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A “Clearing in the Jungle:”¹ Adolescence in Martín Adán’s *La casa de cartón*

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Abstract

While critics of *La casa de cartón* have all considered Martín Adán’s only novel within the cosmopolitan vein of Spanish American *vanguardismo*, the present study questions this classification by showing how the narrative’s nameless protagonist distances himself from not only 19th century tropes and discourses that had characterized literary production, but also from those of his contemporaries. An exploration of Adán’s multiple parodies of literary production in Spanish America, as well as the alternative for collective cultural expression embodied in the trope of adolescence, points to the need to reconsider how we, as critics, approach and, ultimately, organize the canon.

Key words: Martín Adán, Peruvian Literature 20th Century, Parody, Adolescence, Literary classification

Luis Fernando Vidal, in his introduction to the PEISA editions of Martín Adán’s *La casa de carton* (1928), best represents the general critical reception of the text when he calls the Peruvian poet’s only novel “...la acabada expresión de ese viaje sin retorno de una adolescencia brillante que no halla, o que no desea hallar liga con el mundo” (10). Indeed, the critical propensity that has tended to obfuscate Adán’s contribution to the Spanish American literary canon is that which asserts that the poetic narration reflects the poet’s renunciation of social concerns in favor of literary contemplation that, in some cases resembles a certain narcissism.² Mirko Lauer, for example, has claimed that what limits Adán’s radicalization is his refusal to align himself with any of the political movements of the time, instead opting for a rupture with the social arena (10). Lauer also suggests that underlying *La casa de cartón* is a “regression” to the nostalgic *criollo* literature, which idealized the Hispanic identity of colonial times, “...nunca confesado pero siempre presente en su obra” (23). Peter Elmore goes so far as to assert that what he considers to be the hermetic quality of Adán’s text is indicative of an “elan aristocrático,” cynical in nature, which brings about the extreme isolation of the poet and the impossibility of creating an alliance with any community that does not share his eccentricity (67).³

The critical rule has, in general, been to situate *La casa de cartón* in the “insular” or what Nelson Osorio and others have described as the cosmopolitan vein of the Spanish American *vanguardia*, more concerned with artistic experimentation as opposed to the social and ideological vein of the works of Adán’s more famous countrymen César Vallejo and José Carlos Mariátegui.⁴ However, the present study calls into question this interpretation through an analysis of the trope of adolescence in the text and suggests that, rather than the isolated, narcissistic play that some critics attribute to it, what is reflected is a form of play that parodies hegemonic aspirations to any single discourse or identity and proposes an alternative form of collective cultural expression. Furthermore, this alternative, while maintaining some links with the *vanguardia*, at the same time problematizes Adán’s attributed affiliation with the movement’s cosmopolitan vein and suggests an affinity also with more recent Spanish American work.

The central role of adolescence in *La casa de cartón* is present from the beginning of its radically fragmented, ludic text whose nameless narrator presents himself as a 14-year-old schoolboy who does not want to go to school after the summer spent in Barranco, a costal beach community and tourist destination in Lima. Its role is then further developed as the ubiquitous narrator alternately assumes the multiple points of view of other young artist-characters with whom he associates in memories of the past summer in Barranco, and time spent in Lima’s historical center, and distances himself, often through parody, from the tropes that have been employed throughout the history of Spanish American narrative. His targets include the rhetoric of both the cosmopolitan and the revolutionary schools of the *vanguardia*.⁵

Both 19th- and 20th-century scientific discourses provide targets for the narrator's parodic impulse, including those in contention during the Peruvian *vanguardista* debates. The narrator's main technique is to invert the human and the non-human categories, turning the former into objects or animals and thus stripping them of their humanity, implying that the wholesale adoption of any one discourse ends in turning humanity merely into a distant object of discourse. In the text's thirty-eighth fragment, for example, Liman society is transformed into flagstones, diagnosed by the narrator-turned-doctor in a parody of the naturalist novel's empiricism: "Sólo hay entre las baldosas un caso clínico interesante—una triangular en la esquina, en la intersección de las dos aceras (la señorita C.V. de veintitrés años de edad y padres tuberculosos. La señorita C.V. traga saliva. La señorita C.V. tiene los ojos cerrados" (80).⁶ In the same fragment, young men are portrayed as social-climbing dogs who pant after the "gran hembra" of a Russian princess-turned-capitalist in a parody of Freudian discourse: "Veinte perillos sin raza ni cola apresuran sus estaturas...tras una gran perra de raza con cola, cara, mundana, lanuda, opulenta... [...] Hambre de la gran Hembra... La Revolución social... [...] Freud, en los olores coprófilos, no incluye los de Caron de Coty" (81). An ideological implication in the parody of these discourses represents not only a rejection of purely "realist" technique, but also of that of scientific empiricism, whose individuating, distancing gaze reduces "cases" to empirical and temporal observation and familial identifications. The method, rather than revealing a human identity, turns its subjects into objects devoid of humanity and eliminates completely social factors in the explanation of human behavior. Furthermore, the inversion extends to contemporary (at the time) Marxist discourse and "modern" imagery, rendered in highly self-conscious parodies that demonstrate the imposition of the human onto the non-human.

In the text's thirty-ninth fragment the nameless narrator uses the urban referent of power-line posts to portray the Marx-inspired exhausted worker and the regimentation of existence by the workday: "Los postes han trabajado mucho, se cansaron, enviudaron [...] Y los brazos se les caen de puro viejos. Si no se han jobado la estatura, es porque sus huesos son de madera" (84). The fact that the electrical poles are "electricistas provectos" (84) emphasizes the self-conscious superimposition of linguistic planes—the metaphorical and the referential—as does their description: "[...] con las manos reseca y roídas por la gutapercha y la balata, por las sales de las pilas" (84). The perfect distance and symmetry between posts further develop the playful parody of Marxist thought in a monotonous description of their lives marked by a banal alienation: "Se han jubilado, y han adquirido, junto con el goce del sueldo íntegro y el derecho a loquear, ciertas líneas de exfuncionarios públicos en desgracia con el gobierno actual [...] Entre un poste y otro poste, hay veinticinco metros de distancia que nunca amengua ni crece—los postes ni se aman ni se odian...misantropía, misoginia" (84). The narrator's vision of the posts then takes on a cinematic quality, as the distance between them never alters when they move, as if he were equating the retired electrician with the workers who, after a day's work, climb into a streetcar to ride home: "De noche se echan a andar los postes [...] Las distancias en estos raros paseos no se alteran—ellos se atan a la cintura como una cuerda [...] A la mañana siguiente (las mañanas siempre siguen) vuelven los postes a las ubicaciones de sus manías" (84). By transforming the "humanist" discourse of Marxism into hyperbolized alienation, the poet/protagonist's portrayal of them is every bit as incomplete and devoid of humanity as 19th-century medical or 20th-century psychoanalytic theory.

