

Abstract

This article discusses the relationship between journalism and historical representation by exploring the particular case of the *recueils* of illustrated periodicals. With the adoption of a news section, *L'Illustration* asserts its ambition to participate in the writing of history and faces its first challenge in this sense during the 1848 insurrections. While weekly issues cover events as they as they unfold, or in their immediate aftermath, the instalments are also collected in biannual volumes. These occupy a problematic space, transcending the realm of the press to aspire to the status of contemporary histories. Chronicling events in real time, articles retain the urgency of tone, freshness of data and limited perspective of eyewitness records. They lack the reflective quality given by composition, temporal distance, and in-depth research. However, through textual and visual discourses that adopt narrative modes, *L'Illustration* draws attention to the fact that it contributes to the history of the nineteenth century. Retrospectively, the *recueils* constitute a form of historical account composed in the present.

Keywords: illustrated journals, *recueils*, historical representation, *L'Illustration*, 1848 Revolution, historical consciousness

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The Illustrated Press and the Writing of History:

The *Recueils* of *L'Illustration* in 1848

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***Le recueil*: disseminating knowledge or collecting news?¹**

Recent studies on illustrated journals have revealed the role they played in fashioning the image of their audience, in showcasing and influencing the debates of their age, whether in aesthetic, political or moral spheres.² Research on the popular *recueil* publications has determined their importance in the development of the culture of caricature illustration, as well as the part they played in crystallizing national identities.³ The present investigation seeks to further explore how the illustrated press shaped modern consciousness. Through the particular case of the illustrated press, an inherent tension in the perception of historical time in the nineteenth century comes to the fore. Modern consciousness is articulated by the tension between the traditional, Biblical vision of history as continuous and teleological, and the fragmentation, contradictions and arbitrariness of individual experience. In approaching the relationship between permanence and transience, the medium of the illustrated press is particularly eloquent due to its format, which embraces at once fragmentation and continuity. The publication's periodicity and configuration mean that each issue is a collection (*recueil*) of fragmentary texts. However, illustrated periodicals conceive of themselves as collectable items, with each instalment contributing towards the publication's encyclopaedic scope. This is attested by the fact that issues are destined to be bound in annual or biannual volumes, hence amounting to a double instance of collection (a *recueil* of *recueils*). This universal goal gives unity and a form of ultimate finality underpinning the fragmentary nature of the article

form. My intention is to explore the intrinsic ambivalence of such volume editions of illustrated periodicals from the perspective of their relationship with history and historical consciousness. For the purposes of this article, the discussion shall be limited to the biannual *recueils* of *L'Illustration* in 1848 in relation to unfolding historical events and their audience's consciousness.

Through its encyclopaedic scope and vulgarizing approach, the illustrated press professed its goal as the diffusion of knowledge. Conceived of as a tool for the education of the masses, it came in both accessible and high-quality editions. *Le Magasin pittoresque* and *L'Illustration* constitute two cases in point. Both were co-founded by Edouard Charton a decade apart, in each case after an English model: the *Penny Magazine* and the *London Illustrated News*, respectively. *Le Magasin pittoresque* is the first publication of its kind in France (1833), the counterpart of the *Penny Magazine* founded by Charton's friend, Charles Knight, the year before. Although driven by the Saint-Simonian and philanthropic principles of improving the popular classes, the high quality of the articles and illustrations ensured its universal appeal to the 'foyer domestique, riche ou pauvre' (Charton, 1833: i). Images played an essential part in the journal's mission of disseminating knowledge, entertaining and enriching the private lives of its readers. Moreover, the eminently visual nature of the journal was a response to the crystallizing culture of the image that rose to power in the mid-nineteenth century. An important aspect that initially set illustrated periodicals apart was the fact that they did not contain a news section. This was in keeping with their mission to educate and entertain, thus privileging knowledge over daily information. Additionally, the adoption of the same model in several European countries served to create a common experience, and thus a European imaginary, according to Jean-Pierre Bacot (2005: 39).

By comparison, the next generation of periodicals, foremost among them *L'Illustration* (1843), and later *Le Monde illustré* (1857), would mark a departure from this

common model by adopting an *actualités* section. *L'Illustration* incorporated political issues ranging from the French territories to the international scene. From the 1848 Revolutions to the Crimean War, and the urban reorganization of Paris, it chronicled events as they were unfolding. What is particularly striking is that the subjects were served both hot (through weekly instalments) and cold (as semestral volumes). It is on these semestral editions that I wish to focus, as they occupy a problematic space, throwing into sharp relief what Yannick Portebois and Dorothy Speirs considered the *recueil*'s specificity: they are not books, but nor do they belong to the world of the press (2013: 12). The half-yearly volumes of *L'Illustration* offer a rich environment for the exploration of the relationship between journalism, history, and literature. Presenting a chronological development of events recorded at the time of their occurrence, such works retain the urgency of tone and freshness of information of the moment when they were first written, in *medias res*. Due to this context, they constitute contemporaneous eyewitness records that lack the reflective quality which temporal distance, in-depth research, and composition give to certain historical and literary accounts. In this sense, the article focuses on the representation of the February 1848 insurrection as it is chronicled in the *recueil* edition of *L'Illustration*. I am interested in exploring two aspects regarding the *recueil*'s status. First, retrospectively, the half-yearly edition offers a form of historical account, composed in the present. An essential element in this regard was the authors' awareness, and even intention, of participating in the writing of history and of their part in influencing the public's awareness and perception of it. The second aspect concerns the means through which this was achieved and examines the journalistic practice of exploiting narrative strategies, both visual and textual.

L'Illustration announced a new phase in the history of the illustrated press in France. The periodical created by Édouard Charton, Alexandre Paulin and Jacques-Julien Dubochet was remarkable in many regards thanks to the various innovations it brought to the French

press. As a fundamentally visual publication, most notable were the introduction of wood engravings to illustrate news subjects and the first use of photographic sources in the press, which occurred following the insurrection of June 1848. Furthermore, we may note a new manner of exploiting and delivering information, which drew on foreign newspapers, news agencies and, above all, field correspondents, as well as collaboration with readers throughout the world (Marchandiau, 1987: 25). It is important to note that the publication was aware of these innovations and branded itself as different from other journals. The periodical's self-awareness of its novel practice of journalism and the desire to stand out indicate the aspiration to participate in the recording of history through its intended format as a *recueil*.

