

## *César Moro's Transnational Surrealism*

Michele Greet  
George Mason University

*Surrealism is alive and it is a ferocious life. Once again we act in solidarity with the surrealist directives published by André Breton, placing our utmost confidence in them. From Peru, to worldwide Surrealism.*<sup>1</sup>

This statement written by the Peruvian artist and poet César Moro in 1934 indicates his commitment to and faith in Surrealism as a transnational movement. Born in Peru as Alfredo Quispez Asín, Moro made the obligatory sojourn to Paris in 1925 to immerse himself in European avant-garde activities. There he cultivated a new persona to match the name he had taken for himself in 1921 and abandoned Spanish as a medium for his poetry, writing exclusively in French.<sup>2</sup> In 1926 he started visiting surrealist exhibitions and most likely met André Breton around 1928.<sup>3</sup> This exposure led him to begin experimenting with surrealist approaches to art making as a means to push both his painting and his poetry in new directions. He also took up collage, employing the technique to create a personal iconography that oscillated between literary and visual form. The surrealists' embrace of a de-centered perspective to critique bourgeois social values, and their desire to reshuffle cultural hierarchies appealed to Moro. For him Surrealism was the ideal language in which to articulate his own marginality or sense of invisibility as a homosexual man negotiating his place in the international art world. For the rest of his life Moro would employ surrealist ideas in his own work and promote the movement's

Michele Greet: mgreet@gmu.edu

Copyright © 2013 (Michele Greet). Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported License. Available at <http://jsa.asu.edu/>

premises in Paris, Lima, and Mexico City.

Although various scholars have acknowledged the merits of Moro's surrealist poetry, very little has been written about his contributions to the visual arts. Since his paintings and collages are so little-known, one objective of this essay is simply to trace César Moro's extensive engagement with Surrealism in the visual arts, from his early participation in Breton's surrealist group in Paris, to the exhibition he co-organized in Peru in 1935, and finally to the "International Surrealist Exhibition" in Mexico City in 1940. By examining closely Moro's surrealist collages, drawings, and activities as an organizer on a transnational scale, I hope to reveal the depth of his involvement with and impact on the surrealist movement. Beyond elaborating Moro's surrealist activities, however, I argue that Moro did not conceive of Surrealism as a foreign import, rather he believed it to be the ideal visual and literary language with which to counter the entrenched nationalism of artistic production in the Americas. Moreover, he felt that by harnessing the power of myths and the sense of the uncanny already present in Latin American life, Latin American artists and writers could take the lead in implementing a new era of worldwide Surrealism. While his success in spawning a New World branch of Surrealism was negligible, Moro's own oeuvre contributes a uniquely personal, yet exceedingly cosmopolitan manifestation of surrealist ideas, revealing the movement's versatility and relevance beyond European borders.

As the only Latin American artist to join the surrealist group on his own initiative before Breton began actively recruiting Latin American artists in the late 1930s, Moro attempted to position himself as the "Pope" of Latin American Surrealism. While other Latin American artists such as Tarsila do Amaral, Antonio Berni, and Manuel Rendón Seminario deliberately and systematically engaged with the tenets and formal languages of Surrealism in the late 1920s, they did so from a critical distance, selectively appropriating certain surrealist images and strategies without joining the movement. Those Latin American artists who joined the group such as Wifredo Lam and Roberto Matta, did so nearly a decade after Moro's initial involvement. Moro therefore deemed himself a privileged authority on the subject, promoting exhibitions, writing surrealist treatises, and provoking controversy in order to draw attention to the movement in Peru and Mexico and to proclaim Surrealism as a counterpoint to the cultural nationalism that dominated Latin American art upon his return in the 1930s.

### *Moro in Paris*

Moro left Lima for Paris on August 30, 1925, bringing with him a series of paintings to exhibit abroad.<sup>4</sup> In 1926, he secured his first group exhibition at the

Cabinet Maldoror in Brussels with the Mexican artist Santos Balmori, Dominican Jaime Colson, and Chilean Isaías de Santiago. The exhibition, entitled “Some Painters from Latin America,” opened just two years after the first ever survey of Latin American art at the Musée Galliera in Paris, indicating a burgeoning interest in Latin American art in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Reviews of the exhibition reveal a desire to define and circumscribe this new artistic category, however. In his essay entitled “We Demand Painting from Savages” Francis Miomandre notes: “What characterizes the youngest of the painters from there [Latin America], is a need to renew contact with the Indian soul and the art forms that it generated, all while remaining up to date with the most audacious and new ideas in Europe.”<sup>6</sup> While images entirely unrelated to indigenous culture illustrate the essay, Miomandre forces a connection, remarking on the stone-like quality of Balmori’s nudes (as a means to draw a parallel with pre-Columbian stonework), singling out the painting *Araucana Indian* by Isaías for comment, calling Colson’s decorative sensibility “Aztec” and declaring of Moro’s submissions: “But it’s all of Peru that sings out in the watercolors and paintings by the delicious César Moro, beautiful colonial Peru of the vice-roys and of the ‘*carrosse du Saint-Sacrement*,’<sup>7</sup> Peru of the ancient kings dressed in feathers, Peru of the Indians of the interior, mourning their dissolution with the sounds of the heart wrenching *quena*.”<sup>8</sup>

Moro’s submissions included paintings such as *The “cholos”* reproduced in Miomandre’s review, and *Señora Give it to Me!* (Fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> Painted in translucent washes of vibrant color, *Señora Give it to Me!* depicts the racial diversity of the streets of Lima. Vast incongruities of scale simulate the social disparity between the two elegant señoras on the left and the street vendors selling *anticuchos* (grilled meat on skewers) squeezed into the lower right corner. Moro filled the space surrounding the figures with angular geometric forms that deny the perception of deep space and emulate the spatial fragmentation of cubism. The words “¡Señora deme a mí!”, while reminiscent of cubist collage or stenciled letters, are more literal than cubist practice and instead evoke the language of bargaining common in the marketplace. While Miomandre recognized the modernity of Moro’s technique calling his forms “flowering geometry” born of the “cult of Picasso,” what struck him as most original was Moro’s Peruvian subject matter.

Perhaps in reaction to this review, or the general expectation of such scenes in Paris, Moro ceased painting Peruvian scenes and instead began experimenting with rather orthodox cubist technique in 1926, employing the precise clean lines and intersecting planes of Juan Gris or Fernand Léger. Like many Latin American artists recently arrived in Paris, he appropriated different styles in search of an artistic identity. While his cubist endeavor did not last long, the significance of these pictures



Fig. 1 César Moro, *¡Señora deme a mí!* (Señora Give it to Me!), ca. 1925, Tempera on cardboard, 18 x 27 cm, André Coyné Collection

is their complete lack of reference to Moro's Peruvian identity. Many foreign artists in Paris intensified their expression of cultural nationalism in their work in response to Parisian expectations; Moro took the opposite track from this point forward, emphatically rejecting any explicit expression of Peruvian themes, motifs, or forms in his work as a means to position himself as an international artist. He had yet to find the visual language with which to best express his position, however.<sup>10</sup>

Moro's encounter with Surrealism allowed him to radically depart from this sort of cultural nationalism. While he did not articulate his disdain for this type of work until more than a decade later in "About Peruvian Painting," a long diatribe against the dominance of José Sabogal's brand of Indigenism in Peru and passionate plea for the Americas not to rupture their artistic ties with Europe, Moro's ideological shift most likely began in response to expectations of primitivism and nationally specific subject matter in Paris.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, in an article published in the Peruvian newspaper *Mundial* in 1927, the Peruvian philosopher and journalist José Carlos Mariátegui wrote disparagingly of Moro's Parisian audience and their demand for native themes: "From César Moro, Jorge Seoane, and the rest of the artists who have recently emigrated to Paris, native themes and indigenous motifs are requested.

Our sculptor Carmen Saco brought the most valid kind of artistic passport in her sculptures and drawings of Indians.”<sup>12</sup> Thus for Moro, Surrealism provided the philosophical and artistic basis for a more universal vision.

Although he did not become directly involved in the surrealist movement until a few years later, already in March of 1926 Moro had visited an exhibition of Man Ray’s photographs and artifacts from the Pacific Islands at the Galerie Surréaliste, and in 1927 he attended another exhibition there of paintings by Yves Tanguy and ancient objects from Peru, Mexico, Colombia, and the Northwest Coast of the United States. In their presentation of ethnographic objects and avant-garde art together, these exhibitions collapse traditional categories of display to expound a new anti-nationalist and non-hierarchical concept of the art object. This strategy most likely appealed to Moro and encouraged him to investigate Surrealism further. Once Moro became involved with the surrealists he visited exhibitions by Picabia, Dalí, Ernst, and various other non-affiliated artists.<sup>13</sup> By the early 1930s Moro was fully integrated into the surrealist group, forming strong friendships with Breton, Eluard, and Péret, with whom he remained in epistolary contact even after he left Paris.<sup>14</sup> He was a signatory on various surrealist statements and tracts of poetry in 1932, and in 1933 his poem “Renommé de l’Amour” (Fame of Love) appeared in the May 1933 issue of *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*. He also contributed a poem to the surrealists’ volume dedicated to Violette Nozières, a young girl on trial in the 1930s for murdering the father who allegedly raped her repeatedly during childhood.<sup>15</sup> While Moro never published any of his drawings or collages while in Paris, the period of his involvement with the surrealist group was one of intense artistic experimentation in both poetry and the visual arts.

