Reappropriating Cultural Memory of the Preston Lock-Out: Can Animation Be Used to Refocus and Reposition Historical Events Using Historical Visual Archives?

Sarah Ann Kennedy-Parr

Abstract

Inspired by a collection of drawings in the Lancashire Archives about the Preston Lock-out of 1853–1854, I embarked on the creation of an animated film utilising the artwork. The objective was to contextualize the Irish women featured within the narrative and provide them with a backstory. Through analysis of these drawings – something that was absolutely necessary for making the film – I gained a deeper understanding of the social unrest and intricate societal dynamics prevailing in Preston during this period. By conveying this knowledge through the medium of moving images, I sought to share new insights into the lives of these women with a broader audience.

Introduction

Can animation be used to reconstruct, analyse and refocus events in history using historical drawings and artefacts from that time? Many records of the Preston lock-out are kept in the Lancashire Archives including five historic drawings, which form part of the *Lancashire Evening Post* collection.[1] There are no records of who created these drawings. They survive alongside scrap books which were owned and compiled by Henry Ashworth, a cotton master in Bolton who followed the Preston dispute closely and wrote a history of the event in 1854. It is likely that the drawings were put there by Ashworth, but we cannot be certain.

The first drawing in the series was used on the cover of Dutton and King's book on the lock-out, but they did not examine them closely in the book itself.[2] Jack Hepworth, in a study of the Irish in Preston, mentions them briefly, arguing that the images 'merely caricatured the Irish labourers'.[3] Drawing number three was used in a project to mark

I would like to express thanks to Kate Flint for her helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

[1] Lancashire Archives, DDPR/138/87B. Drawings reproduced in this article with permission from Lancashire Archives.

[2] H.I. Dutton and J.E. King, *'Ten per Cent and No Surrender': The Preston Strike, 1853–1854* (Cambridge, 1981).

[3] J. Hepworth, 'Between Isolation and Integration: Religion, Politics, and the Catholic Irish in Preston, c.1829–1868', *Immigrants & Minorities* 38:1–2 (2020): 77–104.

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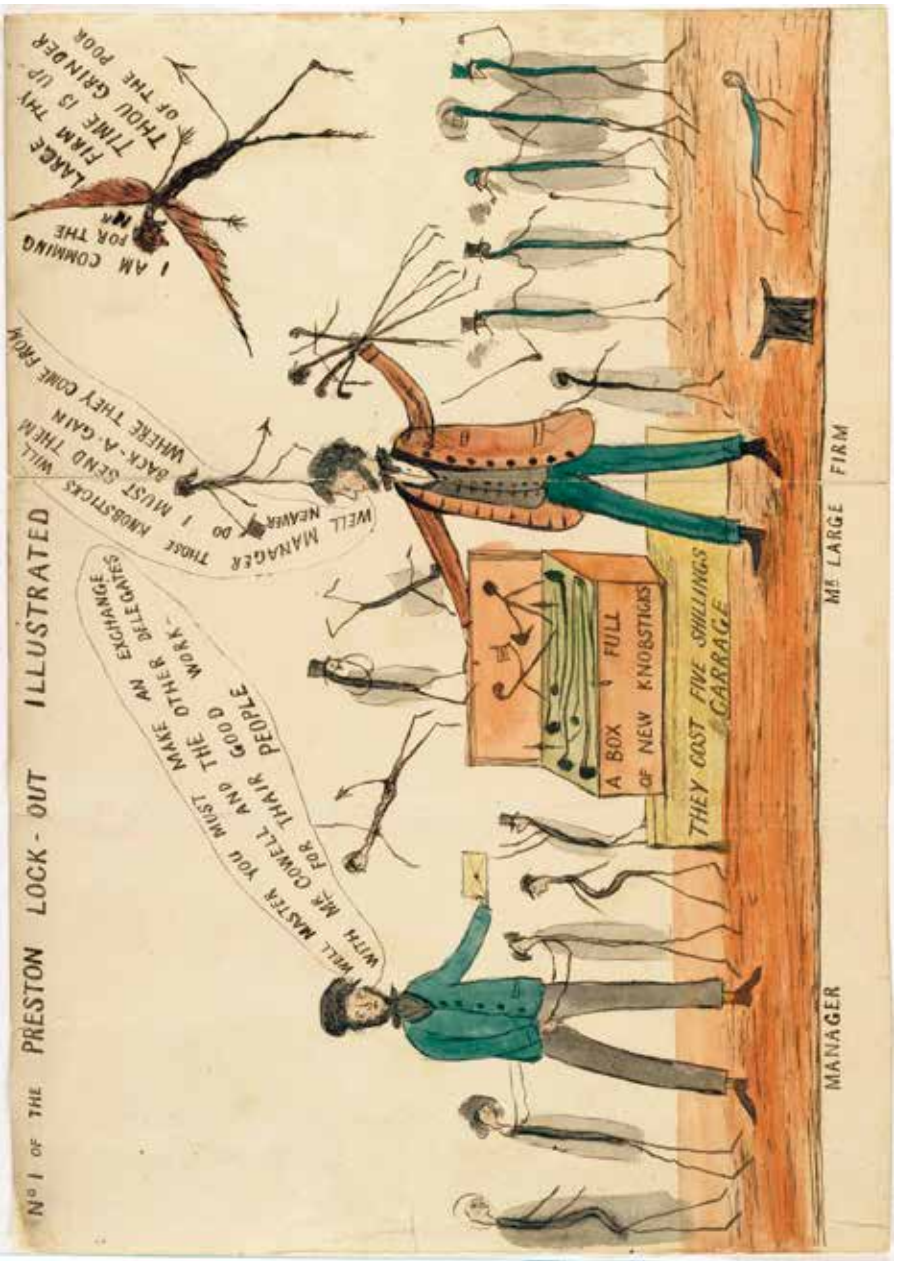

