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European Illustrated Weekly Magazines, c. 1850-1900

*A Model and a Counter-Model for the Work of José Guadalupe Posada**

This essay discusses a subject which has developed out of an awareness of the condition of journalism in Mexico in the 1880s and 1890s, raised by the rich and fascinating exhibition *Posada y la prensa ilustrada*, and as a response to its beautiful, scholarly, and stimulating catalogue. Mexican journalism has its own distinct history and its own distinct features, partly caused by the circumstances of Mexican political and economic development, and partly by the ambitions and abilities of the journalists and entrepreneurs concerned. But the development of Mexican journalism took place in the context of pre-existent cultural models, both American and European. The semi-satirical, semi-political newspaper financed and produced on an artisanal basis (*El Fandango*, *La Guacamaya*), the industrialized and highly capitalized high-circulation low-price newspaper (*El Imparcial*), the illustrated literary review (*Revista de Mexico*), and the weekly illustrated magazine of news, current events, and general interest were all forms first developed and made successful in France, England or the United States before they were developed in Mexico: and we know that many copies of such

* Conferencia leída en septiembre de 1996, en el Museo Nacional de Arte, México.

newspapers and not merely the cultural models they offered, were imported into Mexico.

Fausto Ramírez, in his essay for the catalogue of the exhibition, discusses the difficulty which *La Patria Ilustrada* faced in competing with imported French and Spanish illustrated weekly periodicals, with their reliable supplies of good paper, their up-to-date printing machinery, and their apparently inexhaustible supply of illustrators and illustrations.[1] Mexican *entrepreneurs* faced a problem in their attempts to compete with and replace imports of European and American periodicals. As well as the general ways in which economic imperialism functions, there were distinct mechanisms of cultural imperialism, in which a feeling of the superiority of the center over the periphery is felt both by the imperialists and by those over whom they extend their rule. In the world of the periodical, Mexicans were faced with a range of highly differentiated imports. One may identify at least three main sorts of periodical. There were what Fausto Ramírez calls "periódicos satíricos de intención fundamentalmente política," aimed at the elite, using caricatures of high artistic and technical competence.[2] There were literary magazines, in which both format and subject matter was very varied, and which in some cases took a position in the literary and artistic avant-garde, and in some cases attempted to represent the dominant values of a ruling elite. There were also the weekly illustrated periodicals which dealt with news, current events, and matters of general interest. These had developed as a vital medium for linking the nation, and in the case of Britain and France, its empires, with the metropolis, and they had been able to do so because of the development of a reliable and cheap national and international postal service after the middle of the nineteenth century.

Of course, every European and North American metropolis was also developing a daily press which dealt with political and social news concerning the city and the nation state. Similarly, in every major city a range of low priced weekly periodicals could be found, to some extent imitating features of the elite press, and to some extent developing distinct subject-mat-

1. Fausto Ramírez, "*La Patria Ilustrada* y las colaboraciones de José Guadalupe Posada," in *Posada y la prensa ilustrada: signos de modernización y resistencias*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes-Patronato del Museo Nacional de Arte, 1996, p. 60, n. 7.

2. Ibidem, p. 55. n. 1.

ters, formats, and discourses. Mexican *entrepreneurs* of the press may have been aware of the daily newspaper and the popular press of Barcelona, Paris or New York as models, but because of their low price and their local interests, this offered no direct competition in the Mexican market. Because the more expensive European and North American periodicals were accustomed to serving international markets through the postal service, they were a real presence in the Mexican market-place, and Mexican periodicals did have to compete with them there. But they could not do so directly, by matching form for form, except perhaps in the case of the periodical of social and political satire aimed at the political and social elite. This was large enough and distinct enough in Mexico to support close equivalents of such European magazines as *Punch*, *Vanity Fair*, *Le Charivari* or *L'Assiette au Beurre*; but in the 1890s *El Hijo del Ahuizote* often republished caricatures from London, New York or Chicago, and seems to have had a contract with a French periodical for the syndicated use of sketches by Grevin and Caran d'Ache. It seems as though neither a specialist Mexican literary review (in any of its forms) nor Mexican news-and-general-interest illustrated weeklies could reach a large enough group either of suppliers or of purchasers to compete with European imports directly. So, men like Ireneo Paz combined the two forms, and emphasized the local nature of the alternative they could offer. I think that both the *costumbrista* emphasis of *La Patria Ilustrada* and its tendency to offend the sort of dominant good taste which was so firmly represented in the elite European illustrated weeklies must be seen as part of a strategy to compete through differentiation.

Fausto Ramírez and María de los Ángeles Sobrino F. have already reached similar conclusions and have developed them convincingly in their essays for the catalogue.[3] I want in this essay to identify some aspects of the model, rather than on adaptive responses to it. As I have suggested, the literary magazines were very varied in their forms, in the ways in which they combined texts and images, in their cultural stance, and in their chosen market: it is thus very difficult to characterize them quickly or easily, or to discuss what

3. Ibidem, and María de los Ángeles Sobrino F., "José Guadalupe Posada y Francisco Montes de Oca: la ilustración al servicio del periodismo independiente, popular y comercial," in *Posada y la prensa ilustrada: signos de modernización y resistencias*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes-Patronato del Museo Nacional de Arte, 1996, pp. 73-87.

defined them as a genre. It is however possible to describe the features which define the weekly illustrated news magazines as a genre, because, compared to the literary reviews, their format, their relationship between text and image, their subject matter, and the resources which they deployed to offer visual representations of the world were highly consistent. Of course, illustrated news magazines were not completely interchangeable. *The Illustrated London News* and *The Graphic* in London, for example, had sharply different attitudes towards the reporting of social problems, and to the role and independent value of the illustrations in the magazine. But there is enough consistency for it to be worth while to attempt a general characterization.

That is one good reason to concentrate on a characterization of the illustrated weekly news magazine. The other is that these magazines were highly developed and profitable enterprises, and in them we can see very clearly the importance of technological innovation, and we can also identify the development of journalistic imagery as an independently important form of representation and source of value. It seems to me that it is difficult to understand José Guadalupe Posada's work unless we can understand the cultural processes which encouraged the autonomy of images from texts at the end of the nineteenth century. This is a difficult issue, on which I can offer no general hypothesis, but one force at work was the way in which words and pictures were presented in the European and North American media in contact with which Mexican popular and commercial journalism evolved.

