
RESEARCH ARTICLE

'To the great public': The Architectural Image in the Early *Illustrated London News*

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The *Illustrated London News*, launched in May 1842 as the first illustrated newspaper and quickly copied across Europe, North America and beyond, was full of architectural images. New buildings, ancient ruins, construction sites, royal visits, wars, theatre performances, exotic expeditions, historical essays and innumerable other subjects gave occasion to feature the built, whether for its own sake or as background setting. Images and texts were produced and consumed with an urge and at a speed never seen before. The building, through the illustrated press, left the static confines of the book and the framed print and became peopled by the purposeful bourgeoisie. Through a close analysis of a range of articles on the new Royal Exchange, the refurbished London Colosseum as well as the Queen's Scotland tour, this essay explores the role of the architectural image in the illustrated press by focusing on its relationship to the accompanying text. Untangling the mechanics of representation and perception, it identifies modes of intellectual, affective, and kinetic vision through which architecture was represented to the remote reading public. By externalising and stabilising vision, the *Illustrated London News* thus created a virtual public sphere in which the dramatic technological and material changes occurring in the period could be absorbed and normalized.

Keywords: *Illustrated London News*; image; language; perception; Victorian architecture; printing

Introduction

In its first issue, published on 14 May 1842, the *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*) marked its launch with an engraving of 'the public announcement of this Paper on Friday last': 'Two hundred men', states the caption, 'paraded the streets of London to proclaim the advent of this important publication', carrying large signs on front and back to spread the novelty of the illustrated newspaper ('The "Illustrated London News"', 1842: 16) (**Fig. 1**).¹ Aimed at the middle to upper classes and with over 100,000 weekly copies sold by the 1850s, the *ILN* was not the first paper to include illustrations, but it was the first to allow the visual to dominate the verbal and it has since been dubbed the first illustrated newspaper. Its founder, the salesman turned newspaper proprietor Herbert Ingram, carefully trod a fine line between the visual spectacular, attracting buyers, and the soberly respectable, not to scare off the bourgeois reader – and buildings played an important part in this balancing act. The men carrying the advertisements for the *ILN*'s first issue literally embodied the printed page being paraded in the built environment showcasing the protagonists of this article: the printed page, the building and the reader-viewer.

The launch of the *ILN* fell into what can be called the infancy of architectural journalism in Britain (as well as elsewhere in Europe and North America): the *Architectural Magazine*, the first English-language serial publication to focus solely on architecture, had been founded by John C. Loudon in 1834 but ceased publication, mainly due to financial difficulties, after only five years. More successful, the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* (1837–67) was, while well illustrated, interested primarily in the technical aspects of architecture, rather than its aesthetic or social aspects. The *Builder*, maybe the most famous of Victorian architectural magazines, brought out its first issue on 31 December 1842, but found its feet only when George Godwin took over its editorship in 1844 (for bibliographic information on the contemporary professional press, see Richardson and Thorne 1994). Both the *Builder* and the *Civil Engineer* were monthlies with a very targeted, limited readership, certainly so compared to the *ILN*, which with print runs of 43,000 as early as 1843 and 300,000 by the 1860s reached several hundred thousand and later millions of readers each week (Altick 1998: 394; Sinnema 1998: 16).

Throughout, the *ILN* featured architecture prominently, both for its own sake and as background to other matters of general interest, and described both in images and in words. The early issues of the *ILN* show a great variety of architectural subjects; an interest not least expressed in

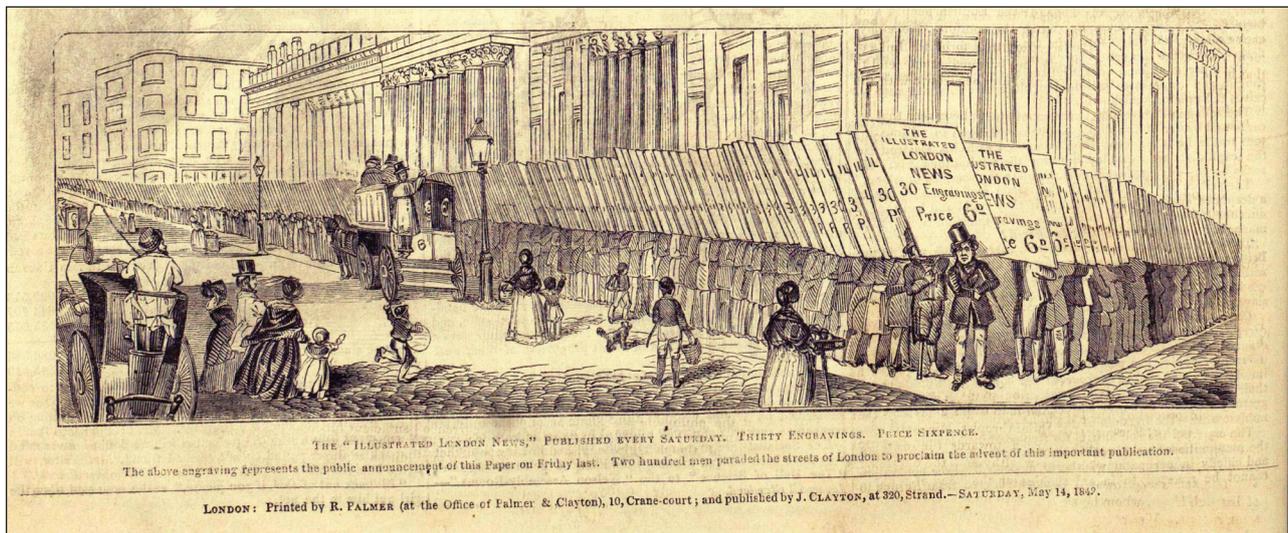


Figure 1: 'The "Illustrated London News," Published Every Saturday. Thirty Engravings. Price Sixpence', *Illustrated London News*, 14 May 1842. © The British Library Board.

its urban masthead presenting the drum and dome of Christopher Wren's St Paul's Cathedral proudly reigning over the warehouses and spires of the City of London (**Fig. 2**). Later, the 1851 Crystal Palace will be said to have made the illustrated press, and vice versa (see 'Speaking to the Eye', 1851: 533). The *ILN*'s very first issue contained illustrations of Hamburg and Kabul while the second, on 21 May, presented impressions of Suez as well as of Strawberry Hill, the Gothic revival home of Horace Walpole. Small vignettes of country houses and castles abounded and the 2 July issue saw the beginning of a series of 'sketches of the Churches of the Metropolis'. Ancient ruins made regular appearances, presented in their original locations or as fragments brought to the newly established collections in London. As Mari Hvattum has recently pointed out, it was through such 'unruly' forms of architecture that the *ILN* transcended its mid-brow, commercial sphere and came to influence architectural thinking (2017: 9).

If anything, the number and quality of architectural images increased over the course of the 1840s. This article explores a selection of such images alongside their accompanying texts in order to understand the contemporary mechanics of seeing and experiencing architecture in the public, non-professional sphere of the illustrated press. How did the relationship between word and image, newly forged on the printed page, affect the perception of architecture, and vice versa? This was a time of groundbreaking technological advances in printing that followed the invention of the wood engraving by Thomas Bewick in the late 1700s. Enabling cheaper and more detailed illustrations to be integrated with metal type, wood engraving contributed to the rise of an illustrated public press reaching new audiences. Now, writers, artists and editors employed words and images en masse, and with increasing skill, to guide readers through the rapidly growing city. The news essentially helped readers to navigate the metropolis; in fact, as Jürgen Habermas has argued, the news made the public (1998). Not unlike

today, one read everywhere: at home, at work, in coffee-houses and while promenading on the street.

Through a close reading of a range of articles about buildings, such as the London Colosseum and the Royal Exchange, as well as about Queen Victoria's visit to Scotland, this essay traces how word and image shifted roles and, in turn, defined the role architecture itself played in establishing the Victorian public sphere. By focusing not only on the nature of both verbal and graphic illustration but also the very idea of illustrating, it reveals how the *ILN* pulled the reader into its stories, and turned buildings into stories, thus bringing the discussion of architecture to a broader public than ever before. It uncovers a new form of graphic-verbal reading that emerged alongside novel modes of architectural perception – intellectual, affective, and kinetic. The architectural image in the early *ILN* thus helped define what it meant to 'see' and 'experience' architecture, while describing the relationship between built spaces and the figures filling them.

Word and Image in the *Illustrated London News*

The *ILN*'s first editor, Frederick William Naylor Bayley, had been recommended to Ingram by Henry Vizetelly, who had been both Ingram's collaborator but later also his rival, with his own, less successful, illustrated newspapers (Vizetelly 1893, vol. 1: 236). According to Vizetelly, it was Bayley who convinced the *ILN*'s proprietor to target the new publication strictly at prim middle-class readers, and to avoid any sensationalist or vulgar content. He was right. In the preface to the first annual volume, after just over half a year in publication, Bayley confidently declared that, 'Seriously, it will scarcely be denied that the *ILN* has been the most remarkable and successful novelty of the year'. 'Clasping Literature and Art together in the firm embrace of Mind', he continued, 'we know the advent of an Illustrated Newspaper in this country *must* mark an epoch . . . The public have been greedy for it and have devoured it eagerly' (*ILN* 1842).

