

# Resisting mechanisation? Reading Shortshanks' 'The March of Intellect' (c. 1828) through the lenses of Daniel and Edward Irving

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ABSTRACT: One of the most celebrated March of Intellect prints from the 1820s was created by Robert Seymour: a man-machine strides across the page, sweeping away abuses with its Brougham, and saving the people by the spread of knowledge from its printing press legs. However, such a reading ignores the nuancing of the image by the caption. This article will proffer a detailed reading of the image through the caption via two different lenses: a probable source text from the Old Testament book of Daniel and the preaching of Edward Irving. Through such an exploration, this paper will argue that whilst Seymour's print is a sharp critique on those who claimed that mechanistic philosophies would solve the abuses of the day, it is complicated by the caption being framed as Irving-esque speech. Whether this print was a critique on mechanistic philosophies or fanatical preaching, Seymour left for his viewers to decide.

KEYWORDS: March of Intellect, Seymour, Irving, Mechanisation, Daniel, 1820s.



## INTRODUCTION

ROBERT SEYMOUR, UNDER his pseudonym Shortshanks, created one of the most celebrated and visually arresting March of Intellect prints from the 1820s (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> So arresting is this print that it has graced a number of book covers including Brian Maidment's *Comedy, Caricature and the Social Order* and Jim Secord's *Visions of Science*.<sup>2</sup> A man-

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this article was presented at the 'The 1820s: Innovation and Diffusion' conference held in Glasgow in 2019 and the author would like to thank the participants for their insightful comments and questions.

<sup>2</sup> The dating of the print is uncertain. The British Museum have dated the print '1828-1830' <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1336673&partId=1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1336673&partId=1)> [Accessed 14 June 2019]. Jim Secord used the British Museum's copy of the print in his work *Visions of Science* and dated the print c. 1828. Brian Maidment in his *Comedy, Caricature and the Social Order* dated it 1829 and used the Lewis Walpole Library copy, which dated the print '1829?'

machine strides across the page, sweeping away legal, medical and religious abuses with its broom, and saving the people by the spread of knowledge from its printing press legs. The limitation of such a reading is that it ignores the caption which provides a significantly more nuanced gloss to the image. Whilst this print has been discussed by scholars, this article will suggest a detailed reading of the image through the caption. This reading will take two different lenses: a possible source text from the Old Testament book of Daniel and, due to the idiosyncratic spelling deployed by Seymour in the caption, the preaching of Edward Irving. Through such an exploration, this article will argue that whilst Seymour's print is a sharp critique of those who claimed that mechanistic philosophies would solve the abuses of the day, it is complicated by the framing of Irving-esque speech in the caption. Daniel's vision comprised beast-like empires that would abuse their subjects; in a like manner, the mechanistic philosophies of the 1820s would actually perpetrate further abuses rather than liberating the masses from existing abuses. The caption to Seymour's image is presented as part of a sermon by Irving, a notorious contemporary preacher. Seymour's readers would thus have brought their own views of Irving to bear on their reading of the print. Whether this print was a critique of mechanistic philosophies or of an enthusiastic preacher and his followers, Seymour left for his viewers to decide.

Despite being so arresting, this print has, perhaps surprisingly, yet to receive a detailed reading of the caption. In his 2008 DPhil on the March of Intellect movement in the 1820s and 1830s, David Magee draws out much of the symbolism within the image but only uses the caption as a description of some of the image's detail. Therefore, Magee excerpts such words as 'march', 'Giant', 'Broom', 'even of Gas' to provide colour to his gloss but does not push his reading further. Magee's concern is to read this print as comment on reform and improvement rather than lingering over why Seymour included such a long caption in this print compared to other March of Intellect prints he made during this period.<sup>3</sup> In his reading of the print in his 2013 *Comedy, Caricature and the Social Order*, Maidment pushes Magee's reading further

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<<http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:975363>> [Accessed 14 June 2019]. For prudence, I have chosen the earlier date of 1828.

<sup>3</sup> David Magee, 'Popular periodicals, common readers and the 'grand march of intellect' in London, 1819-34' (Unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2008), pp. 51-53.

