefore, to grip the reader's attention in the first number and carry him through successive issues of the novel with a galloping narration. Slow-moving narration and a plot thin in exciting incident were deadly to the fortunes of installment novelists. Trollope commented upon the requirements of serial fiction in a letter to John Blackwood:

As regards the workmanship of the story [The Last Chronicle of Barset] I believe it to be as good as anything I have ever done. A weekly novel should perhaps have at least an attempt at murder in every number. I never get beyond giving my people an attack of fever or a broken leg. 51

Leslie Stephen, in requesting a serial story from Hardy to be featured in The Cornhill Magazine, outlined similar requirements:

"'Under the Greenwood Tree' is of course not a magazine story. There is too little incident for such purposes; for, though I do not want a murder in every number, it is necessary to catch the attention of the readers by some distinct and well arranged plot." 62

The writer of installment novels had to catch the reader's
attention and hold it; and thus we find in such fiction a preference for the grand and dramatic opening, such as Becky's arrogant return of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary in Number I of Vanity Fair, the startling revelation to Major Pendennis of his nephew's foolish love affair in Number I of Pendennis, and Pip's harrowing encounter with a convict in Number I of Great Expectations. Because of the necessity of emphasizing sensational incident within the part, the episode of an attack by an enraged bull in the serial version of Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge is three times the length of the episode in the later volume edition. Something had to happen in every segment of an installment novel, and woe to the novelist who failed to produce it. Because of such deficiencies, Thackeray abandoned his attempt to write Henry Esmond for part-issues, stating to Mrs. Carmichael-Smith: "I have given up & only had for a day or two the notion of the book in numbers. Its much too grave & sad for that & the incident not sufficient." Frederic Chapman had a manuscript returned to him by Trollope with the uncorafenting comment: "It is by far too diluted to be published in numbers. It could not be divided into parts which would by themselves have any interest." John Blackwood's criticism of Bulwer-Lytton's My Novel prompted this uneasy reply: "The author is alarmed by your confession that you find the interest flag a little in Nos. 3 and 4. Can you suggest any mode of sustaining it?" Alexander Blackwood's comments to Samuel Warren that his Ten Thousand a-Year, then in progress in Blackwood's Magazine, lagged in interest induced an elaborate defense by the author of his artistic purpose:
I shall be sorry if the public joins with you in regretting the slow progress of the story. Remember that mine is not a story depending for its interest on incident—although quite enough is given from time to time to sustain the interest and curiosity of the reader. The great object of the story is the patient, close and true portrait of character and feeling. 67

Meredith had similar troubles when he was pressured by Lucas, the editor of Once a Week, to provide more plot for the lethargic Evan Harrington; 68 and Mrs. Gaskell suffered artistic strain upon Dickens's insistence that the installments of North and South, appearing in Household Words, end upon a note of strong dramatic emotion. 69 Hardy also was once guilty of the crime of dull narration. He was forced to omit a leisurely sheepshearing episode from Far From the Madding Crowd (Cornhill, Jan. to Dec., 1874) when the editor, Leslie Stephen, commented: "For periodical purposes, I think it rather delays the action unnecessarily. What I should be inclined to do would be simply to omit the chapter headed 'shearing supper' and to add a few paragraphs . . . just explaining that there had been a supper." 70

The failure to provide rapid and thrilling incident did, indeed, prove troublesome for a serial novelist.

In addition to this necessity for action in every issue, the writers of installment fiction discovered the desirability of leading their readers from one installment to the next by means of the impetus of a suspenseful, but unresolved, climax. The suspenseful ending, created by sudden shifts from one plot sequence to another at exciting moments, sudden, unexpected twists of plot, surprising dramatic revelations, or abrupt endings of interesting action,
became almost universal in the installment novel. The reader was given a taste for excitement and then left hungering for satisfaction until the appearance of the next number.

Dickens's *Dombey and Son* illustrates the practice; almost all the numbers of the novel ended by arousing the readers' curiosity or with the suspense of unresolved action somewhere in the number. Part I concluded with the establishment of a basis for a potential friendship between Walter and Florence, and the reader was left for a month wondering about these possibilities. Part II implied, through revelation of the secret hopes of Miss Tox, the possibility of a marriage with Mr. Dombey. Part IV ended with Walter assigned to the Barbados, and the reader wondered about the effect of this upon the lives of Florence and Uncle Sol. Part V rang to a dramatic close with the death of Paul, so complete a climax that Francis Jeffrey wrote to Dickens, "after this climax in the fifth number, what are you to do with the fifteen that are to follow?" At the end of Part VI, Walter departed on his voyage, and the reader was left in suspenseful anticipation of news of his affairs. At the end of the eighth number, Uncle Sol vanished. Part IX concluded with an event that promised new complications for Florence: the engagement of Dombey and Edith. And so it went, number after number.

This curiosity and suspense were the baits which hooked the reader and reeled him willingly to the next installment. It is found throughout the novels of Dickens. The modern reader, skimming uninterrupted through the volume edition of a serialized novel, fails to notice these suspenseful climaxes, and he is thus left unaware of
the impact an installment novel had upon its contemporary readers. The tortuous waiting after the second weekly number of *Great Expectations*, for example (which ended with Pip, worried about his theft of food from Joe's kitchen, suddenly confronted by a band of soldiers, one of whom holds out a pair of handcuffs and says "Come on!"), is not experienced; and with this oversight goes unnoticed the masterful artistry of an author writing for a very specialized form of fiction.

Thackeray, like Dickens, also concluded his installments with suspense. John Lester has described his technique:

> Very frequently Thackeray's method is to end on an instalment [sic] or part with a sudden new turn of plot. It may be a leap forward to a scene well in the future, requiring in the next instalment an explanation—retrospect . . . . It may be simply a dramatic episode, whether it be the sudden re-appearance of George Warrington or the news of George Osborne on the field of Waterloo, "lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart." The essence is that the number end on a note of suspense, a promise of events to be explained and characters' reactions to be studied.73

Thackeray, at his best, was a master of the suspenseful ending. Gordon Ray aptly comments that, "Thackeray saves his most telling strokes for the conclusions of his monthly numbers."74

Like that of Dickens, the artistry of Thackeray in handling the conclusion of an installment goes undiscovered by the modern reader. It is a significant loss, especially with *Vanity Fair*, for the modern one-volume edition of this novel hides a distinctive and supremely accomplished handling of suspense. In *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray prolonged the suspense of the installment beyond the
normal period of monthly waiting, honing the blade of the reader's anticipation to a fine edge of razor sharpness. Thackeray ended the monthly numbers of the novel with a conventional creation of suspense; but then, in the next installment, he frequently made the reader wait still longer, forcing him to proceed with growing anxiety through the whole of the first chapter (sometimes the first three chapters) of the new number before his curiosity was satisfied. Part I, for example, concluded with Jos about to pop the question to Becky, but Part II (Chapters V-VII) opened with a chapter about Dobbin. The reader had to wait until Chapter VI to find out about the collapse of Becky's marital schemes. Part IV ended with the sudden revelation that Becky is married, but there was no disclosure of her husband's identity. The first chapter of Part V (Chapter XV) rambled, equiv­ocated, hinted, but waited until the last line to reveal Becky's husband as Captain Rawdon Crawley. Part V ended with the marriage of George and Amelia eminent; but the sixth number opened, ignoring the love affair of George and Amelia, with a chapter concerning Rawdon's relations with his aunt. Part IX ended, in similar fashion, with George dead on the battlefield of Waterloo. Part X, however, began with discussion of Miss Crawley and the first two chapters concern only the affairs of the Crawleys. The reader had to wait until the last chapter of the number (Chapter XXXV) to discover the the effect upon Amelia of George's death. Again in Part XIV, the reader had to wade through three chapters until, in the final chapter of the number, he received the answer to the question, raised at the end of the previous part, of whether Amelia will allow her
son to be taken by Mr. Osborne. Similar situations of prolonged
suspense exist in Parts XVI, XVII, XIX.

Though to an author such as George Meredith, the necessity of
preparing the conclusion to a number was occasionally a distinct
problem, both Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins were masters of the
sensational ending and relied heavily upon it. In Reade's Put
Yourself in His Place, which appeared as a serial in The Cornhill
Magazine, most of the installments reached an exciting, unresolved
climax such as that in the first number in which Henry Little, an
independent workman on bitter terms with the trade unions, receives
a threat against his life. Walter Phillips finds that out of fifteen
instances where a suspenseful conclusion to a number was possible,
Reade used the technique ten times. "In eight of the ten," Phillips
notes, "he managed to bring into jeopardy the life of the hero or
heroine; murder, gunpowder, and exposure are among the agents employed
for this purpose in the first five numbers; attempted murder twice
more, and a flood . . . are among the remaining agencies."76

Wilkie Collins was such a skillful architect of sensational
plotting that he could repeatedly develop even the weekly installment
to a point which promised exciting action or a new twist to the plot
and then conclude the number with this dramatic suspense. No Name
(All the Year Round, 1862) is an excellent illustration. For example,
the first number of this novel ended with the introduction of a
mysterious stranger who promised to figure significantly in the lives
of the characters. The second ended with disclosure of the existence
of a dark, hidden secret in the past of the heroine's father. The
third number ended with promise of a love affair. The fourth concluded with the heroine's sweetheart being sent away by his father into an unknown future. A strange mental unrest, which leaves the reader to wonder about the causes, overtakes the heroine's father at the end of Number V. With Number VI, the curtain dropped upon the sudden announcement of the death of the father. The seventh number concluded with a puzzling, confidential appointment of the family lawyer with the governess. Number VIII, during which it is revealed that the heroine and her sister are illegitimate and penniless, ends with the two girls left upon the mercy of a mysterious uncle, their father's bitterest enemy. Week after week Collins left his readers panting in anticipation for the following installment of the novel.

This insistence upon suspenseful conclusions appealed to the novelist's sense of the dramatic, or melodramatic, and led to a tendency to end installments upon a particularly dramatic and climactic final statement, called by Phillips, in a term borrowed from the drama, the curtain line. The curtain line was a portentous and theatrically resounding statement of foreboding which brought down the curtain upon a number amid the unrelieved suspense: "Read that," said the narrator at the end of Part II of Collins's *Armadale*, "and for Christ's sake pity me when you know who I am." In Part III, the concluding statements were: "'The boat; the boat,' he cried in a scream of horror. The boat was adrift." Novelists, especially of sensational fiction, favored the curtain line, and they were encouraged by editors of periodicals to produce them. Leslie Stephen, for example, shortened the second
number of Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*, then serialized in *The Cornhill Magazine*, by four pages in order to end the number, he said, "Where there is a better break." When Charles Reade's *A Good Fight* was appearing in *Once A Week*, Lucas, the editor, tampered with Reade's text in order to end the numbers with dramatic curtain lines. Gettmann found that "Lucas changed the conclusions of six installments (number 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13)—i.e., he ended them in mid-chapter." Lucas, for example, ended Number V at a point only 250 words from the end of Reade's original chapter ending. The result was a resounding curtain:

Their mirth was suddenly interrupted. Margaret's eye became fixed and fascinated, and her cheek pale with fear. She gasped, and could not speak, but pointed to the window with trembling finger. Their eyes followed hers, and there in the twilight crouched a dark form with eyes like glow-worms.

It was the leopard.