Figure 1: 'No 1 of the Preston Lock-Out Illustrated'

Source: Lancashire Archives, DDPR/138/87B. Drawings reproduced with the permission of Lancashire Archives.

the bicentenary of Charles Dickens's birth in 2012.[4] Dickens visited Preston during the lock-out in 1854 and wrote of this experience in his magazine *Households Words*. I wanted to make a film about these drawings to bring them to wider attention, and to provide a new perspective on the event. This article explains how I used them as inspiration to create an animated film, and how the experience of working so closely with these visual representations gave new insights into this historical event. It was imperative that the animated film did not 'reinterpret' the drawings or try to make the portrayals 'better' or drawn in a more aesthetic way. It needed to show the Irish women exactly the way they are represented in the sketches. These drawings illustrate how the Irish women and children were depicted at the time of the event, and by using them alongside research and context, the film aims to give a new focus to the event.

The Irish

I found the drawings mesmerizing and was immediately struck by the language that they contain as well as the visual content. The main protagonists of these drawings are the Irish female workers who were imported to break the strike in early 1854. I found an immediate connection because of my Irish heritage – my family comes from Northern Ireland, specifically Belfast and Limavady. The first drawing has no obvious reference to Irish culture apart from a subtle use of imagery. The characters portrayed are mainly men but the imagery of the box of knobsticks or 'scabs' is reminiscent of my father's walking stick made from Irish blackthorn. The term 'knobstick' became well known during the first half of the nineteenth century, and referred to a person who crosses a picket line. It is thought to be a northern term, but its precise origins are unclear. What kind of walking stick are they referring to? Possibly a cane, derby or dress cane?

Figure 2: The author's father, Irishman Robert Miller Kennedy, with his Irish blackthorn walking stick, one of the inspirations for the film

Source: Author's photograph.

[4] *The Guardian*, 7 February 2012.

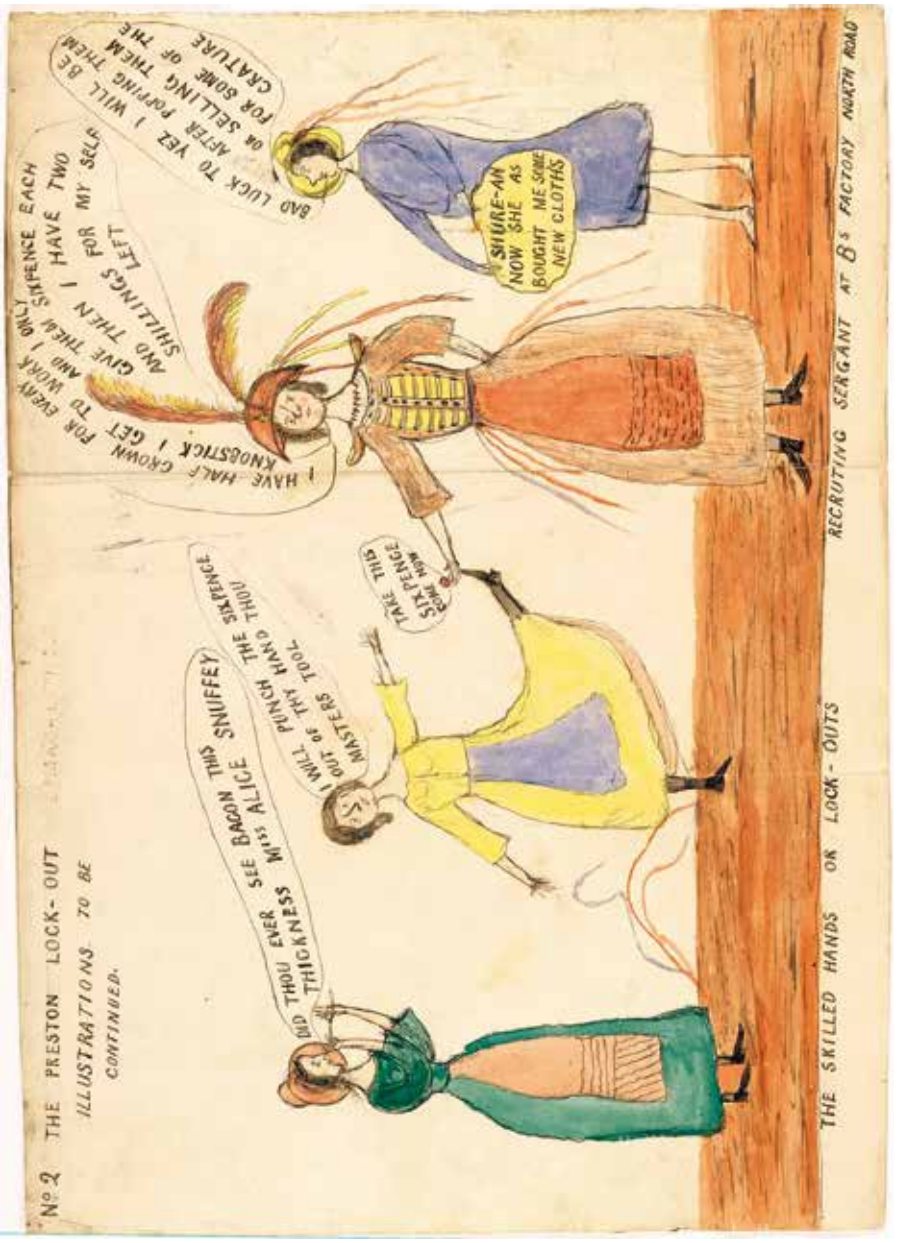

Figure 3: 'No 2 the Preston Lock-Out Illustrations to be continued'

Source: As for Figure 1.

