Civic Picturing vs. Realist Photojournalism
The Regime of Illustrated News, 1856–1901

Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone

The visual culture of the American press developed from the printerly newspaper of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, through the Victorian newspaper of the late nineteenth century, and to the modern newspaper which had emerged by the 1930s. Both printerly and Victorian newspapers used a design sense that we call "vernacular," emphasizing apparent balance and symmetry, filling space with an increasingly varied typography.[1] Newspaper design was not given to establishing hierarchy or categorization; the news was largely unsegmented, presenting an impression of an unmapped and perhaps unmappable world. At first, even the boundary between advertising and editorial content was not clearly demarcated.

This syncretic presentation of content on paper expressed in visual form the habits of news workers. Newspaper design did not exist apart from the routines and practices of journalism, as it often does today, but as an extrusion of standard modes of news gathering. Thus, form followed practice. The active roles of reporting grew out of the more passive news-gathering tasks of colonial printers, who received correspondence and culled other sources, print or oral, to fill their pages. As the printerly age gave way to the age of Victorian papers, these roles coalesced, in fact if not in name, as the correspondent and the scavenger. The correspondent was a manly observer of events and personages in distant and (usually) powerful places; he (rarely she) was a persona, though usually pseudonymous, who conveyed subjective impressions with an air of authority and confidentiality, much like the colonial letter writer. The scavenger was not a persona, but a completely anonymous news hound, combing first the exchange papers then the police courts, the theaters, and the taverns for bits of information that might be conveyed in a sentence or a paragraph, or which might be turned into a story of a column or so. The correspondent was a gentleman, the scavenger a pieceworker, often paid by the line or the column-inch. The content of the news was miscellaneous, matching its presentation. Typography was the dominant voice of news, and images were interlopers, useful as respite and also as information,

1   Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone, "Design Trends in U.S. Front Pages, 1885–1995," *Journalism Quarterly* 68 (Winter 1991): 796–804; John Nerone and Kevin G. Barnhurst, "Visual Mapping and Cultural Authority: Design Changes in U.S. Newspapers, 1920–1940," *Journal of Communication* 45:2 (Spring 1995): 9–43.

but always clearly separated from text, often by frilly bric-a-brac that indicated a conceptual boundary.

The modern newspaper, on the other hand, has assigned a different role to journalists by encouraging a stance of objectivity and expertise. Reporters, who were neither gentlemen nor wage workers, became professionals whose authoritative task was to classify and assign priority to events. Modern photojournalism complements that primary task of professional reporting, providing a sense of visual immediacy to go with the formally structured text. In both text and image, the modern newspaper requires the effacing of the persona of the journalist, who might have a name (registered in a byline) but who does not have a point of view, a set of values, or (usually) a style of writing. The modern journalist and photojournalist are experts, not authors. (The photojournalist is sometimes still a scavenger—a throwback to the Victorian newspaper—although the reporter is not.)

It often is assumed that photojournalism came out of the camera, fully-armored, like Athena out of the head of Zeus. This certainly is not the case. Contrary to the received history in which all techniques and styles of news illustration lead toward the photograph at the summit of journalistic representation, our previous research underscores the contingency of photographic styles and usages.[2] That photography might wed permanently with news was not obvious in the Victorian era. Its adoption or rejection depended not on technical barriers but on its usefulness to the existing regime of news illustration, dominated by typography, and its capacity otherwise to express the routines of news work. Available technology sometimes limited the styles and usages of photography, but this limiting was just that: a limitation. It did not amount to a photo-technological determination of the project of journalism. Within the larger regime of news illustration, moreover, photojournalism appeared tardily. Beginning in the 1830s, in England and the United States, newspaper and magazine publishers began to experiment with the use of various kinds of illustrations. This experimentation preceded the successful introduction of photography in the form of the daguerreotype in 1839.[3] The technologies available to illustrators were numerous and included woodcuts and wood engravings, various forms of metal engravings, and lithography. Eventually, these were combined with photography. But photography—much as it was talked about as supremely realistic and unauthored, as an epochal invention, a radically different and discontinuous tool of illustration—was used simply as one tool among many.

The key figure in this regime of illustration was the artist. Every news illustration had to be composed and rendered by an artist of one sort or another—usually either a sketch artist, an engraver, or both. These artists were journalists, like the textual journalists of the printerly and Victorian newspaper. And they fell into the same categories—correspondents and scavengers. Their jobs were the

2   Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone, "The President Is Dead: American News Photography & the New Long Journalism" in *Picturing in the Public Sphere,* Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, eds., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 60–92.

3   Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Joshua Emmett Brown, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper,* The Pictorial Press and the Representations of America, 1855–1889 (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1993).

same as the textual journalists—to provide intelligence about distant and important people, places, and events, and to provide a fulsome and engaging miscellany of deviant goings-on.

It is our aim in this article to analyze the regime of illustrated news in the United States in the period from the late 1850s to the assassination of President McKinley in 1901. This period begins with the establishment of the first successful illustrated newspapers in the United States, and ends with the full implementation of the photographic halftone. Culturally, it corresponds to the rise of a realist ethos, both in art and literature, and in the social sciences.[4] In journalism, it corresponds to the growth of a sense of literary professionalism that produced the great muckraking reporters, and also to the birth of press clubs, trade periodicals, and other institutions that would support the emergence of the occupational ideology of objectivity.[5] In terms of the media system as a whole, the period begins with a largely partisan newspaper press and a largely genteel range of nationally circulated magazines, and ends with an industrialized newspaper system with an increasingly routinized pattern of news production and a new range of mass circulation popular magazines.[6] Meanwhile, the readers of the print media had become more and more socialized into the "land of desire" that the advertisers in the media were helping to create.[7]

In this paper, we look specifically at two illustrated periodicals, *Leslie's* and *Harper's* These are easily the most important of the genre. They are similar in many ways: both were printed in New York, both were weeklies, both were national in circulation, both were established in the mid- to late-1850s, and both came of age during the Civil War. Also, as we shall see, both used similar techniques of illustration for similar content. But they were also different in important ways. *Leslie's* insisted that it was a newspaper, and maintained an emphasis on breaking news. It was the mainstay of the company that produced it, and sought out a large, heterogeneous readership (its circulation varied from approximately 50,000 to 200,000, with higher peaks for dramatic issues, such as assassinations, because much of its circulation was in single-copy sales).[8] *Harper's* was published by the nation's leading book publisher. It was aimed at a more genteel audience, was more concerned with literature and the arts, and recycled its illustrations in its other publications, notably novels and a monthly magazine. Where Leslie's was a newspaper, *Harper's* styled itself "A Journal of Civilization," a nomination that it took seriously. Our comments in this paper are based on a sample of representative issues from each taken at five-year intervals (1856, 1861, 1866, and so forth).

Techniques of Illustration

Nineteenth-century printing found picture reproduction challenging.[9] The basic technical difficulty was getting an image onto a material that could be locked into a printing form along with textual

4   Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation & Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); and Walter Benn Michaels, *The Gold Standard* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

5   Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978); and Christopher Wilson, *The Labor of Words* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985).