Both Collins and Reade, because of the sensational nature of their material and probably because of their melodramatic tendencies, studiously attempted to create dramatic curtain lines with which to end installments. In Reade's *Hard Cash*, for instance, which narrates the experiences of Captain Dodd in bringing home £14,000 upon his ship the *Agra*, one installment ends: "The captain of the triumphant ship fell down on his hands and knees, his head sunk over the gangway, and his blood ran fast and pattered in the midst of them on the deck he had so bravely defended." The following number concludes: "The surgeon was not there; the two blacks, one with a knife and one with his bare claws were fighting and struggling, trampling all over
the cabin at once and the dying man sitting upon his cot, pale and glaring at them." Another number, in which the Agra is threatened by a severe storm, ends with: "A voice in the dark cried—'Oh God! we are dead men!'"

Wilkie Collins was an adept creator of curtain lines, as evidenced by the dramatically astounding revelation of the narrator in Number XXII of The Moonstone:

"If time, pains and money can do it, I will lay my hand on the thief who took the Moonstone."--I had left London, with those words on my lips. I had penetrated the secret which the quick sand had kept from every other living creature. And, on the unanswerable evidence of the paint-stain, I had discovered Myself as the Thief.

In No Name, Collins manipulated the weekly installments into a variety of effective curtain lines. He could be obvious, as with:

"He was out of spirits: he was strangely out of spirits. What did it mean?" or "Is there a gentleman in the background after all? Is there mischief brewing in the dark, that I don't bargain for?"

And he can be highly dramatic:

"The harm is done," she said: "You may speak out. Is he wounded, or dead?"

"Dead!"

The bottle in her right hand was the first bottle she looked at. It was marked—Sal Volatile. She instantly laid the other bottle aside on the table without looking at it. The other bottle lay there, waiting its turn. It held a dark liquid, and it was labelled—POISON.

Sit closer, Mr. Noel. What I have to say to you must be heard by no living creature but ourselves.

"Your drink, Mr. Noel," she said in a kinder tone, feeling unwilling to offend him. He took
no notice of her.  
She went to the table to rouse him. Was he  
in deep thought?  
He was dead. 

Though Thackeray employed the curtain line far less frequently than Reade or Collins, he was no less a master of its effectiveness. In Pendennis, for example, curtain lines are few but skillful. A masterful stroke of the pen ends Part XVI, in which Pendennis has been trifling with the affections of Fanny Bolton and shocking but unconfirmed rumors of the affair have filtered down to the country and alarmed Pen's mother. When Pen becomes ill at the end of the number, his relatives rush to his bedside; and the number ends, with startling implications, at the door to Pen's room: "They knocked very gently at the door, on which Arthur's name was written, and it was opened by Fanny Bolton." Vanity Fair is filled with stunning curtain lines which close Thackeray's brilliantly suspenseful numbers. Part I, in which Becky schemes to capture the heart of Joseph Sedley, ends with Joseph saying, "Gad, I'll pop the question at Vauxhall." Part III ends with Mr. Horracks's comment to Sir Pitt that Becky was a match for Rawdon to which Thackeray makes the enigmatic addition, "And so, in truth, she was, for father and son too." In Part IV, Becky is made an offer of marriage by Sir Pitt, and the number concludes with her surprising revelation, "'Oh, Sir Pitt!' she said 'Oh, sir--I--I'm married already.'" Perhaps the best of all these dramatic conclusions is the curtain line which ends Part IX: "No more firing was heard at Brussels--the pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and city: and Amelia was praying for
George who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart."

The resounding, theatrical curtain line used to end a number is rare in Dickens's novels. Dickens seems to have wanted to arouse curiosity at the end of an installment, rather than the creation of sensational climax, and he usually concluded his monthly numbers with a rather quiet suspense or with a hint, literal or symbolic, in the final paragraph. Strong, clinching final sentences do exist in Dickens's work, such as that in Number II of *Great Expectations*: "But I ran no further than the house door, for there I ran head foremost into a party of soldiers with their muskets: one of whom held out a pair of handcuffs to me saying, 'Here you are, look sharp, come on!'" The usual curtain line of Dickens, however, is seldom so dramatic and is more like that which ends Part VI of *David Copperfield*, in which Steerforth foreshadows the bitter medicine he is to brew for Emily and Ham: "Daisy, I believe you are in earnest, and are good. I wish we all were!" A similar curtain falls on Part XIII, in which Uriah Heep plans to force Agnes to marry him, with its prophetic hint at Heep's success:

"You have sometimes plucked a pear before it was ripe, Master Copperfield?"
"I suppose I have," I replied.
"I did that last night," said Uriah, "but it'll ripen yet! It only wants attending to. I can wait!"

Profuse in his farewells, he got down again as the coachman got up. For anything I know, he was eating something to keep the raw morning air out; but he made motions with his mouth as if the pear were ripe already, and he were smacking his lips over it."
In *The Pickwick Papers*, the numbers end simply, and without fanfare; and the most dramatic of them all is the modest conclusion to Part III:

On the fourth, the host was in high spirits, for he had satisfied himself that there was no ground for the charge against Mr. Tupman. So was Mr. Tupman, for Mr. Jingle had told him that his affair would soon be brought to a crisis. So was Mr. Pickwick, for he was seldom otherwise. So was not Mr. Snodgrass, for he had grown jealous of Mr. Tupman. So was the old lady, for she had been winning at whist. So were Mr. Jingle and Miss Wardle, for reasons of sufficient importance in this eventful history to be narrated in another chapter.

More often than not, Dickens's installments ended without curtain lines.

The result of the installment novelist's concentration upon the individual number unit, with its fixed length, its balanced incident, its action in every number, its climactic suspense and dramatic curtain line, was that the installment novel often became episodic: a succession of self-contained units of narration separated from each other by fixed durations of time. The Victorians themselves noted the serial novel's lack of unity and its composite structure and criticized it. A reviewer in the *Daily News* (2 Dec. 1850) commented upon the form "with its repose and recurring intervals, and its demand for monthly interest." A critic in the *Saturday Review* complained that the novel which is "the aggregate of twenty-four monthly pamphlets must always be disjointed and languid . . . ." Harriet Martineau remarked that to "provide a certain number of these [climactic closes] at regular intervals was like breaking up the broad lights
and shadows of a great picture and spoiling it as a composition." 101

Dickens himself realized the problems of writing for installment publication that had been created with the publication of *The Pickwick Papers*; he stated in the preface to the volume edition of 1837:

The publication of the book in monthly numbers, containing only thirty-two pages in each, rendered it an object of paramount importance that, while different incidents were linked together by a chain of interest strong enough to prevent their appearing unconnected or impossible, the general design should be so simple as to sustain no injury from this detached and desultory form of publication, extending over no fewer than twenty months. In short, it was necessary—or it appeared so to the Author—that every number should be, to a certain extent, complete in itself, and yet that the whole twenty numbers, when collected, should form one tolerably harmonious whole, each leading to the other by a gentle and not unnatural progress of adventure.

It is obvious that in a work published with a view to such considerations, no artfully interwoven or ingeniously complicated plot can with reason be expected. 102

The structural pattern of almost all installment novels is linear, like a string on which a succession of brightly-colored beads are strung. Even the later novels of Dickens, though not so artlessly episodic as *Pickwick*, are composites of self-contained installments, each with its own incident, arranged in a straightforward chronological sequence. Dickens's *Great Expectations*, one of the best organized of his novels, is simply a sequence of episodes: Pip's meeting Magwitch in the marsh, his experiences at Satis House, the legacy and Pip's London adventures, the Magwitch episodes, Pip's illness and regeneration of character. Thackeray's *Pendennis*, likewise, breaks into segments, related to each other only by the chronological development of the principal character: the Fatheringay
episodes, the University section, the London section; the Fanny Bolton section; the Claverings section. Standing in illustrative contrast to such installment novels, written periodically, published periodically, and offering no opportunity for revision and little evidence of careful overall planning, is Thackeray's three-volume novel, Henry Esmond. Often cited as the most structurally perfect of Thackeray's novels, it was the only one of his major novels to have been written entirely before publication and hence the only novel of his to receive careful planning and painstaking revision. Its careful tripartite design and unity of purpose and action demonstrate, in its contrast with the installment novel, the relative formlessness to which the serial novel was heir.

The comparison of Henry Esmond with Thackeray's installment novels illustrates another feature of novels published in parts or serials: they were generally less artful and polished than three-volume novels. The installment novel, since it did not have to be completely written before publication began, promoted piecemeal composition and hurried composition. This, in turn, increased the possibilities of making mistakes and severely decreased the opportunities for artistic composition, revision, and reading proof. A large number of writers of installment novels seem to have been addicted to composition at the eleventh hour.

An exception, of course, was Anthony Trollope. A methodical writer who could, by adhering to a rigid schedule, grind out his "250 words every quarter of an hour" for three hours a day, Trollope refused to publish his novels before they were completely
written. Framley Parsonage was the only exception to the rule. The cautious Trollope always reserved the opportunity to fit the end of a novel to its beginning. George Eliot was similarly prudent: Book V of Middlemarch (issued in eight parts) was completed six months before it was to be published, and Book VIII of Daniel Deronda was completed four months before it was to appear in the Cornhill Magazine.

Other novelists were not so punctual. Dickens, Forster tells us, "never wrote without the printer at his heels." Dickens wrote frantically to meet a deadline, as he said in the "Preface" to Pickwick, "from time to time, almost as the periodical occasion arose." His letters frequently bespeak the anxiety of writing against time. Once, for example, Dickens was severely frightened by overhearing an impatient customer in a stationer's shop request the latest number of David Copperfield; he suffered a moment of panic in the realization that he had not yet written a word of it.

Thackeray was, perhaps, an even greater procrastinator. He seldom completed the numbers for his novels more than a day or two before they were due at the printer's. Gordon Ray observes that "The monthly parts of Vanity Fair and Pendennis were customarily dashed off a few days before they were to be published, the printer's boy sometimes waiting in the hall at Young Street to carry off his sheets as they were finished." With Vanity Fair, for instance, Thackeray's agreement with Bradbury & Evans called for completion of the monthly number by the fifteenth of each month, but Thackeray's letters reveal that, frequently, he was still writing as late as the
twenty-ninth. With Pendennis, though each number was to be published on the last day of the month, Thackeray did not begin the third number (January 1849) until the eighteenth of December 1848; and he was still writing on the twenty-seventh. During the writing of Barry Lyndon, one installment had to be omitted for want of copy. As can be imagined, therefore, the days toward the end of the month when the next installment was due were ones of constant panic to Thackeray. "I get so nervous," he said, "that I don't speak to anyone scarcely." His letters reveal this tension: "At the end of the month I always have a life- & death struggle to get out my number," he said of Vanity Fair.

This hasty writing had its effect upon Thackeray's novels. There were numerous inconsistencies in the spelling of names in The Newcomes. The chapters were incorrectly numbered in The Virginians. Two long paragraphs were printed in reverse order in Vanity Fair, Part XVII, and have never been printed in correct order in any edition; and in a letter to his mother, Thackeray remarked, "One or two people have found out how careless the last no of V. F. is . . . ." Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson have commented upon the carelessness of Vanity Fair:

But the last-minute rush had one drawback; after the fourth number there can have been little time for careful proofreading. The result may be seen in the large number of variants—about 120—between issues of the first edition; even so, many errors were missed, some persisting through all subsequent editions.

Dickens and Thackeray were by no means alone in writing at the eleventh hour. Dickens, who was seldom more than one step (or perhaps
even half-a-step) ahead of the printer, allowed the contributors of 
All The Year Round to follow the same procedure. Gerald Grubb states:
"Mrs. Gaskell's North and South, Collins' stories, Bulwer-Lytton's A 
Strange Story, Lever's A Day's Ride, and Charles Reade's Hard Cash 
were all so written." The printer dogged the heels of Meredith 
during the serialization of Evan Harrington in Once a Week. William Harrison Ainsworth was frequently so far behind in the com-
position of The Tower of London that he was forced to work late at 
night; and, Ellis states, "The concluding portions of the number on 
hand would pass straight from his desk to the printers, and be set 
up in type." Samuel Warren composed the installments of Ten 
Thousand a-Year (Blackwood's, 1840-1841) at the last moment. Warren 
was, says Mrs. Oliphant, "one of the men who was late with his manu-
script, writing each instalment . . . at the last possible moment as 
it became due." Mary Elizabeth Braddon was faced with similar 
difficulties and complained to Bulwer-Lytton: "I know that my writing 
teems with errors, absurdities, contradictions and inconsistencies, 
but I have never written a line that has not been written against 
time and sometimes with the printer waiting at the door." 