In this second drawing, the indication that the recruited are Irish is clearer. The dialogue of the woman in light blue dress on the right says, 'Bad luck to yez, I will be after popping them or selling them for some creature.' On the bag it states, 'Shure-an now she has bought me some new clothes.' The dialogue hints at an Irish accent which becomes more obvious in later pictures. The title on the right-hand bottom corner states this took place at B's factory North Road, a reference to Birley Brothers' cotton mill. Hepworth argues that the images portray the Irish as naïve and prone to exploitation, and served principally to denounce English cotton masters.[5] He felt that the images merely caricatured the Irish labourers as folksy and nostalgic, albeit being broadly sympathetic with the workers by sharing the English operatives' hatred of the bosses who they insulted with 'pug-ma-hone … may the devils skure [skewer] them'. I felt there was something more to understand than just a 'folksy and nostalgic' look at the Irish. To me, they tell a story of the involvement of these Belfast Irish women in this struggle, their exploitation, and their desperation.

Hepworth's interpretation of the portrayal of the recruiters is accurate, but his claim that the Irish were portrayed broadly sympathetically is less convincing. He does not mention that they were Irish women, who were mainly drawn with their breasts exposed, or the comments from the manager or the owner on their desirability. In later drawings this becomes more obvious. Máirtín Ó Catháin argues elsewhere in this volume that the language depicted in these cartoons reflects a more rustic way of speaking that is more akin to the portrayal of the Irish Catholics and the West of Ireland than workers from Belfast. There is no dispute that these workers were imported by Birley Brothers from the workhouse in Belfast, but this opens up more questions. Did the creator of these drawings depict all Irish people with the same characteristics regardless of Christian denomination or birthplace? Had these Irish migrated north from the West of Ireland and rural Ireland in search of work in Belfast in the shipbuilding industry and linen mills? At this point in Irish history, following the great Famine, many people were flooding into Belfast, so the workers imported by the Birley Brothers may well have been Catholics from rural Ireland who could not find work.

The aim of the film is to tell the story of the Irish women in the drawings and to use the visual record to open discussion about this event. Animation adds movement, sound and visual effects to historical drawings, making them more engaging and captivating. Animation literally means 'bringing to life'. It is a way of bringing history to life and encourages audiences to explore and discuss the historical context further. Animating historical drawings allows for the creation of a narrative structure with sequenced events, and allows the past to be presented in an accessible way. The film looked to tell the story of these female Irish workers through these archive cartoons. As Bryan Alexander puts it,

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[5] Hepworth, 'Between Isolation and Integration', 15.

> Reassembling previously existing materials (language, media, audience, lives), perhaps we can go further and see stories as consisting of some selections from the set of available cultural practices, crafted to represent events chronologically.[6]

Figure 4 is the third drawing in this series. There is a more visible, explicit reference to these workers being Irish in this drawing. The woman is saying, 'By the Powers of Moll Kelly the devil as swallowed a brush and choked himself.' The name Moll Kelly is a typical Irish name.

The Script, Production and Animation

Initially I used all the drawings to create a script to tell their story – one which would include all the dialogue. The script ended up being about 15 pages long, so approximately 15 minutes of screen time (not including title and credits.) To animate this script, it would need to be broken down into seconds to give an approximate production time. There are 25 frames per second so for a minute it is 1500 frames. Each frame represents a drawing or movement. Multiply 1500 by 15 minutes (the length of the script) and this gives you 22,500 frames or drawings. Most animation is not done on single frames but on twos or even threes (but then the quality goes down) so if I was animating on 'twos' that would mean 11,250 frames or drawings.

When I directed Crapston Villas for Channel 4 in 1996, each animator was expected to animate about five seconds' worth of film a day. Animating on 'twos' means 60 'drawings' or 'movements' (if it is stop frame) a day. Modern technology allows for some short cuts but an estimated production time would be approximately 187 working days. This calculation is based on someone animating full-time on the film and not just in the evenings and weekends. That's 37 weeks. This does not include pre-production, when the assets for the film are created. Assets are the backgrounds, the layouts, the character designs, the storyboard, the animatic and any rigging of characters. An animatic is a rough draft of an animated film using the storyboard pictures to see if the timing is right and to test if the shots are working together in sequence. It is at this point that an animation director will edit and re-edit the film to ensure that they do not animate a scene that is not used later. Rigging a character is when you create a kind of skeleton for a character, which can speed up animation because you can just move a part of the arm rather than keep re-drawing it which is called 'frame by frame' animation. Technology has meant that there are many different methods to creating an animated film and you can use various methods in one film.

There is also the voice recording and the edit of the soundtrack before the animation

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[6] B. Alexander, *The New Digital Storytelling: Creating narratives with new media* (Westport CT, 1997), 6.

