A. Magazine Serials

A substantial proportion of Victorian fiction was first published serially in one of the numerous magazines. In the early days Bentley’s Miscellany, The Metropolitan, Ainsworth’s and the Dublin University Magazine were the most important media; but with the rise of Smith, Elder’s Cornhill and its several rivals in the sixties the volume greatly increased. Whereas Ainsworth’s and The Metropolitan (edited and largely occupied by Marryat) were authors’ magazines, the later arrivals—Tinsley’s, Longman’s, Macmillan’s, St Paul’s (Virtue)—were predominantly publishers’ ventures, which not only provided their promoters with a useful flow of new authors but also, by the combination of serial rights and book rights, enabled them to make attractive offers for the new work of established favourites.

The popularity of the part-issue (see Section B) reduced the contribution of some of the more successful writers, since the part-issue was a sort of serial itself; but even among these, a businesslike novelist like Trollope would spread his output over both fields, so that while He Knew He was Right was issued in parts in 1868/9 by Strahan, Phineas Finn was running at the same time in St Paul’s Magazine before book publication in two volumes by Virtue.

Many of the magazine serials carried illustrations, which more often than not were omitted from the subsequent book edition (illustrated three-deckers are most exceptional), though one or two might reappear in a later reprint. And in some cases there were interesting differences of text between serialization and the book, of which Tess of the D’Urbervilles is one well-known example (serialized in The Graphic—with sections also appearing in The Fortnightly and in The National Observer—and published in 3 vols. by Osgood, McIlvaine in 1891—see Section J in this exhibition), and Trilby another (see Section V).

The initial retaliation of the magazines to part-issue competition took the form of reduction in price, from 2s. 6d. to 1s.; and if the part-issue in its hey-day (1840–1855) had attracted a heavy proportion of popular fiction, this opposition reacted in turn on its drawing power with the public, as Trollope makes clear in his Autobiography. But it was the enterprise and profusion of the newer magazines which, in the years round 1860, began to cut seriously—and in the end decisively—into the part-issue’s market, and the serial remained a dominant factor to the end of the century and beyond.

1 Quoted by Graham Pollard in his essay, Serial Fiction, in New Paths in Book Collecting (Constable, 1934), the best introduction to the subject.
Magazine Serials

Of the many fiction-carrying magazines, some of which ran ‘Annuals’ as well, examples of the following are shown here:

1. Bentley’s Miscellany
2. The Metropolitan
3. Ainsworth’s Magazine
4. Dublin University Magazine
5. Douglas Jerrold’s Shilling Magazine
6. All The Year Round
7. Temple Bar
8. The New Monthly Magazine
9. The Sixpenny Magazine
10. The Cornhill
11. Longman’s Magazine
12. Macmillan’s Magazine
13. Tinsley’s Magazine
14. Beeton’s Annual
15. Belgravia
16. The Strand Magazine

B. Part-issues

The cheap reissue in ‘numbers’ of a popular work, whether of fiction or of moral instruction, had been a regular method of distribution since the early eighteenth century. Towards its end, publishers of a quite different type learned to spread the expense of big illustrated works—from Lavater’s Physiognomy to Holbein’s Portraits—over a period, by issue in parts. The former type, handled largely through hawkers and news-vendors at a few pence per issue, and the latter, subscribed for at prices up to a guinea a part by ‘the nobility and gentry’, were at the opposite economic poles of the publishing business; and though the middle area began to be tapped during the Regency by such works as Dr Syntax’s Tours, these were still primarily picture books, with subsidiary text. It was in this tradition that in 1836 Chapman & Hall commissioned Robert Seymour to do some plates for a part-issue which was to be filled out with letterpress by an obscure journalist called Charles Dickens. The success of that letterpress—The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club—changed the whole status of the part-issue for the next fifty years. ¹

The vogue of the part-issue for best-selling fiction overtopped, but did not interfere with, its two earlier uses. It was due to other causes that the big topographical book declined in popularity after the classic period of the great aquatints, but such famous illustrated books as Dalziel’s Arabian Nights and Doré’s various editions continued to be published in parts.