6   Gerald Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in Nineteenth Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); and Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996).

7   William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993); and T. J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

8   See Brown, *Frank Leslie's,* Chapter 1.

9   Michael G. Carlebach, *The Origins of Photojournalism* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1992).

material. More than a dozen discrete solutions were found for this one problem. Of these, woodcuts and later wood-engravings were the favorite media for printers of news illustrations. Both, of course, required the hand of an engraver. Both also required a supply of suitable wood. *Leslie's* pioneered methods to meet both requirements.[10] The preferred wood for engraving grew in trees whose trunks were no larger than six inches in diameter, too small for a half-page or full-page engraving. *Leslie's* solution was to machine the wood into uniform blocks two inches square, which then were bolted together to form a smooth block of any desired size. This allowed for a routinization of the hand of the engraver as well. The outlines of a picture were engraved on a large composite block by a head engraver, then the block was broken down and the pieces distributed to specialist engravers who worked simultaneously. The various engravers had specific skills—one was good at faces, for instance, and another at architectural details—so that a complex division of labor was built into this methodology.

A similar routine existed for the composition of an engraving. Artists in the field—sketch artists and photographers, among others—would collect images. Then a chief artist in house would select the most appropriate pieces. Some, such as portraits of individual statesmen, would be engraved from one image or photograph. Others, including large-scale depictions of events, would be assembled from a large number of individual drawings, and combined into one continuous scene. These sometimes formed two-page panoramic centerspreads, more or less. The chief artist or engraver often would include a signature on these, in effect introducing the chief artist into the company of editors like Horace Greeley, cartoonists like Thomas Nast, and the pseudonymously bylined correspondents of major news organizations as journalistic personae.

The process of illustration in these weeklies thus was a collective and routinized one. Each illustration required the skilled intervention of several artists, in addition to going through a process of editorial selection and, often, composition. The artists' eyes and hands insured that the illustration would have clarity, and would convey a meaning of some sort. But this was applied art. Its production was mechanized to an extent that permitted predictable manufacturing schedules, and allowed the (believable) claim to authentic representation. A reader of *Leslie's* or *Harper's* could expect to see illustrations in each issue on about half the pages, and those illustrations presenting themselves as news would have their origin in "nature," that is, they would have been drawn or photographed at some point from life.

These illustrations, then, were quite a bit like the text that accompanied them. They almost never stood without comment (the exceptions being cartoons and editorial icons, which were themselves forms of commentary). Usually the text amplified and explained the illustration. A typical example is "The Port of

10   Brown, *Frank Leslie's,* 48–59.

Genesee, Lake Ontario." [11] The picture, by itself, is fairly mute: "Look at the pretty boats!" The text tells you more: "Our beautiful picture of the Port of Genesee is from an ambrotype by Whitney of Rochester," meaning it is reproduced from a photograph. Here, and throughout Leslie's history, a photographer typically was named, whereas a sketch artist rarely was. The photographer had an identity as a technician, we surmise, whereas the sketch artist, as a journalist, was meant to be anonymous. The text goes on to recount how recent engineering projects, especially the construction of one-half mile of piers, have made Genesee a keyport for Lake Ontario traffic. "There is here a pleasant and thriving village, called 'Charlotte,' which is yearly increasing in importance, owing to its lake position and connection with Rochester by means of a railroad, eight miles in length, and also to the fact that, from this point, the steamers, forming an international line, arrive and depart daily during navigation for Toronto and other Canadian ports." And so that's what all those pretty boats are up to! This text tells the reader what one would see if the illustration could be in color and in motion—that is, it amplifies the visual experience—but it also tells the reader what the picture means. It presents elements that could not be depicted no matter what tools were available.

Often, the relationship between text and picture was reversed. In these cases, the picture amplifies aspects of the text, adding emphasis or emotion to what already is a full textual account. This is the rare case for the illustrated newspapers. Usually, the paper was composed on the basis of what pictures were available; rarely, though notably in cases of monumental news such as an assassination, were illustrations found for a specific story. In the above example, the availability of an ambrotype of Genesee "suitable for engraving" drove the content, not any breaking news about Genesee.

No matter what the specific relationship of picture to text, the two elements were understood in the same way. Both were representations of real persons, places, and events, but neither was unmediated—both were authored, whether the author had a persona or not. The attraction of news depended on telling a good story, anchored in real events to be sure, but not merely reflecting them. The goodness of the story was in the telling. Text and picture both were held to standards based on the facility with which they advanced a narrative.

The regime of illustrated news did not point to photographic realism or to any other notion of unmediated realism. Instead, it insisted on clarity and lucidity. The images were expected to be articulate, not independently of course because the typographic text usually was indispensable, but certainly when amplified or contextualized by accompanying verbal reportage. Photographic realism was irrelevant to this kind of storytelling, a conclusion that is supported by the fact that neither *Leslie's* nor *Harper's* highlighted the photographic aspect of visual reportage nearly as often as we

11   *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (July 5, 1856): illustration on 53 and text on 54.

expected. Engravings that obviously were done from photographs usually were not distinguished from others done from sketches. And this was not because they were stymied by the technological limits of early photography. When the aim was to present a grand landscape upon which human ingenuity takes on nature (the setting in imagery for many stories in text, to be discussed later), the long exposure times required for photography hardly represented a limitation. Nor would direct duplication of the photograph on newsprint necessarily limit the artist's eye and hand, working to help the text tell stories and make arguments and limn characters.

Genres of Illustration

Illustrated newspapers presupposed that their readers read daily newspapers. Therefore, they conceived of their own function as discrete from that of the daily press. The daily newspaper would cover breaking news, allowing its reader to monitor the day's events. The illustrated newspaper, appearing weekly, would build on the literacy generated by the daily newspaper, and allow the reader to have a vicarious experience of distant and important people, places, and events. The *New York Tribune* would tell people what happened at Lincoln's inauguration, for instance. *Leslie's* then would give its readers a visual sense of what it was like to be there. In this way, the illustrated press was a form of travel literature—a popular form of nonfiction at the time illustrated newspapers were invented. Leslie himself acknowledged this in an editorial in 1873.[12] Noting that daily newspapers provided verbal descriptions of events, Leslie pointed out that these are visually vague—from such accounts "a hundred artists…will produce a hundred pictures each unlike the others…" What his illustrated paper proposed to do was to provide an authentic visual image that fixed in the public mind Leslie's picture of the event. There was some sleight-of-hand in this argument, obscuring (while acknowledging) the artistry of illustrated news. Like all journalism, the project took its authority from events "out there." Illustrated news promised the sort of picture that one would have come away with had one actually been at the event—clear, with the force of memory. Readers could trust that the image actually represented the event because the artist had been physically present (even if only after the fact, as was often the case with breaking news). Illustrated journalism thus intended to intervene between readers and the world, and to provide them with an artificial archive of memory images—a primitive form of total recall of the sort that contemporary scholars ascribe to later visual media.[13]

The subjects of illustrations throughout the period we studied were the sorts of things that a sophisticated traveler might experience. We might denominate the subjects briefly as prominent people, the wonders of nature, the built environment, and noteworthy events. We might further divide the category of events into those of national political or military significance—the Battle of Bull

12 "Illustrated Journalism," *Leslie's* (Aug. 23, 1873): quoted in Brown, *Frank Leslie's,* 131.