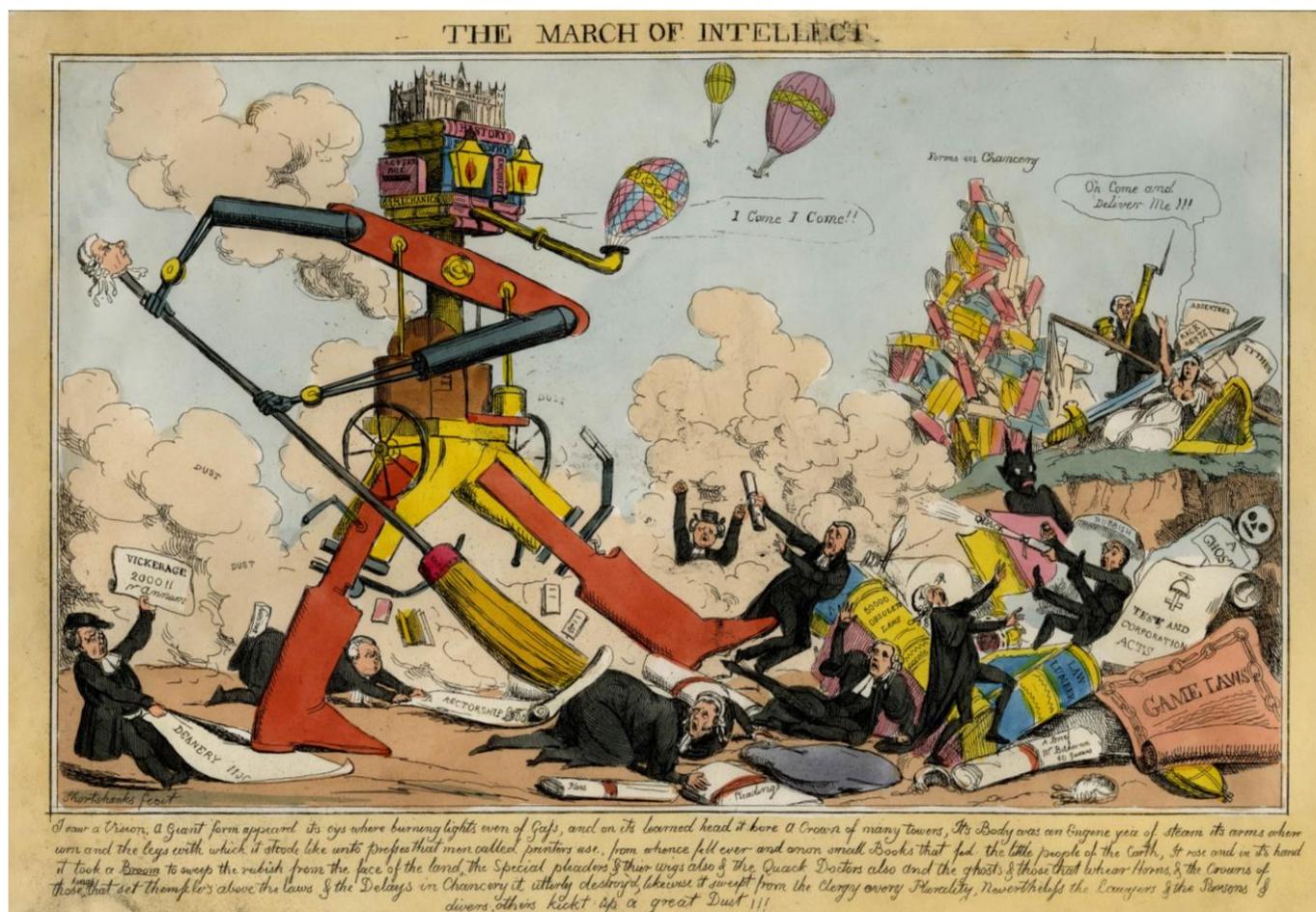


FIGURE 1: Shortshanks, 'The March of Intellect' (London: Thomas McLean, [1828-1830]), British Museum 2003,0531.29.

CAPTION: I saw a Vision, a Giant form appeared [sic], its eyes [sic] where [sic] burning lights even of Gass [sic], and on its learned head it bore a Crown of many towers, Its [sic] Body was an Engine yea of Steam, its arms where [sic] iron [sic] and the legs with which it strode like unto presses that men called printers use, from whence fell ever and anon small Books that fed the little people of the Earth, It [sic] rose and in it's [sic] hand it took a Broom to sweep the rubbish [sic] from the face of the land, the Special pleaders & thier [sic] wigs also & the Quack Doctors also and the ghosts & those that whear [sic] Horns & the Crowns of those that set themselv's [sic] above the laws & the Delays in Chancery it utterly destroy'd, [sic] likewise it swept [sic] from the Clergy every Plurality, Nevertheless the Lawyers & the Parsons & divers others kickt [sic] up a great Dust!!!

by using words such as 'apocalyptic' and 'millenarian zeal' as well as describing the caption as 'messianic'. However, Maidment does not delve into what such descriptions imply, why Seymour's use of the apocalyptic could be significant or why Seymour used

such idiosyncratic spelling.<sup>4</sup> In his 2014 *Visions of Science*, James Secord is primarily interested in the human-machine relations and uses this print as introductory material for his book. Similarly to both Magee and Maidment, he uses the caption for describing the image rather than as an integral part of the print.<sup>5</sup>