In this sense, form and ideology appear as interdependent characteristics, which *L'Illustration* foregrounded explicitly. The emphasis on this conjunction provides the audience with a key for reading the journal: the weekly instalments were meant to become part of a virtual whole, which materialized in the form of biannual bound volumes. From one issue to another, the pages were numbered consecutively and the journal advertised the binding service in each instalment, thus highlighting the idea that the publication conceived of itself as a work in progress. In turn, each volume was destined to become part of the subscriber's library. Hence, the necessity of subscribing to the journal ultimately to access a collection of works in which news and images documenting current events formed a contemporary history. Thus, as was the case with *Le Magasin pittoresque*, this was a collectable item, but whereas the former was intended to form an encyclopaedic work, the latter aspired to be a historical one. In both cases, the implication is that the publications construed themselves as re-readable works, inviting audiences to return and pore over their contents. In this context, the effect of the unfolding insurrections on the periodical and its aspirations are representative of how 1848 marked a turning point in the life of the illustrated press.

Le Magasin pittoresque conceived of journalistic writing as centred on individual improvement and not on society as a whole:

si l'on oublie un instant les agitations extérieures de la société, et si l'on cherche ce que la presse produit d'utile et de bienfaisant *pour la vie intérieure, pour le foyer domestique, riche ou pauvre* on reste étonné de voir que là où tant de connaissances sont à répandre, où tant de goût naïf, tant de dispositions, de sentiments heureux sont à entretenir et à développer, il n'y a encore, sous le rapport de la qualité surtout, que rareté et disette. (Charton, 1833: i, original emphasis)⁴

The emphasis was placed on introspection and private life, rather than on public existence and the workings of society. *Le Magasin* seemed to resist the incessant flow of social movement; its conservative pull aimed to filter enduring values and ideas, discarding the contingent and impermanent. Baudelaire would redefine this relationship, fusing in productive tension the eternal and the transient.⁵

If the first illustrated periodical privileged knowledge conveyed through 'distractions pures et instructives', removed as far as possible from contingencies (Charton, 1833: ii), *L'Illustration* appears closer to this tension at the heart of modernity and its driving force. Thus, the first issue of 1843, which functioned as a manifesto, was complemented by a preface in the bound volume. Here, Dubochet announced the aspirations and guiding precepts of the new periodical. A 'Journal universel', as the subtitle proclaimed it, the publication aimed to offer readers an all-encompassing view of notable events from around the globe, keeping pace with

événements politiques, cérémonies publiques, grandes fêtes nationales, désastres fameux, bruits de la ville, morts illustres, biographies contemporaines, représentations théâtrales, découvertes utiles, expositions, [...] publications, [...] faits glorieux de l'armée, modes, types, scènes populaires. (1 September 1843: i)

The heterogeneous topics exposed in the 'Preface' corresponded to the tenet of being a mirror of contemporary society, recording and reflecting weekly all aspects of life in the nineteenth century. In contrast to the enduring values that *Le Magasin* desired to instil in its readers, the

new journal was firmly anchored in the ephemeral, taking in and relaying apparently without discrimination everything from ‘bruits de la ville’, ‘modes’ and ‘scènes populaires’ to political facts. This inclusive approach foregrounded information over education, unlike its predecessor, and seemed not to distinguish between the serious and the frivolous, the trivial and the valuable.

Nonetheless, while an ‘Avis aux lecteurs’ from 1847 reiterated the journal’s ambition to produce a faithful and complete representation of life, it also revealed that its choice of subjects was not arbitrary. The ‘Avis’, whose purpose was to encourage subscription, illuminates the complexity of the journal’s ideology. The periodical embraced the fleeting existence of its news subjects, but argued for their part in the greater scheme of history:

Beaucoup de personnes pensent que cette collection deviendra précieuse pour l’histoire contemporaine. Qu’on juge, en effet, de quelle valeur serait une publication de ce genre qui aurait commencé à l’origine de la Révolution française, et qui aurait enregistré chaque semaine, en les accompagnant d’une représentation pittoresque, tous les événements du temps, qui reproduirait l’histoire et l’image des personnages célèbres ou fameux, et qui nous montrerait, sous ce double aspect de la parole et du dessin, le mouvement de la politique, des arts, des sciences, des lettres, du théâtre, des mœurs et usages, et jusqu’aux fantaisies de la mode. *L’Illustration* sera pour nos fils cette représentation du temps actuel, et sa collection gagnera en importance historique et en intérêt curieux à mesure que les tableaux qu’elle présente s’éloigneront des regards et de la mémoire du lecteur. (‘Aux lecteurs de *L’Illustration*. Avis important pour ceux qui désirent acquérir ou compléter la collection de ce recueil’, 11 September 1847: 31)

The programmatic content of the notice asserts the journal’s position to history. As Michèle Martin notes, the periodical conceived of itself as ‘part of history, an archival document [...] for generations to come’ (2006: 26). The exuberant analogy with a hypothetical publication, founded in the past and continuously recording events throughout time, is a projection of the very position that *L’Illustration* envisages for itself. Through a false comparison, the journal imagined its role in time, in the future, when it would indeed have become the chronicle of modern times.

Yet maintaining this position is problematic. Firstly, it entails a paradigm shift: whereas *Le Magasin* adopted the ancient model ‘docere et delectare’, *L’Illustration* proposed to raise information to a form of knowledge. Education and information replaced the established formula, although the images’ appeal preserved their entertainment function. The very concept of *actualité* is ephemeral, yet by placing it in relation to the idea of history as an enduring record, the current event transcends the status of a fleeting, discarded piece of information. Projected in the perspective of history, it becomes part of an epistemological system that deals with the past –except that by associating news with historical fact, the result is a writing of history in the present. The implications of this are discussed below.