13 Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory, and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1998); and Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War, and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

Run, or the assassination of McKinley—and those of more social interest—sporting events, for example. All of these categories represented "real" things. In addition, illustrations often presented images that were symbolic or iconographic. *Harper's* included the cartoons of Thomas Nast, as well as frequent illustrations for fictional material. (*Leslie's* carried serial novels in every issue through the bulk of its career, but these were almost never illustrated. Also, *Leslie's* carried few cartoons.) And both publications occasionally featured allegorical illustrations.

This subject matter was conveyed through a complicated arsenal of illustration techniques. We have identified seven modes of illustration in the two illustrated papers, here listed roughly in the order of their importance over the period:

- Sketches (emphasizing irregular shading, deep shadow as from ink washes, and the position rather than the edges of forms; all loosely drawn at first from life or eyewitness accounts, and later from photographs, but containing signs of the human hand, such as smudging and scribbling),
- Drawings or "fine drawings" (emphasizing precise tonal shading and perspective, drawn much tighter as a finished artistic work, with greater detail and surface finish that disguised overt evidence of the artist's hand),
- Photographs (emphasizing fine detail in a limited range of gray tones with shading in regular, repetitive patterns; all in a clean, mechanical rendering at first reproduced as engravings, and later as halftones),
- Cartoons (emphasizing outline rather than fill, which is limited to relatively small areas, and showing human forms with the tendency to caricature),
- Editorial icons (emphasizing silhouette and shape, rather than outline or tonal value, and giving the impression of woodcut and scratchboard techniques to project the allegorical and symbolic),
- Maps (emphasizing varying degrees of line, to show position, in plan, and sometimes also tonal shading in order to show what things look like, in elevation), and,
- Technical drawings (emphasizing outline and surface contour, rather than tonal shading and shadow, with great detail at the points of human interface such as knobs and handles).

All of these modes appeared in editorial content and were particularly tied to specific types of content. The sketch, for example, belonged to breaking news but also to fiction. Cartoons belonged to editorializing and entertainment. Advertising also employed many of these modes, but favored technical drawings for representing products and the more fully rendered drawings for representing scenes of the consumption, marketing, or manufacture
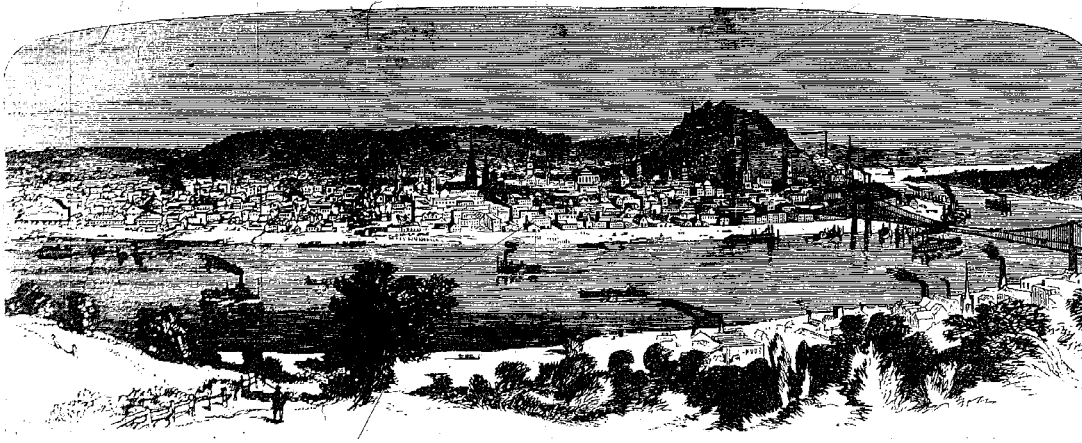
of products. Of course, the tie was not a physical one, as it would become later. Illustration could appear anywhere, without regard to the placement of the related text.[14]

These various modes did not move in an evolutionary continuum from drawing to photography, as one might expect, but were used side by side in an array. The different techniques complemented each other; they did not colonize or displace each other until the end of this period, when photography displayed imperial tendencies. The course of change cannot be summarized as the emergence of photography or the development of photographic realism—that is too neat and proleptic a narrative. The things represented and the modes of representation shifted over time in a complicated pattern. Instead of a shift in technique alone, what we discerned is a shifting notion of subjectivity that accompanies a shifting notion of didacticism, along with a shifting notion of the relationship of the individual to the polity. At the outset, the regime of illustrated news showed prominent personages as public symbols, attending to the grandeur of institutions and the built environment on a ground of natural splendor. At the end, it showed people regardless of their position of authority as indexes of ordinary life, closely observed in a range of emotional expressions and fleeting gestures meant to reveal an interior landscape of thought and feeling.

Built vs. Natural Environments
The built environment was one of the favorite themes of the first illustrated newspapers. This fits in with a sense of the mission of illustration to effect the virtual travel of middle-class readers. One could tour the great buildings of the world in the pages of *Harper's* and *Leslie's*. Early images emphasized the monumentality of human civilization (feats of engineering, architecture, and city planning), with people depicted as textures occupying the foreground like the grass growing around permanent structures. At first, the structures seem to grow organically out of the natural landscape. In a travel

