

Transcultural Encounters amongst Women:  
Redrawing Boundaries in Hispanic and Lusophone  
Art, Literature and Film



Transcultural Encounters amongst Women:  
Redrawing Boundaries in Hispanic and Lusophone  
Art, Literature and Film

Edited by

Patricia O'Byrne, Gabrielle Carty  
and Niamh Thornton

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**  

---

**P U B L I S H I N G**

Transcultural Encounters amongst Women:  
Redrawing Boundaries in Hispanic and Lusophone Art, Literature and Film  
Edited by Patricia O'Byrne, Gabrielle Carty and Niamh Thornton

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2010 by Patricia O'Byrne, Gabrielle Carty and Niamh Thornton and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2073-3, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2073-8

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	ix
--------------------	----

## **PART I: ART, DESIGN AND THE WEB**

Chapter One.....	3
Colonising Kahlo: Frida Kahlo and the Transcultural Encounter	
<i>Tina Kinsella</i>	

Chapter Two .....	21
Regina Célia Pinto's Museum of the Essential and Beyond That	
<i>Margaret Anne Clarke</i>	

Chapter Three .....	35
Consciousness-Raising for the Twenty-First Century: Feminist Websites and Postfeminism Online	
<i>Carlota Larrea</i>	

Chapter Four .....	51
The Dressing of Brazilian Blended Cultures	
<i>Sheila Gies and Tracy Cassidy</i>	

## **PART II: LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF TRANSCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS**

Chapter Five .....	69
Transcultural Conflicts in Mexico City: Comic and Contradictory Representations of Female Identity in Gustavo Sainz's <i>La Princesa del Palacio de Hierro</i>	
<i>Paul McAleer</i>	

Chapter Six .....	83
The Inverted Room	
<i>Ana García Bergua</i>	

Chapter Seven.....	93
Exile and the Mother-Daughter Relationship in Josefina Aldecoa's <i>Mujeres de negro</i> and <i>La fuerza del destino</i> Nuala Kenny	
Chapter Eight.....	107
Telling Their 'War Story': A Comparative Analysis of the Perception of British and Spanish Women Activists of Their Experiences of the Spanish Civil War Deirdre Finnerty	
Chapter Nine.....	123
Voice from the Sidelines: The <i>Crônicas</i> of Inês Pedrosa and Maria Judite de Carvalho at the Intersection of Literary Canon and Journalism Suzan Williams	
Chapter Ten .....	135
The Spanish Woman, her 'Other' and the Censors: Transcultural Encounters in the Post-Civil War Novel Jacqueline P. Mulhall	
Chapter Eleven .....	149
Women Writers and Their Animals: Virginia Woolf's <i>Flush</i> and Maria Gabriela Llansol's <i>Jade</i> , Two Dogs with a Voice of Their Own Raquel Ribeiro	
<b>PART III: TRANSCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN FILM</b>	
Chapter Twelve .....	167
Transcultural Encounters in Icíar Bollain's <i>Flores de otro mundo</i> (1999): From Racism towards Acceptance of the 'Female Other' Patricia O'Byrne	
Chapter Thirteen.....	181
Perspective and Focalisation in the Representation of the Transcultural Encounter in <i>Princesas</i> (2005) Gabrielle Carty	

Chapter Fourteen .....	195
The Legacy of Mexico 1968 on Film in <i>¿Y si platicamos de agosto?</i>	
(1981) Directed by Mayrse Sistach and <i>Francisca, ¿De qué lado estás?</i>	
(2002) Directed by Eva López Sánchez	
<i>Niamh Thornton</i>	
Contributors.....	209





## INTRODUCTION

It is evident that civilisations and cultures have influenced each other since time immemorial, but the cultural exchanges generated by contemporary global migratory flows and the global circulation of cultural goods in a mediated and ever more interconnected world are unprecedented. The latter decades of the twentieth century have seen the erosion of many hitherto firmly established boundaries and enclosures ranging from political to social and gender, through to culture and the arts. The resulting reconfigurations have contributed to a more fluid sense of identity, space and values. They have also led to a revisiting of past experiences in order to analyse on a more personal level the impact of the erosion of boundaries on the individual. At the same time, we have experienced an evolving understanding of what culture means, with the rhetoric of globalisation consolidating the inevitable break down of distinct boundaries, and an emergence of a greater understanding of the openness of borders to outside influences. What is important to us in this present collection is the consideration and analysis of patterns of transcultural relationships and how these are reflected in cultural output, particularly in relation to the representation of women and to women's cultural production.

Creative production by and about women from Portugal, Spain and Latin America is often examined together because of obvious linguistic, cultural, economic, and historical commonalities and interconnections. However, each region has evolved its own complex and distinct identity and cultural products, which are worth examining in the light of their interrelationship, tracing the influences and relationships with other less obvious locales.

Some of these connections can be seen in Gies' and Cassidy's examination of the fashion industry and its evolution in Brazil through the development of patterns, colours and styles influenced by local needs, consumer preferences, and traditions, on the one hand, and transnational textures, contours, and techniques, on the other. Clothing is subject to fashion, and so too is the art world. A figure from this world who has been the subject of considerable attention is Frida Kahlo. Kinsella examines Kahlo and her critical reception as a global artist and reconsiders the significance of her life story and her Mexican-ness. Thus, Kinsella

reconsiders Kahlo's local and specific story in the light of her transnational reception.

Perhaps the most vital force of change across the globe since the last decade of the millennium has been the penetration of the internet. Exposure to new live and virtual experiences and encounters and the availability of what can best be described as unmanageable quantities of information inevitably poses challenges both exciting and daunting with which we must grapple. This volume contains two essays on aspects of cyberfeminism. Clarke in her consideration of the transcultural potential of cyberspace examines the online museum created by the Brazilian artist, Regina Célia Pinto, and her creation of a cyborg self through the use of a visual blog, supplemented by written and aural extracts by others. Clarke takes Donna Haraway's significant exploration of the cyborg and the influences of transnational online artistic expressions on Pinto's work to elucidate her argument. Larrea's essay considers the internet as a space in which to communicate ideas, share opinions, develop activism and display creativity. The chapter looks at the different meanings of the term postfeminism in contemporary Anglo-American and Spanish culture, with particular reference to the online environment. Four different feminist websites are analysed to look for traces of what has been called a 'postfeminist sensibility'.

