

W.F. DEACON AND HIS REVISION OF ROMANTICISM IN *WARRENIANA* THROUGH LITERARY PARODY AND ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS TO PROMOTE BLACKING

W.F. DEACON Y SU REVISIÓN DEL ROMANTICISMO EN *WARRENIANA* DESDE LA PARODIA LITERARIA Y LAS CAMPAÑAS PUBLICITARIAS PARA PROMOCIONAR EL BETÚN

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Abstract

This study aims to reassess William Frederick Deacon (1799-1845) and his work *Warreniana* (1824) by demonstrating that although it is a work of textual parody, its apparent triviality conceals a sophisticated exercise in literary criticism, constituting a valuable contemporary commentary on Romanticism. The collection presents a witty and sophisticated exercise in criticism of the literature and style of its period, being composed of texts attributed to a selection of Romantic authors supposedly promoting a very trivial product: Warren's blacking (shoe polish). Deacon thus acts as another Romantic critic, albeit a more original and unconventional one. Due to space constraints, this paper will focus only on the parody of the poetic style of British romantic authors. The parody of their journal style will be analysed in another article.

Keywords: Deacon, *Warreniana*, literary parody, Romanticism, advertisement.

Resumen

Este estudio pretende revalorar a William Frederick Deacon (1799-1845) y su obra *Warreniana* (1824) demostrando que, aun siendo una obra de parodias textuales, su aparente trivialidad esconde un sofisticado ejercicio de crítica literaria,

constituyendo un valioso comentario contemporáneo al Romanticismo. La obra presenta un ingenioso y sofisticado ejercicio crítico de la literatura y el estilo de este periodo, pues son textos atribuidos a los autores románticos selectos que supuestamente promocionan un producto muy trivial: el betún de Warren. Deacon actúa pues, como otro crítico romántico, aunque más original y poco convencional. Este artículo se centrará en la parodia al estilo de los autores románticos británicos —‘poet parody’— quedando la parodia al estilo editorial y periodístico como objetivo de otro estudio.

Palabras clave: Deacon, *Warreniana*, parodia literaria, Romanticismo, anuncio.

1. Introduction: The Genius of William Frederick Deacon (1799-1845) and his Relationship with the World of Advertising

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Born at a time when novel discourses of Romanticism were emerging, William Frederick Deacon played a significant role in his response to and recreation of Romantic ideas, authors and works. He moved away from his initial works of fiction to write comic portraits and parodic texts, for which he is best known today among critics who have long ignored his important work in the development of Romanticism. John Strachan’s leading and complete edition of 1999, in the collection *Parodies of the Romantic Age*, was already an important first step in highlighting his work—and it will be the edition used for this study.

One of Deacon’s earliest biographical portraits was by his Reading School classmate and childhood friend, Thomas Noon Talfourd, later an MP, judge and author. In “Prefatory Memoir of the Late William Frederick Deacon”, published in Deacon’s novel *Annette. A Tale* (1852), his friend described him as “more than a tasteful critic, an accomplished scholar, and an elegant writer—he was all these— but he was also a high minded gentleman, a kind husband, and anxious parent” (Strachan 1999: viii). It is this portrait of a moderate person that explains the tone adopted in his unique parodic recreations, which are loaded with a dose of good humour. It is a humour that contrasts with that of his friend, the radical British press freedom campaigner William Hone, known for his acid attacks on government censorship. Deacon chose another route in *Warreniana*. While criticism and mockery are constant, the parody is gentle in tone, and far removed from the crude and harsh politically-tinged attacks of works such as *The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner*, a parodic newspaper by Canning, Ellis and Frere created to oppose the radicalism of the French Revolution, also included in Strachan’s collection of 1999.

Deacon's work was published anonymously in 1824 under the title *Warreniana; with Notes, Critical and Explanatory, by the Editor of a Quarterly Review*. There was a later edition in the United States in 1851. Besides, critics such as Kent and Ewen (1992) also selected some of its parodies in their collection, an anthology that included for the first time not only poetry, the most common literary manifestation of Romanticism, but also prose: "Old Cumberland Pedlar", parodying Wordsworth; "Carmen Triumphale", parodying Southey; "The Sable School of Poetry", parodying *Blackwood's Magazine*; and "The Childe's Pilgrimage", which parodies Byron's style. Surprisingly, however, *Warreniana* was not republished in its complete form until Strachan's 1999 edition. Despite this fact, the international impact of Deacon's work was considerable. Interestingly, *The Port Folio*, a monthly miscellany published in Philadelphia, which had been started in 1801 by Asbury Dickins and Joseph Dennie, included in its volume XVII of 1824 a review of *Warreniana*, as well as the short *Warreniana Americana – No. 1* by a certain "H. N. of Baltimore" which praised "the merits of Warren's incomparable liquid blacking" (Hall 1824: 453). It is interesting to see the online edition of volume XVII edited by John E. Hall for examples of those merits.

Deacon's original idea cannot be understood without alluding to Robert Warren, the well-known entrepreneur and owner of a blacking factory of the same name, famous for the promotion of his products. Deacon's genius was to link Warren and his blacking to well-known authors and newspapers of the Romantic era. Deacon in his parody made use of the idea that William Gifford (1756-1826), an important publisher of the time, had been commissioned to bring together established Romantic writers and major publishers to praise Warren's blacking and Warren as a salesman and publicist. The result is a book supposedly edited by Gifford — whose style is also parodied— in which fifteen contributions are joined by an introduction, appendix and critical notes. The level of sophistication of this compendium is evident and, as Strachan rightly notes, it does not parody advertisements per se, but establishes a direct link to the genre: "Though *Warreniana* is not advertising parody as such, it does have links to the genre" (1999: xxii). Indeed, the work shows the importance acquired at the time by the literary advertisement, which creates its space and reactivates its interest in the literature of the moment, as in *Warreniana*. Furthermore, it combines the egotistical outpourings of the conventional Romantic poet and the journalistic genre of the ingenious creator of advertisements, producing practical and direct benefits from that combination. It is interesting to see how, through the burlesque imitation of sublime aspects of Romantic ideology —and the critical style of the literary newspapers of the day, not analysed in this study— a product as unromantic as blacking could be promoted.