¹ Graham Pollard, op. cit., p. 261. The part-issue as a publishing form still awaits its historian; but Mr Pollard’s essay on Serial Fiction gives a brief general analysis, while Mr Sadleir’s Trollope Bibliography examines in detail the part-issue operations of an author whose publishers exploited every variety of the form for his prolific output.
Part-issues

The novel in parts was usually illustrated; one, two and sometimes even four plates by some popular artist being included in each number (the final part was usually a double number: i.e. 20 (say) in 19). It competed, as has already been noted, with the magazine serial, and temporary advantage was achieved now by one, now by the other. But from the late thirties to the early seventies the part-issue claimed a substantial share of the output of a dozen eminent and popular authors, including, for instance, every major novel of Dickens except Oliver Twist and Great Expectations, and of Thackeray except Esmond and Philip.

During the sixties, however, the magazine serial (with book publication in two or three volumes to follow) increased its drawing power decisively, and by the following decade the vogue for illustrating new fiction had also declined, so that although a few novels continued to be issued in parts even in the eighties, few important works of fiction were so published after 1870.

B Dickens, Charles. The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club. Illustrated by R. Seymour and Phiz.
Chapman & Hall. 1836/7.
(a) In the 20/19 monthly shilling parts (April 1836–November 1837).
(b) 1 vol., cloth, plain style. Published at a guinea. Pickwick started slowly, sales of the first number (probably 1000) being so discouraging that only 500 of the second were printed. With the appearance of Sam Weller, popularity began and increased by leaps and bounds, so that first printings of the later parts ran well into five figures.
Pickwick not only opened the eyes of publishers and authors to the possibilities of part-issue as a distributive method, but also set the physical style for many of its successors.
Lent by Messrs J. & E. Bumpus and Messrs Pickering & Chatto.

Longmans. 1840.
(a) Twelveshilling parts, published monthly, January–December 1840.
(b) 1 vol., cloth. Published 1 December 1840 at 14s. The cloth volume is a characteristic example of the decorated style, with appropriate pictorial or emblematical designs in gilt, which is found on many part-issued novels of this period.

Bradbury & Evans. 1848/50.
(a) In the 24/23 monthly parts.
(b) In 2 vols., cloth.
The style of the parts, with a woodcut vignette, is typical of the part-issues of Dickens, Thackeray and Surtees, each of whom, however, had his regular coloured paper as a sort of trade-mark—Dickens, greeny blue; Thackeray, yellow; Surtees, brick red.
3 (continued)

The cloth volumes are of plain style equally characteristic, in colour and ‘blind’ decoration, of Thackeray’s part-issued novels, just as Nicholas Nickleby (see P1) is of Dickens’s; whereas Surtees’s publishers followed the pictorially decorated tradition of Ainsworth and Marryat. Parts lent by Messrs Halewood & Son. Volumes by Messrs W. T. Spencer.


(a) Thirty-two sixpenny parts, published weekly, 17 October 1868–22 May 1869. In April Virtue, in financial straits, sold the copyright to Strahan, but his imprint persists to the end of the part-issue.

(b) 2 vols., cloth. Published May 1869 at £1. Is. with Strahan’s imprint. The weekly parts show a combination of the use of colour and an illustration (not, incidentally, reproduced in the book edition). The decorative style of the two volumes is formal, for the use of pictorial blocking (cf. B2 above) had by now gone out of fashion for the volume form of part-issued novels.


(a) Eight five-shilling parts, published at irregular intervals between December 1871 and December 1872.

(b) 4 vols., cloth. Published at £2. 2s. The title-page of the first volume is dated 1871, the remainder 1872.

This smaller-sized and more expensive type of part-issue never achieved much popularity, though it was used by Blackwood for the same author’s Daniel Deronda (1876) and by Chapman & Hall for Trollope’s The Prime Minister (1876). ‘Presumably the suppression of the sixpenny or shilling crown 8vo part was a concession to public weariness of frequent short instalments of a popular fiction’ (Sadleir, Trollope, a Bibliography, p. 154), and an attitude of concession to library requirements was shown by the concurrent issue in cloth of the parts of both Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda. But the vogue of the part-issue was over, and these compromises did not avail to revive it.


254 penny parts, published weekly.