War and conflict frequently cross political and cultural boundaries. Two essays in the collection consider how ideologies can travel the globe and widen their sphere of influence beyond their immediate borders. In this vein, Finnerty focuses on the testimonies, letters and diaries of British and Spanish women activists in the Spanish Civil War. Applying Miriam Cooke's notion of the 'War Story' as a theoretical framework, she analyses the extent to which British and Spanish women reiterate traditional master-narratives of war in their personal narratives thus bringing what was a local conflict beyond its original borders.

Conflict of a different type is considered by Thornton. She examines the representation by two Mexican directors of the political agitation and conflict which swept the globe in 1968 as it affected Mexico. While Paris burned, and Prague, London, Berkeley and others revolted, students in Mexico City protested. The subsequent bloodshed was first silenced and only considerably later represented in feature films. For the first time, Thornton examines two of the films which, heretofore, had been ignored by critics.

Still in the Mexico of the 1960s and 1970s, McAleer examines the effects of intense hybrid cultural environments on concepts of individual and social identity through an analysis of the representation of female

identity in Gustavo Sainz's comic novel, *La princesa del palacio de hierro* [The Princess of the Iron Palace]. He proposes that Sainz's seemingly 'traditional' delineation of the comic female character is the product of its transcultural and transnational context in which social and individual identities are often conceived as liminal, multiple and contradictory.

Away from the purely academic, we also invited the novelist Ana García Bergua to reflect on her own experience of the transcultural. As a writer from Mexico, whose parents were exiled from Spain after the Civil War, she details her own experiences of displacement. She considers how these specific circumstances led to her becoming a writer and resulted in the particular themes she has been drawn to in her most recent projects. Kenny's chapter also focuses on the impact of the exilic process after the Spanish Civil War, through a consideration of the mother-daughter relationship in the novels *Mujeres de negro* [Women in Black] and *La fuerza del destino* [The Force of Destiny] by contemporary Spanish novelist, Josefina Aldecoa. In their case too, Mexico also becomes their adopted homeland, providing them with a plurality of perspectives and an appreciation of culture, freedom and the value of education.

In contrast, the emigration from Latin America to Spain of young women in search of a better life is the subject of two of our essays on film. O'Byrne discusses Bollaín's portrayal of the differentialist and inegalitarian racism encountered by women immigrants from Spain's former colonies in *Flores de otro mundo* [Flowers from Another World]. The author traces the process of adaptation posited, from transcultural conflict to a stage of mutually beneficial conviviality, highlighting the director's skill in communicating such important social issues in art form to the Spanish public. Carty too considers a film that portrays female immigration to Spain, something which has been a notable feature of recent migratory flows to the country. Through a structural analysis of Fernando León de Aranoa's *Princesas* [Princesses], she investigates the different concerns of the film as they relate to immigration and how the film's representation of the encounter of the central female characters (one Spanish, one Dominican) raises contemporary issues of xenophobia. Analysis of the role of the immigrant character also reveals the film's critique of traditional masculine identity in Spain.

The impenetrable boundaries of the once sacred literary canon have been seriously challenged for over two decades, a challenge in which women writers, critics and academics have been to the fore. Williams discusses how two established Portuguese novelists, Maria Judite de Carvalho and Inês Pedrosa, break from the confines of patriarchal canonical literature opting for the more popular *crônica* in order to

communicate a feminine micro-economy that focuses on the private and unique aspects of individuality.

Muhall revisits a period when belief in the power of censors to exclude external cultural influences was firm, yet her research reveals an interesting and unexpected transcultural encounter. Thus, the censorship process in Franco's Spain has been repeatedly criticised for a seeming lack of consistency, particularly in matters of morality. However, Mulhall posits that the treatment of foreign female characters and their behaviour within the pages of the novel was in fact consistent with prevailing discourse and that the treatment of this 'Other' had a particular didactic function in Spain in the 1950s.

Ribeiro's contribution is unique insofar as it also crosses a boundary of species, from the human to the animal character, supporting Haraway's theory (2003) that dog writing could be considered a branch of feminist theory. This comparative essay presents a parallel reading of Virginia Woolf's *Flush* (1933) and the Portuguese author Maria Gabriela Llansol's *Amar um Cão* [To Love a Dog] (1990), two texts about two special dogs, Flush and Jade, in search of a voice of their own.

The idea of transcultural encounters has therefore led to a richly layered and diverse collection of essays by authors from multiple disciplines who have examined creative works which have their origins in a wide range of locations, and others which have crossed boundaries. These studies have produced their own coincidences and commonalities as well as underlining the importance of looking outside of discrete fields or territories. These essays point the way to the potential of comparative approaches which consider encounters across national borders.

The editors would like to thank the contributors for their prompt replies, readiness to accept changes and willing cooperation over the course of the many emails and telephone calls that it took to produce the final manuscript. The majority of the editors and contributors are members of WISPS (Women in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies), an organisation which supports research into women and their representations and we would like to acknowledge our gratitude to WISPS for their promotion and enthusiastic encouragement of research in the field. Finally, Niamh Thornton would like to thank the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Ulster for their support for her research and, on a personal level, Liz and Dario for their support and for keeping her going even when the butterflies made their mark.

**PART I:**  
**ART, DESIGN AND THE WEB**



# CHAPTER ONE

## COLONISING KAHLO: FRIDA KAHLO AND THE TRANSCULTURAL ENCOUNTER

TINA KINSELLA

The artist Frida Kahlo is a modern icon. In recent years the advent of 'Fridamania' has ensured her fame. However, in this chapter I do not seek to examine the phenomenon of the cult of the celebrity in contemporary culture. Rather, I specifically wish to draw attention to the means by which the discourses of critics, theorists and academics have contributed to the reification of Frida Kahlo's life and image at the expense of a serious critique of her art. Invariably, theorists have scrutinised the most dramatic and tragic details of her existence as a means by which to understand and interpret her work and such an approach has resulted in an inappropriate conflation between Kahlo the woman and Kahlo the artist. Even distinguished scholars have contributed to the common perception of Kahlo as fetish—an effigy of female victimhood—and situated her as representative of certain stereotypes: alienated daughter, childless woman and mistreated wife, amongst others. Such speculative lenses have, I suggest, resulted in victimising Kahlo more effectively than her own artistic representations ever did, culminating in a failure of theory to consider her work within a more challenging discursive schema.