The parody of cosmopolitanism would not be complete without considering the mockery of popular cinema, the techniques of which the reader has seen used to throw the alienated posts into movement. In the text's twentieth fragment the narrator effects a satirical parody of the popular romantic cinema in his description of a "tarde rosada, una tarde de la decadencia de D'Annunzio, y allí todo el mundo se enterneció con la tarde rosa" (37). Again inverting the human with the non-human, he converts movie-goers into characters: "Largas filas de Viejas friolentas [...] —Viejos panzudos con el amigo que nada es, al lado (cotizaciones de algodón, manos peludas con el anillo matrimonial, y lentes, y anteojos, y gafas, y párpados esféricos, y arrugas que parecían de maquillaje" (37). Turning his attention to the film itself, the hyperbolic language of the "cutting-edge" film demythifies the presumably cosmopolitan film that the crowd had expected to see before the theater changed the Schedule: "¿No se daba 'Divino Amor?' El argumento era de D'Annunzio, [...] un bachiche calvo que hacía versos, un hombre inverosímil, una fantasía nacional italiana, [...] Valentino....Paisajes de ensueño...Pasión, sacrificio, celos, lujoso vestuario, la vida del gran mundo...Y, de pronto, ¡nada!" (37). The banality of the plot and the monotonous list that resembles a preview, undercut the idea of "superior" cosmopolitan culture, as does the conversion of the sky into a screen as the disgruntled crowd exits: "Súbitamente el cielo tuvo un 'vean' de placer, y entonces no hubo sol ni estío ni nada: sólo hubo unas posaderas al aire, unas posaderas tremendas enrojecidas por un asentamiento larguísimo" (37-38). The carnivalesque parody distances the narrator from the budding cinematic genre, even while at other times he uses its technique of movement with other discourses mocked for their inability to adequately portray humanity, at the same time drawing attention to the artificial nature of his own writing through imaginative play. Most importantly, the conversion of movie-goers into made-up characters suggests the artificiality of humanity that looks to popular screen models for identity.

The anonymous narrator's use of the same inversion of the human and non-human, as well as the exaggerated Avant-garde techniques, are not restricted to the non-literary discourses that have pervaded 19th- and 20th-century European narratives, as he also parodies the appropriation of these discourses in Spanish American narratives. This includes a parody of the city/country dichotomy in the text's thirty-sixth fragment, where the figures in Lima's *Plaza de Armas* are converted into the animals in and around a poultry yard that reflects Lima's society: government bureaucrats become burros who "respetan devotamente la acera;" the roosters and hens Englishmen and women; the turkeys traditional Liman aristocracy in decline; the ducks the rising mercantile classes; the geese landowners or *latifundistas*; the rabbits the "vox populi" (75) or the rising middle classes; doves the new capitalist bourgeoisie who aspire to European norms; the young goat the bohemian; the "cuyes" or guinea pigs the indigenous servants of the turkeys; and the horses descendants of the original creoles, also servants to the traditional aristocracy. In turn, the country is portrayed in human terms: "La campiña sanguínea de sangre verde [...] Cara gorda del campo con el ojo pardo de un charco que se ríe, idiota [...] Este paisaje, histórico, masoquista, con antecedentes de sífilis... [...] En su vientre, desnudo, la equimosis de un escalio" (76). In this way the narrator directly distances himself from the realist/naturalist mode of writing, humanizing the countryside by once again mocking the "scientific" discourse that had previously defined it as the unreasoned, hysterical "feminine" force that retards civilization⁷, and with the conversion of the city into a chicken coop. He thus playfully mocks *costumbrista* literature, and the arbitrariness of the binary structure that has always separated the city and country.⁸

In the text's thirty-sixth fragment, he likewise deconstructs the quintessential image of realist literature—the house—in an consciously oneiric description that cinematically zeroes in on the family, beginning with the window, an image common in surrealist art⁹: "En las humedades [...] y si un pájaro innominable pasa tras ellas [the houses of an upper-class neighborhood], crece y crece como a través de una lupa. Es una ventana del solo piso que la casa tiene--onírica, visión aflorante al ambiente, pasmado, sucio, loco" (72). The parody converts the wife into an aristocratic chair and the husband as vest hanging on it:

...el chaleco del señor con la cadena de plata y el reloj escondido en el bolsillo. Por la misma, asoman, en vez de la carne del señor afirmada por las clavículas del señor, dos bolillas peladas que culminan en el espaldar de la silla de Viena. Huesos viejos, ya con el aterrado color de los esqueletos que se exhuman después de largos años de enterramiento. (72)

On an ideological level, death by discursive oppression is connoted in the description, indicated by the merging of the house's furniture (and occupants) with the image of dead bones. On a literary level the inversion of the human and non-human to describe a defining element of realist literature suggests that the house has been dead all along, now to be exhumed in the imagination of the artist. The narrative self-consciousness is emphasized by the narrator's introduction of the scene through the perspective of a bird in the distance, and by his interruption of the oneiric scene with an ironic statement that point not only to his distance from the realist model, but also that of the international Avant-garde: "De espaldas al sol, abro yo con la sombra de mi cabeza, un oscuro agujero capaciforme en la luz del cristal. Ahí están, sin horrores de pesadilla, el chaleco y la silla, humanos, familiares, espontáneos, francos, en casa" (72). This splitting of perception between a God's-eye realist view and the associative, close-up view reveals no presumption of automatism, but rather conscious, creative decisions.

As Hugo Verani has pointed out elsewhere, *La casa de cartón's* portrayal of the bourgeois house relates to the house in the title, which he associates with the Avant-garde aesthetic: "Si en la ficción realista la casa es un espacio protector, recinto mítico de la identidad que sostiene la existencia de los personajes, aquí se convierte en un espacio deshabitado [...] producto de la imaginación. El autor construye explícitamente un simulacro. Una arquitectura de papel, reducida a su condición de lenguaje" ("La narrativa..." 62; "*La casa de cartón...*" 1079). However, the inversion of the human and non-human referents, along with the connotation of death, are also crucial elements in reading the parody. They not only refer to the world constructed by the book, but also the world of real people who aspire to be what they read in books.

This idea is made more evident as the narrator of uses the vest and the chair as a meditation on the relations created by so-called "human" constructions of desire and institutional relations. The actual physical space of the house receives no attention, other than the window, the vest, and the chair; in other words the institutional relations that are the foundation of the house. In his parody of the structural relations represented by the realist house, the narrator continues to invest the relations of identity with the scientific and religious discourses of the "real" world that presumably explain "human" experience: "El Casmir de su chaleco" [...] urge en broma engordar a la esterilla, que lo despliegue, que lo llene...A la esterilla flaca, beata, soltera" (Adán 72). Ironically, the wife is a "soltera," as she sits in "la más austera decencia, como en la iglesia o en una conferencia de la higiene doméstica [...] Ella ha eliminado de sí misma el vientre, los senos, las piernas, por vergüenza; los brazos, no sabemos por qué; el rostro, por decencia" (74). As in religious and scientific exhortation, the woman/chair is desexualized, and the mention of

the church and a hygiene lecture links sexual purity to its social origins.¹⁰ Verani clearly defines a division between language and reality, positing that the narrator's use of language "no extrae sus andamios de la observación directa de la realidad, sino de lecturas literarias" ("La narrativa..." 62; "*La casa de carton...*" 1079). While he makes a lucid comparison between the realist house and that of Adán's text, perhaps the narrator would respond that the line between language and observation cannot be drawn so clearly.