Figure 4: 'The Devil Room'

Source: As for Figure 1.

can start. In the western tradition of Disney and Park, I like to record the voices first so that the mouth movements can be accurately lip synched. Traditionally this was done using paper dope sheets and 16mm magnetic tape, which was the method I was taught. A dope sheet is a name for the exposure sheet. In the early twenty-first century the 'dope sheet' or exposure sheet allows the animation director to write down instructions for the animators and the rostrum camera person to follow, to enable them to draw and shoot the animation accurately. For example, how many frames per drawing and if there is a camera move. The dope sheet or exposure sheet is also used to write down phonetically the sounds of the voice recording so that the animator can ensure the lip-synch is accurate. In the UK we tend to call them dope sheets and, in the States, they tend to be called exposure sheets or X sheets.

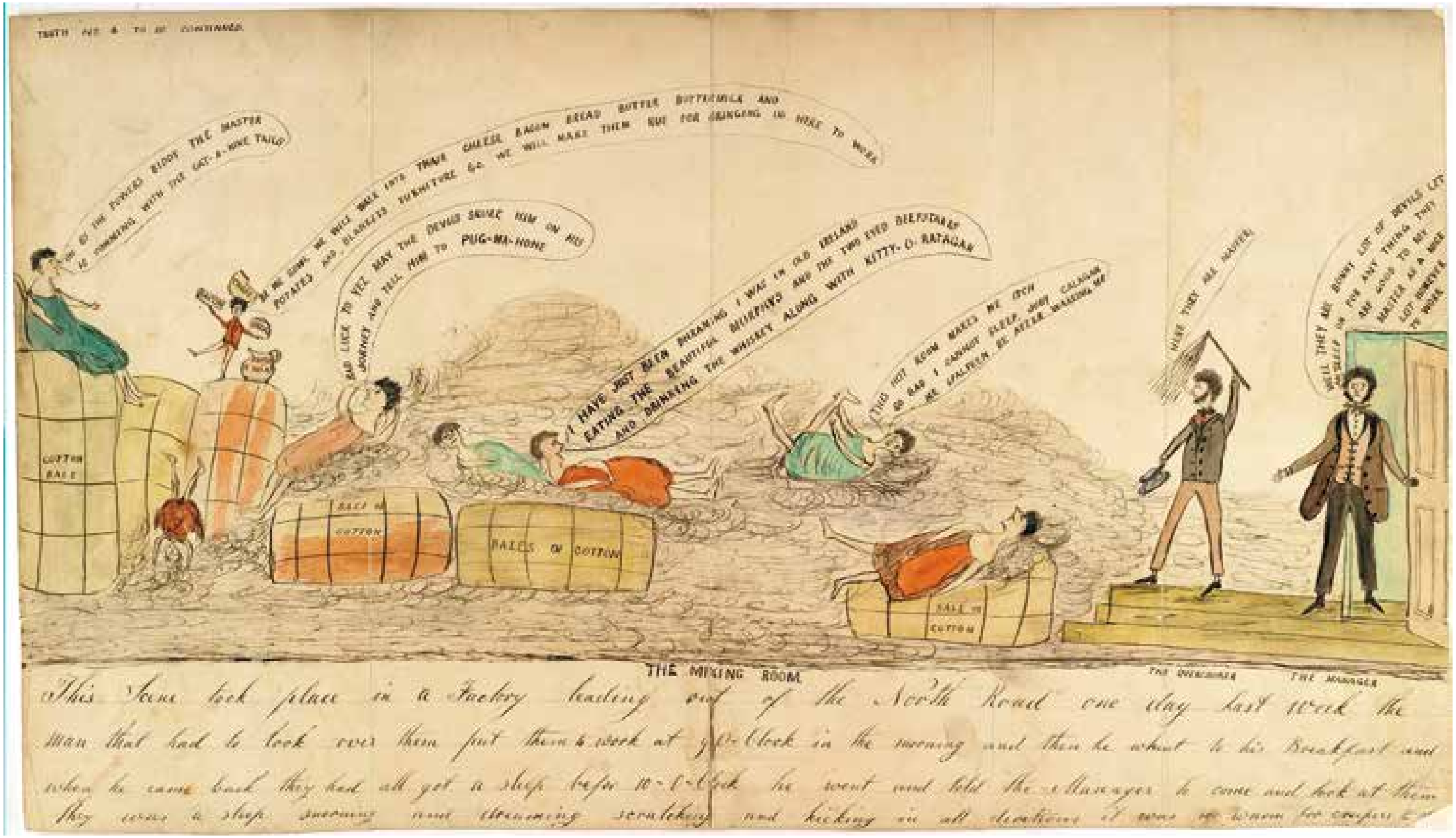
The magnetic tape is scrolled through the sound head and the sound of the voice would be phonetically written down on the dope sheets, for example a Lancashire 'hello' might be written as 'ehhhhlooow'. Each sound of the word is written onto sheets and is broken into frames at 24 frames a second. Today most animators put the pre-recorded voice track into animation software and can see the sound in correlation to the picture. There are still useful guides to help people use specific mouth shapes with certain sounds. M, P, B are represented by a closed mouth, whilst OO is represented by a small round mouth or AH is represented by an open mouth. Most animators like to create their own mouth shapes to give some sense of ownership of their characters and ensure that the style has continuity and to stop it looking generic.