Moro did not conceive of his poetic and artistic practice as separate disciplines; rather he saw them as integrative activities, locating the poetic in the visual and the visual in the poetic. For Breton the disruptive quality of collage was a uniquely surrealist form of expression that functioned in a manner similar to poetry. Similarly, as Moro delved into Surrealism he began to write poems with accompanying collages or pen and ink drawings, gradually developing a personal iconography that manifested in both poetic and visual form. In one of his earliest surviving attempts at collage made in 1927 (Fig. 2) Moro surrounds a collaged fragment clipped from a medical journal with free-form automatist drawing. Employing the cut-away image of a human nasal passage, jaw, and throat as a point of departure, Moro extrapolates the rest of the human form in a shaky sinuous line. In a lighter shade, he echoes the outline of the figure, altering its stance and arm position to create the illusion of movement. An eye on the back of its head suggests that the figure has turned to gaze at and simultaneously reach for the circular floating



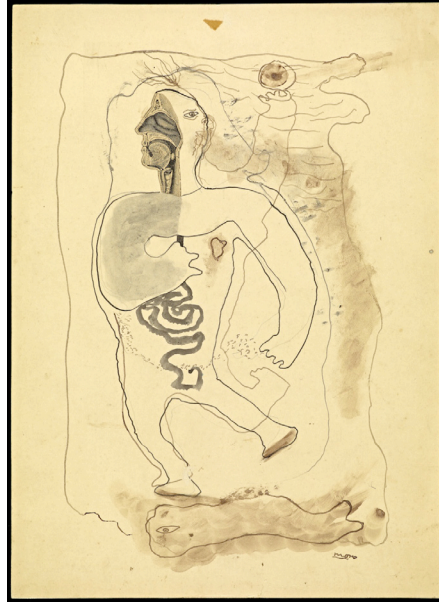


Fig. 2. César Moro, Untitled, 1927, Collage, “César Moro Papers,” box 1, folder 10, “Artwork by Moro,” The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, (980063)

object in the upper right corner that resembles a female breast. While not fully developed here, the disembodied eye and the gaze are motifs that Moro would build on for the rest of his career. The image also introduces the notion of transparency and vulnerability, themes that reveal Moro’s own struggle with marginal social status. The use of collage elements cut from medical journals is, of course, also reminiscent of Max Ernst’s collage practice, in particular, his 1920 collage *Max Ernst and Caesar Buonarroti*, with its flayed human head represented in profile.<sup>16</sup> But while Moro’s image juxtaposes internal and external views of the body as well as movement and stasis, it does not have the jarring quality of surrealist chance juxtapositions. Nor does it disrupt or transform the way the collage element can be read. The addition of the thick scrawling line in the figure’s abdomen clearly continues the notion that we can see through the skin to the inner workings of the body. This continuity from collage to drawn element creates a sense of unity that runs counter to the surrealist project of disruption.

In *Head* (Fig. 3), one of the few other extant collages known to have been created in Paris, Moro begins to create his own personal iconography: the detached

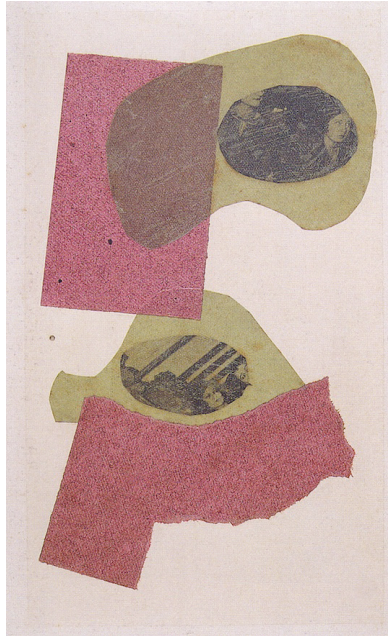


Fig. 3. César Moro, *Tête* (Head), 1932, Collage on paper, 21.5 x 31 cm, E. A. Westphalen Collection

eye. While the eye has held symbolic value in art for centuries, eye portraits are a specific genre that date back to the Georgian period (from around 1790-1835) when the aristocracy would exchange miniature portraits of eyes, usually in the form of a small brooch, as tokens of affection that only a lover could identify. By isolating the eye in this manner, Moro's imagery suggests discretion and secret codes of communication between lovers, themes that are particularly relevant to homosexual lovers in a predominantly heterosexual environment. The collage is made of textured mauve paper—some torn in a manner reminiscent of Jan Arp's *Collage with Squares Arranged according to the Laws of Chance* (1916-17), and some cut into rectangular shapes—that overlaps beige paper cut into curvilinear forms. At the intersection of the abstract cut paper shapes Moro has shaded the resulting form to create the illusion of transparency. Over the abstract patterns created by the mauve and beige paper Moro glued two ovoid cutouts from magazines. The cutouts are centered on the beige papers to resemble large eyes peering out at the viewer. The title, *Head*, compels the viewer to make the cognitive leap to unify these disparate elements into a whole face, complete with two eyes, a nose and a mouth. The collage functions in

the manner of synthetic cubism because each individual element is entirely abstract, but in context, or rather because of syntax, they take on meaning as part of a whole. This process closely resembles the semiotics of poetry and the creation of meaning through placement within a sentence or phrase. What makes this collage enter the realm of Surrealism, however, is its questioning of the notion of the gaze. By pasting an image in the center of the eye, Moro creates the illusion of a reflection. But we can only see a fragment or sliver of what is reflected in the eyes: a female face, a decapitated body, a room tilted at a disconcerting angle. Moro therefore raises the question of the possibility of shared vision. Can we ever truly see what another person sees? Is anyone's vision complete? Can we share knowledge, poetry, art? Or is communication impossible and each person's experience of the world entirely subjective? The skewed, cubist, construction of the head only reinforces this impression that synthesis is impossible. From this point forward these themes of the obstructed gaze and the impossibility of knowing appear repeatedly in Moro's artwork and poetry. And it is this philosophical questioning that locates this piece firmly in the ranks of surrealist inquiry and relates it to images such as Magritte's photomontage *I do not see the...hidden in the forest*, 1929, a deliberate probing of the process of vision, speech, and perception in relation to gendered constructs of sexuality.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Moro in Lima*

In 1933, in the face of the worsening worldwide economic crisis, and the intensifying persecution of foreigners in Europe, Moro left Paris for Lima. In a letter to Moro, Maurice Henry consoles his friend that he was better off leaving: "And I assure you that in France foreigners are getting really bad press—according to bourgeois journals, foreigners are responsible for everything and several thousand workers have been driven back to the borders—if they are foreigners, they are like the Jews in Germany or blacks in the USA."<sup>18</sup> In Lima, Moro tried to emulate the environment he had left behind, expanding his collage production and fashioning himself a leader of Surrealism in South America.

During this period of transition Moro continued his engagement with surrealism, keeping personal notebooks that he filled with poetry and drawings executed in an automatist mode. It is in the pages of these notebooks that his vision of poetry and the visual arts as an integrative process is most apparent. At times he superimposed text directly over an image and in other instances, a poem concludes with an automatic drawing that elaborates or at times contradicts in visual form the suggested meaning of the written word. In an entry dated April 14, 1934, for example, the concluding lines of a poem that reads, "what a feverish time in which



to love, what joy the burning tears of love bring, first time in the world for love”<sup>19</sup> are followed by a pen and ink drawing of a face embellished with free form phallic protrusions and floating knob-like shapes (Fig. 4). Moro renders the face in profile, while the eye, depicted on its vertical axis, gazes directly at the viewer, creating a disconcerting composite view. A tongue protrudes from a mouth graced with a thin handlebar mustache in an expression of contempt, while a short stubby arm reaches around as if to coif the unruly “hair,” which transforms as it cascades over the shoulders into an article of clothing. Whereas the mustache signals masculinity, two bare breasts that protrude from beneath the hair-vestment shift perception of the figure’s gender toward the feminine. The pairing of this hermaphroditic figure with Moro’s passionate musings on love reveals an inner turmoil and cynicism that marked his surrealist visual and poetic production.

In addition to his private artistic practice, Moro strove to position himself as the public face of Surrealism in Lima. Moro was not the first to introduce Surrealism to Peruvian intellectuals, however. Both the poet César Vallejo and José Carlos Mariátegui had published in-depth analyses of the subject in Peruvian journals prior to Moro’s return, presenting diametrically opposed viewpoints. In an article published in *Variedades* in 1926 Mariátegui, on the one hand, discusses the surrealists’ growing political consciousness and condemnation of bourgeoisie decadence.<sup>20</sup>

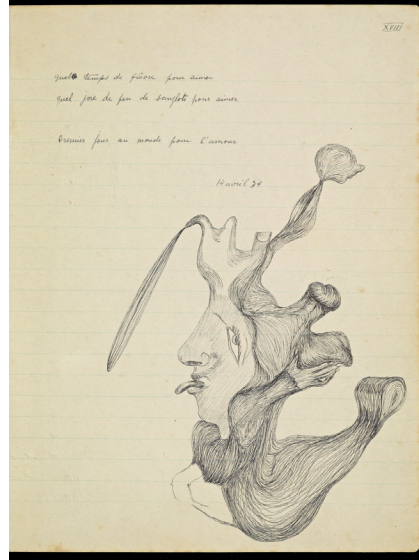


Fig. 4. César Moro, Untitled Drawing, April 14, 1934, “César Moro Papers,” Box 1, folder 7, Manuscripts/Notebooks, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, (980063)