Of even greater significance to the installment novel than its 
frequently hasty composition was the fact that it was seldom written 
completely before publication began. Rarely were more than a few 
initial numbers prepared. Dickens had completed only three numbers 
of Little Dorrit before publication, for example. Generally, it was 
written and printed piecemeal, part by part. As an installment 
became due, the author wrote it; and then he dawdled until the next
deadline. It is for this reason that Thackeray, Dickens, and Mrs. Gaskell all died leaving unfinished novels of which portions had been published. Six numbers of The Mystery of Edwin Drood, for example, had been published at the death of Dickens, and Thackeray had written three and a half numbers of Denis Duval at the time of his death. The illness of an author could also interrupt the publication of installment novels. Blackwood's Magazine had to cease publication of Samuel Phillips's Caleb Stukely for two months in the middle of the novel because of the ill health of the author. There was a three-months hiatus in the issuance of Pendennis when Thackeray became ill in 1849. When Dickens's sister-in-law died suddenly during the publication of Pickwick, Dickens's intense grief prevented his writing, and thus there was no number of the novel for June 1837 (and also for the serial Oliver Twist, appearing at the same time in Bentley's Miscellany).

The upshot of the practice of piecemeal composition was that opportunities for alteration of the original plan of a novel along the way were provided. Novels grew like unruly children, following strange paths and directions, in opposition to their parents' original ambitions for them. During the lengthy course of composition, modifications of initial planning were effected; and the final numbers of a novel, separated from the first ones by a year or more, could be quite different in focus, theme, or tone. In addition, there was of course no turning back to the early pages of the manuscript for revisions or additions which would adequately prepare for the changes in the latter portions. Details could be forgotten over the lengthy
flow of time and narration, and inconsistencies could and did appear.

Many a novel just grew from a mere seed of an idea in the fertile mind of a writer, for not infrequently there was very little elaborate planning at the outset of an installment novel. Dickens's early novels were begun with a minimum of preliminary planning. The original intention of Pickwick was: "simply to amuse. It was to string together whimsical sketches of the pencil by entertaining sketches of the pen; and, at its beginning, where or how it was to end was as little known to himself [Dickens] as to any of its readers." The novel was, for the most part, one vast improvisation.

In Dombey and Son, Dickens had a rough idea of his major plot after the first four chapters were completed: Dombey's hopes for his son and disdain for his daughter, Paul's death and his father's gradual growth of love for Florence. This is all of the plot he had, however; the rest would be added as he went along, for Dickens said to Forster after outlining this basic plot, "This is what cooks call 'the stock of the soup.' All kinds of things will be added to it, of course."

The Old Curiosity Shop just grew:

It began with a plan for but a short half dozen chapters; it grew into a full-proportioned story under the warmth of the feeling it had inspired its author with; its very incidents created a necessity at first not seen; and it was carried to a close only contemplated after a full half of it had been written.

The idea of killing Little Nell had not occurred to Dickens, Forster tells us, until he suggested it about halfway through the novel.

Thackeray's outline of Vanity Fair, expressed in a letter to Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth about a third of the way through the writing of the
novel, was only slightly less hazy:

What I want to make is a set of people living without God in the world (only that is a Cant phrase) greedy pompous mean perfectly self-satisfied for the most part and at ease about their superior virtue. Dobbin & poor Briggs are the only 2 people with real humility as yet. Amelia's is to come, when her scoundrel of a husband is well dead with a ball in his odious bowels; when she has had sufferings, a child, and a religion--But she has at present a quality above most people whizz: LOVE--by wh. she shall be saved.127

Because of such abbreviated initial planning, authors had to take especial care in the selection of titles for their works, since there could be no alteration of them in order to fit a modification of intent later in the novels. On the manuscript of David Copperfield, for instance, there are seventeen different draft titles which Dickens considered.128 Dickens, therefore, usually chose broad, all-inclusive titles of the "life and adventures of . . ." sort for his early, sketchily planned novels. The overly explicit nature of the original title of Martin Chuzzlewit, however, once caused him trouble. The title ("The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewig [sic], his family, friends, and enemies. Comprising all his wills and his ways. With a historical record of what he did and what he didn't. The whole forming a complete key to the house of Chuzzlewig") indicated an initial direction which went astray; for Forster says "all of which latter portion of the title was of course dropped as the work became modified, in its progress, by changes at first not contemplated . . ."129 The experience taught Dickens the necessity for more groundwork before beginning to write.
Various changes, minor and major, could be made in an install-
ment novel during the course of its piecemeal composition. In Dombey 
and Son, Paul's death was originally planned for the fourth number. 
As the novel picked up speed, however, Dickens saw the need to make 
Part III "a kind of halfway house between Paul's infancy, and his 
being eight or nine years old"; and Paul's death, consequently, was 
postponed until Part V. During the writing of Pickwick, Dickens 
had been assigned, in the capacity of a reporter for the Morning 
Chronicle, to cover the North-Melbourne trial of June, 1836. Seeing 
there the comic possibilities of satire upon the administration of 
the law, Dickens incorporated such satire into the novel. While 
David Copperfield was being published, the person who served Dickens 
as the original source for the character of Miss Mowcher, a Mrs. Hill, 
a chiropodist and manicurist, wrote to Dickens and complained of her 
comic portrait. Dickens, therefore, though "he had intended to employ 
the character in an unpleasant way" (probably as an agent to further 
Steerforth's purposes), changed his plans to accommodate this com-
plaint; and consequently the character of Miss Mowcher is drastically 
changed between the twenty-second and thirty-second chapters.
During the writing of Pendennis, Thackeray's mood and perspective 
changed during the interval of his illness in 1849. After Chapter 
XXXVI, Gordon Ray observes, "No longer was Pen what Thackeray had 
been in youth, he became simply an alter ego, expressing his creator's 
opinions and feeling; and with this change disappeared the doubleness 
of vision that makes the first half of the novel so remarkable."

Perhaps the most significant of the influences of the piecemeal
method of composition was that it enabled authors to gauge the public's estimation of a novel's excellence as expressed by sales and letters and to alter the novel accordingly. Throughout the long course of publication, the sales figures of the various monthly parts told a novelist which characters and episodes were popular; and his fan mail written by appreciative readers congratulated him and not infrequently offered suggestions as to what course the action should follow. Lord Jeffrey's letter to Dickens after the first few parts of Dombey and Son had been published is typical of the esteem and advice offered by the public:

The Dombeys, my dear D! how can I thank you enough for them! The truth, and the delicacy, and the softness and depth and pathos in that opening deathscene, could only come from one hand; and the exquisite taste which spares all details, and breaks off just when the effect is at its height, is wholly yours. But it is Florence on whom my hopes chiefly repose; and in her I see the promise of another Nelly! though reserved, I hope, for a happier fate, and destined to let us see what a grown-up female angel is like. I expect great things, too, from Walter, who begins charmingly, and will be still better I fancy than young Nickleby, to whom as yet he bears most resemblance. I have good hopes too of Susan Nipper, who I think has great capabilities, and whom I trust you do not mean to drop. Dombey is rather too hateful, and strikes me as a mitigated Jonas, without his brutal coarseness and ruffian ferocity. I am quite in the dark as to what you mean to make of Paul, but shall watch his development with interest. About Miss Tox, and her major, and the Chicks, perhaps I do not care enough. But you know I always grudge the exquisite painting you waste on such portraits. I love the Captain, tho', and his book, as much as you can wish; and look forward to the future appearances of Carker Junior, with expectations which I know will not be disappointed . . . 134

Among the other readers who wrote to Dickens, says Kathleen Tillotson,
one wished to "counsel him to develop the character [of Sam Weller] largely-to the utmost." Thackeray's followers complained when Amelia figured too prominently in *Vanity Fair*, and they implored him to marry Laura to George Warrington in *Pendennis* and Ethel to Clive Newcome in *The Newcomes*.

No writer, with even a mild concern for his pocketbook, could afford to ignore such testimony of success or failure. Just like the television networks of today, the installment novelist strove to give the public what it wanted; and sales figures and fan mail were the Neilson Rating of the day. Dickens, for example, was ever attuned to fluctuating sales and public opinion through a sense of both financial and artistic insecurity. When contemplating altering his original plan to kill Paul in *Number IV of Dombey and Son*, he asked Forster what he thought the public reaction would be. "Do you think," he said, "the people so likely to be pleased with Florence, and Walter, as to relish another number of them at their present age?"

In keeping one eye fastened on his audience's reaction, Dickens was prompted to emphasize those elements which he felt were popular and promoted sales and to curtail or alter those elements which did not. For instance, when the monthly purchases of the early numbers of *Martin Chuzzlewit* did not meet expectations, Dickens announced, at the end of Part IV, that Martin would go to America. Martin took the trip, although Dickens confessed that the change in direction of the main course of his narrative created great difficulty. About two thousand new readers were added because of the simple expedient of the American episode. Mrs. Gamp appeared in the seventh number;
and, finding her also to the public's liking, Dickens provided more of this saleable character. In *Little Dorrit*, Lovett and Hughes tell us, the novel began "with a scene which promises a romance of crime. But Dickens found the combination of protest against imprisonment for debt, satire upon government inefficiency, and the appeal of childhood more to the taste of his readers."

Nowhere was Dickens's consciousness of his readers' preferences felt so strongly as in *Great Expectations*, in which, upon urging from Bulwer-Lytton, the original unhappy ending was eliminated in favor of a publicly acceptable one which implied a conjugal happiness for Pip and Estella. The public was thrown its syrupy sop, and artistic integrity be hanged.

Dickens, however, was not alone in kowtowing to popularity and the power of the shilling. When Alexander Blackwood wrote to Samuel Warren hinting that the public was complaining that *Ten Thousand a-Year* lagged a little, Warren replied that the next installment would contain some exciting action: "the solemn and final exclusion of the Aubreys from Yatton; and the manner in which each party bears his fate in circumstances of joy and triumph, of grief and trouble, appreciable by all classes of readers." Thackeray also bowed to public pressure and purchasing power. By the ninth number of *Pendennis*, he was worried about the lack of popularity of his novel. He was determined, he wrote Mrs. Brookfield, "that Mr. Pendennis shan't dawdle any more, and that I'll do something to fetch up my languishing reputation." To enliven his narrative, Thackeray promised "something uncommonly spirited, sarcastic, pathetic, humorous"--a little of everything for everybody. Later in the writing of the
novel, public pressure was again felt. Thackeray wanted to drop Fanny Bolton from the narrative after Pen said farewell to her, for her role in Pen's affairs was ended by this action. The public, however, had become concerned about her, and consequently Thackeray did not dare eliminate her from the novel. "Hence," Ray says, "a chapter is devoted to settling Fanny in life with Sam Huxter, irrelevant though this episode may be." During the course of The Newcomes, Thackeray became conscious that the character of Colonel Newcome was not exciting enough to suit the public. The Colonel was, in Thackeray's words, "rather a twaddler"; so he shipped him off to India to get him out of the way. Later, when the public desired a marriage between Clive and Ethel, Thackeray gave them a marriage. "But then, you see, what could a fellow do?" he apologized to James Russell Lowell; "So many people wanted 'em married."

