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«TO BE READ POCO A POCO»: A LETTER FROM EDWARD DUBOIS (1774-1850) TO FRANCIS DOUCE (1757-1834)

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ABSTRACT: This article focuses on a letter signed «ED» found among the papers of the British antiquary Francis Douce (1757-1834) kept in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The identity of Douce's anonymous correspondent is discussed, a hypothesis regarding both authorship and date is proposed, and the contents of the letter are explored in connection with the transmission of knowledge within Douce's extended networks, paying particular attention to his Spanish acquaintances and correspondents.

KEYWORDS: Bodleian, Douce, Dubois, Jiménez de Alcalá, letter.

«TO BE READ POCO A POCO»: UNA CARTA DE EDWARD DUBOIS (1774-1850) A FRANCIS DOUCE (1757-1834)

RESUMEN: Este artículo se centra en una carta firmada «ED» encontrada entre los papeles pertenecientes al anticuario británico Francis Douce (1757-1834) y conservada en la Bodleian Library en Oxford. En él se discute la posible identidad de su autor, se propone una hipótesis sobre su autoría y datación y se estudia su contenido en relación con la transmisión de conocimientos dentro de las extensas redes de Douce, prestando particular atención a los españoles incluidos en las mismas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Bodleian, carta, Douce, Dubois, Jiménez de Alcalá

Among the correspondence of the antiquary Francis Douce (1757-1834) bequeathed to the Bodleian Library in Oxford after his death in 1834, there is an undated letter

signed with the initials «ED» preceded by the words «To be read poco a poco».¹ This manuscript letter has been bound in a volume catalogued as «Letters and drafts of letters from Douce, 1786-1831, with miscellaneous notes». The handwriting in the letter does not match Douce's characteristic spidery hand, while the contents also suggest that he was the recipient, and not the author, of this document. It must therefore have been included in this volume of his letters either mistakenly, or as falling within the «miscellaneous notes» category. In this article, the identity of Douce's anonymous correspondent is discussed, a hypothesis regarding both authorship and date is proposed, and the contents of the letter are explored in connection with the transmission of knowledge within Douce's extended networks, paying particular attention to his Spanish acquaintances and correspondents.

Francis Douce was a London-based antiquarian collector and scholar, who acquired thousands of rare books, manuscripts, coins, paintings, prints, drawings, and miscellaneous antiquities selected on the basis of their usefulness to understand his subject, which was the history of customs and beliefs. After training at Gray's Inn in London, he was appointed attorney to the King's Bench, a position he held until the inheritance received upon the death of his parents in 1791 allowed him to focus on his research and collecting activities. Douce's vast knowledge of rare books and manuscripts (and, reportedly, his friendship with Sir Joseph Banks) led to his appointment as Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum in 1807. In 1811, he resigned in annoyance at the bureaucratic nature of the job, which prevented him from pursuing his studies. In 1823, Douce became the main recipient of his friend Joseph Nollekens's fortune after the latter's death, thus devoting the last years of his life to enrich his collections and to continue his work, which resulted in several articles and in two books entitled *Illustrations of Shakspeare and of Ancient Manners* (1807) and *The Dance of Death* (1833) (Bodleian Library, 1984). After his death in 1834, his collections were bequeathed partly to his friend Sir Samuel Meyrick, who displayed them in his neo-Gothic castle Goodrich Court, Herefordshire, and partly to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, where his manuscripts, rare books, personal papers, and correspondence are kept (Whiteley, 1997: 58-59).

According to his friend Walter Scott, Douce's distinct strand of antiquarianism focused on «the community of fable», by which he meant the transmission of certain motifs, tropes, and tales among different cultures and across the centuries (Scott, 1810: 392-393). Throughout his life, Douce provided ample access to his collections —and to the knowledge he had gained about them— to anyone interested in related topics, such as popular culture, the history of printing and printmaking, legends and myths, religion, and witches and witchcraft. His activities and his collections belonged to a time when Romantic antiquarianism was taking shape and providing historians, as well as artists, with a wealth of materials resulting from its characteristic fusion of information with imagination (Hill, 2011: 36; Sweet, 2004). The necessarily interdisciplinary nature of Douce's networks is central to the kind of knowledge circulated and produced within them.

