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**The Diary of Frida Kahlo: the Genre,
the Book, the Work**

by

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To my parents

The process of writing my thesis has been, for the most part, a very positive learning experience. I would like to thank and acknowledge my family, for their support and encouragement. I would also like to thank my close friends, especially Marisha, Jacquie, Danahe, Susana, Penny, Ralf and Gaston for listening to my many dilemmas regarding my thesis and helping me overcome the challenges that arose throughout this period. I would like to thank the University of Ottawa for its financial, administrative and academic support, especially Rodney for all the time spent on helping me develop the organizational aspects as well as the content of my thesis.

Abstract

This study explores some fundamental aspects of The Diary of Frida Kahlo, namely its classification as a diary, the impact of the prologues of the different versions on the diary's reception, and the various dialogues taking place within it and the rest of Kahlo's artistic production.

The first part focuses on the classification of this work as a diary. The theoretical sources utilized to establish the characteristics of the diary genre are: Le journal intime by Béatrice Didier, and the scholarly article by Valerie Raoul, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre". This chapter demonstrates that there are certain aspects of Kahlo's diary that indeed correspond to the genre whereas other elements distance it from this classification.

In the second part of this study, the role and impact of the introduction and prefatory essays is examined. The basis of the analysis of the different prefaces is Gérard Genette's concept of the paratexte as elaborated in his book, Seuils.

The English, French and German versions of the diary all share the same introduction by Carlos Fuentes and essay by Sarah Lowe. The Fuentes/Lowe preface presents the reader with a homogeneous approach to the diary which is shown to be related to the current "fridamania" phenomenon characterized primarily by its focus on Kahlo's life. The Spanish version, omits Lowe's essay and includes three essays written by authors active in Mexico, Karen Cordero Reinman, Olivier Debrouse and Graciela Martínez Zalce. Each of the essays interprets the diary differently. The various angles of interpretation are more congruous with the complexities found within the diary's pages as well as reflect the various facets of Kahlo's artistic production. This preface provides Mexican readership with a more in-depth understanding of Kahlo's life and art.

In the final part of the study an interpretation of Kahlo's diary is offered which focuses particularly on the notion of dialogue. The combination of modes, media, topics and icons found in the first entry are shown to be closely linked to Kahlo's artistic production. This third chapter proposes that Kahlo's diary is at times carefully constructed as is the case in the initial entry and slowly progresses to a much freer, less self-conscious form of expression. Certain media which is present both in her diary and in her painting is used to create different effects. This chapter demonstrates through a detailed descriptive analysis of the first entry that there exists a dialogue present on three different levels: within the diary itself, between the diary and Kahlo's artistic production and between the diary and Kahlo herself.

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Introduction

The object of this study is the 'diary' that Frida Kahlo kept throughout the last ten years of her life. It was published in book form in English, French and Spanish in 1995 under the titles, The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait, Diario de Frida Kahlo: Autorretrato íntimo and Le journal de Frida Kahlo.

Frida Kahlo was born in 1907 to an Austro-Hungarian German father and a Mexican mother. At the age of seven she contracted polio, which affected one of her legs. She studied at the National Preparatory School, where she met the famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, to whom she was married twice. She began to paint in 1925 after having been involved in a serious traffic accident which left her bedridden for many months. She would never fully recover from the injuries sustained in the accident. According to her 'diary' she underwent a total of 32 surgical operations throughout her lifetime and in 1953 one of her legs was amputated due to gangrene. She died in 1954, probably by her own hand.

As an artist, Kahlo produced a total of about 150 paintings. Approximately third of her artistic production consists of self-portraits. Of her art, her husband wrote, as quoted by J.M.G. Le Clézio in his book Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo, "Frida is the only example in the history of art of a person who has ripped open her breast in order to report on the biological truth they [sic] contained." (11) Her paintings are characterized by their miniature size, their attention to detail, their realism and their highly self-referential quality. She exhibited her artwork in Mexico, the United States and in Paris, and was associated with the Surrealist movement. André Breton claimed she was a "bombshell wrapped in ribbons".

She did, however, publicly deny being a Surrealist. Throughout her life, Kahlo had strong ties to the Mexican Revolution and Communism. Her paintings as well as her 'diary' are testimony of her political convictions. She was celebrated and recognized as an artist in her own lifetime; however, there has been consistently more interest in her life and art since the early 1990s.

In this thesis I shall study three different aspects of Kahlo's 'diary'. I will first establish in what sense Kahlo's 'diary' may be considered a diary. I will then explore how its publication in book form influenced its reception. And lastly I will examine certain entries in the 'diary' in order to better understand its importance within the context of Kahlo's artistic production.

Although most of the critical bibliography on the subject states that the 'diary' of Frida Kahlo is one of her most important works as an artist, there are relatively few critical articles written about it. It would seem that there has always been much more interest in Kahlo's life than in her work as an artist, including her 'diary'. Apart from the articles included in the edition of the 'diary' itself, the database of the Modern Language Association contains only two scholarly articles dealing with this work: "Féminité, hybridité, monstruosité" by Georgiana M.M. Colvile and "Bruised Words, Wounded Images in Frida Kahlo" by Clara Orban, as well as a PhD thesis: "La (con)fabulación de mujeres como arma política en la mexicanidad del siglo XX: María Novaro, Elena Garro, Frida Kahlo y Carmen Boullosa", which contains one chapter on the 'diary'.

Why so little interest in the 'diary', one may wonder? Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the answer to another one. To what discipline, domain,

realm does the 'diary' belong? Is it a work of art like her paintings or is it rather a literary work? Should it be studied by art historians or by specialists of literature? Or is it instead a cultural object that falls somewhere between these two fields? Perhaps part of the reason for the lack of attention to the 'diary' stems specifically from this problem of classification¹.

The first chapter of this study will be dedicated precisely to the genre classification suggested in its title. I shall provide a brief theoretical framework to explain what constitutes the diary genre and try to answer the question, "Is Frida Kahlo's 'diary' really a diary?" I will show through examples that there are certain aspects of the 'diary' that are consistent with the genre whereas others are less so. The first chapter will rely particularly on Béatrice Didier's study Le journal intime and on Valérie Raoul's article, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre".

The second chapter will look at how Kahlo's 'diary' was transformed into the books known as, The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait, Diario de Frida Kahlo: autorretrato íntimo and Le journal de Frida Kahlo. I will analyse the prologues found in the various versions of the published 'diary'. Though there have been four different versions, namely the English, French, German and Spanish versions, the second chapter will concentrate concretely on the prologues of the English and Spanish versions. In this chapter, I shall first identify the differences between the various versions. Secondly I will look at the

¹ Valérie Raoul, author of the article, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre", published in 1989, also states that, "Another reason (in addition to their private function), why diaries have been largely excluded from the literary canon is that their apparent lack of selectivity and the absence of conscious artistic effect in the combination of entries are radically opposed to a traditional view of the literary work of art." (62)

prologues in detail. And lastly I will evaluate the editor's decision on the selection of essays for the respective versions. I will try to understand the impact the preliminary text (particularly the different prologues) has on the reception of the books, The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait and El diario de Frida Kahlo: Autorretrato íntimo. I will use Gérard Genette's definition of what constitutes the *paratexte*, as defined in his book entitled Seuils, in order to better analyse the prologues in question. This chapter will also explore the "consumption" of Kahlo's work with the help of Margaret Lindauer's book, Devouring Frida. The Art History and Popular Celebrity of Frida Kahlo.

While the two first chapters deal with questions concerning the transformation of Kahlo's 'diary' into a book, the third and final chapter will look at the facsimile of the 'diary' as such, and try to relate it to Kahlo's artistic production. It will focus particularly on the first and last entries of Kahlo's 'diary', analysing them and attempting to show the relations that exist between them and some of her paintings. It will examine if and how a dialogue takes place, how in some instances, the paintings influence the 'diary' while in others the 'diary' influences the paintings produced by Kahlo at that time. This chapter will also discuss the dialogue which takes place within the 'diary' itself, namely the dialogue between: **modes**, such as images and text; **media**, such as photographs, aquarelle paints, ink or felt pens, and collages; **themes**, such as death, life and love; and **icons** such as self-portraits, doves and flowers. This third part of the study will explore the idea of Kahlo's 'diary' as an extension of her artistic production.

At the end of the study I include an appendix with selected paintings and entries from Kahlo's 'diary'. I will make constant reference to the images in the appendix to facilitate the understanding of my commentary on both her artistic production and her 'diary'.