Warreniana drew inspiration from the existing parody of advertisements, which was closely related to the fashionable advertisement “The Cat and the Boot”, illustrated by Cruikshank. Furthermore, Wood (1994) brilliantly explains William Hone’s influence on this literary scene, becoming an author who was able to incorporate all the forms and techniques of advertisements into his work. Among his best-known works are *The Queen’s Matrimonial Ladder* (1820), and the pamphlet *Non mi ricordo* (1820) related to the so-called *Queen Caroline’s Affair* — studied by authors such as Laqueur (1982) or Smith (1994) as the accusation of adultery made by King George IV against his wife Queen Caroline. Because of this supposed adultery, the King wanted to divorce through the Bill of Pains and Penalties Act of Parliament, which penalised a person “without resorting to a legal trial, not a judicial act” (Fulford 1967: 41). Also *A Slap at Slop* (1821), a burlesque newspaper in close collaboration with Cruikshank in which the advertisement for Warren’s product mentioned above appeared.

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Hone’s work was important as he was one of the pioneers in combining in the same work text and illustrations in advertisements in *La Belle Assemblée or, Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine Addressed Particularly to the Ladies*, one of the most famous women’s magazines of the time. Founded by John Bell, this magazine was published from 1806 to 1832 and known for its illustrations featuring famous painters of the time such as Arthur William Devis and John and William Hopwood. The genre of the advertisement had attained a primordial role in the promotion of certain products, especially those most useful in the domestic space. Botein et al. (1981), among others, point to products that had received this attention since the 18th century. Toothpaste, certain medicines, and items essential for the comfort of the home and personal hygiene form part of a list of products that were regularly advertised with widespread acceptance: “fabrics, furniture, wine, horses, and cosmetics as well as an abundance of books, medicines, and dwellings” (Botein et al. 1981: 486). In the early nineteenth century, the list included ‘Warren’s Blacking’, a well-known boot polish which became the surprising subject matter for the parodies contained in *Warreniana*. Boot polish was a popular product and the use of its advertisements was systematic and had become regular and constant in the publications and works of the time. Strachan goes so far as to mention “the near-ubiquity of blacking advertisements in the Romantic period” (2007: 139), defining blacking as a social phenomenon and noting that even George IV himself had “his own royal blacking mixture” (2007: 120). Besides, even Dickens was linked to blacking. At twelve, as Giddings notes, he had to work for six shillings a week at “Warren’s Blacking Warehouse, Hungerford Stairs (now beneath Charing Cross Station)” (2002: 17). This company, however, was not Robert Warren’s but that of Jonathan Warren, who started his business taking advantage of having the

same surname. Dickens would never forget his experience at the factory and his references to the world of blacking are recorded in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Pickwick Papers*.

Many of Robert Warren's highly creative blacking advertisements became a landmark in the history of English advertising. The success of the aforementioned advertisement, "The Cat and the Boot, or, An Improvement upon Mirrors" (1820), was considerable. It is a combination of a verse stanza and an illustration by Cruikshank in which a cat spits at its own figure reflected in a very shiny boot thanks to Warren's shoe polish. According to Presbrey "it made Warren's Shoe Blacking known through the Kingdom and produced a heavy sale of it" (1968: 85). Strachan notes Warren's novelty in the combined use of verse text and image, which he calls "idea illustration" (1999: 87) and which became "the most famous advertising image of its day" (2007: 38). Warren profited from this famous 'puff'—an advertisement or promotional method to exaggeratedly praise a product—showing how the use of his blacking rendered mirrors unnecessary when shaving. Many imitations of this advertisement emerged. Wood (1994: 155-214) lists the most interesting ones: "Warren's Black-Rat Blacking", the result of a collaboration between Hone and Cruikshank and published in *A Slap at Slop* (1821), focused on attacking "another" Warren, Charles Warren, a Tory aspiring to the judiciary. The illustration, also playing with the animal motif, showed a rat-turned-judge in a wig. In 1839, an imitation by Donnison, another blacking manufacturer, replaced Cruikshank's cat with a cockerel.

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The image of the shiny boot as a mirror in Hone's famous advertisement exaggerated the properties of Warren's everyday product in the same way that *Warreniana*, through compositions supposedly written by romantic authors and columnists and supposedly edited by Gifford, extolled the qualities of Warren's blacking and its entrepreneur in hyperbolic style. It is not surprising that the cover illustration for *Warreniana* chosen by Strachan for his edition was "Scene from Hamlet". Published in 1830 in Robert Seymour's *The Looking Glass*, it shows a frightened Hamlet facing a ghost in armour and shining boots with the caption: "The Blacking most approv'd through the land Is Robert Warrens 30 Strand".