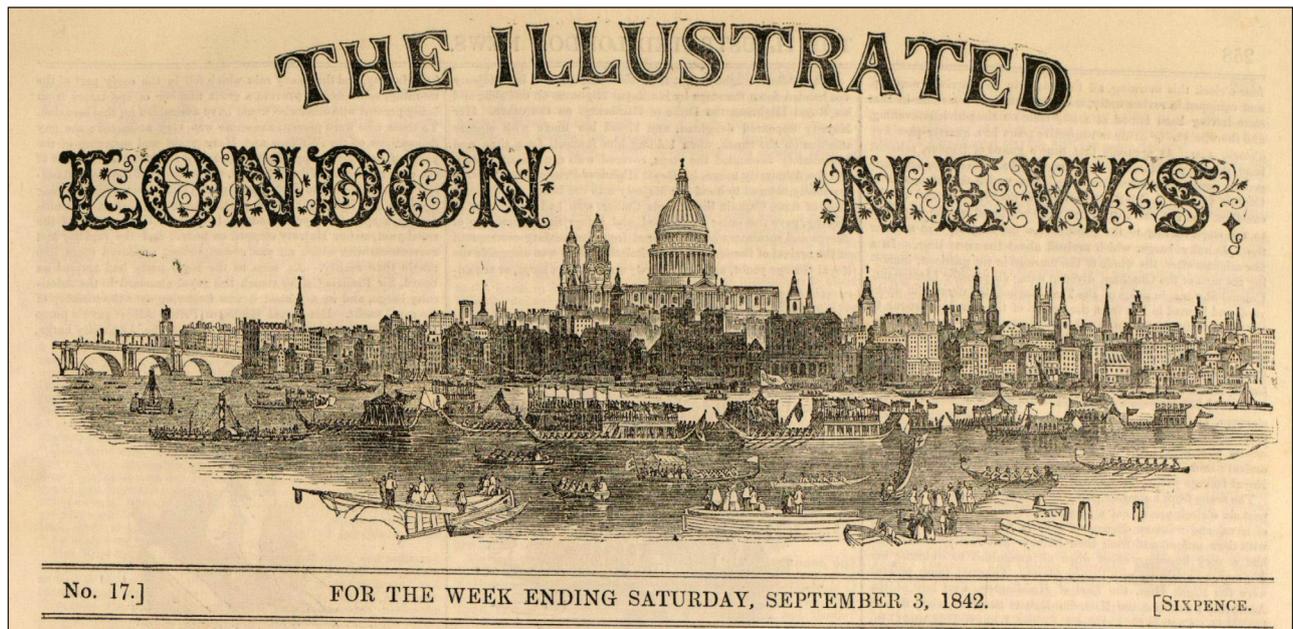


Figure 2: Masthead of the *Illustrated London News*, showing the Thames and the City of London dominated by St Paul's Cathedral, 3 September 1842. © The British Library Board.

Bayley's declaration conveys a particular understanding about several key issues regarding both the relationship of word and image in the illustrated press as well as the role of the *ILN*'s audience. The 'firm embrace of Mind' holding 'Literature and Art together' implies that it is the intellectual faculty that merges word and image in the reader's mind, somehow leaving them with a more complete impression of the thing being described. The second issue evident in this passage is communicated by the use of 'we', the first person plural. Not entirely the same as the 'royal we', the 'editorial we' still expresses the idea that the author sees himself as a spokesperson for a specific group of people. Third is the reference to the 'public': a 'greedy' public that 'devours', literally eats, the illustrated news. This is interesting; indeed, linguists have long connected this type of metaphor, which employs a term relating to nutrition for expressing a concept of the mind, to everyday experience. In *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson argue that this metaphorical link between understanding and eating is embedded in everyday English. They show that expressions such as 'a thirst for knowledge, an appetite for learning, and an insatiable curiosity' express the fact that we understand the mind in terms of the healthy body (1999: 241–42; for a parallel discussion of similar metaphors in John Ruskin's writing, see Hultzsich 2014). To be 'greedy' for 'devouring' the illustrated news thus expresses the idea that reading the news in word and image contributes to a healthy, educated mind – and more, an urgent desire to possess such a mind, or to acquire it with some speed. Moreover, it is not a single mind that shows such needs but is instead 'the public'. The 'public' here, as throughout the *ILN*, is personified, presented as an active being and as a distinct whole, an entity, if not an organism, hearing, speaking and seeing as one: ear, voice and eye together. This is exactly the kind of civic society that Habermas conjures

in his classic description of how the bourgeois public sphere developed from a reasoning, engaged and unrestricted – in short, an active – community (1998). And it is a notion that one encounters again and again in the early *ILN*.²

If the illustrated newspaper, as a genre, was a novelty, it was because of the special relationship it created between text and image. As Richard D. Altick has claimed, the *ILN* 'was the first to make a policy of subordinating text to pictures' (1998: 344). There had been illustrated periodicals before, the *Penny Magazine* and others, and yet scholars seem to agree unanimously that with the *ILN* something new was born, an observation closely fulfilling the instructions Bayley and Ingram, confident as ever, left for future historians:

It [the *ILN*] will pour the lore of the Antiquarian into the scholar's yearning soul and teach him truth about those who have gone before him, as it were, with the Pictorial Alphabet of Art! . . . This volume is a work that history *must* keep. (*ILN* 1842)

The 'Pictorial Alphabet of Art', the graphic illustration, will 'teach' future scholars (that is, us, today's historians!) about the past, and it is this that distinguished the *ILN* from other publications: 'We discovered and opened up the world of *Illustration* as connected with News'. The image and its superiority to the text make the *ILN* new, and news, unmistakably. As Tom Gretton has argued, the reader of the *ILN* and other such publications was 'encouraged to look at text as much as to read it'. 'Reading', he continues, 'was constructed as an activity subordinate to looking' (2010: 683). Certainly this must have been the case, if readers were ready to greedily devour the new combination of text and image; there is, again, an element of speed associated with consuming images that is absent

from notions of reading columned text in traditional newspapers.

The early years of the *ILN* anticipated what Paul Goldman and Simon Cooke have referred to as 'undoubtedly one of the most productive epochs in the history of British illustration', between 1855 and the mid-1870s (2012: 1). They argue that the abundance of high-quality yet affordable illustrated material that became available during this period contributed to 'bringing the art gallery into the parlour' by 'insisting on the illustrations' status as "fine art". As a consequence, they write, 'the bourgeois hobbyist was converted into a connoisseur' (2012: 4). In other words, the image was able to educate its consumer's sense of taste in a way that the text could not: by claiming the status of a work of art, the images in the illustrated press contributed to the common good, thus justifying the genre's moral right to exist.

Seeing the Built: The Royal Exchange

When London's Royal Exchange on Threadneedle Street burnt down in 1838, William Tite was chosen to erect a new structure whose portico was akin to the Pantheon's in Rome. Completed in 1844, the building and its construction had been covered by the *ILN* since 6 August 1842, when the paper presented readers with a sketch of the first walls rising among scaffolding ('The New Royal Exchange', 1842) (Fig. 3). Early in 1844, the building now close to completion, paper featured images of its tower and the figures in its pediment ('Tower of the New Royal Exchange', 1844; 'Sculpture for the Pediment', 1844). On 6 April a full perspective view 'from the architect's drawing' was followed by an article promising that 'hereafter, we shall illustrate the striking changes which have taken place upon this site during the past century' ('The New Royal Exchange', 1844) (Fig. 4).³ This series of building reportages exemplifies how the early illustrated newspaper

linked building, word and image, and thus sheds light on the very idea of illustrating.