In this chapter I aim to liberate Kahlo's work from such speculative analyses. Contending that her artistic sensibility is infinitely more subversive and transgressive than such reductive discourses intimate, I will appraise Kahlo's work as radical sites of resistance to hegemonic globalising rationales. Providing a context for the complexity of her work, the first section of this chapter outlines aspects of Kahlo's life-story, locations (socio-political, historical, cultural and gendered) and artistic influences, and a brief summary of the advent of Fridamania—the cult of Kahlo. Through an exploration of the problematic relationship between

critical discourse and the transcultural encounter, the second section attempts to understand why interpretations of Kahlo's work have been hampered by a reductive hegemonic perspective. The third section reconsiders Kahlo's work within a frame that expands upon previous limiting interpretative analyses. Viewing her subversive representations of the body and Mexican identity as radically dialectical, this section claims that her work is a critical epistemic intervention in the ontology and phenomenology of subject formation. In the concluding section I suggest that Kahlo's work, if viewed as offering a transformative, dynamic and evolving dialogic space, can encourage new modalities of understanding and communication that can re-invigorate the aesthetical and ethical dynamics of the transcultural encounter.

### **Frida Kahlo: Her Life, Influences and Fridamania**

Disproportionate academic attention focused on the sensational aspects of Kahlo's life has meant that other, perhaps more important, influences on her work have been largely ignored. A dilemma arises for the theorist wishing to creatively engage with Kahlo's work: which influencing factors of an artist's life and work should one pay attention to, account for, privilege? Kahlo's life-story is undeniably colourful. She actively created her own personal mythology; her paintings are a fusion of myth and personal history, a weaving of fact and fiction. Yet, it is true that all socially engaged human beings create their own histories and mythologies. Memory, recall and truth-telling work in an extraordinarily subjective and contrary fashion but are vital to subject formation. Thus the stories that we tell about ourselves are as revealing as those we omit. It is with these caveats in mind that I offer a selective overview of the life of Kahlo and of some of the influences that prevailed upon her.

Frida Kahlo was born into a middle-class family in Mexico in 1907. Her father, Guillermo Kahlo, a photographer, was of hybridised European ancestry, and her mother, Matilde Calderón y González, was of primarily indigenous blood. In 1925 Kahlo was involved in a tramcar accident in which she suffered severe injuries and, as a result, she was plagued by chronic health problems until her death at the age of forty-seven. Whilst recovering from her injuries she was forced to lie supine on her bed, encased in a full body cast, for many months and it was under these circumstances that she first began to paint. She married the famous muralist, Diego Rivera, twice—in 1929 and 1940. At the time of Kahlo's birth, Mexico was struggling through a period of intense political upheaval. This period of political turbulence, characterised by an insurgence of



diverse ideologies—socialist, liberal, anarchist and populist, led to a critical re-evaluation of what it meant to be Mexican, living in a postcolonial world amidst a cross-fertilisation of cultures. Kahlo was one of a ‘post-revolutionary intelligentsia’ who actively engaged with an ideological articulation of Mexican identity, known as *mexicanidad* (Zamudio-Taylor 2007, 14). According to Victor Zamudio-Taylor, the discourse of *mexicanidad* was founded on ‘a social imaginary’ that synthesised ‘Mexico as a modern nation based on a recognition of its rich history and its indigenous and *mestizo* cultures’ (ibid.). In keeping with the prevalent ideology of *mexicanidad* being articulated by her contemporaries, Kahlo’s paintings invoke the iconography of Mexican folk art and pagan Mexican mythology. However, in her work there are critical departures that disrupt the hegemony of the prevailing ideology of *mexicanidad* being promulgated by her male contemporaries. As Victor Zamudio-Taylor has observed, Kahlo’s work is:

... characterised for the most part by personal themes and an intimate scale, standing in stark contrast to the ideological and epic treatment of politics and history in the works of the Mexican school, particularly in the public mural programs. (ibid.)

Kahlo’s paintings both synthesise and subvert the ideology of *mexicanidad*, offering a critique of this new formulation of Mexican identity, even whilst it is being created. The ideology of *mexicanidad*, though culturally specific to Mexico, resonated with the international *zeitgeist* of modernism which had initiated an interest in indigenous art forms. Artists such as Édouard Manet (1832-1883), Henri Rousseau (1844-1910) and Pablo Picasso (1881-1873), intrigued by the romance and the otherness of ethnic art forms, actively appropriated aspects of Asian, African and New World cultures within their Modernist aesthetic. In a departure from her Mexican contemporaries, Kahlo’s work encompassed the broader Modernist trend towards an expanded notion of primitivism that included art made by marginalised or excluded groups such as ‘children, the insane, and self-taught artists’ (Zamudio-Taylor 2007, 27). Whilst sharing much of the political and cultural ideology of her contemporaries, in her work she asserted the right to problematise the paradigmatic notions of gender, nationhood and artistic responsibility being advocated by the muralists (See Ades 1998). Viewed from this perspective, her paintings are profoundly political—operational sites of resistance to hegemonic normativity. It seems that even within the iconoclastic culture of post-revolutionary Mexico, Kahlo was a die-hard radical.

