Floating selvedges are warp threads on each edge of the warp that are not threaded in a heddle. When your warp is at rest, these ends will sit higher than the others. When you open a shed, these threads will sit in the middle space, between the risers and the sinkers. They can be wrapped on separate beams or hung from the back of the loom and weighted individually. Every weft shot goes around the floating selvedge. This can cause a difference in tension, thus the need to control them apart from the warp.

If weighting the floating selvedge, make a small butterfly of thread as long as the warp or a bit longer, and place it in a film canister with some nuts and bolts. You can get the tension just right by adding or subtracting a few nuts or bolts.

If you forget to add an extra warp thread on each side of the warp to use as a floating selvedge, and want to use ends that are part of the warp, just remove the left-most and right-most warp end from their heddles and bring them straight from the back beam through the reed, and tie with the rest of the warp. You will see that removing them from their heddles puts them in that middle position, above a resting warp and below a raised shed. If these threads get too tight as you are working, replace them with a separate thread that is weighted at the back. Add them to your cloth by T-pins, in the same way you would fix a broken thread, by making a figure eight around the pin and securing it to the cloth.

To work with a floating selvedge, you want to be consistent in your method. One way is to always throw your weft over the floating selvedge on the side you are throwing from, and under the floating selvedge at the other end. If you do this consistently, always over the first one and under the opposite one, you will have straight edges and every weft will be caught. If you prefer, you can go under the floating selvedge at the edge you are throwing from, and over the opposite one. If you do this, be consistent. We have found the first method preferable because you can easily push the selvedge down as you go over it, and when you throw your shuttle, it should naturally pass under the opposite floating selvedge. If necessary, your hand is there to catch the shuttle, and you can push that floating selvedge up for easier passage of the shuttle.
Appendix B

Making an Extra Back Beam

If your loom has only one back beam, and you will be working with two warps that need to be beamed separately, as in lampas or matelassé, you can wind one warp on the beam and hang and weight the second one off the back of the loom. If you have a friction brake on your back beam, place the warp that needs the most fine-tuning on the back beam.

On top of the back beam, on either side of the warp that is now on the beam, place a thin piece of wood. Place a strong flat piece of wood or metal on top of the wooden supports and tie them securely to the back beam. The bar should be above the warp on the beam, not touching it. Your second warp will hang over it. (Some loom manufacturers make extensions for the back beam that fit on their loom and do the same thing. If you have one, use it.)

If you warp from back to front, make the chain for the warp that will be weighted so it chains from back to front. Hang both warps from the back castle of the loom, using separate lease sticks for each warp. At this point, your second warp is not weighted, just hanging in a chain. Wrap it around the back beam to the side of the other warp if necessary or just let it hang, but be sure there is a cord in it so the chain does not unravel.

After threading the heddles, put both warps through the reed and tension the warps together. Do not put weight on the second warp until you have secured it at the front of the loom. Otherwise, you might watch with horror as the weights pull the warp back through the reed and heddles and on to the floor.

Now unchain the warp that needs to be weighted and separate it into a few sections, depending on the width of the warp. Then chain each section from back to front and tie them so the warp will hang from the back beam extension but the tie is not near the floor. Attach loops of cord to each section and hang weights from these. You can use plastic bottles filled with water—measuring so each section is weighted equally, and adjusting the amount of water until the tension is just right. You can hang cones of yarn as weights, or plastic jars full of sand, or use knitting machine weights. Be inventive.

You want to have good tension, so that your shed is clear and threads drop down after being raised, but not so much weight that it is hard to make a shed.

Periodically, as you weave you will have to go to the back of the loom and untie the weight, release some of the warp from the chain, straighten the warp ends, and retie and weight the warp.