14   See, for example, the illustration of a statue of Nathan Hale on 504 that refers to the story of its unveiling in *Harper's* (July 4, 1891): 494; and note that the story does not refer back to the illustration.
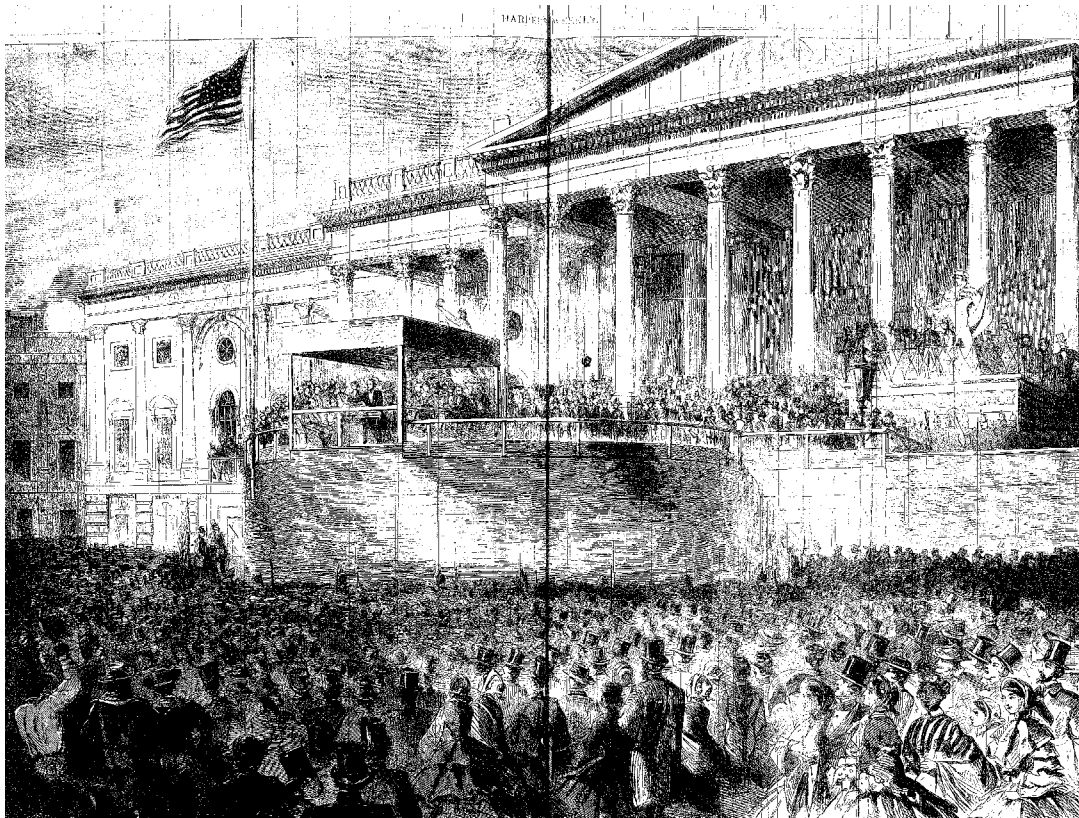
story, "A Railroad Pleasure-Trip to the West,"*Harper's* shows the
growing city of Cincinnati, Ohio.[15] Cityscapes such as this one (Fig.
1) attest to the permanence of the built environment growing out
toward equality with the overarching hills or surrounding waters.
The simple quantities of space the two occupy in the picture plane
reveal an interesting play that suggests a hope for growth (and ulti-
mate dominance) by human constructions over the natural world.

Even great men were small in relation to the products of
material culture. The emphasis on one or another was accomplished
through techniques of composition, in which the elaborate vaults of
a ceiling dominate the image showing men in the Congress.[16] A
dramatic example of this is Lincoln's inauguration picture (Fig. 2),
with the mass of humanity clearly dwarfed by the Capitol building
and flag, which symbolize the republic.[17] Lincoln himself is smaller
than the Capitol statuary and some of the closest spectators (a point
we'll return to later).

A later moment of celebration for the built environment was
the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, or world's fair.
Especially for *Leslie's,* whose proprietor was president of the exposi-
tion board of commissioners, this was an occasion for rhapsodic
treatment of the progress of human control over the forces of nature.
The narrative of progress was made to dovetail with the political
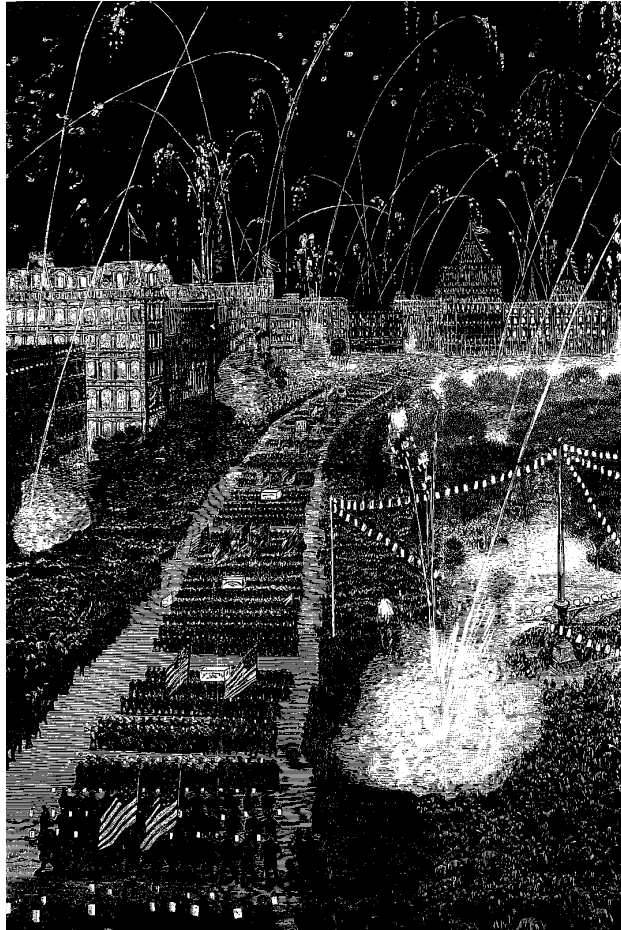commemoration that the exposition enacted—the career of U.S. rep-

15   *Harper's* (July 4, 1857): 428.
16   *Harper's* (December 26, 1857): 792–3.
17   *Harper's* (March 16, 1861): 168–9.

resentative democracy and the career of industrial progress intertwined. So in one issue, on July 22, 1876, the centerspread (Fig. 3) features a grand Fourth of July procession in which orderly crowds of people traverse an urban panorama—Union Square in NYC—while a later spread of illustrations features the Wilson Sewing Machine Co. of Chicago, Illinois (engravings of the corporate headquarters and the factory, done from photographs, and another engraving of the exhibit in Machinery Hall at the exposition, done from sketches). *Harper's* similarly emphasized the buildings.[18]

The power of nature emerges later in the nineteenth century and takes a place as the only equivalent of (and perhaps the superior to) these human monuments. From the initial tourist views of Cincinnati, Ohio, of Jefferson City, Missouri, and of other western towns, the imagery becomes more expansive. Consider, for example, later aerial perspectives, whose acts of consummate imagination show human constructions marking the face of nature. The railroad system of Boston (Fig. 4) shows a vast landscape contained by the system of tracks.[19] In this sense, maps become the conceptual tool of empire, and they were a staple for military coverage as well as for stories on western expansion.

18   *Harper's* (July 22, 1876): 593.
19   *Harper's* (July 8, 1871, Supplement): 636–7.

