***Triangulating the Atlantic: Blanco White, Arriaza, and the London Connection***

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Only two months after the first issue of José Blanco White’s monthly newspaper *El español* in April 1810, the Spanish Regency sent a poet and propagandist, Juan Bautista Arriaza, to London to combat White’s prominent place within the emerging transatlantic network of British interests and Latin American pro-independence circles. This paper looks at this literary struggle as a sign of what Gabriel Paquette and others have denominated the “axial change” that took place in the Atlantic around the time of the Napoleonic invasion of the Peninsula: a reconfiguration of Transatlantic networks of intellectual and economic power that placed British cultural and financial capital as a new center. Challenging the epic nationalist academic framework built around tropes of national origins, colonial emancipation, and independence, this study looks at these open-ended debates as an early articulation of alternate definitions of Hispanicity and of Spain’s wrestling role within its cultural and economic colonial network. At stake here is the instability between Spain as a signifier and its plural signifieds: through the many issues of “el Español,” Blanco sought to resignify “lo español” ie Spanishness as a plural Transatlantic network of cultural connections through the image of a decentralized confederation, a full enfranchisement of *criollos*, and a questioning of colonial logics which included a refutation of slavery and of peninsular preeminence. Arriaza, by contrast, mobilized a series of tropes (metaphors, allegories, hyperboles) which signified Spain as uniquely peninsular, and redefined Creole agency as subaltern and peripheral, thus reinstating a Eurocentric colonial agenda at a time when the metropolitan Bourbon state had been entirely overwhelmed. The theoretical shift of a postnational Transatlantic Studies with its emphasis on circulation and transit – its inherent challenge of the national epistemic frame – recasts this debate within the new network of neocolonial cultural and commercial flows where London had become a prominent metropolis.

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