True to its earlier promise, on 24 August 1844 the paper printed two page-width engravings contrasting the now completed building on the bottom with the situation on the same site in 1780 at the top of the page (Fig. 5). What is interesting here is the way in which text and image trace each other:

One of the annexed pair [sic] of engravings shows the buildings on the site of the splendid Exchange just completed, as they appeared in the year 1780 . . . The block of houses in the centre of the foreground, is that known as Bank-buildings, recently taken down . . . In the distance is seen the Royal Exchange, as it was rebuilt, within three years of its destruction in the great fire . . . To the left are seen two churches, both of which have been removed. Between them is seen the Bank of England, first built in 1782. ('The Royal Exchange', 1844)

This is just a short part of a lengthy description – not of the building, however, but of the set of images before the reader. Artist, author and reader-viewer begin here to see with the same eyes, as the writer assumes the fixed position of the draftsman – and in turn assigns this also to the reader. Text and image converge, yet while the image presents its contents in graphic simultaneity, language has to employ a linear storyline to render the visual into the verbal, to describe the spatial relations between the depicted objects. The author constructs this by means of spatial markers, extended prepositions, such as 'in the centre of the foreground', 'in the distance', 'to the left' or 'between them'. These help the reader's eyes to establish the links between the described buildings and thus

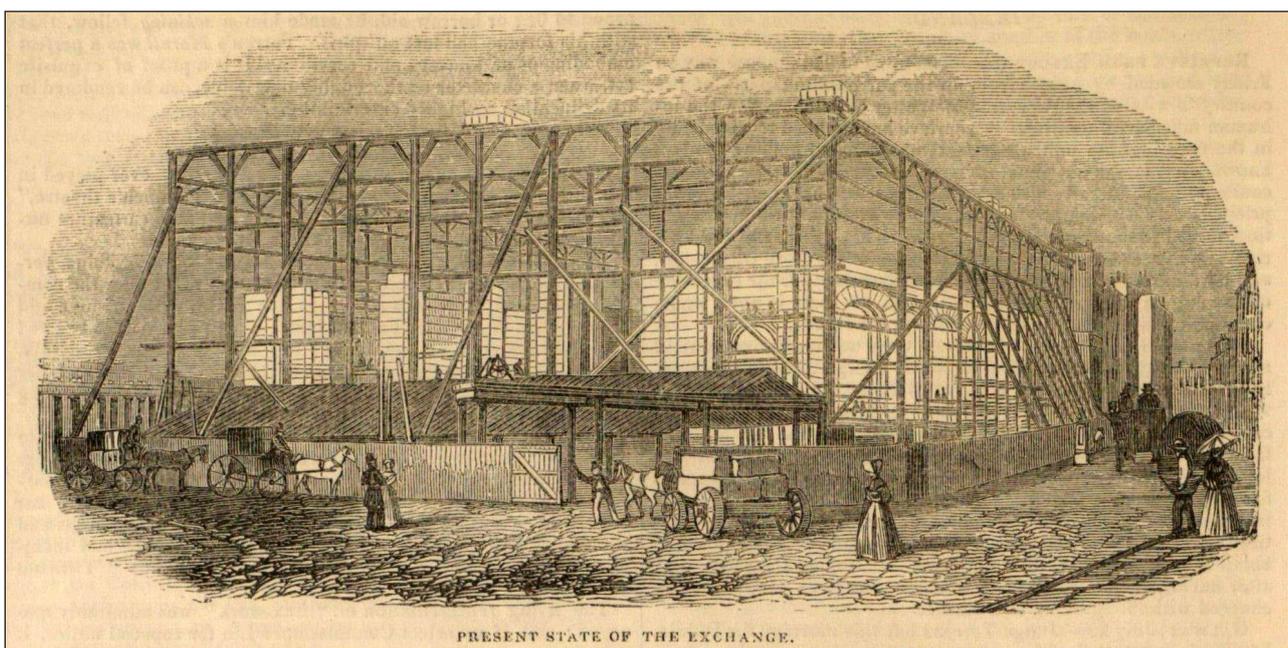


Figure 3: 'Present State of the Exchange', *Illustrated London News*, 6 August 1842. © The British Library Board.

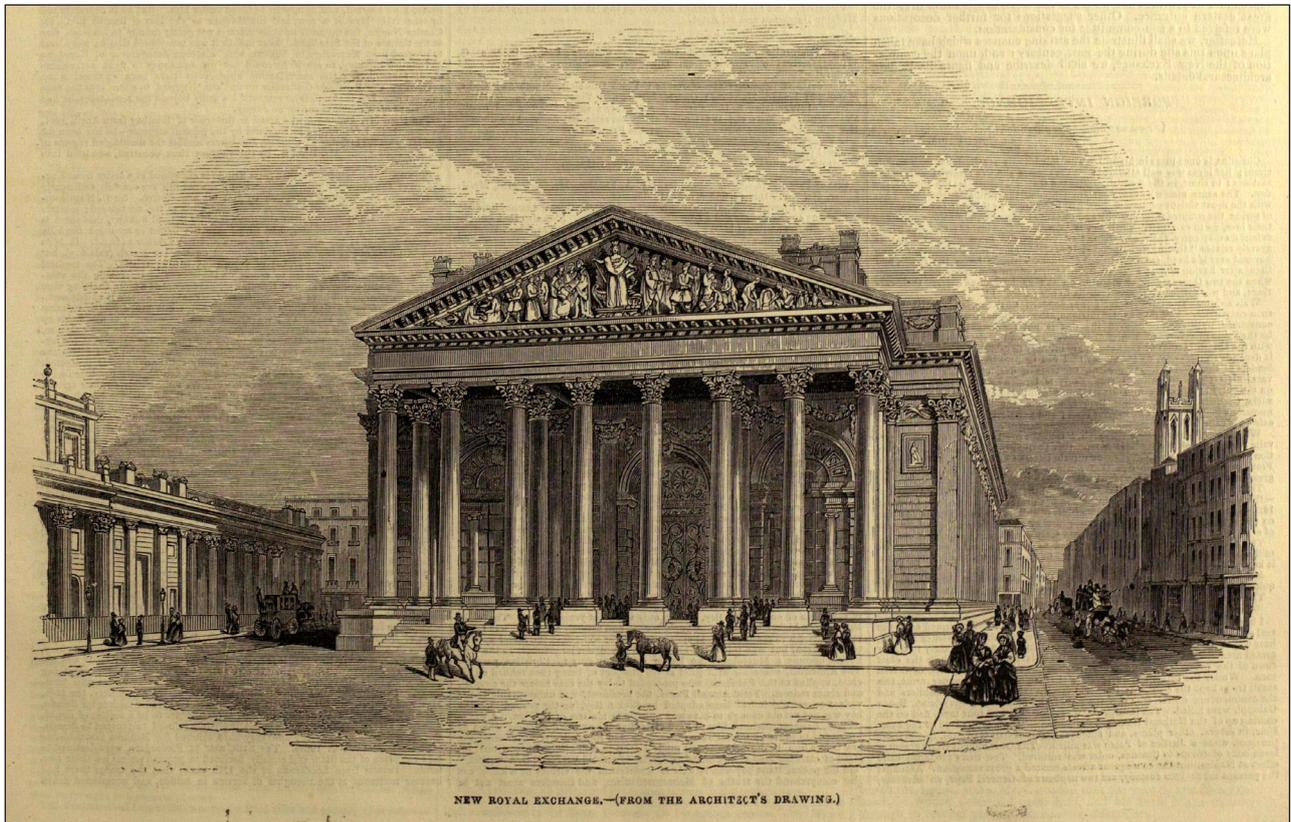


Figure 4: 'New Royal Exchange. — (From the Architect's Drawing)', *Illustrated London News*, 4 June 1844. © The British Library Board.

locate them within the image, to 'see' them, or recognise them without looking at them. As in a linear sequence of words in a sentence, the reader is thus enabled to 'read' the image. Vision becomes text.

So which of the two is the illustration here — the text or the image? Which one was first; which triggered the other? And how did the contemporary reader perceive this visual-verbal hypertext? Interestingly, the term 'illustration' acquired a distinctly material or pictorial sense only in the nineteenth century. Previously, the term would have referred exclusively to the action 'of making clear or evident to the mind', for which the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives examples from around 1600 (*OED Online*). John Ruskin wrote in his *Stones of Venice*, when discussing the Gothic's 'savageness', that even if he 'confined the illustration of it to architecture', he 'must not leave it as if true of architecture only'. He meant that 'the Gothic imperfection' that caused any work to become 'noble' was not limited to the art of building only but actually applied to any art form (Ruskin 1903: II, vi, § XXIII). Here, it is the building that illustrates something, makes clear to the mind: 'illustration' is an action, rather than an object.

At the same time, Ruskin subtitled the *Stones of Venice* with the words 'with Illustrations drawn by the Author', now clearly referring to the printing of his own drawings, as material objects. The ambivalence of the term 'illustration', as referring to both object and action, seems to have emerged exactly at the time when illustrated newspapers set about revolutionising the marketplace for the news, triggered by the rise of the cheap yet sophisticated wood

engraving. Consequently, this fluctuation in meaning is also relevant for the word-image relationship played out on the pages of the *ILN*. Verbal 'illustration' is typically an action rather than an object; the term is not as commonly used, neither now nor then, to refer to a material manifestation of writing, such as a printed page, as it is to imply an image, drawn, painted or printed. Words can only ever be actions 'of making clear or evident to the mind' while graphic illustration can refer both to this act as well as to an object. Going back to the description of the Exchange, it appears that both text and image are illustration-actions, explaining each other to the reader and thus working closely together.