In a second article on the trend published in 1930 Mariátegui wrote an extensive commentary on the second surrealist manifesto, praising Surrealism's alignment with Marxism and asserting that [Latin] American artists should emulate the European movement.<sup>21</sup> Vallejo, on the other hand, also an ardent Marxist, responded very differently to the second manifesto, calling Surrealism a defunct school and accusing Breton and his followers of opportunism:<sup>22</sup>

The surrealists, mocking the law of continual transformation, became academic during their famous moral and intellectual crisis and were unable to overcome this crisis with truly revolutionary forms, that is to say, destructive-constructive forms... They broke off relations with many members of the [Communist] Party and with their means of publication and proceeded to completely divorce themselves from the great Marxist directives. From a literary point of view, their production continues to be characterized by a bourgeois refinement... Right now, Surrealism—as a Marxist movement—is a cadaver.”<sup>23</sup>

The debates about Surrealism were thus clearly delineated in Peruvian avant-garde journals prior to Moro's return. When he arrived, however, Mariátegui had passed away and Vallejo was still in Europe and no longer interested in the movement, leaving Moro the sole pundit on Surrealism in Lima. Four years after Vallejo declared the movement dead, Moro revived it in his essay “The Sulfur Goggles.” While the impact of his words may have only reached a small circle of friends, since the essay was apparently not published until after his death, the essay elucidates Moro's vision for Surrealism. In a direct retort to Vallejo he proclaims: “Surrealism is alive and it is a ferocious life.”<sup>24</sup> For Moro, previous knowledge of surrealist activities in Lima was poor, defective, or entirely false.<sup>25</sup> He therefore asserts that the surrealist movement should be welcomed into Peru “like an avalanche full of explosions that no one can prevent from transforming the world”<sup>26</sup> His title, “The Sulfur Goggles,” further develops the theme of obstructed vision that Moro initiated in Paris and evokes the painful sensation of eyes being eaten away with sulfuric acid. Vision has not just been clouded, but the very means of seeing has been destroyed, an analogy which Moro extends to the cultural stagnation and pernicious provincialism in Peru.<sup>27</sup> For him, Surrealism is the only means of salvation and he posits Peru as the base for a global movement, closing his essay with the proclamation: “From Peru, to worldwide Surrealism.”<sup>28</sup>

While he continued to pledge his allegiance to Breton from afar, Moro

positioned himself as the leader of the Latin American branch of the surrealist movement. To do this, he had to distinguish himself from those who came before him (Mariátegui and Vallejo) and eliminate any regional competition. His strategy involved highlighting manifestations of Surrealism in the visual arts and attacking the Chilean poet and founder of the literary movement *creacionismo*, Vicente Huidobro, who had his own vision for the future of Latin American vanguardism.<sup>29</sup>

In May of 1935 Moro co-organized, with Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, the first exhibition of surrealist art in Latin America at the Academia Alcedo in Lima. While not specifically titled as such, the exhibition catalogue was the only Latin American publication included in a montage of surrealist exhibition brochures from around the world in *Minotaure* in 1937, indicating that Breton recognized it as a manifestation of Surrealism. In his introductory essay Moro invokes a Dadaist desire to destroy everything that has passed for painting in America up to this point. For him only Surrealism offers a way forward:

In Peru, where everything is insular, where increasingly everything acquires the color of a church at dusk, a color that is particularly horrific, we are simply afraid of wanting to prevent the possibility of success for every youth who wants to paint; we hope to discredit painting in America to such an extent that not even one of those valiant and intrepid painters can face a canvas anymore without feeling the urgent need to send everything to hell and replace it with a vacuum cleaner.<sup>30</sup>

The rest of the catalogue, which featured inflammatory quotes about the church, the family, and bourgeois society by Aragon, Breton, Dalí, Picabia, Eluard as well as Lautréamont and the Marquis de Sade among many others, was a tribute to European surrealist belligerence. Rather than attempting to appeal to the Peruvian public, the selected texts were meant to provoke scorn and insult the audience whom Moro already assumed would hate the show and its organizers.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, no explanation of the works on display was provided for the audience at all, keeping visitors deliberately confused.<sup>32</sup> And to further alienate viewers, all of the titles of Moro's submissions were published in French, establishing the show as an esoteric endeavor, inaccessible to the average Lima resident. Since Moro had been writing almost all his poetry and correspondence in French for years, the choice not to provide translations was most likely meant intentionally to aggravate those unwilling to question their own provincial aesthetic expectations. This defensive posture also indicates that Moro expected rejection. While his attitude could have stemmed from

his previous encounters with surrealist affronts on bourgeois values, it may also relate to his personal experiences as a homosexual man. According to Westphalen the catalogue was written in a “tone of insolence essential for those who know themselves to be discredited, who know they will not be understood even before they express themselves.”<sup>33</sup>

Of the fifty-two works in the exhibition, thirty-eight were by Moro, making it essentially a one-man show. Moro chose one of his own paintings, *Pedestrian* (Fig. 5) of 1926, to grace the cover of the catalogue. The painting is a free-form drawing of figures in a landscape reminiscent of works by Miró such as *Person Throwing a Stone at a Bird* made the same year. The addition of feet, tiny wings, and a large circular eye transform the amorphous floating form in the center of the composition into a sort of bird. The bird’s flight defies all logic because the diminutive wings could not possibly support such a large creature. Behind the bird is a triangular form topped with a small flag that resembles a sail. And peeking out from beneath the sail are two small feet, which stand where the hull of the boat should be. Thus both the bird and the pedestrian boat suggest a sort of impossible or illogical travel, perhaps a voyage of the mind, or a voyage across cultures—just the sort of trip promoted by the surrealists.

The catalogue also reproduced a collage-poem by Moro entitled *Fifty Years Ago* (Fig. 6). Made of photographs cut out of magazines, the collage juxtaposes unrelated elements in a typically surrealist manner. Moro bisected the pictorial space vertically with the mid-section of a double barrel break open shotgun. The circular openings of the barrel peer like eyes at the viewer, but as in Moro’s previous collages, these are hollow unseeing eyes, unable to perceive the world except through the tunnel vision of the gun’s barrel. Superimposed on the ornate trigger is the curvilinear form of a gramophone, which becomes a nose under the barrel eyes. Glued to the left side of the shotgun is what appears to be a telescope, positioned in such a way as to resemble a cigarette in an implied mouth. To the top of the barrel Moro pasted a cut out array of fountain pen nibs; the curve of the white paper cutout becomes the brim of a gentleman’s hat. An oyster on the half shell complete with pearl, the only organic form in the entire composition, tops off the assemblage. In a characteristic surrealist fashion, none of the objects relate in type, scale, or function to any other. Yet Moro has arranged them in such a way as to make a human face appear, a face fraught with contradictions. The phallic form of the gun contrasts with the oyster, which alludes to female sexuality; the violence of gunfire disrupts the music playing on gramophone and the pensive writer whose presence manifests in the fountain pen nibs and the poem inscribed around the collage. The image thus fluctuates from cohesive figure to uncanny conglomeration of objects.

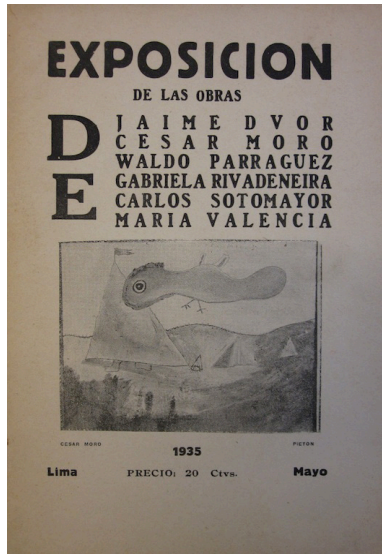


Fig. 5. César Moro, *Piéton* (Pedestrian), 1926, current location unknown. Reprinted on the cover of *Exposición de las obras de Jaime Dvor, César Moro, Waldo Parraguez, Gabriela Rivadeneira, Carlos Sotomayor, Maria Valencia* (Lima: C.I.P, 1935)

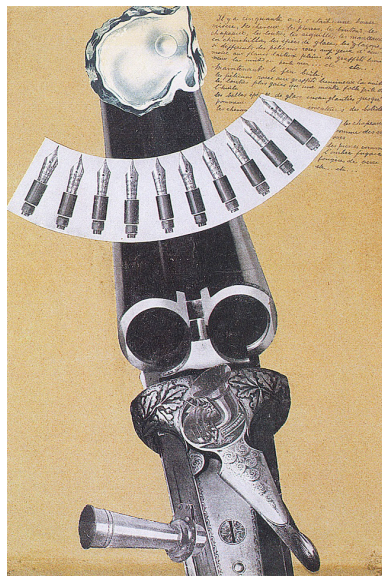


Fig. 6. César Moro, *Il y a cinquante ans...* (Fifty Years Ago...), ca. 1935, Collage and ink on paper, 29 x 20 cm, André Coyné Collection



The poem Moro wrote to accompany the collage only augments the confusion. Written in an automatist style, its imagery, which includes, rocks, hair, needles, chinchilla coats, and pink penguins does nothing to help interpret the collage. Rather it suggests a frigid atmosphere in which materialist decadence reigns over a nonsensical world.