I will concentrate my discussion on one French weekly magazine, *Le Monde Illustré*, for two reasons. The first is to do with me: I have studied it more closely than any other magazine. The second is because for a period from the mid-1870s, *Le Monde Illustré* published a Spanish-language edition in Barcelona, so that the Mexican *El Mundo Ilustrado*, from which Posada copied the image so brilliantly discussed by Renato González Mello and Ana Laura Cué,[4] may have some sort of link still unclear, to the Parisian magazine. I will discuss, first, the general features of such magazines, then the relationship between text and image which does so much to define them, and then the way in which they display their images. I will also discuss the

4. Renato González Mello and Ana Laura Cué, "El asesinato de Arnulfo Arroyo," in *Posada y la prensa ilustrada" signos de modernización y resistencias*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes-Patronato del Museo Nacional de Arte, 1996, pp. 103-119.

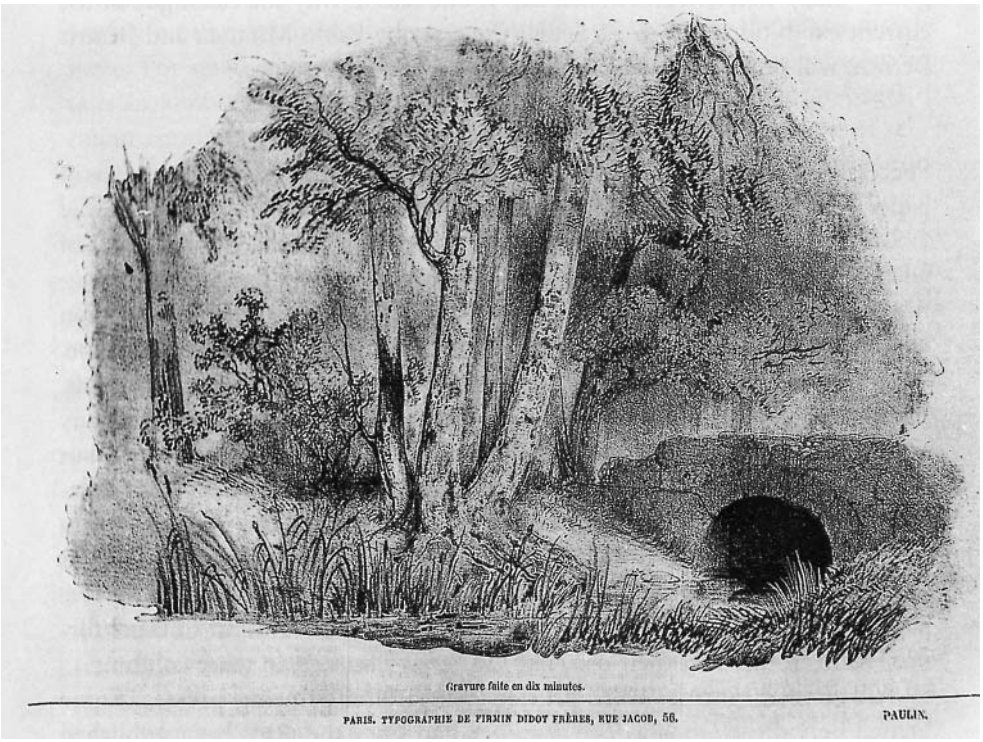


Figure 1. *L'Illustration*, June 14, 1856. Photo: Thomas Gretton (hereafter T.G.).

relationship between hand-made image-making and the development of new and more industrial ways of making prints through the use of photography. This is a complex subject, and we can not arrive at any general understanding before we have studied the development of photomechanical technologies in many different situations; this is one reason why the catalogue of the current exhibition, and in particular the essay by Pablo Miranda and Beatriz Berndt, will prove to have a considerable general importance.[5]

Successful illustrated weeklies were expensive, at least as long as the price of paper kept costs high and advertisements marginal: in 1860, *The Illustrated London News* cost 5 old pennys, plus a penny postage, perhaps 2.5 per cent of what it would cost a family to stay above the poverty line each week. *Le Monde Illustré* cost a similar sum: in 1880, the 24 franc annual subscription was also about 2.5 per cent of the absolute minimum respectable income. Their cost did not completely restrict the weeklies to bourgeois households, since some copies were bought by and read in pubs and cafés, and many copies were sold-on second-hand to poorer readers from week to week, but predominantly these papers present a middle-class view of life for middle-class readers. Such magazines were about 350 mm high and about 280 mm wide. Most of them had 16 pages per issue (with 24 as a maximum, and 8 as a minimum, in both cases depending on special circumstances). Twelve pages, which *La Patria Ilustrada* used in its early years, was an unusual format. Most of them set their text, like *La Patria Ilustrada*, in three columns.

All these magazines were printed using relief printing presses. Some French periodicals, such as *Le Charivari*, had since the 1830s been published using a combination of lithographic and relief technology. But this has many severe commercial drawbacks. Relief presses could, even in the 1830s, work perhaps 20 times as fast as lithographic presses, and if necessary, the text could be typeset twice, or stereotyped, to print on two or more machines. Lithographs might be copied from stone to stone by some transfer techni-

5. Pablo B. Miranda Quevedo and Beatriz Berndt León Mariscal, "José Guadalupe Posada y las innovaciones técnicas en el periodismo ilustrado de la ciudad de México," in *Posada y la prensa ilustrada: signos de modernización y resistencias*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes-Patronato del Museo Nacional de Arte, 1996, pp. 23-37.

que, but this would generally result in a loss of image-quality. By the mid-1860s, *Le Charivari* was being printed entirely on relief presses, using a process called "gillotage," to convert the lithographs of Daumier and Cham into relief surfaces. *Punch*, the most successful British imitator of *Le Charivari*, had used only relief presses from its foundation in 1841, and all the illustrated weekly news magazines which were founded in and after the 1840s did the same. For small editions, and for periodicals where it was possible to maintain an almost complete separation between text-pages and image-pages, it might continue to be more profitable to use the same combination of relief presses and lithographic presses as *Le Charivari* in the 1830s. Until Mexico City was linked by railroad to other cities, and for as long as the only potential market in Mexico City was a restricted elite, Mexican periodicals could survive using this archaic technological solution. But they risked coming to appear increasingly unlike the French, Spanish, and Yankee periodicals which they were attempting to imitate; technological retardation could give commercial advantage only for a limited time and only in limited markets.

Illustrated weekly magazines kept a certain distance from a purely political discourse. This had something to do with the pressures of censorship and other press laws, but more to do with the hold of the daily papers on political debate. It was also caused by the time it took to make wood-engraved images for such papers. Even using the most extreme division of labor, which tended to produce schematic and unsatisfactory images, no event could be illustrated which had happened more recently than four days before publication day. So the magazines tended to illustrate events which they could anticipate, such as ceremonial occasions and the opening of new plays, and features which were not urgently topical: fashions, the activities of the happy few, the visual evidence of modernization, and records of picturesque places and customs. I am not going to spend much more time on describing the range and frequency of different sorts of subject matter in such magazines; but it is worth pointing out that they conformed to the elementary rules of semiosis: their iconography worked to produce and reproduce systems of difference, in this case predominantly between the self and the other. The self is modern, metropolitan, leisured, wealthy, and in search of spectacle, recreation, and pleasure. The other is variously the world of work and labor, the world outside the city, the world of other nation states, the world of poverty and deprivation, the world of tradition, and the world of the primitive; on occasion the other included the worlds of art, science and learning.