All published versions of the 'diary' contain similar pagination. However, there are a few aspects that must be noted in this regard. In the first place, the Spanish version of Kahlo's 'diary' contains completely different introductory essays from the English version, though Carlos Fuentes' introduction is common to both. When I refer to his introduction I will be quoting from the English version with the English version's pagination. The essays found in the Spanish version are numbered with Roman numerals: therefore, when I refer to the essays written in the Spanish version of the 'diary', the page number will appear in Roman numerals (Debroise V, for instance). In order to avoid confusion, I clearly identify the various essays, their title and author the first time I refer to them. Sarah M. Lowe's essay, which appears in the English version, will be quoted in the following way: (Lowe, [page number]). Though she has written a biography on Frida Kahlo, which does appear in the bibliography of this study, I make no reference to that work, but rather to her introductory essay. Lowe wrote the commentaries found at the end of the facsimile, therefore references to these commentaries appear with their corresponding page numbers. The pagination in each version of the 'diary' is the same, however, the facsimile of the 'diary' is unnumbered. To simplify things, I include the plate number of each reproduction as well as the page on which it appears. For instance, the first page of the

facsimile of the 'diary' is plate 4, and the reproduction appears on page 202 of all versions. I thus refer to it in the following manner: plate 4, 202.

Chapter 1: The Genre

I have chosen to begin this study by looking at the title given to the publication of Kahlo's 'diary', The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait. The title takes for granted that this work belongs to the diary genre yet, due to its complexity in terms of medium, structure and thematic content, this is not at all clear. In this chapter, I explore the question of genre in order to better understand and grasp this work in the context of Kahlo's production as an artist. The theoretical texts I will be using in order to ascertain whether or not the classification of diary which has been assigned to Kahlo's work is reflective of the genre are Béatrice Didier's study of the diary genre, Le journal intime (published in 1976), and Valérie Raoul's article, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre" (published 1989).

The first reference to this work as 'diary' appears in 1958 in the "Legado de Diego Rivera al pueblo de México". It is the fourth item mentioned in this document and it is referred to as "Diario escrito e ilustrado por Frida Kahlo con 84 láminas en color", as mentioned in Olivier Debrouse's introductory essay, "¿Sadja o vivir en Coyoacán?", in the Spanish version of the published 'diary' (V). All published versions describe the work as being a 'diary'. But what exactly constitutes a diary? And is the 'diary' of Frida Kahlo really a diary after all?

The word “diary” stems from the Latin words *diarium* meaning “a daily allowance” and *diarius* meaning “daily”² (Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology 645). Kahlo's ‘diary’ is not made up of daily entries. Most of her entries are undated and between some of them there are large temporal gaps. Although there is nothing to dictate that a diary must strictly comprise daily entries, it is through such progressive entries that the diary differs from the autobiography and the memoir. As Béatrice Didier states in her book, the diary is characterized by the immediacy of the events recounted, whereas the autobiography and the memoir are generally written a long time after the facts. (8) This is of particular importance in the case of Frida Kahlo, if one compares her ‘diary’ to her self-portraits, since it is well known that she would paint her canvases over a number of days making them the result of much contemplation. (Lowe 26) If we are to accept this work as a diary, her entries may be compared to photographic images of her innermost thoughts. Olivier Debroise, however, claims that some passages of her ‘diary’ were in fact developed over time, “...queda claro, que Kahlo ‘revisó’ las secciones iniciales en los últimos meses de su vida, tachando y corrigiendo sus primeros textos, repasándolos con lápices de colores y el bolígrafo de reciente invención, agregando nuevos motivos e imágenes.” (VII) When we consider what Didier sees as the main difference between the novel and the diary, “le journal diffère du roman intime...le roman suppose non seulement une part d'affabulation (mince parfois, et qui pourrait affirmer qu'il n'y ait pas de fabulation dans le journal?) mais surtout un travail de recomposition,

The French “journal” has a similar etymology. It stems from the Latin word *diurnum* meaning day.

d'organisation" (10), it is difficult not to apply this distinction to Kahlo's 'diary'. An obvious example of this *travail de recomposition et d'organisation* is illustrated in the entry entitled "origen de las dos Fridas=Recuerdos"(Images1-4, Appendix), where Kahlo explains the memory of an imaginary friend. The initial writing in this entry is blue and faded. On top of this writing is a thicker brownish writing which at times scribbles out a word replacing it with another, or adds words to the text. The darkish brown ink is also the same used on the image at the end of the text illustrating the story.

In her commentary, Sarah M. Lowe, the author of one of the introductory essays of the English version, as well as the translation of the facsimile and the commentaries accompanying the entries, states that this "doubled [sic] entry—first the small, scratchy words in blue ink, and then again with determination in a larger, brown-gray scrawl—underscores the importance of this recollection" (245). It makes no mention of the possibility that this text was "touched up" perhaps years after the initial entry. In reference to the entry dated November 4th 1952, page 255, Lowe concludes that this entry was indeed developed over time. However, her criteria for distinguishing the "immediacy of first hand sensations" (26) are unclear.

In her introductory essay, Lowe describes the 'diary' as pertaining to the French tradition of the *journal intime* (25). According to Didier's study on the *journal intime*, the only guideline the author must follow is a certain periodicity, a relative regularity (8). Valérie Raoul complements what Didier says by concluding that the only rule that must be respected is the non-retrospective one

of being in *medias res* (61). However, if one were to limit the definition of what constitutes a diary to the above-mentioned guidelines, a great deal of writing would fall into the diary category. There are therefore other aspects that must be considered.

Thematically the diary genre is centered on the Self and, in principle, is written for the Self. In her article, Raoul views the diary genre in terms of the Freudian scheme of ego/id/super-ego. She goes on to say that the specular and speculative narcissistic nature of the act of diary writing enables the diarist to become “simultaneously desiring and desired, watching and watched, inside and outside, judging and judged. The diary itself represents both a return to the womb, the ultimate refuge and the birth of the book” (59). In other words, the Self takes on the triple role of author, main character and reader all at once. In Kahlo's case this triangular equation becomes altered at some points because of the importance of the role of others. In terms of the author, one can assume that the 'diary' is indeed Kahlo's own creation. We should qualify this by mentioning that the first page of Kahlo's 'diary' contains a photograph of Kahlo probably taken by her friend Lola Álvarez Bravo (Image 5, Appendix) and that in her entry on plate 122, 267, (Image 6, Appendix) one can distinguish Diego Rivera's handwriting (Debroise VII). To a certain extent, these two entries are collaborative works between two artists rather than exclusive creations of Kahlo. However, apart from these two entries, there is no evidence that Kahlo collaborated with anyone in the other pages.

There is no doubt that the main character of any diary is the diary writer. Kahlo's case is no exception. However, there are certain entries in which the Other becomes intertwined with Kahlo's own identity. The role of the other in such cases becomes central, at times overshadowing the Self. Although the Other corresponds to various people in Kahlo's entourage, it most often refers to her husband, Diego Rivera. The majority of the entries mention or make reference to Rivera at some point³. Kahlo's 'diary' defies Didier's interpretation of the Other as merely an object (180). She frequently refers to Diego as her reason for living, "todo el esfuerzo que me queda para Diego, todo para Diego" (plate 143, 277), as her inspiration, as when writing about her exhibition in Mexico: "las manos construyen, los ojos abiertos, los Diegos sentidos..." (plate 130, 272), as the center of her world, "para Diego mío la vida callada dadora de mundos" (plate 25, 217). Page 60 (Image 7, Appendix), one of the most famous entries of the 'diary', focuses entirely on Diego. Here Kahlo asserts that she is Diego. He is simultaneously attributed the role of "principio, constructor, mi niño, mi novio, pintor, mi amante, 'mi esposo', mi amigo, mi madre, mi hijo". This entry ends with the equation "Diego=Yo=Diego Universo Diversidad en la unidad". At this point Kahlo explicitly joins her identity to Diego's, so to speak, transforming the main character of this entry into two entities superimposed on each other. In this passage the main character becomes very ambiguous and Kahlo's identity varies from mother to child to Diego himself. "No soy solamente tu —madre—soy el embrión, el germen, la primera célula que=en potencia=lo engendró. Soy él desde las más primitivas...y las más antiguas células, que con el 'tiempo' se

³ Concretely, Diego's name appears on 32 pages throughout the diary.

volvieron él" (58). Just as her identity becomes confused, so does Kahlo's addressee. She at times seems to be talking directly to Diego by implicitly addressing him as you (*tu madre*), and at other times she is talking about him by referring to him as he (*lo engendró*).

