

Dr J Michael Lennon

From: Michael Millgate [michael.millgate@utoronto.ca]
Sent: Friday, May 09, 2003 3:34 PM
To: lennon@wilkes.edu
Subject: Re: Hardy and serial novel

Dear Mike:

We don't leave until the 19th, so that you caught me in plenty of time. And I'm happy to be able to assure you that Hardy's practice with his first serialised novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, was repeated with almost all of the novels--the only exceptions that I can think of off-hand being *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess*, and in both those cases pre-serialisation completion was essentially the result of the start of the serialisation's being delayed. I think it's not too much to say, indeed, that this was the standard practice during the Victorian period: a novelist would submit to a magazine editor one or two specimen instalments--sometimes (especially if he/she were already well-established) no more than a fairly brief synopsis--and the editor, with or without the advice of another reader, would commission (or not) the serial on that basis. The usual situation (especially when the magazine publisher and the book publisher were one and the same) was then for the book version to appear just ahead of the last serial episode. Typically a novelist--even if famous--would earn significantly more from the serial than from the (usually) three-volume first edition, such editions being mostly small and highly expensive and most readers having resort to Mudie's, W. H. Smith's, and the other big circulating libraries. As a matter of standard practice, the much cheaper one-volume editions normally appeared around a year later than the first editions. The system broke down in the mid-1890s--for various complicated reasons, including the increasing popularity of cheap one-vol. reprints--and the 3-vol. novel disappeared almost overnight. Serialization didn't disappear but became much less prevalent and important, especially for serious fiction. But remember that what I've described was the UK situation only and that in the US serialisation was always less pervasive and the one-volume novel, issued at a purchasable price, remained dominant throughout.

You'll have known most or indeed all of that already--but 19th-century publishing history is a special interest of mine (which doesn't mean that I'm much of an authority) and when that tap is turned on it tends to keep running. The guy you know in Chicago could certainly tell you more, especially about the US situation.

Good luck with the paper!

Michael

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