A significant influence of this awareness by the novelist of his audience seems to be the establishment of an especially close relationship between writer and reader, manifesting itself in increased direct address to the "Gentle Reader" and a tendency toward a chatty, informal, intimate style. The installment novelist's association with his audience was similar to the intimate relationship between the story-teller of old and his circle of listeners. Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, and the rest entertained, amused, or made their readers weep for weeks, or months, on end; and the readers' affection for the writers who did this was not the ephemeral appreciation felt after the reading of a novel in one fell swoop, but an extended affection, like that for a friend of long duration. It was expressed
to the novelist by their continued purchases and by their letters; and the novelist, especially Dickens and Thackeray, responded to it, feeling that in the long and close mutual contact they had to sell not only the novel but, in part, themselves also. Thackeray called this relationship "a communion between the writer and the public . . . something continual, confidential, something like personal affection." Dickens revealed his awareness, and appreciation, of this writer-reader intimacy in his note to the reader in the last number of Dombey and Son: "I cannot forego my usual opportunity of saying farewell to my readers in this greeting-place, though I have only to acknowledge the unbounded warmth and earnestness of their sympathy in every stage of the journey we have just concluded."

Thackeray, more than any other novelist perhaps, was influenced by an affectionate awareness of his audience; and it apparently accounts, in part at least, for his colloquial garrulity. In his novels he is ever the puppeteer, the story-teller, who manipulates the characters and chats about them, making the reader a confidant to the personal thoughts of his mind. "There is no writer of the present day," says David Masson, "who has established such friendly relations between himself and the public—none whom the reader seems to know so well, none with whom he feels so familiar."

In Vanity Fair, for example, Thackeray speaks directly to his readers as he would to friends over a cup of tea:

But as we are to see a great deal of Amelia, there is no harm in saying, at the outset of our acquaintance, that she was a dear little creature.
The world is a looking glass . . . . Frown at it, and it will in turn look sourly upon you . . . .

If Miss Rebecca Sharp had determined in her heart upon making the conquest of this big beau, I don't think, ladies, we have any right to blame her . . . .

I know that the tune I am piping is a very mild one (although there are some terrific chapters coming presently,) and must beg the good-natured reader to remember, that we are only discoursing at present about a stock-broker's family in Russell Square . . . .

What were the adventures of Mr. Osborne and Miss Amelia? That is a secret. But be sure of this--they were perfectly happy, and correct in their behavior.

By use of direct address and employment of the pronouns "we," "us," "our," Thackeray draws his readers into a personal confidence and then chats to them, rambling on with personal opinions in what he called in *Pendennis* "a sort of confidential talk between writer and reader."

In addition to the other characteristics of installment fiction, the great length, concentration upon the part, and hurried and piece-meal composition, it seems likely that the installment format also produced some small effect upon characterization. The great length permitted, of course, a process of gradual revelation of personality; but more important was the propensity it created to give characters names which suggest their personalities or to present them with readily identifiable tags: a distinguishing physical feature, a characteristic action, or a set speech phrase. In novels which were read in segments, with a week or a month between the parts, spread out over a period of almost two years in some instances, there can
be no doubt that a reader often had difficulty in remembering minor characters, and perhaps even major ones if there was an abundance of them in the novel or if they had been allowed to lie dormant for a while. Any methods by which character traits could be accentuated or characters made more easily memorable, therefore, were desirable; for they would greatly facilitate the reading of an installment novel. The descriptive or suggestive name, the aptronymn, or the characteristic action, feature, or speech, the tag, were such means, as a letter by Mrs. Bryan Waller Proctor, discussing the characterization of *Vanity Fair*, testifies: "One feels well acquainted with all his [Thackeray's] characters, although they have no pet phrase or peculiar expression, and except in the case of Dobbin's lisp they have no distinguishing habit, or manner of speaking." The aptronymn and the tag served a valuable function in the installment novel: they were memory devices which bridged the gap between installments and kept the reader, and probably the author also, alert to previously discussed actors and activity. They prevented, to a large extent, subtlety of characterization, promoting caricatures rather than people of real depth; but to the writer of installment fiction, they seem to have been a necessary evil.

The descriptive or suggestive name is by no means the invention of the nineteenth century or the installment novelist. In English literature it goes back at least as far as the medieval morality plays; it was common property in restoration drama; and it can be found in the novels of Fielding and, especially, Smollett. Nor is the characteristic action of recent origin. The installment novelists...
of the nineteenth century adopted these devices, rather than invented them; and it is the frequent use of the aptronym and tag which suggests that they were particularly suited to the needs of the installment novelists who probably seized them instinctively.

The easily remembered descriptive or suggestive name is widely used in installment fiction. Dickens especially, as C. A. Bodelson comments, "displayed very great skill in choosing names that, by some psychological process that is not always easy to follow, symbolize the personality of the bearer." Sometimes merely the comic properties of his names render them memorable: Snubbin, Snodgrass, Pickwick, Wackles, Pumblechook, Wopsle. More often Dickens's character names describe or through connotations suggest character traits: Jingle (bells, money, gaiety), Murdstone (murder, stone), Heep (rubbish, creep), Micawber (macabre), Cuttle (fish, hence the sea), Jaggers (jagged, sharp), Bounderby (bounder), M'Chokumchild (choke, child), Steerforth (straightforward), Mould (mold, graves), Magwitch (hag, witch), Pip (small, insignificant). All of these names are unusual, memorable, and appropriate and would aid in the identification of characters as the reader encountered them from month to month. Wilkie Collins, Dickens's disciple, imitated Dickens and also employed the aptronym in such characters as Miss Clack (noise, talk) and Sergeant Cuff (handcuffs) of The Moonstone, Captain Wragg (rags, out at elbows) of No Name, and Madame Pratolungo of Poor Miss Finch, who, characteristically, is garrulous to the extreme. Though less frequently employed, the names of Thackeray's characters, especially in Vanity Fair, attest to his use of the practice: Blanche Amory
(recalling her pale complexion), Wag (the caustic wit), and Captain Strong (the masculine soldier) of _Pendennis_; Sedley (sedentary), Sharp (sharp), Crawley (crawling), Steyne (stain), Dobbin (a horse, plodding), Miss Swartz (dark complexion), of _Vanity Fair_.

The tag was less frequently used in installment fiction and is primarily the property of Dickens who was most prone to the practice of accentuating character through characteristic action, feature, or phrase. Dickens's use of the device stems partly from his interest in the drama and particularly from the examples furnished by the actor, Charles Mathews. Earle Davis has noted the indebtedness of Dickens to Mathews's method of acting:

> The mimicry of peculiarities of gesture, posture, walk and talk was the essence of Mathews' acting. Contrasting mannerisms were heavily emphasized, and each character was assigned a way of speaking which would impress itself upon the audience. This process was necessary to make sure the audience would keep the characters separate. Most noticeable of Mathews' mannerisms was the assignment of tags of speech to his characters: the little phrase which recurred every time a person spoke served to fix that individual's identity in the attention of the listeners.156

It was a significant influence, for the tag is everywhere in Dickens's work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Novel</th>
<th>Tag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Wardle</td>
<td>Pickwick</td>
<td>address to the fat boy: &quot;Joe, Joe! Damn that boy, he's gone to sleep again.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the elder Weller</td>
<td>Pickwick</td>
<td>disparagement of women &quot;I'll be content to eat my own head, sir!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Grimwig</td>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>address to youngsters: &quot;My dears&quot; consigning people to &quot;the damnation bow-wows&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fagan</td>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>&quot;a lone, lorn creatur&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Mantalini</td>
<td>Nickleby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Gummidge</td>
<td>Copperfield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Barkis
Uriah Heep
Mrs. Micawber
Betsy Trotwood
Mrs. Gargery
the Aged P
Mrs. Pocket

Copperfield
Copperfield
Copperfield
Copperfield
Copperfield
Copperfield
Expectations
Expectations

"Barkis is willin"
I will never leave Mr. Micawber"
Janet, donkeys!"
Expectations
Expectations
Expectations
references to her imagined nobility

In *Dombey and Son* almost all the minor characters possess such labels:

Carker's smile; Mr. Chick's humming tunes; Miss Chick's speeches upon lack of effort; Miss Tox's expressions of admiration for Paul; Uncle Sol's wig; Mrs. Pipchin's eating hot chops; Mrs. Skewton's enactment of the role of Cleopatra; Major Bagstock's self-reference to "Old Joe Bagstock, tough and devilish sly"; Mr. Toot's comment, "It's of no consequence." Each of these characteristic tags is sufficient to produce an instant recollection of a character's personality in the reader's mind and thus to lessen the significance of the waiting period between installments.

Thackeray did not follow Dickens's practice of using character tags: the closest he came to giving his characters tags was an emphasis upon distinct, individualistic traits of character, such as Harry Foker's wink, Major Pendennis's dandyism, Lady Clavering's poor grammar, and Helen's parsimony in *Pendennis*. Such assignment of characteristic features of personality served the same function as the tag, but without the artificiality and caricatured distortion.

Wilkie Collins, on the other hand, was a willing imitator, and the tags he gave his characters, in the Dickens' fashion, can be seen in the divination by means of *Robinson Crusoe* of Betteredge, the incontinent evangelism of Miss Clack, the singing of the song "The Last
Rose of Summer" by Sergeant Cuff of *The Moonstone*; the buzzing in Mrs. Wragge's head in *No Name*; the dilettante's hypochondria of Frederick Fairlie in *The Woman in White*.

Like the requirements for three-volume novels, the requirements of installment fiction had their effect upon those novels written for issuance in fragments. Whether he wrote for publication in parts or serials, the installment novelist was confronted with a set of criteria which was demanding and restrictive. His own individual tastes, genius, and working habits produced variety, of course, but it was a variety bordered by limits beyond which he could not go.

Far too often, however, these limitations go ignored in the reading of modern editions of installment novels, compact in one volume and designed for uninterrupted reading. Consequently, through comparison with modern fiction, the Victorian writer is condemned rather than the conditions under which he wrote. Mammoth length, words seemingly for the sake of words, episodic structure with repetitive climaxes, over-simplified characterization are the charges fixed upon him; and if we love him, we seem to love him in spite of those features we consider his weaknesses. The Victorians, however, loved him for the very elements which we deplore. Perhaps, more than in any other age, the novelist of the Victorian period wrote for his public. He produced his work not for himself, not for the sake of art alone, but for his readers. He gave them what they wanted. The circulating libraries wanted three-deckers; the people wanted novels in a format they could afford. This is what they received. Consequently, the installment novels of the nineteenth century are not the novels of
today: they are long, they are rambling, they are loosely-knit, their characterization is often limited. They are not, however, poorer novels; nor are they less artistically executed. Their artistry is merely an artistry different from ours, the result of publishing conditions different from ours; and those features frequently labeled weakness, viewed in respect to the demands of conformity to format, are frequently masterful solutions to difficult situations. The ringing climaxes of No Name, the delightful caricatures of Dickens, the panoramic scope of The Pickwick Papers, the prolonged acquaintance with Becky and Amelia and its resultant sense of the gradual passage of time of Vanity Fair, our awareness of the humanness of Thackeray are all, in part, the legacy of the installment format.
Footnotes to Chapter V


5*Autobiography*, p. 135.


8The last parts of *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes* were double numbers.


16See McCarthy, p. 32.