In these many parodies that de-mythify European influences and Western models of knowledge that have portrayed and explained Spanish American cultural identity, the poet's portrayals in *La casa de carton* include extra-literary satire and at the same time mock the very discourses on which his authority rests. However, lest the reader believe that he leaves the original models as the "self-same monolithic authority it purports to be" (Carlos Alonso 28), or that his mockery runs the risk of textual self-destruction¹¹, the way that he breaks down the binary forms that inform the original models, as well as the alternative he proposes, would suggest otherwise.

The alternative is best revealed by examining his relationship to other young artist characters that populate his memories of Lima and its outskirts in a play of distance and identification. The Spanish American writer, Manuel, who makes the ritual sojourn to Europe to look for inspiration in a cosmopolitan cultural identity, draws the narrator's attention in the text's eleventh fragment. He relates this experience directly to written discourse in the mention of a novel, as yet unfinished, that Manuel takes with him, presumably to find meaning in a more cultured environment: "...mil cuartillas negras de letras que asustaban la cordura a Manuel, cosas de locos, gritos, todo sin motivo...porque la novela era un conflicto de histeria—una mujer se arrojó en los brazos del millonario y éste le mordió el mentón" (Adán 21). Manuel plans to find his "motive" in his pilgrimage to the European Mecca that is Paris and its romance. A parodic impulse revolves around the hyperbolic, ridiculous description of hysteria in the love story, taking as its target the *novela rosa*¹², ridiculed for its provincial acceptance as a model of cultural reality.

The hyperbole extends to the self-consciously oneiric description of Manuel's trip itself, which, as Elmore has pointed out, demonstrates the narrator's immunity to the "modernolatría futurista" (69). The departure is portrayed metaphorically as the writer, leaving his wife or mother (country) behind: "El puerto quedaba atrás, con su collar de luces y su gorda silueta de amor para hombre serio y nada gastador...curva monstruosa en el mar, el canal de Panamá, el Océano Atlántico, la línea Grace y los etcéteras del destino--, De pronto—él no supo cómo—París" (Adán 21). Not only does the anonymous narrator not submit to the futurist idolatry of all things modern, but he also parodies it in the hyperbolic description of the time it takes for Manuel to reach Paris. This mockery also includes other forms of the Avant-garde, such as its tendency to create lists by heaping image upon image, initiated with the "curva monstruosa" and ending with a sarcastic "los etcéteras del destino." Rather than being a sign of continual movement as a marvel of modernity, it connotes a routine litany, parodically degraded. The same effect occurs in the narrator's exaggerated use of the oneiric, a repetition of surrealist practices¹³ that transport Manuel back and forth between Lima and Paris:

Ya desnudo [in Paris], no supo él qué hacer; quiso salir a la calle, volver a Lima, no hacer nada. Se metió en la cama—temprano, aburrido y remelón—y se durmió profundamente. En un momento volvió él a Lima [...] Manuel se despertó y ahora era París [...] Y un día—él no supo cómo—se despertó en Lima...Manuel no supo qué hacer—volver a París, salir a la calle, no hacer nada...Y se quedó profundamente dormido. (21-22)

Whereas Paris was hithertofore often a sign of modernity¹⁴, here it is transformed into a monotonous, repetitive experience, ironically devoid of not only the hysteria of his novel, but any feeling at all aside from humorously feigned prudery: "Manuel visitó a los cónsules latinoamericanos; en el Louvre,...una cocota sentimental abandonó una mano suya—áspera y reseca—en las dos de él, cadavéricas; en el Moulin Rouge, él pecó de veras" (38).

As Elmore has also pointed out (69-70), while Manuel's experience is converted into a formula, his view of Lima is surrealistically defamiliarized, with surprising movement and metaphor: "Un Hudson sucio de barro se llevó a Ramón por una calle transversal que asustaba con sus ventanas trémulas, medio locas. Un ficus móvil transitó por la calle densa de seminaristas, busconas y profesores de geometría... (Adán 21-22). The degradation of Manuel's mythical Paris trip thus not only emphasizes the aspiring author's own provincialism¹⁵ in his blind imitation of European modes, but also holds ideological implications: that the inevitable result of the imitative aspiration to be modern is that one's own home becomes unfamiliar.

The narrator's ideological irony begins to point to the creation of new forms through multiple-layered parody, when he turns his attention to the tourist book culture that Manuel leaves in Barranco: "Aquí uno quiere poner letreros...: "Es prohibido pecar en los pasadizos", "Se suplica a los bañistas no hablar en inglés", "No se permite destruir el

local completamente”, “Etcétera”. Aquí lo posee a uno cierta cultura frenética, infantilista, experimentada y aburrida, crítica y deletante...--Baedeker excesivo, guía de no sé cuál Pentápolis vanguardista” (23). The irony of the passage lies in its inversion of the idea of the Old World and New, the mature and immature, and the puerility of international culture, which renders the need to go to Europe in order to “mature” a ridiculous proposition, a point driven home by an additional mention of French sojourns by famous artists to the so-called “third world:” “Paul Morand en un yate de vela, con su amante sin raza y sin orejas, camino de Siam, como en las notas sociales. Cendrars, que viene al Perú a predicar entusiasmo de explorador bávaro y espontáneo;...Radiguet, paseando en puntillas a su querida, súbitamente afeada de un marido heroico” (23). So that the irony in the inversion not only rests in the degradation of modernity as regression, as shown by the foreign tourists in Barranco, but also in that the narrator links this regression with European globe-trotters who travel to “developing” countries in search of a reinforcement of “old-world” identity.¹⁶ The narrator thus distances himself from the inferiority complex that is the legacy of his precursors through the inversion of binary oppositions that had defined Spanish American identity—Europe/America, Old World/New World, civilization/barbarism. Implicit in this inversion is the dissolution of the temporal paradigms that create the dichotomies¹⁷, which aids in the creation of a dialectical relationship between Europe and America: Europe needs America for the same reasons that America presumably needs Europe. While the Spanish American writer seeks a “modern” identity and culture, the European globe-trotter searches for a pristine place that will renew his/her presumably mechanized culture and reinforce his/her identity as “modern.” These ideological implications, which turn on its head the traditional literary relationship between Europe and Spanish America, make the narrator’s parodic impulse far from simply imitative and create a relationship of reciprocity.