Of the March of Intellect prints from the 1820s, this one by Seymour is the only one to have such an extended caption. William Heath produced several March of Intellect prints in 1828 including two where the caption is simply 'March of Intellect' and a set of four for Thomas Maclean where the caption narrates a conversation between two figures in the print.<sup>6</sup> This print is also unusual for Seymour who also favoured the short caption with speech bubbles for characters within the image.<sup>7</sup> With such formats, there is a tendency to play one viewpoint off against another for satirical effect. For this print however, Seymour chose to narrate a mechanical vision using Biblical tropes. Since Biblical tropes are primarily textual, the caption is illustrated and amplified by the image in the print rather than vice versa which then enables Seymour to construct more than one response to the challenges of both mechanism and millennialism.<sup>8</sup>

Upon reading the caption, there are two immediate questions to answer: the first is whether this is a pastiche of apocalyptic tropes or whether it is referencing a particular Biblical text; the second is the sheer number of seemingly deliberate spelling mistakes. This article will argue first that Seymour was probably referencing Daniel chapter 7, a text frequently quoted, discussed and interpreted within millennial discourses of the period. By alluding to such an apocalyptic text in both caption and

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Maidment, *Comedy, caricature and the social order, 1820-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 186-188.

<sup>5</sup> James A. Secord, *Visions of Science: Books and Readers at the dawn of the Victorian age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 21-22.

<sup>6</sup> William Heath, 'The March of Intellect' (London: George Humphrey, 1828) British Museum 2002,0519.1, William Heath, 'The March of Intellect' (London: Thomas Maclean, 1828) British Museum 1948,0217.34, William Heath, 'The March of Intellect' (London: Thomas Maclean, 1828) British Museum 1895,0617.456.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Robert Seymour, 'An untoward event, or a Tory triumph' (London: Thomas Maclean, 1828) British Museum 1868,0808.8856, Robert Seymour, 'Mrs Greece and her rough lovers' (London: Thomas Maclean, 1828) British Museum 1935,0522.4.156 and Robert Seymour, 'The political bellman' triumph' (London: E King, 1828) British Museum 1868,0808.8845.

<sup>8</sup> Another Seymour print with an extended caption is 'Shaving by Steam' which operates as an explanation of the machine rather than to construct multiple viewpoints. See Shortshanks [Robert Seymour], 'Shaving by Steam' ([London]: E. King, [1828?]), Lewis Walpole Library 828.00.00.12+.

image, Seymour portrayed a metaphorical vision of a seismic change on the cusp of occurring. Second, this article will show that Seymour deliberately rendered the Scottish burr of Edward Irving into print through his altered spelling. During the 1820s, Irving had published numerous works on Daniel. By framing this critique through Irving's preaching, the credibility of the critique on mechanisation was then directly tied up in the viewer's own views on Irving and associated millennialist movements.

As noted above, the terms apocalyptic, messianic or millenarian have been used by scholars without delving into why these terms are significant when reading Seymour's print. Messianic is to do with salvation and, in the Old Testament, salvation was bound-up with God's king ruling, with God's priests ministering in the Temple and with God's prophets speaking truth to the people: when all were in place, the Kingdom of Israel had its heyday in around 1000 BC. Whilst the Kingdom declined, the prophetic literature of the Old Testament gradually began to reveal that these previously distinct individuals were going to be a single individual who would embody these three roles – the Messiah – and that an even greater golden age was to come. Whilst Christians claim that the title Messiah belongs to Jesus of Nazareth, the term messiah acquired a metaphorical meaning whereby an individual would rescue, save, or redeem a group from their troubles. Seymour's image and caption posed the question: to what extent is this automaton messianic?

A number of messianic passages are also apocalyptic. Apocalypse is a sub-genre of prophecy and relates to the end of the world. As a sub-genre, examples can be seen in Old Testament prophetic literature including Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah and in the New Testament including the Gospels and supremely in Revelation (the English translation of the Greek *apokalypsis*).<sup>9</sup> Apocalypse also developed a metaphorical sense in which it marked the sudden end of an era within human history.<sup>10</sup> Whilst it is predominantly this second sense that Seymour's print engages with, the distinction between the two was complicated by the competing theologies concerning the timings of the end of the world including their interpretation of the millennium.

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<sup>9</sup> Christopher Burdon, *The Apocalypse in England: Revelation Unravelling, 1700-1834* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), p. xi.

The concept of a millennium only occurs once in the Bible in the New Testament book Revelation chapter 20. In this scene, Satan is bound by an Angel for a thousand years and thrown into a deep pit 'that he should deceive the nations no more'.<sup>11</sup> At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released to deceive once more before a decisive battle in which he is defeated forever before Judgement Day and commencement of the New Creation.<sup>12</sup> As John Dickson and Greg Clarke argue, 'instead of seeing this passage as visionary apocalyptic literature painting word-pictures about God's victory over evil, [millennialists view it] as a coded revelation of the time line in God's mind'.<sup>13</sup> Crawford Gribben notes that amillennialism, the metaphorical reading of Revelation 20, was supported 'in the major reformation confessions of faith'.<sup>14</sup> Of this visionary passage, millennialists instead took a literalist reading and expected a dramatic rupture in time.