Figure 2. *Le Monde Illustré*, February 14, 1880.

Figure 3. *Le Monde Illustré*, February 14, 1880, detail. Photo: T.G.

Most of these magazines had a regular satirical or comical caricature feature: in *Le Monde Illustré* this was one page per month until 1892, when the magazine was given a separate four page cover, and the comical section was moved to the inside back cover and appeared each week.

All of these magazines tended to separate text from image on different pages, usually on different openings of the journal. Different magazines developed this separation to different extents: *The Illustrated London News* segregated the two forms of representation significantly less than *Le Monde Illustré*, but from the 1860s until the end of the century, all such magazines had three or four openings with nothing but text, and three openings plus the front and back covers in which images were more or less dominant.

After circa 1895, the magazines began regularly to reproduce news photographs, which they tended to integrate with news reports, and the separation between text and image began to break down; but in the 30 years before then, the more successful illustrated magazines tended to emphasize the autonomy and independent significance of the images which they published.

This was achieved partly through typographical layout of the whole magazine and of individual pages, with each page being symmetrical, and with text disposed around images, so that the visual logic of the image, rather than of the paragraph, dominates. But it also involved the development of emphatic stylistic devices in the imagery itself, to refer the viewer beyond the image's status as a report to its status as an object with its own independent existence.

I will return to this feature of *Le Monde Illustré* in a moment, but before I do, let me discuss the development of printing technology, and particularly the development of the relief print.

The application of photography to making surfaces which can be used in conventional printing presses is the final stage in an industrial revolution on print-making which began in England in the 1780s, and had, by 1900, utterly transformed the ease with which the world could be represented visually, and had also enormously reduced the cost of getting access to such representations, so that by the outbreak of the Mexican revolution accurate visual information was in the developed world essentially a free good. I understand Posada's career as being determined by a process in which the technological basis of an old and powerful cultural differentiation had been destroyed by modernizing capitalism, and in which necessary distinctions between elite and popular culture in the visual sphere had to be reinvented.

Every producer of visual culture in the West was in some way involved in this process, none of them in quite the same way as Posada.

Thomas Bewick reinvented wood engraving (boj) in the 1780s, but it was more than a full half century before the modern world was in a position to make full use of his technique. For two hundred years before 1780 high quality printed images (that is to say, images which could communicate large amounts of accurate visual information, had been made only on intaglio plates, which were exacting to make, slow and expensive to print and quick to wear out) while the "popular" market had been supplied using wood-cuts, which required less skill to make to a standard adequate for this market, and which wore out slowly and could be printed quickly and cheaply. These offered only limited access to the world of visual culture. Visual information, including access to reproductions of works of art, was thus communicated through two distinct cultural circuits, their separation being technologically determined.

In the century after 1780 this distinction collapsed. Industrialized printing of relief images was by far the most important instrument of this capitalist democratization. Photography as such also played a part, and so without doubt did lithography and steel engraving, which were in their different ways adequate vehicles for a certain democratization within restricted, that is to say for the most part elite, markets. By developing ways of making relief-printing images on the end-grain of pieces of box-wood cut across the trunk of the tree, Bewick offered a way of competing with intaglio in the density and accuracy of visual information which could be stored on a printing surface which could be printed quickly and cheaply with type. But making wood-engravings was a slow and demanding process, requiring a highly specialized skill. Moreover, each wood-block was unique, making it unsuitable for printing newspapers, which in the first half of the nineteenth century were printed on several presses in parallel, so as to be able to serve large markets with tight deadlines on slow machines. In the 1830s, electrotyping was developed; this made it possible to make absolutely accurate metal reproductions of wood-engraving blocks from wax impressions of the sculpted box-wood surface. The problem of getting high quality visual information to the poorer masses was close to solution; high-quality illustrations and journalistic news and comment could immediately be printed together to serve a richer market. *The Illustrated London News* began in 1842, and *L'Illustration*, like the *Leipzig Illustrierte Zeitung*, in 1843. By 1860 there were similar publications in Spain, Italy, Russia, Austria, and the United States.

Figure 4. *Le Monde Illustré*, March 6, 1880. Photo: T.G.

But of course, no single technological development, not even a combination such as wood engraving and electrotyping, explains the whole story of the origin and success of the illustrated weeklies. The development of national railway networks in the 1840s and 1850s made it possible to move large numbers of newspapers to distant destinations in time for their contents to be topical. After the repression of the first third of the century, governments were relaxing censorship, and removing the most ferocious of the taxes on knowledge which they had used to keep inflammatory opinion away from the inflammable classes. The illustrated periodicals took full advantage of these conditions to built larger and larger national markets.

Printing presses were getting faster and more accurate, as cast-iron and steam changed the standard press from a cast-iron version of Gutenberg's press to something much more like what we know today over the course of two generations. The new presses had a voracious appetite for paper. Paper-making machines, invented in the 1790s, were running reliably by the mid-1820s. Industrially-produced cotton clothing enormously increased the available supply of rags to make printing paper, as did chlorine bleaching, though insatiable demand continued to keep prices high and paper scarce until the development of wood-pulp paper-making in the 1870s; the poorer masses did not get their illustrated weeklies until the last quarter of the century in western Europe and the United States: it took somewhat longer in Mexico, and here too the availability of paper seems to have been a crucial factor.

In 1839, Daguerre and Fox Talbot announced their different photographic processes. At that stage neither could be used to make a conventional printing surface. Daguerre's discoveries had been shaped by such attempts, and Fox Talbot's development of a process which produced positives from a negative made the production of multiple copies possible. But even Fox Talbot's process presented the gravest of problems for those who wished to publish large editions of pictures. Taking prints from negatives remained, and remains, a relatively slow and skilled process, and for much of the nineteenth century photographic positives remained more or less unstable images, as the silver salts continued to react to light and air, and as paper became discolored and brittle. Photography might immediately be able to compete with *painting*, and produce "collectibles," but until it could be used to make conventional printing surfaces, it could not compete as an information technology with the new and flexible power of the electrotyped wood-engra-

ving printed on machine-made paper in a steam press, nor even with the lithograph.