20 Letters, p. 178.

21 John A. Lester, "Thackeray's Narrative Technique," PMLA, LXIX (June 1954), 397-398.

22 Quoted by Butt and Tillotson, p. 25.


24 See Sadleir, Trollope, A Commentary, p. 351.


28 Quoted by Butt and Tillotson, p. 23.

29 Ibid., p. 23.

30 Forster, I, 113.

31 Butt and Tillotson, p. 23.

32 Ibid., p. 73.


34 Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson, "Introduction" to Vanity Fair, Riverside Ed. (Boston, 1963), pp. xix-xx.

35 See Vanity Fair, Riverside Ed., pp. 672-674. For a similar passage in Philip, see Gordon Ray, Thackeray, the Age of Wisdom, p. 374.

36 This view is strongly advanced by Helen Lasek McCarthy, pp. 97ff.

37 Letters, III, 372.

38 Ibid., II, 678.
Letters, p. 69.

Ibid., p. 93.

Life of Dickens, I, 113.

Butt and Tillotson, p. 22.

Ibid., p. 97.


Butt and Tillotson, pp. 97-98.

Ibid., p. 97.

Forster, II, 115.

Butt and Tillotson, p. 203.

Ibid., p. 22.


Forster, II, 115-116.


Dickens at Work, p. 101.

Quoted by Butt and Tillotson, p. 116.

The Flint and the Flame, pp. 174-175.

Ibid., p. 175.


Purdy, p. 336.
See Chase, pp. 31-32.

Letters, III, 2h. The italics are mine.

Trollope, Letters, p. 2h3.

Mrs. Oliphant, William Blackwood, II, 422.

Ibid., II, 220.


Purdy, pp. 337-338.

An exception was Walter Besant. He stated that, although most of his novels appeared as serials, he "never felt, recognized, or understood that there was the least necessity of ending an installment with an incident." He merely divided his novels into roughly equal divisions. See Walter Besant, Autobiography (London, 1902), pp. 191-193.

Quoted by Butt and Tillotson, p. 41. Dickens had outdone himself with this overly emphatic climax; and he realized the problems of possible anti-climactic action in the following number, for he said to Forster: "To transfer to Florence, instantly, all the previous interest, is what I am aiming at. For that, all sorts of other points must be thrown aside in this number." (Forster, II, 41).

"Thackeray's Narrative Technique," p. 396.


Dickens, Reade, and Collins, pp. 86-87.

Quoted by Phillips, p. 87.

Ibid., p. 87.

Purdy, p. 337.

2h9

80 Ibid., p. 28.
81 Quoted by Phillips, pp. 87-88. The two following curtain lines are from Phillips, p. 88, also.
82 Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone in All The Year Round, XIX (1868), 583.
83 Wilkie Collins, No Name in All The Year Round, V (1862), 102.
84 Ibid., VII, 295.
85 Ibid., VI, 125.
86 Ibid., VIII, 174.
87 Ibid., VIII, 198.
88 Ibid., VIII, 223-224.
90 William Makepeace Thackeray, Vanity Fair, Riverside ed. (Boston, 1963), p. 44.
91 Ibid., p. 107.
92 Ibid., p. 142.
93 Ibid., p. 315.
94 Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, Nonesuch ed. (Bloomsbury, 1937), p. 27.
96 Ibid., p. 575.
98 Quoted by Ray, Thackeray, The Age of Wisdom, p. 175.
100 Quoted by Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen Forties, p. 44.


103. McCarthy, p. 28.

104. Life of Dickens, I, 114.


107. See Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of Eighteen Forties, p. 38.


112. Letters, II, 346. See also Thackeray's letter of 29 December 1847 to Abraham Hayward: II, 327-328.

113. See McCarthy, p. 150, n. 37.

114. Ibid., p. 104-105.


116. "Introduction" to Vanity Fair, p. xxiii. Some of these inconsistencies were: in eleventh chapter Mrs. Bute Crawley is called "Martha" but she is designated "Barbara" in the thirty-fourth chapter; Lord George Gaunt's wife is called "Joan" in Chapter XLVII, but "Fanny" in Chapter XLI.


120. Mrs. Oliphant, II, 223.

121. Quoted by Sadleir, Things Past, p. 77.
122See Mrs. Oliphant, II, 302-303.

123Forster, I, pp. 80-81.

124Ibid., II, 24-25.

125Ibid., I, 141.

126Letters, II, 309.

127Butt and Tillotson, p. 114.

128Life of Dickens, I, 314.

129Ibid., II, 35.

130See Butt and Tillotson, p. 71.

131Forster, II, 121-122. See also Letters, II, 193.


133Quoted by Forster, II, 39-40.

134Novels of the Eighteen Forties, p. 34.

135Ibid., p. 34.

136Forster, II, p. 35.

137Ibid., I, 327-328.


139Mrs. Oliphant, II, 220.

140Letters, II, 565.

141Thackeray, The Age of Wisdom, p. 117.

142See Letters, III, 341.

143Quoted by McCarthy, p. 153, n. 46.


155 *The Flint and the Flame*, p. 41.
CHAPTER VI

TWO INSTALLMENT NOVELS: THACKERAY'S THE VIRGINIANS AND TROLLOPE'S FRAMLEY PARSONAGE

The influences exerted upon fiction by the process of writing for installment publication were varied and far-reaching. No one novel, of course, exhibits them all; but the examination of representative novels will present some evidence of the effects they could induce within an individual work. Thackeray's The Virginians and Trollope's Framley Parsonage are the works chosen to illustrate this totality of effect. They are not necessarily typical installment novels; for there is, perhaps, no such thing as a typical novel. Each novel issued in parts or as a serial was an individual work, exhibiting its author's distinctive talents; and any novel of the period issued in these formats could serve in some capacity at least to illustrate some aspects of installment fiction. The Virginians and Framley Parsonage, therefore, are merely sample installment novels, chosen partly at random. The selection of Framley Parsonage was motivated, in part, by the fact that it was issued as a serial and that, unlike the other installment novels of Trollope, it was composed piecemeal during the course of its publication. The Virginians was chosen because it was issued in monthly parts. Vanity Fair, perhaps, would have been a better choice to illustrate the
novelist's skillful mastery of the problems of writing for part-
issues; but, since The Virginians is a kind of sequel to Henry Esmond, it presents a more telling contrast to the three-decker and its problems of composition.

The Virginians was published in twenty-four monthly shilling parts of thirty-two pages each, in yellow covers, containing two engravings, from November, 1857, to October, 1859. This pattern of publication committed Thackeray to a novel of rather massive length. Since each number contained, on the average, four chapters or 14,200 words, the total aggregate of the twenty-four parts is more than 340,000 words. This is some 150,000 words more than the three-volume Henry Esmond, adequate testimony that the part-issue novel was sizably longer than the three-decker, a fact which Thackeray realized when the novel was conceived. "I shall more likely do the Esmonds of Virginia," he wrote, "and it will depend on the size to which that book goes whether it shall appear in three vols. or 20 numbers."2

The Virginians, consequently, had more ground to cover than did Esmond: its canvas was more than a fourth larger. Thackeray stretched his subject by seizing upon a life chronicle plot of not one, but two principal characters, and by ambling through this basic situation at a snail's pace. The lives of both Harry and George Warrington are traced in The Virginians in somewhat wearisome detail from adolescence to middle age; and into this expanded narrative vista are introduced a small army of major and minor characters to help bear the burden of narration. In addition to twenty-eight characters of minor significance, there are, besides Harry and George, ten other characters
of major importance with whom their lives at one time or another become entangled: Lord Castlewood; Will Esmond; the Baroness of Bernstein; Madam Esmond; George Washington; Maria Esmond; General Lambert; Theo and Hetty Lambert; Lydia Van den Bosch. Thackeray entwined his two protagonists in relationships with first one, then another, of these significant characters, shuttling back and forth between characters in a fashion quite unlike the orderly progression of Henry Esmond. In the first half of the novel, for example, Harry becomes involved first with the Baroness Bernstein, and then gambles with Will Esmond. A love affair with Maria Esmond follows. He next falls in with the Lamberts, proceeds to Tunbridge and becomes involved with several gamblers there. The second half of the novel repeats a similar process using George as the central figure of involvement.

At times characters are introduced into the narrative on the flimsiest of principles for the potential they provide for padded description or additional incident. In Number XXI, for example, the wealthy brewer, Mr. Foker, is introduced, ostensibly to supply George Warrington a tutor's position; primarily, however, he exists as a figure who could supply, through opportunity for the construction of a genealogy and character description, over two full pages of padding. In similar fashion, Lydia Van den Bosch is initially introduced into the novel in Number XVIII, a point in the narration where the incident had become precariously thin; and her sudden appearance on the scene seems primarily due to a necessity for injecting new life into the novel by extending the narration into new areas of development. By
involving Lydia in an unexpected, mercenary marriage with Lord Castlewood, Thackeray inserts into the novel an excitement in welcomed contrast with the mundane affairs of George Warrington. The narrative is enlivened, and the new incident enabled Thackeray to augment the rapidly thinning material with which he was filling the final numbers.

The major method of stretching this story through twenty-four monthly numbers, however, consisted of the multiplication of minor and mostly trivial incident. Thackeray had two major characters with which to work, and he related the sequence of affairs of each, concentrating first primarily upon Harry for twelve numbers, then upon George for the last twelve. The reader is told of Harry's visit to England, and then given a flashback of the antecedent boyhood days of the two brothers: their revolt against their mother's dominance, their jealous quarrel with Colonel George Washington, George's campaign against the French and Indians, and his apparent death. The narrative then returns to a focus upon Harry: Baroness Bernstein's interest in him, his betting with Will, his affair with Maria, his fall from a horse and recovery at the Lamberts, his riotous days at Tunbridge, Hetty Lambert's infatuation with him, his spendthrift days in London and imprisonment for debt. In Number XII George suddenly re-appears, relates the story of his capture and escape, and wins the favored position that Harry once held as the presumed heir to immense property. Harry's engagement with Maria is broken off and he becomes a soldier. George writes a play, falls in love with Theo Lambert, and, after numerous difficulties, finally marries
her. Lydia Van den Bosch appears and marries Francis, Lord Castlewood. George writes another play, sires a son, and inherits the Warrington estate. Eventually he returns to America, fights for the English during the revolution and Harry fights for the colonies. In the final number, the loose ends of the story are tied together, and an end put to what otherwise could have been endless.

The major weakness of this succession of incident was that it was distributed evenly throughout the twenty-four numbers. Installment fiction demanded action in every issue; yet Thackeray diluted his incident, allotting one or two minor ones to each monthly issue and giving each about equal emphasis. He failed to accentuate any of these separate incidents with great emotional intensity. The result was an eveness of emotional voltage which, without significant peaks, quickly becomes monotonous. In essence, the installment format permitted Thackeray, who was never a master of sensational plotting, to neglect the preparation of exciting turns in the plot in favor of his own predeliction for concentration upon detail, character, and general commentary. He failed to follow the rule of action in every issue; and in a novel of 340,000 words, such an oversight was deadly.

In addition, the pace of Thackeray's narrative is unfortunately slow. In being forced to prolong his story over twenty-four issues, he dawdled over the trivial, filling in his numbers with repetition, mundane incident, and the easily composed moralistic commentary. The result, especially in the second half of the novel, was a desultory progress, which seems an imperceptible motion through quagmires of petty affairs. John Dodds has aptly appraised The Virginians:
He was beginning to imitate himself, and he knew it. "I have exhausted all the types of character with which I am familiar," he wrote, "and it is very difficult to strike out anything new." As his energy weakened, the narrative faults which had been subdued in the earlier novels were suddenly magnified. Too often he not only refuses to get on with the story but even seems to forget that he is telling a story. Chapters of pure padding begin to appear. What had earlier been discursiveness shades off into garrulousness. He moralizes more frequently and less effectively.3

At least five monthly numbers, for example, are devoted in whole or in part to Harry's adventures at Tunbridge (Number V-IX); the material could have been pared in half to the novel's artistic betterment. The following three numbers, relating primarily to Harry's gambling in London, are required to bring him to ruin and debtor's prison. It requires two full numbers (XV-XVI) to get Harry out of the action by shipping him off to go a-soldiering, and though George realizes that he loves Theo in Number XVII, Thackeray does not unite them in marriage until the end of Number XX.