The comparative images of the old and the new exchange from 24 August would in all likelihood have been drawn before the text was written, in order for the author to adapt the same viewpoint as the artist. Interestingly, a new image had been produced for the current situation rather than reproducing the one from 6 April which had, allegedly, been 'drawn . . . under the direction of Mr. Tite' ('The New Royal Exchange', 1844), indicating that the August image was both drawn and engraved by the *ILN*'s artists while the earlier picture was only engraved after a drawing provided by the architect. Even if very similar in style (nothing really characterises the earlier engraving as a more or less 'architectural' image than others in the *ILN*), the two pictures differ subtly: the perspective is slightly changed so that the August version shows more context, including an equestrian statue in the foreground. The level of detailing is not far off, even if the



THE ROYAL EXCHANGE AND BANK BUILDINGS, IN 1780.

first check. Dr. Johnson, in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale, declares that if the mob had attacked the Bank on Tuesday, in the height of the panic, by obtaining possession of St. Christopher's Church, which, like the Bank-buildings, was entirely undefended, "they might have carried irrevocably away whatever they had found."

St. Christopher's was a very ancient foundation, and was so extensively damaged in the Great Fire, that nearly the whole of the body of the church was taken down, and rebuilt by Wren, the original tower alone remaining. The architecture of the church was of a very unpretending character: the roof of the clerestory was so near the height of that of the Bank, that, in all probability, had the rioters once obtained access to the church, they could easily have passed from one roof to the other, and thus become possessed of the Bank treasure. After the riots the church was taken down, as we have already stated.

The church seen in the distance, is that of St. Bartholomew-the-Little by the Exchange, so called to distinguish it from St. Bartholomew-the-Less, in Smithfield. The tower was ancient, and in the upper story resembled a dismantled ruin; the body of the church was destroyed in the great fire, but rebuilt by Wren. The entire fabric was taken down in the year 1830, and, nearly upon its site were erected the highly embellished premises of the Sun Fire Office.

Thus, reader, you perceive how great has been the architectural change in this portion of the City, within somewhat more than 66 years. The extensive root of the buildings of the Bank of England, has altogether been changed; and

Sir Robert Taylor's embellished facade has given way to the still more ornate creations of Sir John Soane, in unity of design, and exquisiteness of detail, presenting a truly classic pile. In place of the unpicturesque block of houses, and the old Exchange, in the centre we have a truly magnificent palace-home—a superb temple of commerce for the assembling of our merchants. This, however, is but the nucleus of a grand scheme of embellishments; whence diverge streets of classic architecture, which have scarcely a parallel in any other European capital. Nor ought we to pass by, even for the present, the fine effect of the Exchange portico—the most magnificent in the metropolis, in juxtaposition with that of the Mansion House—a massive Palladian pile of extraordinary grandeur, and occasional beauty of detail. In each of these noble structures, so prominent in their decorative details. In the area between these noble structures, is placed the statue of the greatest hero of the age, an admirable work of art, and a fitting tribute for this focus of commercial ascendancy, to which the illustrious original has, by his conquests, so gloriously contributed.

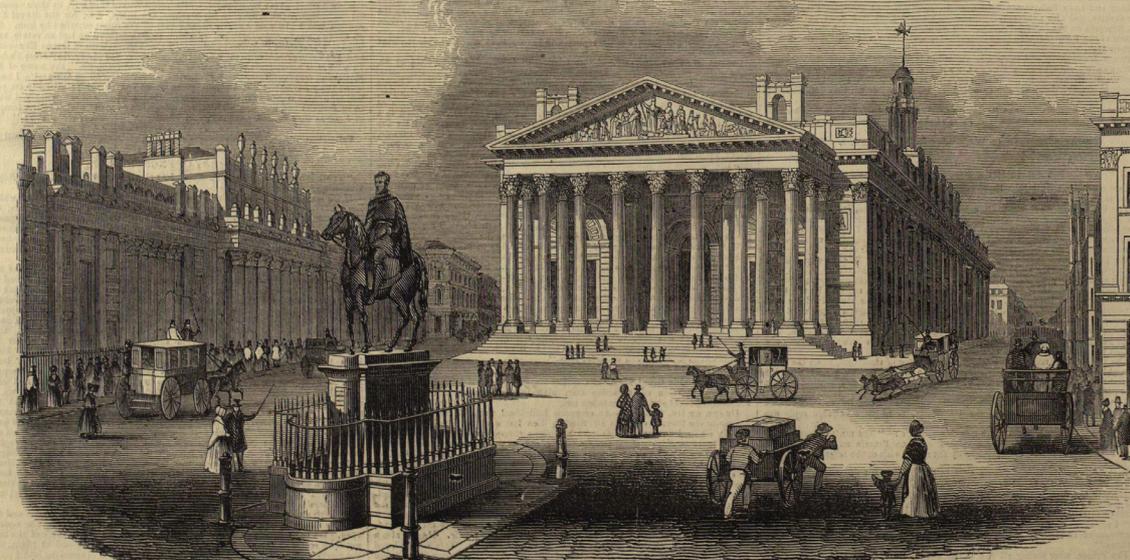
It is expected that, during the ensuing month, the New Exchange will be opened with becoming splendour. Meanwhile, it may be interesting to report the finishing of the sculptural decorations, and the works remaining for completion.

On the outside the sculpture on the pediment has been finished, and is considered on the whole to be a work of considerable merit. On the stone base

supporting the Statue of Commerce, which forms the centre and principal figure of the group, is the very appropriate inscription from the Psalms—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." On the frieze of the portico a Latin inscription is partly cut, recording the very curious fact of the founding of the Exchange in the reign of one Queen, viz., Elizabeth, and its rebuilding in the reign of another, her present Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. In the centre of the south front, over the three openings, the arms of Sir Thomas Gresham, of the Mercers' Company, and of the city of London, are introduced on the key stones, and, with the architectural accompaniments of festoons and other decorations, give great beauty to this most important entrance.

The various offices and shops are in a remarkable state of forwardness, particularly the great rooms on the one pair floor, intended for Lloyd's establishment. In these rooms the scaffolds have been removed, and they are to be the finest apartments in the city. One of them is 100 feet in length. Over the great western entrance is a coat of the royal arms, with supporters in *alto relievo*, carved in a style of amazing boldness and effect, by Mr. Carew. The fixing of it will be completed in the course of the ensuing week. Mr. Carew is finishing a splendid statue of Whittington for one of the principal niches of the edifice.

The decoration of the interior is proceeding *pari passu*: it will present some fine specimens of fresco, encaustic, and other beautiful styles of mural embellishment; whilst the pavements will be triumphs of ingenuity both in hitherto considered "lost art," and the ingenuity of our own age.



THE NEW ROYAL EXCHANGE.

Figure 5: 'The Royal Exchange', *Illustrated London News*, 24 August 1844. © The British Library Board.

architect's drawing presented the ornament and sculpture on the Exchange's façade somewhat more meticulously. The difference then lies not in the image, but instead in the text: while the descriptive text of the August issue was written to match the illustration, the much shorter article in April gave more factual, quantitative (and maybe more architectural) information, such as the number of columns and precise measurements of the portico. It could have easily stood on its own, without a graphic illustration. This earlier text then did not epitomize the seen – naturally, perhaps, as the building did not exist yet and could not be observed firsthand. It was a theoretical, even scientific construct of numbers and stylistic orders, rather than a visual description of an object to be seen and put into relation to the real space it occupied.

In contrast, the August article could have made readers feel as if they had seen the described object by instructing them how and what to look at, clearly outlining a two-part system of architectural perception. First, the intellectual 'reading' of text and image: 'Thus, reader, *you perceive* how great has been the architectural change [i]n this portion of the City, within somewhat more than 60 years'. The direct 'you' is employed to introduce the two engravings that are, of course, before the reader at the very moment of reading and understanding ('perceive'). This is followed, after the description quoted above, by the onsite observation, requiring empathy from the reader: 'the *spectator* will scarcely fail to be *struck* with the richness of the Corinthian order, so prominent in their decorative details' ('The Royal Exchange', 1844: 120, emphasis mine). The reader is asked to identify with an assumed 'spectator' of the building who is 'struck' by an abundance of architectural details. First, direct speech is employed for the act of reading words and images; then, indirect third-person speech for the act of looking in situ. There is a clear distinction between the intellectual response of the 'you', on the one side, and the affective reaction of the anonymous 'spectator', on the other. Readers first see and understand the printed illustration before them and are then asked to – remotely – look at and 'feel' the building represented.

And yet, how much did the images in the *ILN* really rely on firsthand observation? We know from Vizetelly that one method employed by the *ILN* was 'to scan the morning papers carefully, cut out such paragraphs as furnished good subjects for illustration, and send them with the necessary boxwood blocks to the draughtsmen employed' (1893, vol. 1: 232). And both Vizetelly and Mason, the paper's art editor from 1860 to 1890, refer to the circumstance that the *ILN*'s artists often made up their drawings from rough sketches 'aided by descriptive notes' (Vizetelly 1893, vol. 1: 253; Jackson 1885: 320). At times, therefore, images were created based on text rather than directly on vision. If before, readers would have had to create these images themselves in their mind by visualising verbal descriptions, the printed image relieved them of this task. With the *ILN*, reading the news completely changed as a mental process. The visual was externalised. One was no longer restricted to reading about events, such as new buildings erected around the country (or abroad) or the

dresses worn by the ladies at the latest royal entertainment; one could see them, almost firsthand. And through this, architecture gained a new status in the news, as it was now much easier to contextualise information within its built setting.