As the opening note in the letter to Douce suggests, the writer was familiar with Spanish, and several words and phrases in this language are scattered throughout its pages. He visited Spain, since he referred to his time in Seville, and he was interested in, and knowledgeable about, Spanish recent history and current affairs. He was, however, a native English speaker, probably a bibliophile or a man of letters, who evinced an insider's knowledge of the early nineteenth-century British artistic milieu —most of

¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Douce c. 8, ff. 39-41. I am grateful to Carlos García Minguillán, from the British Library, for his assistance with the bibliography on Edward Dubois.

the letter is devoted to commenting on artistic matters. The author ostensibly began, however, by asking Douce to return a book and a manuscript borrowed from him. The book was an unidentified work by «Joannis Fabrius» «upon the Gem & Books» (works by both Johann Albert Fabricius and Joannes Bolandus Fabricius are listed among the contents of Douce's library), while the second item would be an autograph note on Spain's recent history —more specifically, on the reign of Charles III of Spain (also Charles VII of Naples). The anonymous correspondent justified the urgent tone of his request by explaining that he had lost another book, a catalogue of the paintings in the collection of Charles I of England, to a «Frenchman», a «devil drawing Rascal» who should have never been trusted. The mysterious borrower of the author's missing book had the same (presumably little) «judgement perspicuity and profound knowledge of painting» as «that enlightened Yankey philosopher my friend Mr Christie's Venerable President», which probably referred to Benjamin West (1738-1820), the Pennsylvania-born President of the Royal Academy of Art from 1806 until his death in 1820. «Mr. Christie» clearly alludes to the antiquary and auctioneer James Christie (1773-1831), who was responsible for organizing the earliest sales of the contents of West's collections and studio between June and July 1820 (Weber, 2013: 9). Christie's had also been the main auction house attended by West as a collector (Weber, 2013: 92).

A clearer clue to the identity of the target of the author's ire would be the assertion that he had «at this very moment, the care of his Majesty's Pictures; out of which there were many belonging to that collection, derived from that of Charles the First: & who really did not honour: (by his own accidental confession)». West was appointed Surveyor of the King's Paintings in 1791, a position he held until his death in 1820. But the person about whom the anonymous correspondent was writing is more likely to be his successor, William Seguer (1772-1843) (Laing, 2004). Of French Huguenot descent, Seguer was certainly a better fit for the «Frenchman» to whom the writer had lost his valuable book, a catalogue that he would have «used for the instruction, no doubt of that Sapient Society, so liberally puffed, by the now more aspiring Graduates». If Seguer was indeed the recipient of the author's indignant rant, the «Sapient Society» ought to be the British Institution, of which he was Superintendent from 1805 until his appointment as first Keeper of the recently created National Gallery in 1824. The author extended his scorn to «this most credulous community: who looking at Hogarth's Portrait of the complicated Richardson; through a Telescope, reflecting only the opinions of others; suffer the virtues to be imposed upon; and who reject that which shows real Genius; for «the genteel, the airy, and the smart Imagen of Nonsense», which is suitable only to their own want of Discernment». The anonymous writer thus considered the British Institution as a complacent, conventional, and unoriginal organisation unable to recognize true genius. He ridiculed the Institution by comparing its attitude to that of the eighteenth-century painter Jonathan Richardson, satirised in the etching entitled *Hogarth's Portrait of the complicated Richardson; through a Telescope*, attributed to William Hogarth by Samuel Ireland (Paulson, 1989: 36). Another eighteenth-century satire, *The Rosciad* (1761) by Charles Churchill, was the source of the phrase «the genteel, the airy, and the smart», with which the author referred to Seguer's preferred painting style (Churchill, 1761: 20). The acerbic tone of these allusions to the British Institution and to Seguer, as well as the negative view of the general state of the arts in Britain that they revealed, continued in the following paragraph of the letter. When reporting on an unidentified exhibition seen in London, Douce's correspondent wrote about neglected young talents and overrated artistic celebrities:

I have worn out your patience and will only observe further that a small Picture in the last Exhibition. the painter Etty. the subject the Pearl Divers was very modestly sold for thirty guineas which contained more merit, taking the art under every aspect, than the whole exhibition put together; yet this unassuming young man, whom I never saw, is passed by, hardly noticed, because he doesn't yet understand the art of puffing and has not had the folly to place our saviour [...] god if not of inanimate, of unintelligible expression and form, upon a little diminutive, Faith Ass; who seemingly vain of his Rider deserved to have been painted with a pair of spectacles.