***L’Illustration* or the annals, the chronicle, and the mirror**

The first illustrated periodical in France to treat current affairs proclaimed itself apolitical and maintained a neutral tone. This was in agreement with the manner in which the publication construed itself, namely, as similar to annals, recording facts collected into two volumes at the end of the year. The references to the Revolution and to the scenario of a publication that continues uninterrupted imagined by the ‘Avis’, underline the publication’s desire to become a modern equivalent of the old annals and chronicles that kept a continuous record of events.⁶ This aspiration is clear in the 1843 ‘Préface’ to the volume that reunited the first semester of instalments:

L’ILLUSTRATION sera véritablement ce que, dès le principe, nous avons voulu qu’elle fût, un vaste annuaire où seront racontés et figurés, à leurs dates tous les faits que l’histoire contemporaine enregistre dans ses annales [...] L’ILLUSTRATION sera, en un mot, un miroir fidèle où viendra se réfléchir, dans toute son activité merveilleuse et son agitation si variée, la vie de la société au dix-neuvième siècle. (1 September 1843: i)

The terms ‘annuaire’, ‘annales’, ‘histoire contemporaine’, and ‘miroir’ highlight the semantic field to which the journal wished to be associated – that of historical representation. Since the

publication appears as more than a journal, but not quite a book, the volume format is essential because it embodies and plays out the historical mission assumed by *L'Illustration*. Anchored in contemporaneity, *L'Illustration* aimed to preserve the present for posterity: 'Que l'on imagine l'intérêt de curiosité et l'utilité même qu'offrirait aujourd'hui un recueil de ce genre, s'il avait été créé il y a plusieurs siècles et continué jusqu'à ce jour!' (1 September 1843: i).

In fact, the periodical confidently represented itself as a parallel record to the one that 'l'histoire contemporaine enregistre dans ses annales'. The comparison between the biannual volume and the historic genre of the annals represents precisely one of the expressions of the historical dimension that *L'Illustration* incorporated within its pages. The *recueil*, however, is different from both annals and chronicles. Hayden White's distinctions are useful in this sense. He classifies annals and chronicles in the category of non-narrative representations of history. This means that both modes fail to insert the events they recount within 'a structure, an order of meaning' (1980: 9). White summarizes this non-narrative status as follows: '[w]hile annals represent historical reality *as if* real events did not display the form of story, the chronicle represents it *as if* real events appeared to human consciousness in the form of *unfinished stories*' (1980: 9, original emphasis). Annals are not built around an overarching ideology, with a moral at its core. They record events synthetically and chronologically over the course of years and lack a conclusion. Devoid of commentary or reflection, annals establish no relationships of causality and are indiscriminating in the inscription of facts: there is no hierarchy of importance in their ordering. White's argument ascribes this to the fact that events recorded are not set in relation to what he calls 'a system of law' (1980: 17). Borrowed from Hegel, this is a referential system against which occurrences can be measured, for example, as reinforcing or threatening it. By comparison, the chronicle exhibits a higher degree of narrative coherence given by a central subject, comprehensiveness, and

organization, for instance, by ‘topics and reigns’ (1980: 20). Nevertheless, even this form of historical representation falls short of a narrative representation by the absence of closure, as the account terminates without bringing the resolution that would have bestowed significance on the chain of events recounted. Additionally, the very ‘perseverance of the chronology as the organizing principle of the discourse’ makes the chronicle less than a ‘history’ (1980: 20).

This understanding of annals and chronicles is relevant in the discussion of the *recueil*’s status due to the fact that such views on forms of historical representation were current in the nineteenth century. The journal exhibits traits ascribed to chronicles, for instance, in the structure of its internal space, wherein subjects were organized by category, from the ‘Histoire de la Semaine’, which covered political affairs and reviews, to chapters of *romans feuilletons*, genre studies, and travel accounts. Often, column sub-headings further organized subject matter, suggesting the will to insert facts within a narrative structure. Furthermore the existence of indexes for text and illustrations in the volume allowed audiences to follow subjects both by topic (Voyages, Reviews) and alphabetically. Although flexible, the geography of the journal provided stable referents, so that readers could be directed to consult particular points in a discussion that ran through several issues. Following the author’s indications, they could be sure to find under the same heading the column(s) dedicated to a particular topic. Also, unlike annals, in the *recueil*, subsequent issues could also present critical reappraisals of past events recorded, correcting, developing or offering different perspectives on the facts.

As Yannick Portebois and Dorothy Speirs remind us, ‘le recueil périodique est un phénomène éditorial singulier au XIXe siècle’ (2013: 13). It inhabits a liminal space between single editions and issues understood as part of a corpus. Current affairs represented therein partake, on the one hand, of the teleological absence that characterized annals, recorded as they occur, from one issue to another. On the other hand, the *recueil* as a volume shows that

their position within the geography of the journal may change from one issue to another, drawing attention to the fact that interest in a subject waxed and waned. Thus, in the 26 February issue immediately following the insurrection in 1848, recent events took over the columns 'Histoire de la Semaine' and 'Courrier de Paris', displacing, in one case, international news and, in the other, social events in Paris. Meanwhile, the 4 March issue was entirely dedicated to the Revolution and its aftermath, so that, for instance, the frontpage covered political aspects, the social column recounted anecdotes and street scenes from the Revolution, while the columns usually dedicated to travel reportages chronicled the ceremony for the funeral of the victims of the Revolution. Thus, the system for ordering information within the journal's space was shaped by, and shaped in turn, public opinion. The attention that a subject attracted and the number of issues across which it remained newsworthy can bespeak an awareness of what was considered consequential and draws attention to the process which decided an event's potential to be historically relevant.

Furthermore, as interest in a subject rose and fell across the issues in a *recueil*, the question of a conclusion imposes itself. For White, the possibility of closure in historical accounts is linked to the presence of narrativity and morality. Closure is a characteristic of narrative, which invests an occurrence with meaning. Meaning is associated with a moral impulse; thus, argues White, the presence of a conclusion marks a shift, made possible by narrative means, 'from one physical or social space to another' (1980: 26). Closure depends on the actors and/or events moving from the incidence of one law to another, or their 'passage from one moral order to another' (1980: 26). In light of its claims to historical representation, how the *recueil* responded to the question of closure is relevant. I will return to this aspect in the discussion of the February 1848 Revolution news coverage.