The growing role of architectural images in the illustrated press was thus directly linked to novel word-image relationships in the same medium. While text became subordinate to the image, dependent on it and often supplementary, architecture emerged as a public image and as the increasingly indispensable furniture of the news picture. Context became more and more important as events turned into visual news stories to be reported and consumed across the country and beyond. The built was one of the key ingredients to situate stories, to make them real – the image now contributed to the corroborating function that had, since the first newspapers, fallen exclusively to multiple witnesses verifying each other's accounts (see Pettegree 2015: 1–13).

Experiencing the Built: The London Colosseum

The increase in pictures available meant that a new relationship emerged between the constituent parts of the illustrated press. While, as Tom Gretton has pointed out, pictures regarded as 'illustrations' had previously been 'at the service of texts', the images printed in the *ILN* very quickly lost this serving character in the mid-nineteenth century, gaining independence from, and eventually dominance over, the accompanying article (2010: 683). Indeed, Paul Jobling and David Crowley refer to such engravings as 'not illustrations to the text at all but highly wrought pictures' autonomous from the text (1996: 26). Gretton argues that this found expression in page layouts that ignored the hitherto standard three-column formula, forcing upon the verbal part of the *ILN*'s pages a plasticity that formerly only the images themselves had had to show. The text, in other words, had to adapt to the dominance of the picture, and it did so graphically, through condensed, widened or cut-out columns acting as frames to the image that more and more clearly began to take centre stage, as is clearly visible in a page spread from 3 May 1845 presenting the newly refurbished London Colosseum (**Fig. 6**). First opened in 1829 on a site next to Regents Park to house Thomas Hornor's enormous 360-degree panorama of London as well as extensive pleasure grounds, the amusement venue had been overhauled and increased in size (see Altick 1978: 141–62). The pages documenting its reopening demonstrate the *ILN*'s growing confidence in mixing different types of images and in using the entire double spread, encouraging the reader's eyes to move freely over it, liberated of the left-to-right column-line rhythm of the linear text.

The changing word-image hierarchies in the *ILN* were also reflected in the newspaper's own terminology regarding its imagery. There are frequent references to the printed picture, ranging from terms referring to the mode of production, such as, simply, the 'engraving', to words



Figure 6: 'Re-Opening of the Colosseum, Regent's Park', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1845. © The British Library Board.

describing the comprehensiveness or mood of an image. The article on the Colosseum described its images thus:

We have engraved three fragmentary but picturesque *snatches* . . . The first of our *scenes* groups the decaying Greek Temple, with the Italian Fountain. The second *illustration* shows the Temple of Vesta . . . Next is a *vignette* of Italian scenery . . . The larger *engraving* . . . shows, perhaps, the most novel triumph of the artist's skill; it being a large model of the celebrated Stalactite Cavern, at Adelsberg. ('Re-Opening', 1845: 276; emphasis mine)

There is a certain speed of looking implied here that mirrors Bayley's expression of readers 'devouring' words and images: the three 'snatches' refer to the bottom image on the left page and the two top ones on the right. These are described as fragments of a larger whole, the arranged setting of the 'scene' (bottom left), the 'illustration' of a specific famous building, the Temple of Vesta on the Roman Forum (top right) and finally the 'vignette' of a general Italian prospect (centre right), all of which are shown with rounded and blurred margins. Only the last, and most emphatically praised, image (bottom right) is referred to by its mode of production – as 'engraving'. On this the eye should come to rest, indulge in it before and after reading the comprehensive description of the route through, and ensuing experience of, the Colosseum's caves.

This route, or tour, is very literally spelled out in the opening sentence of the article: 'We . . . request the reader to accompany us to the eastern entrance in Albany-street, which is entirely new' (276). This is followed by a room-to-room itinerary of the premises dominated by 'you', the mobile viewing reader:

North of this new Saloon you enter by large folding-doors, and pass into a square vestibule; thence, to the left, into a nobly arched corridor . . . Descending to the basement . . . you enter a spacious apartment. (276)

The 'you' is now instructed how to move – or rather, how to imagine moving – around the Colosseum, not dissimilar to the description of the Exchange, and yet there is an imagined physical presence of the reader-viewer within the space that is wholly absent from that earlier article. The tour of the Colosseum continues until the reader arrives, virtually, at the entrance to the artificial caves, depicted in the biggest of the illustrations, the 'engraving', on the bottom right page:

The long gallery is passed through, and you enter 'the vestibule', 'the large rugged unequal grotto', from which you behold, branching in every direction, the apparently interminable succession of caverns. (277)

The *ILN* provides the reader with glimpses of the London novelty: glimpses in the sense of an immediate impression that could only be gained through words emulating movement and images imitating glances. Language is fluid while the picture is static; yet by combining word and image, and by blending several scenes, movement and glance are linked into kinetic representation. It is kinetic because it is not the reader who is made to move, but the building. As John B. Thompson has argued, the newspaper's 'reading public . . . was not localized in space and time' (1995: 126). Even if readers were separated, geographically, from the events described in the newspaper, they did witness them on the printed page. It is through this, what Thompson has called a 'publicness in the absence of co-present individuals', that word and image in the illustrated press preceded the kinetic experience of film in which the viewer would remain static and things would begin to move (126).

Indeed, active verbs of motion (enter, pass, descend) and directional indicators (by, into, to the left) would have enabled an interested reader to visualise the layout of the described spaces, linking together the earlier described 'snatches' of the Colosseum's attractions. The author ('we') is the guide and the reader ('you') the visitor, the sightseer seeing sights. The description of the caves is much longer and more colourful than those of most other parts, directly reflecting the status of their illustration, which takes up the whole page width and is not framed by text, as are all other 'snatches'. It is the words that enable the representation of the building's layout, rather than an actual plan, the tool of the architectural profession. In fact, plans are a rarity in the *ILN*, which always favoured views that could be related to human visual experience, such as perspectives and, less often, elevations. There are very few floor plans or other orthogonal drawings, as they could not represent the aesthetic task that architecture had to fulfil in the general-interest illustrated press. Instead, plans only came to be presented as technical drawings, for scientific and technical subjects of all sorts, even murder (see Hvattum 2018).

However, while the image seemed to rule the early *ILN*, there were also instances in which not even its visual parts sufficed to give a full impression. The only picture on the double spread not named and classified like the others – the 'snatches' and the 'engraving' – was the one showing the conservatories on the top left. Here, we find a notion of the limits to the graphic rendering of sense impressions. The author describes the effect of the space on all the senses, exclaiming how 'you', the reader, would hear 'the murmur of sparkling fountains, the song of gaily-plumed birds', smell 'the fragrance of exotic plants and flowers' and see 'the beautiful forms and freshness of the colours of the embellishments'. And yet, in spite of the writerly and artistic craftsmanship of the illustrated newspaper, the reader – 'you' – is encouraged to visit the actual space in person, as 'Some of this is beyond the engraver's art to convey'. Only 'a good idea' of the 'entire scene' can be given, but not the sensual particulars ('Re-Opening', 1845: 276). Is that why the given images can only ever be 'snatches', quickly seizing a momentary

impression to be as truthful as possible, if never fully verisimilar to the bodily experience of the real space? There was clearly a struggle going on at the time about how to represent to the reader what it would feel like to actually be in these spaces while at the same time suggesting that holistic sensual experience is, perhaps, beyond the capacities of print.

Filling the Built: Queen Victoria and her Subjects

As we have seen, at the same time as the visual (and the architectural) became part of the news, the need for accuracy and truthfulness that had hitherto mainly applied to the text was extended to the image. Once the message was mediated more by the image than the text, it became essential, for the survival of the illustrated newspaper, that the image be accurate. From this need, the profession of the correspondent artist, the predecessor of the press photographer, was born, confirming the primacy of the image and, to some degree at least, repudiating the *ILN*'s practice of producing images from verbal descriptions. When Queen Victoria embarked upon a tour of Scotland in September 1842, scarcely four months after the *ILN* had first come out, the *ILN* promised to 'pictorially . . . record the visit of her Majesty to Scotland'. To this end, Bayley proudly announced,

we have provided, by securing to a distinguished artist a position near the immediate escort of our Sovereign during the whole progress of her journey . . . the drawings of every circumstantial adventure will be given, we are sure, with spirit in the delineation and accuracy in the detail. (*ILN* 1842: 272)

It was now the picture, taken on the spot, that ensured veracity of the reporting. While press coverage of royal tours was nothing new, to send a correspondent artist to illustrate the Queen's progress was. According to the Dalziel Brothers, one of the most successful engraver firms of the period, it was Ebenezer Landells, the *Punch* co-founder, who suggested this to Ingram. In the end, it was Landells himself who took over this role (Law 2009: 345). Indeed, the Dalziels wrote, 'it was the success of, and great interest taken in these pictures that had much to do with making the *ILN*' (Dalziel and Dalziel 1901: 6). The Queen's visit was covered over several issues in 1842 in considerable detail and with many architectural illustrations of Scottish towns and houses. The built thus became part of the royal success story.