With the nameless protagonist having revealed, through parody, the fallacy of the wholesale adoption of one discourse on identity, adolescence becomes the representation of an alternative. While the narrator, who is only 14 in the text, clearly rejects blind imitation of the cosmopolitan reflected in Manuel’s trip, he also does not identify completely with the older 16-year-old intellectual in his group of school friends, Ramón. At times, his perspective merges with that of his Marxist friend, whereas in other instances, the younger poet distances himself from the older boy, in a play of difference and identification that suggests that they are part of each other, at the same time that they are different.¹⁸

To illustrate, in the text’s twenty-fourth fragment, the narrator recounts his friends’ literary *tertulias*, where the reader learns first of the books the boys read, both of European Modernism that one friend, Raúl, has read—those of James Joyce and Luigi Pirandello, for example—and those of the “olla podrida literaria española y americana” (45), which is what the other boys have read. In their discussion, it is difficult to know where Ramón’s perspective ends and the narrator’s begins. The narrator counts himself among those that read Spanish literature, “...manjar de canónigos y ricachones” (45).¹⁹ Among those mocked are Fernán Caballero and its “licencia eclesiástica;” Pardo Bazán, whose literature is “llena de pecados que no llegan a cometerse;” and Pérez Galdós, “con tísicos y locos y criminales y apestados, pero que el lector ve de lejos sin peligro” (45). The implication is that readers will read of the sins and sicknesses of a society in order to reinforce the “correct” identification with the Church and moral hygiene. Raúl, in turn, gives an analysis of European Modernists that is materialist in nature, indicating a voracious reader of Avant-garde literature and volunteering Marxist and psychoanalytic interpretations of the literary characters.²⁰ Joyce’s Stephen Daedalus is “un muchacho ambicioso que soñaba con desposarse con una yánqui rica,” while one of Pirandello’s characters “era inmoral por...imponer a un hijo de quien nada malo se decía, una madre putativa” (44). Ramón, who bites his lip, obviously does not approve of these models; for him (as spoken through a narrator whose point of view is difficult to separate from Ramón’s), the Joyce character is “un mozo vicioso y testarudo, seguramente lampiño” (44).

The reference to the “immaturity” of the Daedalus, suggested by the image of an adolescent who is not old enough to shave yet, is key to understanding the distinction between the nameless narrator and Ramón and their disparate relationships with hegemonic discourses. On one hand, the boys mock an English tourist in Barranco, Miss Annie Doll, an amateur anthropologist, obsessed with “...colecciones de arqueología en una maleta de Manchester en que cabe la civilización entera” (14). The narrator thus makes fun of the nascent discipline of anthropology²¹, which was gaining popularity in European Avant-garde thought and had made its way to Spanish America (González Echevarría, *Myth...* 154). The relationship of this scene with the anthropological impulse is strengthened as the narrator clearly separates his vision of her from Ramón in the text’s eighth fragment, as he addresses the tourist and compares her to a jacaranda: “Pero Ramón no ve en el jacarandá tu imagen dilatada por el sol...Tú eres una cosa larga, nervuda, roja, movilísima, que lleva una Kodak al costado y hace preguntas de sabiduría, de inutilidad, de insensatez...Un jacarandá es un árbol solemne, anticuado, confidencial, expresivo, huachafo, recordador, tío” (Adán 14-15). Ramón, as he does with Raúl’s discussion of European Modernism, disdains metaphorical games and creates binary categories that are mutually exclusive: the “inauthentic” *gringa* as opposed to the tree’s natural, autochthonous “authenticity,” an opposition that recalls the Marxist/indigenist turn of Peruvian writers such as

Vallejo or Alberto Hidalgo, or of Pablo Neruda in the wider literary milieu. Ramón seeks a return to a nationalist/indigenous purity that opposes that of Miss Annie Doll with her stereotyping Kodak and amateur anthropology.

However, from the nameless narrator's point of view, in his search Ramón commits the same epistemological error as the tourist and the various discourses which the narrator has previously parodied, which ended in opposing Latin America to Europe, city to country, and ultimately civilization to barbarism. In contrast, the younger writer resorts to the interstices that he looks to in order to question the exclusionary impulses inherent in binary oppositions and he also speaks from his urban reality. The Englishwoman is a jacaranda found in the city, on Mott Street, "con un muñon de flores violadas..., Ante él dudamos como ante los huacos del Museo, que no sabemos si son de Nazca o de Chimú, si auténticos o falsificados" (31). By questioning the artifacts, the narrator renounces what Roberto González Echevarría has designated the mediating anthropological discourse that characterizes twentieth-century Latin American narrative, whose object is not nature, but rather language and myth.²² In contrast, Ramón's binary view creates the very hierarchy inherent in the impulse toward ideological hegemony.

Adán's text does not rest solely on criticism of ideology. The reader finds the narrator's more inclusive alternative model for collective artistic endeavor in the way that he and the Marxist intellectual respond to Catita, Ramón's adolescent love interest. In the text's ninth fragment, Ramón rejects her Catholic morality when he shows the narrator a trifle that Catita has given him: "una estampa en que hay un ángel con cara de estreñido y un crepúsculo bellaco en primer término. Un regalo de Catita rra, rre, rri, rro, rru" (17). Ramón considers the gift nothing more than a silly toy from a Catholic schoolgirl, which hints at a disdain for the Hispanic tradition and its concomitant morality, implicit in the playful use of the word "estreñido," that prohibits sex outside of marriage; and Ramón is grumpy because Catita rebuffs his sexual advances. He sees woman only within the context of her material presence—her sexuality, and his vision of her does not reach beyond the limits of her hegemonic identity. Instead, it has only shifted from the terrain of the ethereal, *mariana* woman of Catholicism, defined by her lack of sexuality, to a materialist terrain, where she is defined by her freedom to have sex with whomever she wants. In the end she is still defined as a sexual object, and thus, from the nameless narrator's point of view, represents the metaphorical "death" not only of the woman's humanity, but also the man who "loves" her. And, by extension, Ramón's view represents the death of a form of cultural expression that takes into account the multiplicity of racial and ethnic realities of human experience, which was previously stated in his disapproval of Spanish literature, which allowed only a vision of humanity "de lejos" (45).

The fullest expression of this idea appears in the text's thirty-fourth fragment, where Ramón realizes his desire in a closed dialectical description: "Ella encajaba una pierna gorda...bajo la derecha de él...Ramón era una bestia que empezaba a hacer ideas. Ella era una mujer que principiaba a bestializarse" (69). Metaphorically, Ramón's "maturity" in the sex act signifies adoption of an overriding Idea in an exclusive model and the end of childhood's more inclusive vision in a unitary model that imposes itself and thereby excludes multiple dimensions, in the same way that Manuel does when he goes to Europe to "mature." The narrator, whose 14 years oppose Ramón's sixteen, obviously admires his friend, but also has the ability to engage with multiple possibilities for cultural expression: "Yo voy con él, cerca de él, con oscuro disgusto de que mis pies no lleguen al suelo. Pero, en cambio, cambio, en mi mano demasiado larga, caben los lomos de todos mis textos" (17)

In the anonymous narrator's portrayal of Catita he, like Ramón, includes a description of her material aspect in *La casa de cartón's* thirty-fifth fragment, and at the same time parodies her literary portrayals in the Hispanic tradition from the medieval era to the *vanguardista* present. Furthermore, it becomes evident that there are two kinds of materiality in play: "Ella era una brava catadora de mozos. Todos nosotros hubimos de rodar la cabeza por sobre su pechito...Así de este amor inevitable hacíamos una era—'Cuando yo enamoraba de Catita" (79). On one hand this is an innocent commentary on a flirtatious schoolgirl who enamors a group of adolescent boys and whom the boys, as men, will someday remember. However, she also represents the era of a Medieval Hispanic schoolgirl: "Catita es un nombre gótico; hace pensar en ojivas lívidas de crepúsculos, en fuentes de bronce musgoso, [...] en moñosos cinturones de castidad..." (70). Next, she becomes the womanly ideal of post-Independence, the racially pure jewel of the bourgeois/realist house: "Catita era una ventana rubia de mediodía; una pila de cemento blanco, moderno, pulcrísima; un sombrillón de trapo para la playa, un lazo loco de colegiala" (70). Here she represents the decadent era of the *modernista* poets: "Catita [...] mariposa diseca, serojo de ictericia o amarillo gorro de jebe" (70). She is also the nationalist icon of twentieth-century Perú: "Catita mar redondo encerrado en un muelle semicircular, embanderado de ciudades... [...] Catita mar con luces, con caracoles, con botecitos panzudos" (71).