Under the tutelage of her father, Kahlo was well versed in the history of occidental art. She was particularly interested in the Dutch, German and Italian Renaissance painters, and is known to have been inspired by a variety of Modernist contemporary artistic movements such as the Cubists, the Surrealists (especially René Magritte), the Italian Futurist and Dada painters and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (or New Objectivity painters), such as Otto Dix. The artistic influence of the West is well documented in Kahlo's *oeuvre* and this has helped to shape critical analyses of her art. Theorists have invariably propagated a US-Eurocentric bias when engaged in an exegesis of Kahlo's paintings. Far too little attention is paid to the importance of the vernacular—pre-Hispanic indigenous art, Mexican folk art, nineteenth century Mexican painting and sculpture, Spanish colonial religious painting, the *Estridentista* artistic movement—in her work. Apart from the political and aesthetic factors which shaped Kahlo and her art, her work was further influenced by the close contact she had with the accoutrements of her father's photographic studio. Allowing herself to be photographed many times throughout her life, Kahlo's paintings evidence a fascination with photography. She repeatedly represented herself in the stance of a photographer's subject and the structure of her works, Nadia Ugalde Gómez (2004, 23) suggests are:

... inspired by this type of image. She would take poses, postures and referential objects, such as curtains and backdrops, clocks and furniture, bases and columns, as well as toys, dolls and hobbyhorses, from the artificial atmosphere of the photographic studio, where people went in order to perpetuate their own image.

Unfortunately, the influence of her father's work on Kahlo's paintings is often overlooked. Instead, her multiplicitous self-portraits are usually interpreted as evidence of her inherent narcissism and self-obsession rather than, as I would suggest, a profound and enduring enquiry into the complex and paradoxical nature of the human condition. Whilst Kahlo was born into, and lived through, a period of intense political and ideological transition, unlike many of her contemporaries her works do not promote any singular ideology. Instead, they mediate between a cross-pollination of cultures, identities and ideologies and offer a personalised self-reflexive synthesis that interrogates post-revolutionary Mexican identity. I suggest that this reflexive stance with regard to the construction and formation of identity forms a unifying theme in her work and may help to account for the breadth of her popular appeal in recent years.

The late 1960s heralded a re-emergence of interest in the life and work of Frida Kahlo when Mexican-American women artists and theorists (most

notably the art critic Amalia Mesa-Bains), feminists from across the Americas, and Latinas from the United States began a critical re-evaluation of her *oeuvre*. Following two exhibitions of her paintings, organised in the USA in 1978 and in England in 1982, an awareness of her work has become more widespread within the public imaginary.<sup>1</sup> By the 1990s the phenomenon of Fridamania—the cult of Kahlo—had begun to make an appearance proclaiming Kahlo's heroic status to Mexican Americans, marginalised groups and/or counter-cultural groups such as gays, postcolonial immigrants and feminists. In recent years exhibitions, books and films about Kahlo are ubiquitous. Hayden Herrera has noted that 'one of her self-portraits appeared on a 2001 United States postage stamp. In Texas she achieved sainthood—Santa Frida, the patron saint of unwed mothers and undocumented workers' (Herrera 2007, 56). However, Herrera, who wrote a seminal biography on Kahlo, has herself contributed to the artist's mythic and fetishistic status by claiming that her image is 'like a primitive totem (it) has healing powers (...) Kahlo's self-portraits are invocations' (ibid). The result is that Kahlo is now a collectable commodity. Gerardo Mosquera, in *The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems Around Art and Eurocentism*, has observed this remarkable phenomenon. He claims that although most Latin American artists do not normally fetch high prices at the major art auctions, artists who 'satisfy the expectations of a more or less stereotyped Latin-Americanicity' and artists who agree to 'display their identity, to be fantastic, to look like no one else or to look like Frida' (Mosquera 2005, 221-2) are the ones most sought after. The salacious interest in Kahlo's remarkable personal experiences—her suffering body, her childlessness, her bi-sexuality—and her exotic appearance has ensured that the demand for Kahlo's paintings is high. However, it is apparent that such interest has resulted in the creation of a fetishistic prototype for both Latin American identity and for female artists in general.

### **The Transcultural Encounter and the Problematics of Discourse**

Why has the art of Frida Kahlo consistently been interpreted through such a reductive theoretical, critical and academic lens? Traditionally, academic discourse has been largely predicated on a presumption of critical neutrality. However, I suggest that such a presumption of neutrality produces potentially globalising effects that fundamentally problematise the veracity of the academic transcultural encounter. Globalisation is a term ubiquitously applied within economic discursive schema but rarely

applied to discourses emanating from the academic elite. In contemporary fiscal discourse heterochthonous economic forces are readily perceived as those which potentially oppress and marginalise autochthonous minority markets. I suggest that academic discourse which is perceived as authoritatively 'neutral' can create a similar totalising effect on autochthonous minority voices. The position that I have outlined is by no means an anarchic indictment directed at academia. Eminent critics, in wide ranging disciplines (postcolonial studies, poststructuralist theory, feminist theories, indeed most postmodern studies in general), have illuminated and deconstructed the subtle means by which discourses (academic or otherwise) produce potentially totalising effects on others; this is particularly true of oppressed and marginalised groups. Poststructuralist writers, such as Giles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, have admirably critiqued the pivotal role that discourse plays in the formation of subject identity, highlighting the complex dynamic that exists between discourse, power and agency. Disclaiming the positivist rationale of the sovereign subject, such theorists favour a 'becoming', mobile or in-process subject: one whose identity is constituted by the shifting discourses of power which speak 'through' it. Thus poststructuralists posit that the subject is de-centred and that identity is constructed extrinsically. Their insights highlight the limits of discourse and thereby raise the critical question: who can meaningfully speak on behalf of whom?

Despite this innovative theoretical approach, the ghost of Enlightenment thinking continues to haunt even the most enlightened thinkers. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993, 66-101) has observed that even poststructuralist theorists, such as Deleuze and Foucault, risk falling into an essentialist trap by speaking for or centring oppressed groups. She suggests that there is always a risk of 'a clandestine restoration of subjective essentialism' (Spivak 1993:74). In positioning themselves as an authoritative mediating 'voice' for the marginalised, the oppressed and those who cannot speak, intellectuals can fail to take account of the diversity of specific locational factors (historical, cultural, socio-political and gendered) which prevail upon situated subjects (both themselves and others). Postcolonial theorists have alerted us to the fact that all discourse is inherently culturally biased. Viewed from this perspective, the authority of 'neutral' academic discourse encounters its limitations when it aims to speak on behalf of others as the theorist can effectively, albeit unintentionally, veil the complex power dynamics, both macrocosmic and microcosmic, embedded in discourse. This is the Achilles heel that lies latent within the transcultural academic encounter: discourse can assume the existence of a

global or transcultural subject when it is apparent that no such subject exists. For these reasons I suggest that the transcultural subject exists only as a discursive construct, not a phenomenological reality. The authenticity of the transcultural encounter is particularly precarious when attempting to evaluate an artist such as Frida Kahlo who occupies and articulates multiple marginal locations simultaneously. Analysis of her work has suffered from the construction and application of meanings and significations to her work which may not exist at all. Therefore, rigorous critical self-reflexivity (regarding congenital cultural specificities and privileges) is necessary to alert the theorist to the danger of constructing new myths whilst actively engaged in the deconstruction of old ones.