The third element of Raoul's equation, that is to say the reader, is probably the most problematic when applied to Kahlo's 'diary'. The whole notion of intimacy is closely bound up with the reader. A diary, in principle, is written exclusively for the Self and the idea of intimacy plays a fundamental role in its writing. Kahlo's 'diary' was in fact published in its English and Spanish versions with the addition, "An Intimate Self-Portrait." Lowe begins her essay (English version of published 'diary') by referring to the reading of the 'diary' as an act of transgression, describing it as being, "a deeply private expression of her feelings that was never intended to be viewed publicly" (25) and which therefore adheres to the tradition of the subgenre of the *journal intime*. Such a characterization of the 'diary' is highly debatable since, as stated both in Raoul and Didier, most famous artists who kept a diary knew that if they did not themselves destroy it prior to death, it could be posthumously published⁴.

Interestingly enough, the Spanish version follows a completely different direction. According to Debroise, Kahlo shared her 'diary' with her close friends

⁴ Raoul's quote is as follows, "The posthumous publication of documents not originally intended for the public gave rise to pseudo-private journals and epistles by famous people (usually men) who wrote them with eventual publication in mind.(58)

Didier's quote is as follows, "Le regard d'autrui peut annihiler ou stimuler. À côté de ceux qui redoutent par-dessus tout la publication, il y a des écrivains qui l'organisent de leur vivant peut-être pour éviter de

during her lifetime to such an extent that one of them, Raquel Tibol, was invited to copy a poem included in the diary's pages (VII). Furthermore Debroise shows, through Kahlo's treatment of language and topic as well as through her frequent corrections, that she was perhaps writing for the public as well as for herself, "Ciertos elementos...hacen pensar que el diario fue concebido—como la pintura—para un público más amplio, para ser expuesto, 'leído', analizado."(V) We can see this in various entries, particularly the autobiographical ones spanning pages 151 to 155 (Images 8-12, Appendix). She entitles this section 'esquema de mi vida' and she recounts her heritage and certain events of her youth. This type of entry would be consistent with what Debroise refers to as "operaciones de 'rectificación', limpieza y purga, arquetípicas de la retórica estalinista" (VII). It also seems written with a certain regard for posterity. There is no trace of her typical slang expressions or comical uses of language.⁵ Here the language is highly self-conscious. There is a solemn tone and style in this entry which would hint at the notion that Kahlo was writing for a wider audience than just herself. Although the 'diary' contains many similar entries, it is not made up exclusively of them. There are a great many entries that are much more ambiguous and difficult to decipher. However, the fact that they are all contained within the format of a book and not on loose sheets of paper makes it

falsifications, pour des raisons financières, enfin parce que cette idée du public ne leur est pas désagréable...Écrit-on pour soi seul?(24)

⁵ One of her students is quoted in Hayden Herrera's book, *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*, as saying, "She had invented her own language, her own way of speaking Spanish, full of vitality and accompanied by gestures, mimicry, laughter, jokes, and a great sense of irony. (329)

obvious that Kahlo was aware that the entries were part of an ensemble. When considered in this light, Lowe's reference to the reading of the 'diary' as an "act of transgression" does not appear relevant.

What is the usual motive for writing a diary? Why did Kahlo choose to begin this journal in 1944-45? Why did she continue writing it? According to Raoul, the usual reason stems from a malaise based on a questioning of selfhood (61). Lowe's account of her life would definitely warrant such a questioning. According to Lowe:

Her recent emotional life had been extraordinarily turbulent. Her father had died a few years earlier; she had been divorced from Diego Rivera in late 1939 and remarried him a year later. Kahlo had come to the unavoidable conclusion that she would never bear the child she longed to have, and was plagued by her inadequacy [sic]. She had undergone numerous medical and surgical interventions [sic], for miscarriages and spinal problems. As she approached the age of forty she could no longer ignore the signs that her health was deteriorating. (26)

Kahlo's gold initials engraved on the leather cover of the 'diary' suggest that the book was made to order. The first page (Image 5, Appendix) is a collage which, according to Karen Cordero Reinman, author of an essay entitled "¿Desenmascarando el mito?" found in the Spanish version of the 'diary', refers directly to Kahlo's exploration of Surrealism.(11) Taking this into account, and we assuming that the beginning of the 'diary' does in fact coincide with the first entry Kahlo made, it is difficult to make the connection between the upheaval of Kahlo's emotional life and the impulse to write. The first pages of the 'diary' correspond to what Georgiana Colvile calls "de longues listes de mots, qui ont certes cessé de donner le sens, mais qui suggèrent de nouvelles dimensions

visuelles et auditives par leur juxtaposition, à la manière de l'écriture automatique" (348). The 'diary' begins on a much more playful note which, rather than showing Kahlo's malaise regarding the intimate details of her emotional life, demonstrates her genuine interest in the Surrealist movement. Kahlo's main motive for writing, to judge from these early entries, would be her artistic curiosity and creativity.

Though the 'diary' begins on a playful note, what follows is not always consistent with the initial tone. As to why Kahlo continued to write in her diary, the answers vary. At times one has the impression that Kahlo is indeed questioning herself whereas in other instances the 'diary' seems to serve as a therapeutic tool. She had her 'diary' with her towards the end of her life when she was in the hospital having her leg amputated (Images 13-16, Appendix). Kahlo's entries corresponding to this period refer to her physical and emotional state. Didier's characterization is particularly apt, "Prisonnier de son mal, et voyageur dans son propre abîme, le malade aura tendance à tenir un journal qui parfois aide à sa guérison..." (13). Kahlo in these entries seems to live in her own personal and private world of suffering and of joy. One can get the impression that Kahlo is optimistic despite her health condition. Diary writing perhaps contributed to her process of recovery.

Structurally, the diary genre is characterized by its fragmentation. According to Raoul, this aspect of the diary would be one of the principal reasons behind its popularity among women (62). Be it through the use of foreign languages, the frequent changes of subject, the lack of evident continuity within

the text, or the alternation between text and image, the 'diary' of Frida Kahlo is a fragmented oeuvre.

Kahlo's 'diary', though written primarily in Spanish, also includes words or passages in English, French and German. According to Didier, the use of foreign languages, "serait à rattacher à la question de la discontinuité. Plus d'une fois nous avons constaté que le journal...relevait cependant du genre discontinu du fragment, que l'organisation même de ces fragments était traversée par des cassures. L'écriture en langue étrangère est encore un des moyens de ces césures(182)". The transcription in German of an excerpt of Bertoldt Brecht's *Three Penny Opera* constitutes the longest entry in a foreign language (Image 17, Appendix). Its function is unclear but it is most probably related to one of Kahlo's experiences rather than to a conscious desire to exclude certain non-German speaking readers.⁶ It is what Lowe would classify as a "doubled entry" since it is written over with different coloured ink. The page is divided horizontally into three parts, which in itself constitutes a certain fragmentation. All parts are written in German and they all contain the same excerpt from Brecht's play⁷. They differ only in colour (the top and bottom fragments are written over in bluish ink, whereas the middle fragment is written in orange) and in the last line of each part. The top part ends with San Francisco de Asís, the second part ends with Manhattan and the third part ends with "México.

⁶ Lowe's commentaries on this entry are as follows, "This bit of verse...is the lone example of Kahlo's copying a passage from a source other than herself. The place names below suggest she may have seen the play in New York or Paris during her 1938-39 trip...she had some familiarity with the language through her father's birthright—though he would not have been proud of her numerous errors (212).

⁷ There are here some further seemingly minor inconsistencies between the versions of the text. The Spanish version does not transcribe the first part of the page. The transcription begins with San Francisco

Coyoacán. Paris. New-York.”⁸ This one-page entry is embedded between a entry describing the characteristics of various colours and a love letter written to Rivera (Images 18-19, Appendix). The content of the text has apparently very little to do with the surrounding two entries (before and after). All three entries vary in language, theme, tone, colour and style. However by looking more closely, one can find some common traits: the first and the third are both written in Spanish and are written by Kahlo; the second and the third share the same medium, that is to say they are written with the same ink; the first and the second share a certain point of reference, German, since in Kahlo’s definition of colours she attributes the colour green to the whole of Germany. Therefore, though the work is fragmentary because of the use of a foreign language which presumably breaks its fluidity, there are nonetheless certain elements which bind these entries together.