Adorned with the 'ancient regalia of Scotland' and figures such as a highlander and a piper (**Fig. 7**), these images gain an almost emblematic status, furnished with meaning beyond the actual event depicted, in reverence to a queen who came to represent a whole cultural ethos of the period. Both Mason Jackson and Charles Knight, the publisher of the *Penny Magazine*, remarked on the special relationship between the Queen and the illustrated press (Jackson 1885: 296; Knight 1864, vol. 3: 246; see also Fox 1988: 279). In a way, the Queen served as a marker

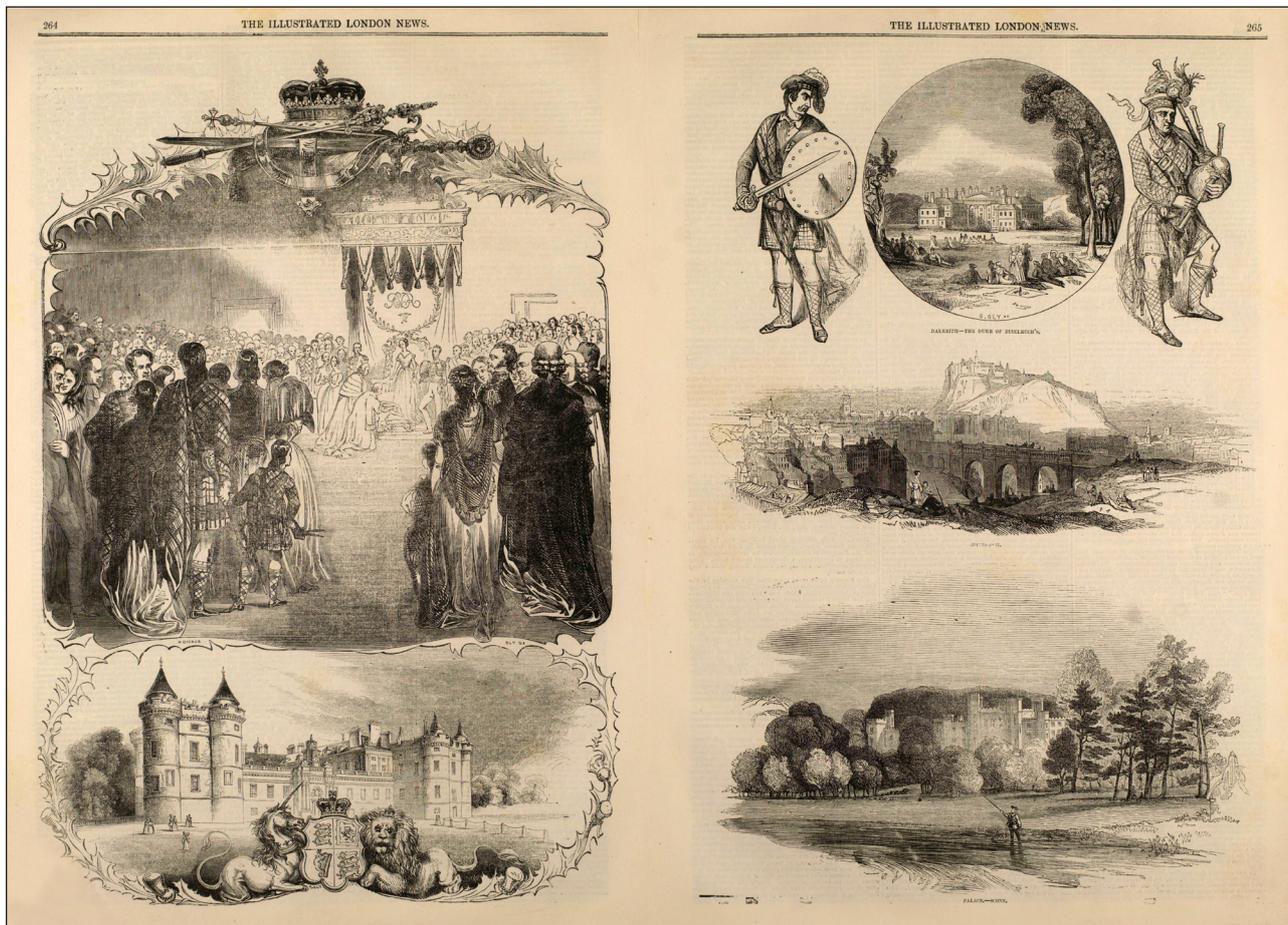


Figure 7: 'The Royal Visit to Scotland', *Illustrated London News*, 3 September 1842. © The British Library Board.

identifying the events – and spaces – to be depicted and consumed.

Accordingly, the *ILN* also did not lose its interest in the Royal Exchange simply because it had been completed; indeed, a far more exciting story still waited to be told: that of its opening by Queen Victoria. Preceded on 26 October 1844 by a historic survey of its two previous buildings, the issue of 2 November devoted no fewer than nine pages to the event. They contained detailed descriptions of guests attending, the places passed by the procession, as well as the Queen's dress, and presented nine images, most of which also featured, naturally, the building itself. Yet, as the image of Queen Victoria in her carriage en route to the opening on the issue's title page showed, the interest was now divided between the architecture and its occupants – on this day, royalty, the City's dignitaries and the cheering crowds, 'with all the circumstance befitting so truly national an event', took centre stage ('The Opening', 1844: 275) (**Fig. 8**).

In the images documenting the pageant from Buckingham Palace to Bank junction, Victoria's voluminous dress, minutely described and depicted, is mirrored in the gowns of the Lord Mayor and other notables as well as the festive drapery on galleries and ceilings. The *ILN* presented Tites's building in action, so to speak, in a series of vignettes – 'snatches' – of the various spaces through which Victoria passed during the event, both inside and out. First, there is a view from the balcony of Mansion

House, within sight of the Exchange and with spectators in the foreground cheering the arriving pageant, as well as a faceless crowd opposite ('The Opening', 1844: 276) (**Fig. 9**). Then follows the Queen passing through the portico, showing the decorations on the ceiling and the Corinthian capitals as well as the Latin mottos of the City and the Worshipful Company of Mercers embedded in foliage in the top left corner (**Fig. 10, top**). On the same page, the 'procession passing the north ambulatory' again divides its focus between the preciously clothed dignitaries and the florally decorated ceiling (**Fig. 10, bottom**). Images followed of the courtyard, where the floor tiling takes over the decorative role of the ceiling; the reception room, with the Queen on the throne; and the vestibule. (**Figs. 11, 12**). The building is thus turned into a stage for the news story, played out in the space of the city and tracked, as in a storyboard, on the printed page in word and image.

Of particular interest here is the interaction between the figures in the images and the built spaces they find themselves in: the actors and their stage. Very few illustrations of a building or built space in the *ILN* are ever unpopulated – in stark contrast to the professional magazines, such as the *Builder*, whose images were more often free of people. Commonly, the *ILN*'s domestic 'public' took the form of contented horse riders, strollers, carriage-riders or individuals engaged in some trade or another, all inhabiting the public and private spaces



Figure 8: 'Procession of Her Majesty to Open the New Royal Exchange — Delivery of the City Sword, at Temple Bar', *Illustrated London News*, 11 November 1844. © The British Library Board.