### **Critiquing Prevailing Discourses: An Analysis of Kahlo's Radical Artistic Dialectic**

When discussing the specifics by which Kahlo's work evidences a radical approach to the painting of subjectivity, it is important to remember that she was born in 1907 and died in 1954. These dates place her firmly within a Modernist timeframe and there are, undoubtedly, strong Modernist elements within her work (see Zamudio-Taylor 2007). With the advent of postmodernism in the latter half of the twentieth century, contemporary artists began to institute a critique of traditional and modernist representations of subjectivity, embodiment and identity. Specifically, many female artists re-visited the tradition of the prototypical 'female nude' and began to use the body (often their own) as a site of reclamation, a location on and through which they may re-define the signs and significations embedded in Modernist discursive constructs of identity and gendered corporeality. The work of these artists can be seen as regenerative in intent.

Although Kahlo is primarily viewed as a Modernist painter, I suggest that through her complex representation of multiple identities—her radical representations of the body and of Mexican identity—anticipates the critique of subjectivity offered by postmodern artistic trends. Given the tradition of the female nude in occidental art, Kahlo's deployment of the body is, I contend, anarchic. Critiquing artistic depictions of the naked female body, Lynda Nead (1992) has claimed that the traditional female nude marks the border between art and obscenity (See Nead 1992). According to Nead, no longer illicit—a visceral signifier for sex or sexual desire—the naked, real-life and unstructured female body is symbolically re-codified, regulated and contained within the pictorial frame. Being newly defined, delimited and re-structured as a 'nude' it becomes an

object of beauty, an object suitable for art. Whitney Chadwick (1991, 2007) has directed our attention towards the power dynamics at play when the female body is painted. She claims that as the privilege of painting the naked female body traditionally belonged exclusively to male artists, this allowed those artists to claim an exclusive equation between masculine artistic creative energy and masculine sexual energy as their depictions frame the female body as a locus for male viewing pleasure. This subject is further explored by Rosemary Betterton, who writes (1987, 252):

Male artists and critics have consistently justified their enjoyment of the nude by appealing to abstract conceptions of ideal form, beauty and aesthetic value. Such a view renders invisible the relationships of power and subordination involved when a male artist depicts the female body. It ignores or denies the difference between looking at the body of a woman and looking at a pile of fruit.

Betterton makes a highly politicised point. Claiming that the female body is not merely an inanimate ‘object’, and cannot be regarded as such, she highlights the discourse that neutralises the particularity of subjective experience and obfuscates the reality of power dynamics played out both in the production and in the consumption of an artwork. The nude, as defined by Nead, is a site of desire and therefore little attention was paid to an investigation into the specificity of female embodied knowledge and experience. The ideology of womanhood, as it has been broadly constructed within the lived worlds of patriarchy, has censored and delineated the acceptable parameters of articulation emanating from the feminine sphere.

Given the various parameters that I have outlined concerning the articulation of female experience, Kahlo’s work authors a startling account of female subjectivity. Her bodies are never objects that invite the viewer into a scopophilic, spectatorial space of sexual possession; they specifically explore the problematic particularity of female subjectivity, embodiment, knowledge and experience. Often naked, her bodies are never nude.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the safe, contained, passive and idealised nude that Nead speaks of, Kahlo’s bodies are subversive, uncontained, dynamic and visceral: unregulated-broken, mutilated, bleeding and leaking—they overspill the traditional conceptual frame. She strips away the comfort of the feminine sphere, anarchically painting what had never been visible before—the abject, the secret, the previously unspeakable: the bloodied act of childbirth, an aborted foetus in a jar, a woman in the act of suicide, an adult-faced baby Frida being breastfed.<sup>3</sup> Her self-portraits and paintings do not present woman as an object defined in relation to someone else, a

Lacanian *objet a*—daughter, sister, mother, wife—for although she painted herself in all of these identities, they did not define her. Intervening in the canon of prototypical allegorical and mythological women, benign goddess, suffering saint, bountiful Mother Nature, inspirational muse, grieving mother of Christ—Kahlo articulates the hidden, immanent reality of female experience, the pain and the suffering. Her works interrogate the hegemonic socialised norms of ‘femininity’ which regulate the ‘sign’ of woman.<sup>4</sup> Primarily evidenced in the self-portraits in which Kahlo, as subject, occupies and performs multiple identities, these signs are re-worked, re-conceptualised and re-appropriated in a critical announcement of the realities of female embodiment. Theoretical analyses which situate Kahlo as an artist prone to confessional blood-letting, fail to take account of the radical reflexivity, the profound investigation into performativity that is taking place in her work.<sup>5</sup> It is as though Kahlo consciously engaged in prototypical representations of femininity and intentionally subverted them. Re-positioning Kahlo’s work in this way allows her *oeuvre* to be radically re-assessed as highly political statements that evidence a critical resistance to the normative hegemonic performance of gendered identity.