It was clear that I would either have to dedicate at least a year to creating this film or get some help. I decided to create a taster of the film which I could use to raise some funding to make a longer film, which would enable me to work with a crew of people to create the final film.

Deciding on how many drawings or which area to focus on for the taster was a difficult decision because I wanted to show the context of these characters. In drawing 4 (Figure 5) the women are ridiculed: 'I have just been dhraming I was in old Ireland eating the beautiful murphy's and the two eyed beef stakes and drinking the whiskey with Kitty-O-Ratagan.' The women are also depicted topless, as they had been in drawing no 3 (Figure 4), but in this one they are holding their hands between their legs, possibly alluding to an inappropriate act. The working environment may have been incredibly hot but there are other ways of showing characters working in heat. Looking at historical etchings of women mill workers in 1834 in the Granger Historical Picture Archive, it is clear that women mill workers are fully clothed despite the heat, perhaps to protect themselves from the machinery. The Irish women in these cartoon drawings are drawn as figures of fun, figures to be ridiculed and denigrated.

The main colours used for their clothing are orange and green like the Irish flag or maybe representing Protestant and Catholic. It is uncertain, but the inclusion of these colours opens up questions about who these women are. There is one Irish woman who spots the overlooker with his whip and cries, 'Oh by the powers Biddy the master is

Figure 5: 'The Mixing Room: Truth No. 4 To be continued'



Source: As for Figure 1.

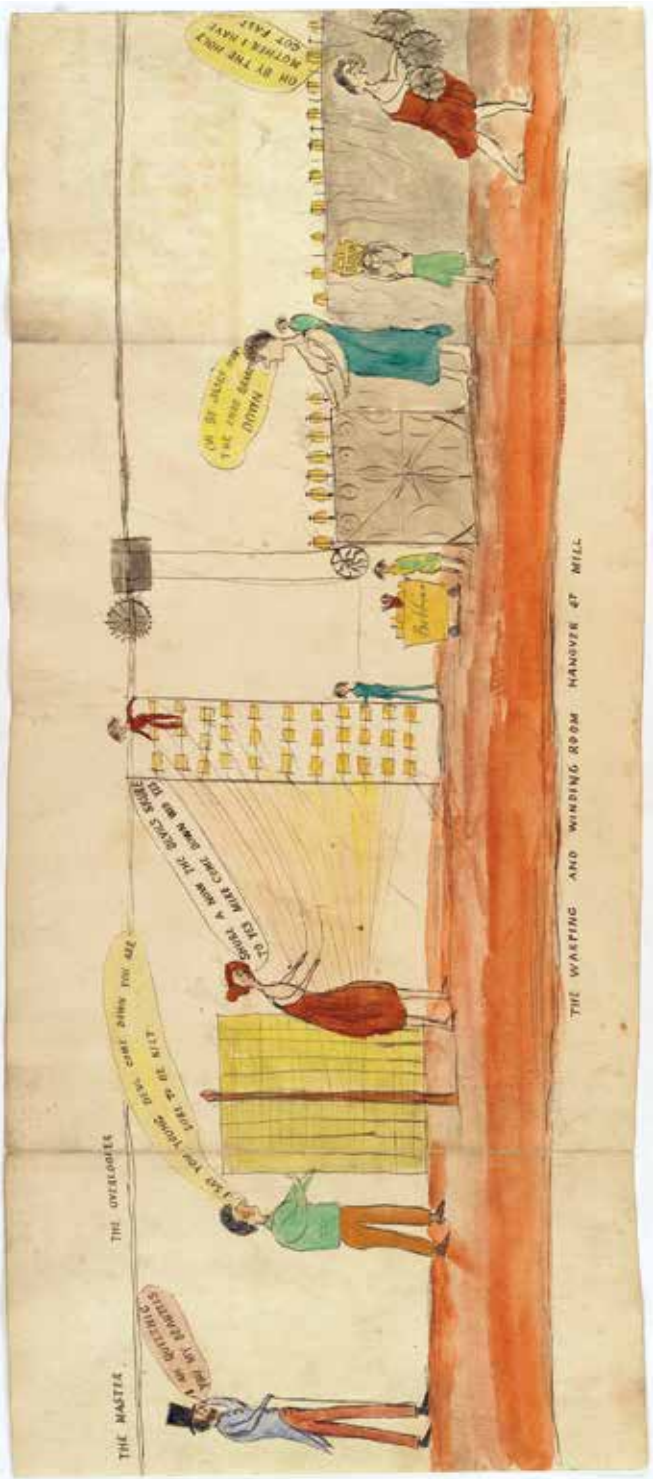


Figure 6: 'The Warping and Winding Room, Hanover St Mill'

Source: As for Figure 1.

coming with the cat-a-nine tails'. The other women ignore her and carry on with their various lazy and inappropriate activities. The viewer is supposed to feel sympathy with the poor overlooker having to deal with these outrageous unskilled workers. There is a handwritten section at the bottom of the drawing that says, 'This scene took place in a factory leading out of North Road one day last week the man that had to look over them put them to work at 9 o'clock in the morning and then went to his breakfast and he came back they had all got a sleep before 10 o'clock he went and told the manager to come and look at them. They were a sleep scratching and kicking in all directions it was so warm for creepers to …' In the drawing the manager's response to the overlooker is 'Well they are bonny lot of devils let am sleep on for anything they are good to my master as a nice lot however to work.' I feel a hint at sexual exploitation.