An additional instance of comparison sets the journal side by side with the mirror, complicating the idea of contemporary historical representation. Given *L'Illustration's*

aspiration to cover worldwide news, the mirror as metaphor for representation calls to mind the medieval genre of the *miroir du monde*, which designates encyclopaedic works. One of the most notable creations is Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum majus* (1244), which plays on the polysemy of reflection (*speculatio*). Vincent de Beauvais invited his reader to contemplate the order of creation through a complex system of mirrors made of 'un miroir naturel', 'un miroir doctrinal' and 'un miroir historique', to which, notes Alain Rey, 'on a joint plus tard un miroir moral' (2007: 121). In Vincent's work, the discussion of the natural world was structured following the narrative of Genesis, so that subjects paralleled the stages of creation: Theology corresponded to the first day, which took as its subject the Creator, the nature of creation, and angels; Physics was discussed over the first and second days in relation to light and astronomy, respectively, and so on. Meanwhile, the 'miroir doctrinal' included Philosophy and Rhetoric, Economy, Mechanics and Technology (Rey, 2007: 121). The journal's own universal approach bears out the connection to its predecessors in terms of content. However, its overall internal organisation does not adopt a consistent narrative structure as had the *miroir*'s Days of Creation.

In fact, *L'Illustration* categorically distanced itself from the encyclopaedic genre, which it associated with the *magasin*: 'Les recueils pittoresques ne sont au fond que des livres composés d'articles variés, et publiés feuille à feuille' (4 March 1843: 1). Despite this disclaimer, we noted how the division by subject of the journal's space was comparable to the structure of chronicles and not dissimilar from encyclopaedic practices. Under the title 'Notre but', the 1843 manifesto detailed over six paragraphs the sections dedicated to different topics, from internal and external news to reviews and special features: 'nouvelles de la politique, de la guerre, de l'industrie, des mœurs, du théâtre, des beaux-arts, de la mode dans le costume et l'ameublement' (1). Maps, correspondence, and travel reports would support the foreign news coverage. An innovative section under the heading 'Biographie' would

introduce readers to the portraits (written and engraved) of contemporary personalities at home and abroad. Thus, to the *encyclopédisme* of the *magasin*, the new journal opposed its own *nouvellisme*. The term designates in reality an encyclopaedia of news: the world of culture, science, and technology, of ephemeral fashions, gossip, and anecdotal ‘scènes populaires’ competed with momentous political and military actions, spectacular celebrations or unforeseen calamities. Although registering events as they came to be known, similar to annals, the periodical exercised a particular form of selection of the information, whose broad criteria were hinted at by the epithets ‘publiques’, ‘nationales’, ‘fameux’, ‘illustres’, and ‘glorieux.’ This would suggest that recording live, as it were, the movement of the times, the periodical filtered its subjects through the prism of their relevance in terms of contemporaneous history.

The *magasin*’s closeness to the model of the medieval *miroir* and its encyclopaedic descendants is inferred in a rhetorical question that functions as litotes: ‘Pensera-t-on que nous allons être réduits aux monuments, aux sujets généraux d’instruction, au rétrospectif [...] ?’ (4 March 1843: 1). The encyclopaedic approach associated *magasins* with reflections of /on past and static subjects, and served as antithesis to *L’Illustration*, which stood poised in the present, an encyclopaedia of all things fleeting, in perpetual motion. Yet despite this flux, the *recueil*’s ‘Préface’ reinforced the idea of reflectivity through a reflexive construction: ‘viendra se réfléchir [...] la vie de la société’ (1 September 1843: i). This syntactic choice underlines the objectivity of the periodical through an impersonal tone, as well as being suggestive of movement (‘viendra’).

Furthermore, although the journal dismissed the encyclopaedic tradition, the heterogeneous subjects consolidate the idea of a panoramic representation, epitomized in the view of Paris above the masthead.⁷ The project of a panoramic contemporaneous history is reminiscent of Balzac’s ‘Avant-Propos’ to his great fresco of humanity in the nineteenth

century and will later find an echo in Maxime du Camp's monumental monograph, *Paris, ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle* (1869-1875). Both works in different genres consciously used contemporaneous events to construct epistemological systems, moral in one case, administrative in the other, in whose light the society of their time could be apprehended. Moreover, bearing in mind the legacy of the *miroir* genre, the polysemy of *réfléchir* could be argued to endure. The mirror metaphor reappears in the treatment of the February 1848 insurrection, where it reveals its power to do more than reflect reality. The mirror frames events in such a way as to confer coherence upon them. I will return to this aspect. *L'Illustration* thus conceived an epistemological system, structuring micro-narratives under its different section headings – 'Histoire de la Semaine', 'Voyages', 'Biographie'. Society was represented through the actions, places, and people that the journal registered and organized as in an encyclopaedic history of the present times.

***L'Illustration*, or the spectacular image, recording and recreating events**

In the particular context of the illustrated journal, the image was a structural and ideological principle, playing a key role in the manner in which *L'Illustration* defined itself as a historical document:

Au même titre que le texte, l'image est un critère de sélection qui oriente le choix éditorial [...] D'un maniement plus compliqué que l'édition de textes, la publication de gravures assujettit l'organisation graphique et éditoriale d'un numéro. Pour ces différentes raisons, les images ne peuvent être envisagées comme de simples décorations qui accompagnent les textes. Elles ont un rôle structurant qui contribue à la définition du journal illustré. (Gervais, 2003: 56-85)

In its dialogue with history, the publication set up a complex system of values centred on the image and requiring journalistic techniques to adapt and transform. Thierry Gervais recognizes this, as he writes that wood engravings

sont pour l'hebdomadaire le moyen de réduire la distance intellectuelle, qui sépare le spectateur du sujet, au point de refléter l'actualité même. Au-delà de l'aspect

pédagogique, cet usage des images exprime une forme de modernité journalistique qui se retrouve dans la démarche écrite des journalistes de l'hebdomadaire [...] Récits et figures doivent exprimer la proximité avec l'événement, incarner l'objectivité d'un 'réflecteur.' (2003: 56-85)

Within this system, the historiographic vision and visual conception define the relationship with the audience. Both the 1843 manifesto and the 'Préface' to the first semester's *recueil* insisted on the importance of illustrating text that claimed to deal with contemporary history. The idea of the 'réflecteur' evoked by Gervais appears in a polemical feature, 'Un journal modèle. Excursion dans le royaume d'utopie', which discussed journalistic practices.⁸ Part of the journal's mirror mechanism, images translated text visually and constituted necessary cognitive mediators in 'toute littérature descriptive comme de celle du théâtre, que l'on ne connaît bien qu'après l'avoir vu représentée' (4 March 1843: 1). The syntagm 'littérature descriptive' sheds light on *L'Illustration*'s conception of journalistic writing as a literary activity.