In the light of the prototypical representation of the female nude and the dominant ideology of womanhood, how can Kahlo’s radical representation of female identity be accounted for? There are representational modalities and iconographies of the pictorial body which exist outside of the Western frame, some of which may have influenced Kahlo’s conceptualisation and representation of embodiment and identity. Detailed readings of Kahlo’s paintings reveal the multifarious references she made to her indigenous inheritance—a point often overlooked or simply not visible to the eye that views her work from a globalised perspective, a perspective largely authored from an occidental, US or Eurocentric viewpoint. Therefore, frequently the vital influence of Kahlo’s Mexican inheritance on her artistic sensibility is simply not afforded the attention it deserves. Pre-Hispanic pagan Mexican artifacts—of which Kahlo and Rivera were prodigious collectors—challenge much of the representative iconography within occidental artistic representations. Many of these artifacts (found, for example, at ritualistic and sacrificial sites) symbolically elaborate the subject as engaged in a cyclical, transformative relationship with creation and death.<sup>6</sup> Viewing Kahlo’s work through this expanded lens highlights the infinitely nuanced and synthesised nature of her artistic representations. Similarly, many of Kahlo’s paintings demonstrate the influence of Mexican *ex-votos* or *retablos*. Small devotional paintings, usually on tin, executed by ordinary men and women to plead for God’s

mercy or to thank him for an answered prayer, these votive works, like many of Kahlo's paintings, often represent the body in distress.<sup>7</sup> Kahlo regularly depicts the body as a site of pain and sacrifice, and this is also true of Catholic Hispanic art in which the crucified Christ's wounded body bleeds, the mourning Madonna weeps tears of blood, as both bodies suffer.<sup>8</sup> In an emblematic re-working of the various representational modalities that I have outlined, Kahlo uses the body as a means by and through which to explore and expand upon conceptualisations of female subjectivity, embodiment, experience and knowledge. Presenting the body, her body, as a site of pain, sacrifice and love, she demands that we address the feminine sphere from the particularity of subjective experience.

In a further radical and reflexive approach to explorations of subjectivity, Kahlo's work institutes a dialogue with hegemonic conceptualisations of Mexican identity, nationhood and gender. In the *Labyrinth of Solitude* (an extended meditation on the postcolonial Mexican psyche), Octavio Paz (1985) refers to a synthesis of allegorical women who have shaped Mexican notions of self and collective identity—*La Malinche* (the indigenous half-collaborator, half-victim, Indian interpreter and mistress of the Spanish conquistador, Hernán Cortés) and *La Chingada* (the raped and beaten mother immortalised in popular slang) are two such figures. Paz claims that, as they stress the ambivalent relationship—of dependency and complicity—that exists between the colonised and the coloniser, these women highlight the collective mother/victim/nation image that postcolonial Mexico had inherited. Oriana Baddeley (1998) has proposed that Kahlo's works critique the collective inheritance of *La Malinche* and *La Chingada* and thus subvert the identification of woman with victimised nation. I suggest that Kahlo's paintings reference, synthesise and crucially re-signify pre-colonial and postcolonial Mexican myth, allegory, ideology and history (social, cultural, economic and political). Kahlo regularly dressed and painted herself in pre-colonial *Tehuana* costume. The *Tehuana* was a matriarchal culture that resisted the strictures of gender, social, cultural and economic normativity imposed by Spanish colonial rule. Invoking the *Tehuana* as a symbol allowed Kahlo to re-empower and re-codify the signs of *La Malinche* and *La Chingada*, which both signify woman as victim.<sup>9</sup> She simultaneously referenced both pagan and Catholic iconographies in many of her works, thus situating her spiritual inheritance within a Christian and pagan matrix.<sup>10</sup> In a reflexive re-negotiation with conceptualisations of gender and nationhood, she painted herself in the liminal space of 'Gringolandia' (the borderland between Mexico and the USA forming part of the territories that Mexico had lost to the USA in the USA-Mexico war



of 1846-1848).<sup>11</sup> It is clear that Kahlo's art forms a fluidic web. By incorporating a matrixial lexicon of symbolologies in which dualisms collapse, Kahlo invokes and radicalises cognitions of both Mexican and occidental iconographies of identity, gender and nationhood. In so doing, she de-stabilises the binary of both autochthonous and heterochthonous perceptions and dialectically re-frames the symbolic syntax of signs and meanings. Representing multiple and contradictory identities that are unfixed, in-process and transformative provides Kahlo with a shape-shifting, shamanic *modus* through which to explore liminal states: shades, traces and shadows.

Clearly, Kahlo mined her life experiences and used them as an intrinsic inspirational source for her art, but re-situating her work in this way problematises discourses that view her paintings as fetishistic, confessional and self-obsessive blood-lettings. I suggest that her *oeuvre* can be re-conceptualised as a public confession of private experience, a radical exomologesis that is a deeply reflexive interrogation into the instability of identity. The iconography that infuses Kahlo's art is a composite of intrinsic experience and extrinsic symbology (pre-Hispanic, indigenous, pagan, Catholic, classical) that enables her work to effect transits from the personal to the collective experience, from the particular to the universal. Situated within this frame, Kahlo's artworks problematise and radicalise the perceived binaries of intrinsic:extrinsic, personal:collective and particular:universal. Her paintings challenge canonic pictorial representations of the human condition which presuppose that the viewer and the represented experience are comprehensible within a universal paradigm. Such representations typically address individual experience through metaphor, myth or allegory, thus neutralising the particularity of subjective experience and presuming a collective experience of subjectivity. In other words, Kahlo challenges the canon which globalises experience with its presumption of a transcultural subject and a transcultural point of address.

Discursive constructs of normativity mark the signs of 'Woman' or 'being Mexican' with hegemonic inscriptions which carry signifiers for the acceptable paradigmatic performance of identities: cultural, socio-political and gendered. Negotiating with established iconographies—re-codifying them and deploying herself as critical subject—enabled Kahlo to articulate the particularity of her own embodied, lived experiences whilst simultaneously addressing, yet not assuming to speak on behalf of, the shared experiences of humankind. Thus her paintings are radically dialectical. As I have illustrated, in recent years postmodern and poststructuralist theorists have discussed the inherently contingent nature of identity

formation. Seminally, Judith Butler (1999) has claimed that identity is extrinsically constructed through repetitive ‘performative’ acts which evidence that identity is not an innate or stable reality. She claims that it is impossible for the subject to arrive at a final destination point as the ‘performing’ body is no more than a complex of socially constituted states. Thus, the subject is in a persistent state of departure, a constant state of becoming. Perceived as multiple and complex performances, Kahlo’s work can be re-conceived as critically self-reflexive with regard to the contingency of subjectivity. Her paintings resist being viewed as a vindication or victimisation of identities—of womanhood, of being Mexican, of being a spurned wife, of being childless or of being bisexual—as they attest to the inherent problematics, and ultimate inability, to *be*, to evidence, to prove, what any of these identity tags might mean.