At bottom, however, Catita is only a name and a girl: "Catita, todas las vocales apareciendo en ella, cabal, íntegra, en cuerpo y alma en la a desapareciendo poco a poco [...] en la e tierna y boba; en la i flaca y fea; en la o, casi ella pero no... [...] en la u, cretina albina..." (71). In a poetic parody of the portrayals of the woman ideal throughout

Spanish American literary history, the narrator lowers Catita the Idea to her basic and immanent materiality of language and the person represented by language, so that she can be perceived in all her endless possibilities. His game is in no way a return to a mythical origin, since he constantly juxtaposes each idea with the image of the girl and the adolescents. Nor is adolescence here a Freudian regression, a return to the exclusively Hispanic, or the stage of an “underdeveloped” country that one day hopes to be its father (Europe).

Rather, the artistic vision given to us by the narrator is an alternative form of collective endeavor, “a clearing in the [discursive] jungle,” so to speak, that does not depend on just one hegemonic cultural model that inevitably excludes someone or something. Rather than a strident call that strives for cultural hegemony, it is a call to his friends to remember the various parts of who they are collectively, but not necessarily from the same cultural perspective: “Ramón, recuerda. Hemos ido tardes y tardes, tú y yo, a la calle Mott a oír las campanadas del ángelus verspertino—pompas de jabón tornasoladas que el pueril San Francisco lanza por las cerbatanas de las torres de su iglesia en un cielo para un niño” (15). Far from a “regression” to the exclusively Hispanic, he posits adolescence as a metaphor for collective activity in which artists and thinkers who share the same goal of changing society, in all their discursive diversity and from their respective places may offer their fragment of the collectivity without aspirations to a static whole : “Catita, una cosa cualquiera y la contraria precisamente... [...] Cogerla era tan imposible como comprimir con la yema del índice el chorro de agua en la boca de un caño grande; [...] que, si se depositaba en un recipiente, quieta, era sino luz densa, agua que se podía beber y en la que se podía echar barquitos de papel” (71).²³

In contrast to Ramón, who adopts a model that creates hierarchies and divisions by attempting to impose itself to the exclusion of some elements, the narrator offers a model, embodied in his own writing, of fragments that add up to no integral whole and identities that are indistinguishable. He portrays the inhumanity of discourses that purport to explain humanity by converting their subjects into animals and banal objects. More tellingly, his engagement with the history of existing cultural models adopts those parts of each model which allow him to avoid a static, unitary trap, thus showing the weaknesses and interstices between previously uncommunicative binaries and generating new forms with ideological implications that create relationships of reciprocity between cultural elements.²⁴ In his portrayal of the plaza/poultry yard, the country creates the city and the city creates the country, showing how both are mutually dependent and cannot exist without the other. In Manuel's European sojourn, Europe needs America to reinforce the sense of modern in a post-war world where modernity is called into question. The narrator uses cinematic technique to throw static posts (Marxist symbols) into movement, and converts movie-goers into movie characters, showing the very human tendency to look for identity in exterior models. In his portrayal of the realist house, he uses self-consciously Avant-garde techniques that lay bare the discourses that are its source, continuing to emphasize the role of the social in creating the house's models of identity. He uses the materialist images of fashionable perfumes (Caron and Coty), to create a Marxist parody of psychoanalysis. And his parody of the woman/cultural ideal reveals the source of all models in the form of language and the people they represent.

The simultaneous distancing from and employment of models such as the Avant-garde, psychoanalysis, and Marxism implies not a complete rejection of them, but includes an awareness that his own narrative—indeed, his own existence—would be impossible without those who came before. His skepticism of Marxism, for example, is not necessarily of its goals, but of its exclusions and the divisions it creates, as he opposes the “seriousness” of the “adult” world, with his playful parodies: “Lima, la sucia Lima, caballista, comercial, deportiva, nacionalista, tan seria...- [...] Nosotros, previviremos una supervida, quizá verdaderamente futura donde todos los hombres serán hermanos y abstemios, y vegetarianos, y teósofos, y deportistas” (47-48). Parody, then, should not be interpreted as indicative of Adán's elitism or lack of concern with the social, but rather as a sign of wariness in the face of any nationalist discourse with hegemonic aspirations. From the narrator's view, such a discourse could not be anything else but oppositional and reactionary, and unrealistic given the material circumstances it confronts.²⁵

Thus, while gently mocking the various attempts at hegemony, the narrator's use of their techniques and ideas pays homage to the poets and thinkers who wield them, including Freud himself: “Ser felices un día...Ya lo hemos sido tres meses cabales. Y ahora ¿qué hacemos? ¿Morir?...Ahora te pones sentimental. Es cordura ponerse lírico si la vida se pone fea [...]—Cuénta, Lucho, cuentos de Quevedo, cópulas brutas, maridos súbitos, monjas sorprendidas, inglesas castas...Di lo que se te ocurra, juguemos al sicoanálisis, persigamos viejas, hagamos chistes...Todo menos morir” (48-49). The wistfulness for a summer vacation that does not end takes on a metaphysical tone, given the narrator's desire to avoid the reductive stasis of a fixed identity, and mirrors his writing. It is a radical call to come out to “play”—to read, to pirate elements from every discourse that avoid the imposition of hegemonic (as opposed to collective) models. He makes no claim to an integrated identity from one autonomous discourse; rather his is a postmodern concept of autonomy, which borrows from everything without fully subscribing to anything, while creating dialectical relationships between previously exclusive elements. Furthermore, in a time of polemics, strident manifestoes, and political turmoil, it is a radically quiet call, going out not to large groups that vie for

intellectual and political hegemony, but rather brought down to the level of “adolescent” friends. In his own vision of the intellectual, he projects writing as a form of re-relating to the world and its inhabitants in a manner that offers an alternative to the distant, hierarchized, and striated existence of modernity. Creation comes from difference and reciprocity between subject and object, as he poetically ponders in the text’s thirty-ninth fragment:

Esta mula nos está creando, al imaginarnos. En ella me siento yo solidario en origen con lo animado y lo inanimado. Todos nosotros somos imágenes concebidas en un trote amplio y calmoso, imágenes que folian, o se enyesan y fenestran, [...] Cós mica lógica nos distingue a todos en indefinidas especies de un solo género...una ventana y yo...una paloma y yo...A cada paso de la mula [...] tiembla mi ser al destino inconocido. (83)

The turning toward “indefinidas especies de un solo género” does not signal the foundation of a new, integrated mythical identity, whether individual, regional, national, or international. Rather it reflects recognition that we are all, in the beginning, products of language, ideas, and experience.