The best known examples of millennialists in this period were Richard Brothers (1757-1824), Joanna Southcott (1750-1814) and Edward Irving (1792-1834). However, as Morton Paley has shown, all the now-canonical Romantic poets also engaged with the apocalyptic genre and ideas of millennium.<sup>15</sup> Tim Fulford summarises the appeal of millennialists thus:

Movements such as Southcott's and Irving's [...] bespoke the need of many in the period to restore power to the human, in a country where more and more people were subjected to the inhuman discipline of factory, clock and technology and where knowledge was increasingly institutionalized and bureaucratized [...] People began] turning to the Bible as one of the few authorities with which they could resist the domination of life by technologies and institutions. Reduced to "operatives", many Britons found their identity dominated by machines, machines whose concentration of

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<sup>11</sup> Revelation 20. 1-3 (KJV).

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 20. 7-15 (KJV).

<sup>13</sup> John Dickson and Greg Clarke, *666 and all that: the truth about the future* (Sydney: Aquila Press, 2007), p. 77. That time-markers cannot be taken literally is seen in passages like Ps 90. 4, 'For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night' (KJV).

<sup>14</sup> Gribben, p. xi.

<sup>15</sup> Morton D. Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999). See also John Beer, 'Romantic Apocalypses', in *Romanticism and Millenarianism*, ed. by Tim Fulford (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 53-69.

power was such that they, and not the people who worked them, seemed sublime.<sup>16</sup>

Faced with the risk of becoming a dehumanized operative, Fulford argues that some of the working classes embraced this alternative ideology which allowed them a measure of control over their situation to manage the dangers from mechanisation.

However, the challenge posed by millennialist thinking was not solely theological. Due to their belief in violent ruptures, millennialist thinking and radical politics often went together as they both sought to amend or overthrow the current political and social structure. Brothers, for example, in the 1790s declared that he was the chosen prince to lead God's people back to Israel and George III should renounce his crown to him: the Lord Chancellor had him confined to an asylum.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, as J. F. C. Harrison notes, millennial sects tended towards unorthodox views on families and relationships which were direct challenges to the social structures.<sup>18</sup> Such antinomianism was found in the Anabaptists and Buchanites in the eighteenth century and continued in the Southcottians.<sup>19</sup> After Southcott's death in 1815, John Wroe (1782-1863) emerged as a successor and gathered a circle of followers in Ashton-upon-Lyme during the 1820s from the surrounding Pennine region. Philip Lockley notes that Wroe's followers typically held pre-existing ideas about creating Jerusalem in England ahead of the millennium which Wroe then expanded with "Israelite" rituals such as keeping the Mosaic Law and Nazarite vows claiming this would be the lifestyle in the millennium period.<sup>20</sup> This theological controversy combined with economic stresses from yearly

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<sup>16</sup> Tim Fulford, 'Millenarianism and the Study of Romanticism', in *Romanticism and Millenarianism*, ed. by Tim Fulford (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1-22 (p. 10).

<sup>17</sup> Fulford, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> J. F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Antinomianism, or 'the freedom from the restraints of the moral law' (Harrison, p. 15), finds a possible Biblical mandate in Roman 6. 11: 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord' (KJV). However, reading on in Romans 6 nullifies any hope that Jesus's proprietary death is a license to behave precisely as you choose, e.g. 6. 15 'What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid' (KJV). Harrison, pp. 14, 36, 139. Philip Lockley, 'Who Was 'The Deluded Follower of Joanna Southcott'? Millenarianism in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64 (2013) 70-95.

<sup>20</sup> P. Lockley, 'Millenarians in the Pennines, 1800-1830: building and believing Jerusalem', *Northern History* 47 (2010) 297-317.

boom-bust cycles, continued migration to cities, the lack of parliamentary representation for these new industrial areas and the increase in steam-powered machinery together with the repeal of the Test acts and Catholic Emancipation led for a very heady mix of radical politics and fears about the end of the world or, at the very least, fears about the end of an era.

### Daniel's Beasts

The Old Testament book of Daniel narrated the story of Daniel, a Jewish exile, in Babylon after the Babylonians had conquered the Kingdom of Judah in 587BC.<sup>21</sup> Daniel's vision that Seymour was alluding to came in 552/551BC and was a text continually reinterpreted in millennialist literature with reference to contemporary events. Below are the key verses from Daniel's vision of a sequence of four beasts with the focus on the fourth and final beast:

Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea diverse from one another. [...] After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; [...] and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and

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<sup>21</sup> Chapters 1 to 6 of Daniel provide a potted narrative of his time in Babylon whereas chapters 7 to 12 are a sequence of visions which were given to Daniel during his time in Babylon: chapters 7 and 8 are two visions from the time of Nebuchadnezzar's grandson Belshazzar, chapters 9-12 are visions from Darius's reign who succeeded Belshazzar. Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel to be ruler of the province of Babylon (Daniel 2:48). Later, when Babylon had been conquered by the Medo-Persians, Daniel was one of 3 presidents who reported to Darius and to whom 120 satraps reported (Daniel 6:1-2). See Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978; repr. Nottingham: IVP Academic, 2009).