### **The Ethics and Aesthetics of Subjectivity: Re-visiting the Transcultural Encounter**

Occupying a third space in which the binary constructs of the Enlightenment—adult:child, man:woman, nature:nurture, human:animal, day:night, love:hate, pain:pleasure, conscious:unconscious, self:other—are collapsed, her subject inhabits a converse universe in which the adult and the child, pleasure and pain, the conscious and unconscious mind, are one and the same (see Zamudio-Taylor 2007, 17). This third space welcomes the contradictions of knowing and not knowing; it is a space where they are invited to co-exist. Discourses which concentrate on the ‘speculative’, the ‘fantastical’ and the ‘special’ in Kahlo’s art precipitate a potentially violent academic encounter as an inability to incorporate the paradox of her artistic sensibility results in a commodification or fetishisation of it. Such discourses ‘other’ Kahlo, by re-packaging her radical dialectic to situate her as exotic or merely different in an attempt to make her more understandable—but to whom? As I have illustrated, the academic tendency ‘to speak on behalf of others’ has been widely evaluated by postmodern and poststructuralist theorists. Challenging the epistemic limits of Modernist metanarratives regarding the ontology and phenomenology of subjectivity and identity, such theorists suggest that Modernist hermeneutics fail to take account of the specificity of locations—historic, cultural, geographic, socio-political, gendered—which prevail upon the situated subject, most especially the subaltern, marginalised or oppressed subject. Spivak (1996) claims that the subaltern does have a voice, that the subaltern can speak of his or her experience, but others do not know how to listen as others do not know how to enter

into a discursive transaction between speaker and listener. Therefore, the silence of the subaltern is the result of a failure of interpretation, not of articulation. I suggest that considerations of Kahlo's art have suffered from the syndrome outlined by Spivak. Her paintings 'talk' but observers may have a problem hearing or reading her complex text.

The West is now entering a post-global economic phase. Hung by its own progressive petard, the fiscal metanarrative of modernity is foundering. New challenges are arising regarding how to appropriately respond economically, politically and ethically, to the current international situation. In a world still catching its breath after the vertiginous expiration of the global economic balloon, Stuart Sim (2009) has suggested that postmodern theory and artistic practice may have something to offer in the face of these new challenges. He writes:

We can learn to a certain extent from postmodernism, particularly as it is applied in the arts, how to challenge Western modernity, but it will require a considerable leap of imagination to move past that state to a truly post-Western culture. Nevertheless, the opportunities for doing so are beginning to emerge, and they deserve exploration—by the artistic community as much as anyone.

Can the theoretical and artistic insights of postmodernism pave the way for a revitalised transcultural global encounter in a wider sense? Art, and the discourse applied to it, may not singlehandedly have the power to paradigmatically change the world, but it does have the power to influence it. If the transcultural encounter is to be perceived anew, as an opportunity for dialogic exchange, can the West enter into a discursive transaction between listener and speaker, between the privileged and the oppressed, that appreciates the cultural specificity of experience, that acknowledges difference and that is open to transformation and renewal?

The third space occupied by Kahlo's subject is a site of correlative transaction between the self and the other. This place of exchange, I suggest, is an ethical locus, a space in which 'our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human' (Butler 2005, 136). In this location the boundary of ethical and aesthetical categories can be explored, transgressed and articulated anew, we can 'vacate the self-sufficient 'I' as a kind of possession' (ibid.). This location—an evolutionary transsubjective site in which mutual and reciprocal transaction can take place—invites a potentially positive and transformative transcultural encounter, where the binary of self and other can be suspended, disturbed and, ultimately, collapsed.

I am not proposing that the artworks of Frida Kahlo, or any artist, necessitate a transformative experience in the viewer. In re-conceptualising the transcultural encounter, I merely wish to suggest that approaching the articulations of others—artistic or otherwise—as an opportunity for positive ethical transaction might just help to create the possibility for an improvement in interpersonal exchange on a wider scale. Seeing with open eyes, listening with open ears may, as Stuart Sim has observed, improve transcultural communication. In an embattled world struggling to cope with the ravages of imperial globalisation, innovative approaches to communication will be vitally important. If viewed as an interrogation into the ethics of subjectivity and as sites of resistance to the hegemonic demand to prove, evidence or authenticate identity, Kahlo's paintings can offer a significant contribution to postmodern, feminist and postcolonial discourse within an expanded framework. Her work can be re-situated as a radical intervention in the practice and process of negotiating the critical subject and in the deconstruction and re-construction of our own histories.

## Works Cited

- Ades, D. (1998) 'Orbits of the Savage Moon: Surrealism and the Representation of the Female Subject in Post-War Paris', in W. Chadwick (ed.), *Mirror Images: Surrealism and Self-Representation*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: MIT Press, 106-127.
- Betterton, R. (1987) 'How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon', in H. Robinson (ed.) *Visibly Female: Feminism and Art Today*, London, UK: Camden Press, 250-271.
- . (1997) 'The Translator's Task, Walter Benjamin, (Translation)' S. Rendall (trans.) in *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction*, vol 10, no 2, 1997, 151-165 [online], available from <http://www.erudit.org/iderudit/037302ar> [Accessed 5 January 2010].
- Butler, J. (1999) 'Bodily Inscriptions: Performative Subversions', in Janet Price and Margaret Shildrick (eds.) *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 416-422.
- . (2005) *Giving an Account of Oneself*, USA: Fordham University Press.
- Chadwick, W. (2007) *Women, Art and Society*, London, UK: Thames and Hudson.
- . (1991) *Women Artist's and the Surrealist Movement*, London, UK: Thames and Hudson.
- Gómez, N.U. (2004) 'La metamorfosis de la imagen', in *Frida Kahlo*, an exhibition catalogue, Mexico City: Instituto Nacional des Bellas Artes, 14-23.