Where, then, does this leave the reader trying to classify Adán’s work within the Spanish American literary canon? *La casa de cartón* does resemble Osorio’s idea of the cosmopolitan Avant-garde, with its preference for the urban motif and the filtering of reality through “el buceo de la subjetividad” (241). However, certainly the nameless narrator’s simultaneous parody and constructive use of *vanguardista* models, such as surrealism, psychoanalysis, and Marxism make it difficult to identify the text exclusively with the strictly cosmopolitan or nationalist veins of the movement, as does his own status as a nameless, marginal, fragmented presence. As for what has heretofore been characterized as the Boom, or, in the case of Raymond L. Williams, the Modernist novel, Adán’s text also poses some problems, as does the attempt to find a consensus on the literature that succeeds the 1960s, which has, depending on the critic, been alternately called the Post-Boom or Postmodern literature. For Williams, who situates Adán in what the critic considers the first generation of modernists (*The Postmodern Novel* 8), Modernist literature in Latin America started with the *vanguardia* of the 1920s and 30s, and was characterized by the following: subjective relativism that asserted the primacy of individual consciousness in understanding the world through its fictionalization; stream of consciousness techniques; structural fragmentation and experimentation; varying narrative points of view; metafictional self-consciousness; and a lack of causality (*The Modern Latin American Novel* 4-5, *The Postmodern Novel* 8-9). These techniques would reach their maturity in the Boom novels, in which many writers would reveal a kind of “transcendent regionalism”—the portrayal of a specific region with the incorporation of universal human experience which both reflected and invented social realities (*The Modern...* 7-10). Adán’s text would seem to fit the description, were it not for William’s assertion that “The Latin American novelists of the modernist project...still believed in the possibilities of articulating truths through the 1960s” which underscores an impulse toward totalization (*The Postmodern Novel* 10). This would seem to run antithetical to Adán’s text, which is more attuned to Yazmín López Lenci’s “estética del vitalismo” of the Peruvian *vanguardia*: “La vitalización de la palabra está vinculada...a la necesidad de ampliación del concepto de la utilidad e interés hacia el sector que integran el arte, el amor y el pensamiento. Todos estos elementos justifican el interés como un valor vital que desconstruye una palabra solidificada y algebraica...para recrearla en el flujo del movimiento” (87). In other words, although Adán’s anonymous narrator is clearly not, as I argue, divorced from social reality, he is less interested in articulating truths than in establishing more immanent, inclusive relations with the world through language in ways that strive for no totalizing, static view of history or discourse and attempt to broaden the idea of culture to include limitless possibilities for its expression. Also absent in *La casa de cartón* is any primacy of individual consciousness; rather, individual consciousness is portrayed as inseparable at times from the consciousness of its characters, particularly in the case of Ramón.

Adán’s text appears to relate more to William’s description of the Postmodern in the “North Atlantic” vein, in which “discontinuity, disruption, dislocation, decentering, indeterminacy, and anti-totalization” (*The Postmodern Novel* 11) predominate in order to go beyond the self-conscious questioning of how truth is established to the search for the origins of culture, both elite and popular, in language that remains politically responsive. However, does this necessarily exclude Adán’s text as the anomaly that criticism has tended to deem it, based partly, I believe, on a misreading of his work as devoid of social concerns? Furthermore, if, as Williams states, the Postmodern novel reflects a body of work identified by its “concern for language, their confrontation of language” and (128), could this not be said also of those he calls Modernist writers, who, as González Echevarría has pointed out in *Myth and Archive*, take as their object language and myth in the undoing of discourses that had defined Spanish American narrative in the twentieth century?

As early as 1987, González Echevarría speculated on the relationship between the Modern and Postmodern with the Boom and the Post-Boom, using as a starting point the return of Severo Sarduy’s fiction to more conventional literary forms after the radical experimentation in the context of the theory of the 1960s. The critic finds it

“plausible to say that the Modern is equivalent to the Boom, and therefore postmodern is equivalent to the post-Boom,” and considers the main differences between them the absence of “a nostalgia” for totalization and identity, the elimination of an authoritative authorial voice and self-consciousness, superficiality of language, and characters, and the primacy of the story in the post-Boom (“Sarduy... 69-71). The characters in *La casa de carton* are not superficial in the sense that González Echevarría defines the term—that is, lacking any discursive depth—since they often reflect previous modes of thought (science, political ideologies, literary tropes) deconstructed through parody. And while Adán’s text, as a series of fragments with minimal action, does not necessarily mark the return to the idea of story-telling devoid of ironic reflexivity to which González Echevarría refers, nor does it aspire to a totalizing “metadiscourse, of any global category that might posit a meaningful order, including language” (70), the basic tendency with which the critic characterizes Boom narrative.

Neither does Adán’s poetic narrative fit fully into Donald Shaw’s typology of the Boom, first posited in 1981 and repeated in his 1998 study, *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction*. While *La casa de carton* does partially fit Shaw’s description in its radical experimentation and a-chronological structural fragmentation, there are certain characteristics posited that reflect a binary thinking that proves difficult to apply to Adán’s work and, by extension, that of Boom authors.²⁶ For example, Shaw asserts that the Boom reflects the end of the socially committed novel in favor of primarily metaphysical literary pursuits, without considering that perhaps the line between them is not so clear-cut. As Elzbieta Sklodowska has posited in her 1991 study of parody in the new novel, “...el enfoque sobre la parodidad ayuda a insertar el texto en el contexto, permite engarzar lo estético y lo extraliterario y, por lo tanto, facilita el análisis íntegro del sentido y de la forma de una obra literaria” (173). This latter idea is particularly pertinent to a study of *La casa de cartón*, whose critics have tended to overemphasize the artifice at the expense of content. While Adán’s narration could be said to be metaphysical in that the narrator strives to use language as a vital way to relate to the world, it is also true that he rejects transcendence and appeals for a more inclusive way of collective cultural expression that eschews an overriding cultural identity and allows for each artist to speak from his or her respective place.

To further cloud matters, *La casa de cartón*, in addition to social concern, reflects other characteristics that Shaw has used to interpret the Post-Boom, such as the primacy of youthful characters, the absence of an impulse toward totalization, the introduction of popular and youth cultures (20-24).²⁷ In the critic’s analysis of what he considers to be Post-Boom novels, Adán’s work would be categorized with the work of the Mexican Onda as reflected in the work of Gustavo Sainz, representative of the more “writerly” vein of the Post-Boom that sees language as “instrumental rather than as something to be explored and experimented with for its own sake” (164). This idea could be seen also as part of what has been described earlier in this study as the “estética del vitalismo” typical of the *vanguardia*.