Figure 6 shows the final drawing in the series. Once again, the overlooker appears exasperated, saying, 'I say young devil come down you are sure to be kilt.' The master (mill owner) seems over-excited, 'I am quizzing you my beauties.' The Irish women are portrayed as topless again, and incompetent with the master appearing to ogle at them. This image is a clearer indicator that the women were objectified or maybe the artist thought it was funny that they might be because they were so clearly poor and scruffy.

Illustration no 3, 'The Devil Room' (Figure 4), felt like the pivotal point in the story, the point where it dawns on the owner that employing these Irish will affect the quality and amount of production, and I felt there was some space in this to give sufficient context to their story.

Making the Film

Initially, I used all the dialogue from this drawing to create the script. I wanted to work with Lancashire actors to play the owner and the manager and then have women and children from Belfast play the imported workers. I contacted Belfast Metropolitan College and made a connection with Janis Leaden who teaches drama there. She also works with children in a drama club so would be able to cast the younger members of the cast. It felt important to work with women and children from Belfast to give authenticity to the project as well as to share this historical event with them. The male voice actor was from Lancashire, Terence Chapman, and he played the mill owner. Again, explaining the context of the film and using authentic voices was important in sharing this story with people whose heritage I shared and was animating.

When recording animated voices, you do not have to record all the voices together. Terence was recorded first but it made me realise that the script dragged a bit and needed some more context to allude to what the whole film might be about. To me, the drawings told a story about the suffering of these Irish women and children at the hands of the mill owners and managers. I also felt there were parallels between the migrant crisis today and the mass migration of the Irish during the potato famine. The potato famine finished in 1852 but the fallout of poverty rippled through Ireland afterwards. I was interested

in the way the Irish were portrayed in these drawings, the lack of sympathy for them, or understanding of their situation, and of why they were there. The scene starts with the owner's initial exasperation at the lack of skills and knowledge these Irish workers have: rather than keep the whole of this character's dialogue I cut it back and changed it slightly so that he just says, 'By Jove Jenson I'm going to be ruined. I'm losing above 100%.' I then added, 'These Irish workers won't do.' In the drawing he also says, 'I had better give my old hands Blackburn price at first.' The reference to the Blackburn price alludes to the mills in surrounding areas that had been given a ten per cent rise. This is the reason for the strike itself. The Preston mill owners refused to give the ten per cent so the workers walked out and the owners locked them out.

I wanted the focus to be on the Irish women and on their situation, and the reason for the strike would be part of the cultural backdrop of their story and something to highlight later in the film. The camera pans across drawing 3 towards the Irish woman who is panicking at the sight of the loom. Her dialogue was cut completely because it was made clear through the visuals that she didn't know what she was doing. The previous dialogue from the owner also covered this, and there would be no need to repeat it because it would slow the pace of the film down. 'Show not tell' is a useful guide when writing a script or making a film. The child is the next focus of the script. In the drawing she says, 'In faith must I put some cotton on this end.'

From the drawing it is clear the Irish child does not know what she is doing. To include her speech in the film would be to repeat the same information and although this works when looking at a still drawing, the brain needs time to absorb information and make connections when looking at strip cartoons. A film requires different conventions to keep an audience engaged. Repetition of action or dialogue can become boring and key questions like 'How is this moving the story on?' resonated in my head. I felt it was important to explore the experience of the Irish through this child's voice, to add another dimension to the film and give some layers to the story. I wanted the voice to sound innocent and yet be saying phrases and names that many Irish were called during this period. The aim was to make the audience feel uncomfortable, particularly as her delivery was sweet and innocent, as if this child is used to this abuse. The child is not shocked or angry, she is matter-of-fact, accepting of it and almost proud. I wanted the audience to understand how the Irish women felt at that time, so they were the focus of my story.

We cut to a close-up of the girl, who starts off saying, 'This is the Devil Room' (Figure 7). This is the title of the drawing, the name of the room they are working in: the 'devil' was a machine that loosened the fibres of the raw cotton, and cleaned the dirt from it. The name indicates the risks this room contains, fast moving machinery, and the air full of cotton particles leading to respiratory problems. Next, she goes on to say that 'We are the Irish devils.' I wanted her delivery to sound tongue-in-cheek, as if she knew how she was seen and almost revelled in the fear and disgust that that produced in the English people. She morphs into a devil, then a dog repeating phrases that the

Irish were called at this time, "The dogs, the dirt, the paddies, the potato diddley dee men or the bog trotters' (Figures 8–9). This part of the film is deliberately uncomfortable for various reasons. The voice saying these words is a young innocent Irish girl, played by Scarlet Blair, and the images are taken from photographs of the Irish in the potato famine. I was careful to make sure that the young Irish girl reading the script was aware of the context of this script, and that she understood the history of Ireland, and how the place and standing of Irish people in the world has now changed. But I also felt it

Figures 7–9: Stills from *The Knobsticks* by Sarah Ann Kennedy-Parr

Source: The author.

was important to show the parallels with the migrant crisis today and how important it is to see migrants as people, and not as a mass of nameless faces.