Warreniana thus starts from an imitation of the type of advertisements Warren used to promote his product. It is of interest for its construction as an unconventional romantic work. The purely romantic theme is parodied by adopting the format of the genre of the advertisement. For this reason, the key elements of advertising texts are repeated throughout the work. The interplay of capital letters, italics and bold types, together with images and content is combined with the name of the advertised product and its manufacturer:

A Shilling of WARREN'S PASTE BLACKING is equal to
four Shilling Bottles of *Liquid Blacking*; prepared by
Robert Warren
30, STRAND, London;
and sold by most Venders of *Blacking* in every town in
the Kingdom, in Pots, 6d. 12d. and 18d. each. (Strachan 1999: vii)

As noted by Strachan, propaganda campaigns were clever exercises that relied not only on street cries —often associated with newspaper sales— but on a whole series of puffs of which Warren's is just one example (2007: 124). Many products were advertised, with text or with text and image, in newspapers, pamphlets, flyers, billboards, posters, or signs on vehicles. In addition, Warren's campaign in the mid-19th century was a precursor of the 'jingle copy' and lasted for some fifty years (87). Strachan describes Robert Warren as a pioneer in the development of advertising in England and details his innovative resources:

Warren's ran a series of ground-breaking campaigns in favour of its product, extolling it in a nationwide series of newspapers advertisements, puffing it in handbills, saluting it in advertisements painted on the side of metropolitan buildings and praising it in letters two feet high daubed on fences at the road side in the country.
(xi)

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It was this notoriety and repercussion of the advertising world at that time that Deacon exploited, and his peculiar way of adapting advertising discourse is what makes *Warreniana* original. He took advantage of the knowledge and taste of the readers of the time for romantic writers, which he then exploited within a devised advertising context. This guaranteed the success of his parody.

2. The Nature and Structure of *Warreniana*

Warreniana (1824) is described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as "a series of burlesque imitations of popular authors in the style of the *Rejected Addresses*, and in praise of Warren's blacking" (Stephen 1888: 249). Indeed, this collection is based on the parodic imitation of poems, essays, stories or reviews of romantic works that adopt the format of advertisements or puffs to praise something as prosaic as boot polish. Just as Warren employed all his rhetorical resources in advertising discourse to promote his polish, Deacon resorted to playing on the knowledge that readers of the time had of the most famous contemporary authors and the style of the newspapers to compile his work. 'Eminent literary figures' of the day, and editorial contributions supposedly contracted by Warren, seemed to go to great lengths to promote his blacking. The contributions imitate compositions that could have been written by Washington

Irving, Wordsworth, James Hogg, Leigh Hunt, Charles Mills, Southey, Townshend, Barry Cornwall (Bryan Waller Procter), Byron, Coleridge or Scott. The collection also parodies the style of articles and reports published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, *New Monthly Magazine* and *The Times*.

With clear antecedents in the tradition of *ad rem* parody, which can be traced back to the 18th century with *A Pipe of Tobacco, in Imitation of Several Authors* (1736) by Isaac Hawkins Browne (1705-1760) or in the collective work *Rejected Addresses* (1812) as well as later in *Rejected Articles*, *Warreniana* uses the advertisement as the basis for its parodic strategy. The common thread that unites all the compositions is a product as common and mundane as blacking. The variety of tones and authors of the Romantic period parodied in the collection, coherently united around the same objective and style, stands out, as Strachan states: "In many of these parodies, we see an ostensible 'low' subject matter, boot polish, addressed in discourses which employ stylistic and formal devices that are aesthetically 'high'" (1999: xxvi).

Warreniana presents a clear cohesion as the work opens and closes in the same key. The rigorously scholastic voice in the preface parodies that of the well-known editor of the time, William Gifford, who signs a pompous dedication to the king, and is also parodied in the introduction and endnotes to the work. The work is made up of 15 varied long parodies and an appendix, containing four short parodies, whose inclusion is explained on the grounds that the authors were late in sending in their contributions.

Strachan explains that the idea for the resource originated in an actual incident involving Byron, who was credited with writing advertisements for the promotion of blacking sold by Warren's competitor, the *Day and Martin Company*. Strachan records Byron's words in *The Two Foscari* (1821):

Whilst I have been occupied in defending *Pope's* character, the powers of Grubstreet appear to have been assailing *mine*: [...] One of the accusations in the nameless epistle alluded to is still more laudable: it states seriously that I "have received five hundred pounds for writing advertisements for Day and Martin's patent blacking!" This is the highest compliment to my literary powers which I have ever received. (1999: xvi, emphasis in original)

Deacon adopted this anecdote for his edition and transformed Byron's quotation into a paratextual element at the beginning of the work: "I have even been accused of writing Puffs for Warren's Blacking. LORD BYRON" (In Strachan 1999: 1). Thus, the book opened with the assumption that the rest of the authors would have received, like Byron, a similar commission.

3. Parodying the Style of British Romantic Authors

3.1. Wordsworth and the Naivety of the Observer

Special mention should be made of Wordsworth, one of the most parodied authors especially in the first decades of the nineteenth century, when he began to achieve notoriety as a poet (Bauer 1975; Bates 2012; Stewart 2018). Thus, Deacon could not pass up the opportunity to have the well-known Wordsworth appear as one of the poets praising Warren. The poem “Old Cumberland Pedlar” is a parody of the founding father of Romantic poetry, arranged following the first book of Wordsworth’s *The Excursion* (1814) and containing references to characters from *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth’s well-known character, his metaphysical ‘Wanderer’—known to have been parodied to exhaustion under the name of Peter Bell, as it is also parodied and named in *Warreniana*—is transformed by Deacon into a ‘pedlar’. In doing so, the author uses the original but gives a twist in the representation of Warren, who is comically portrayed in a rural and natural environment, imbued with a reflection and meditation of moral dyes that have lost their philosophical aspect to adopt a mercantilist nuance related to blacking and Warren. The aim of the parody is achieved: Wordsworth’s emotion is imitated and transformed into an exaggerated and emotional eulogy to mere blacking.