Fragmentation is also manifested through frequent changes in subject and medium. Karen Cordero Reinman states that Kahlo’s ‘diary’ has been characterized as being “el manejo del palimpsesto en las palabras y las imágenes, las frases obradas o sobrepuestas, remite a una sensibilidad e identidad mucho menos definidas y claras que las que aparentan sus óleos.” (III) The perceived vagueness of identity can be explained by looking at the fragmentation inherent in the diary genre. Though Kahlo’s ‘diary’ appears unique in that the juxtaposition of topics, colours, beliefs and media is at times violent or perhaps even schizophrenic, this fragmentation is symptomatic of the *journal*

de Asis. The French and English versions transcribe the entire page. However the French translates San Francisco de Asis to Saint Francois d’Assise.

intime. Though, as we have seen earlier, there are cases where they share common elements, the entries in Kahlo's diary often appear disconnected from one another. Didier compares the fragmentation occurring within the *journal intime* to a Cubist painting. "La page de journal peut devenir une sorte de tableau cubiste...ou figureraient des collages composés par des morceaux du *Petit Parisien*, un peu jaunis par le temps ou la couleur. Le dessin, la photographie, les 'reliques' diverses peuvent aussi s'intégrer dans le journal, surtout si leur valeur mémorative semble déterminante" (187). Kahlo's 'diary' has a series of major recurring topics: love, her relationship to her work, her political beliefs, her physical state, death, life and memories. With respect to the cyclical thematic structure of the diary, Didier notes that, "La souplesse du genre, son absence de délimitation expliquent à la fois la monotonie et la grande variété du journal. C'est la monotonie et l'infinie variété de la vie elle-même. Les diaristes se répètent. D'un mois à un autre, d'une année à l'autre—et parfois même à plusieurs années de distance—les problèmes restent identiques; identiques les caractères, les réactions et les pensées.(11)"

In the next ten consecutive entries (Images 20-29,Appendix) it is difficult to find an obvious continuity. The only common trait the first four of these (Images 20-23,Appendix) have is the yellow blotch of ink that in each case is transformed into a different figure. This aside, the entries vary in subject as well as in their treatment. The series begins with a green-beaked creature baptised "El Horrendo Ojosauro primitivo" by Kahlo (Image 20, Appendix). It is accompanied by a short text on its origin. The following pages show a series of images and

^a It should be noted that "Coyoacán" is written over "Méjico".

texts which have nothing to do with each other. The first five entries (Images 20-24, Appendix) appear to have been done in one sitting since they share the same colours and all seem to be painted with aquarelle. In this case the medium is a common factor. The subject however is radically different. This series of entries would seem to be mere doodling since they do not address any topic in depth. The only exception is found on the fourth page of the series (Image 23, Appendix) which Kahlo divides into three fields. The second field shows two winged figures. The accompanying text reveals that this is a depiction of “el ‘clásico’ amor (sin flechas) solamente con espermatozoides”. The bottom part of this field is presumably supposed to represent spermatozoa. In this entry there is an evident judgement being expressed in regards to love, even though there is also a certain aspect of humour. The sixth entry (Image 25, Appendix) is a short text in which Kahlo pays tribute to laughter. There are no images to accompany this text. The seventh entry (Image 26, Appendix) is one of the very few collages found in the diary: a black and white postcard has been defaced and pasted over a text. The words at the bottom of the page are disconnected from one another but some could be used to describe the photograph above. There are the words “Sonrisa” and “ternura” painted in red aquarelle over another text, perhaps bridging text and image, or perhaps they are meant as a dialogue between both texts. Another possibility is that they are related to the text on the previous page. One of the most enigmatic entries is the next one (Image 27, Appendix): there are four major elements in this entry, “Sadja”, “379”, “the yin and yang symbol” and the words “de siempre”. This entry was possibly made at the same time as

the previous one. However, they seem disconnected in topic and medium. What they have in common, though, are the colours. The last two entries are both figurative. As the text suggests, “movimiento al danzar”, the ninth entry (Image 28, Appendix) transmits a sense of movement through the repetitive strokes of paint emanating from the figure’s body. The last entry (Image 29, Appendix) was eventually transformed into a painting: this is the only case where Kahlo uses her diary as a sketch pad.

Each of the above ten entries deals with a different topic and reflects a different state of mind. This phenomenon is typical of the diary genre precisely because each entry corresponds to a specific time in the diarist’s life. A diary is essentially the concrete expression of time in space. It is for this reason that the entries often, if not always, appear fragmented since the diarist is not concerned with establishing continuity for the reader. On the contrary, the text is much more focused on the writer, often on the immediate gratification the author feels at transferring his or her feelings, reflections, thoughts onto paper through a given medium. The ten entries mentioned constitute an example of this transference.

Fragmentation as seen through the juxtaposition of text and image is at times problematic for the reader, there being obvious differences between images and texts.⁹ Kahlo’s ‘diary’ is characterized by the diverse media she uses to express herself. The ‘diary’ as a whole is not composed exclusively of either text or images (although some individual entries are). For the most part entries are made up of both image and text. For the reader this produces a break in

⁹ I will not discuss what constitutes an image in this chapter nor will I attempt to examine the difference between verbal and optical images. These two aspects will be dealt with in Chapter 2.

continuity similar to the break encountered in a switch to a different language. At times the image serves as an accompaniment for the text as is the case with the entry entitled “Las dos fridas-Recuerdo” (Images 1-4, Appendix). In other instances the text serves as an explanation for the image it accompanies, as seen in the entry entitled “movimiento al danzar” (Image 28, Appendix,). At other times the relation between image and text is more ambiguous, as on the first page of the ‘diary’ (Image 5, Appendix). The title words “Pint(é) de 1916” do not seem to help us understand the image beneath it, nor does the image give us a clue as to what the text is referring to. In this case, the text and image are apparently dissassociated from one another.

Finally, Kahlo’s ‘diary’ can also be described as fragmented because it has not been published in its entirety. There are missing sections, that is to say, pages missing from the text. According to Raoul, these “gaps attributed to evasures or torn out pages (62)” are a typical stylistic feature of women’s diaries. Some of these missing pages are mentioned in the “Legado de Diego Rivera al pueblo de México”. However, there are others that remain unaccounted for. We may wonder whether some were some torn out by Kahlo before her death: Were some of these given to her friends before her death? Were some taken as souvenirs by her friends after her death? Were some taken out by someone who, as Lowe says, “...wanted to preserve Kahlo’s dignity, or perhaps shield him/herself, and so removed them from all other scrutiny”? (278)

As stated earlier, the *journal intime* is an open genre. There are very few rules that define it. Within a diary one can find prose, poetry, fiction, illustrations,

newspaper clippings, etc. There is no restriction on the author in terms of topic or medium. The diarist is free to express himself or herself as he/she sees fit. Although historically the diary was considered a form of writing appropriate for women because of its initially “non-literary”, “non-public” character, as Valérie Raoul writes, the diary is not specific to gender but rather to genre. (62) It is characterised by its fragmentation, by its openness, by its focus on the Self, by its regular or irregular, dated or non-dated entries, by its relative proximity to the events narrated, by the notion of intimacy. Frida Kahlo's ‘diary’, though unique insofar as her life was, adheres, for the most part, to the diary genre. Her ‘diary’ is fragmented by its use of foreign languages, by its frequent diversions, by its radical change of subjects and media and by the fact that there are pages missing which obviously affect the continuity of the text. The text is structured as an ensemble of various entries written at different times and deals with topics relating to her life, such as love, political beliefs, family ties, relationship to work, life and death, which are typically found in diaries,. Frida Kahlo's ‘diary’ is also cyclical, repetitive and focused on the Self.

It is not, however, an intimate self portrait as the title suggests. It was indeed written with the foreknowledge that it would be read by others. Indeed it was read by others in her own lifetime. It is not a private account of her life but rather, in some entries, a carefully pre-meditated work; it is also perhaps a censored work.

Frida Kahlo's 'diary' is therefore a diary and not a diary, depending on how one chooses to look at it. It is, in the form in which it was published in 1995, definitely a consumer object.

Chapter 2: The Book

Que yo sepa, nadie ha formulado hasta ahora una teoría del prólogo. La omisión no debe afligirnos, ya que todos sabemos de qué se trata. El prólogo, en la triste mayoría de los casos, linda con la oratoria de sobremesa o con los panegíricos fúnebres y abunda en hipérbolos irresponsables, que la lectura incrédula acepta como convenciones del género...El prólogo, cuando son propicios los astros, no es una forma subalterna del brindis; es una especie lateral de la crítica.

Jorge Luis Borges

Prólogos con un prólogo de prólogos

This chapter will deal with the materiality of the 'diary' as published in 1995 by H.P. Abrams, Inc. and La vaca independiente Publishing Company. It will examine elements which were added to the 'diary', specifically the prologue, when it was mass-produced as a book for the general public. In this part of the study I will examine how the additions to the facsimile of the 'diary' impact on the readers (consumers) of the book, as well as highlight and analyze the differences

existing in the prologues of the various versions of the 'diary'. I will show how these differences affect the consumption and reading of the 'diary'.