The story then cuts back to the Devil Room and the women struggling with the machine. When designing the Irish woman in the scene I wanted to keep her exactly as she was drawn. My understanding of Victorian etiquette at this time leads me to believe that the creator of these drawings assumes that these impoverished workers had no sense of decorum. If these women were to be seen as extremely poor, they did not necessarily have to show their breasts. They could have been wearing ragged clothes. Exposing your breasts in a public place in Victorian times would have been shocking and seen as an indication of a lack of virtue, a disregard for appearances. Virtue and respectability were characteristics that were seen as going hand-in-hand with beauty in Victorian times. Ruskin 'sees beauty only in the face; the beauty of the face reflects the virtues, while the body can display only corrupting influences'.[7] To me, this depiction showed a lack of respect for these women; a lack of understanding of who they were and what they had been through. Although it would have been unbelievably hot in the mill, which would also account for the lack of clothing, I felt these caricatures of the Irish women needed some context, so rather than cover them up I felt they should be animated exactly as they were drawn.

There is a voice-over by Janis Leaden, from the Belfast Metropolitan College, which explains the rest of the story over visuals of the women struggling with the machinery, the title, and a train pulling into Preston train station with the Irish worker and the child on board – which finally morphs into images of migrants today.

Once the script was written, I recorded the dialogue and then started to work out the visuals. I created a rough storyboard. This is when you break the script down into shots and decide what angle and shot size you are going to have. I wanted to stay as true to the drawings as possible, so rather than creating a 3D version of the story, I kept the drawing very flat like the original drawings. This was a clear connection between the drawings and the film. There was little perspective in these original sketches, so it felt more suitable to keep the shots on a 2D plane. I scanned the drawings into Photoshop and removed the characters by cutting them out of the background and replacing these blank areas with re-creations of the backgrounds. It was important that this was seamless so that you could not tell that any characters had ever been in these scenes. This would give me creative freedom with the characters and they would be animated on another layer.

The characters were then pasted into another Photoshop file to be exported out as PNG files with transparent backgrounds. These PNG files could then be imported into Adobe Animate as reference. The animation was created using a combination of 'frame by frame' and rigged characters. The character designs were fairly easy because they were exact copies of the original drawings. Once the action of the characters and the camera had been mapped out in the storyboard and the animatic it was clear what action each

[7] I. Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, gender, empire and the cultures of travel* (Durham, NC, 1996), 37.

character needed to perform. This is what dictates the rig or frame-by-frame method. Planning is key with animation, and everything has to be designed before starting. The main background was finished, and so was the storyboard, before I began the animation. I wanted to be quite economical with the animation because there was little time to do it in. Each scene or storyboard panel was planned so that the owner had more moveable parts than the manager. The owner needed to be lip-synched, to move his arms and body and his hat needed to fall off, so this character had to be split into several parts so that each area could be rigged or made into a object. The face was animated frame by frame. As the film pans across the manager, he reacts to the owner and then turns to the Irish woman. This is done frame by frame with just six drawings as the head turns round. If the movement is quite quick, it is believable. As the camera pans across the scene, it was important to keep the drawing 'alive', so it was essential to keep the boy in blue holding the sign saying "Laps of cotton' moving. This wasn't in the original storyboard, but I worked with animator Kevin Baldwin to save time and he suggested adding this. It was quite simple and brought more life to the scene. Kevin used to work with Bob Godfrey on *Henry's Cat* and is a master at economical animation.

The Irish woman was fairly straightforward to animate with just arm movements, a slight body movement and a brief change of expression. The balls of cotton were simply made into 'objects' and then moved and 'tweened'. 'Tweening' is when the computer creates the drawings between the keyframes. This used to be the job of a junior animator or 'inbetweener', and was one of the first jobs a trainee animator would be given. The key frames are the main drawings of the movement and these in-between drawings or tweens join up the drawings to give a smooth movement. I was not going to animate these balls of fluff (for example, make them grow or lose shape), they just had to suggest chaos and movement. This could be done simply by moving them across the screen, setting the key frames, and then the computer can add the in-between frames or tweens. The little girl was the main voice and so her lip synching and movement had to have more detail. There was no need to animate her legs because I cut to a close-up. The main animation came with the movement of her facial expressions, arms, hands, and body. The main body and arms were rigged but the head was drawn frame by frame, as she morphed into the devil and the dog. As the girl talks, her close-up shot dissolves into photographs of Irish people during the potato famine (Figures 10–11). I did not want to pay for clearance for these photographs because there was little or no budget. I decided that it would be better to recreate these photographs in a similar style to the drawings. I had a student intern at this point, Georgia Little, and she was given the task of creating these drawings in the style of the original ones. These were then scanned and imported into Adobe Premiere and given the 'Ken Morse' effect. Ken Morse was a famous BBC rostrum cameraman and was famed for his use of panning, zooming and dissolving between still images to keep them 'alive'. The effect was created manually within the software.

The next scene in the film features a train pulling into Preston station with the Irish woman and her child on board (Figures 12–13). The voice over by Janis Leaden explains

Figures 10–11: Potato Famine stills from *The Knobsticks* by Sarah Ann Kennedy-Parr

Source: The author.

the context of the rest of the story, the way the Irish were brought over from Ireland to break the strike, and why the strike occurred. The visual was the train pulling into Preston station in front of a booing crowd. I looked for some visual reference of a steam train pulling into a station and found some archive footage of a Victorian steam train pulling into Preston station. The train station these Irish women really pulled into was Maudland, but this does not exist any more. I am not sure when this footage was shot – it is slightly more modern – but it fitted with the project. It felt right to just draw the characters from the illustrations and place them onto the train. I kept the Irish woman in the clothes she was wearing in the original drawing, the clothes that exposed her breasts. At first, I drew her in imaginary clothes but then I questioned myself, 'Why am I covering up what someone else has drawn?' This is how these women were seen. Maybe if they are shown out of context, away from the machine room, it might make it clearer how inappropriate these pictures are.