As such, the text becomes a *mise-en-abîme* of the artistic experience it represents, bridging the gap between representation and the event itself through illustration, as in the case of theatre:

[N]otre affaire, au lieu d'analyser simplement les pièces, est de les peindre. Costumes des acteurs, groupes et décorations [...], tout ce qui appartient à cet art où la jouissance des yeux tient une si grande place [...] viendra se réfléchir dans nos comptes-rendus, et nous tâcherons de les illustrer si bien, que les théâtres, s'il se peut, soient forcés de nous faire reproche de nous mettre en concurrence avec eux, en donnant d'après eux à nos lecteurs de vrais *spectacles dans un fauteuil*. ('Notre but', 4 March 1843: 1)

Illustrations of plays helped recreate for the public the very experience that the text chronicled, while engravings that reproduced artwork presented at the Salon acted as stand-ins for the event:

[n]ous ne nous contenterons pas de donner, comme les autres journaux, des jugements tout nus, auxquels l'immense majorité du public, celui de l'étranger et des départements, n'a le plus souvent rien à voir ni à entendre. A côté du jugement, nous aurons soin de donner les pièces sur lesquelles il se fonde: et, sans avoir besoin de se

déplacer, tout le monde pourra se faire au moins une idée générale des morceaux. (4 March 1843: 1)

The italicized image 'spectacle dans un fauteuil' and the mention 'sans avoir besoin de se déplacer' show the journal striving to reduce the distance between the public and the event or object discussed. Visual representation anchored the text, becoming indispensable to elucidate information and access knowledge about historical or theatrical manifestations. Not least, although objectivity was not yet a tenet in journalistic writing, images, in the form of maps or painting reproductions, strengthened its claim to mirror without deforming. According to Gervais, this conception of the diffusion of knowledge 'suppose l'intelligibilité immédiate des illustrations. De ce pouvoir accordé aux images naît une croyance en leur impartialité, qui repose sur la relation de confiance établie entre elles et le lecteur' (2003: 56-85). For the purposes of historical representation, the visual element drew its power from the idea that it depicted contemporaneous events; thus, the illustrations constituted faithful renderings. Rather than being retrospective reconstructions, they had the ring of truth that only witness accounts could lay claim to: the closeness and instantaneity they recreated for the reader warranted authenticity and reinforced the text.

Transparency and reflection coexisted in the illustrated journal. The quality of the observations expressed in the reviews was to be tested against the illustrations that illuminated textual description and completed discussions. The periodical invited its audience to assess the justice of the written commentary. Instead of the 'jugement tout nu', irrelevant for readers who had no means of knowing the piece discussed, *L'Illustration* enabled the public to judge for themselves; it challenged them to become informed readers and viewers rather than blindly accept an opinion. This corroborates the idea that the journal's ambition was to provide access to knowledge, not just information. Its desire to shape public opinion presupposes initially cultivating its readership to make educated assessments. No longer just

informative, the illustrated journal was educative:

Combien les descriptions écrites, même les meilleures, sont pâles, inanimées, toujours incomplètes et difficiles à comprendre, en comparaison de la représentation même des choses! On le répète depuis longtemps: 'Les choses qui arrivent à l'esprit par l'oreille sont moins faciles à retenir que celles qui lui arrivent par les yeux.' ('Préface', September 1843: i)

Privileging representation over description was a novel approach to recording history, signalling the periodical's modernity. The illustrated periodical proposed in fact an alternative mode of writing history, by visualizing it in the making.⁹ More than a recording of facts, the text and image dialogue constituted a *mise-en-scène* of events. Appropriating the conventions of different media to gain authority and prestige, the recording process turned into visual play under the sign of History that was alive and collectible. By this very attitude towards news, it asserted itself as capable of shaping a historical and civic consciousness, a mission subsequently emulated by *Le Monde illustré*. The reference to Horace underlines how visual elements, as mnemonic media, consolidated historical consciousness by ensuring that history-making news should not be forgotten.

***L'Illustration*, 1848: an event in (the journal's) history**

The uprisings in February 1848 were the first to test the journal's ambition to actively take part in the writing of history. *L'Illustration* had imagined a publication that would take in its stride and faithfully document major historical changes since the 1789 epicentrum, referred to in the 'Avis aux Lecteurs'. Such occurrences in the life of the periodical are noteworthy on account of their implications with respect to the epistemological and ontological principles guiding *L'Illustration*. On Saturday, 26 February the journal appeared with a slight delay for the first time since its launch in 1843. The reason: the events that had shaken the capital between 22 and 24 February. A similar delay would occur during the insurrections between 22 and 26 June:

Les lecteurs de *L'Illustration* comprendront le retard apporté dans le service de ce numéro, quand ils sauront que nous n'avons pas trouvé, en temps utile, les imprimeurs à leur poste; que le chemin même de notre imprimerie, comme beaucoup d'autres quartiers de la ville, était devenu un champ de bataille, le théâtre d'une guerre civile. La lutte terminée, nous reprenons notre travail paisible. Nous le prenons sans aucun désir de le transformer au souffle des circonstances; mais plus persuadés que jamais de la nécessité de demeurer, comme auparavant, voués à la science, aux arts et aux lettres, et de nous borner, sur tout le reste, au rôle de rapporteur. En publiant un peu tard aujourd'hui la scène de l'émotion déterminée par l'annonce des débats de la chambre des députés, lundi dernier, nous faisons voir assez que nous nous attendions déjà à des scènes plus vives. Il s'est accompli, en effet, depuis ce jour-là, une révolution. Comme ce numéro devrait être distribué à l'heure où nous mettons celui-ci sous presse, le récit de ces événements et de ceux qui en ont été la conséquence immédiate est connu de tout le monde. Pour être le miroir fidèle du temps, *L'Illustration* se borne à analyser sommairement les événements [...]. (26 February 1848: 401)