«The Exhibition» could have been either the Royal Academy's Summer exhibition or the annual exhibition at the British Institution, but it is difficult to find any work in their catalogues matching the subject of the picture by William Etty (1787-1849) described in the letter. In 1816, Etty showed an unidentified «Study» at the Royal Academy, while in 1820 he obtained some success with his *Coral Finders*, shown at the same venue (Royal Academy of Art, 1820: 6). Although the author of the letter referred to its subject as *The Pearl Divers*, which recalled *The Pearl Fishers* copied by Etty after a painting by Alessandro Allori in the course of his trip to Venice in 1822-23, he could have meant the 1820 painting instead (Bertram, 2014: 91). This hypothesis seems substantiated by Etty's sale of *The Coral Finders* «to Mr. Tompkinson, piano-forte maker, at the Painter's modest price of £30», which would fit the account given in the letter to Douce (Gilchrist, 1855: 1, 91). However, «Two small Finished Sketches» were exhibited by Etty at the British Institution in 1825, when he was too busy with *The Combat: Woman pleading for the Vanquished* to produce anything new. The subject of one of them was *Nymph and Cupid*, but nothing was said about the other, which could relate to the earlier work after Allori's painting mentioned above (Gilchrist, 1855: 227). The author considered that Etty's work was overlooked because of a widespread preference for more mediocre history paintings, such as the image of «our saviour» upon a donkey that he described in a likely attack on the much-talked-about *Christ Entering Jerusalem* by Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846). This large, ambitious picture on which Haydon had been working since 1814 was not publicly displayed until 1820, but by 1817 it was already well known in artistic circles—in that same year, it was reproduced, for instance, in an etching by Thomas Landseer (Cummings, 1963: 371). Haydon had trained at the Royal Academy and he admired West, whose praise he had received (Olney, 1952: 32). Moreover, together with the artists David Wilkie and John Jackson, Haydon was part of Seguer's circle since about 1806 (Olney, 1952: 36). This younger generation to which Haydon belonged was also the subject of the anonymous author's disparaging remarks:

I will put [...] young men at the Plow, Boys I mean, and if in five years I do not produce six painters from the number who will not out all this mummery, mascara and imposition then shall they make a Portrait of me as Marsyas and the living President shall [...] sing, say or paint, if he pleases at my Encuentros, in the character of Apollo: and he may be decorated (being the fool of the Ladies) with the Order of Saint Catherine to the Bargain.

The «living President» ridiculed as «the fool of the Ladies» could be West's successor at the Royal Academy, Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), whose complicated love life had long been, and still was, the subject of gossip and scandal (Levey, 2005: 96-97, 151-152).