The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait was not simply a published facsimile of Kahlo's 'diary'. The facsimile, of course, is at the book's center, but it is surrounded by other texts and photographs. The way in which the facsimile appeared in the 1995 publication of the 'diary' inevitably influences the reading of the 'diary'. The accompanying elements such as the title, the book cover, the front page, the preface, the introduction, the epilogue and so on also impact on the reader. These various elements, among others, are referred to as the *paratexte* by Gérard Genette.¹⁰ Genette's definition of the *paratexte* will be the basis of the analysis that follows. In his 1987 book, Seuils, Genette defined the *paratexte* as follows:

L'oeuvre littéraire consiste, exhaustivement ou essentiellement, en un texte, c'est-à-dire (définition très minimale) en une suite plus ou moins longue d'énoncés verbaux plus ou moins pourvus de signification. Mais ce texte se présente rarement à l'état nu, sans le renfort et l'accompagnement d'un certain nombre de productions, elles-mêmes verbales ou non comme un nom d'auteur, un titre, une préface, des illustrations, dont on ne sait pas toujours si l'on doit ou non considérer qu'elles lui appartiennent, mais que en tout cas l'entourent et le prolongent, précisément pour le présenter [...] pour le rendre présent, pour assurer sa présence au monde, sa "réception" et sa consommation, sous la forme, aujourd'hui du moins, d'un livre. Cet accompagnement, d'ampleur et d'allure variables, constitue ce que j'ai baptisé ailleurs [Palimpsestes, 1982] [...] le paratexte de l'oeuvre. Le paratexte est donc pour nous ce par quoi un texte se fait livre et se propose comme tel à des lecteurs, et plus généralement au public (7).

¹⁰ Genette is not the only one to have reflected on the accompaniments to the text. What Genette refers to as *paratexte* is called *hors livre* by J. Derrida, and *métatexte* by J. Dubois. For more regarding this concept, see, La périphérie du texte by Philippe Lane.

According to this definition, as soon as a text, be it a work of fiction or not, becomes a book, it is accompanied by a *paratexte*. Keeping this in mind, Kahlo's 'diary' ceased to be simply Kahlo's diary as soon as it was published. Depending on the version one reads, one may interpret the 'diary' quite differently precisely because of the *paratexte* surrounding the facsimile of the 'diary'. What is the impact of the surrounding text on the 'diary' itself? And why was the 'diary' published with different texts surrounding it, depending on the version?

In order to answer these two questions, it is necessary to first identify the accompanying elements of Kahlo's 'diary'. All versions were published in 1995 as the diary of Frida Kahlo. They all begin with a photo of Kahlo taken by Lola Álvarez Bravo. This is followed by the front page which is in fact a modified version of the collage found at the beginning of Kahlo's diary (Image 5, Annex). The table of contents is embedded between a photo of Kahlo taken by Bernice Kolko and an introduction by Carlos Fuentes. As far as the preliminaries are concerned, this is what all versions have in common. They differ in the essays which follow. In the English, French and German versions, there is a single essay by Sarah M. Lowe entitled "Essay". In the Spanish version, Fuentes' introduction is followed by three essays; "¿Desenmascarando el mito?" by Karen Cordero Reinman; "¿Sadja o vivir en Coyoacán?" by Olivier Debrouse; and "Frida y Frida: Del color a la palabra" by Graciela Martínez-Zalce. After the introductory essays, all versions coincide in leaving a blank page facing a page with the title printed on top. Then there is the facsimile of the 'diary', which is preceded by a

photograph of Kahlo taken by Gisèle Freund. There is a translation (or transcription in the case of the Spanish version) of the 'diary' and a few brief commentaries by Sarah Lowe that are meant to set the 'diary' in its historical and cultural context. This is followed by a chronology and a photo of Frida Kahlo painting in bed taken by Juan Guzmán. The book ends with a bibliography and an index.

It must be noted that there are other elements of the *paratexte* that influence the reader's interpretation and judgment of the 'diary', such as the cover, the inner cover, the back cover, the type of paper, the type of print, the dimensions of the book, the critical reviews and the publicity. What all these elements have in common is that they usually play a role in the reception of the book as a marketable item. Their function is to convince the prospective reader, the buyer or borrower, to buy the book or borrow it from the library. Though these elements all play an integral role in the reception of the text, I will focus here primarily on the preliminary essays, since there is a rather significant difference depending on the version read. By preface I am referring to the introduction and prefatory essays found at the beginning of the book. I will look chiefly at the direction in which the preface guides the reader of the 'diary'. The preface takes for granted the presence of an interested reader, and therefore its function focuses on the way in which the reader should read the text that follows.

The preface in the first place is at the service of the text and not the reader. It serves essentially to ensure that the text will be read properly. This

implies two tasks: that the text is read, and that it is read well (Genette 183).¹¹ In other words, the preface is there to influence the reader's reading of the text. It serves to persuade the reader to read the text in a certain way, in a given light. As mentioned earlier, Kahlo's 'diary', depending on the language one chooses to read it in, is presented to the reader, or packaged, "differently", to such an extent that each version influences the reader in opposite directions. These differences will be explored later on in the chapter.

Apart from the above-mentioned principal function of a preface, Genette specifies the two main functions of any preface written by someone other than the author of the central text. These functions are to present the text that follows and to recommend it. (244)

Within the presentation of a text one can find the circumstances in which it was written, biographical information about its author and/or placement of the text within the context of the author's body of work (245-246). The second function, that of recommending the book to its reader, is usually based on the following formula, "Moi, X, je vous dis qu'Y a du génie, et qu'il faut lire son livre." (246) Although this formula is rarely made explicit, it is used for the most part by someone famous recommending a book written by someone less famous. In the case of a translation, this type of statement is made by someone better known than the author in the country in which the book is translated. (247) There are some authors, however, that are of the opinion that this type of preface, written by famous people, "est parfaitement inutile et ne fait pas vendre un exemplaire

¹¹ In French the quote reads as follows, "a pour fonction cardinale d'assurer au texte une bonne lecture...1. obtenir un lecture, et 2. Obtenir que cette lecture soit bonne" (Genette 183).

de plus, le bon lecteur sachant d'avance, déprécie un livre; car l'éditeur a l'air d'en douter puisqu'il a recours à un étranger pour en faire l'éloge" (Flaubert as quoted in Seuils by Gérard Genette 251). This type of reflection is of particular interest to the 'diary' of Kahlo, since it was the editor's choice to have Carlos Fuentes, a stranger to Kahlo, yet famous, write the introduction.

Genette mentions one way of recommending and appreciating a text in a preface is through critical commentary. Indeed he writes, "...valorisation et de commentaire critique, ne sont nullement incompatibles, et même que la seconde peut être la forme la plus efficace de la première, parce qu'indirecte..."(249) This technique seems to be lacking somewhat in the introduction of Carlos Fuentes.

Genette goes on to name a few traps the author of a preface or introduction can fall into, the biggest one being not to discuss the text at hand but to use it as a pretext to present his/her own ideas.

Mais il arrive aussi que le préfacier, fort de la position dominante que lui confère généralement sa notoriété, et toujours le fait de répondre à une demande, et donc certain de pouvoir à peu près 'tout se permettre', profite des circonstances pour déborder quelque peu l'objet prétendu de son discours au profit d'une cause plus vaste, ou éventuellement tout différente. L'oeuvre préfacée devient alors simple prétexte à un manifeste, à une confidence, à un règlement de compte, à une divagation. (250)

Since all versions share the same piece by Carlos Fuentes, I would like to discuss this text. Carlos Fuentes' introduction recounts various episodes of Kahlo's life. It is not so much focused on the 'diary' as it is on the legend of Frida Kahlo. From the beginning, where Fuentes sets the scene with the grand entrance of Kahlo as an Aztec goddess into the Palacio de Bellas Artes, up to the end, where Kahlo is transfigured into the heroine of one of Kafka's novels,

Fuentes, aided by such subtitles as “A street car named rape” or “A bomb wrapped in ribbons”, writes of the fantastical cliché-laden world of Frida Kahlo. The introduction characterizes Kahlo as various mythical figures ranging from a broken Cleopatra to a wide variety of Aztec gods and goddesses (Coatlícuē, Tlaxolteotl, Xipe Totec), to the Mexican versions of Saint Joan and Saint Sebastian, to the Spanish Dama de Elche, to the feminine Ariel. It becomes unclear at times whether or not Kahlo in fact existed as a flesh and bone human being rather than a character out of a novel. This novelistic dimension is further emphasized when Fuentes claims Kahlo’s letters to her lover seem written by a Catherine Earnshaw from a “Mexican Wuthering Heights”, or again when he refers to her as “such an endearing, and, finally, happy figure”, as though she were a character from a novel or movie.