The opening lines of the *premier-Paris* column, 'Histoire de la Semaine', placed the periodical in *medias res*, directly affected by the events that elapsed in the week since its last instalment. Affected, but not involved, as the journal clearly stated: the epithet 'paisible' characterizing its activity stands in antithesis with the 'champ de bataille' and 'théâtre d'une guerre civile'. Through this parallel, the introduction strove to clarify the periodical's role in relation to recent events. All the more so since behind the euphemism 'au souffle des circonstances' hid the menace of further potential unrest. From this perspective, the very vagueness of the euphemism and the epithet 'paisible' subtly asserted the non-combative position of *L'Illustration*, not swayed by the winds of change to inflame the spirits.

Simultaneously, the opening paragraph juxtaposes the image of the *imprimeurs* absent from work with the journal's return to its 'travail paisible.' This aligned the publication's work with that of the printers and also signalled that the journal's activity is no threat to order. In a time when the freedom of the press was contested and the usual consequence of uprisings was to suspend publications and often imprison the editors, such *professions de foi* were meant to safeguard *L'Illustration* from this fate.¹⁰ This circumspection borders on auto-censorship, as the article almost disavows the periodical's activity in covering political news, but ultimately reaffirms its promise of impartiality. The position of 'rapporteur' it claimed is

evocative of the initial self-comparison with annals, inscribing facts, and of the metaphor of the 'réflecteur'. The latter stance is reiterated at the end of the introductory paragraph through the reference to the mirror, as the article prepares to summarize the insurrectionary episode.

Indeed, the *premier-Paris* produced more than a report of the past week's events. The mirror it provided played on the polysemy of 'réflexion', with *L'Illustration* weaving together the impact of the insurrection and the periodical's activity. In this sense, the publication construed a retrospective view of the past week with a deliberately teleological approach. That is, the article set out to trace the atmosphere leading to the insurrection, hinting at the ineluctable outcome of the protests. To this end, it exploited the publication's delay: since there was no time to order the drawing and engraving of a revolutionary scene, the journal had to make do with the composition it had prepared to accompany its report on the Chamber of Deputies meeting from Monday 21 February. However, the illustration and the events it alluded to are transformed into the prelude to the Revolution, allowing the periodical to thread a story that led from these tell-tale signs to the 'scènes plus vives'. The journal, therefore, diverges from annals, the comment 'nous nous attendions' marking its engagement in a process of reflection whereby it anticipated consequences and reviewed events, drawing conclusions.

Due to its publication pattern, on Saturdays, the journal appears at once rooted in the present and benefitting from a short-term perspective on the past. In light of the revolutionary climax, it looked back on the past week and sought to establish a narrative progression from the heated debate over the electoral reform in Parliament to the insurrection and the current situation. Exploiting the limited perspective in a narrative effort suggests a will to draw together strands of events as if to stitch up the torn fabric of society, to make sense of what was perceived as a narrative gap. The publication explicitly entwined its fate with that of Paris by narrating together the process of sending to press the articles and the *éclatement* of the

Revolution that temporarily suspended it. The disruption in the journal's rhythm reflected the suspension of the laws of society, and led the former to try to integrate this discontinuity into a flowing narrative. The mode of reasoning relied on links of causality that brought together the report of the Chamber of Deputies session, written before the turning point, and the subsequent escalation, documented in the wake of the Revolution.

We have already noted that the image accompanying the opening lines on the front page of the 26 February issue played a major role in creating a narrative of the past week's events. Almost full-page, the subject – a crowd gathered in a public square – is not immediately transparent and no more enlightening is the caption proclaiming: 'Aspect du boulevard des Italiens dans la soirée du 21 février'.¹¹ Two groups of people from different social categories, as their attire suggests, huddle around figures holding copies of the newspaper *La Patrie*, whose contents they are reading out. Signs with the word 'Patrie' are held up in the background, where several figures rise above the crowd, seemingly discoursing. Between the smaller group in the left foreground and the large crowd that fills the centre and background stands a mounted guard, facing away from the crowd to survey troops gathered further back to the left. There is no sign of violence, but the juxtaposition of the cavalry and the attentive crowd listening and reading conveys a tense atmosphere, mingling agitation and the sense of anxious waiting. As the opening lines inferred, the illustration presented a scene that preceded the events narrated in the main body of 'Histoire de la Semaine'. The composition develops the narrative only alluded to in the text, namely, what ensued following the publication of the decision not to lift the interdiction of the banquet. The illustration corresponds to the textual image, 'la scène de l'émotion déterminée par l'annonce des débats de la chambre des députés, lundi dernier', relaying the feeling of being on the edge of some ominous event.

Contemporaneous readers would have known that these references concerned the debate regarding the banquet campaign, which had raged for several months. Following the

1835 amendment that prohibited public gatherings, political meetings of the opposition took place under the cover of society events, whether funerals or banquets. The latter had developed by 1847 into the *campagne des banquets*, which supported a reform of the electoral law. The banquet campaign, argued the opposition, was a legitimate form of protest, posing no threat to public order (the banquets were considered private events, with attendants paying a fee). In late December 1847, the Guizot government denied permission for a reform banquet although it had tolerated numerous such events since July. William Fortescue, who retraces in detail the workings behind these events, writes that the initial banquet, planned by a ‘group of radical National Guard officers and held in a working-class district of Paris’ was ‘perceived as a threat’ (2005: 65). Still, the government ‘maintained its prohibition even after the organisation and character of the projected banquet had become much less radical and threatening’ (2005: 65). Indeed, the organising committee changed composition and altered the details of the event. Whereas initially working-class oriented, now the subscription price increased, the venue relocated from the poor twelfth *arrondissement* to Chaillot, on the outskirts of Paris, and the date changed from Sunday to Tuesday (22 February). Fortescue argues that the aim was to exclude working-class attendants (2005: 64).