The letter is signed ED on the verso of the leave numbered 40, as mentioned above. The following page, numbered 41, does not bear any heading, initials, or signature, but the handwriting is the same as in the previous two. It is either a postscript, or a fragment from another letter by the same hand. The author starts by referring to a mutual acquaintance, «Mr. Alcalá», who could be either the Spanish author, diplomat, and liberal politician Antonio Alcalá Galiano (1785-1865) or the Sevillian writer and academic José María Jiménez de Alcalá (fl. 1804-1840). They were both in London in the 1820s, although the latter had arrived earlier, after quitting his post as a professor of Philosophy at the University of Seville, while the former left at the end of the Liberal Triennium and was in London in early 1824 (Gallardo, 2003). They both taught Spanish, Alcalá Galiano at University College London from 1828 and Jiménez de Alcalá at King's College London from 1832. Jiménez de Alcalá worked previously as a private tutor, according to the advertisement published in the *Morning Herald* on 20 April 1827, in which he also stated that he had been in London for twelve years and he gave «10 Gower Street North, Bedford Square» as his address. Douce lived on the same road in about 1791-1807 and, again, in 1825-1834 (first at 13 Upper Gower Street and later at 15 Gower Street) (Bodleian Library, 1984). From this «very good sort of Spaniard», the anonymous correspondent had received assistance with the translation of some unidentified Spanish text intended for publication, probably on the Spanish political situation after the intervention of the Holy Alliance in 1823. Douce's correspondent acknowledged that the Spaniard had «been of great service» to him, «particularly in Ecclesiastical technical terms», which might suggest that he is referring to Jiménez de Alcalá (rather than to Alcalá Galiano), who published a *Compendio Histórico de la Santa Biblia* in London in 1825.² The anonymous letter characterizes the unnamed Spaniard as «a good Priest for a Spaniard, a goodish Grammarian», possibly alluding to Jiménez de Alcalá's religious interests —not necessarily to his occupation, since his author also joked about how his «friend Alcalá is so kind hearted a fellow that he will never use the stiletto or Toledo but to the prettiest woman he meets»— and to his expertise in Grammar, who would lead him to publish *A Grammar of the Spanish Language for the Use of the students in King's College* in 1833. The letter seems to suggest that Douce was responsible for the author's acquaintance with Alcalá, although there is another possible motivation for bringing his name up precisely at this time. In April 1825, the British press reported on «the legal action brought against [actor Edmund] Kean for alleged adultery with Charlotte Cox, the wife of London alderman Robert Albion Cox», a banker and businessman who was also «employed in the office for liquidating Spanish claims».³ Among the witnesses for the plaintiff the press included a «Signor Alcalá», who gave evidence concerning Cox's whereabouts on 11 June 1824. According to the newspapers, «Signor Alcalá, the Spanish teacher» confirmed that Cox, who «was studying the Spanish language at the Alien Office», had lessons and then breakfast with him on that day. What has been termed the «Edmund Kean's controversy» became a sensational affair extensively covered by the press, in which Kean's character and morals, but also his acting style, were the subject of pieces for and against the actor (for instance *The Times* attacked Kean, while the *Morning Chronicle* defended him) (Mulrooney, 2019: 113). Given that both Douce and his correspondent knew Alcalá, it is possible that the appearance of his name in the papers in connection with this case would have prompted the author of the letter to mention him.

² Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, U/5631-U/5632.

³ *New Times*, 13 April 1825, n. p.

There is another intriguing reference to Spanish matters at the beginning of the letter, where the anonymous author mentions a note on the coincidence of «the meeting of Borrelli Clarke and Gazzola at Madrid» that he had sent Douce. It is tempting to identify this «meeting» as the one that took place in 1760-1761 between the chaplain of the British embassy in Madrid, Edward Clarke (1730-1786), and Count Felice Gazzola (1698-1780), «one of His Catholic Majesty's great favourites, a Lieutenant-general, and his principal Engineer» (Clarke, 1763: 79, 295). Gazzola had just arrived in Spain as part of the entourage of the new king, Charles III, while Clarke, then chaplain to the Earl of Bristol, was collating Hebrew manuscripts in Spanish libraries for Oxford-based Hebraist Benjamin Kennicott (1718-1783) (Holtby, 2004). The letter also alluded to Charles III's then recent abdication of the crown of Naples for that of Spain. Clarke and Gazzola met once in El Escorial and then again in Madrid, where Gazzola had promised Clarke his assistance to gain access to some ecclesiastical collections and libraries. With regard to «Borrelli», a possible candidate would be Jean-Alexis Borrelly (Borrely, Borrelli or Borelli) (1738-1810), the French-born, Prusian-educated military officer and philosopher whose *Éléments de l'art de penser* (Berlin, 1778) were translated into Spanish by José María Magallón y Armendáriz (1763-1845) and published in Madrid in 1797. There is no evidence, however, of Borrelly's ever visiting Madrid.

Who is the author of this letter? From all these data, some conclusions can be reached concerning Douce's anonymous correspondent «ED». He was a bibliophile, familiar with Spain, with its history, language, and politics. At some point, he had been to Seville, where he experienced first-hand the «intelligence» and ingenuity of the Andalusians. He was involved in journalistic matters, possibly writing about Spanish subjects for a journal or a magazine, which explains his need for Jiménez de Alcalá's assistance. He was interested in the arts, he knew the antiquary and auctioneer James Christie personally, he visited the London exhibitions, and he was critical not only of Seguer and the British Institution, but also of Lawrence and the Royal Academy. At the end of his letter, when praising Jiménez de Alcalá's command of grammar, he regretted his own shortcomings in this respect, explaining to Douce that he left formal education at the age of fifteen. Together with the initials in the signature and with the presumed date of the letter in the 1820s, all these data seem to point in the direction of «English wit and man of letters» Edward Dubois (1774-1850) (Clemit and McAuley, 2004).