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The parody is very well constructed, comprising a brief ‘Summary of contents’ and seven stanzas of complex dense verse. Deacon brilliantly transforms Wordsworth style into the description of a solitary protagonist who not only finds the name of Warren “graven on the tawny rock” (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 28), in the midst of a vast, gentle and primitive landscape, but who also establishes a dialogue with a merchant, curiously named Peter Bell, who works for Warren’s firm. The coincidences with Wordsworth’s work are indisputable in this successful parody, and the description of nature and emotion with a commercial hue is unsurpassed:

Beauteous it was but lonesome, and while I
Leaped up for joy to think that earth was good
And lusty in her boyhood, I beheld
Graven on the tawny rock, these magic words,
“BUY WARREN’S BLACKING”, then in thought I said,
My stars, how we improve! Amid these scenes
Where hermit nature, jealous of the world,
Guards from profane approach her solitude;
E’en here, despite each fence, adventurous art
Thrusts her intrusive puffs; as though the rocks
And waterfalls were mortals, and wore shoes. (28-29)

If, as Williams rightly notes, in *Peter Bell* “the uncouth bray of an ass is the chosen medium through which the most profound mysteries are expressed” (2017: 80),

it is the bite of a mosquito that Deacon uses to complete his parody, mixing the vulgar bite with the parodied Wordsworth's typically profound meditations:

Touching these gnats, I could not choose but feel, [...]
The venomous superficies of a pimple,
On the left side of my nose: [...]
It was a gnat-bite!! [...]
Thus nature warns her sons, and when their thoughts
Aspire too boldly, or their soaring minds
Elope with truant fancy from the flesh,
Their lawful spouse, she spurns the gross affront,
And sends a gnat to tell them they are clay. (In Strachan 1999: 31)

As also indicated by Stewart, "Wordsworth so often asks his readers to reflect on the unlikely affinities between things, to take some objects of seeming insignificance and find in it a hidden depth" (2018: 609). Yet, as Stewart rightly states, Wordsworth would not have advertised boot polish. In any case, blacking and nature, simplicity and deep meditations or feelings, all remain together in *Warreniana* through a symbiosis that shows that, as Stewart properly admits,

the success of the parody lies in the way that it follows Wordsworth in teasing out an idea, in testing the boundaries between categories of things. He recognizes that Wordsworth's claim for his own value share much with its opposite, the advertiser's puff, because they both are in the business of publicly claiming the distinctiveness of their products. (2018: 609)

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3.2. James Hogg and the Ballad

Deacon draws on the stereotype of the autodidactic poet James Hogg, the so-called 'Ettrick shepherd', who taught himself to create his own poetic style while mixing with the Scottish *intelligentsia* and becoming a columnist for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. While he was known for his satirical and parodic works and for his novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), Deacon turns to him for his pastoral, lyrical and transparent style with which to promote Warren. With Hogg it was possible to parody the Romantic milieu that extolled nature and the primitive, for this author combined the influence of German theorists with their praise of *Volkpoesie* and a taste for the works of people living in "natural", primitive, uncivilised environments. This was evident in his use of the ballad.

In the chapter "Warren in Fairy Land", Deacon includes an insightful parody based on elements of the ballad, the folk tradition and the supernatural that sharply transforms Hogg's poem "Kilmeny" (1813). Like his young protagonist, Bonnie Rob Warren is transported in his dreams to the fairy world where he sees the future success of his blacking. The detailed description of the natural landscape

surrounding the character is comical from the beginning of the poem, which sometimes also recreates an archaic language:

Bonine Rob Warren gaed up the lang glen–
‘Twas on Saturday last, at a quarter to ten–
The morn was still, and the sky was blue,
And the clouds were robed in their simmer hue,
And the leaf on the elm looked green as the sea
When it sleepeth in brief tranquility; . . .
Till rapt in reverie strange and deep,
Bonnie Rob Warren fell fast asleep. (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 35)

The reader can walk with Warren through the vision of a future where his blacking and company will become famous, selling all over the globe. He also witnesses the boy’s happiness when he wakes up and returns home. The poem’s narrator, in a conventional ending to the ballad, makes a wish for longevity to all who hear it, encouraging the readers to buy blacking. An ingenious symbiosis of parodied romantic poetry and commercialism is thus achieved:

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Now lang live a’ those wha hae money to lend,
And lang live a’ those wha have ony to spend;
And lang live a’ those wha hae gowd to receive,
And ditto to those wha have ony to give;
Provided, that lang as ‘tis likely to sell,
They’ll buy Warren’s Blackings, and puff it as well. (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 41,
emphasis in original)

3.3. Leigh Hunt and Nursery Odes

In his game of sustained parody through poems, Deacon includes “A Nursery Ode”, imitating the work of the well-known caustic critic Leigh Hunt. Interestingly, rather than using one of his well-known works, Deacon creates a threefold exercise in parody. First, he draws on a poem Hunt once wrote for one of his sons as a rebuke —“To J. L., Four Years Old” (1816). Second, highlighting the motif of childhood so closely associated with the development of Romanticism, he includes surprisingly varied mythological references identifying many Romantics who, along with Leigh Hunt, had been pejoratively identified as the *Cockney School of Poetry*—such as Hazlitt, Keats and Webb— and, third, presents the composition as Hunt’s personal gift to Warren’s son, justifying it as follows:

[...] originally written for private circulation, and transmitted, together with an ounce of crisp gingerbread-nuts, to my little acquaintance, John Warren, junior, by way of a birth-day present [...] the Editor of this Volume, to whom it was shown by the father, imagined that it might be serviceable in promoting the interests of his Work. (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 47)

3.4. Charles Mills and the Crusade Chronicles

Deacon does not overlook a taste for the past in his sophisticated compendium of romantic parodies. With great imagination he devises “Digression on The Family of Warren at the time of the Crusades” using the genre of historical study, specifically part of the general knowledge of Gibbon’s work. This well-known historian, famous for his work on the Roman Empire, had included a “Digression on the Family of Courtenay”. Deacon assumes the persona of Gibbon’s real-life disciple, Charles Mills, and creates a chronicle in which he delves into the annals of Warren’s history. He parodies historical seriousness to define Warren’s timeline, and the reader is amused to read of a supposed ancestor of the high-flown businessman, Michael de la Warene, who, of humble origin, accompanies his lord as a vassal to the crusades. In the middle of the desert, he will sacrifice his boots in exchange for food. The chronicle is structured to explain how he and his descendants —Michael de la Warene and, after his death, his son Robert Blackboots— will be rewarded by the king, and the act of the boots serves to praise the marvellous properties of the blacking preparation used.