On 19 February, *L’Illustration* evoked the ‘orages de la tribune’, ‘une inquiétude générale, une agitation sourde, mais profonde’, which ensued following the Chamber of Deputies’ debate on the banquet, and the public’s involvement as ‘tous les bons citoyens se préoccupent avec la plus vive anxiété’ (385). This issue coincided with the second meeting, when representatives of the opposition making up the new committee drafted a statement meant to alleviate the fear of violence and invoke the constitutional right of public assembly. The opposition also announced a march before the banquet,

in a district of Paris with broad streets, starting at the Place de la Madeleine and proceeding via the Champs Elysées to [...] Chaillot. The procession was to be policed by unarmed members of the National Guard, and demonstrators were instructed not to shout any slogans or to wear any badge or symbol, so as to ensure a legal and peaceful

protest. (Fortescue, 2005: 64)

Faced with the continued interdiction, the committee issued a second statement on 21 February, published in the evening edition of *La Patrie* 'insisting that it had no intention of usurping the government's authority over the National Guard' (Fortescue, 2005: 64). This is the scene *L'Illustration* figured on its front page and the composition captures precisely the idea of the quiet revolution evoked by the text. The repeated attempts by the committee to secure the government's goodwill failed and, late on 21 February, members of the opposition decided not to participate in the march the following day, aware, however, that it could not be prevented from taking place. The key idea is that the journal identified the point of no return before 22 February as it wrote: 'Il s'est accompli, en effet, depuis ce jour-là, une révolution', and emphasized this by having it illustrated. Likewise, it established the moment when the government's fate was sealed during the night of 22 to 23 February, when 'un détachement de ligne' accidentally opened fire on the crowds in the streets. Unnamed, this was the massacre on the boulevard des Capucines later depicted in *L'Éducation sentimentale*.¹²

The retrospective position of the *hebdomadaire* allows for a synthetic and critical vision, underscored by the use of 'rapporteur' and 'analyser.'¹³ The synthetic approach contributes to the tension in text and image. The latter draws attention precisely by its visual ambivalence at first sight. First, it coincides with the text's identification of the tipping point in the banquet crisis. Second, the illustration can be read to indicate that violence was imminent, yet, in light of the content of the statement in *La Patrie*, it can also support the idea of a peaceful protest, reuniting students, *artisans*, bourgeois and *Gardes nationales*.¹⁴ Arguably, contemporaneous readers would have had access to other sources of information, hence they would have known about the second statement in *La Patrie* and that the organising committee had initially wanted the National Guard's unarmed presence to complement the

participants' non-violent protest. The image could thus be interpreted as alluding to what was intended as a peaceful protest.

In addition, we know from the journal's account of the events that, when the government summoned the National Guard on 22 February, few responded and the following day 'elle prit les armes, mais ce fut pour proférer avec le peuple les cris de: *vive la Réforme! à bas Guizot!* et pour s'opposer aux démonstrations agressives de la troupe de ligne et de la garde municipale' (26 February 1848: 401). In light of the outcome of the insurrection, a retrospective reading further corroborates the suggestion of solidarity between classes, as well as between civilians and the forces of order. This is figured by the presence of all three categories and non-threatening attitude of the armed Guard's captain, who watches the troops, his back turned on the assembled civilians. Therefore, the presence of the National Guard in the illustrated scene suggests a syncretic reading of the events: the Guard was summoned to help repress civic protest, but ended up supporting it.¹⁵ The image functions in a similar way to the opening text, to announce at once the disruption and return to order that had occurred during the week. This implies a form of closure, which, in White's terms, called for the resolution of the conflict between desire and law through the passage to a different moral order (1980: 16, 26). Text and image equally sidestep the chronological structure, another condition of authentic histories.

The account in the February issue reveals *L'Illustration's* marked reticence to dwell on events and the fact that it did not quite master a balanced tone. The first article oscillates between evoking 'un champ de bataille, le théâtre d'une guerre civile' and downplaying the events to '[d]es rassemblements et des troubles peu significatifs en apparence [...] dès la matinée de 22 février'. Vague formulations – '[d]ans la soirée, l'agitation et les conflits partiels prirent un caractère tel que le gouvernement se décida à appeler aux armes la garde nationale' – contrast with the violent image retracing events earlier in the same day: '[d]éjà

des luttes meurtrières étaient engagées dans Paris' (401). This alternating tone shows the publication's wariness regarding the future, while previous issues attested to its awareness of the gravity of the situation, as it registered the mounting anxiety. For instance, the 29 January 'Histoire de la Semaine' opened with the following statement: 'Nos luttes parlementaires deviennent de jour en jour plus vives, les événements extérieurs de jour en jour plus menaçants. Palerme, Naples, attireraient tous les regards, si le Palais-Bourbon n'exigeait pas une bonne part de notre attention' (337). Used retrospectively, at the moment when the Revolution had been accomplished and *L'Illustration* published the 26 February issue, this consciousness allowed it to capitalize if not on its predictions, at least on its observations, as it wrote: 'nous nous attendions déjà à des scènes plus vives' (401). In contrast with this cautious, austere text, the following instalment, opening a new volume of *L'Illustration*, was unambiguously exuberant, amply illustrated, and expounded at large on the recent events. With the added benefit of temporal distance, the whole issue was dedicated to a retrospective of the Revolution and its aftermath.

In my concluding remarks, I would like to suggest that the *recueils* encouraged a double process of reading and rereading that allowed audiences to experience a conception of history written in the present tense. Although articulated in the present, this historical representation called for audiences to move backwards and forwards in time, following the development of a story. Such an exercise invited critical thinking, as rereading could disclose clues about the evolution of a historical event. A retrospective rereading of the 29 January issue proves how premonitory was its juxtaposition of the figurative and literal 'luttes' taking place in the Palais-Bourbon and in the streets of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The Palermo insurgency would be the first and one of the bloodiest in the wave of European revolutions in 1848. The violent scene of the assault of the Palace of Justice anticipates the journal's illustration of similar actions in Paris.¹⁶ To reread the *recueil* following a sequence

of events amounted to actualizing the text, by imposing a different pattern on the journal.