The difficulties in aligning Adán’s work with any one of these literary typologies as they have been developed in recent Spanish American literary criticism make clear the limitations of typological construction of the canon. While such classifications can help to contextualize a literary work, they can also increase confusion and create automatic acceptance of a label which, at least in the case of *La casa de cartón*, can deny some very obvious contributions of a given work to a developing context. While the answer to this conundrum is beyond the scope of this study, perhaps it can be found in the post-structuralist tendencies to analyze the narrative mechanisms that may signal a rupture with tradition, in the same vein as Sklodowska’s *La parodia en la nueva novela hispanoamericana* and her more recent 1995 article, which proposes parody, within the context of the exhaustion of the 19th-century realist formula, as a possibility for reading literary evolution in Spanish America, beginning with the *vanguardia*. According to Sklodowska, this reading would have to simultaneously analyze the context of historical change in which parody appears (“La parodia como factor... 107). This approach proves much more productive considering the wealth of parody in *La casa de cartón*, which includes the mocking of incipient 20th-century discourses, such as that of anthropology and surrealism, and which shows Adán to be much more than an imitator of European cosmopolitanism. Given the inclusion of the 20th-century discursive context in the narration’s multiple parodies, one is almost inclined to believe that magical realism would have received the same ludic treatment had it been part of the literary tradition of the 1920s. Combined with the study of contextualized discourses evident in the novel, in the vein of Roberto González Echevarría’s *Myth and archive*, the study of parody and other narrative mechanisms that arise might be more productive than attempting the difficult and often confusing typology of a chronologically determined movement, at least if *La casa de cartón* is any indication. Perhaps Adán himself would say that his work, as well as his treatment by critics, at the very least urges us to reformulate our use of categories in the interpretation of literary works, which have tended to cloud our appreciation of his vision. If his alternative concept of collective cultural expression did not materialize during his literary career, surely the onus does not lie solely with him.

Notes

- 1 I borrow this phrase from a chapter in Roberto González Echevarría's *Myth and Archive. A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (1990), in which these words appear in the introduction to explain the function of Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* as a beginning of the undoing of previous narrative based on legal, scientific, and anthropological discourse during the Colonial, post-Independence and Avant-garde periods respectively.
- 2 This tendency may derive from Luis Alberto Sanchez (21) and José Carlos Mariátegui's (91-92) playful assertions in the prologue and colophon respectively of the first edition, where Sánchez jokingly claims, "...estoy seguro de que *La casa de cartón* le levantó Martín en el limbo, en las nubes, en cualquier parte, a donde sólo le alcance el rumor de sus aficiones literarias y en donde pueda hacerse la ilusión de ser clerical y civilista" (21). Mariátegui, in turn, asserts seemingly in jest that while Adán's literatura is Avant-garde, Adán himself is not: "Martín Adán no se preocupa sin duda de los factores políticos que, sin que él lo sepa, deciden su literatura" (90).
- 3 Other examples of critics who have doubted or negated a connection of Adán's work with social issues of the time include Mario Castro Arenas 203, 206; John Kinsella, *Lo trágico...* 56-57, and "La creación..." 96; and Luis Loayza 124. Vicky Unruh presents a more nuanced view that, while the the narrator's skeptical portrait of international modernity presents artist characters as simultaneously immersed in and critical of a recognizable urban world, there is still little obvious presence of social concerns in *La casa de cartón* (106).
- 4 The term "insular" comes from Julio Vélez, who divides the Perú's literary modernity into three schools; the first being the autochthonous, as reflected in Vallejo and Mariátegui, the second being writers whose work reflect transculturation or *mestizaje*, and the third being the "insular," to which Adán belongs (1067-68). Those critics who hold a similar view of the divisions in the Peruvian Avant-garde count among them Hugo Verani, *Narrativa vanguardista...* 64-65, Ester Castañeda Vielakamen 21, and Washington Delgado 13-17. And in general studies of the *vanguardia*, Ana Pizarro and Gloria Videla de Rivero have commented on a tendency in writers who synthesized the cosmopolitan and the autochthonous by recuperating indigenous themes with "more experimental writing techniques.
- 5 Carlos Alonso has cautioned critics that to use parodic appropriation of European forms in Spanish American literary criticism risks offering an inevitably incomplete picture that does not represent accurately the position that writers have taken in their relation to the burden of European cosmopolitan discourses (27-28). Furthermore, Alonso asserts that analysis of the "savage" appropriation of European rhetoric implied by parody does not take into account the inherently "plurivocal, self-contradictory, and open-ended dimension of metropolitan discourse, which is therefore left to stand as the self-same, monolithic authority it purports to be" (28). My analysis, however, refers more to parody as it is explored in Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody*, and Elzbieta Sklodowska's analyses of this technique in *La parodia en la nueva novela*. Hutcheon posits that it has dual possibilities as an "authorized transgression" of traditional forms: it can reflect a strengthening of the original model or generate new synthetic forms (26, 35). According to Sklodowska, studying the parodic techniques that proliferate beginning with the *vanguardia*, one can link the literary with the extra literary in a postmodern "restauración de la 'estética del contenido'" (93).
- 6 Pagination for this and all succeeding quotes from *La casa de cartón* refers to that of the 1982 collection of Adán's previously published prose edited by Ricardo Silva-Santisteban.
- 7 In *Foundational Fictions*, Doris Sommer has explored the symbolic elements in key Latin American novels of the 19th and early 20th centuries, whose plots are developed in the figures of men as the civilizing rational forces who must tame the barbaric land/woman. See especially her analysis of Rómulo Gallego's *Doña Bárbara*. Benigno Trigo, in turn, analyzes the effects of evolutionary theory, in particular its relation to the 19th-century concept of "degeneration," on Spanish American cultural production and the production of "subjects of crisis" in a genealogy of a "virile and racialized Creole subjectivity" (9). He equates the mapping of bodies with the mapping of landscapes in 19th-century fiction, where sick bodies and landscapes are equated to the bodies of woman and racial "others."
- 8 Elmore has pointed out this connection of the "corral" in the city with the *costumbrista* portrayals of Lima's society. He further asserts that by employing the rural referent in an urban metaphor, Adán reminds the reader that "Lima—y, por supuesto, Barranco—no es una metrópoli" (79). Julio Ortega, in turn, has noted the ways in which Adán's ludic narration collapses the dichotomy city/country, and the concomitant opposition of civilization/barbarism, so much a part of 19th- and early 20th-writings. In Ortega's view, Adán's text reads as though rural and urban space were "dos páginas que se cruzan, interponen y refieren" (201); the rural space has no identity of its own outside its status as urban future in the impulse toward modernization in early 20th-century Perú (201, 207). However, neither critic takes into consideration the humanizing imagery used to portray the country, and

instead focus only on the portrayal of urban space.

9 Martin Jay has noted the surrealist preoccupation with the image of the window, which many painters would later use as a transitional or liminal space between reality and imagination, as well as internal and external worlds (245).