Described as the third reissue in this form of a popular favourite, this is a typical example of those cheap part-issues, aimed largely at the schoolboy market, which continued, alongside (and by this time, outliving) their newly respectable brethren, the original tradition of the part-issue as distributed through the chapbook and news-vending trades. The garish folding colour plates which accompany the early issues soon give way to monochrome and shortly disappear altogether, their place being taken periodically by a free sample of Part 1 of some other publication. Lent by Messrs Scribners.
C. Three-deckers

Three small octavo volumes had become, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the standard form for fiction publishing; and though the page size had increased slightly between *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) the format had changed little in other respects. During the Victorian age, though a certain number of unillustrated novels were published in two volumes and a very few in one or four, the three-decker convention was maintained, largely through the influence of the circulating libraries, whose patrons liked to feel they were getting their money’s worth of reading. The public’s appetite for ample reading, the three-decker convention and the requirements of the serial and the part-issue all influenced writers towards a leisurely length. It was only in the eighties that medium-length novels began to be artificially spun out to three volumes, and the physical conventions did not long survive the swing away, both in readers and writers, from the spacious, many-plotted novel of mid-Victorian days towards a shorter and more astringent formula.

That for two decades after 1837 the outward appearance of the three-decker changed very little, in spite of the establishment during the thirties of gilt-lettered and gilt-decorated cloth bindings in other departments of publishing, was due to the peculiar methods of fiction distribution. For besides the bulk purchases of the libraries, novels were commonly handled in large wholesale lots by jobbers: and both were as likely to buy from the publisher in quires as in boards or half-cloth, for binding on their own account. Consequently, the publisher had little reason to spend money or attention on beautifying his fiction output, and with few exceptions the exterior of the three-decker remained sober—indeed often drab—by comparison with other books until the end of the fifties.

Even then, when fiction had fallen into line with general books in discarding half-cloth for full-cloth, gilt, the three-decker as a whole tended for some years to lag behind in respect of care and taste in the treatment of its exterior; and though Bentley, Smith Elder and Chapman & Hall maintained a respectable style, the tradition that it did not matter much what novels looked like died particularly hard in firms like Newby, Hurst & Blackett or Tinsley which published very little else. Exceptions to this rule, however, became increasingly widespread, and during the last quarter of the century the three-decker, in its economic decadence, blossomed out into a riot of competitive gaiety, with the great fiction house of Bentley leading the field in ingenuity and extravagance.

¹ For the illustrated novel, issued in parts, see the previous Section.
Three-deckers

By the nineties novels published in one volume at 6s. (4s. 6d. net cash) decisively outnumbered the three-deckers, and the margin for lavish detail in production had disappeared. No 'functional' section in the present exhibition has been devoted to these, but a number of examples may be seen in Sections J–W.

C Brougham, Henry. Albert Lunel.
1. 3 vols. Charles Knight. 1844.
   All-over drab boards, paper labels.
   This, the standard dress of novels during the Regency period, persisted long past the introduction of publisher's cloth (c. 1825), and though it became steadily less common during the forties, examples even survive from the following decade.

   (a) Boards, cloth backs, paper labels.
   (b) Full cloth, lettered in gilt.
   These alternative styles for fiction (published at the same price) ran concurrently for a number of years. Novels were marketed largely through wholesalers, who often (until the fifties at any rate) bought in quires and did their own binding; and so did the lending libraries until full cloth became stabilized as the only binding for fiction (late fifties).
   The concurrent style proper lasted from the mid-thirties to the mid-forties; but it was revived only a few years later owing to shortages of cloth and persisted, for economic reasons rather than from choice, till the late fifties. Trollope's The Three Clerks, for instance, was issued both in full cloth and half-cloth in 1858.

   This two-volume novel has been deliberately intruded here as a reminder that exceptions to the three-volume standard, though a small minority, were not infrequent. The grey-green cloth and its rather commonplace treatment are typical of the routine novel in the middle years of the century.

   Maroon or claret-coloured cloth was a favourite for fiction at this period, and its treatment here, though still unambitious, shows some signs of self-respect.

5. Fitzgerald, Percy. The Parvenu Family, or Phoebe, Girl and Wife.
   3 vols. Bentley. 1876.
   This diagonally ribbed cloth was popular in the seventies, and the combination of colour and decoration has begun to give a brisker general effect.
Three-deckers

6. **Moore, George. A MODERN LOVER.**
   3 vols. Tinsley. 1883.