This type of introduction is precisely what Margaret Lindauer in her book, Devouring Frida, describes as the reduction of Kahlo to an icon of tragedy and triumph (xii). Fuentes’ introduction contributes explicitly to the mythification of Kahlo by comparing her to a multitude of fictional characters. This mythification has been the general trend in most works dedicated to Kahlo. In fact, it has been the essential problem in the critical bibliography: most works written have focused primarily on Kahlo’s life and not on her work. This common trend is due to the interpretation of her art as highly referential, making it at times difficult to discuss without reference to biographical details. On the other hand, very little attention has been focused on the creative element within her work. Herrera in the preface of her autobiography, Frida. A Biography of Frida Kahlo, mentions in

passing that “The art—the legend Frida herself had created—won out in the end”(xii), but does not elaborate on her statement. Kahlo's art is not merely “Frida's autobiography in paint” (Herrera xii). It is art, an application of Kahlo's creativity. This often seems to be forgotten.

It often is the case, as with Fuentes' introduction, that Kahlo's work slips into the background at the expense of the biographical data about her life. For example, most of the subtitles throughout the introduction relate, not to her work, nor to her diary, but rather to her life: The Schism of the Body; Youth: A Streetcar Named Rape; Suffering: Murdered by Life; Politics: A Bomb Wrapped in Ribbons; Dressed for Paradise; Keys: Keys.¹² Fuentes, as many others before him, is not so much interested in Kahlo's production, in this case her 'diary', as he is in discussing her life. What Fuentes' does is to contextualize Kahlo's life within the history of Mexico. He does this explicitly at the beginning, mentioning her only in the first two sentences, and then going on to give a detailed description of the Palacio de Bellas Artes.

I only saw Frida Kahlo once. But first, I heard her. I was at a concert in the Palacio de Bellas Artes—the Palace of Fine Arts—in the center of Mexico City, a construction begun under the administration of the old dictator Porfirio Díaz in 1905 and very much in tune with the tastes of the Mexican elite at the turn of the century. An Italianate mausoleum in white marble, fashioned in the purest wedding-cake style, it remained in a state of physical and aesthetic suspension during the following thirty years of civil strife in Mexico. When it was finally inaugurated in 1934, the ornate, frozen meringue of the exterior had been thoroughly denied by the Art Deco interior...(7)

¹² The only exception is in the subtitle Art: Lions in the Bookshelf, which deals primarily with the influences on Kahlo's art and other's interpretation of it.

He does not mention Kahlo again until the third paragraph, "All of this in order to say that as Kahlo emerged..."(7) The rest of the introduction follows in the same style falling precisely into the digression trap described by Genette, as discussed earlier.

When discussing Kahlo's political convictions, Fuentes takes the opportunity to express his own opinions regarding Communism in Latin America by downplaying and reducing Kahlo's convictions to the loyalty she had towards Rivera,

Frida, then, saw politics through Rivera. And Rivera was an anarchist, a mythomaniac, a compulsive liar, and a fantastic storyteller. How were these qualities (or defects, if you wish) to blend with dogmatic Communism? I have a suspicion that many Latin American Communists are really lapsed Catholics in need of reassurance. Having lost the Catholic roof, they yearn for the Communist shelter...Today when religions resurrect and Marxism is pronounced dead, it is interesting to hark back to the 1930s and try to understand both its illusions and loss of the same. (19)

It would appear as though Fuentes was pushing his own agenda in these lines. He further makes light of Kahlo's political positions by asking, "Was there not a deeper sense to her politics than Rivera, Marxism, and the Cold War?" (21)

When it comes to a concrete discussion of the 'diary', Fuentes has indeed very little to say. He characterizes it as her lifeline to the world, as a painted diary, as proof of her clever sense of humour, as her confidant to whom she could express her views about art that contradicted her public views. None of these notions are discussed in detail.

What is the impact of Fuentes' introduction on the reader of the 'diary'? What kind of reading is it promoting? The introduction leaves the reader with a very vague idea of what is to follow and therefore does not in fact present the 'diary' to the reader. It is lacking in critical commentary regarding the 'diary', and is much more focused on the persona of Frida Kahlo. Fuentes' introduction, when recalling the basic formula given by Genette for recommending a text can be summed up in the following manner: "I, Carlos Fuentes, a very famous Mexican author quite knowledgeable of my Mexican heritage say to you, dear reader, that Frida Kahlo was a genius. More than a genius she was a Goddess, a mythical figure and I recommend that you read her 'diary'. How? With reverence, with the knowledge that what lies within its pages is not the product of a mere mortal but rather the legacy left behind by a divine entity." And what would be the interest in presenting Kahlo in this light? As stated earlier, nearly everything written about her has promoted her as a martyr, as a legendary figure, larger than life, surreal. This having been said, the published 'diary' was not addressed to scholars, since it lacks critical commentary, but rather to the mass market, specifically the non-Mexican mass market. Given the current wave of "Fridamania", defined by Lindauer as being, "the so-called frenzied cult following reflected by mass-market circulation of objects bearing Kahlo's image" (12), the editors of the 'diary' obviously assumed that this mass market of Kahlo fans, who already recognize her as a mythical heroic figure would rather read her diary with this legend in mind than look at it as the work of a mere mortal, or a Communist, or an intellectual. Though the reader may have a very confused idea of the

identity of Frida Kahlo after reading her 'diary', it will be congruous with most of what has been written about her in the past.

Sarah Lowe's essay in the English, German and French versions, unlike Fuentes' introduction, actually does present the 'diary'. From the beginning, Lowe, author of a biography of Frida Kahlo, focuses her attention on the 'diary' to follow. Lowe spends comparatively little time recounting Kahlo's biography, and rather than mythologizing Kahlo, dramatizes her.

Lowe begins her essay by trying to establish that reading the 'diary' inevitably implies an act of transgression. She does this by discussing the 'diary' genre and categorizing Kahlo's diary as being a *journal intime*, meaning that it was never intended to be read by anyone. The first part of the essay conveys to the reader the idea that reading the pages that follow is akin to violating Kahlo's intimacy. It even goes so far as to act as a warning to the reader by implying that the 'diary' is perhaps to be viewed as something dangerous, or at the very least mysterious. This caution is made explicit when she writes, "Thus, these pages must be approached with some trepidation; the portrait Kahlo paints here, with color and lines, with prose and poetry, is an image of the artist unmasked" (26). This warning, coupled with Lowe's vocabulary of taboo, in terms such as "transgression", "voyeurism", "disclosure", "unmasked", "trepidation", "provocative" and "aggressively audacious", help to create an aura of forbidden mystery around the 'diary'. This strategy, making the reader feel as though he/she is partaking in something taboo, is designed to heighten his/her curiosity.

It incites the reader to read on in order to find out all the hidden details of Kahlo's life that ere never intended for others.

In keeping with the tragedy/triumph dichotomy established early on in her essay, Lowe arrives at her last paragraph in melodramatic style: "Despite the pain and anguish Kahlo freely and openly expressed in her 'diary', her unquenchable search for life reveals itself". (29) The essay ends with very strong imagery of Kahlo in intense suffering, "...is a testimony to her vigilant recording, in words and pictures, of her inexorable path toward death." Lowe emphasizes Kahlo's pain in these lines, thus leaving the reader with a final image of Kahlo as being completely consumed by her various ailments. The dramatization of Kahlo's suffering seems to be done at the expense of all other facets of Kahlo's life. As Margaret Lindauer remarks, "It is tempting to condense Kahlo's life into a narrative of emotional and physical health, first because biographers' interviews with the artist's colleagues and acquaintances bind significant events, passions, and idiosyncratic characteristics of the artist's life to her marriage and/or illnesses. And second, it allows for a heroic/tragic drama. Because Kahlo's life has been recounted as a litany of physical and psychological symptoms, she is revered for her 'triumph' in creating art despite the 'torment' of bodily and emotional injury." (3-4) Though she focuses primarily on the 'diary', Lowe fails to separate her work from her life, a trap many biographers have fallen into.¹³

¹³Margaret Lindauer describes this general trend of interpreting Kahlo's work with the author=corpus theory, "A pervasive torment/triumph approach can be gleaned from a cursory glance at monograph and essay titles: Andrea Kettenmann's *Frida Kahlo: Pain and Passion*; Malka Drucker's *Frida Kahlo: Torment and Triumph in Her Life and Art*; Martha Zamora's *Brush of Anguish*; Nancy Breslow's 'Cry of Joy and Pain'; Hayden Herrera's 'Frida Kahlo; The Palette, the Pain and the Painter'; and Gloria Orenstein's 'Painting for Miracles' " (4).