Like Seguer, Dubois was of French descent, his father was a merchant and he «was educated at home and then at Christ's Hospital, developing particular interests in classics and in French, Italian, and Spanish languages and literature». Like Douce, he belonged to the legal profession and in later years he was appointed first to the Metropolitan Lunacy Commission and subsequently to the National Lunacy Commission by Lord Brougham. Apart from this letter, there is no evidence Douce knew Dubois, but they moved in the same circles and Douce had certainly heard of him: Dubois was one of several people «credited with authorship [...] of *The Identity of Junius with a Distinguished Living Character Established* (1816)», another being the bookseller and publisher of John Keats, John Clare, Charles Lamb, Thomas De Quincey, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Taylor (1781-1864), who in the course of a visit to Douce on 1 March 1819, told him «a witty saying of [Samuel] Rogers's on the subject of [blank] being the author of Junius (whom he called Junius Brutus)». ⁴ Taylor's links to Douce's Spanish networks are also evinced by his involvement in the publication of Alcalá Galiano's *An Introductory Lecture Delivered in the University of London* in 1828, when Taylor was the official publisher of the recently

⁴ Oxford, Bodleian, *Coincidences*, 1 March 1819, Ms. Douce e. 87, f. 16. On Taylor, see Schupbach (2021).

founded University College, London, based at 28 Upper Gower Street (Heredia Campos, 2001). Moreover Dubois, who sometimes signed his satirical works as Old Nick, was responsible for an edition of the *Decameron* published by Longman in 1804, of which Douce owned a copy.⁵ Although the illustrations for this edition were reused eighteenth-century French engravings, Douce's friend Thomas Stothard (1755-1834) drew a vignette reproduced as a wood-engraving on the titlepage. It might have been around this time that Douce asked another friend, the travel writer Richard Twiss (1747-1821), about Dubois, since the latter wrote to him in the postscript to an undated letter:

Old Nick is written by a Mr. Dubois, an Englishman of french extraction he also published a good novel called family Biography. 3 v.s, in 1799. & last year Odes & verses translated from the Grecian Poets. He is one of the best Classical Scholars living. I shall find him out, & go & see him.⁶

Twiss, who had travelled to Spain in the 1770s, was the author of *Travels through Portugal and Spain in 1772 and 1773* (Londres, 1775). If he did indeed become acquainted with Dubois, Twiss could have been responsible for introducing him to Douce at a later stage. There is an intriguing reference to an unnamed common acquaintance in a letter from Douce to another friend, the artist, collector, and author George Cumberland (1754-1848) dated February 1825:

As to D. he has not mortal enemy enough to be inimical nor even mischievous, but he is the most incautious man I ever met with, & will offend you to your face, without knowing it. He is one of the mere talkers behind your back to amuse a dinner party, every individual of which will [shun] him the next day.⁷

Douce's opinion could well refer to Dubois, known for his mischievousness. Dubois was not only a journalist who wrote for *The European Magazine*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Monthly Mirror*, *The New Monthly Magazine*, but also an art critic, mainly for *The Observer* (Barnett, 1993: 325). He knew two other authors interested in Spain and acquainted with Douce, William Godwin (1756-1836) and Robert Southey (1774-1846). The latter described Dubois to Walter Scott (also a friend of Douce's) as

a man who spits his frothy venom occasionally both at you & him [Coleridge] in the Monthly Mirror [...], Sir John Carr's antagonist. —a man possessed of some classical reading, tho not very deep in that, & a great stock of small wit, but as full of malice & of mischief as he can hold. He brought out two letters of introduction to me at Lisbon, one from a person who did not know him, the other from a person who did not know me.⁸

From Southey's letter, we know that Dubois travelled to Portugal in about 1795-1796, and this might have been also the date of the journey into Southern Spain to which he alluded in his letter to Douce. John Carr (1772-1832) was a travel writer well known to Douce, who shared with him the executorship of Richard Cosway's will in 1821-1822. His

⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce B 541 and Douce B 44.

⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Letter from Twiss to Douce, 4 April [1801?], Ms. Douce d. 39, f. 102.