   The all-powerful Mudie banned this book from his shelves, which was enough to kill any three-decker. The author, however, found a champion in Vizetelly, a publisher less dependent than a routine fiction house like Tinsley on lending-library good will, and his next book (see M 11) was issued in one volume at 6s., so that those who could not borrow could buy (and for 4s. 6d. if they liked to pay cash, a discount which remained normal till the Net Book Agreement in 1899). He also attacked Mudie in a pamphlet, a copy of which is shown, entitled *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals.*

   In the atmosphere of publicity provoked by the case, the artificially high price of the three-decker was thus brought forcibly to public attention, and although it lingered on for a decade, it was doomed. By the nineties the ordinary novel was normally published in one volume instead of three and at 6s. instead of £1. 11s. 6d.

7. **‘Maartens, Maarten’ (=Joost M. W. van der Poorten Schwartz). THE GREATER GLORY.**

   If the three-decker was to die, the great fiction firm of Bentley was determined that it should die gloriously. The bronze-butterflied design here covers the edges as well as the binding itself and demonstrates the large margin for frills which lay between the printing cost and the wholesale selling price of the three-decker. The discount to the lending libraries was 50%, and a publisher and his author could make a respectable profit with a sale as low as 1000 copies. Since Mudie took 1500 of any Bentley novel, sight unseen, there was plenty of margin for butterflies, silk bows, chintz and inset calling cards.

8. **Wingfield, The Hon. Lewis. THE MAID OF HONOUR.**
   3 vols. Bentley. 1891.

   Another typical Bentley three-decker of the final period.

9. **Library Copies.**

   As a reminder of the condition to which the vast majority of three-deckers were reduced by library circulation, and in which they normally survive to-day, three specimens are here shown.

   Of two copies of Hardy’s first novel *Desperate Remedies* (3 vols. Tinsley, 1871), one is in that dingy half roan, marbled paper sides, which is familiar on library-bound fiction from the twenties to the eighties; the other has been cut down and put into plain ‘binder’s cloth’, with ‘Mudie’s Select Library’ on the spine of the first volume.

   The third example is *Aylas Angel* by Anthony Trollope (3 vols. Chapman & Hall, 1881), the front covers of which are defaced by the pink printed labels of Lawrence’s Library, Rugby.
C  Three-deckers

10. ‘Reminders’

An unsuccessful three-decker might be sold off, in quires or bound, to a remainder publisher, or to a circulating library for its less fastidious country branches (cf. note to E2). The latter would normally keep it in three volumes, for obvious reasons; but the former often economized by binding up three volumes in one, sometimes with the original price of 31s. 6d. prominently stamped on the spine, for contrast with the reduced price on the flyleaf. The example of this degraded thing shown here is Restless Human Hearts by Richard Jefferies. originally published in 3 vols. by Tinsley in 1875.

D. One-volume Reprints

The Victorian novelist normally sold his product to a publisher for an outright sum, for the royalty system urged on authors by Sir Walter Besant’s ‘Authors’ Society’ and by A. P. Watt, the first of the powerful ‘literary agents’, was virtually unknown before the ‘eighties and was not firmly established till the final years of our period. But just as he might sell the serial rights separately if his publisher did not also (as many did) operate a magazine, so he would often sell the book rights either for a term of years (Meredith, for instance, sold Diana of the Crossways for five years for £500 to Chapman & Hall), or for three-volume publication only: the reprint and cheap-edition rights being subject to later negotiations and further payment. These alternative practices affected, in various ways, both the interval between the original publication and the first cheap reprint and also the form and price of that reprint, even though the novel’s initial success and its consequent expectation of purchasers (as distinct from borrowers) remained the dominating factor. In general, however, it was one result of an artificial convention that the interval between the original three- or two-decker and its first cheap edition, whether in one of the reprint series or independently, was normally much shorter than has become customary in the present century—often less than a year, sometimes no more than six months. Similarly revealing of the deliberate exploitation of the library market was the reduction in price—31s. 6d. or £1. 1s. to 6s. or 5s.—proportionately much greater than that between 7s. 6d. and 3s. 6d., the standard comparative figures of the years between the two world wars.

The Victorian fiction reprint series are shown in the following section. The present comprises a small selection of individual reprints characteristic of their periods in general and of their publishers in particular.

1. Gaskell, Mrs. MY LADY LUDLOW, AND OTHER TALES.
   Sampson, Low. 1861.
   First published in 1859 in 2 vols., under the title Round the Sofa.
One-volume Reprints

2. **Trollope, Anthony.** _The Kellys and the O'Kellys._
   Chapman & Hall. 1862.
   First published in 3 vols. by Colburn in 1848. This reprint was uniform
   with a number of other Trollope titles reissued during his 'Chapman &
   Hall' period (1858 to 1866). _Lent by John Carter._

3. **Norton, Caroline.** _Lost and Saved._
   Hurst & Blackett. 1863.