Other extant collages in the exhibition included *Head*, discussed previously, *Adored in the Open Air (The Art of Reading the Future)* (Fig. 7), and a piece entitled simply *The Art of Reading the Future* (Fig. 8). While quite different in content, the latter two both suggest the theme of obfuscated vision. *Adored in the Open Air* consists of four photographs of human heads pasted on black sandpaper. In the upper left hand corner is a young woman with her hands, bedecked in bracelets and rings, drawn up to her chin; a dark shadow falls over half of her face and hands, lending an air of mystery about her. Two stone sculptures, one of pre-Columbian (Mexican) origin and the other a classical bust of a nude woman overlaid with collaged wet drapery, establish a dichotomy between the ancient (both primitive and classical) and the modern as represented by the young woman. Being made of stone, these heads,



Fig. 7. César Moro, *Adorée au grand air (l'art de lire l'avenir)* (Adored in the Open Air (The Art of Reading the Future), ca. 1930/1935, Collage, "César Moro Papers," box 1, folder 10, "Artwork by Moro," The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, (980063)

while they have eyes, cannot see, and Moro reiterated this lack of sight by overlaying one of the eyes in the pre-Columbian mask with a silver sequin. The shininess of the sequin adds a glint to the otherwise blind eye, suggesting that sight is only possible in the most superficial way. The final head in the lower right corner of the collage is a mustachioed man in profile that appears to have been featured on a coin or medallion. The head is perched on a precarious tower of decaying human molars, perhaps implying the moral decay of society. (The similarity between the words “molar” and “moral” in both French and Spanish would not have been lost on him here). Each of these faces gazes intently into space, but none catches the eye of any other. Moreover, Moro has aligned the cutouts in such a way that they almost touch, but never actually overlap one another. This lack of both physical and visual contact seems to perpetuate the developing theme in Moro’s oeuvre of the impossibility of true vision or insight into another’s psyche.

Significantly, Moro cut the pre-Columbian mask in the upper right hand corner of the composition from a 1930 issue of the Parisian journal *L’Art Vivant*.<sup>34</sup> The page from *L’Art Vivant* features a spread of various types of masks from

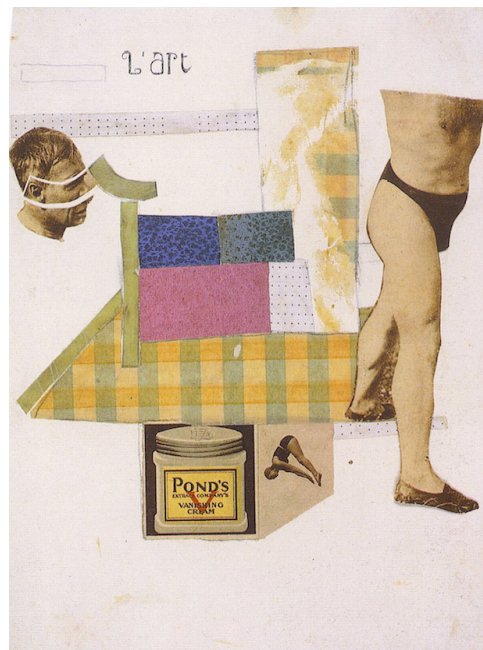


Fig. 8. César Moro, *L'art de lire l'avenir* (The Art of Reading the Future), ca. 1935, Collage on paper, 30 x 23 cm, E. A. Westphalen Collection

different cultures and time periods. In *Adored in the Open Air*, however, Moro glued a hand-drawn floral wreath to the pre-Columbian mask, perhaps to mock the collection and display of these objects for their decorative potential without understanding their cultural significance. Moro's collage, which takes the uncanny juxtaposition of unrelated visages significantly further than the spread in *L'Art Vivant*, could therefore be a comment or spoof on the tendency of such journals to make broad reaching associations across time and place. Simultaneously, however, the image suggests Moro's own experience of travel, attempts at transnational alliances, and cultural and temporal disjunction.

The stone sculptures in the collage also recall the themes of stone, petrification, and obfuscated vision that Moro explored in his poetry. In "Fame of Love," for example, he speaks of having "a bed of marble so as not to have a tomb" and goes on to describe "the stone mouth of love," which suggests the impossibility of truly connecting with a lover.<sup>35</sup> In other poems he would develop this iconography further, writing of liberated stones, impenetrable stones, or speaking a language of stone. In "Battle at the Edge of a Cataract," he writes: "An immense barren field bitten by weeks and interpretable stones; A hand on a severed head; A stone turning another that rises and sleeps standing; An enchanted horse a stone shrub a stone bed; A stone mouth and that shimmering which encircles me sometimes"<sup>36</sup> Similar imagery also appears in "Mother Stone": "You like me have a dull eye, stone... On thee too have I settled o stone; Here I am in exile; speaking a language of stone..."<sup>37</sup> This repeated reference to stone in his poetry becomes a metaphor for impenetrability, the impossibility of communication, and ultimately personal and cultural alienation. *Adored in the Open Air* was his first visual manifestation of the theme, however.

The second collage, which takes the subtitle of the first as its primary identifier, elaborates a similar theme. In *The Art of Reading the Future* Moro explores the unrequited homoerotic gaze. Central to the composition is a geometric collage of patterned paper, with one of the paper strips removed to reveal the glue beneath.<sup>38</sup> On the horizontal axis of this abstract composition are a decapitated male head, on the left, and a headless torso and legs of a male figure in a black bathing suit on the right. Moro has cut the eye and ear out of the head as a unit and glued them back in their original location, leaving a gap to indicate the cut marks. A curved arrow-like form, which points directly across the pictorial space to the male torso's buttocks, mirrors the cutout section. By cutting out the eye and ear, Moro draws attention to the action of looking and listening. But abstract forms and missing information (the detached collage element) block the space the gaze has to traverse. Moreover, the male torso strides away from his admirer and lacks the intellectual and sensory

capacity (his head) to respond.

The vertical axis of the collage perpetuates this notion of invisibility with advertising imagery. The Pond's jar contains "vanishing cream" which literally suggests that the user or some characteristic of the user will disappear from sight. Next to the jar Moro has pasted a photograph of a female diver, from whose form we extrapolate that she is just about to disappear into the water. And the inverted "V" of her body mirrors the red "V" on the Pond's jar visually linking the two images. These advertising images contrast with the decorative art nouveau lettering of the word "l'art" at the top of the composition, establishing a dichotomy between lowbrow and highbrow notions of the visual.<sup>39</sup> These letters also stand in for the complete title, claiming all the seemingly unrelated imagery and truncated social interactions in the composition as part of the "art" of reading or seeing into the future. This notion of clairvoyance as a futile endeavor reappears in the early 1940s in the poem of the same name "The Art of Reading the Future" in which Moro speaks of clairvoyant tears with holes.<sup>40</sup> Through the repetition of motifs of obstructed vision in both his poetry and collage, Moro reveals his personal sense of estrangement and invisibility, an experience he seems to have endured no matter what his country of residence.

While Moro's works dominated the 1935 exhibition, the show also featured contributions by five Chileans: Jaime Dvor, Waldo Parraguez, Gabriela Rivadeneira, Carlos Sotomayor, and María Valencia. Indeed, the exhibition was a bit of a coup. All the artists whose work Moro exhibited were part of a group associated with Vicente Huidobro in Chile called the Grupo Decembrista, who were beginning to experiment with neo-cubism, abstraction, and surrealist automatism. The group, with the exception of Sotomayor who joined them in 1934, held their first exhibition in December of 1933. Huidobro, an itinerant European traveler and major promoter of young artists in Chile, wrote the exhibition catalogue in which he proclaimed: "the last thing I imagined was to find something so interesting in our America."<sup>41</sup> While he neither mentions Surrealism nor abstraction in the catalogue, Huidobro praises the artists in the show for their opposition to realism. By exhibiting their work, which María Valencia brought with her to Lima just for the show,<sup>42</sup> Moro was basically usurping Huidobro's group for his own purposes and aligning these young artists with Surrealism.

Moro's inclusion of these artists seemed to be more about challenging Huidobro than highlighting their achievements, however. Only one sculpture by Parraguez, one wood work by Rivadeniero, two paintings and one collage by Valencia, three mixed media works by Dvor, and six "drawings" by Sotomayor were exhibited compared to Moro's thirty-eight pieces. All three of the artworks

reproduced in the catalogue were abstract mixed media compositions that approximated the free-form biomorphic shapes common in Arp's work of the time. Sotomayor's "drawing," for example, displays a strong affinity with Arp's *Two Heads* of 1927 in its play with the malleability of string as a source of automatic forms. But none of these artists specifically identified themselves as surrealists.

Not only did Moro co-opt Huidobro's group, he also wrote an "Aviso" or warning against the poet that he printed, in all capital letters, in the exhibition catalogue. In it, Moro accused Huidobro of plagiarizing a text by Luis Buñuel published in *Surrealisme au service de la révolution* in 1933 and of imitating the work of Pierre Reverdy.<sup>43</sup> While Moro was quite specific in his accusation—he called Huidobro "the veteran of arrivism in America" and "a mediocre copyist and nauseating literary puppet"—the aim of his text seemed to be to rid himself of a rival and to provoke a level of controversy that would bring attention to his cause.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the rancor and condescension of his language emulated quite closely that of Breton in the second surrealist manifesto where he conducted a brutal culling of the surrealist ranks, concluding that "very few men... are of a caliber to meet with the Surrealists' exacting standards."<sup>45</sup> This was a comparison that Moro most likely deliberately cultivated to position himself as the leader of Surrealism in Latin America through his inside knowledge of the European movement.