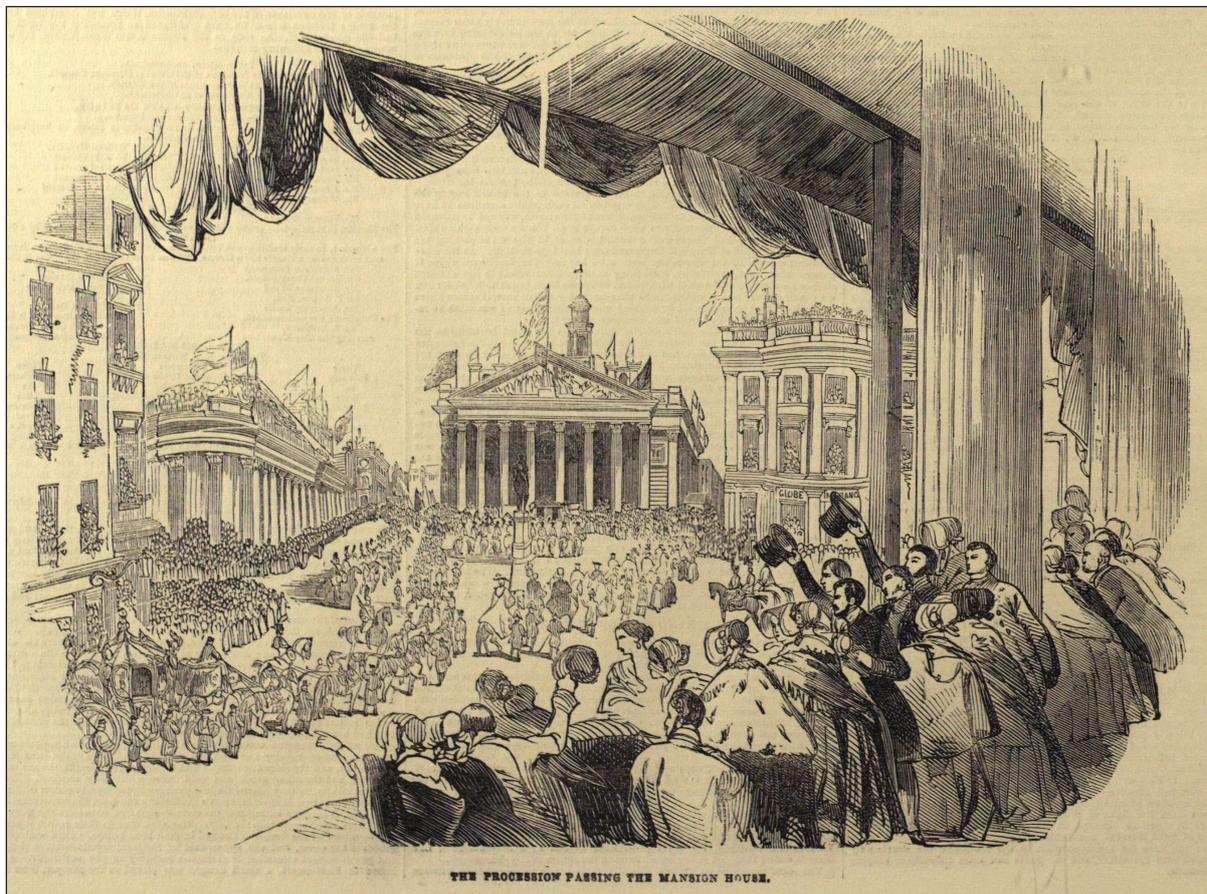


Figure 9: 'The Procession Passing the Mansion House', *Illustrated London News*, 11 November 1844. © The British Library Board.



Figure 10: 'Her Majesty Crossing the Great West Portico' and 'The Procession in the North Ambulatory', *Illustrated London News*, 11 November 1844. © The British Library Board.

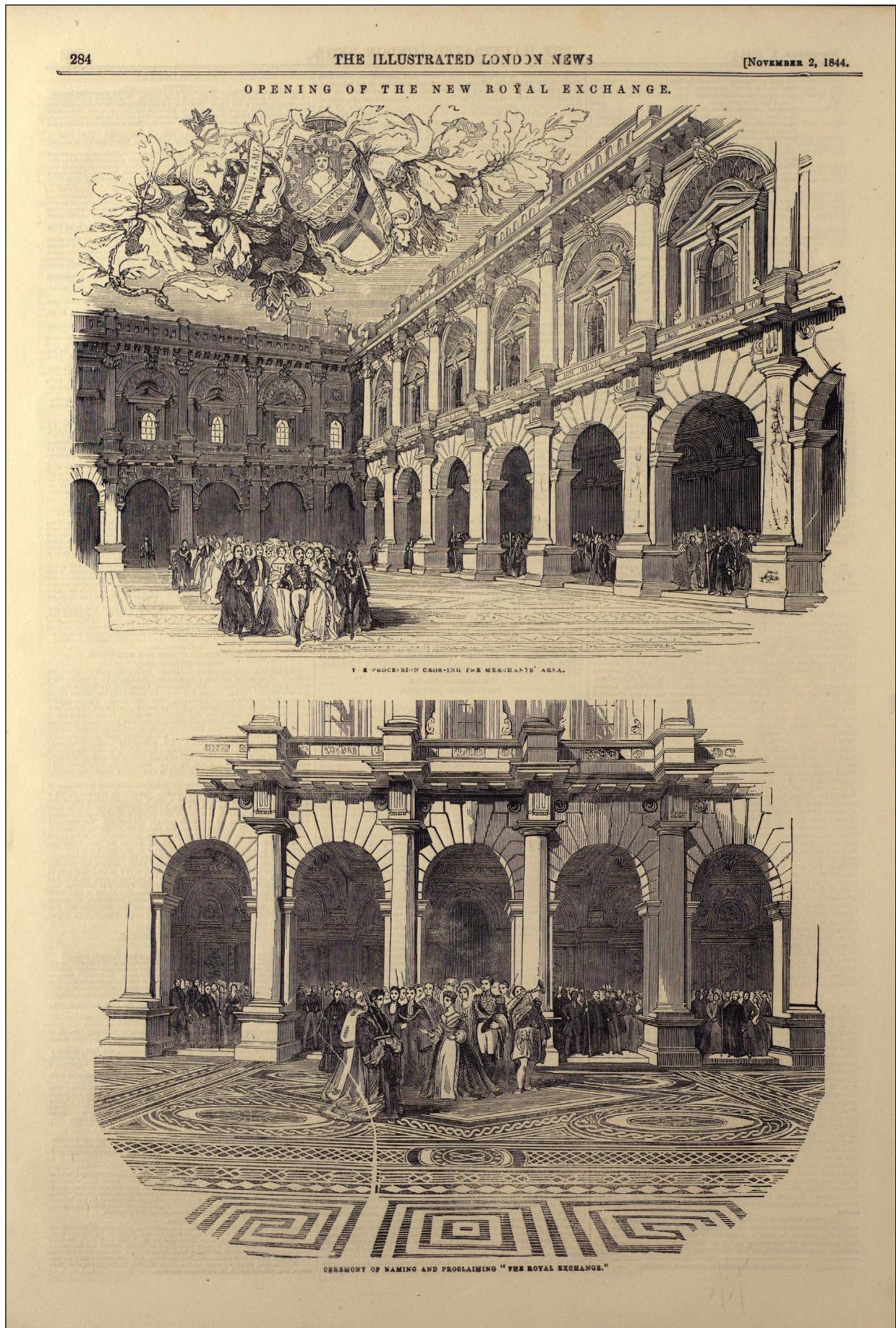


Figure 11: 'Procession Crossing the Merchants Area' and 'Ceremony of Naming and Proclaiming "The Royal Exchange"', *Illustrated London News*, 11 November 1844. © The British Library Board.

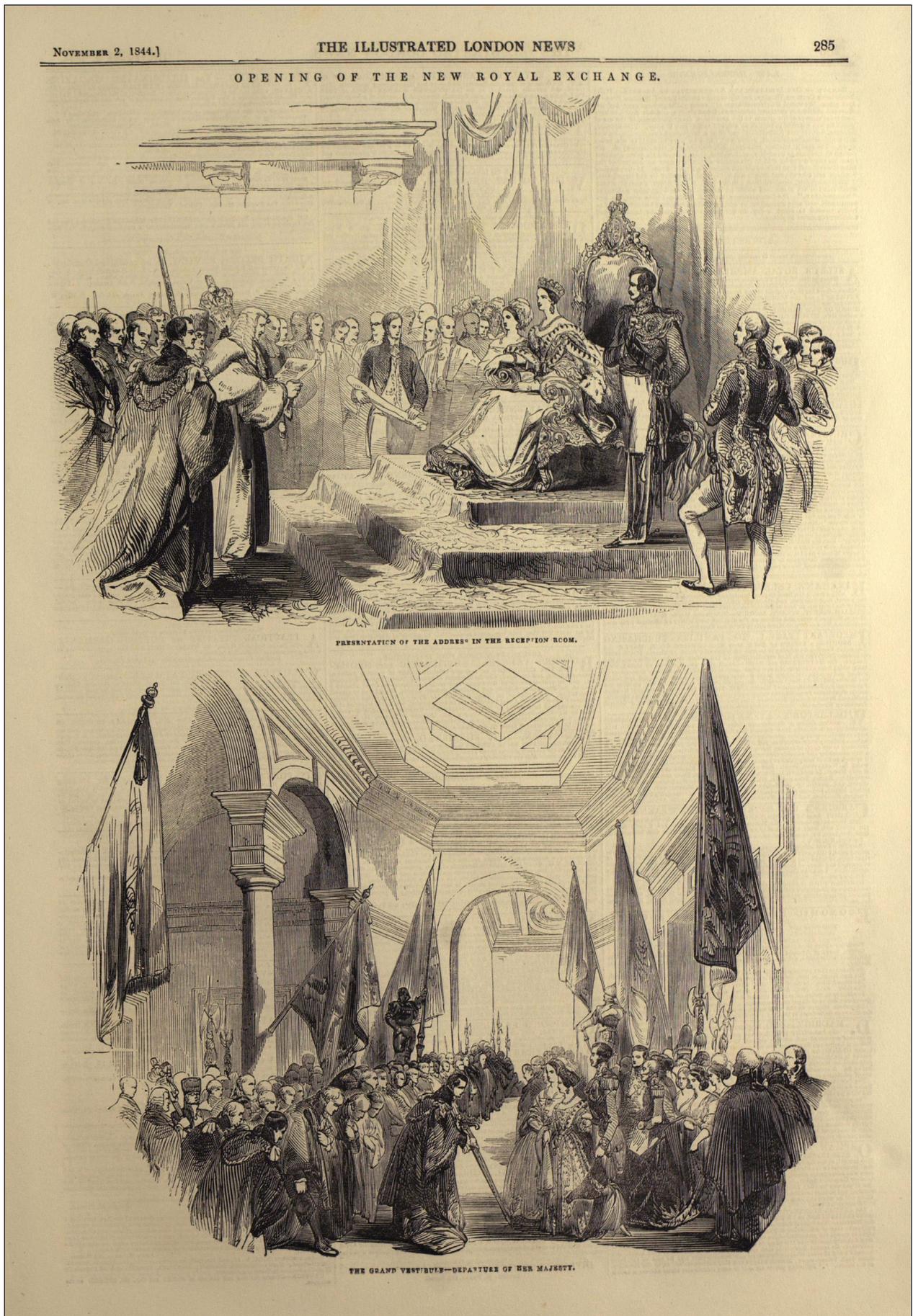


Figure 12: 'Presentation of the Address in the Reception Room' and 'The Grand Vestibule – Departure of Her Majesty', *Illustrated London News*, 11 November 1844. © The British Library Board.