This “Digression on the Family of Warren”, signed C.M., plays on Deacon’s knowledge of Charles Mills’ work on the crusades, which was once praised by Scott. Its interest lies in the recreation of such an exotic, historical and orientalist theme, which includes the fictional origins of Warren and his family. The battle with the Muslims is described as a clash between boots and bare feet, and invocations of St. George’s boots are included: “Behold the boots of St. George! Do you fear to follow the saint!” (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 57). The narrator manages to praise the alleged historical origin of this blacking:

[...] the historian will not be justified in concealing from the curious enquirer the existence of a singular tradition. In his death-bed Robert Blackboots the Polisher anticipated the present grandeur of his house, and foretold that a Robert de la Warene (the Warren of the corruption or change of our tongue) should benefit and surprise the world with the discovery that boots in general may be rendered as dark and as polished —perhaps too as durable— as the Black-boots of St. George himself. (58-59)

3.5. Southey and Laudation

Deacon sharpens the parodic attack on Southey by taking into account not only his status as *Poet Laureate*, but also his known errors in verse through his supposed facility in constructing odes. In this case, such a lyric genre is taken as the basis for creating the exaggerated praise of Warren. Southey’s reputation, attacked not only by the conservative authors of *The Anti-Jacobin* but also by more liberal writers such as Byron, Hone or Hunt, declined as a result of the criticism of his changing

political views and is parodied in direct relation to the praise of Warren. Deacon succeeds with the parody “Carmen Triumphale By R.S.” in fanning the contemporary attacks on Southey in a poem he supposedly composed in praise of Warren. It is based on the first work the poet wrote as poet laureate —“Carmen Triumphale, For the Commencement of the Year 1814”— in which he rejoiced in Europe’s resistance and military victories over Napoleon. This provides an excuse for Deacon to transform Southey’s style by describing the success of Warren’s blacking.

The poetic voice associated with Southey is pretentious, egotistical and petulant. While waiting for his servant to return the boots he is cleaning for a walk, he decides to create a panegyric to praise Warren, as important as himself:

I sate me down in a chair, and thus apostrophised Warren.
“Pontiff of modern art! Whose name is as noted as mine is”,
Noted for talent, and skill, and the cardinal virtues of manhood,
Receive this tribute of praise from one whose applause is an honour.
(Deacon in Strachan 1999: 65)

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Interestingly, the egocentric poet insists that Warren’s eulogy will succeed because of his fame, showing how his influence spreads across the country, and then moving on to Europe:

In Brighton thy name is known, and waxeth important at Cheltenham,
Travels *per coach* to Bath, that exceedingly beautiful city,
Thence crossing the Chanel to Wales, it stirs up attention at Swansea [...]
Till valley, and rock, and glen, ring aloud with “Buy Warren’s Blacking”,
But not unto Britain alone is thy fame, Robert Warren confined: o’er
The civilised regions of Europe, believe me, ‘tis equally honoured [...] (67)

All the familiar elements of the original that lauded the glory of the king in early 1814 are transformed into a parodic exercise in which the supposed Southey hints at his preoccupation with explaining his own fame rather than Warren’s. Hence, at many points he lapses into an exaggeratedly bombastic presentation of himself, turning the praise of Warren into an exaltation of his own self:

For I am the bard of time, the puffer of peer or of a peasant,
Whether Russ, German, or French, Whig, Radical, Ultra or Tory,
Provided my *sack-butt* is paid with a *butt of sack* for each bouncer.
Hence, nobles are proud to bow to my laurelled head at Saint James’s,
Deeming His Majesty’s grace dispensed through me, for they well know
His Majesty loves in his heart my political creed. (68-69)

This multi-dimensional parody thus succeeds in exploiting the possibilities of the panegyric genre. It includes the promotion of Warren and his blacking in Southey’s parodied voice and makes the Romantic poet appear vain, emphasising his lack of

political consistency. The exaggerated praise of the king in the original is transformed into an encomium of the romantic poet himself, curiously in almost mercantilist competition with the businessman Warren.