If it was controversy that Moro wanted, his challenge to Huidobro's position of leadership among Latin American vanguard intellectuals certainly achieved his objective. Huidobro took the bait and responded to Moro's invective in a biting essay entitled "A Bit of a Fight: Don César Quispez, Morito of Calcomania" published in *Vital*.<sup>46</sup> By recalling the artist's original family name "Quispez"—a name common to families of indigenous descent—Huidobro exposes an aspect of Moro's identity that he may have wished to repress. His use of the diminutive "Morito" and suggestion that the artist is a descendant of "decalcomania" maligns Moro's work as a mere facsimile of surrealist practice. Accordingly, in the essay, Huidobro insults Moro at every turn, outing him publicly as a "homosexual louse" and then escalating the insult to refer to his art proclaiming: "This flirtatious louse took modern French art up the ass." Huidobro then turns the accusation of plagiarism back on Moro: "You are the servant, the lackey, the slave of Surrealism, which you discovered too late." He calls his drawings and paintings "an idiotic plagiary first of Max Ernst and then of Dalí," and demands that Moro "destroy that bad drawing, *Pedestrian*, plagiarized from Joan Miró." About *Fifty Years Ago...* Huidobro proclaims: "Upon his return to Peru, the flirtatious Moro tried to charm four [sic] innocent little creoles [the other artists in the exhibition, Huidobro's protégés] with pedestrian imitations of surrealist objects, like the rifle with fountain pens published in his catalogue."<sup>47</sup> By insulting



Moro's ethnic heritage and sexual identity, Huidobro makes the dispute personal, perhaps in hopes of alienating Moro from his peers in Peru and reclaiming ground for himself.

Although Huidobro was right to identify in Moro a connection to Ernst, Miró, and Dalí, his anger was of course triggered by Moro's initial attack. But why would the accusation of plagiarism thrown back and forth between Moro and Huidobro be considered the ultimate insult? Both Moro and Huidobro were Latin American intellectuals with extensive European experience. Their project was to perpetuate a global avant-garde that was related to and conversant with its European antecedents, but at the forefront of Latin American artistic innovation. Whereas European artists could emulate one another as a source or inspiration, to be derivative or to plagiarize these artists from across the ocean implied a sort of cultural hierarchy. While struggling to find this balance for themselves, Moro and Huidobro accused each other of not achieving enough creative distance. For Moro, the answer was to establish a Latin American variant of Surrealism that was at once unique and recognizably surrealist. In contesting Huidobro and usurping the Chilean artists he supported, Moro was fighting to establish Surrealism as the most viable vanguard strategy in Latin America.

As a result of these conflicts and other mitigating circumstances, Moro never succeeded in fully establishing Surrealism as a relevant practice in Peru. With the dominance of José Sabogal's brand of Indigenism at Lima's National School of Fine Arts and Moro's antagonistic approach to promoting the movement, Surrealism did not find an audience. As Westphalen contends: "The outcry, the annoyance, and the uproar were huge, but the repercussions and influences of the show would not reveal themselves until years later."<sup>48</sup> While it introduced new possibilities to young artists and initiated a challenge to the ascendancy of Indigenism, Moro was not able to follow through with what he started. In 1938, because of his involvement in the publication of a pamphlet protesting Peru's support of the fascist regime in Spain, Moro fled to Mexico to avoid arrest and remained in the country for the next decade.<sup>49</sup> It was there that he once again met up with Breton and renewed his surrealist activity.

#### *Moro in Mexico*

André Breton also arrived in Mexico in 1938 as a cultural ambassador to the French government. While there he gave a lecture on Surrealism entitled "The Modern Transformations in Art and Surrealism" at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and co-wrote the famous manifesto "For an Independent Revolutionary Art" with the exiled Bolshevik revolutionary León Trotsky.<sup>50</sup> He also

established connections with prominent artists including Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Breton was enchanted with Mexico, famously calling it a surrealist country par excellence. While Breton's presence in Mexico reinvigorated Moro's faith in Surrealism, he did not share the Frenchman's enthusiasm for the place, complaining in a letter to his friend Emilio Westphalen "It's a country of the most utter absurdity and falseness...I don't know how long I can suffer this hell."<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, after Breton returned to Paris in the fall of 1938, Moro became the voice of Surrealism in Mexico, writing the only two articles on the subject to appear in Mexican publications prior to the famous "International Surrealist Exhibition" in 1940: "Trajectory of the Dream," an overview of Breton's writing on dreams, and "Reality Hidden from View," a lament against the state of world politics in 1939.<sup>52</sup> It was the 1940 exhibition that would be the culminating project in Moro's effort to establish Surrealism as a transformative practice in Latin America, however. Working with the Austrian-born artist Wolfgang Paalen in Mexico City, and coordinating with Breton in Paris, Moro played a major role in determining the scope of the exhibition and layout of the catalogue. But the issues he encountered and the concessions he was forced to make began to erode Moro's faith in Breton.

Moro handled most of the negotiations with the Mexican artists participating in the show. What he experienced revealed to him, not the innate Surrealism of these artists' activities, as Breton presumed, but rather a group of opportunists looking to take advantage of Breton's international stature to further their own careers. Moro was particularly disgusted with Kahlo and Rivera (Fig. 9). In a letter to Westphalen he laments:

You saw what happened with Frida and the drawing, she didn't do it under the pretext that she was very demoralized because of her divorce, but that didn't prevent her from painting an enormous canvas for the surrealist exhibition, to get a very important place and be seen at the exhibition. Authentic. You cannot imagine the number of embarrassments that Diego has caused, he did the same thing as Frida, two enormous paintings and wanting the best placement... And what's more, from the photo in the catalogue you will see what bullshit the titles of Diego's paintings are, and the ugliness of the famous 'Majandrágora, etc...' He is someone, he represents all the qualities of the South American genius, with all the ruses and the crazy ability to trick people and to pass as someone well intentioned...Regarding his Surrealism, no one believes it,



Fig. 9. Installation Photograph of the “Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo” (International Surrealist Exhibiton), Galería de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City, 1940. Cortesía Galería de Arte Mexicano /Courtesy of Galería de Arte Mexicano

it's the thousandth attempt remake a reputation that scarcely needs remaking, since in the United States he earns a crazy amount of money and is considered a genius without parallel. In Paris that would not go over, despite 'Minotaure', you understand, people there have a refined instinct and know painting. There would have to be a thousand circumstances for Breton to fall into the trap that Rivera set for him, he that is so lucid was plowed over like a child.<sup>53</sup>

This rather long excerpt from a personal letter reveals several things about Moro's attitude toward Latin American artists and their relationship to Surrealism. For Moro, a cultural insider, Rivera was a con artist whose attempt at Surrealism was no more than a jockeying for position that no one took seriously. And critical reactions to Rivera's submissions confirmed Moro's estimation of the artist. As Luis Cardoza y Aragón wrote: “His [Rivera's] genius and talent allow him to engage in the most infantile of games. His picture *The Mandrake* is a pompous portrait of Ms. Macaria Pérez, of the 'high society' of Monterrey, or any other place, and that is all...”<sup>54</sup>

Moro was particularly dismayed that Breton, his intellectual idol, would be so gullible as to not recognize Rivera's and Kahlo's posturing. What Moro's letter also reveals, however, is his longing for the sophistication of Paris and contempt for the social affectation in contemporary Mexican society. These sentiments may ultimately explain some of the reactions to the exhibition.

Despite his difficulties dealing with demanding personalities and ironing out the practical details of the exhibition, Moro's introduction to the exhibition catalogue remained utopian in tone and sought to rouse Mexican intellectuals from their complacency to view their world in a new way. The text is written in a vaguely automatist style, interjecting nonsensical elements into a more controlled and chronological narrative. Like his introduction to the Lima exhibition catalogue, Moro references numerous European associates of or participants in Surrealism. Despite his personal contempt for Mexican society, Moro assumes a sophisticated audience familiar with both the movement and its major proponents, proclaiming that the surrealists he lists are "names we all know." His stance indicates that he perceives Mexico, not as a backward cultural wasteland, but rather as a country fully conversant in the most recent developments in Europe, to the point where prominent artists were capable of sophisticated cultural maneuvering. And in a jab at Rivera and the bourgeois conditions of artistic production, he proclaims that "poetry rises where the market place ends."

For Moro, it was not a matter of introducing Surrealism in Mexico, but rather of reawakening or reinstating in countries with a strong pre-Columbian heritage a way of being that was inherently surrealist:

For the first time in centuries we witness a heavenly combustion in Mexico. A thousand signs converge and then disperse to form constellations that restore the brilliant pre-Columbian night. The purest night of the New Continent, in which the grandiose forces of dream clash with the formidable jaws of the civilization in Mexico and the civilization in Peru. Countries which keep, despite the invasion of Spanish barbarians and the sequels [of these invasions] that persist, thousands of luminary points that must enlist very soon in the line of fire of international Surrealism.<sup>55</sup>

This passage draws directly on the surrealists' notion of ancient civilizations as characterized by pure instinct and mythic power, the exact opposite of rational

bourgeois culture from which the movement arose.<sup>56</sup> By advancing Breton's notion of surrealist pursuits as analogous to so-called primitive thought, Moro co-opts and redirects the rhetoric of muralists such as David Alfaro Siqueiros who famously asserted "let us return to the work of the ancient inhabitants of our valleys... Our atmospheric proximity to them will help us assimilate the constructive vitality of their work..."<sup>57</sup> Rather than focusing on the constructive nature of pre-Columbian art, Moro posits that Surrealism would draw on the "dream potentialities" of these cultures. Surrealism was therefore a way forward for Latin America, a means of embracing Mexico's and Peru's native heritage while avoiding the didacticism and sentimentality that had recently come to characterize Indigenism and Mexican muralism. With the catastrophic events unfolding in Europe, Surrealism for Moro was "the magic word of the new century," and Latin America must take the lead in advancing the movement.