⁷ Letter to Cumberland, 26 February 1825, London, BL Ms. Add. 36510, f. 294.

⁸ Letter from Southey to Walter Scott, 24 December 1810, MS: National Library of Scotland, MS 3879. ALS; 4p. See Curry (1965: 550-552).

popular works included a *Tour in Ireland* (1807), satirized by Dubois in *My pocket book; or, hints for «a ryghte merrie and conceited» tour... to be called «the stranger in Ireland» in 1805* (1808) (Handerson and Baigent, 2004).

As an art critic, Dubois «supplied malice and muckraking to the Morning Chronicle and Observer» (Brown, 2020). The use of his «poison pen» against contemporary painters, such as John Constable, would fit with the negative views on the younger generations of British artists vented in the letter (Barnett, 1993: 325). But William Jerdan, who also knew Douce, wrote in his biography of Dubois for *The Literary Gazette* that the latter «had a fine taste and was an excellent critic on the arts. The Morning Chronicle, the Observer, and other periodicals employed his judgment on exhibitions, &c., and his pen, if somewhat biting, was generally just, and, if questionable, it could only be on the score of judgment» (Jerdan, 1850: 52). Douce would have agreed with some of Dubois's views on the state of the arts in Britain, since the despondency and low opinion evinced in the latter's comments about Seguier were echoed by Douce in his observations about the recently created National Gallery to Cumberland:

ministers & trustees of a certain place have been squandering £9000 for 3 pictures, by Titian, Poussin & Carache. Mr R. had the impudence to say that Angerstein offered £5000 for the Titian, & what then? is a merchant with more money than wit the victim of the frauds of dealers, to be regarded as a national oracle? But the fact is that he did not make such an offer. The business is a job to which a certain dealer who leads Long by the nose who misleads his brother trustees, & Sir T. Lawrence is consulted when the stable door is shut. This is shameful work, & not a member of tact or judgement is to be found to enter his protest against this waste of publick money, but a man [...] who knows nothing of pictures but the Britannia on bank notes or the phiz of the sovereign, a dot & go one chap is to be the arbiter elegantiarum of the nation!⁹

Douce's reference to «a certain dealer who leads Long by the nose who misleads his brother trustees» hinted at Seguier's dishonesty in his advice to Sir Charles Long (1760-1838) and to the rest of the Trustees of the Gallery. In addition to his role as Superintendent of the British Institution, Seguier was also a dealer and restorer, which would explain Douce's allusion. The latter's remarks could therefore be partly based on Dubois's written communication.

Another subject of interest to both Dubois and Douce would have been Britain's involvement (or lack of) in the Iberian Peninsula in the 1820s. On 12 January 1823, Douce wrote in his notebook of *Coincidences*: «The day after I had sent the lines I wrote on the state of Spain as to Europe to the N. paper, in which I had used the expression «The Russ» I read in the account of the debates of the Spanish Cortes that the member Argüelles had used the same expression contemptuously «El Russo»!!!».¹⁰ A few days later, on 9 February 1823, Douce referred to another article he had written on the same subject, this time for the *Morning Chronicle*: «On the day after I had sent some lines intitled «the Spaniards» to the M. Chronicle & before they were inserted, there appeared in that paper similar lines intitled «Spain»». A few months earlier, England had broken with France, Prussia, and Russia on the question of the intervention by the Holy Alliance to overthrow the liberal government in Spain (Schmieder, 2015: 155). England opted for

⁹ Letter from Douce to Cumberland, 31 March 1826, London, BL, Add. 36511, f. 148.

¹⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Douce e. 87.

neutrality, but there was popular support for the Spanish cause and the issue was hotly debated in the English Parliament. Although no text signed by Douce seems to have been published under his name in the *Morning Chronicle*, the authors of several letters to the editor pledged their support and offered to contribute to a subscription to help the Spanish liberal government between January and February that year.¹¹