the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.<sup>22</sup>

The full vision was of four successive empires in this region, symbolised by the four beasts, who were progressively more terrifying. However, in the vision, these empire-beasts would ultimately all be judged and swept away by God, the Ancient of Days.<sup>23</sup>

Analysing the print as a vision of judgement, the automaton did sweep away previous powers and had fiery, steamy breath so could be identified with God. As this was a hand-coloured print, it was originally white in appearance which would increase the identification with the Ancient of Days. On the right of the image is Hibernia, Ireland personified, in a white dress with a broken harp, leaning on papers (Rack-rents, Absentees, Tythes), weighed down by a sword and being robbed of treasure.<sup>24</sup> Under such a burden, Hibernia implored the automaton 'Oh Come and Deliver Me!!!' to which the automaton replied, 'I Come I Come!!!' In potential fulfilment of Jesus' encouragement in Revelation that 'I come', mechanistic salvation, it seems was about to arrive for Ireland.<sup>25</sup> The abuses of pluralities, legal delays, quack medicine and obsolete laws were very real and relief from these abuses was much to be desired, but could the automaton deliver it?

Unfortunately, the much stronger associations of the automaton were with the last, and worst, of the beasts rather than with God. Like this fourth beast, the automaton was 'strong exceedingly' and 'stamped' with its feet what it had broken in pieces. Like the horn arising from the fourth beast, the automaton had 'eyes' and 'a mouth speaking great things'. From the interpretation to the vision given later in Daniel 7, we learn that

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<sup>22</sup> Daniel 7. 2-3, 7, 8b-12 (KJV).

<sup>23</sup> The empires are Babylon (620-540BC), Medo-Persian (540-330BC), Greece/Seleucid (330-63BC), Rome (63-400AD), the sequence agreed with even by a millennialist like Irving (Edward Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed - A Discourse on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse which relate to these latter times, and until the Second Advent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Glasgow: William Collins, 1828), pp. 52-53). See also Daniel 7: 17-18.

<sup>24</sup> Magee, pp. 51-53, argues the woman is Britannia. From bank note iconography, we know this is actually Hibernia as Britannia was usually depicted with a trident but this lady has a harp. Such a personification also makes sense of the abuses mentioned, particularly rack-rents. These abuses are also highlighted in Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800).

<sup>25</sup> Revelation 22. 12 (KJV).

this last horn arising from the fourth beast would oppress people and 'think to change times and laws'.<sup>26</sup> The lack of discrimination shown by the automaton as it swept away previous power structures and laws adds to the identification of the automaton with the beast.

Another source of unease with this automaton is its source of power and control – it had no off switch, no steering and no human override. This lack of human override or intervention raises another question: how to stop the broom sweeping away the good as well as the bad? With no off-switch, until the automaton literally ran out of steam, there was no escape from the tyrannical empire of the fourth beast. Returning to Daniel 7, the section that Seymour was imitating was one of tribulation rather than of hope: if the automaton was not God but a beast, a figure representing 'the Ancient of Days' was missing from Seymour's caption. The absence of 'the Ancient of Days' meant there was no guarantee of a judgement against either the abuses being swept away or that the automaton would stop its sweeping before it itself became abusive. In the design of the automaton, Seymour raised the alarm that mechanistic principles could turn abusive and therefore beast-like.

With no human override, the course of the automaton was then set by the rational books of its head. However, the output of this "rationality" is hot air balloons from a sewer pipe. Neither the sewer pipe nor the hot air balloons were positive associations and the hot air balloons were particularly damning. After their invention in 1783, the technological challenge facing aerostation was steering once aloft. In addition, balloon launches had a problematic status in that it was never clear whether they were a philosophical or a social occasion.<sup>27</sup> Whilst hopes that hot air balloons might be steerable resurfaced in Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* (1826), which featured scheduled European flights, the entertainment aspect had almost completely overtaken any philosophical angle such that any fete or town opening was incomplete without a balloon launch. By the hot air balloons and sewer pipe, Seymour argued that the rational head of the automaton would only produce frivolous, irrational rubbish:

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<sup>26</sup> Daniel 7. 25 (KJV).

<sup>27</sup> Clare Brant, *Balloon Madness: Flights of Imagination in Britain, 1783-1786* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), pp. 240-252 notes that the British feared invasion by balloon and that balloons were used for reconnaissance during the 1780s. These fears continued in satirical prints: see for example, Isaac Cruikshank, *Intended bonne farte raising a southerly wind* (London: S W Fores, 1798).

perhaps a literal rendering of the I Corinthians phrase 'knowledge puffeth up'.<sup>28</sup> In its very un-rationality, Seymour argued that allowing reform according to mechanistic philosophy was the replacement of one set of abuses with another.