The exhibition opened on January 17, 1940 at the Inés Amor Galería de Arte Mexicano in Mexico City in spectacular fashion. The catalogue announced the "Apparition of the Great Sphinx of the Night"—actually Isabel Marín, Rivera's former sister-in-law, disguised as Wolfgang Paalen's painting the *Golden Fleece*—and proclaimed "Clairvoyant watches," "Perfumes of the Fifth Dimension," "Radioactive Frames," and "Burnt Invitations" would amuse and amaze visitors.<sup>58</sup> The exhibition itself was a truly international endeavor, including works by artists from Germany, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Spain, the United States, France Guatemala, England, Italy, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, Peru, and Mexico as well as pre-Columbian objects from Rivera's personal collection. As many scholars have noted previously, despite its international scope the exhibition and the catalogue designated "international" and "Mexican" artists, setting up an artificial dichotomy between those artists whose work transcended national borders and those whose contributions were inherently Mexican. Rivera and Kahlo, of course, insisted their work be part of the international section.

Moro submitted four pieces, shown in the international section, that spanned more than a decade of artistic activity, including two early paintings *Pedestrian* (1926) and *Untitled Painting with the Inscription "Eluard"* (1926). He also presented *The Art of Reading the Future* (1935) and a surrealist object *Cover for the Blind* (1939). While no reproductions of *Cover for the Blind* exist, the title indicates that Moro continued to explore the notion of obfuscated vision while in Mexico. The inclusion of *Pedestrian* and *The Art of Reading the Future*, discussed as part of the 1935 exhibition in Lima, suggests that Moro most likely continued to envision these two images as pivotal in the creation of a personal iconography.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, the only critic to review his work seems to have mistakenly identified *The Art of Reading the Future* describing the



piece as, “some burnt out matches, a bit of lead, some paint stains and a few tacks stuck into the canvas.” While it is possible that the piece is currently mislabeled or that the critic was just careless, his cavalier comment about the artist—“we don’t know what Mr. Moro would read in this work; but a psychiatrist should of course also read something there”—suggests that his error was an attempt to demonstrate that Surrealism is a joke and that one surrealist piece is easily replaceable by any other.<sup>60</sup> But for Moro, someone whose artistic practice oscillated between two languages and spanned three continents, the coveted yet elusive desire to “read the future” was a fit metaphor for the discontinuities of time, space, and worldview his life in transit entailed.

Despite Moro’s enthusiastic claims about Surrealism in the exhibition catalogue, the participants’ conflicting demands and Breton’s absence during the organizational process led to an exhibition that was most likely far from what Moro would have desired. Most critics either perceived the exhibition as sensationalistic or as merely a society event, and none paid much attention to the art. As José Rojas Garcidueñas asserted, “In our opinion, there is a lot that is simply *épatant* [the author uses French term for “shocking” here].”<sup>61</sup> Or as Horacio Quinoñes wrote in *Hoy*, “Sensation. That’s what Surrealism is. To me personally, it’s a form of self-torture, full of meaning only for those who are decadent or desperate.”<sup>62</sup> The most damning was the review by Ramón Gaya who wrote: “Surrealism has lost its indignant enemies, it doesn’t hurt anyone, it has turned into something rose colored, something chic, something of good taste. And when a movement of the violence, exaggeration, and radicalism of Surrealism loses its detractors, it means that it has also lost its strength... Surrealism is dead as a fight, as a school, as an insult, as a warning, in the end, it is dead as a movement.”<sup>63</sup> Like Vallejo’s declaration a decade earlier, Gaya’s assertion that the movement was dead served to position Gaya as an authority on a European movement and, in an act of anti-imperialism, to position Mexico against it.<sup>64</sup> Thus while Moro and Breton envisioned Surrealism as a means of opening Mexico to the world, many critics resisted this external imposition and the resultant assumption that Mexico needed guidance.

While some scholars have since positioned Surrealism as the primary catalyst for the radical shift away from cultural nationalism in Mexican art, its importance took time to manifest and this vision of the exhibition as transformative did not surface until after Moro’s death.<sup>65</sup> Breton’s departure for Paris after the exhibition and his decision to move to New York rather than returning to Mexico in 1941 when he fled Europe, left Moro disillusioned with the movement and isolated from its key proponents. After the 1940 exhibition, Moro continued to participate in and promote surrealist activities, drawing, writing poetry, and publishing articles in the

Mexican and Peruvian journals *Dyn* and *Las Moradas*; but he did not exhibit his work, nor did he organize any more exhibitions. While he never completely renounced Breton's ideas, he began to differentiate his approach to Surrealism from that of his mentor. While some scholars have suggested that Moro distanced himself from Breton because of Breton's homophobic conception of love, the Frenchman's views on the subject had not changed significantly since the 1920s. Rather, as André Coyné has pointed out, Moro's detachment from Breton commenced in the 1940s when he began publishing in Paalen's review *Dyn* (1942-1944), which explicitly positioned itself in opposition to *VVV*, the surrealist journal published in New York that served as an outlet for Breton and other exiled European artists.<sup>66</sup> Despite his various collaborations with the Peruvian, Breton too, distanced himself from Moro. Although he solicited Moro's assistance in investigating the connection between art and magic in Peru for his book *L'art magique* (1957), Breton neglected to mention Moro as an organizer of the 1940 "International Surrealist Exhibition" in the re-edition of the surrealist manifestoes in 1955.<sup>67</sup> As the so-called "Pope" of Surrealism, Breton controlled, to a certain extent, historical memory of the movement; his disregard for Moro's contributions has meant that his name is often left out of scholarly analyses of Surrealism. And Moro's untimely demise in 1956 prevented him from responding to Breton's oversight. Upon his death most of Moro's works remained with those who inherited them and have only rarely been exhibited since.<sup>68</sup> For Moro, Surrealism remained an unrealized revolution.

Perhaps because Moro was one of the few truly transnational surrealists, his contributions to the movement have still not been fully recognized. After leaving Paris Moro deemed himself a privileged authority on Surrealism, promoting exhibitions, writing treatises, and provoking controversy in order to draw attention to the surrealist movement and to proclaim it a counterpoint to the cultural nationalism that dominated Latin American art. While the impact of his organizational efforts was more sporadic than cataclysmic, his artworks represent an original interpretation of surrealist practice. Moro's approach to collage—as a form of visual poetry—allowed him to create a personal iconography based on his experience of travel, exile, and sexual difference. These images, which echo in his poetry, deal with the limitations of personal and artistic communication and fragmented or obfuscated vision. For Moro, Surrealism offered the only viable language to express his uniquely modern transnational existence.

1 “El surrealismo está vivo y de una vida feroz. Una vez más nos solidarizamos con los rumbos impresos al surrealismo por André BRETON, haciéndole entera confianza. Desde el Perú, por el surrealismo mundial.” “Los Anteojos de azufre” (written in 1934, but not published until after Moro’s death in César Moro, *Los Anteojos de Azufre; Prosas reunidas y presentadas por André Coyné*. Coyné, André, Ed. (Lima, 1958)). I have cited it from César Moro, *La Tortuga ecuestre y otros textos*, Colección Altazor (Caracas, Venezuela: Monte Avila Editores, 1977), 99.

2 Moro changed his name from Alfredo Quispez Asín around 1921. The new name, based on a character in a story by Spanish novelist Ramón Gómez de la Serna and chosen for its pleasing combination of sounds, suggests a very different identity. While Moro’s father was a relatively wealthy physician, the name Quispez indicates indigenous heritage. The choice of the name Moro, however, inverts the class hierarchy an indigenous name suggested in early twentieth-century Peru. Moro translates as Moor—the North African group that occupied the Iberian Peninsula for nearly 800 years. In Spanish, the word “Moro” often has negative connotations and can be used to refer to all dark or black peoples. “César Moro,” however, implies “Black Caesar” or the imperial leader of the dark race. Thank you to Alison de Lima Greene, Curator of Contemporary Art and Special Projects, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston for suggesting the notion of “Black Caesar.”

3 Ricardo Silva-Santisteban, “André Breton en el Perú,” in *Avatares del surrealismo en el Perú y en América Latina: Actas del coloquio internacional organizado por la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, La Embajada de Francia y La Alianza Francesa, Lima, 3-4-5 de Julio 1990* = *Avatars du surréalisme au Pérou et en Amérique Latine* (Lima: Institut Français d’Études Andines, 1992), 93 cites 1928 as the date Moro met Breton, but as far as I know there is no direct evidence to corroborate this date. The Moro Archives at the Getty Research Institute contain an invitation for an opening at the Galerie Surréaliste of works by Man Ray and “Objets des Iles” in March of 1926 as well as an exhibition brochure for Tanguy’s exhibition at the Galerie Surréaliste in May of 1927, which included Peruvian, Mexican, Columbian, and Northwest Coast objects. If Moro attended these events, he may have met Breton or other surrealists even earlier than 1928.