The destructive power of nature over human construction comes to the fore in various disasters involving weather and ships and especially in coverage of the Great Chicago Fire. An artist takes the aerial view published in the previous week's issue, and obliterates much of the city in black billows of smoke interrupted by tongues of flame.[20] The text exclaims, "The pathetic sketch by Mr. Reinhart, printed on our front page, conveys a more graphic idea than can be expressed in words of the privations and sufferings endured…." [21]

A particularly revealing example of change over time in styles of illustration is the treatment of humans in physical activity and sports. Images of annual regattas were a regular feature of the illustrated press and, initially, the mechanisms and objects dominate the action, with images of the sails against the ocean and sky. There are no participants, but spectators look on, and their depiction turns the occasion into a social and not a sporting event.[22] In the *Leslie's* drawing, "Regatta of the New York Yacht Club" (Fig. 5), the sails of the competing boats appear in the background, pictured against the

20 *Harper's* (Oct. 28,1871): 1008–9, and compare (Oct. 21, 1871): 984–5.
21 *Harper's* (Oct. 28,1871): 1011.
22 See, for instance, the onlookers in *Harper's* (July 7, 1866): 420.
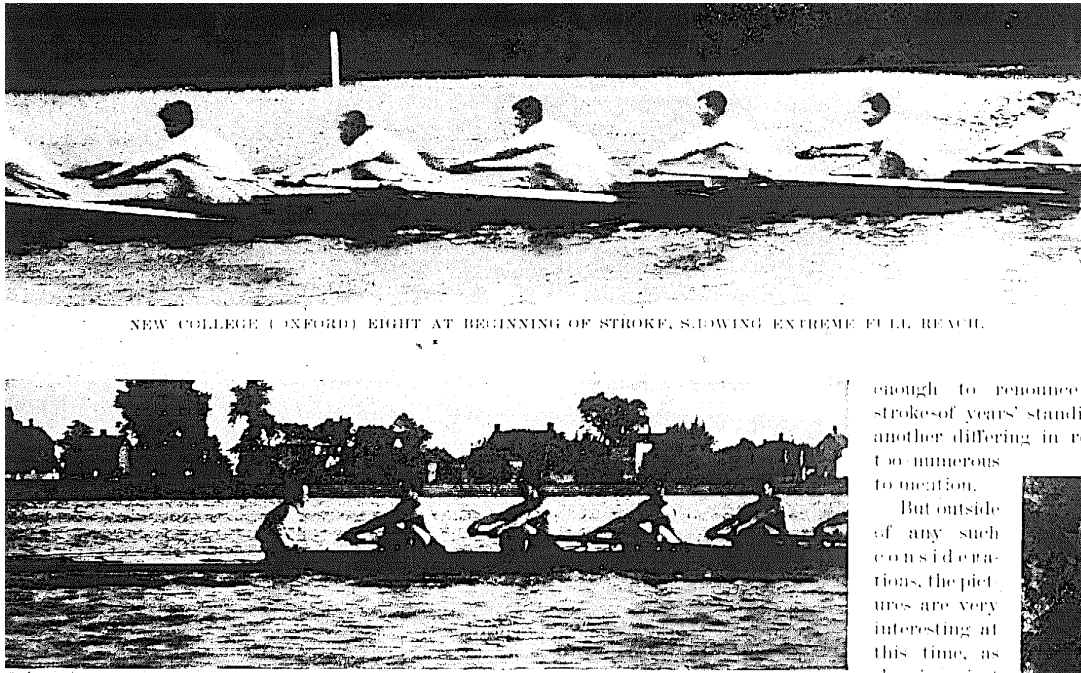
NEW COLLEGE (OXFORD) EIGHT AT BEGINNING OF STROKE, SHOWING EXTREME FULL REACH.

enough to renounce
strokes of years' standing
another differing in re-
too numerous
to mention.
But outside
of any such
consideration,
tions, the pict-
ures are very
interesting at
this time, as
showing just

Figure 6

Top, "New College Oxford Eight at Beginning of Stroke, Nearing Extreme Full Reach," Bottom, "Yale Crew, With Johnson at Stroke, Just About to Take Water," *Leslie's,* (July 9, 1896): top of 28.

cityscape, while the foreground is the shore occupied by fashionably dressed ladies and gentlemen.[23] The spectators appear in the exaggerated and stylized poses of painting, and the engraver highlights some elements—such as a pair of handsome, bonneted women—while leaving others only sketchily realized. In this case, the related text is devoted almost exclusively to a list of the boats and the times of their finishes.[24]

These presentations of the spectators for sport continue,[25] but increasingly are accompanied by presentations of the human body. For participants, sport moves from the action of man-made mechanism against the barriers of nature, to the delight of onlookers, and into another definition in which the human body competes, and perhaps increasingly against not nature but other bodies. The change parallels the emergence of the notion of the body as a human motor, one of the originating metaphors of modernity.[26] In *Leslie's* 1896 coverage of a rowing team competition against Oxford in England, "Form Shown by Yale's Opponents at Henley" (Fig. 6), a series of photos of the rowing techniques of the various teams are interleaved with text to form a detailed commentary. Here, the illustrations are meant to show men in action.[27]

The Civic Gaze
The evolving coverage of affairs such as boat races indicates a more general shift in the way events were depicted. The change seems rooted in the formulation of the subject position of the reader or viewer. Initially, subjectivity takes the position of spectator. That is, images are created to represent incidents as they would be viewed

23 *Leslie's* (July 8, 1871): 273.
24 Ibid., 276–7.
25 *Harper's* (July 4,1891): 492.
26 Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).
27 *Leslie's (*July 9, 1896): 28.

by a citizen not directly involved, but paying close attention at a distance. These most assuredly are not ordinary or common viewers, but privileged ones who look from among the ranks of better society upon (and who at times look down on their social inferiors in the middle ground separating them from) the great men and events being depicted.[28] Most often, the faces clearly visible are of social peers. Examples from the coverage of the Civil War demonstrate this. In the "Grand Review of General McDowell's Corps d'Armee, etc.," the soldiers stand in an ordered mass receding into deep perspective, while leaders occupy the central ground on horseback. The largest figures are the well-dressed onlookers in casual poses, some of them in admiring clutches around military officers, their faces turned toward the reader.[29]

This privileged subjectivity was reinforced by the technique of composition. Images were composed by sketch artists who acted like correspondents. They gathered visual impressions as they walked around an event, then used them to construct a composite scene. This scene would compend the various detailed images that the artist had sketched in such perambulations. In the case of depictions of groups of important men—for instance, the meeting of the U.S. Senate (described previously)—recognizable faces seem to float on a flat surface of bodies and architectural details. Another example of this style of drawing (Fig. 7), is a *Leslie's* two-page illustration of President Garfield's inaugural ball.[30]

This positioning of the subject as privileged and perambulatory was well suited to narrative illustration. In their depictions of events, the illustrated newspapers often combined sketches that were temporally sequential into one illustration, allowing for the telescoping of a sequence of occurrences into a single, supposedly instantaneous depiction. *Leslie's* depicted Garfield's shooting, for instance, in a two-page illustration (Fig. 8) that shows the look of surprise on Garfield's face as the bullet hit and before he collapsed, the look of concern on the faces of bystanders, and the apprehension

28   See, for example *Harper's* (July 6, 1861): 426.

29   Ibid., 424–5.

30   *Leslie's* (March 19, 1881): 52–3.

of the assailant—a temporal range that would have covered about a minute of actual time, and never could have been captured by a camera.[31] This drawing was based on the sketch artists' interviews with people on the scene; the journalists themselves had not been present but arrived two hours after the shooting.