### Edward Irving's preaching

Having argued that mechanistic philosophies would not solve the problems of the day, Seymour then severely complicated his argument by his framing of the caption. The sheer number of idiosyncratic spellings in the caption suggest that these are deliberate renderings rather than inadvertent errors. Through a consideration of Irving's status, his Scottish accent, the rendering of the Scottish accent in prose and Irving's own commentaries on Daniel, this article will argue that Seymour framed his scepticism of mechanisation as if it were part of a sermon by Irving who, by 1828, was a standard caricature for a fanatical, millennial preacher. Since Irving was a divisive figure, the extent to which a viewer would agree that mechanistic philosophy was problematic would depend upon whether they found Irving a credible preacher to be listened to or a raving fanatic to be laughed at.

Born in 1792 in Annan in the Scottish borders, Irving was educated at the University of Edinburgh before becoming a schoolmaster then later a clergyman, securing his first post as assistant minister to Thomas Chalmers at St John's, Glasgow in 1819.<sup>29</sup> His growing reputation as a charismatic orator led to his invitation to lead the Caledonian Church at Hatton Garden in London in 1822.<sup>30</sup> There, Irving's oratorical gifts were noted by the fashionable elite which led to William Hazlitt including him in his *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) as one of the characters sketched. Hazlitt focussed on Irving's ability to combine Biblical and literary imagery into new sensations for the London fashionable scene, noting that his 'hyperbolic tone' required his 'stature' and the effects would not have worked 'if he had been a *little man*'.<sup>31</sup> In his eulogistic essay of 1834 after Irving's untimely death, Thomas Carlyle, a fellow Scotch-borderer, focused his account on 'thou poison of Popular Applause' that Irving had drunk deep of in 'Babylon'

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<sup>28</sup> I Corinthians 8. 1b (KJV).

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, third edition (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1864), pp. 1, 15, 21, 36, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Oliphant, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 55.

(London) which left him bereft when fashionable tastes changed. Carlyle noted that Irving's response was to retreat into isolation, studying the Bible alone, and issuing many written treatises in a bid to regain his former status 'in vain'.<sup>32</sup> It is this context of 'ever wilder' treatises that Irving moved from a celebrity preacher who was 'altogether irresistible' to a ranting fanatic, ripe for caricature in prints of the later 1820s including Thomas Hood's *The progress of cant* (London: Thomas Maclean, 1826) and Henry Heath's *A meeting for the conversion of the benighted Irish* (London: Thomas Maclean, 1827).<sup>33</sup> Irving's trajectory was also captured in Henry Crabb Robinson's *Diaries* which noted that in 1823 Irving was 'novel' and he had heard him preach another two times as well. By February 1824, Crabb Robinson was at a dinner with Rev and Mrs Irving and noted 'I anticipate pleasant intercourse with them'. However, after Crabb Robinson's tours to France and Ireland, the Irvings did not feature strongly in his *Diaries* and by June 1826 he noted that 'Irving has sunk of late in public opinion in consequence of his writing and preaching about the millennium [...] He is certainly an enthusiast – I fear too a fanatic'.<sup>34</sup>

Having traced the arc of Irving's career and his fall from feted doyen to dismissed fanatic, this article will now review the evidence for his accent. Hazlitt noted that Irving had 'relaxed the inveteracy of his northern accents' as well as designating him as 'Caledonian', 'Presbyterian' and mentioning 'Kirk of Scotland'.<sup>35</sup> Carlyle, as a fellow Scot, saw no need to mention his accent but did describe their first meeting in Irving's home town of Annan.<sup>36</sup> Frances Williams-Wynn attended a sermon by Irving in 1823 and noted in her diary that it was 'frequently spoilt by extraordinary Scotch accents. He spoke of the high-sup, of being crucifeed, scorged, &c. &c.'. <sup>37</sup> An anonymous article in *The National Magazine* noted that 'the tones of [Irving's] voice are rich and strong: their

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas Carlyle, 'The Death of Edward Irving', *Fraser's Magazine* 61 (1834). Online resource: <<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/carlyle/irving.html>> [accessed 14 June 2019].

<sup>33</sup> Hazlitt, p. 48. A discussion of why the publisher Thomas Maclean published both prints mentioned as well as the *March of Intellect* print under discussion is outside the scope of this article.

<sup>34</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diaries, Reminiscences and Correspondence*, ed. by Thomas Sadler, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1869), II pp. 254, 269, 329, 330.

<sup>35</sup> Hazlitt, pp. 49, 53.

<sup>36</sup> Carlyle op. cit. (26).

<sup>37</sup> [Frances Williams-Wynn], *Diary of a Lady of Quality from 1797 to 1844*, ed. by A. Hayward (London: Longman, 1864), p. 112.

sweetness is somewhat roughened by his strange and indescribable accent, or mixture of accents, which he apparently uses to impart energy and strength to his expressions'.<sup>38</sup> Whilst we can therefore note that Irving had a Scottish accent, how this was recorded varied between his listeners.