10 Jacques Donzelot has theorized the solidifying of the family structure in 19th-century France as part of an effort by the state to foment institutions to create an idea of the “social”—a set of strategies by which to mitigate the “material pressures and politico-moral uncertainties” brought about by rapid modernization (xxvi). According to Donzelot, the medical field enlisted the mother’s supervisory gaze to tend to proper behavior in the repression of sexuality, positing her “usefulness” in the proper education of families (17-19). Although it is certainly impossible to equate exactly the development of this idea of the social in France with that of Spanish America, it is true that in Perú, as in many other countries in the region, the urban upper middle-classes often looked to Europe for models of custom and behavior. See, for example, Manuel Burga and Alberto Flores Galindo’s *Apogeo y crisis de la República Aristocrática* and Julio Cotler’s *Clases, estado y nación en el Perú*.

11 Elzbieta Sklodowska calls this latter danger the dilemma of parody: “...pica y desmitifica el pre-texto y en eso estriba su propia autodestrucción” (*La parodia...* 162).

12 Elmore has noted the affinity of Manuel’s novel with the popular romance novel, against which *La casa de carton* must be read (69-70). In addition, Marcy Schwartz has analyzed the portrayal of the Spanish American writer in Paris and his relations with French women in the new novel, which parodies this literary type by rendering it “ironically banal” in order to subvert its cultural and political basis (9).

13 Elmore focuses on the epistemological and linguistic implications of this parody of surrealism, asserting that it opposes two forms of knowledge: the empirical, based on common sense, and the poetic, “producido por las virtualidades creativas del lenguaje” (70).

14 As Schwartz points out, in much of nineteenth-century Spanish American narrative, the arrival in Paris implied having ascended to and intellectual and artistic height, as well as to having left behind the “earthy materiality” of América (14). For *modernista* writers, the awareness of having transcended their Spanish American environment extends into the realm of sensual and sexual adventure as well (14).

15 Elmore notes that one implication of Manuel’s attempt to appropriate the modern through blind imitation is that he only reveals his own provincialism (72).

16 Stephan Bann has illustrated this function of travel in his essay on travel and collecting: “The traveler affirms ‘identity as a subject’: but what if that identity was not simply suspended, provisionally, by the act of departure, but already in doubt, or problematized, by the circumstances which led to the departure in the first place?” (155-56).

17 This dissolution of temporal paradigms prefigures the Boom authors’ exhaustion of the anthropological myths created by what Johannes Fabian has called “the denial of coevalness”—that is “a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referents of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse” (31).

18 Kinsella (25, 49-53), Verani (“La casa...” 1083, *Narrativa vanguardista...* 68), and Lauer (27) see Ramón as the narrator’s alter-ego, an expression of the narrator’s own personality. Their view is that Ramón represents the active side of the narrator’s personality, while the narrator himself is more passive and contemplative. Unruh (106, 108-09), Bendezú (170), and Elmore posit that the difficulty in distinguishing the perspectives of the two poets is part of the author’s insistence on deconstructing the realist notion of conventional, integrated identity. And Antonio Bravo (15) and Aguilar Mora (55) have speculated that Ramón is an extension of Adán’s brother César, who died in 1920, and who the narrator merges with and separates from when Ramón dies in the text. Elsewhere I have argued that Ramón at times bears a strong resemblance to José Carlos Mariátegui and César Vallejo at others. Mariátegui was a Marxist/indigenist thinker who also dabbled in Psychoanalytic theory and avant-garde literature, as well as studying the situation of the quechuas in Perú, and whose literary journal *Amauta* published a fragment of *La casa de carton* and Adán’s early poems. Vallejo, in turn, eventually rejected entirely certain elements of the European Avant-garde as bourgeois parlor games and sought to create a new model for Marxist intellectuals based on Marx and Lenin’s ideas. While both Vallejo and Mariátegui tended to scorn part or all of the Hispanic literary tradition, the former due to what he saw as its “orientaciones de cliché” (*Artículos...* 297-98)—its adherence to naturalism and casticismo—the latter because of the reactionary *criollismo* that idealized Perú’s colonial past. For a fuller analysis see “A Reconsideration of Martín Adán: The Case of *La casa de carton*.”

19 Julio Ortega has investigated the resurgence of *criollismo* in urban literature of the early 20th century, which, he asserts, reveals a desire on the part of various Peruvian writers beginning with José Gálvez’s *Una Lima que se va*,

to institutionalize the aristocratic Hispanic past and thus establish an authoritative, elitist identity. See especially the chapters "Coloquio en el jardín" and "El dictamen crítico" in *Cultura y modernización...*

20 As Yasmín López Lenci has posited that, José Carlos Mariátegui, whose *tertulias* Adán attended (Águilar Mora 22-31, Gargurevich 57) saw in Surrealism a revolutionary artistic complement to his Marxist politics. Through careful readings of the articles and manifestoes of the time, the critic shows Mariátegui's marriage of Freud and Marx.

21 Amy Fass Emery, in her study of Anthropology's role in 20th-century Spanish American narrative, posits that collecting artifacts serves as a "way to fetishize the products of the periphery and constitute the center as the space to which these objects are relinquished, and in which they are subjected to the 'nostalgic cannibalism' of the West's controlling gaze" (26-27). Bann also emphasizes the dialectical nature of the collector's identity: "...the traveler/collector acquires an identity as a result of the oscillation of the subjective status he imposes on the world and the world imposes on him" (160).

22 In *Myth and Archive*, the critic's thesis centers on mediating discourses in Latin American Literature during colonial times (legal), the nineteenth century (scientific), and the twentieth century (anthropological). He links the transition from the nineteenth-century to the twentieth-century mode with the Spanish American Avant-garde, citing, among others, the work of Miguel Ángel Asturias and Alejo Carpentier (14, 154).

23 Elsewhere I have posited that the figure of Ramón is in part a portrayal of César Vallejo, whose poetic voice in poem III in *Trilce* (1922) reminisces about launching paper boats with a sibling during a time of harmony. See my "A Reconsideration of Martín Adán..."

24 Hutcheon has identified this creative impulse in parody as indicative of its double nature: "Parody, then, in its ironic 'trans-contextualization' and inversion is repetition with a difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony. But this irony can be playful, as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive" (32).

25 According to Burga and Flores Galindo, this reactionary nationalism was not confined to the intellectual sphere: "Encontraremos sus manifestaciones en Cerro o en Talara, entre el proletariado limeño, los cañeros del norte, los intelectuales del sur, los medianos comerciantes de la sierra central, los comuneros de esta misma región afectados por los humos de la Oroya...El carácter pluriclasista del nacionalismo explica también su ambivalencia. No es necesariamente una corriente progresista" (75).

26 Shaw's typology notes a long list of characteristics to describe Boom novels, many of which could be said of *vanguardista* works like Adán's, such as greater use of symbolic elements, the subversion of chronological, lineal time structures, experimental structures that reflect multiple realities, greater presence of eroticism and humor, the ambiguity of reality, the absence of telluric or indigenous themes, and the transformation of realist spaces of the traditional novel into imaginary spaces (4).

27 While Shaw uses these tendencies to describe the Post-Boom, Sklodowska uses them to characterize the novels analyzed in her study of parody in the more general category of "new novel" (*La parodia...* xii-xiii).

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