4. **Wood, Mrs Henry.** _Verner's Pride._
   Bradbury & Evans. 1864.
   First published in 3 vols. in 1863.

5. **Edwards, Amelia B.** _Half a Million of Money._
   Tinsley. 1866.
   First published in 3 vols. earlier in the same year.

6. **Braddon, Miss M. E.** _Birds of Prey._
   Ward, Lock & Tyler. 1868.
   First published in 3 vols. in 1867.

7. **Marryat, Florence.** _Love's Conflict._
   Warne. 1869.
   First published by Bentley, 3 vols., 1865. _Lent by Mrs Richard Bentley._

8. **Mulock, Dinah Maria (Mrs Craik).** _The Head of the Family._
   Macmillan. 1875.
   First published by Chapman & Hall, 3 vols., 1852.

9. **Collins, Wilkie.** _After Dark._
   Smith, Elder. 1888.
   First published in 1865, in 2 vols.

10. **Hardy, Thomas.** _Under the Greenwood Tree._
    Chatto & Windus. 1891.
    Originally published in 2 vols. in 1872, this had been reprinted in 1 vol.
    by Tinsley in 1876. The present reprint was included in Chatto &
    Windus's 'Piccadilly Library'.

11. **James, Henry.** _The Tragic Muse._
    Macmillan. 1891.
    First published in 1890, in 3 vols.

12. **Cholmondeley, Mary.** _The Danvers Jewels._
    Bentley. 1898.
    First published in 1887. The gold flower decoration on white cloth of
    this reprint shows the influence of the _Art Nouveau_ style. _Lent by Mrs Richard Bentley._
E. Fiction Series

The immediate impulse in England to fiction reprints in handy form, at a reasonable price and on a large scale, came, like so many other English impulses, from Scotland. For although cheap reissues of the classics had not been infrequent, from Harrison’s *Novelist’s Magazine* (1789–1791) to Whittingham’s *Pocket Novelists* (1825–1828), it was Cadell’s *Author’s Edition of the Waverley Novels*, which began to appear at 5s. a volume in 1829, that first applied the same method to the recent works of a living, if however exceptional, writer. In the matter of format Cadell had no doubt been influenced by the neat glazed canvas and paper labels of *Constable’s Miscellany* (1827 onwards), and it was in such general literature, not fiction, that Cadell’s own example was most immediately followed. Murray’s *Family Library*, the *Cabinet Cyclopedia* of Dr Lardner (Longmans) and the *Library of Entertaining Knowledge* of Charles Knight, were only three of a number of small cloth-bound non-fiction series, selling for 5s. a volume, which were well under way by 1830.

In 1831 the formula was applied to fiction, with the first volumes of Colburn & Bentley’s (soon Bentley’s alone) *Standard Novels*, the original announcement of which duly acknowledged its parentage—the *Waverley Novels* of Cadell. The series was immediately successful; and its careful selection, respectful editing and enterprising distribution not only established it in a long and fruitful career, but inspired several imitators, one of whom (as will be seen below) capitalized unscrupulously on Bentley’s standards without attempting to emulate them.

From 1832 to 1846 Bentley, Colburn (now independent) and Blackwood had the fiction series field to themselves. In the latter year Simms & McIntyre of Belfast introduced their *ParLOUR Novelist* series, at 2s. 6d. a volume as against the ruling 6s.; and in 1847 they followed up this trial balloon by *The ParLOUR Library*, which, at 1s. in boards and 1s. 6d. in cloth, was an innovation as revolutionary as Bentley’s of fifteen years before. This further reduction in the cheap series price, together with other features noted below, brought Bentley’s and Colburn’s price down, and opened the eyes of a number of other publishers—Routledge in particular—to the possibilities of the new market. As with Bentley in 1831, so Simms & McIntyre, the innovators of 1847, never lost their head start, and *The ParLOUR Library*, with its 320 pages for 1s. and a number of original works among its reprints, had a long and successful, as well as a highly influential career. But there was plenty of room for others, even if they lacked the same imagination and enterprise, and Routledge’s *Railway Library* probably ran up a longer list of titles than any other cheap reprint series in the history of publishing.