In his *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish dialect* (1786), Robert Burns rendered Scottish accents phonetically for his readership.<sup>39</sup> Such was the success of his *Poems* that Burns was able to have the work reprinted in Edinburgh in 1787. Walter Scott also included speech in a Scottish dialect in his novels such as *Waverley* (1814) and *Guy Mannering* (1815).<sup>40</sup> *The National Magazine* article also quoted from poem written in a Scottish dialect which demonstrates how it was rendered in print:

When Irving bright first cam' to light  
 Frae Caledonia, man  
 Sae weel he pleas'd, the hale town squeezed  
 Into his chapel sma', man,  
 An' frae the west the gentry press'd,  
 Baith lord and duke and a', man,  
 In chaise and coach, wi' swift approach,  
 Like flocking to a shaw, man.<sup>41</sup>

Through the idiosyncratic spelling, the poet rendered a Scottish accent phonetically for their readership. In a like manner, Seymour did the same with his caption to the print to bring Irving, the most notorious Scottish preacher of the day, to mind for his viewers.

Through his preaching, and particularly through his publications, Irving was closely associated with Daniel, Revelation and wider thought on interpreting prophetic writings. Irving's interest in the Apocalypse was established by his first book, *For the Oracles of God* (1823) which Irving reminded his readers of the potential imminence of

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<sup>38</sup> "D", 'Personal Sketches No. XII: The Rev. Edward Irving', *The National Magazine*, 1 (October 1830), 381-386 (p. 383).

<sup>39</sup> Nigel Leask, 'Robert Burns and Romanticism in Britain and Ireland' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 127-138. See also Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Gaelic Literature and Scottish Romanticism' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 49-60.

<sup>40</sup> Alison Lumsden, *Walter Scott and the Limits of Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 75-100.

<sup>41</sup> "D", p. 383.

Judgement Day, exhorted them to be ready and urged them to trust in Jesus' atoning death on the cross.<sup>42</sup> Through his preaching, Irving met Henry Drummond, a fellow student of prophecy, who invited Irving to a gathering at Albury Park. The discussions at Albury led to the publication in 1826 of *Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed - A Discourse on the Prophecies of Daniel* which then ran to a second edition in 1828.<sup>43</sup> In this work, Irving expounded Daniel 7 at length, even decreeing that one particularly bad king (associated with the final beast and usually interpreted as the Roman Empire) was the 'Papal Power' to this day rather than a Roman emperor such as Nero who had persecuted the Christians in 64 AD.<sup>44</sup> He then spent the remainder of the book arguing that the French Revolution marked the end of this Papal power, that various prophetic texts in Daniel and Revelation predicted the British victory over Napoleon and that the resurrection of the righteous would commence in 1867.<sup>45</sup> Views like these confirmed Irving as a millennialist who expected the apocalypse to occur imminently and linked him, as discussed above, with radicalism. Given the imagery of fire and brimstone throughout Revelation coupled with fears about steam engine explosions, associating a steam-powered automaton with the onset of the Apocalypse was not entirely ridiculous. However, Irving's statement about the Apocalypse timing in *Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed* was also in direct contradiction of Jesus' statement that 'but of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father'.<sup>46</sup> Jesus had stated that the knowledge of when the Apocalypse would occur was not to be found in this universe; by going against this statement, Irving demonstrated how far he, and fellow Albury circle members, had travelled from orthodox belief.

Despite this, Irving's interest in unorthodox matters grew still further and in 1828 he also published *A Discourse on the evil character of these our times*. In the dedication, he declared that 'Christ took human nature in the fallen, and not in the unfallen state' thus rendering Jesus sinful and therefore unable to propitiate the sins of the world

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<sup>42</sup> Edward Irving, *For the Oracles of God, Four Orations. For Judgement to come, an Argument, in nine parts* second edition (London: T. Hamilton, 1823).

<sup>43</sup> Oliphant, pp. 104, 203-206.

<sup>44</sup> Irving, *Babylon*, pp. 55-56. On the identification of empires with beasts, see note 18.

<sup>45</sup> Irving, *Babylon*, pp. 96, 414-415, 526-527.

<sup>46</sup> Mark 13. 32 (KJV).

meaning that the death Jesus said 'must' happen was a tragic failure rather than the act of salvation.<sup>47</sup> The book itself was an exposition of a passage in I Timothy whilst also recapping Irving's thoughts from *Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed* on interpreting Daniel as well as arguing that most Christians had apostasied. This book brought Irving further condemnation. Irving was aware of his changing status, noting in an 1828 letter to his wife that 'I am generally reported [...] as a man wholly mad' but determining nonetheless to press on with his ever deeper immersion into prophetic literature in the Albury circle.<sup>48</sup>

Despite his radical theology, Irving was politically conservative. In his essay, Hazlitt commented that