Interestingly, Lowe, just as Fuentes, seems uneasy with Kahlo's politics. Instead of describing Kahlo as a Communist, she skirts around the subject, timidly mentioning that Kahlo had throughout her life been sympathetic to Communism, having joined the young Communist league in her youth. She talks about Kahlo's commitment to social causes supported by the Party, yet she fails to call Kahlo an outright Communist and active party member. Furthermore, Lowe makes a point of distancing Kahlo from Communism when she states,

...Kahlo's interest in Communism moved beyond social conscience and became an epistemological, perhaps even religious search for 'pillars' that could support her faith. Her thousand-year Mexican heritage offered solace. By combining Communism with this conviction, Kahlo fashioned an ideal that was uncomplicated by the realities of the two regimes, for neither the bloodthirsty, class-divided aspects of the Aztecs [sic], nor the authoritative, regimented practices of Stalin are considered. (28-29)

In summary, the English, French and German versions tend to write off Kahlo's politics as somewhat superficial. According to Fuentes, Kahlo said she was a Communist because her husband was, yet she apparently lacked conviction. Lowe complements this picture by trying to rationalize her politics, making her out to be more of a moderate with a rather simplistic approach to Communism, though Kahlo herself claimed to be aware of "dialectical materialism." (28)

Kahlo refers to her political ideals through the use of symbols (hammer and sickle) or statements (*soy yo un ser comunista*) in approximately one quarter of the 'diary's entries. According to the Fuentes/Lowe prefatory essays, these entries are not to be interpreted as a true reflection of Kahlo's ideals, but

rather, should not be given much importance. The message conveyed to the reader is that, though Kahlo explicitly identified herself with Communism, she was not *per se* a Communist. Though this may very well have been the case, it differs dramatically from the introduction given in the Spanish version which will be discussed later in this chapter. The Kahlo represented in the English, French and German versions is not a political radical. This version of Kahlo perhaps appeals to the non-Mexican mass market who may not identify her with Communism and would prefer a less controversial reading.

In what direction, then, does the Fuentes/Lowe preface guide the reader? Though Lowe cautions the reader in her essay, the impact of both introduction and essay on the reader is that what follows should be taken lightly. The preface given in the English, French and German versions recognizes Kahlo more as a pop icon than as an artist. This entices the reader to read the diary as a way of finding out the secrets that lie beyond what has already been written. Since Fuentes hardly mentions the 'diary' but instead reinforces the already predominant image of Kahlo as myth, his introduction can be interpreted as somewhat superficial. Lowe's essay, though more critical or at the very least more focused on the task of presenting the 'diary', complements Fuentes' introduction by awakening the reader's curiosity. Given the complexity of the 'diary', not only because of the themes discussed but also through its frequent change of medium, the Fuentes/Lowe preface does not adequately present the text. There is very little insight into Kahlo's 'diary' and very few critical tools are given to the reader to aid him/her in deciphering its text.

The decision to include this preface in the non-Mexican editions of the diary stems perhaps from the accepted image that non-Mexicans supposedly already have of Kahlo. As Lindauer states, Frida Kahlo has become a consumer object since the early 90s.¹⁴ "Fridamania", which manifests itself through the Frida-look copied in fashion magazines, T-shirts, jewelry, shoes, posters, nail polish and a soon-to-be-released Hollywood movie, has contributed to the mythification of Kahlo as a pop icon (1). The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait, published in 1995 and in 2001, follows the general trend. By no means a critical edition, this book has been packaged as a serious book on Kahlo, through its association with Fuentes and Lowe, yet remains another element in the engulfing of Kahlo as a product to be consumed by the masses.

The Spanish version of the 'diary', El diario de Frida Kahlo: autorretrato íntimo, was published by the same editors as the English version: La vaca independiente publishing company and H.P. Abrams, Inc. The pagination throughout the book is identical to the other versions, apart from the three essays. These essays have been paginated into the book with Roman numerals. Each essay concentrates on a different aspect of Kahlo's 'diary', giving the reader different interpretations. Though all versions of the book share Fuentes' introduction, the Spanish version appears to be more complete, precisely because of the multiple angles used in the essays to approach the 'diary'.

¹⁴ Lindauer cites the travelling exhibit "Mexico: Splendor's of Thirty Centuries" at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1991, which publicized the event with the use of one of Kahlo's self-portraits on billboards, newspapers and museums, as having contributed substantially to "Fridamania" (1)

The first essay, “¿Desenmascarando el mito? (Notas para una lectura del “Diario de Frida Kahlo)”, was written by Karen Cordero Reinman, an art critic working in Mexico. Her title clashes quite obviously with the Fuentes essay that precedes it. Though her essay begins much in the same manner as Sarah Lowe’s, discussing the act of reading the diary as implicitly linked to voyeurism, Cordero Reinman’s main focus is precisely the demystification of Kahlo. She is distinctly aware of the author=corpus type interpretations surrounding Kahlo’s work, and sees the ‘diary’ as being key to establishing a distance between Kahlo’s private life and her public image and work. Cordero Reinman sees the ‘diary’ somewhat in terms of a dialogue between Kahlo and Surrealism.¹⁵ She refers to the first image of her diary by quoting a number of different sources ranging from Manuel Álvarez Bravo’s famous photograph, “Obrero en huelga, asesinado”, used by André Breton, the self-proclaimed pope of Surrealism, on the front cover of the exhibition catalogue for the “Exposición internacional del Surrealismo en México” in 1940, to the Mexican tradition of painting dead children lying as though sleeping on their beds (like the one Kahlo herself painted in 1937 entitled “El difuntito Dimas Rosas a los tres años de edad”, Image 35, Appendix), to the typical style of invitation cards sent by young girls to celebrate their 15th birthday. Interestingly enough, Cordero Reinman takes for granted that such works will be well-known to the reader since there are no reproductions accompanying the essay to demonstrate the connections described.

¹⁵ The Surrealist movement is by no means the exclusive focus of the ‘diary’ for Cordero Reinman. She also says, “Como el ‘diario’ es un producto de los últimos diez años de la vida de Kahlo, también habría que interpretar su significado a la luz de la imagen de esta artista en su propio tiempo, ante sus contemporáneos y en particular ante el surrealismo, un movimiento cuya importancia para Kahlo emerge aquí con mayor claridad que en su obra pública.”(1)

The focus of Cordero Reinman's essay is on the comparison between the collage made by Kahlo at the beginning of her 'diary' and a painting of Kahlo's entitled "La máscara" (not reproduced in the essay), done at roughly the same time (1945). The painting in question is a self-portrait of Kahlo holding up a mask in front of her face and therefore hiding it. The viewer recognizes that the person behind the mask is Kahlo because of the elaborate hairstyle which is left visible and the slender hand with flaming red fingernails and adorned with one of Kahlo's typical massive rings. According to Cordero Reinman,

...podemos reforzar la hipótesis de que el documento en cuestión es el producto de una reflexión crítica de Frida Kahlo sobre el invento que ella misma hizo de su identidad y su relación con la imagen que la sociedad produjo de ella...La imagen de la máscara se acerca, en color y en impacto, a algunas de las imágenes libres y fantásticas del "diario". Al poner así en entredicho la construcción pictórica de su identidad en términos exotocistas e indigenistas, la obra parece reflejar disgusto e incomodidad con la versión que de sí misma había construido y proyectado, y que para los cuarenta la había hecho una especie de mito o prototipo de 'lo mexicano'. Sería verosímil, entonces, que el ímpetu detrás de este 'diario' es el rechazo o cuestionamiento a este mito, y el afán de emplear nuevas estrategias para descubrir o indagar en la intimidad propia. (II)

The *nuevas estrategias* Cordero Reinman is referring to here are those of Surrealism. She sees Kahlo as using techniques favoured by the Surrealists, such as *automatismo*, as a tool to explore her own identity¹⁶.