3.6. Townshend and the Academic Prizes

For his parodic compositions, Deacon drew on authors who might be known for their academic, literary or intellectual work, in this case, Chauncy Hare Townshend. A clergyman, poet and intellectual, connected with the scholarly world of Cambridge where he graduated, Townshend received the “Chancellor’s Medal at the Cambridge Commencement July, 1817” for his poem “Jerusalem” (Strachan 1999: 70). Deacon uses this poem, and the idea of that prize, as a basis for describing Warren’s role in contemporary London life in a burlesque imitation entitled “The Triumph of Warren. A Cambridge Prize Poem. By C.H.T.” It copies the bombastic style of the original, providing an intentional recreation of the burlesque epic. The consumerism of urban life is portrayed through fashions and the promotion of advertisements. For that, Deacon tangentially touches on the genre of the so-called *parody of learning* with the intention of satirizing the budding ingenuity of young people graduating from university institutions. Warren’s glory in the poem is exaggerated. It is compared, for example, with the beauty of nature:

As when young day first blushes in the skies,
Each virgin flowret starts with glad surprise,
Thus when the name of Warren greets the eye,
Thrills with angelic bliss each passer-by [...] (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 73)

The muses also pause before its magnificence:

But halt, my Muse; not thine in vengeful verse
The countless dupes of fashion to rehearse; [...]
‘Tis thine to pluck a berry from each bough,
And twine the wreath round Warren’s classic brow. (77)

Against the backdrop of everyday life, Warren’s brilliance stands out with echoes of Thomas Love Peacock’s 1820 parodic essay *The Four Ages of Poetry*—iron, gold, silver and brass—in this case focusing on the brass age, which offers an untidy catalogue of mixed categories that includes characters, professions, cultural aspects and ways of life that the reader of the day would recognise and which Deacon looks upon with derision—sermons, actors, tie-dye business, hat business, balloon rides, lottery players, etc.:

His wide-spread fame adorns this age of brass—
Thrice honoured age of churches and of quacks,

Of Scotch orations, Liston, and Almack's:
Each summer gale or winter blast that roars,
Puffs some new folly to thy guileless shores:
See, graced by fashion, Petersham's cravats,
Hoby's spring boots, and Dando's dandy hats;
On wings of gas see aeronauts arise,
The Captain Cookes of undiscovered skies,
Explore new clouds, and coast around the moon,
Till burst at once the bubble and balloon;
See lottery crews, our national corsairs,
Proffer their golden sheaves, but yield the tares;
While quackery's genius, hovering o'er her isle,
Prompts each aspiring folly with a smile. (In Strachan 1999: 76)

In this curious parodic composition, Deacon, through the veneer of a supposedly prize-winning poem, accentuates the value of Warren and his business in a context where he satirises everyday life.

3.7. Bryan Procter, the Cockney style and its Amorous Uses

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Deacon masterfully covers all the romantic stereotypes in his brilliant and at the same time desperate commercial salesmanship and praise of Warren's blacking. Impersonating the Cockney poet Procter, he not only uses his pseudonym —Barry Cornwall— but creates the composition "The Girl of Saint Mary-Axe" to parody the author's well-known poem "The Girl of Provence", published in 1823.

The reader of the time would automatically associate the composition with this author associated with the so-called *Cockney School* and would also laugh at the parallels drawn between the original and the copy. Deacon adopts a pathetic tone to address the theme of unrequited love and the narrative of impossible relationships which, logically and comically, includes Warren as the subject who does not reciprocate the lady's love for him. This is the topic of impossible love, one of the manifestations of feelings frequently exploited by the romantic sentimental writers and their parodists. For example, Peacock parodied not only romantic love in general terms, but specifically Werther's prolonged sorry for his unrequited love in *Nightmare Abbey* (1818). This issue is presented in *Warreniana* with the damsel dying of love singing a hymn to Warren. Exaggerated sentimentality is used as a starting point, already announced in the opening introductory note, which describes the composition as "the melancholy catastrophe" (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 80).

The most successful passages are those in which Procter in his poetic composition presents the suffering of the lady, who discovers with despair that Warren has been married for three years. To this is added an exaggerated appreciation of nature.

There is no lack of references to the waves of the sea, to pure water, or to green forests together with the mention of urban and common elements such as the cooker Warren wants to buy (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 83). Lyrical exaggeration is also deployed in the description of the lady's last moments where, before the doctor, she is able in extremis to sing a song promoting Warren's blacking: "Hymned a low tune, (sung partly through her nose),/ And WARREN'S BLACKING was the theme she chose" (90). Even the little bird that mourns her death, intones the slogan about Warren: "With voice of girlish fondness seem to cry,/ 'BUY WARREN'S BLACKING!' to each passer by" (91).

3.8. Byron and his Heroes

Deacon imitates many of the elements of Byron's well-known "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" (1812-1818) in "The Childe's Pilgrimage", creating a very original eulogy to Warren. This time the narrative poem created by Byron is transformed into twenty-two stanzas. Like the pilgrimage of the original hero, Childe Harold, the parody presents a tormented character, a tradesman —called Higgins— who crosses part of London westwards to discover a sacred place, the neighbourhood where Warren's company is located. The pilgrimage from the darkest, soberest, most mercantile and saddest of the area of departure contrasts with the arrival at the bright and shining destination of *N 30 The Strand*. Deacon captures the character's romantic and misanthropic musings. His preoccupations with the world and his despair are meant to mimic the deep meditations of the romantic hero, but he is nonetheless a very mundane character, afflicted by an unglamorous toothache, as he reflects from the outset:

Whilome in Limehouse docks there dwelt a youth,
Childe Higgins hight, the child of curst ennui,
Despair, shame, sin, with aye assailing tooth,
Had worn his beauty to the bone. —Ah me!
A lone unloving libertine was he; (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 104)

The reason that motivates this character to make his pilgrimage is the newspaper advertisements of the time about Warren, "the Strand bard's self-eulogistic rhymes" (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 105). The original satire on Byron's London life becomes in Deacon's poem a model transformed by parody, as a character is created who traverses different areas of London starting from the markets of Whitechapel and the fish or fruit stalls of Billingsgate "where dirt and dullness dwelt" (107). These well-known places in London are charged with dark connotations. Passing by *The Exchange*, for example, the pilgrim describes "this barbaric booth, this fair of vanity" (107), with echoes of what Thackeray would later recreate in his famous novel. As he passes the Lord Mayor's official mansion, he attacks the exaggerated

affluence of the wealthy classes: “Twas here like geese, they fattened and they died” (108). The stanzas continue in this way with harsh descriptions of the St Paul’s congregation, Fleet Street and the City of London. Meanwhile, the protagonist’s musings become more philosophical and desperate, curiously with references to blackness, in front of what will appear as a monument among lights, the end of the pilgrimage, Warren’s place of work, “the sacred shrine” (111). At this moment, the magic and exoticism of the company’s name are exaggerated:

And saw —bright glittering in the hemisphere—
Like stars on moony nights —a sacred band
Of words that formed the bard’s cognomen— grand
Each letter shone beneath the eye of day,
And the proud sign-boot, by spring breezes fanned,
Shot its deep brass reflections over the way,
As shoots the tropic morn o’er meads of Paraguay. (111)

Arriving at this ‘sacred’ site, the dark character —“the lone unloving Childe” (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 111)— will become radiant and his soul seems to be transformed with an inner light that equates to that of the entrepreneur’s advertisements with exaggeration and amusement:

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Ere thrilled his soul with such intense delight
As thrilled it now when Warren’s magic till
Thro’ each shop-window gleamed upon his sight,
Clear as Italian dawn that gilds the brow of night. (111)

It is the magic of parody in fact that this highly original romantic composition manages to include the name of a businessman and the strength of his advertisements and window displays. In this way, Deacon is able to recreate in a poem the main features of the success of his product. While imitating the censorship of some social aspects in Byron’s time and following in the footsteps of the original, where the motif of pilgrimage already existed, the prodigious change of Deacon’s protagonist is certainly acute due to the equally prodigious blacking being advertised. In the last stanza, the poetic voice disdainfully bids farewell to the powerful characters —“Ye dolphin dames”, “Ye dandy drones”, “Ye ball-room bards” (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 112)— and snaps at them with the expected advertising spot in capital letters: “BUY WARREN’S BLACKING”, as ye hope to crown/ Your senseless souls or soulless senses with renown” (112).

3.9. Coleridge and Esoteric Dreams

The contrast between darkness and light is also maintained in the excellent parody of Coleridge’s works in “The Dream, a Psychological Curiosity. By S.T.C.”, in which Deacon exploits cues taken from the original “Kubla Khan” and “Christabel”

in a retelling that unravels the dream of a pugilistic combat between Satan and Warren, from which the businessman will naturally emerge victorious. The structural perfection of the parody allows us to see how Deacon, knowing the original in detail, transforms its elements with humour and wit. It consists of two distinct parts: “Advertisement to the reader” parodies Coleridge’s well-known preface to the poem “Kubla Khan” (1816), satirising its opacity, its philosophical and metaphysical content, and its motif of the dream as inspiration.

In this context, Wu’s exhaustive review of the myth of the dream as inspirational experience in Romantic poetry is of interest. Analysing “Religious Musings”, written according to Coleridge on Christmas Eve 1794, Wu explains that the production of “Kubla Khan” was not as spontaneous as Coleridge would have us believe, but the fruit of a long creative process: “In other words, the claim to have written a poem of 420 lines on a single evening belies a more plausible truth: it was written over fifteen months and revised after its first publication over the course of six months. It was, Coleridge wanted readers to understand, a gift from God” (2005: 52). As explained by Wu, Coleridge’s text was the result of a painstaking writing process and not an intuitive act inspired by dreams. Likewise, Wu insists on the demystification of the use of opium as a vehicle instigating the process of creation of “Kubla Khan”: “Experts on opium addiction doubt it could have been written at once, and even Coleridge’s biographers are sceptical of his claims” (53). In the same vein, Ballesteros rightly states: “The poet was interested in fostering the relationship between imagination and drugs, turning the magnificent poem into a text of almost legendary echoes” (2011: 158, my translation).¹

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In *Warreniana*, Coleridge’s supposed voice is recorded, proud that Warren had counted on him for the work: “at the instigation of Mr. Warren, who was desirous of enrolling me among the number of his panegyrists” (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 117). Before falling asleep, the poet reads a newspaper account of a pugilistic fight between two well-known boxers of the time: “when suddenly falling asleep over a provincial newspaper which detailed the battle between Crib and Molineaux, the thoughts of my waking hours assumed the aspect of the present poetical reverie” (117). This is accompanied by a pedantic and practically incomprehensible exercise on the ideas of Kant, the use of dreams and nonsensical reasoning on psychology, typical of the parodied Coleridge.

The chronological development of this dreamed story unfolds over twenty-four hours, from sunrise to sunset. This allows the narrative progress to follow that of the original “Kubla Khan” but with stanzas detailing the confrontation between pugilists —“The Fight”— and the development of the fight —“The Rounds”. Warren’s challenge to Satan and his victory through characters fighting in his name is highly original, as is the characterisation of the characters. Warren defines

himself as “lord of the Strand” or “the Pride of the Strand” (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 127). The “old mother Nightmare life-in-death” is the creature-goblin who brings him into the presence of Satan, surrounded by darkness and power, whose authority seems undermined by the fact that he needs a shave (122). The end of the confrontation explains how all the spirits, Satan included, fall before Warren’s powerful product: “The shadowless spectres leaped up with delight, And ‘Buy Warren’s Blacking’ they shouted aloud” (127).

Deacon weaves into the sophisticated composition the contemporary taste for boxing matches and mixes it in an original way with aspects and authors of Romanticism in an alteration of Coleridge’s original that is evidence of his creative imagination.