The position of subjectivity changed quite dramatically. By the turn of the century, subjectivity floats in the air around great events—a fly on the wall, not connected to any identifiable social or political subject. The emphasis has moved from a public (being those with the franchise) to a more generic "public view" available at closer quarters, revealing emotion in the moment and emphasizing the human face and body frozen in action or reaction. When *Leslie's* illustrated President McKinley's assassination, the age of the photograph had arrived. It published dozens of photographs of McKinley in action, and of other figures associated with the administration, plus a haunting portrait of the assassin, Leon Czolgosz, behind bars, but there was no attempt to illustrate the shooting itself. The nearest thing was a shot of the scene of the shooting, with an *X* marking the spot where the deed was done. The viewers of these photographs could experience an emotional response to the depictions of human moments, but they could no longer read the president as a monumental personage or the image as a story unfolding before them, the citizenry, as public witnesses to grand spectacle.

From Personage to Person
The shift from personage to person can be seen best in another dimension of the pictures: the tenor or mood they convey. This is most evident in depictions of people. Initially, they occupy the picture plane as a "personage," that is, as a relatively fixed set of traits that spring from social class, race, position of power, physiognomy, style of dress, and personality. The illustrated journals appeared when notions such as animal magnetism and phrenology were current; the vogue of illustrated journalism coincided with the age of Darwin. The common sense of the day affirmed the importance of genetics and physiognomy to character, and it was assumed without much questioning (even by race reformers like Frederick Douglas) that there was a science to the relationship between race and behavior. Ordinary people, then, usually were depicted according to physiognomic stereotypes.[32] Ordinary people, however, were rarely, if ever, the subjects of portraiture; they appeared in crowd scenes, usually sketched, or they appeared as the appendages of machines and buildings. Portraiture was reserved for leaders, and to depict them as personages meant something more than mere racial or physiognomic characteristics.

The president and other political leaders (and their wives) were personages that moved into view but did not change, their poses remained stiff and their gestures, if any, theatrical signs.

31 *Leslie's* (July 16, 1881): 332-3.
32 For an extended discussion, see Brown, *Frank Leslie's,* Chapter 2.
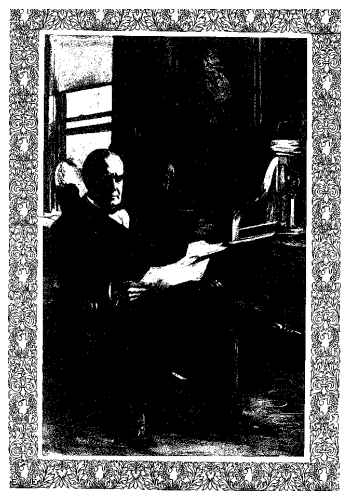
33 *Harper's* (March 16, 1861): 165.
34 *Leslie's* (Oct. 8, 1881): 85 and 92.
35 *Harper's* (Oct. 28, 1871): cover.
36 *Harper's* (March 9, 1901): 247.
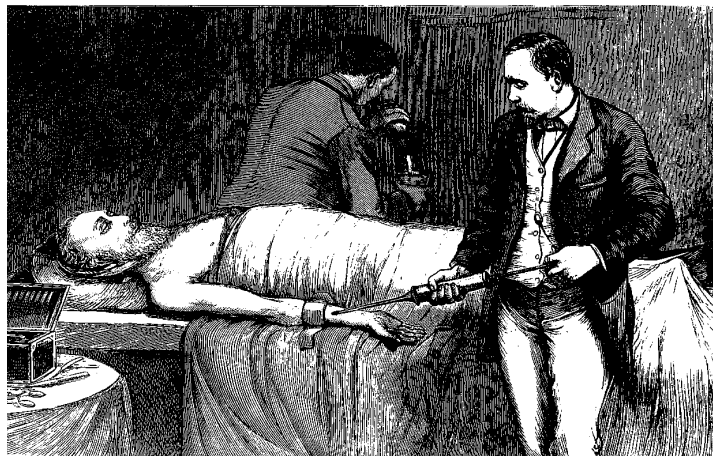
Again, this mode of depiction is not divorced from technique—most portraits were engraved from photographs, which initially required that the subject maintain a fixed position for several seconds of exposure time. However, these facial expressions and poses were stiff also because the sitter and photographer arranged them so: more casual poses were technically feasible and were used for lesser persons. Equally fixed were the accompanying texts, verbal descriptions of character, presenting a record of the personage's career and an account of his or her values, allegiances, and characteristics. Fixity was the point—the image was supposed to present the essence, the distilled character, of the personage. Even in sketch art, the brow, nose, and mole of Lincoln are as set as the faces of buildings presented elsewhere, as can be seen in "Presidents Buchanan and Lincoln Entering the Senate Chamber, etc." [33] Emotions are formulaic, like the masks of drama and comedy.

The fixity and materiality of the personage, even the character of great men, is quite alien to the photographic age. One index of this is a series of engravings following Garfield's death (Fig. 9)—rather gruesome depictions of his corpse being autopsied and embalmed.[34] No matter how intrusive the camera eye may be said to have become, such illustrations—so intimate and seemingly unconnected to the public interest—are unthinkable today. They relate more closely to the medieval concept of power invested in the king's body. They could illustrate only something larger than any mere person. Indeed, ordinary people usually appeared relaxed and unposed (Fig. 10), while in the same scene, men of substance took on theatrical poses.[35]

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the mood had changed utterly, because now even great people were possessed of emotional lives that are fleeting, and exist on a background that is no longer so clearly fixed and monumental. After his inauguration, *Harper's* shows McKinley in portrait (Fig. 11), not as the grand personage as in previous presidents' portraits, but in a private moment of reading and reflection.[36] The era that produced Freud and Einstein, in

Figure 12
"The Grant Monument to be Erected in Chicago. Drawn by T. de Thumibot. See Page 494." *Harper's* (July 4, 1891): cover.

which an invisible world came under the gaze of the new sciences, thus found cultural expression in the illustrated press.

Images meant for amusement or commentary did not follow the same course, remaining largely untouched by the realist ethos. The illustrations accompanying fiction consistently emphasized the characters in the stories as characters. Cartoons likewise always emphasized persons, and did not shift from personage to emotional person since they remained focused on the realm of satire. In *Harper's,* an 1861 cartoon called "A Dust-Storm in Broadway" showing two figures in vignette [37] does not differ that greatly from the vignette in an untitled cartoon from 1896.[38]

The Moment of Change

The year 1890 may be taken as a watershed, a moment of change in the practice of illustrated journalism, in much the same way as it marked a change in periodical literature more generally. By 1890, a new genre of middle-class, mass-market periodicals led by Edward Bok's *Ladies' Home Journal* had embraced a realist ethos, preparing the way for the great muckrake journals founded in the next decade. Photography was, of course, the picturing tool most congenial to the realism of the new periodical literature. The landmark moment in the marriage of social realism, journalism, and photography was the publication of Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* in 1890.