The story of how photography and the technologies of printing were finally brought together is complicated and confusing: inventor-printmakers struggled for almost 50 years to develop ways of harnessing photography to the making of lithographs, intaglio plates, and relief printing blocks, telling lies as they did so to protect their trade secrets and recipes. I will offer a very simple account of the story; it covers most aspects of the situation in France and England, and its time scale is generally reliable, but it leaves out important independent developments in Prague, Vienna, and New York. Significant steps were taken in the 1850s, but photomechanical block-making only became a reliable and widely available technology after 1875. For a score of years, the photomechanical line block became a second resource for the editors and artists of illustrated weeklies alongside the wood-engraving. The printing of photographs via the halftone screen became possible at the end of the 1880s, but because of its technical difficulty and its demands on printing presses and paper-quality came to dominate the pages of the weekly magazines only in the second half of the 1890s.

So, for half a century after the invention of photography (1839) and the founding of illustrated weeklies (1842) in the Western world's capitals, the two visual technologies evolved separately. Separately, but not independently. From the outset, the illustrated weeklies had used daguerreotypes as the originals from which line drawings were made, to be turned into printing surfaces by *grabado a mano con buril sobre boj*. And in 1856, the technicians at the French weekly *L'Illustration* succeeded in coating a wood block with a light sensitive emulsion, so that a positive photograph could be printed on it: this took the place of the drawing as the basis on which a wood engraving was made. The first use of this technology was for the christening of the *prince imperiale*, Napoleon III's infant son. It was of course possible to print on to boxwood not only photographs of babies in christening robes, but also photographs of pen and water-color drawings; within ten years the practice was universal.

What I take to be the great period of the illustrated weeklies correspond to the quarter-century during which photography was used by the illustrated weeklies in two ways: as a source of originals, and as a way of transferring artists' designs in line or tone to blocks of box for translation into the conventions of wood engraving. During this period, the line-block (the relief printing

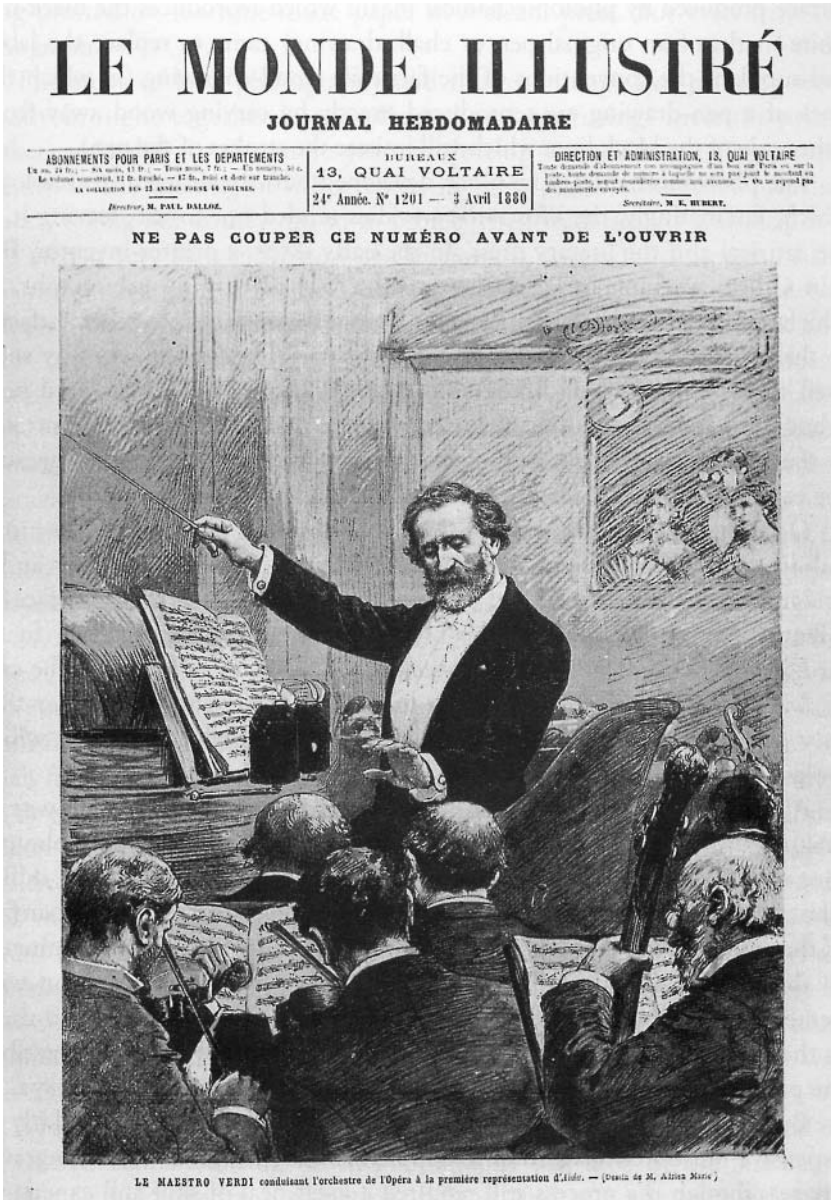
surface produced by photomechanical means which reproduces the black-on-white marks of an original pen or chalk drawing) came to replace the labor and supplant the conventions of the facsimile wood-engraving (in which the lines of a pen-drawing are reproduced exactly by carving wood away from either side of the black lines which will imitate the strokes of the pen).

The photomechanical line-block developed out of a different technology, which, fascinatingly, the illustrated weeklies tended not to use, leaving it to the satirical and the literary press. In the early 1850s, a printer-inventor, Firmin Gillot, working in Paris, developed a way of turning lithographs, in which an image is transferred to paper from a flat surface into relief surfaces, so that they could be printed together with type. The process was very soon used to make both chalk-lithographs (such as those of Daumier) and pen-lithographs into relief surfaces. But we believe that its use was concentrated in the reproduction of satirical chalk-lithographs. I say "we believe" because the early history of Gillot's process is still very much under-researched.

On June 14, 1856 the leading French illustrated weekly, *L'Illustration*, published a chalk-lithographic drawing of a rural scene with a river and a bridge, which they claimed had been turned into a relief-printing surface by Gillot in ten minutes: this is probably its first use in such a medium (figure 1). *L'Illustration*, and other similar weeklies, used Gillot's process, in the case of *Le Monde Illustré* particularly for maps, but for twenty years after 1856 they clearly preferred to continue to provide images which were, or which looked like, wood-engravings rather than like chalk-drawings.

Also in the 1850s another printer-inventor, Lemercier, found a way of making an image on lithographic stone or zinc using photography: photolithography was born. But such images took enormous amounts of skilled labor to produce, were difficult to print, and were so unstable on the surface of the stone or zinc that Lemercier's process was not widely used or imitated. In the 1860s, Gillot found a way of combining his 1850's invention with Lemercier's: he could transfer a photographic image to zinc, fix it, and use it as the basis of a coating which would resist the action of acid. He described the process in 1867, but did not offer it as a commercial service until 1872.