of the world depicted. Generally, they are arranged in groupings of couples, families or single-sex clusters, with the odd carriage ploughing through and children running about (all visible in most of the images included here). These were safe and accepted social categories that would have been essential to any concept of Victorian happiness or attainment. Figures are shown both in foreground and backgrounds, often giving buildings their scale. Unless poverty is of central interest, figures are well-dressed, calm and orderly. As Charles Knight, the publisher of the earlier *Penny Magazine*, later wrote, it was the 'crowd of great people and respectable people' that populated the *ILN's* pages, and, he added, 'never, if possible, any exhibition of vulgar poverty' (1864, vol. 3: 247). The *ILN*, as Celina Fox has argued,

preferred to retain a safe academic distance rather than to explore fully subjects which could arouse the partisan passions of pity and indignation, disturb the comfort of the family circle, or pass on such images of the age to posterity. (1988: 284)

Patricia Anderson has claimed that it was in the illustrated press that 'the mass made itself' (1991: 156). Even if not all pictures in the *ILN* were crowded, strictly speaking, the figures portrayed bear the characteristics of parts of a crowd: they melt into the uniformity of respectability. This is true of pictures which are only sparsely peopled, such as the earlier images of the Royal Exchange, as well as of those which show a throng of people, such as of its opening, in which part of the depicted figures dissolve into an undistinguishable, faceless, yet not threatening, mass engulfing the buildings (Fig. 9). As Knight remarked, 'The scenery is varied; the actors are the same' (1864, vol. 3: 246).

The homogenisation of figures had partly practical reasons: to increase efficiency in the production of its images, the *ILN's* draughtspeople quickly began to divide up the work within each single image, with some specialising in the representation of people, others of architecture, foliage, skies or even waves (see Jackson 1885: 320). The technological and mechanical conditions of the image thus directly informed its contents and message. Andrea Korda has linked the mode of representation adopted by the *ILN* to the discourse of 'mechanical objectivity, which helped cultivate a new standard of immediacy' by validating the image as truthful (2014: 32). Most architectural images in the *ILN* adopted the elevated viewpoint, above natural eye level; a 'trick', Korda contends, which

convinces viewers of the mechanical objectivity of the image since it denies the bodily presences of the author, and therefore any interference on the part of an active will, a physiologically variable body or the environment itself. . . . The existence of an embodied subjective self, in the body of either the draughtsman or the viewer, is entirely suppressed, and the newspaper's readers are led to believe that they are seeing the event for themselves. (Korda 2014: 36)

Korda describes the images in the *ILN* as detached, with strong linear perspective, people depicted indistinctly and often separated from the reader through a physical barrier as well as empty space in the foreground. Importantly, she claims, the *ILN's* striving for 'immediacy' and for 'faithful transcripts of appearances, in order to let readers "see for themselves"', required an emotional detachment of the reader from the depicted subject (2014: 68). One saw, remotely, but did not really look.

And yet, what influence did this emphasis on the mechanical objectivity of the image, and the homogenisation of the urban population, have on the perception and cognition of the built? Did this distancing, this urge to see like a machine, like the photographic camera that had only just been invented and yet was already widely employed, have any effect on the perception of architecture? In some ways, the *ILN* focused the gaze on the environment in which the actors played their roles: if there was little interest in the variety or individuality among the people portrayed, then perhaps the accustomed reader's eye focused on the spaces which contained them instead. On the other hand, if one assumes that contemporary readers were keen (or meant to be keen) to fit into this standard of the bourgeois citizen, then these architectural images presented life scenes, inviting readers to project themselves into the pictures, taking the place of one of the figures roaming the public space around the depicted buildings. Indeed, I argue that these standardised figures serve as signifiers for a static public sphere: a safeguarded civic realm immune to change and upheaval, even if its material conditions – industrial progress – and physical container – buildings – changed all the time. It is clear from these pictures that it is not so much royal power that keeps these spaces stable but rather the silent power of the respectable bourgeoisie: it is not the Queen who visually controls the images of the Exchange's opening. She is not as a rule presented in the centre, and while the eye is often drawn to her figure, at times one has to seek her out, recognisable through her clothes and, often, the tall, slim figure of Prince Albert shadowing her. As John Plunkett has pointed out, the countless images of the royal couple 'surrounded by loyal and cheering crowds' served not to present themselves as 'spectacle'; rather, 'the spectacle is of popular constitutionalism and a public sphere in which royalty was legitimated' (Plunkett 2005: 23–24).

The role of the buildings depicted then is clear: not only do they provide the physical stage for the conformist actors, but they also act themselves, brought to life through word and image. In the case of the Colosseum article, the route through the building creates a kinetic effect on the reader, the Queen's Scotland tour is represented by the eye-witness artist sharing the royal experience with the reader, and the series of articles on the exchange shows all the different roles a building can assume, from architectural design to historical artefact and flag-waving spectator of a royal pageant. Buildings are turned into events themselves, becoming one with the news story being told.

'To the great public'

Bayley's preface to the first annual volume of the *ILN*, so clearly meant for posterity, ends in a 'Dedicatory Sonnet', in which the public, 'that gigantic soul', is personified as the single entity giving 'life and light' to the nation – the life, in turn, that is 'pictured' in the *ILN* with all its emotions, 'all the hues' and 'fair domestic joy'. In short, it is 'the *new*' which is gifted 'to the great public' ('Preface', 1842). On the pages of the illustrated newspaper, everything becomes news that is worth being pictured, illustrated, 'made clear or evident to the mind'. Presuming a certain degree of visual literacy right from the start, the *ILN*, alongside other printed outputs of the time, changed the relationship between word, image and building. It did this by drawing readers into a dialogue between themselves and the newspaper's authors, commonly presented as the editorial 'we'. At times, this 'we' even included readers, expressing shared experiences only possible to be conveyed through a combination of the verbal and the visual and resulting in the creation of that 'great public', the community of informed writers and readers moving in conformity through the public sphere – both the virtual one of print and the physical of buildings. The correlation between word and image remained dynamic and malleable, rather than fixed and static, very much expressed in the way they were laid out on the pages and spreads of the *ILN*. As the etymology of the term 'illustration' has shown, the very idea of illustrating, whether verbally or graphically, was formed at exactly this moment, tried out and tested in relationship to the represented objects, whether inanimate or alive.

As Hill and Schwartz have maintained, 'The news picture's optimal public is always the most generalized conceivable public', indicating the necessary homogenisation of figures, spaces and structures that occurred on the pages of the *ILN* (2015: 5). The central question underlying this article was how the distinct duality of word and image in the illustrated press influenced the public perception of cities and buildings. Exploring a range of articles from the first decade of its existence, the 1840s, this article has demonstrated that the inclusion of images in the reporting on architectural matters essentially transformed the ways in which readers were expected to appreciate, understand and, importantly, act within the built spaces of their time. It positioned architecture as a key player in establishing a stable virtual public sphere in print to counter the increasing speed of change and transformations occurring in the physical public realm. By relieving readers of the task of visualising text in their minds, the illustrated press externalised and stabilised vision, while at the same time introducing a new mode of kinetic experience through the combination of word and image, making the building move in front of the static, place-less reader. Buildings normalised the spectacular; the familiar order of the built environment turned the image into respectable news appropriate for the bourgeois reader. The architectural image in the early *ILN* thus epitomises that nineteenth-century paradox of the static versus flux, the striving for progress while fervently holding on to the past, endeavouring to find origins and truthfulness.

Notes

- ¹ All images from the *ILN* are reproduced with kind permission of The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).
- ² The public in both Habermas's account and the *ILN* excludes a range of other 'public spheres' that did not fit into the tight bourgeois prescription of society (see Eley 1994).
- ³ This image was printed five months later on the front page of the *ILN*'s French equivalent *L'Illustration* (9 November 1844: 145).

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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