4 Moro had difficulty maintaining his artistic activities because he suffered health and economic problems, which forced him to drop out of the ballet academy where he was studying. In a letter to his brother Carlos he wrote: “For a while now I haven’t been drawing because I don’t have materials. The same thing with painting, my economic state is abysmal... When you come to Paris you will be surprised to find instead of the boxer you left behind, a skinny man, something that greatly upsets me because I love plumpness” (“Hace tiempo no dibujo por falta de útiles. Lo mismo

me pasa con la pintura, y respecto a la parte económica es nula... cuando vayas a París te va a sorprender encontrar en lugar del boxeador que tú dejaste una especie de hombre flaquito, cosa que me tiene desolado, pues amo la gordura”). André Coyné, “El arte empieza donde termina la tranquilidad,” César Moro, *Con los anteojos de azufre: César Moro, artista plástico* (Lima, Perú: Centro Cultural de España, 2000), 12.

5 The exhibition brochure reads: Cabinet Maldoror—Hôtel Raventein—Mont des Arts—Bruxelles. Du 6 au 17 mars 1926. Quelques Peintres de l’Amérique Latine. Santos Balmori de México—Jaime A. Colson de Porto Plata (República Dominicana)—Isaías de Santiago (Chile)—César Moro de Lima (Perú).

6 “Ce qui caractérise les plus jeunes parmi les peintres de là-bas, c’est un besoin de reprendre contact avec l’âme indienne et les formes d’art qu’elle a générées, tout en se tenant au courant de ce qui se fait de plus audacieux et de plus nouveau en Europe.” Francis Miomandre, “On demande de la peinture de sauvages” *Le Bulletin de la vie artistique* Aug. 1, 1926 7:15, 234-235. The article does not specifically reference the Brussels exhibition. It is possible, therefore, that the exhibition traveled to Paris in the summer of 1926, especially since all the artists were living in Paris, not in Brussels at the time. Unfortunately, I have found no documentation of an exhibition in Paris prior to that in 1927 at the Société Paris-Amérique Latine.

7 *Le Carrosse du Saint-Sacrement* is a comedy in one act published in Paris in 1829. It was inspired by the historical figure Micaela Villegas, a well-known Peruvian comedian of the seventeenth century.

8 “Mais c’est tout le Pérou qui chante dans les aquarelles et les peintures du délicieux César Moro, le beau Pérou colonial des vice-rois et du ‘carrosse du Saint-Sacrement,’ le Pérou plus ancien des rois vêtus de plumes, le Pérou des Indiens de l’intérieur, pleurant leur décadence aux sons de la déchirante *quena*.” Miomandre, “On demande de la peinture de sauvages,” 234-235. The reference to Moro as “delicious” is curious. Is it perhaps meant to be flirtatious? I have not come across any evidence of a relationship between Miomandre and Moro, but that does not preclude the possibility. A *quena* is a traditional wood or bamboo flute from the Andes.

9 *Señora Give it to Me* was made during this period, but since I have not been able to locate an exhibition list, it may not have been one of the pictures exhibited. He may also have brought some of his earlier work executed in a sinuous art nouveau style such as *De Profundis* (ca. 1922) to Paris, but given Miomandre’s description of the Peruvian content of Moro’s work, and his affinity with Picasso, it is unlikely that these works were included in the exhibition. Rather, Moro must have realized once he arrived in Paris that art nouveau was out of date in Paris in the 1920s.

10 The following year, 1927, Moro would participate in his second and final exhibition in Paris with Jaime Colson entitled “Deux Peintres de l’Amérique Latine”

at the Société Paris-Amérique Latine. Miomandre wrote the text for the catalogue, again emphasizing indigenous characteristics and the authenticity of the artists' work: "the young generations visibly search for evidence of that which is the most pure on the continent, the most ancient" ("les jeunes générations visiblement tâtonnent à la recherche de ce qu'il y a de plus pur dans le continent, de plus ancien"). He goes on to ascribe their success to the latent power of the Indian soul. Francis Miomandre, "Deux Peintres de l'Amérique Latine," Société Paris-Amérique Latine, Paris, du 10 au 16 mars 1927.

11 "A proposito de la pintura en el Peru" (1939) reprinted in Moro, *La Tortuga ecuestre y otros textos*. The essay was originally published in the journal Moro started with Westphalen, *El uso e la palabra*, in Dec. 1939.

12 "A César Moro, a Jorge Seoane y a los demás artistas que últimamente han emigrado a París, se les pide allá temas nativos, motivos indígenas. Nuestra escultora Carmen Saco ha llevado en sus estatuas y dibujos de indios el más válido pasaporte de su arte." José Carlos Mariátegui, "El indigenismo en la literatura nacional" *Mundial* 345, Lima, Jan. 21, 1927; cited in José Carlos Mariátegui, Luis Alberto Sánchez and Manuel Aquézo Castro, *La polémica del indigenismo* (Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1976), 33.

13 Brochures from all the exhibitions he attended are among César Moro's papers at the Getty Research Institute. The Moro archives also contain catalogues from two de Chirico exhibitions from the same period.

14 Many of these letters are among César Moro's papers at the Getty Research Institute.

15 André Breton, *Violette Nozières* (Bruxelles: Editions Nicolas Flamel, 1933).

16 According to Dawn Ades "Max Ernst was one of the first artists systematically to explore the disorienting power of combined photographic images, and the possibilities of marvelous transformations of objects, bodies, landscapes and even substance itself down to the tiniest detail." Dawn Ades, *Photomontage* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 111.

17 See Robin Adele Greeley, "Image, Text and the Female Body: Rene Magritte and the Surrealist Publications" *Oxford Art Journal*, 15: 2 (1992), 48-57 for an in-depth discussion of this work.

18 "Et je t'assure qu'en France les étrangers ont une mauvaise presse—d'après les journaux bourgeois, ce sont eux qui sont responsables de tout et plusieurs milliers de travailleurs ont été reconduits aux frontières—Si ce sont les étrangers, comme ce sont les juifs en Allemagne et les Nègres aux U.S.A." Henry goes on to recount the worsening political situation in France and how the surrealists can no longer participate in Communist Party activities. Letter from Maurice Henry to César



Moro, Nov. 25, 1934. "César Moro Papers," box 1, Correspondence 1930-34, Getty Research Institute.

19 "Quel temps de fièvre pour aimer, quel joie de feu de sanglots pour aimer, premier fois au monde pour l'amour." "Joie de feu" seems also to be a reversal of the expression "feu de joie" which means salute. This type of inversion and double entendre was common to Moro's poetic practice.

20 "El grupo suprarrealista y 'clarte' José Carlos Mariátegui, *El Artista y la época*, Ediciones populares de las obras completas de José Carlos Mariátegui 6, Biblioteca Amauta (Lima: Empresa Editora Amauta, 1959) 44. Originally published in *Variedades*, Lima, July 24, 1926. In 1928, Mariátegui printed three of Moro's surrealist poems in *Amauta*.

21 "El Balance del suprarrealismo" *Ibid.*, 45-52. Originally published in *Variedades*, Lima, Feb. 19 and March 5, 1930.

22 "Autopsia del superrealismo" (1930), César Vallejo, *Artículos y crónicas completos* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2002) 833. Originally published in *Variedades*, no. 1151, Mar. 1930; *Nosotros* (Buenos Aires) no. 250, Mar. 1930; *Amauta*, no. 30, Apr-May, 1930.

23 "Los superrealistas, burlando la ley del devenir vital, se academizaron, repito, en su famosa crisis moral e intelectual y fueron impotentes para excederla y superarla con formas realmente revolucionarias, es decir, destructivo-constructivas... Rompieron con numerosos miembros del partido y con sus órganos de prensa y procedieron, en todo, en perpetuo divorcio con las grandes directivas marxistas. Desde el punto de vista literario, sus producciones siguieron caracterizándose por un evidente refinamiento burgués... A la hora en que estamos, el superrealismo—como movimiento marxista—es un cadáver." *Ibid.*, 830-31.

24 "El surrealismo está vivo y de una vida feroz." "Los Anteojos de azufre," in Moro, *La Tortuga ecuestre y otros textos*, 99.

25 "They have a poor, defective, and entirely false image of Surrealism's objectives and of what constitutes surrealist activity" ("No tiene sino una imagen pobre y defectuosa, enteramente falsa, de las finalidades y de lo que constituye la actividad surrealista"). *Ibid.*, 98.

26 "Que salude al movimiento surrealista como un navío de nieve cargado de explosiones y que nada podrá detener en su devenir de transformar el mundo por el hombre y para el hombre." *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*, 97.

28 *Ibid.*, 99.

29 Huidobro was the founder of the literary movement *creacionismo*, a movement based on the idea of pure artistic creation or art for art's sake.

30 “En el Perú, donde todo se cierra, donde todo adquiere, más y más, un color de iglesia al crepúsculo, color particularmente horripilante, tenemos nosotros la simple temeridad de querer cerrar definitivamente las posibilidades de éxito a todo joven que desee pintar; esperamos desacreditar en tal forma la pintura en América, que ni uno solo de esos bravos e intrépidos pintores pueda ya enfrentarse a la tela sin sentir la urgencia de mandar todo al Diablo y de hacerse reemplazar por un aspirador mecánico.” *Exposición de las obras de Jaime Dvor, César Moro, Waldo Parraguez, Gabriela Rivadeneira, Carlos Sotomayor, María Valencia* (Lima: C.I.P, 1935). (Lima: C.I.P, 1935). Not paginated.

31 “The exhibition shows, however, for the first time in Peru, an uncensored collection of works destined to provoke scorn and anger in the people who scorn us and hate us” (“Esta exposición, muestra sin embargo, tal cual es, por primera vez en el Perú, una colección sin elección de obras destinadas a provocar el desprecio y la cólera de las gentes que despreciamos y que detestamos”). Ibid.