By the end of the 1870s, photo-gillotage was being used regularly in expensive illustrated magazines to supplement the supply of wood-engraved images, though the process still required a great deal of skill and experience to execute reliably. In Paris in 1880, *Le Monde Illustré* could get such blocks from only two suppliers. A way of simplifying Gillot's process, and making it



LE MONDE ILLUSTRÉ

JOURNAL HEBDOMADAIRE

ABONNEMENTS POUR PARIS ET LES DÉPARTEMENTS

BUREAUX
13, QUAI VOLTAIRE

DIRECTION ET ADMINISTRATION, 13, QUAI VOLTAIRE

24e Année. N° 1201 — 3 Avril 1880

Directeur, M. PAUL DALLOZ.

Secrétaire, M. E. HUBERT.

NE PAS COUPER CE NUMÉRO AVANT DE L'OUVRIR

LE MAESTRO VERDI conduisant l'orchestre de l'Opéra à la première représentation d'*Aïda*. — (Dessin de M. Alfred Marie.)

Figure 5. *Le Monde Illustré*, April 3rd, 1880. Foto: T.G.

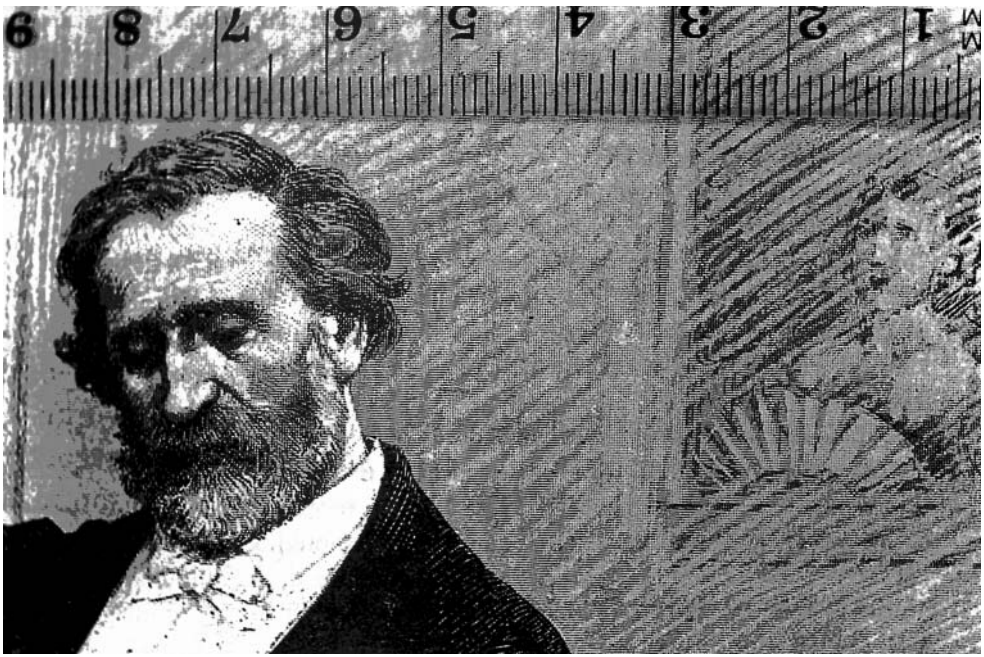


Figure 6. *Le Monde Illustré*, April 3rd, 1880, detail. Photo: T.G.

faster and more reliable, was developed in the United States in the 1880s, and in the 1890s photomechanical processes became widely available, the most important of them at this stage being the direct descendent of Gillot's process, the line-block. By 1890, illustrators were working in a world in which there were a large number of processes available, many of which required some specialized technical knowledge from the illustrator. Of them, the various forms of line-block were the most common, and the cheapest. Photography applied to planographic printing was in this period not so widely used. Intaglio printing had also found ways of using photography to make printing surfaces. Printers were able to make reproductions of drawings and photographs of astonishingly high quality using photo-intaglio processes. But until the first decade of twentieth century it was impossible to industrialize the printing of these, and even when this did become possible, photo-intaglio remained a luxury medium for another fifty years.

Most discussion of wood-engraved illustrational prints concentrates on the style and the output of the originator of the image. There is a developed literature on English book illustration of the 1860s, and on the magnificent work of *The Graphic*'s illustrators of the 1870s, Hubert Herkomer, Luke Fildes, and Frank Holl. But the truth is that all images produced for and published in the periodical (or, in the case of Vanegas Arroyo, the occasional) are, like movies, the result of collective action; the finished product is in a real sense a collective work of art. The journal has its editorial policies, its conventions of the distribution of texts and images in each issue, and of page layout; its policies on what sort of engraving style should be used for particular subject matter, and on what sorts of visual framing devices should be used in the presentation of this or that size, style and subject matter of image. As well as this editorial influence on the style of images, there is the fact that wood-engraved images were always the result of the work of more than one hand. On a given image there may be a distant first sketchier, a draughtsman to work the sketch into a drawing suitable for publication in an illustrated weekly, then (at least in the early years) another to re-draw this drawing on the wood-block, and an engraver or a team of engravers.

In England and in France, during the 1860s, a range of factors contributed to produce a decisive shift in the appearance of the weekly illustrated news magazine. One of these factors was the employment of photography directly onto the block. In the 1840s and 1850s, tonal originals had been re-drawn as cross-hatched pen-drawings as part of the transfer of the image to the block;

consequently, almost all the wood-engravers of those early years schooled themselves to reproduce black line drawings with black printing lines; that is to say, lines and hatchings made into printing surfaces by cutting whites away from two sides of a black-printing line. A photographic image (from nature or from a wash-drawing) sits on the block as lighter and darker areas: the engraver is free to turn its tones into black and white printing marks, in whatever way seems best. Some continued to use conventions derived from intaglio, but larger and larger numbers of wood-engravers began to use white lines to make tones and convey forms, rather than black. For example, in *Le Tir*, published in *Le Monde Illustré* on February 14, 1880 (p. 104), we can see the engraver Valette working from a photograph by Goupil of Ballavoine's painting (figure 2); the use of white-line is most obvious in the target-stand and the flower-bed, but it can be seen across the dresses and the flesh of the woman and the child (figure 3).