As a result of the combination of leisurely pace and the necessity of filling every number with fourteen thousand words, The Virginians was heavily padded, more so perhaps than any of Thackeray's other novels. Month by month, Thackeray filled out his numbers with the invention of trivial, unnecessary incident and garrulous commentary. All of the following episodes, for instance, a few among many which could be cited, could have been eliminated from the novel without any significant disruption of the narrative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pages of padding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry meets Dr. Johnson gambling</td>
<td>I, 26</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Harry's Ball 34 IX 9
gambling 42 XI 6
dinner at Sir Miles's 43 XI 5
dinner at Sir Miles's II, 2 XIII 10
chatting about home 7 XIV 6
Harry's loss of favor 9 XV 6
George meets the King 10 XV 8
going to a play 11-12 XV 17
George reads his play 15 XVI 10

None of these incidents advances the plot or reveals any information of significance to it; each does, however, provide space for needless description, dialogue, or repetition of previously accented traits of character.

Such incident also furnished Thackeray the opportunity for indulging in the far too frequent commentary which abounds in the novel, clogging its arteries with superfluous verbiage. All of Thackeray's favorite subjects for moralizing are here: mercenary marriages, the present unfavorably compared with the past, the universality of sin and misery, hypocrisy, the emptiness of success, human selfishness, the vanities of life and love. These ubiquitous digressions exist in irritating profusion, blocking the reader's path at every turn and forcing him either to jump over them or to plod wearily through the massive bog of words. The beginning of a chapter was Thackeray's favorite place for inserting digressive comments. At the beginning of the thirty-fifth chapter (Part IX), he rambles on for fifty-two lines, for example, about the proper treatment of women; he meanders for fifty-five lines about the Irish and the desirability of forgiveness at the beginning of the thirty-eighth chapter (Part X); and he commences the eleventh chapter (Part XV) with a forty-five-line digression about the writer's inability
to deal with the "real business of life." In addition to such large blocks of discursiveness, the chapters are interlaced with brief comments of shorter length. The cumulative total of these comments went a long way in filling out a number with a lot of nothing. There are, for instance, 16½ lines of digression in Part XI, a sum sufficient to fill three and a half pages, or over ten percent, of the number. The equivalent of at least two and a half pages of digression are present in Number X, XV, XVII; and it can be assumed that the other monthly parts are padded with equivalent amounts.

Another, less objectionable, means of padding the monthly installments was the use of large illustrations at the chapter headings. These illustrations pictorially presented the first letter of the first word of the chapter, similar to the fashion of illuminated medieval manuscripts, and were almost wholly ornamental. Rarely did the illustration specifically illustrate some scene from the text. Their primary value to the author was the way they took up a sizeable portion of the first page of a chapter. Placed at the left of the page, they occupied a space of from four to nine words in width, and from seventeen to twenty-nine lines in length. Thus they effectively occupied an area which would ordinarily be filled with from seventy-five to two hundred words. On the average, these chapter-heading illustrations occupied an area which would require 15½ words to fill. Since there were four of them to each part, these illustrations served the function of providing a full page of padding to each monthly number.

In addition to its length, The Virginians exhibits another
feature of the installment novel: concentration upon the monthly installment. In the first half of the novel, at least, Thackeray attempted to balance the various characters or plot threads against each other and thus achieve variety through a sort of counterpoint within each monthly number. In Number I, for instance, the first two chapters narrate Harry's arrival in England and his visit to his relatives; the last two chapters are a flashback relating the family history of the American branch of the family. Part II confines itself wholly to this background information, but balance is achieved by description of the Warrington boys' early life in the first two chapters and the introduction of different lines of actions, the French and Indian War and George's jealousy over attentions paid to his mother, in the final two chapters. In Number III balance is achieved by means of alternate concentration upon the war and upon George's quarrel with George Washington, the presumed suitor of his mother. The chapters of Number IV are divided between narration of Harry's affairs in America and relation of his activities in England. This pattern of alteration of incident and character is continued through most of the numbers of the novel. In Number IX, for example, Thackeray contrasts Hetty's innocent love for Harry (Chapters 33 and 34) with the self-interested love of Maria (Chapters 35 and 36); Number XIII balances narration of Harry's affairs in London (Chapters 1 and 2) with a flashback relating George's escape from captivity (Chapters 3 and 4). The chapters of Numbers XV and XVI concentrate alternately upon Harry and George, relating the affairs of one brother in one chapter and the other brother in the next. After
Number XIX, however, there seems to have been little attempt to balance incident or character within the individual number.

Other evidence of Thackeray's special concentration upon the monthly installment is seen in the presence of a suspenseful climax, a new turn in the plot, or an enigmatic hint of future events at the conclusion of almost every number. The curtain line, so magnificently employed in *Vanity Fair*, is here too; but it is rare in *The Virginians*; and when it appears, it is seldom resoundingly dramatic. Number I, for instance, builds to a sort of climax in the sudden revelation of the relationship of Harry to Baroness Bernstein: looking at a portrait, she says at the conclusion of the number, "Harry, that was my face once--yes, it was--and then I was called Beatrix Esmond. And your mother is my half-sister, child, and she has never even mentioned my name!"¹ The ending has little inherent impact in itself; but to a reader familiar with *Henry Esmond*, the disclosure that Madam Bernstein is the once beautiful, coquettish Beatrix seems exquisitely chosen for dramatic force. Number II ends with the reading of a fragment of a letter which implies that George Washington intends to marry Rachael Warrington, and the reader is left hanging in anxiety until the next installment. Thackeray left him hanging; for with a carefully calculated prolonged suspense, he did not reveal that Washington intends to marry not Rachael, but Martha Custis until the third chapter of Number III. This number concluded in a fashion reminiscent of George Osborne's death in *Vanity Fair*. In the final chapter, George Warrington has gone to war, a report of a defeat is heard, Harry seeks information about his brother, and Thackeray
ended the number:

Wounded men looked up and were softened by his grief: rough women melted as they saw the woe written on the handsome young face: the hardy old tutor could scarcely look at him for tears, and grieved for him even more than for his dear pupil who lay dead under the savage Indian knife. 7

Number IV is terminated upon a strong hint at a romance between Harry and his cousin Maria, and the reader was left to wonder about this development until the next installment. Number V ends upon the dramatic with the sudden stumbling of Harry's horse: the "horse had gathered himself up and stood perfectly quiet after his feat: but his late rider gave not the slightest sign of life." 8 It is a melodramatic, but effective, curtain. Number VII concludes with an implication that Harry's character will degenerate. Number VIII promises new complications of action with the hint that Hetty is in love with Harry. Number XI terminates upon a sudden report that Harry has been taken by two bailiffs for debt. Number XII ends with the surprising reappearance of George Warrington, presumed dead by the reader since the third installment. Numbers XVI and XVII both end with Harry on a military mission, undergoing danger and the threat of possible death. A quite effective curtain line concludes a surprising turn of events in Number XVIII:

From the London Magazine of November, 1759:
"Saturday, October 13th, married, at his seat, Castlewood, Hants, the right Honourable Eugene Earl of Castlewood to the beautiful Miss Van den Bosch, of Virginia, £70,000." 9

Number XIX terminates upon the forced separation of George and Theo; Number XX ends with doubts aroused about the possibilities of success
of George's new play, upon which his present fortunes depend; Number XXI ends with the sudden death of young Miles Warrington and George consequently the heir to an estate and a baronetcy. Only in Numbers XVII and XXIII did Thackeray fail to create a conclusion without suspense.

Like Thackeray's other novels written for publication in parts, the installments which comprise *The Virginians* were composed under the pressure of time. Number VII was hectically written to meet a deadline, for Thackeray had written only three pages of the installment by the tenth of the month. The final sixteen pages of Number VIII were composed in one day, the last Thackeray had to spare. Number XVI, the number for February, 1859, was finished at 2:30 a.m. on the twenty-fifth of January. With Number XXI, Thackeray complained to Charles Lever on the twenty-seventh of June: "You ought to have had a letter 2 days sooner. But--0 that number. It was done, after a fearful struggle, on Saturday night." Number XXII was still being written as late as the twenty-fourth of the month.

In all of this pressure, Thackeray and the printers failed to notice that Chapter 48 was improperly numbered. When Number XII was published, it contained Chapters 45, 46, 48, and 49; the forty-seventh chapter simply did not exist.

It was the process of piecemeal composition, however, which had the most detrimental effect upon *The Virginians*. Though this method of writing a novel did offer Thackeray, who was involved in a personal quarrel at the time with Edmund Yates, the opportunity to include insulting allusions to Yates as "Young Grubstreet" in the
The ninth number and further satiric references in the eleventh, the process of piecemeal composition was fatal to the final structure of the novel.

The ordinary problems of the installment novelist confronted Thackeray. In order to use the afterthoughts which occurred long after their proper chronological position in the narrative, he, like many installment novelists, had to resort to awkward delayed explanations, the novelist's answer to the storyteller's "I forgot to tell you that . . . ." In Number II, for example, Mrs. Mountain became significant and Thackeray had to back up for an instant and explain her existence in the Warrington household. In Number VI, it became necessary to establish an acquaintance between Mrs. Lambert and Madam Esmond Warrington. Since Thackeray had never mentioned the existence of such a relationship before, he had to resort to the awkward device of a letter from Mrs. Lambert to Madam Warrington reminding her, and the reader, of details he had not seen necessary to relate earlier. Had Thackeray prepared the reader for this development, he would have avoided the clumsy necessity of relying upon coincidence. When Lydia Van den Bosch appeared in the eighteenth number, Thackeray had similar difficulties in explaining her background and presence in the action.

Another problem of the installment novelist which Thackeray faced was the necessity to bring the reader up to date concerning the activities of a character absent from the serial for a month or two and to keep him from forgetting important details. Consequently in The Virginians, when Harry was shipped off to the wars to enable the action to center upon George, Thackeray, since he intended to use
Harry later in the novel, had to keep reminding the reader from time to time of Harry's affairs. Thus periodically Thackeray disturbingly interrupts his narrative, through letters primarily, with news about Harry. When Hetty and General Lambert are made to vacate the premises, he had also to remind the reader periodically of how they were faring.

In addition to these typical problems of piecemeal writing, Thackeray had difficulties of an individual nature: his inability to follow his original plans for the novel. Thackeray's characters tended simply to run away from his control, to go their own way after he had set them in motion, frequently straying off upon byways far removed from the thoroughfares he had outlined at the beginning of his novels. M. R. Ridley has expressed the situation well:

He was the kind of writer who starts with a few characters, and knows roughly the theme and course of his novel, and the sort of episodes in which the characters as they progress will be involved. But as they become alive to him, and take on an independent existence of their own, he lets them largely go their own way. And as he lives with them, month by month, he shares in their progress rather than conducts it.