I downloaded the footage of the train and created a character for the crowd which was copied and pasted with some tweaks to make each person look slightly different. In Adobe Premier I played with the lighting settings to make sure that this crowd of characters looked in shadow so that just their outlines were defined. Then the animated characters, who were in full colour, were placed on another layer.

Figure 12: Train pulling into the station from *The Knobsticks* by Sarah Ann Kennedy-Parr

Source: The author.

Figure 13: Characters on train from *The Knobsticks* by Sarah Ann Kennedy-Parr

Source: The author.

The voice-over tells the story of the strike and then the film dissolves into more pictures that are drawn in a similar way to the poverty-stricken Irish. These images are of modern-day refugees, but initially they are drawn to look like the Irish migrants. The voice-over spoken by Janis in a lovely Northern Irish accent says, 'No one knows what happened to them. These people need our sympathy and not ridicule and fear.' The drawings gradually dissolve into an original photograph of modern migrants in a camp. I wanted to use a ballad or broadside that was written at the time for the credit music but the Lancashire Archives had only text and no recordings. The text for many of the songs did not seem to fit with the film and I was not sure of the tunes. I watched

Jennifer Reid, the 'Langley Linnet', perform some Victorian street ballads on YouTube so had a sense of what they were like. In the end I used the song, 'Home Sweet Home', written in 1823. The song would have been known to the striking workers and was in Jenny Lind's repertoire no later than 1850. The song's words seemed appropriate to the subject of the film, which was more about the plight of the Irish migrants than the Preston strike. It was sung by Robyn Sollis in the style of Reid.

After making this film I still had questions about who these drawings were for. At the time, broadsheet ballads were printed by a Preston-based printer, John Harkness, between 1840 and 1880. These papers were created for the masses on cheap paper using woodcut headings. Engravings such as those showing conditions in the cotton mills in the 1830s would have been far too expensive to reproduce for a mass audience. Higher-end newspapers and periodicals of the day were usually black and white, and any illustrations would have been made using either woodcut or wood-engraved illustrations, with colour only introduced in 1855. Colour was used occasionally but this was rare. The drawings are quite naïve, but carefully created with care and attention to detail, suggesting that the originator of these paintings wanted the story of these illustrations to be taken seriously. This still does not answer the question about who these drawings were for and who might have drawn them. Why were they part of these scrapbooks? Why has no one laid claim to them? But not having this context – which is a historical puzzle that may never be solved – helps to free up the images, and makes it easier for the imagination to get to work on them.

Conclusion

This collection of drawings provides a novel perspective on the Preston Strike and Lock-Out of 1853–1854, shedding light on different aspects of the historical event. They add to its cultural memory by highlighting the plight of Irish women from the Belfast workhouse and initiating discussions on intricate Irish issues regarding the involvement of the Irish women in the conflict. Through a deeply personal approach, these drawings offer insights into the event, utilizing colloquial language and employing specific colours to represent the values and identity of the depicted characters. Inspired by this collection, I embarked on the creation of an animated film utilising the artwork. The objective was to contextualise the Irish women within the narrative and provide them with a back story. Through analysis of these drawings – something that was absolutely necessary for making the film – I have gained a deeper understanding of the social unrest and intricate societal dynamics prevailing in Preston during this period. Examining these drawings in detail gave me an insight into the exploitation of poor Irish female migrants and of poor women across Victorian society at this time. The drawings allude to a familiar issue of sexual exploitation of vulnerable girls and women in Victorian society and open up bigger discussions that still exist today.

By conveying the experiences of these women through the medium of moving images, I sought to share these insights with a broader audience. Adding movement to these

artefacts brings the ideas to life. They can communicate ideas and concepts without relying on an audience possessing specific language skills. The human brain is highly adept at processing and interpreting visual information. Visuals also have the power to evoke emotions and engage the viewer on a deeper level than printed words alone. Images can evoke empathy, curiosity, or surprise, leading to a stronger emotional connection with the context. Images are open to interpretation and invite a free and open discussion around themes alluded to within them. There is dialogue in the drawings, but using movement to convey feelings and illustrate this dialogue gives a universality to the film. This universality makes visuals accessible to a broader audience and facilitates cross-cultural understanding. This is especially important because of the parallel that I draw between these economic migrants and migrant populations in the twenty-first century. I make this parallel in a way that deepens our understanding of, and sympathy for, the pressures that led these women strike-breakers to cross the Irish Sea, and also to indicate the long history behind what seems to some to be a recent crisis in migration.

This is a very personal approach to the conflict and is traditionally held to be bad practice within the history discipline. I am not claiming to be an historian. I am merely approaching this event with a creative framework. For years, history has been presented as the story of white middle-class men because they had access, a voice, and the means to tell the story. This history was presented as factual, and without opinion but in fact it was the view of the dominant hegemony. A construct, that we now readily accept as one, because of the rise of the women's movement and women's involvement in higher profile positions in society. I wanted to present my paper as distinctly personal so that the framework of the piece is clear and not presented as factual and without opinion. We all have an unconscious bias so, rather like the theory of alienation used by Brecht, this piece seeks to make it obvious that it is a construct which allows the viewers and readers to see it for what it is. An opinion which invites them to question, research and think for themselves.

Link to the film by scanning QR code with phone. Password is crapston.