The illustrated journals were caught up in these changes. In Harper's in 1891, people appeared for the first time arrested in motion (Fig. 12), usually larger than the monuments near them.[39] Note the slicing off of the rider's horse in the foreground, in clear echo of the fleeting moment as originally visualized in the art of impressionism (such as Edgar Degas's *A Carriage at the Races* of 1873). By 1891, the stock regatta image is gone, replaced by an intimate view of people inside a boat watching the much-smaller regatta in the distance. People are also the center of imagery meant to cover the inauguration of a cold-storage facility. Interestingly enough, these changes occur just when type and image begin to have a different interplay, much more fluid, with type wrapping around images (an effect that occurred much earlier in advertising). In 1896, the images of battle scenes finally begin to show people in action; no longer does the coverage focus on the physical objects of war, as it did during the Civil War.

Travel coverage is an especially valuable indicator of the shift to realism. More than any other kind of reporting, it shows how "we"—the "we" of elite, civic society—see the world and, in the 1890s, what we usually see are faces, costumes, and gestures from faraway places. This focus on surface representation and fleeting subjectivity is true of the new sports photos as well, where, as we have noted, the human figure—sometimes in motion—has replaced the equipment as the center of pictorial attention. Even so, sketch art and drawings continued to be used, both for purposes of

37   *Harper's* (March 16, 1861): 176.
38   *Harper's* (July 19, 1896): 696.
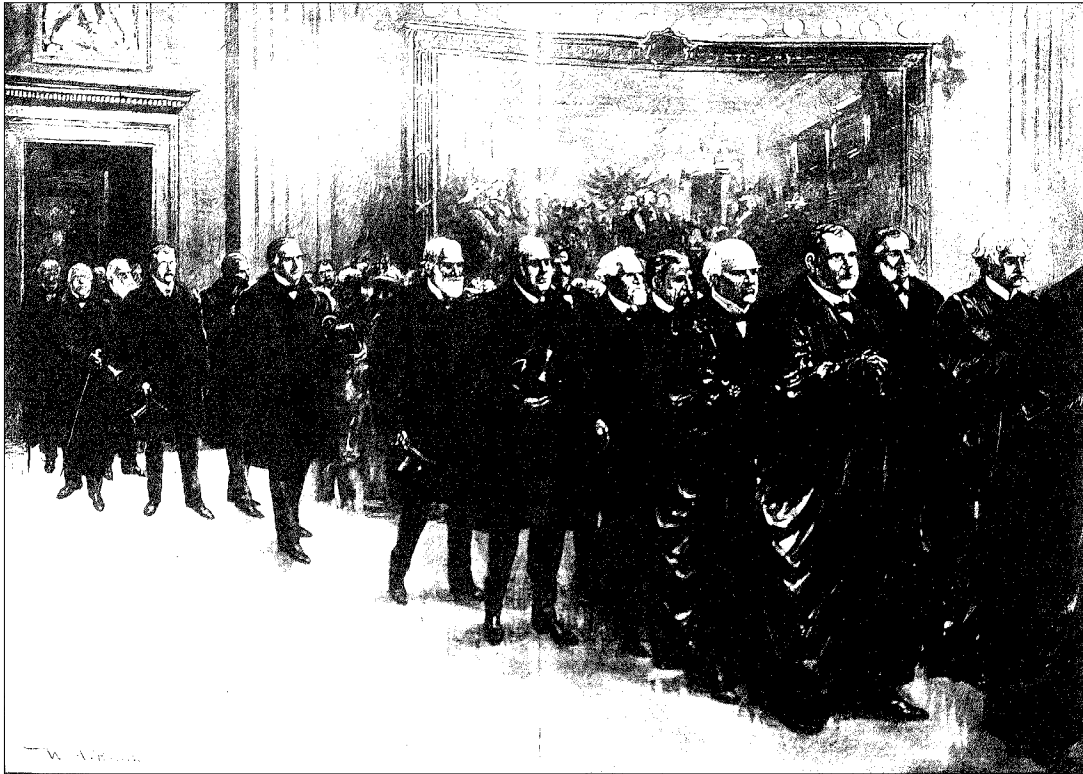39   *Harper's* (July 4, 1891): cover.

explanation and as a way of reporting with a point of view. In short, a change has taken place, and it is dramatic, but the old continues to coexist with the new.

Coverage of McKinley's swearing-in in 1901 is emblematic of this shift. The illustrations are realistic, and his portrait (described earlier) is not the standard monumental pose but a moment of contemplation. A new regime of typography also has taken over, with hierarchical clarity in type (gray text, heads made darker or larger to "pop" out, and distinctive display type—all elements of the emerging modern style). Even the illustration of the President-elect passing through the Capitol (Fig. 13), despite the old way of showing the building and the bodies with portrait-heads stuck on them, has people in motion.[40] Although this is a drawing, nevertheless, it clearly indicates that the goal of imagery has changed.

Meanwhile, in the photographs after 1890, we see an abandonment of the art of storytelling and a reversion to the lifeless portrait images of the 1860s. This had been the case throughout the introduction of photography in these publications. In Civil War engravings, those taken from photographs reproduce a very narrow range of grays, their interest lying primarily in their novelty, not in their content. In the *Leslie's* and *Harper's* coverage of the Great Chicago Fire, the stunning images are the sketches and drawings. One of these the editors tout (as quoted previously)—despite the presence of photographs on the adjacent page—for good reason.

40   *Harper's* (March 9, 1901): 260-61.
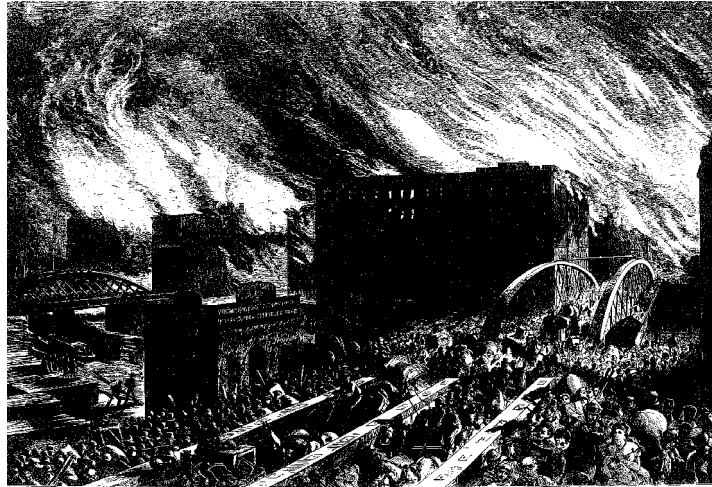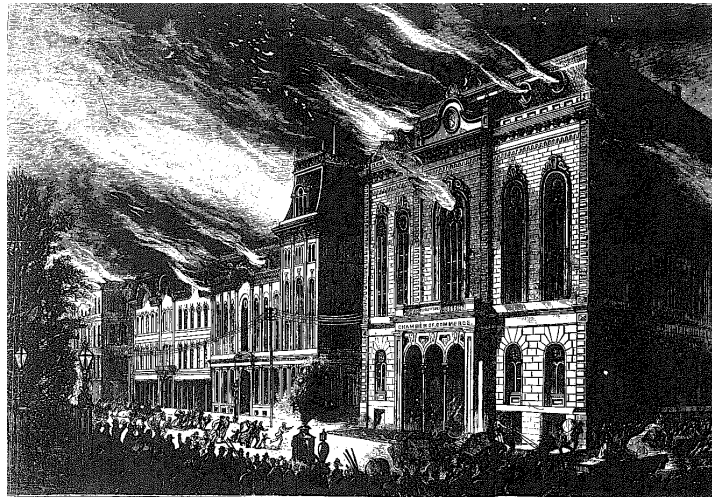
Consider two *Harper's* engravings in that week's issue (Figs. 14 and 15), one from a sketch (well to the front of the magazine) and the other from a photograph (both entitled, "Chicago in Flames").[41] In these examples, the photograph emphasizes precise mechanically-rendered details, producing a composition in which the flames seem incidental, whereas the sketch pits the flames against the fleeing crowd in a vee composition that uses the buildings in silhouette as the wedge between the two living flows. If the photos were always the more artless of the illustrations, then the era of press photography marked a triumph of artlessness, as well as the demise of an earlier notion of picture-enhanced storytelling. It is evident that the producers of illustrated journals had misgivings about this adventure in naiveté.