Mr. Irving keeps the public in awe by insulting all their favourite idols. He does not spare their politicians, their rulers, their moralists, their poets, their players, their critics, their reviewers, their magazine-writers; he levels their resorts of business, their places of amusement, at a blow -- their cities, churches, palaces, ranks and professions, refinements and elegances -- and leaves nothing standing but himself, a mighty landmark in a degenerate age, overlooking the wide havoc he has made! He makes war upon all arts and sciences, upon the faculties and nature of man, on his vices and his virtues, on all existing institutions, and all possible improvements, that nothing may be left but the Kirk of Scotland.<sup>49</sup>

Even by 1825, Irving had made a name for himself for being against contemporary 'moralists', 'sciences' and 'all possible improvements'. When asked by Thomas Carlyle for his view on applying for a professorship at London University, Irving could not

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<sup>47</sup> Edward Irving, *A Discourse on the evil character of these our times: proving them to be the "perilous times" of the "last days"* (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1828), pp. xii, 508-514. On why Irving's position was not orthodox see II Corinthians 5. 21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (KJV, emphasis added), 1 John 2. 2 "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (KJV) and Mark 8. 31 "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (KJV).

<sup>48</sup> Edward Irving to Isabella Irving, 31 July 1828, quoted in Oliphant, p. 241.

<sup>49</sup> Hazlitt, p. 53.

encourage him since he disapproved of its irreligious foundations.<sup>50</sup> This view may have been widely known or suspected as Seymour included London University as the crown of the automaton in the print. In *A Discourse on the evil character of these our times*, Irving argued directly against the march of intellect:

One of the specious names is, the march of intellect; another is, the diffusion of knowledge; and a third, this enlightened age. Because an apprentice can babble of liberal opinions, and retail the slander of the public prints against every thing [sic] good and great; because a sempstress [sic] can prattle of poems and novels and reviews; and because the workman can retail some incoherent scraps of mechanical lectures; the age is called enlightened, and intellect is thought to have taken a great step in advance, and knowledge to be diffused abroad.<sup>51</sup>

In this quote, Irving continued in his stance against his 'enlightened' age and the spread of knowledge to all people. This spreading of knowledge is part of the automaton since its legs were printing presses distributing publications to the people. Alan Rauch notes that 'the political implications of [the march of intellect] movement were complex given that many believed that knowledge was foisted by the powerful and the wealthy on the working classes in order to indoctrinate them into a culture where knowledge validated a simple work ethic'.<sup>52</sup> In 1828, Irving additionally published *A Letter to the King, on the repeal of the Test and Corporation Laws, as it affects our Christian Monarchy* setting out his conservatism and argued against enfranchisement and 'improvements'. Therefore, given Irving's printed materials and Hazlitt's essay, it was highly credible for Seymour to place a speech against mechanisation and the spread of knowledge in the style of Irving.

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<sup>50</sup> Fred Kaplan, *Thomas Carlyle: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 135. Kings College was in the process of being established in 1828 but it was satirically linked with Toryism and Anglicanism against Reform and the March of Intellect exemplified by London University: see Anon, *First Book for the Instruction of Students in the King's College* (London: B. Steill, 14 Paternoster Row, [1828]) and Anon, *Lectures and Examinations for King's College Students* (London: B. Steill, 14 Paternoster Row, 1828).

<sup>51</sup> Irving, *Discourse*, p. 464.

<sup>52</sup> Alan Rauch, *Useful Knowledge: The Victorians, Morality, and the March of Intellect* (London: Duke University Press, 2001) p.23.

### Conclusion

It is clear that, whilst Seymour's automaton has saving power in that it removes a large number of abuses of judicial, medical and religious systems, the much stronger associations are with the fourth beast of the Daniel 7 vision. From the caption, Seymour viewed the machine as more likely to provide greater oppression once it had delivered the people from the present-day abuses. Mechanistic philosophies were not the solution to the societal issues of the day. This is compounded if we consider again Seymour's caption – the wording was all about removing abuses. Having swept away the abusive power structures with the automaton, what would replace them? How would the spreading of 'small books' to all the 'little people' fill the power vacuum such that there were no further abuses? This was a print primarily concerned with explaining the problems and showing what would not work rather than proffering solutions that would. The one glimmer of hope was the spread of knowledge from the automaton to all the people but whether that would be sufficient to resolve any of the issues or prevent further abuses, Seymour left open.

But having made such a compelling point, Seymour then severely complicated the matter by framing the point as if were part of a sermon by Irving. As shown above, Irving was against the march of intellect and liberal values. Seymour's rendering of the caption's anti-mechanistic diatribe into the speech, manner and vocabulary of Irving was inspired. However, it also contributed to the dehumanising trend within prints to reduce Irving into a caricatured, ridiculed fanatic. Nevertheless, was the point that mechanisation could not solve their societal problems something to be taken seriously, or the enthusiastic rantings of a deluded fanatic? The viewer's perspective would depend upon their view of Irving and associated millennialists: if unfavourable, then this print could be viewed as the ravings of someone seeing monsters everywhere, even in their imagination as they conjured up this automaton; if favourable, this was a call to arms to resist mechanisation. But as to Seymour's own position on the matter, the framing left it ambiguous and for his viewers to discuss.



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