3.10. Scott and Epic Battles

Deacon begins “The Battle of Brentford Green. A Poem in Two Cantos” signed SIR W.S. with a brief explanatory introduction, typical of Sir Walter Scott, on the origin and nature of the work. This very brief opening parody describes the competition between blacking companies as a contest between warriors: “a serious affray took place between those illustrious rivals, Warren, and Day and Martin” (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 163). Scott’s supposed voice further confirms his sources —“I learned from the black-letter record of the fray” (163)— gives information on the date, 1818—which he also explains at length in the endnotes—and the place, Brentford, where the pitched battle takes place.

The careful explanation also provides the keys to a burlesque epic in which Deacon recreates Scott’s voice in justifying his primitivist historical method of recreating the rivalry of London businessmen in nineteenth-century London in the context of sixteenth-century Scotland:

I have taken the liberty of adding a few particulars and persons, for the purpose of elevating my subject, a principle which induced me to raise a fictitious superstructure on the historical groundwork of *Marmion*. (In Strachan 1999: 163)

Deacon, well acquainted with the father of the English historical novel with whom he corresponded, exploited the knowledge that every reader of Romanticism would have of Scott and his play *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* (1808), and would therefore be able to follow the transformation into the genial parody of the medieval joust between Lord Marmion and his rival Sir Ralph de Wilton. The detail and structure of the original are turned into an imaginative burlesque epic. The composition in two Cantos follows Scott’s typical patterns. Already in the first Canto, the sunrise in the middle of London is presented in an epic tone, where the focus is on the advertisement of Warren’s office:

W.F. Deacon and his Revision of Romanticism in *Warreniana*

Day set on Regent Street, Pall Mall,
Bathed Westminster's emblazoned hall
In one wide ruddy glow;
Lit up the brazen Hand-in-Hand
Fire-office, eastward of the Strand,
And gilt, Saint George's Row;
The Warren sign boot ers't so gay,
Slow darkled as the darkling day,

Less wide and less was flung; (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 163-164)

This is the tone that will govern the whole poem. The three parts of the poem are announced by black titles that imitate the gothic style of the poems in "Marmion". Everything in the poem recreates the epic atmosphere. In the first canto—"The Wassail"—a medieval banquet in Warren's office is the setting where a stranger challenges Warren for his use of competing advertisements:

'That thou by advertising,
Hast dulled the Day and Martin's fame,
Decried their worth, assoiled their name,
And puffed, —I say it to thy shame—
With impudence surprising'. (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 167)

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Deacon indulges in a parodic recreation of a medieval hero by having Warren speak as a warrior ready to fight:

'I, Robert of the sable hand,
And lord of Number Thirty, Strand,
Obey their summons to the fight,
And will on Monday morn, despite
Their mercenary mob,
Like cataract on their squadrons rush,
With banner, broom, and blacking brush
I will, so help me Bob!' (168)

The second Canto—"The Battle"—picks up on the fierce struggle between the two sides by deploying all the familiar epic formulas in their parodic version: the presentation of the warrior—"Well armed in stern unyielding mood,/ High o'er that Green the Warren stood" (Deacon in Strachan 1999: 169); the harangues of the narrator—"Charge, Warren, charge, yon battle Green, Glitters afar with silvery sheen" (170); the description of the battle—"Each nose is bleeding fast; Strike, strike,— their skulls like walnuts cracking, "For Day, for Martin, and his blacking,/ The battle cannot last" (171); the muse that inspires the press to tell of Warren's victory; the catalogue of the vanquished foes with Day and Martin's apprentices and their wounds; and finally the fame the battle acquired—"The sympathising hind shall tell/ Of those who fought and those who fell,/ At Brentford's grim foray" (174).

Deacon does not hesitate to end with a French-echoing ending —“L’Envoy to the Reader” where the bard bids farewell: “[...] nor feel I need/ to add to Warren’s fame, my meed/ Of laudatory rhymes” (in Strachan 1999: 174), alluding again to the many places he will be able to visit with clean boots thanks to the familiar blacking: “The sight and sense with awe attacking, [...] In boots baptized with WARREN’S BLACKING” (174).

Deacon, like Scott, recreates the existing tradition with a medieval overlay but, through parody, effectively manages to exploit the romantic elements attributable to Scott and bring them into the practical realm of the persuasive strategy of the contemporary advertisement.

4. Conclusion

As explained above, in *Warreniana* each parody has its own rhetoric and only seems to be united by a commercial purpose, in this case ‘poetically promotional’, emphasising the importance of Warren and his blacking. Its coherence is revealed by a more important feature, its identity and nature as yet another romantic work. While *Warreniana* follows the parameters of previous collections such as *A Pipe of Tobacco* or *Rejected Addresses*, in this one the advertisement of blacking and of its creator is elevated to such an exaggerated level that it charges the overall parody on important authors —and the most popular press of the time— with humour.

If Hazlitt critically reviews in *The Spirit of the Age* aspects of consumer culture — books, commercial blacking firms such as Warren, Turrer’s or Day and Martin, bookshops, bookbinders, tailors or fashionable dress— Deacon focuses on just one of these, ‘blacking’, but in an exhaustive and exaggerated way that heightens its degree of humour. His use of parody does not take on the moralistic tone characteristic of the 18th century, but shows a move to a more novel and modern treatment. While generally exercising a benevolent form of parody, he also writes in the style of many of the contemporary critical and satirical attacks that Romantic authors and their works faced at the time.

This non-canonical type of Romanticism expressed in *Warreniana* takes advantage of the Romantics, extols them, but simultaneously recreates them for an intelligent, modern audience who can decode the clues and recognize their rhetorical publicity. With this original portrayal of Romanticism through the perspective of parody, Deacon and *Warreniana* become worthy of belonging to the Romantic canon.

Notes

1. "Al poeta le interesó fomentar la relación entre la imaginación y la droga, convirtiendo el magnífico poema en un texto de ecos casi legendarios".

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