Line-block can reproduce a pen-drawing, like one by Morin from *Le Monde Illustré*, March 6, 1880 (p. 148, figure 4), or chalk-sketch like the 1856 bridge from *L'Illustration*. Other tools for reproducing tone also became available: prints made on textured scraper-board are one particularly striking example. This is the front page from *Le Monde Illustré*, April 3, 1880 (figure 5); the image was made on scraperboard by Adrien Marie and the printing block by Gillot. Textured scraperboard is used as follows: a card is coated with compressed kaolin. Its surface may then be covered with an embossed texture, or printed with a tone made of fine black lines or dots. The artist may use a black pen, brush or crayon to add tone either to the whole of an area, or to the top surface of the embossings. The artist may also scape away at the applied or printed tone, to move the image towards white, rather than black. With adding and scraping, and perhaps with now-invisible changes made by adding or scraping away black areas, the picture is finished. It is then photographed, and turned into a line-block (figure 6).

We know that this is a design made on scraperboard—rather than on a woodblock—because textured scraperboard can give unique tonal and textural effects, and because the block is signed by its photomechanical engraver, Gillot. But there may be many scraperboard images which we can not identify because they were done on plain black or white scraperboard: they may look like facsimile wood-engravings, or like white-line wood-engravings. We may very well be making the same error about at least some of the work produced for the European and American illustrated magazines as Mexican

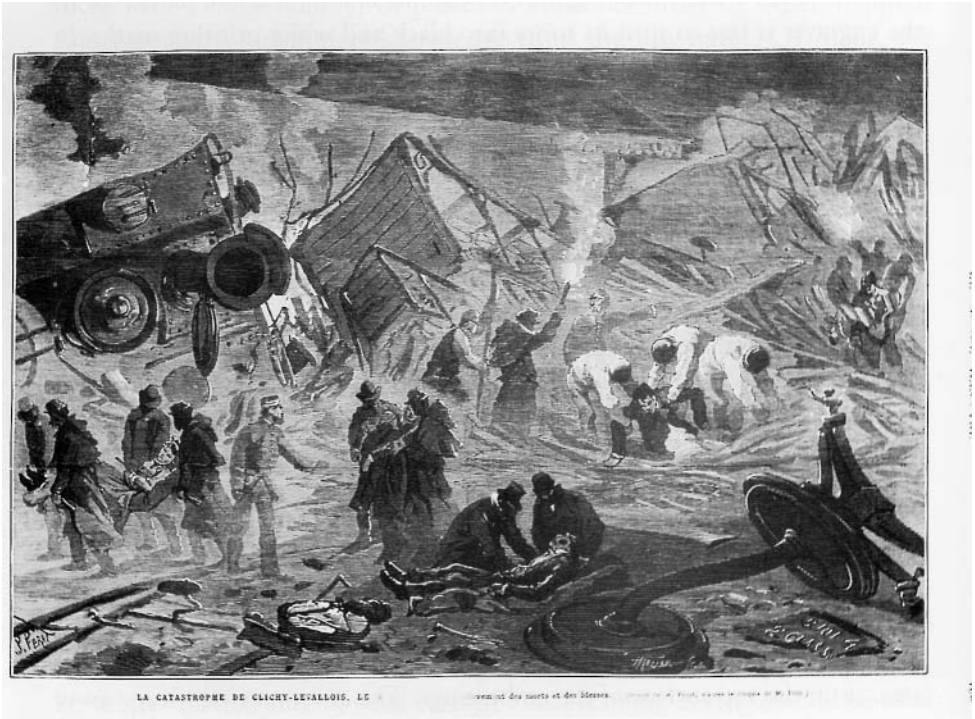


Figure 7. *Le Monde Illustré*. Photo: T.G.

scholars made, following Jean Charlot, for much stronger reasons, in the case of the technique of J.G. Posada.

As I have said, the half-tone screen came to dominate the production of images for the illustrated weeklies in the second half of the 1890s. By 1895, something like 7 per cent of *Le Monde Illustré*'s images were screened. By 1900, 67 per cent. More than 80 per cent of the images in the magazine were made photomechanically by that date. For a late twentieth-century viewer, such images are unremarkable, and there is little to be said about them, except that for at least ten years after their introduction, the technology was difficult to manage, and it was common for some hand-work to be done, both on retouching the negative and by hand-work on the printing surface itself to strengthen or clarify the results of photomechanical processes. It is also worth noting how difficult it was for the illustrated weeklies to integrate the new technology into the visual conventions which had evolved to present the old technology of wood-engraving and line-block. The style of image presentation which had evolved emphasizes the independent aesthetic value of the illustration as an object of aesthetic contemplation: but it turned out that this presentational convention was incompatible with the truth-effects produced by photography and relayed by photomechanical process.

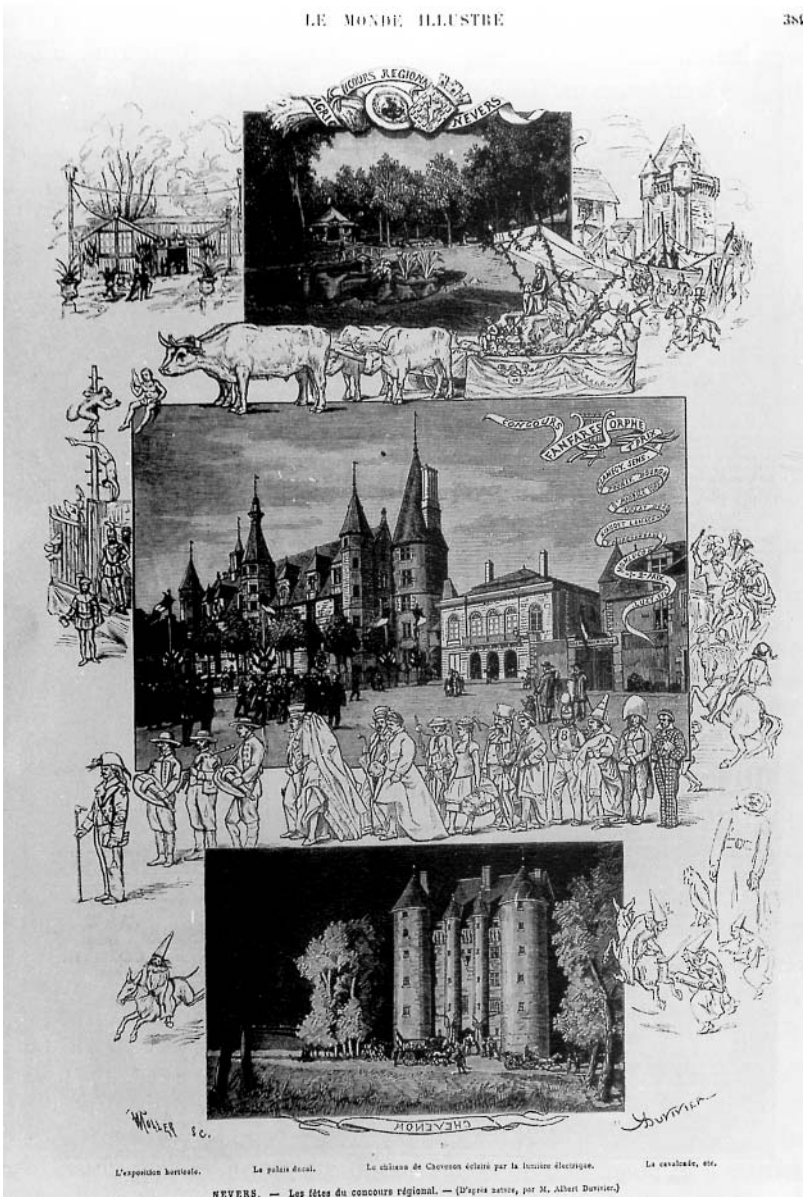
This brings me back to the question of style, and to an image I have used before (figure 2). Facing the salon-painting of the bourgeois family shooting at target, in the same opening of *Le Monde Illustré* is a news report of a train-crash at Clichy-Levallois made by a journalistic illustrator (figure 7). The image in which reference is made to the *pietà* (the two figures supporting the injured traveler in the foreground), in which sfumato is so confidently used (here literally as drifting smoke and steam), in which an extraordinary essay in the foreshortening of circles and cylinders is laid out to remind us of the precarious nature of the relationship between order and chaos, in which a composition of intersecting triangles is achieved, in which distortion of both scale and physical objects, in for example the twisted railway wagon wheels in the foreground is manipulated for overtly symbolic purposes is of course the news report, while the shiny, closely observed and naturalistically reported snapshot of bourgeois leisure is of course the salon painting, or rather, the wood engraving of the salon painting.