Had Thackeray been able to compose the novel before publication, he might have been able to stifle this tendency. In *The Virginians*, he did not have the opportunity; and the novel reaches what Gordon Ray calls, "an acme of formlessness." Thackeray began *The Virginians* with a distinct design in mind. On a visit to Richmond, Virginia, in 1856, he outlined his projected novel to John Esten Cooke:
I shall lay the scene in Virginia, during the Revolution. There will be two brothers, who will be prominent characters; one will take the English side in the war and one the American, and they will both be in love with the same girl.18

He intended to place major emphasis upon the Revolution, to deal with "Wilkes & Liberty," and to include pictures of Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, and Garrick as they really existed. As he began writing, however, as Gordon Ray comments, "Such questions as how to keep George Warrington, 'after he was knocked down at Braddock's defeat, . . . away for a year and a half' proved troublesome, and as a result he 'dawdled fatally between numbers V. and X.'"19 The idea of the triangular love affair was discarded by March, 1859;20 and the Revolutionary War episodes, originally planned to occupy twelve numbers,21 were continually put aside. Thackeray became bogged down in a series of minor episodes, and complained to Dr. John Brown of the way the action lagged: "I . . . don't like The Virginians half as much as you do. Very good writing, but it ought to have been at its present stage of the story at No. X."22 The American Revolution was finally crammed hastily into the final two numbers, where it is discussed in the fashion of a history book with the two central characters as merely small points of focus; and thus Thackeray managed to lose all of the potential excitement these episodes would have offered had they been expanded earlier in the novel. Thackeray never did get to "Wilkes & Liberty," and his planned portraits of literary figures were abandoned except for a brief glimpse at Samuel Johnson.

Thackeray was always out of step with the melody of his initial design, and the end product was far removed from his primary
conceptions. Instead of focusing simultaneously upon the two brothers fighting on opposite sides in the Revolution, he created parallel biographical studies of their adventures in England for twenty-two numbers. Consequently, the novel breaks into two parts, the second (the numbers dealing with the phlegmatic George) becoming merely an empty echo of the first, which dealt with the far more interesting and spirited Harry. The novel seems almost to have written itself, falling into the formless patterns of the central characters' lives and existing, especially in the final twelve numbers, as a procession of relatively minor episodes and characters.

Another feature of installment fiction visible in *The Virginians* might also be mentioned briefly. The close relationship of writer and reader is conspicuous here. Thackeray continually took his readers into his confidence, talking to all segments of them in direct, friendly intimacy, using the pronouns "we," "our," "us," "your." For example, he paid his respects to his matronly readers:

> Madam, don't you recollect your first ball; and does not your memory stray towards that happy past, sometimes, as you sit ornamenting the wall whilst your daughters are dancing. I, for my part, can remember when I thought it was delightful to walk three miles and back in the country to dine with old Captain Jones. Fancy liking to walk three miles, now . . . .

To his young readers also he chats amiably:

> As for you, young people, whose May (or April, is it?) has not commenced yet, you need not be detained over other folks' love-rhapsodies; depend on it, when your spring season arrives, kindly Nature will warm all your flowers into bloom, and rouse your glad bosoms to put out their full song.
To the ladies he said:

Dear ladies! I assure you I am only joking in the above remark,—I do not advocating the thrashing of your sex at all,—and, as you can't understand the commonest bit of fun, beg leave flatly to tell you, that I consider your sex a hundred times more loving and faithful than ours. 25

And to the male reader of the family:

After the drinking of good Bordeaux wine, there is a point (I do not say a pint) at which men arrive, when all the generous faculties of the soul are awakened and in full vigour; when the wit brightens and breaks out in sudden flashes; when the intellects are keenest . . . . There is a headache in the morning; we are not going into Parliament for our native town; we are not going to shoot those French officers who have been speaking disrespectfully of our country; and poor Jeremy Diddler calls about eleven o'clock for another half-sovereign, and we are unwell in bed, and can't see him . . . . 26

Seen overall, The Virginians was a novel severely weakened by the necessity of publication in parts. Installment publication forced upon it a length far in excess of the potentialities for development of its basic material. To obtain this length, the plot was spread thin, and eked out by the multiplication of character and episode. The novel had also an excessive amount of padding. Concentration upon the individual numbers tended to render the novel episodic; and its piecemeal composition stimulated awkward after-thoughts and an inability of the author to carry out his initial design.

Trollope's Framley Parsonage, serialized in The Cornhill Magazine from January, 1860, to April, 1861, illustrates on the other hand the effective use of the installment format. Trollope
makes the process seem easy. He had, of course, a less demanding task than did Thackeray from the outset, for he was committed by contract to a novel of only three-decker length. Each of the required sixteen installments contained three chapters and averaged about 12,000 words. The production was remarkably even: the shortest installment contains 11,800 words (Numbers V, XII, and XVI) and the longest 13,000 (Number III). The total number of words in the novel was about 197,000—the size of a respectable three-decker,—and the novel was published in three volumes upon completion of its serialization.

Trollope, a master of the process of stretching a subject to a large canvas, had no trouble in arriving at installments of adequate length. In the first number he was even faced with the painful necessity of trimming a full page from his manuscript, and he wrote to George Smith:

I return the proof of the article—I have cut out a page—but it was tho you asked for my hearts [sic] blood. And the fault must have been your own in giving me too long a page as a sample—I had even the words counted, so that I might give you exactly what I had undertaken to give & no more.\(^27\)

Having once determined the correct length of an installment, the scrupulous Trollope had never again to refer in his letters to deficiencies in length.

There was, of course, a bit of padding here and there, such as the page and a half of superfluous digression upon the circuitous route of Parson Robart's letter in Chapter V and the page of unnecessary dialogue of Chapter VI, in which Mrs. Proudie gossips forth
the story of her difficulties with Mr. Slope. But such obvious passages of padding are rare. Rather, Trollope relied upon the multiplication of character and sub-plot in order to fill his novel. In Framley Parsonage, the fourth of the Barsetshire novels, Trollope brought in a host of peripheral characters seen in other novels in the series. Bishop and Mrs. Proudie, for example, were given considerable attention now and then, attention not necessarily commensurate with their importance to the action, and thus by concentration upon them a few pages were filled among the assorted numbers. Mrs. Proudie's "conversazione," for instance, occupied a whole chapter (nine pages) of irrelevant action, providing Trollope an opportunity for a long disquisition upon true hospitality and for the development of the trifling conversation of the assorted guests. Frank and Mary Gresham drop in at the Duke of Omnium's affair in Part III (Chapter VIII), and their visit conveniently filled a page. Archdeacon Grantly and his family are present also, and their introduction in Number IV presented occasion for a couple of pages of recapitulation and description. They offered opportunity for development of subplots, such as Griselda's marriage, the possibility of a bishopric for Dr. Grantly in Number VIII, and their feud with the Proudies, which in Number XIV created material for the development of a whole chapter (Chapter XI). In Number X, Dr. Thorne is brought in to complicate the action, and present also are Mr. Arabin and Miss Dunstable.

In addition to these old and familiar faces, Framley Parsonage is adequately staffed with new ones around whom the major action
develops: the Reverend Mr. Robarts and his wife, Lady Lufton, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Mr. Sowerby, Lucy Robarts, Lord Lufton, the Reverend Mr. Crawly, Lord Dumbello. These characters appeared, usually, one by one as the need for new plot threads or complication of the action arose; and with the presentation of each new character, the potentialities for the development of the novel increased. At the introduction into the story of Lucy Robarts in Number IV, for instance, Trollope had to pause for the description that the insertion of new characters necessitated:

And now I must say a word about Lucy Robarts. If one might only go on without those descriptions, how pleasant it would all be! But Lucy Robarts has to play a forward part in this little drama, and those who care for such matters must be made to understand something of her form and likeness.\(^\text{28}\)

The description that followed filled two full pages of the number, and the following three pages were filled primarily with prolonged dialogue, a sort of running debate, between several characters as to whether Lucy was beautiful or plain. In essence, the mere introduction of Lucy Robarts into the novel provided matter for filling an entire chapter.

Each new character opened new avenues for the complication of action. Though Framley Parsonage contains only two major plot threads, Robarts's debts and Lucy's romance, each has several parts; and there are attendant minor plots in addition. The major plot, for example, concerns Mr. Robarts's foolish financial difficulties, yet intertwined with this major action are several related interests such as Robarts's relationship with Lady Lufton and the whole Framley-
Chaldicotes enmity, Robarts's unbecoming predilection for hunting, and Sowerby's financial fall. Lucy's love affair with Lord Lufton is complicated by the rivalry of Griselda Grantly, and this led to the separate sub-plot developing Griselda's eventual conquest of Lord Dumbello. These two major plots and attendant sub-plots gave backbone to the novel, yet woven around them were several additional unrelated minor plots: the poverty of the Crawleys, Smith's political rise and fall, the possibility of a bishopric for Dr. Grantly, the marriage of Miss Dunstable and Dr. Thorne.

Unlike Thackeray in The Virginians, Trollope alternated his various plots well, bringing in new complications and minor plots in almost every installment to mark the pace of his narration. The pace is slow; a novel of 197,000 words demanded leisurely progress. But Trollope injected new life periodically into his narrative, so that, though the pace is slow, the new interest prevented it from seeming so. Trollope realized that installment fiction demanded action in every issue, and he gave the public what it wanted:

And I will say also that in this novel [Framley Parsonage] there is no very weak part,—no long succession of dull pages. The production of novels in serial form forces upon the author the conviction that he should not allow himself to be tedious in any single part. I hope no reader will misunderstand me. In spite of that conviction, the writer of stories in parts will often be tedious. That I have been so myself is a fault that will lie heavy on my tombstone. But the writer when he embarks in such a business should feel that he cannot afford to have many pages skipped out of the few which are to meet the reader's eye at the same time. Who can imagine the first half of the first volume of Waverley coming out in shilling numbers?
The result of Trollope's attention to the rules of his trade was a lively novel which provided, in contrast with the even succession of minor events in *The Virginians*, emotionally stimulating incident in almost every installment.

Number I, for example, presented the background surrounding Framley Parsonage and introduced the conflict of Lady Lufton's distrust of the Chaldicotes set with Robarts's ambitions of rising to a position of importance in the world. Number II related Mrs. Robarts's quarrel with Lady Lufton in defense of her husband's progress in winning the favor of important people; and in Number III, when this line of action began to grow stale, Trollope introduced the major focus of the novel: Robarts's signing for Sowerby bills of credit which he is unable to honor. In Number IV, new variety was injected with the appearance of Lucy Robarts, a new candidate for the affections of Lord Lufton. In Number V Robarts becomes rather impiously fond of hunting; and in Number VI Lord Lufton proposes to Lucy, and Robarts is given hopes of acquiring the prebendary of Barsetshire. Number VII concentrated on new developments in the plots of Robarts's debts and Lucy's romance; and in Number VIII new incidents, the illness of Mrs. Crawley, the possibility of a bishopric for Dr. Grantly, and a scheme of Sowerby to marry Miss Dunstable, were introduced. Other new complications of action appeared in later installments in the same pattern of calculated variety: the engagement of Griselda to Lord Dumbello in Number X, Lady Lufton's disapproval of Lucy in Number XII, Sowerby's ruin and the engagement of Miss Dunstable and Dr. Thorne in Number XIII; the bailiffs' arrival at
Robarts's to appraise his furniture and Lord Lufton's payment of the bills in Number XV. The final number, of course, ended with a deluge of brides: Miss Proudie, Griselda, Miss Dunstable, and Lucy Robarts. Trollope's conscious attention to the unwritten rules of installment fiction enabled *Framley Parsonage* to provide its readers an interesting installment every month.