- Grimberg, S. (1998) 'Frida Kahlo: The Self as End' in Whitney Chadwick (ed.), *Mirror Images: Surrealism and Self-Representation*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: MIT Press, 82-105.
- . (2008) *Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself*, London and New York: Merrill.
- Herrera, H. (2007) 'Frida Kahlo's Legacy: The Poetics of the Self', in *Frida Kahlo*, an exhibition catalogue, Minneapolis, USA: Walker Arts Centre, 56-80.
- Mosquera G. (2005) 'The Marco-Polo Syndrome: Some Problems Around Art and Eurocentrism' in Z. Kocur and S. Leung (eds.), *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1945*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 221-2.
- Nead L. (1992) *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Paz, O. (1985) *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings*, New York, USA: Grove.
- Rivera, J.R.C. (2004) 'Frida Kahlo: La selva de sus vestidos, los judas de sus venas' in *Frida Kahlo*, an exhibition catalogue, Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 24-145.
- Simm, S. (2009) 'After Modernity: Towards a Post-Western Culture' in *Printed Project Issue 11: Farewell to Postcolonialism - Querying the Guangzhou Triennial 2008*, 119-123, [online], available from HYPERLINK [http://www.docstoc.com/docs/document-preview.aspx?doc\\_id=13291701](http://www.docstoc.com/docs/document-preview.aspx?doc_id=13291701) [Accessed 5 January 2010].
- Spivak, G.C. (1993) 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in L. Chrisman and P. Williams (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, Harlow, Essex, UK: Longman Pearson Education, 66-111.
- . (1996) 'Subaltern Talk' in D. Landry and G. MacLean (eds.) *The Spivak Reader*, Oxford, UK: Routledge, 287-308.
- Zamudio-Taylor, V. (2007) 'Frida Kahlo: Mexican Modernist', in *Frida Kahlo*, an exhibition catalogue, Minneapolis, USA: Walker Arts Centre, 14-34.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Frida Kahlo, 1910-1954*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1978 and *Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti*, Whitechapel Art Gallery London, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> See *Henry Ford Hospital o la cama volando* [Henry Ford Hospital or The Flying Bed], 1932, oil on metal, 31 x 40.2cm: Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiña, Mexico City; *Mi nacimiento* [My Birth], 1932, oil on copper, 30.5 x 35cm: Private collection; *Unos cuantos piquetitos* [A Few Small Snips], 1935, oil on metal with painted frame, 68 x 78cm: Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiña, Mexico City; *Mi nana y yo o Yo mamando* [My Nurse and I or I suckle], 1937, oil on metal, 30.5 x 35cm: Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiña, Mexico City; *Dos desnudos en un bosque o La*

*tierra misma o Mi nana y yo* [Two Nudes in a Forest or The Earth Itself or My Nurse and I], 1939, oil on metal, 25.1 x 30.2cm: Collection Jon A and Mary Shirley, Medina, Washington; *La columna rota* [The Broken Column], 1944, oil on masonite, 39.8 x 30.5cm: Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiña, Mexico City; *Árbol de la esperanza, manténte firme* [Tree of Hope, Keep Firm], 1946, oil on masonite, 55.9 x 40.6cm: Private collection.

<sup>3</sup> See *Mi nacimiento o Nacimiento* [My Birth or Birth], 1932, oil on copper, 30.5 x 35 cm: Private collection; *El aborto* [The Abortion], 1932, lithograph, 22.5 x 14.5 cm: Private collection; *El suicidio de Dorothy Hale* [The Suicide of Dorothy Hale], 1939, oil on masonite with painted frame, 59.7 x 49.5 cm: Collection of Phoenix Art Museum; *Mi nana y yo o Yo Mamando* [My Nurse and I or I suckle], 1937, oil on metal, 30.5 x 35 cm: Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiña, Mexico City.

<sup>4</sup> See *Autoretrato con pelo cortado* [Self Portrait with Cropped Hair], 1940, oil on canvas, 40 x 27.9 cm: The Museum of Modern Art, New York; *Autoretrato: 'muy feo'* [Self-Portrait: 'very ugly'] 1933, fresco, 27.3 x 22.2 cm: Private collection. Most of Kahlo's self-portraits show her with a visible growth of dark hair on her upper lip and between her eyebrows.

<sup>5</sup> For analyses of Kahlo's narcissism see Grimberg (1998, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the painting entitled *Mi nana y yo o Yo mamando* [My Nurse and I or I suckle], 1937, oil on metal, 30.5 x 35cm: Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiña, Mexico City. The nurse in the painting wears an indigenous mask and the branches in her right breast may be referencing the *Ceiba Yaxche* tree; the Mayan celestial tree of life, this tree provided milk for infants who died before their mothers had weaned them.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the painting entitled *¡Unos cuantos piquetitos!* [A Few Small Snips!], 1935, oil on metal with painted frame, 68 x 78cm Collection Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiña, Mexico City, illustrates the influence of the *ex-voto* or *retablo* on Kahlo's work.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *La columna rota* [The Broken Column], 1944, oil on masonite, 39.8 x 30.5cm: Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiña, Mexico City; *El venado herido o El venadito o Soy un pobre venadito* [The Wounded Deer or The Little Deer or I am a Poor Little Deer], 1946, oil on masonite, 22.4 x 30cm: Private collection and *Árbol de la esperanza, manténte firme* [Tree of Hope, Keep Firm], 1946, oil on masonite, 55.9 x 40.6cm: Private collection See Rivera (2004) for a detailed discussion of the influence of Catholic Baroque art in the work of Frida Kahlo.

<sup>9</sup> See *Las dos Fridas* [The Two Fridas], 1939, oil on canvas, 173.5 x 173cm Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City *Diego en mi pensamiento o Pensando en Diego o Autorretrato como Tehuana* [Diego on My Mind or Thinking of Diego or Self-Portrait as Tehuana], 1943, oil on masonite, 76 x 61cm The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection of Modern and Contemporary Mexican Art, The Vergel Foundation; *Autorretrato con medallón* [Self-Portrait with Medallion], 1948, oil on masonite, 50 x 40cm Private collection.

<sup>10</sup> See *Mi nacimiento o Nacimiento* [My Birth or Birth1], 1932, oil on copper, 30.5 x 35cm: Private collection and *Moisés o Núcleo Solar* [Moses or Nucleus of Creation], 1945, oil on masonite, 50.8 x 94cm: Private collection, Texas.