I at any rate find this comparison startling and disorientating. It offers clear evidence of a printmaking practice which by 1880 had evolved so that it could produce, week in, week out, dozens of images of high finish, which employed almost the whole range of compositional and narrative techniques

developed by painters since the Italian renaissance, and renewed in France in the 1860s. These images were distributed in their tens of millions each year, all round the Western world. Visual journalism clearly has its own aesthetic agenda; here we see how the news report both builds on the resources available to salon painters and finds a way of being sharply different from salon painting. The competitive strategy of imitation and differentiation, which I argue is employed by *La Patria Ilustrada* and by other such periodicals, is already an aspect of the periodicals which they are imitating.

Let me show you a few more examples of the way in which the aesthetic and the reportorial are combined in the pages of *Le Monde Illustré*. A extraordinary page from *Le Monde Illustré*, June 19, 1880 (p. 389), is an example of such wantonly bravura wood-engraving, undermining the coherence of the picture plane, subverting the distinction between illusion and reality, and casually spending its technical brilliance on the production of disorientating trivia (figure 8). In a charity ball depicted in *Le Monde Illustré*, February 7, 1880 (p. 92), we see the evening's program collaged into the picture space at bottom right, and a sketch of the white-dove tricks of the conjuror stuck under the picture-edge at top left (figure 9). In both these pages we may notice the utmost graphic freedom: flat blacks, brilliant whites, gesturality, and free texture. And again we see the page treated as a place in which to remind the reader-spectator of the artifice of the imagery, to undermine the truth-effects normally thought to be offered by the periodical press.

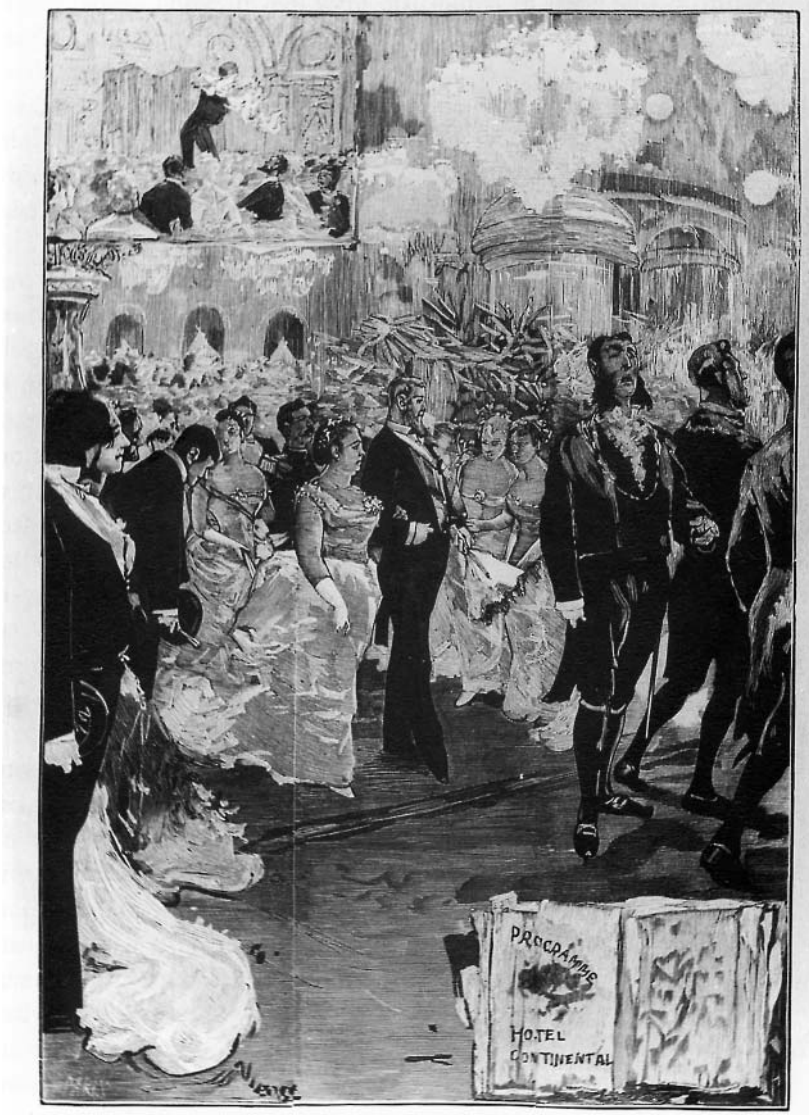
Or look at this page, from *Le Monde Illustré*, January 10, 1880 (p. 20, figure 10): it offers two distinct images. One is of four new government ministers, whose portraits are given in the form of some supposedly reproduced *carte-de-visite* portrait photographs, making complex reference to the status of such objects as cards, and to the fact that the pack of available ministers in France has just been shuffled and dealt again. The other image illustrates (or imagines) the aftermath of an attempt on the life of the king and queen of Spain. The anarchist responsible is arrested. Permit me to do a brief formal analysis on it. The composition, with its left to right dynamic, is arrested by the bulk of the sentry-box, as the fugitive is arrested by the sentry. In the lower left corner two figures reinforce the dynamic and act as a balancing repoussoir for the sentry-box. The line of the kerb-stone and the line of the lance triangulate on the figure of the culprit, with his violent contraposto. He is isolated and emphasized by being placed as a silhouette in an illuminated space. In case we missed the compositional force of the lance, its butt-



L'exposition horticole. Le palais ducal. Le château de Chevenon éclairé par la lumière électrique. La cavalcade, etc.