Not only did each issue contain its proper quantity of incident, but within each the various plot threads were effectively contrasted and balanced. Since Trollope, in effect, had several stories in progress simultaneously, he gave his public variety in their steady diet of excitement by alternate focus within the installment upon the different lines of actions. In Number II, for example, the scene shifts effectively from Robarts's decision at Chaldicotes to accept the Duke's invitation (Chapter 4) to Fanny's quarrel with Lady Lufton at Framley (Chapter 5) back to Chaldicotes and Mr. Smith's lecture (Chapter 6). The introduction of Sowerby's borrowing from Robarts in the middle chapter (Chapter 8) of Number III provides excitement in contrast with the rather mundane affairs narrated earlier in the installment: Robarts's sermon and the gathering at the Duke of Omnium's. Number IV is balanced between concentration upon Lucy Robarts (Chapters 10 and 11) and new developments in Robarts's financial dealings with Sowerby (Chapter 12). In Number VI, the middle chapter, relating Mrs. Proudie's tea party (Chapter 17), serves as a narrative fulcrum between Lord Lufton's proposal to Lucy (Chapter 16) and Sowerby's promise to Robarts to secure for him the prebendary of Barsetshire (Chapter 18). Number X is a blend of concentration upon three
separate romances: Dr. Thorne and Miss Dunstable (Chapter 28), Lord Lufton and Lucy (Chapter 29), and Griselda and Lord Dumbello (Chapter 30). Each installment of *Framley Parsonage*, with the exception of Number I, was constructed so that it would furnish variety through balance of narrative plot threads.

In addition, Trollope complied with the requirements of good installment fiction still further by concluding his monthly numbers upon a note of suspense. Two-thirds of the installments of *Framley Parsonage* left the reader hanging in expectation of the next month's issue of *The Cornhill*. Number I, for example, ends with a problem suspensefully unresolved: whether Robarts will accept the Duke's invitation, and by so doing anger his patron, Lady Lufton, or refuse and be disappointed. Number III concludes with Robarts wondering how to tell his wife of the large debt he has contracted. In Number IV, Robarts signs a new bill for £500, and the suspense of how he will pay if called upon to do so looms more intense than ever. Number V leaves Robarts debating with his conscience whether to give up his favorite sport of hunting. Number VI concludes with the possibility that Robarts might receive the prebendary of Barsetshire. Number IX ends with Sowerby's ruin, which would consequently bring about that of Robarts, suspensefully imminent. Number XI ends with Robarts's creditors close on his heels, and Number XIV concludes with seizure of his household goods forthcoming. Number XIII leaves the reader anticipating the wedding of Miss Dunstable and Dr. Thorne. Number XIV ends with rumors of Lord Dumbello's change of heart and a possible cancellation of his engagement to Griselda Grantly. Though Trollope
avoided using curtain lines to bring these installments to a resoundingly dramatic conclusions, the suspense of unresolved climax is ever present, effectively tantalizing the reader to purchase the next month's installment.

Framley Parsonage exhibits another feature of nineteenth-century installment fiction: the tendency to employ easily remembered descriptive character names. Trollope was much too interested in the reality of his character portraits to employ the tag; but with minor characters, and sometimes major ones, in whom a slight degree of caricature was not ruinous to the overall verisimilitude of the novel, he frequently employed the aptronymn. That Trollope used such names consciously in a considered effort to make his installment characters memorable from month to month is doubtful; for Barchester Towers, a three-decker in which no such necessity of naming was necessary, has its Proudie, Slope, and Quiverful. Rather, Trollope's employment of the aptronymn seems based upon the general popularity of the practice created by the frequent and emphatic usage in the novel by Dickens and Thackeray. This influence manifested itself in Framley Parsonage with such names as Lady Lufton with its Germanic suggestion of air-haughtiness-lofty position; the Duke of Omnium and his Gatherum Castle, suggestive of omnipotence and acquisitiveness; Mr. Crawley, suggestive of low position; Lord Dumbello, suggestive of silence and stupidity. Each name is apt, an economical outline of character; and whether consciously designed or not, these names effectively rendered the characters possessing them unforgettable during the sixteen-month course of publication of the novel.
Like many an installment novel, *Framley Parsonage* was written piecemeal. During the course of writing *Castle Richmond*, Trollope was offered the handsome sum of £1000 for a novel to be serialized in the forthcoming *Cornhill Magazine*. This was more than twice what Trollope had received for his earlier novels, and he therefore put aside his unfinished novel and began the composition of *Framley Parsonage* in November, 1859. By diligent effort, the opening installment was prepared in time for the first issue of *The Cornhill* on January 1, 1860. Trollope completed the novel (and also wrote *Castle Richmond* at the same time) during the course of its publication in *The Cornhill*.

The experience re-inforced in Trollope a principle that Dickens and Thackeray had refused to learn: that installment novels should be written completely before publication. *Framley Parsonage* was the only installment novel that Trollope ever wrote that was published before the whole book was written, and even with it he realized the dangers inherent in this method of composition:

... it had already been a principle with me in my art, that no part of a novel should be published till the entire story was completed. I knew, from what I read from month to month, that this hurried publication of incompletely work was frequently, I might say always, adopted by the leading novelists of the day. That such has been the case, is proved by the fact that Dickens, Thackeray, and Mrs. Gaskell died with unfinished novels, of which portions had been already published. I had not yet entered upon the system of publishing novels in parts, and therefore had never been tempted. But I was aware that an artist should keep in his hand the power of fitting the beginning of his work to the end. No doubt it is his first duty to fit the end to the beginning, and he will endeavour to do so. But he should still keep in
his hands the power of remedying any defect in this respect . . . . When some young lady at the end of a story cannot be made quite perfect in her conduct, that vivid description of angelic purity with which you laid the first lines of her portrait should be slightly toned down. I had felt that the rushing mode of publication to which the system of serial stories had given rise, and by which small parts as they were written were sent hot to the press, was injurious to the work done . . . . But such a principle becomes a tyrant if it cannot be superseded on a just occasion . . . on this my first attempt at a serial story, I thought it fit to break my own rule. I can say, however, that I have never broken it since.  

Even though Framley Parsonage was composed in piecemeal fashion, it shows little evidence of such composition. Unlike Thackeray's extemporaneously narrated novel, The Virginians, Trollope's novel seems to have been well-planned before it was written. Though a mechanical artisan, Trollope was nevertheless the artisan, and Framley Parsonage was composed with an excellent sense of proportion. The incidents in the two major plots are well distributed throughout the various monthly installments. The first three numbers concentrate upon Parson Robarts, with the major conflict of financial difficulties introduced toward the end of Number III. Three numbers later, in Number VI, Mark's friendship with Sowerby seems to be producing rewards with the promise of the prebendary of Barsetshire. After three additional numbers, the drift of Robarts's fortunes shifts unfavorably when, in Number IX, the Duke presses Sowerby to pay his debts, and the likelihood of trouble for Mark seems certain. In Number XI Robarts quarrels with Sowerby about the debt and prepares for the worst. The climax of this thread of action occurs in Number
XV when, with the bailiffs in Robarts's house, Lord Lufton pays the bills.

In similar fashion, the plot thread of the romance of Lucy Robarts and Lord Lufton is also well apportioned throughout the novel. Lucy is introduced in Number IV, obviously according to plan and with her role in the novel already mapped out, for Trollope had said in Number I: "There were therefore at the time of the doctor's death two children left at home, of whom one only, Lucy, the younger will come much across us in the course of our story." In Number VI, halfway through the novel, with Lord Lufton's proposal of marriage, the conflict clearly centers upon the uneven course of young love. The direction the conflict will take becomes obvious four numbers later, at Lord Lufton's refusal to consider any girl but Lucy as his wife; for here the focus of the conflict is narrowed to the methods whereby Lady Lufton's disapproval of Lucy can be overcome. The climax of this thread of action occurs in the final number with Lady Lufton's acceptance of Lucy as a suitable wife for her son.

Trollope, it can be seen, had perfect control over the installment medium of publication. His subject was adequately large for the desired length of the novel; and he could fill his numbers, not with prolonged passages of padded digression, but with the interaction of multiple characters and plot threads. Unlike Thackeray in The Virginians, he refused to allow these characters to run away with the action. He allotted sufficient incident to each number in order to make each interesting within itself, and he created variety in the installments by balancing the various narrative paths. As a
result, *Framley Parsonage* was an enormously popular success which not only launched *The Cornhill* on the seas of prosperity, but also made a reputation for Trollope and launched him on his career as a successful novelist.
Footnotes to Chapter VI

^Number 24, however, contained only twenty-four pages of story text. The last eight pages contained the title page to Volume II, a dedication to Sir Henry Davison, table of contents, and a list of plates. The first twelve numbers were designed to be bound as Volume I, the last twelve as Volume II. All page references are made to these divisions.

^Letters, III, 171.
^See, for example, II, Ch. 6; I, Ch. 13.
^See I, Ch. 6; II, Ch. 2.
6I, 32.
7I, 96.
8I, 160.
9II, 192.
10See Letters, IV, 79.
11Ibid., IV, 80.
12Ibid., IV, 127.
13Ibid., IV, 144.
18Quoted by Ray, Thackeray, The Age of Wisdom, p. 382.
19Ibid., p. 382.
20 Ibid., p. 382.
21 See Letters, IV, 135.
22 Ibid., IV, 135.
23 I, 225.
24 II, 165.
25 I, 274.
26 I, 243.
27 Letters, p. 54.
28 Framley Parsonage, The Cornhill Magazine, I (April, 1860),
451.
29 An Autobiography, pp. 121-122.
30 See Sadleir, Trollope, A Bibliography (London, 1928),
pp. 31-32.
32 Framley Parsonage, The Cornhill Magazine, I (April, 1860),
450.
CONCLUSION

The nineteenth-century novel was profoundly influenced by the format in which it was published and for which it was written. In general, the novel of these times was more the result of financial considerations than of artistic ones; and so it became dedicated to giving publishers, circulating libraries, and public what they wanted.

In its three octavo volumes at a guinea and a half or its aggregate of numerous small fragments priced from pennies to shillings, it was, first of all, massive in length—from 165,000 to 340,000 or more words, whatever the format required. To obtain this length it adopted expansive plot situations and filled them with numerous characters and succession of incident. Not infrequently, it was simply padded, with unnecessary dialogue, description, and wordy digression.

The particular formats dictated an agreement of structure and form. The three-volume format induced novelists to think in terms of thirds, giving their works distinct beginnings, middles, and conclusions. The installment novelist had not only to keep the whole in view, but had also to concentrate upon the individual installment, realizing that it was a separate entity as well as part of the whole. He therefore tended to provide interesting and
exciting incident in every installment and to balance his concentration upon various plots and characters within the individual part. To persuade his readers to purchase the subsequent installment, the writer of novels in parts preferred to conclude an installment upon a note of unresolved suspense, frequently bringing the part to an end upon a curtain line of resounding dramatic intensity. The installment novel, consequently, tended to become episodic, with attention focused upon action rather than theme.

Not infrequently, installment novels were written in fragments, the composition period being strung out over the long course of publication; and the ingrained indolence of some novelists led to last-minute composition, hastily written, proofed, and corrected. Since this practice enabled novelists to gauge the success of certain features by the sales records of the individual parts, they tended to react to public preference and accentuate those aspects which increased sales. In addition, the prolonged communication between author and reader, often extending over a period of as long as two years, frequently resulted in a feeling in the writer of closeness to his public; and he directed specific commentary to them as he would to old friends. Because of the extended period of publication, and the great number of characters usually employed to fill the great length, characterization often became simplified and distinguishing features heavily emphasized for easy remembrance. Characters were sometimes given distinguishing tags or especially suggestive or descriptive names.

The result of all these specialized considerations, criteria
with which the contemporary novelist is not faced and with which modern readers and critics are little acquainted, was a far different narrative artistry from what is generally produced today. An awareness of these problems while reading the fiction of the nineteenth century helps explain why novelists produced the sort of works they did. It gives some insight, when special requirements are weighed against individual abilities, into their failures, and it should serve to strengthen our admiration for their successes. The specialized requirements of the publishing formats of the nineteenth century are too significant to be ignored.
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