32 As Westphalen contends: “The fact that neither program nor explanations were offered should be understood as the result of a deliberate decision not to guide or indicate to the visitor or reader how to see and understand” (“que no se ofrecían ni programa ni explicaciones debe entenderse en el sentido de la falta de propósitos de guiar e indicar al visitante o al lector maneras de ver y comprender”). Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, “La primera exposición surrealista en América Latina,” *Revista nacional de cultura* 47, no. 259 (1985): 27.

33 Mariela Dreyfus, “Interview with Emilio Adolfo Westphalen,” *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts* 51 (1995): 53.

34 While it is possible that Moro brought a collection of journals with him back to Peru, he may actually have made the collage in Paris, bringing into question the 1935 date of the collage. *L'Art Vivant* 6 (Apr. 1, 1930): 268.

35 César Moro, “Renommé de l'Amour,” *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* 5 (May 1933): 38.

36 “Battle at the Edge of a Cataract” was translated in César Moro, *The Scandalous Life of César Moro in His Own Words*, Ward Philip trans., Oleander Modern Poets, 6 (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1976).

37 “Pierre mere” (“Mother Stone”) was published in César Moro, *Le Chateau de Grison* (México, D.F: Editions Tigronine, 1943). “Toi comme moi avons l'œil terne, pierre... De trop t'avoir fixé ô pierre; Me voilà dans l'exil; Parlant un langage de pierre.” Translation is mine.

38 It is also possible that the collage has simply been damaged and that a piece is missing.

39 Dickson has suggested that this juxtaposition accuses “bourgeois art of

complicity with capitalism.” Kent Dickson, “César Moro’s Impossible Futures: L’art de lire l’avenir,” *Mester: Literary Journal of the Graduate Students of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of California, Los Angeles* XXX (2001): 24.

40 “Larmes trouées clairvoyants” (Clairvoyant tears with holes). For a more extensive discussion of the poem see Dickson, “César Moro’s Impossible Futures: L’art de lire l’avenir.” In other poems such as “Lost to sight” and “Battle at the Edge of a Cataract” he deals even more extensively with the theme.

41 Miguel Rojas Mix, “Huidobro y el art abstracto,” *Arte en Colombia* 23 (1984): 88.

42 César Moro, *César Moro: Retrospectiva de la obra plástica 2-11 de Julio 1990* (Lima, Perú: Galerie L’Imaginaire, Alianza Francesa, Arequipa 4595 Miraflores, 1990) 9.

43 Moro is referring here to the long polemic between Guillermo de Torre and Huidobro. As Lynda Klich points out, it was de Torre who initially disputed the authenticity of Huidobro’s theories in relation to French poet Pierre Reverdy. Klich cites Guillermo de Torre, “Literatures novísimas: problemas teóricos y estética experimental del nuevo lirismo,” *Cosmópolis* 32 (Aug. 1921), 585-607. On de Torre’s polemic with Huidobro, also see *El Ultraísmo y las artes plásticas* (Valencia: IVAM Centre Julio González, 1996), 13 and Juan Manuel Bonet, *Diccionario de las vanguardias en España, 1907-1936* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1995), 340-341. Cited in Lynda Klich, “Revolution and Utopia: Estridentismo and the Visual Arts, 1921-27” (Dissertation, New York City: New York University, 2008), 64.

44 *Exposición de las obras de Jaime Dvor, César Moro, Waldo Parraguez, Gabriela Rivadeneira, Carlos Sotomayor, María Valencia*.

45 André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 135.

46 “Un Poco de pelea: Don César Quispez, Morito de calcomanía” *Vital*, June, 1935. “César Moro Papers” Series VI. Printed matter, 1926-1987, Box 5, Folder 5, Getty Research Institute.

47 All the quotes in the preceding paragraph come from Huidobro, “Un Poco de pelea: Don César Quispez, Morito de calcomanía.”

48 Dreyfus, “Interview with Emilio Adolfo Westphalen,” 53. In another instance Westphalen asserts: “Still eleven years later Moro delighted in remembering the stupor, disconcertedness, and indignation of the people: Never had they seen anything similar, nor more insolent than our exhibition in ’35” (“Todavía once años más tarde se deleitaría Moro rememorando el estupor el desconcierto la indignación de la gente: Nunca habían visto nada semejante, ni insolencia mayor que nuestra exposición del 35”). Westphalen, “La primera exposición surrealista en América Latina,” 25.

49 “When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, Moro and other writers

contributed to the *Boletín en defensa de la República Española* (Bulletin in Defense of the Spanish Republic), edited by the journalist Genaro Carnero Checa. According to Westphalen: "It had to be distributed in secret because Peru was going through a period of political persecution and was under the control of a pro-fascist dictator. Some of the people who wrote for the Bulletin were imprisoned, so Moro decided to go into exile." Dreyfus, "Interview with Emilio Adolfo Westphalen." 54.

50 For more on the manifesto see: Robin Greeley, "For an Independent Revolutionary Art: Breton, Trotsky and Cárdenas's Mexico," Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss, *Surrealism, Politics and Culture* (Ashgate, 2003), 204-225.

51 César Moro, "César Moro letter to Westphalen," January 27, 1940. "César Moro Papers" 2001.M.21 box 1 folder 5, Getty Research Institute.

52 Luis M. Castañeda, "Surrealism and National Identity in Mexico: Changing Perceptions, 1940-1968," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* 3, no. 1 (2009): 17. "Trayectoria del sueño," 3 (II) 10 (Oct. 15, 1939): 5, and "La realidad a vista perdida," *Letras de Mexico* 3 (II) 11 (Nov. 15, 1939): 8.

53 Moro, "César Moro letter to Westphalen."

54 Luis Cardoza y Aragón, "La exposición surrealista" *El Nacional*, Jan. 28, 1940. Quoted in Olivier Debroyse, *Figuras en el Trópico, plástica mexicana, 1920-1940* (Barcelona, España: Océano, 1984), 186.

55 Translated in part in Castañeda, "Surrealism and National Identity in Mexico: Changing Perceptions, 1940-1968," 17. Some of the translations are mine.

56 For more on the surrealists and primitivism see Louise Tythacott, *Surrealism and the Exotic* (London: Routledge, 2003).

57 David Alfaro Siqueiros, "Three Appeals for the Current Guidance of the New Generation of American Painters and Sculptors," trans. in Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea, *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 458-59. Originally published in *Vida Americana*, Barcelona, (May 1921).

58 For further discussion of the exhibition see Ilona Katzew, "Proselytizing Surrealism: André Breton and Mexico" in *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts*, 51, Fall 1995, 21-33. 26.

59 There are also no extant reproductions of *Untitled Painting with the Inscription "Eluard."* Since Moro made all the works he exhibited in 1940 except *Cover for the Blind* prior to his arrival in Mexico, he was most likely beginning to curtail his exploration of collage. The survey of his work in *César Moro: Retrospectiva de la obra plástica 2-11 de Julio 1990* confirms that, while he continued to draw and paint in Mexico, his collage production virtually ceased.

60 "(Unos cerillos apagados, un poco de plomo, unos manchones de pintura y

unas cuantas chinchas clavadas en el lienzo), no sabemos lo que el Señor Moro leerá en este cuadro; pero desde luego un psiquiatra también debe leer algo.” Roberto Manzanares, *Estampa*, Jan. 23, 1940, 19-21, quoted in Luis Mario Schneider, *México y el surrealismo (1925-1950)* (México: Arte y Libros, 1978) 179. Westphalen has remarked on the fluidity of titles in Moro’s oeuvre, suggesting that titles were sometimes changed for exhibition purposes or added later. Westphalen, “La primera exposición surrealista en América Latina,” 26.

61 “a nuestro juicio, mucho hay de simplemente ‘épatant’...” José Rojas Garcidueñas, “La Exposición surrealista,” *Letras de México*, No. 14, Feb. 15, 1940, 11-12, quoted in Schneider, *México y el surrealismo (1925-1950)*, 181.

62 “Sensación. Eso es el surrealismo. A mí me parece personalmente, que es una forma de autotortura, plena de sentido para decadentes o para desesperados.” Horacio Quiñones, “Surrealismo es sensación,” *Hoy*, Feb. 3, 1940, quoted in *Ibid.*, 180.

63 “El surrealismo ha perdido ya sus indignados enemigos, no hiere a nadie, se convirtió en algo casi color de rosa, en algo chic, en algo de buen gusto... El surrealismo ha muerto tan sólo como lucha, como escuela, como desplante, como aviso, ha muerto, en fin, como movimiento.” Ramón Gaya, “Divagaciones en torno al surrealismo,” *Romance, revista popular hispanoamericana*, Feb. 15, 1940, 7, quoted in *Ibid.*, 181-182.

64 For an excellent discussion of critical responses to the 1940 exhibition see: Castañeda, “Surrealism and National Identity in Mexico: Changing Perceptions, 1940-1968.”

65 Castañeda cites Schneider’s, *México y el surrealismo (1925-1950)* as a catalyst in this regard.

66 André Coyné, *César Moro*. (Lima, Impr. Torres Aguirre, 1956), 32-33.

67 Coyné mentions this oversight in *Ibid.*, 32-33. See André Breton, *Les Manifestes du surréalisme suivis des prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste du surréalisme ou non du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives et d’éphémérides surréalistes*. (Paris: Le Sagittaire, 1955).

68 For a list of owners and exhibitions of Moro’s work see Dreyfus, “Interview with Emilio Adolfo Westphalen,” 55.