NEVERS. — Les fêtes du concours régional. — (D'après nature, par M. Albert Darrier.)

Figure 8. *Le Monde Illustré*, June 19, 1880. Photo: T.G.



PARIS — Le Fête de bienfaisance donnée, le 30 janvier, à l'Hotel Continental, sous le patronage de S. M. Isabelle II.

Figure 9. *Le Monde Illustré*, February 7, 1880. Photo: T.G.

end is picked out against the sky, reinforced by the way it bisects the angle between vertical and horizontal building-edges. The compositional triangle is completed by the upraised sword of one of the left-hand figures, and the running thigh of the other.

As well as these everyday masterpieces, the illustrated magazines could offer the occasional pull-out bonuses, for example a fold-out image, about 1.10 meter wide, offering a visual report of the opening night of Verdi's *Aida* at the Paris Opera (figure 5): clearly in such an image, impossible to reproduce in this medium, the desire to report an event has been overtaken by the desire to present a spectacular image and to represent aesthetic and cultural values. Mexican periodicals did make some attempt to compete directly with this astonishing display of cultural confidence and wealth: the way in which Posada frames his earliest images for *La Patria Ilustrada*, on the aftermath of the flood in León. Show him using aestheticizing framing devices directly derived from the European models which his new employers were emulating; and this concern with the frame in which his images were to be printed never left him.

I have argued that the development of new technologies gave enormously increased cultural power to the makers of visual representations of the world. I have suggested that this increased power required the distinction between high culture and popular culture to be redefined, and that as part of this redefinition, the distinction between artist and visual journalist became much more a matter of institutions and media than of aesthetic ambition or achievement. It would take many more words to develop an argument about the parallels and convergences between Posada's artistic practice and that which is exhibited in *Le Monde Illustré*, but I can at least begin. *Le Monde Illustré* offers a way of distinguishing journalistic from academic imagery, using the resources of the academy. Posada developed a way of distinguishing his production for Vanegas Arroyo and periodicals like *Gil Blas* from that of elite journalism using the technologies and skills which the elite periodicals were also using. *Le Monde Illustré* offers an independence of images from texts: Vanegas Arroyo and Posada make use of this when they recycle Posada's images without apparent loss of commodity-appeal. *Le Monde Illustré* insists that its prints are important as objects made in a particular way: the display of technique is a key element in the aesthetic appeal.

So, via scraperboard and *fotograbado*, with Posada, I can even understand the presence of nailheads and the cracked blocks as part of this same aesthe-

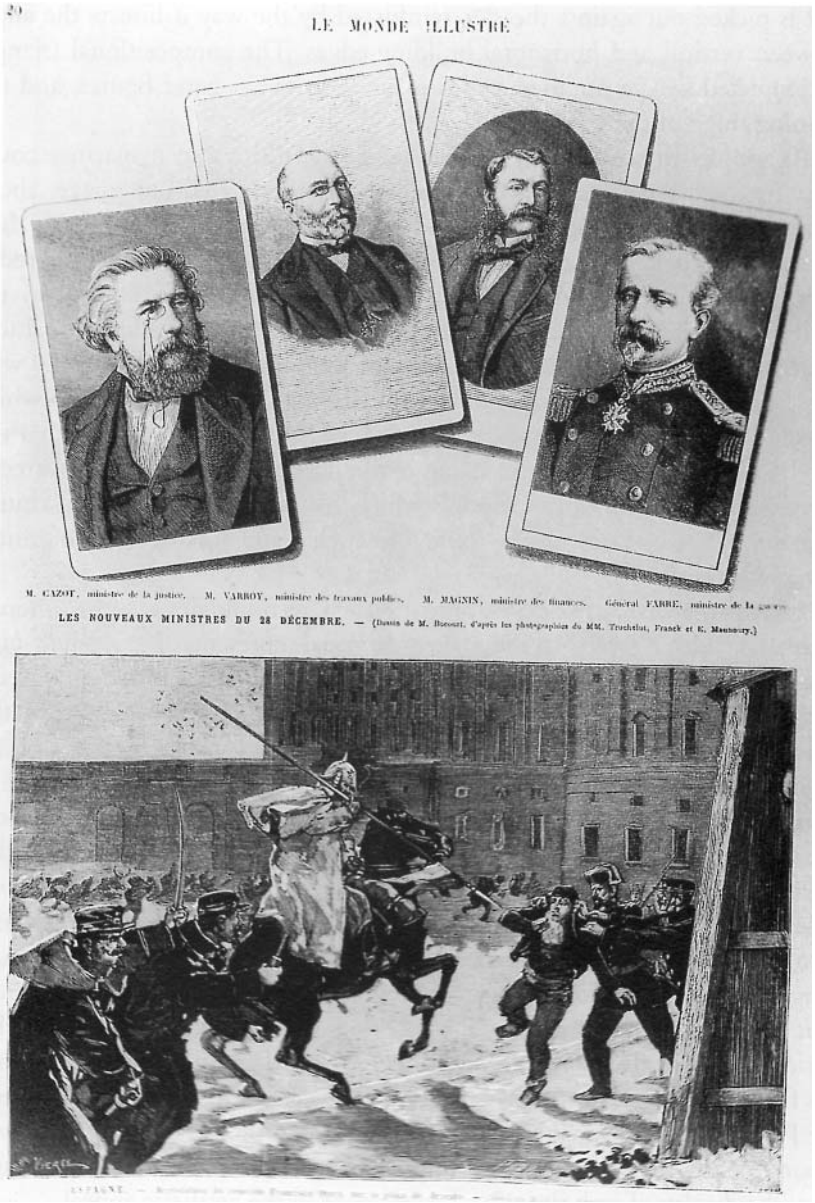


Figure 10. *Le Monde Illustré*, January 10, 1880. Photo: T.G.

tic logic. And Posada's use of collage and of drawn framing devices, both elaborate and vestigial, claims that images have a value of their own, and that visual signification has a logic set apart from that of words in the same way as collage and framing devices work to establish an autonomy for images in the weekly illustrated news magazines. I believe that Posada observed and learned from these features of *Le Monde Illustré* and other magazines. But in this case as in every other, what one sees when Posada is at work is a visual and cultural intelligence of enormous originality and power. The debt is transformed into a unique aesthetic and cultural power. ♣