Douce's and Dubois's artistic concerns explain the mention of another art-related issue on the left margin of the post-script leaf, which bears this annotation, probably added as a hurried afterthought: «His books are well printed and between ourselves his Engravings are imperfect for either the Designer or Engraver can't draw but this between ourselves, for I wish him well». What artist and what engravings could be the subject of these comments? Given the previous references to Jiménez de Alcalá, it is possible that the work in question was his *Compendio Histórico*, published in two volumes illustrated with six anonymous wood-engravings in 1825. Although unsigned, these wood-engravings recall the work of John Jackson (1801-1848), who would have just completed his apprenticeship with the celebrated printmaker Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) and who knew Douce (Cerón, 2015: 227). They resemble the illustrations that Jackson supplied for Rudolph Ackermann's *El Instructor o Repertorio de Historia, Bellas Letras y Artes*, edited by Jiménez de Alcalá between 1834 and 1839 (see for instance Jackson's print after Raphael's cartoon *La Muerte de Ananias* published in its first issue).¹² It is also possible that the letter was alluding to another recent illustrated publication of interest to Douce. In 1825, William Pickering published Boccaccio's *Decameron* in an edition by Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827), then exiled in London. This edition was illustrated with a number of prints by Augustus Fox after drawings by Douce's friend Stothard. Another friend of Douce's was the dedicatee of Foscolo's edition, the antiquary and bibliophile Roger Wilbraham (1743-1829). A few years earlier, in 1814, Douce had referred to Luke Clennell's wood-engravings after Stothard's illustrations for Samuel Rogers's *Poems* in not very enthusiastic terms, explaining to Cumberland after being presented with the «proofs on Italian paper» by the draughtsman himself that «They are certainly very pretty, though some too carefully drawn & faulty». ¹³ As has been noted, Dubois had published an edition of the *Decameron* in 1804 and, according to Frederic Wordsworth Haydon's edition of his father's memoirs, in about 1818 Dubois and Foscolo «were, more or less, [Haydon's] intimates», together with Scott, Wilkie, Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth and Hazlitt, among others (Haydon, 1876: 1, 109). This description of the relationship between Dubois and Haydon does not agree with the disparaging remarks about the latter in the letter to Douce, although they could be attributed to Dubois's natural, careless duplicity.¹⁴

Dubois and Douce had common acquaintances that included the already mentioned Godwin, Southey, possibly Twiss, Carr, Brougham, and Taylor. Douce was aware of Dubois's work as a satirical author through the books by Dubois in his own library, through Twiss's correspondence and through the gossip on Junius reported by Taylor. The tone of the anonymous letter also seems to match Dubois's characteristic writing style. Moreover, there are significant similarities in handwriting, style, and in the inclusion of Spanish references, between this letter and the three signed letters that Dubois sent to

¹¹ See for instance the letter to the Editor of the *Morning Chronicle* on 30 January 1823 signed «Humanitas» that supported a subscription to assist the Spanish against the French.

¹² «Los Cartones», *El Instructor o Repertorio de historia, bellas letras y artes*, nº 1, January 1834, p. 9.

¹³ Letter from Douce to Cumberland, 13 April 1814, London, British Library, Ms. Add. 36504, f. 261.

¹⁴ For a letter from Dubois to Haydon dated 1819 praising the latter's paintings, see Haydon, 1876: I, 338.

Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866) in 1818, now in the New York Public Library.¹⁵ Once the authorship of the letter has been tentatively established, the issue of its date can also be considered. The references to the positions held by West, Seguier and Lawrence point towards a date in the 1820s, which would also suit the allusions to the public exhibition of works by Haydon and Etty. If the annotation on the margins of the postscript concerned the publication of Jiménez de Alcalá's *Compendio* or of Foscolo's *Decameron*, the date can be narrowed down to sometime in 1825. Jiménez de Alcalá's coincidental involvement in Cox's sensational court case at the beginning of that year also provides a reason for Dubois to mention his name.