Editors understandably questioned and delayed the use of images that were clearly inferior in their narrative range. In the 1896 *Leslie's* example cited previously, the Yale rowing competition photos once again are not as lucid as the drawings. The same is true in the coverage of McKinley's death in *Harper's.* The drawings

41   *Harper's* (Oct. 28, 1871): 1004, top of 1012.

capture candid moments, but the photographs have an unskillful, snapshot quality. There is a wonderful retrospective in the same issue,[42] showing depictions of the deaths of Lincoln and Garfield. In the 1865 engravings, people appear as specks beneath the man-made ceiling and draperies as the casket lies in state, and again as mere texture covering the hills and beneath the trees at the burial. Even the more closely rendered citizens in the foregrounds are dwarfed by the monumental man-made and natural world. On the facing page, reproductions of the 1881 Garfield pictures are much the same, with arches, canopies, and hills dominating, but a candid quality is emerging, although tiny details are blurred in favor of focusing the scene. But the images of McKinley depend on photography and, as a result, revert to older forms, with small people and buildings emphasized, but here the old monumentality is lost, as the photograph renders everything in minute, dull, and inarticulate detail.

Conclusion

The new regime of realism embodied in photography is not a culmination of some process of development. It is a whole new regime in which the role of illustration is fundamentally recast. Photography, explained in the terms of realist ideology, became understood as the zenith in a long drive toward true fidelity, toward the capture of the real, unmediated by human artistry. This implied the simultaneous demotion of sketches and drawings which, in the twentieth century, are no longer credited with authenticity and instead become mere art. The condition for the rise of photojournalism, then, was the rejection of the regime of illustrated journalism, with its obsolescent (and perhaps too republican) collusion in the explicit artistry of storytelling.

Why the disappearance of the regime of illustrated news? Its fate was not simply determined technologically, by the superiority of photographic reproduction. The historical evidence cannot support that interpretation. To a certain extent, the failure of illustrated journalism was brought about by changes in media ecology. It became increasingly difficult for the illustrated weeklies to compete with the daily press. In the 1890s, papers such as Pulitzer's *World*, *Hearst's* and the *Chicago Daily News*, carried illustrations like those in *Leslie's* but on a daily basis and more cheaply. Newspapers effectively absorbed the franchise of the illustrated weeklies. The scale of newspaper manufacturing made it simpler and more efficient in the 1890s for a daily to print a photo than to create an engraving from it, justifying the investment in photographic technology.

The larger cultural environment also realigned the real with the technical, obscuring the centrality of human mediation. We reject the notion that photographs were simply inevitable because they were more truthful than engraved or woodcut illustrations. Nevertheless, along with new ideas about the unconscious and

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42 *Harper's* (Sept. 21, 1901): 952-53.

about the possibility that invisible physical forces could be "seen" and measured by machinery, the rise of photo-as-realism did interfere with the ability of *Harper's* and *Leslie's* to proclaim the fidelity of their sketches. Illustrated journalism had a choice. It could adhere to art, or it could imitate its photographic competitors. But adhering to art had come to mean divorcing art from the notion of the real and, since its founding, illustrated journalism had married artistry to authenticity. Trapped in this contradiction, the illustrated papers imitated their more powerful competitors and eventually floundered.

What consequences flow from the loss of the regime of illustrated news? As a result of its marriage with realism, press photography embraced a notion of reportage that required the effacement of authorship. If photographers simply operate the machinery revealing reality, they cannot be held accountable for what the camera exposes. Unlike artists and authors, who hold responsibility for their vision of the world, photojournalists are witnesses and bystanders to events ostensibly beyond their control. Thus, the realist regime effectively removed any clear lines of responsibility, hiding news work in what has been called the fog of documentary force.

Realism in art welcomed into the canon of imagery the depiction of ordinary life, as opposed to great scenes from history, mythology, and literature—a move that preceded the shift we observed in the illustrated papers. In ordinary parlance, the real, of course, is that which exists whether you like it or not. This obdurate sense of realism springs from naturalizing conceptions of its rock-hard substantiality—as in Gustave Courbet's *Stonebreakers*—as well as from its origins as the incursion of the exotic other, the "ordinary" (read: the lower classes) ruled inadmissible into the canon of greatness for centuries but thereby rendered fixed and immutable. Journalistic realism, at the receiving end, projects an audience that can neither blame journalists nor take effective action in the public sphere. Thus, the regime of photojournalism contributes to a sense of powerlessness and fatalism in the face of intractable social problems that has been observed elsewhere.[43] Certainly a kind of visual intelligence disappears when readers forget about the authored artistry of pictures, and succumb to what philosophers call naive realism.

A more important loss was the disappearance of an implied model of citizenship. The new regime divides the reader or viewer from the world in ways normatively distinct from those of the old regime. Journalism driven by narrative carried along in its wake the reader, who anticipated sequence, emplotment, and resolution. Realist press photography trades away temporal narrative in exchange for other things, such as immediacy and emotional impact. Photojournalism is exciting and startling but, by doing more, it may, in fact, do less to bring readers into the storytelling of

43 Kevin G. Barnhurst, *Seeing the Newspaper* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

news. Although illustrated journalism projected the comforting belief that illustration can amount to a form of travel, annihilating time and space, it also offered vistas of great occurrences and personages. This removed a form of social distance, while reinforcing the notion of greatness. The distance from the reader was obviously diminished, and yet those illustrations of Garfield's autopsy and embalming also reinforced the President's body as a symbol of state. The viewer became an insider elevated to the citizen's vantage point. Seeing the President in ordinary moments of emotion obliterates both social distance and the civic posture, while calling for raw sentiment. The demise of the regime of illustrated journalism thus implies the loss of the republican ethos of citizenship.