Rereading would thus be interpretative, performative and transformative. Arguably, the *recueil* became an intertextual object, enabling audiences to select and pursue a subject across the volume or to peruse an issue and discover the relations between the topics therein.

Between historical document and cultural artefact, the illustrated *recueil* transgressed the boundaries of the press, or rather redefined them, the better to establish journalism as a historical force.

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Notes

¹ As a little-studied phenomenon, the *recueil* is difficult to define, not least due to the variety of its formats, aims, and readerships (the *revue* and *magasin* are two incarnations). Yannick Portebois and Dorothy Speirs propose a definition starting with the type of publication, as distinct from both daily journals and books. Illustrated periodicals, the type of *recueil* I discuss here, are epitomized by the *magasin*, which comes to embody some of the defining traits of such publications. These include their periodicity and specific format, in which illustrations play an integral role: ‘bandeau illustré, gravures, articles de longueur variable, abondance de sujets, rubriques labellisées, réclame, publicité, table des matières, identification des collaborateurs, prix des abonnements, réseaux de distribution clairement annoncés [...]’ (2013: 9, 23).

² See Jean Watelet, *La Presse illustrée en France 1814-1914* (1998), Marie-Laure Aurenche, *Edouard Charton et l’invention du Magasin pittoresque (1833-1870)* (2002), Thierry Gervais, ‘D’après photographie’ (2003).

³ See Robert Goldstein, ‘Censorship of Caricature and the Theater in Nineteenth-Century France’ (2012), Jean-Pierre Bacot, *La Presse illustrée au XIX^e siècle* (2005), Michèle Martin, *Images at War: Illustrated Periodicals and Constructed Nations* (2006).

⁴ The same phrasing recurs in the first issue’s manifesto and the ‘Préface’ to the *recueil*.

⁵ The concept of modernity and its aesthetics are articulated in ‘Le Peintre de la vie moderne’: ‘La modernité, c’est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l’art, dont l’autre moitié est l’éternel et l’immuable’ (1975-76 [1863, 1869], 2: 695).

⁶ For the relationship between annals, chronicles, chronology, and forms of representation, see Hayden White’s article and my use of his discussion below (1980: 9-27).

⁷ Available at <<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.c022633451?urlappend=%3Bseq=11>> [accessed 19 February 2017].

⁸ 11 December 1847, pp. 254-55. The article belongs to a series bearing the title ‘Études sur le journalisme’, which runs from 11 December 1847 to 26 February 1848. The author signing ‘Un Utopiste’ engages in a meta-discourse on contemporaneous journalism.

⁹ In the nineteenth century, the Romantic school embodied a new conception of history, privileging representation over description. With a strong emphasis on the visual, this approach focused on the re-creation of past events, drawing on anecdotic, picturesque elements and, significantly, using illustrations. For a discussion of nineteenth-century historiography’s relationship with illustration, see, for instance, Maurice Samuels’s chapter ‘Spectacular Histories’ in *The Spectacular Past* (2004: 63-106).

¹⁰ For the dynamics of nineteenth-century press censorship, see Claude Bellanger et al. (eds), *Histoire Générale de la Presse Française* (1969-76), Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (1990), Robert Goldstein, *The War for the Public Mind* (2000), and Thomas J. Cragin, ‘The Failings of Popular News Censorship in Nineteenth-Century France’ (2001). Reflecting political upheavals, the law regarding press freedom changed constantly throughout the century. Strict regulations under Napoleon were followed by the liberalization guaranteed through Louis XVIII’s *Charte constitutionnelle* (1814). Its articles were subsequently modified, before being briefly reinstated under Louis-Philippe (1830). By 1835, visual media, journalism, literature, and theatre were affected by repressive censorship. Throughout the July Monarchy, political journals were subject to special taxes and rigid conditions of production, from authorization to pre-publication censorship. In 1848, the February insurrections would briefly end censorship, only to re-introduce it in 1850, before the fall of the Second Republic.

¹¹ Available at <<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.c022633363?urlappend=%3Bseq=411>> [accessed 19 February 2017].

¹² At the very end of Second Part, following the change of government, Frédéric and Rosanette are out on the streets: ‘Par la rue Duphot, ils atteignirent les boulevards. Des lanternes vénitiennes, suspendues aux maisons, formaient des guirlandes de feux. Un fourmillement confus s’agitait en dessous; au milieu de cette ombre, par endroits, brillaient des blancheurs de baïonnettes. Un grand brouhaha s’élevait. La foule était trop compacte, le retour direct impossible; et ils entraient dans la rue Caumartin, quand, tout à coup, éclata derrière eux un bruit, pareil au craquement d’une immense pièce de soie que l’on déchire. C’était la fusillade du boulevard des Capucines’ (1952 [1869]: 315).

¹³ One of the articles in the series ‘Études sur le journalisme’ advocated the benefits of providing useful insights rather than bulk information, denouncing the overlong *premier-Paris* of daily newspapers. This front-page column, typically covering political subjects, should be neither indiscriminate nor verbose. Rather, its impact on the audience should be proportional to its relevance. Not writing ‘un premier-Paris’ when ‘la matière politique fait défaut’ ensured the readers’ interest and attention once the author broke his silence (5 February 1848: 359).

¹⁴ Contemporaneous iconography depicts the February insurrection reuniting different social classes on the same side of the barricades, while in June, these groups figure on enemy sides (Pauquet, 1997: 107).

¹⁵ Figures similarly bear out this synthesis of the protest's development – see the predominance of bourgeois costumes which serves as a reminder of the role of the *écoles* and *petite bourgeoisie*, but could equally intimate the change in the composition of the banquet committee which, argued Fortescue, encouraged a middle-class attendance. For this middle-class, the banquets meant expressing their support for the reforms proposed by the opposition.

¹⁶ Available at <<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.c022633363?urlappend=%3Bseq=347>> [accessed 19 February 2017].