The letter sent by Dubois to Douce exemplifies the circulation of knowledge within the latter's networks, which included other collectors, antiquaries, scholars, curators, keepers, librarians, researchers, dealers, as well as authors and artists. As shown by his relationship with Jiménez de Alcalá, Douce's networks were cosmopolitan and transnational in their scope and nature. In addition to his many British correspondents, Douce interacted with French antiquaries, Scandinavian philologists, German bibliophiles, Italian sculptors, and Spanish exiles. Among the latter, Douce befriended another Spaniard with a similar profile as Jiménez de Alcalá, José María Blanco White (1775-1841), whom he met on 23 October 1823 through the already mentioned James Christie and described as «an excellent learned man».¹⁶ As is well known, Blanco White, who had been in Britain since 1810, abandoned Spain for religious reasons. This might have also been the case with Jiménez de Alcalá who, according with the advertisement mentioned above, left around the time of the restoration of the Inquisition in 1815. Blanco White's *Letters from Spain* had been published in 1822 and, in March 1823, Southey commended him in a letter to Edward Hawke Locker as «a man for whom I have the highest respect» when alluding to his own writings on «Spanish affairs» (Speck, 1999: 160). Douce was interested not only in Spanish language, history, and current political situation, but also in Spanish art and literature. He owned two copies of Francisco de Goya's *Caprichos* (1799) and one of his *Tauromaquia* (1816), as well as a significant number of Spanish rare books and prints (Glendinning, 1964: 7). In his search for connections between the myths, legends and lore of different peoples and cultures Douce, who only left Britain twice for short research trips to France, Germany, and Switzerland, requested, for example, Blanco White's views on «what the Spaniards knew of King Arthur & particularly about the Mount Salviet in Salvatierra in Arragon».¹⁷ Jiménez de Alcalá's help might have been enlisted by him with similar purposes.

If his relationship with Douce could have provided Jiménez de Alcalá with contacts within the scholarly and antiquarian world, his acquaintance with Dubois would have introduced him in journalistic and literary circles. Jiménez de Alcalá would end up editing Rudolph Ackermann's *El Instructor o Repertorio de Historia, Bellas Letras y Artes* between 1834 and his return to Spain in 1839 (Loyola López, 2019: 41-78). Ten years earlier, Ackermann had also been responsible for the publication of *Variedades, o el Mensajero de Londres*, for which he engaged Blanco White's services. Both publications were lavishly illustrated with prints and their miscellaneous contents often dealt with artistic and literary matters. Jiménez de Alcalá could have benefited from the contacts, information, and access to artists and collections that both Dubois and Douce were able to provide. Such assistance would have been invaluable during his tenure as editor of

¹⁵ Edward Du Bois manuscript material: 3 items, Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, The New York Public Library.

¹⁶ Letter from Douce to Cumberland, 29 June 1824, London, British Library, Ms. Add. 36510, f. 125.

¹⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Coincidences, 17 January 1825, Ms. Douce c. 87, f. 69.

El Instructor. The scope and variety of the knowledge produced and shared within their networks would have fitted the miscellaneous nature of this popular publication intended for Spanish readers, either in the Peninsula or in America.

Why is this piece of writing significant? On the one hand, Dubois's letter can be regarded as an example of the ways in which knowledge was circulated and produced within antiquarian networks. It shows how this type of informal communication fostered a productive combination of information and opinions with gossip and news; its miscellaneous nature, the lightness of its tone, and the fact that there were not pre-established distinctions or hierarchies of importance imposed on the subjects discussed provided the reader with the freedom and flexibility to connect and to process the information according to their own interests and needs. As Philipp Sarasin puts it, «knowledge is not a spirit that floats above the waters. But it floats and it changes in all these processes». Such transformations, which constitute an essential part of the production of knowledge, are determined not only by its mechanisms of transmission, «because media necessarily format knowledge in specific ways», but also by what is done with that information, since «different recipients, who in principle are also (co-)producers of knowledge, do different things with knowledge because they too always receive and pass on knowledge in a slightly new, different way» (Sarasin 2020: 3). On the other hand, the connection established between Dubois, Douce, and Jiménez de Alcalá and its ramifications evince the centrality of Douce's role within a transnational network of knowledge that contributed to the Romantic interest in Spanish history and culture in early nineteenth-century Britain. In Douce's case, this interest was also related to the widespread perception of Spain as a proto-industrial country, still largely untouched by the kind of modernisation that was transforming Britain's traditional customs and communities and, hence, ripe for antiquarian mining of the sort that enriched his researches and collections. Douce was one of «those who aspire to the romantic, the poetical the sentimental, the artistical, the antiquarian, the classical» to whom Richard Ford would recommend searching for their materials in «the racy freshness of that original unchanged country where antiquity treads on the heels of today» (Ford, 1846: 269; Llorens, 1979; Saglia and Haywood, 2018).

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- London, British Library, Ms. Add. 36510.
- London, British Library, Ms. Add. 36511.
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