¹⁶ The exact quote is as follows, "En el 'diario' se percibe desde su inicio el empleo del flujo de conciencia, herramienta surrealista para dar configuración o voz al inconsciente, a partir de la asociación libre de palabras, de dar sentido figurativo a manchas de tinta, o de dejar—como Klee—que una línea 'siga su camino'. Así el "automatismo" se convierte ... en un instrumento seductivo y divertido para explorarse a sí misma y para generar nuevas imágenes visuales y verbales, vehículo de una especie de autoanálisis que le lleva más allá de los límites de su estilo e identidad establecidos. (II-III)

The essay next attempts to establish the category to which the 'diary' belongs, and draws a distinction between the texts and images in the 'diary' and those produced in the public sphere. Cordero Reinman ends by showing the influences of other artists, particularly that of Kahlo's husband, Diego Rivera, on the images found in the 'diary'. Her theory is that, whereas Kahlo's public works were extremely well constructed in order to affirm her independence from Rivera's artistic influence, among others, Kahlo, in her 'diary' allows herself to let down her guard and explore her own identity. Cordero Reinman concludes that ,
“...se abren nuevas posibilidades para la lectura de la obra de Kahlo como construcción, una construcción más vulnerable de lo que aparentaba.” (IV)

It is obvious that the impact of “¿Desenmascarando el mito? (Notas para una lectura del “Diario” de Frida Kahlo)” is completely different from that produced by Lowe's essay. Whereas the latter explicitly relegates the 'diary' to being just another product to be added to the long list of cult objects of consumption, the former encourages an intelligent and complex reading of the 'diary' as a work primarily in dialogue with Surrealism. It presents the 'diary' as being relevant to the current interpretations of Kahlo's paintings.

The second essay, “¿Sadja o vivir en Coyoacán?” by Olivier Debroise, a writer, art critic and curator specializing in Mexican culture, also questions the dramatization of Kahlo's life and interpretation of her 'diary' as a record of Kahlo's “inexorable path towards death”, as Lowe puts it (29). The title of his essay can be interpreted as referring precisely to the dichotomy between the myth Kahlo herself contributed to creating, and her own private life. According to Debroise,

Kahlo would sign various entries throughout her 'diary' as Sadja, a reference to the title of André Breton's novel Nadja, where he characterizes the "Surrealist woman." (VII) Sadja therefore comes to represent the fictional identity Kahlo constructed in her public life¹⁷. Coyoacán, on the other hand, would be symbolic of Kahlo's true self, referring to her birthplace, her home and her place of death.

Another possibility, according to Debroise, is that the title refers to the various thematic periods within Kahlo's 'diary'. Debroise writes that the 'diary' may be divided into three independent parts. The first, written between 1945 and 1946, deals with Surrealism manifested through automatic writing, accidental painting and explicit references such as the use of Sadja as her signature. The second part, written between 1947 and 1950, shows more typical diary entries, namely her genealogy, childhood memories and the inspiration behind one of her works, "Las dos Fridas". Debroise characterizes this second part as, "la negación de la informalidad y de los aspectos lúdicos del precedente." (VII) According to Debroise, the last part of Kahlo's 'diary', also the most voluminous, was written most probably during her three-month stay at the "Hospital Inglés de la Ciudad de México" in 1953, when she had her left leg amputated. Debroise summarizes the themes to be found in this final part as Kahlo's reaction to the "mutilation" of her body, death and her commitment to the Communist party. He makes a point of mentioning that Kahlo sought membership in the party five years before Rivera. He also explicitly writes that Kahlo was forging herself a

¹⁷ It is worth noting that in Lowe's commentaries, which are also to be found in the Spanish version, Sadja is explained as, "...a variation of the Sanskrit word *Sadha* meaning heaven and earth and *Sadya* meaning genuine or sincere. (Kahlo 240)."

new identity in this last part of her 'diary' as, "... una Frida Kahlo, una militante comunista..." (VIII)

There are two other points made by Debroise that explicitly contribute to the radically different reception of the 'diary' by the reader. In the first place, Debroise points out that, though the 'diary's' existence has been known to the public since Kahlo's death and has been on exhibition in the Casa Azul, museum opened on the same page, since 1958, few have had access to it "...lo que favoreció las especulaciones y la mixtificación [sic]." (V) He goes on to quote one of his own works as an example of such erroneous speculation. Before its publication the 'diary' was considered vital to an understanding of many enigmas surrounding Kahlo's work ("El 'diario', por lo tanto, parecía una importante fuente primaria que develaría numerosos enigmas acerca de la obra de Kahlo." [Debroise V]) This assumption, made before the 'diary' was ever even read, bears a striking resemblance to the caution given by Lowe, "Thus, these pages must be approached with some trepidation; the portrait Kahlo paints here, with color and lines, with prose and poetry, is an image of the artist unmasked." (Lowe 26) As noted in Chapter 1, Debroise suggests that the 'diary' is yet another one of Kahlo's constructions, made to be read by others and therefore contradicts the supposition that it is the key to uncovering the artist's work and life. Despite this, Debroise concludes his essay with the statement that, rather than promoting the further mythification of herself, Kahlo, specifically in the last parts of her 'diary', is in the process of deconstructing her own myths, in part created earlier on in the 'diary', thus turning the diary into, "una insólita obra de arreglo y conciliación."(IX)

Debroise invites the reader to read Kahlo's 'diary' as a work which simultaneously contributes to the construction and deconstruction of Kahlo's myth.

The second point that Debroise brings to the fore in his essay is the "(mis)interpretation" of one of Kahlo's last entries as being her final farewell to the world. He puts this entry into a context which completely de-dramatizes it.

Espero con ansia la salida y espero no volver jamás.

El diario termina con esta observación, a menudo glosada por los hagiógrafos de Kahlo como una renuncia suicidaria a la vida, antecedente inmediato de la muerte, pero que, en un estudio más cabal del contexto, simplemente indica la salida del hospital y el (último, por cierto) retorno a la casa azul de Coyoacán, con la esperanza de no volver jamás al hospital; por ende no volver a pasar por la espantosa experiencia de la mutilación. (VIII)

When compared to Lowe's comments on this entry, "As she awaits discharge from the hospital, her words have a double meaning" (285), one cannot help but see the drastic difference in tone. While Lowe promotes the melodramatic, heart-wrenching interpretation, Debroise suggests to the reader a much more pragmatic way of reading the entry.

The third essay, "Frida y Frida: Del color a la palabra", was written by Graciela Martínez Zalce, a professor at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico City. Though there is no explicit mention in the essay, be it through footnotes or endnotes¹⁸, of Béatrice Didier's book, Le journal intime, it is more than clear that Martínez Zalce's essay is indebted to this work.¹⁹ Though

¹⁸ There is but one endnote referring to Hayden Herrera's biography of Kahlo.

¹⁹ Graciela Martínez Zalce's essay copies Didier's ideas and words, without recognizing her source.

lacking in academic credibility, Martínez Zalce's essay attempts to demonstrate how Kahlo's 'diary' fits into the diary genre. Her essay opens with a quote in French by Marguerite Duras about writing alone, which refers to the condition necessary to write a diary. Martínez Zalce starts by giving a brief description of the diary genre. She then goes on to establish how Kahlo through words and color adheres to the genre.

The interpretation proposed to the reader is, "Escritura espejo donde Frida Kahlo se retrató, otra Frida y la misma, la de imágenes sonoras, la de palabras." (XIV) In other words, Kahlo's 'diary' should be viewed as mirroring both Kahlo's pictorial and verbal self. This essay assumes that the reader is already well acquainted with Kahlo's work and will be able to achieve a more global understanding and appreciation of Kahlo's entire artistic production.

The style of the essay is quite dense and characterized by long sentences. This at times leads to confusion, requiring a great deal of re-reading in order to understand the meaning of a particular sentence. This may be in part due to the fact that most of the text is a translation of another work which was not written specifically with Kahlo's 'diary' in mind.

Pero además están los autobiográficos, como aquel en que habla del origen de las dos Fridas, cuento de infancia en que se mezclan la fantasía y la realidad; o el esquema de su vida, puro texto azul, donde traza su genealogía; el tono característico del diario, que pertenece al modo de lo discontinuo, se pierde para ceder el paso al ritmo de la autobiografía donde la memoria juega un papel orgánico y organizador; o el relato de sus operaciones, garabateado con caligrafía desfigurada; prisionera de su mal, viajera en su propio abismo, la Frida enferma lleva un diario que la ayuda a sanar; en este caso particular, la distancia entre los eventos y el tiempo de la escritura es particularmente importante;

en plena crisis, ¿qué queda de la visión?, ¿qué tanto es recomposición? Por ser una artista, la elaboración que Kahlo hace de todos elementos autobiográficos —tan obviamente presentes en su otra obra, la pública—tiene aún más peso. (XIII)²⁰

The Mexican edition presents Kahlo's 'diary' from different angles. The introductory essays offer at times contradictory interpretations of Kahlo's 'diary', of Kahlo's work and of Kahlo herself, especially when taking into account the presence of Fuentes' introduction. This kaleidoscopic preface reflects the complexities to be found in the 'diary' that follows it. It does not offer one single way of looking at the text, but rather presents it through a variety of different interpretations ranging from Kahlo's conscious desire to further construct her public image to the exact opposite, namely Kahlo's deconstruction of her own identity. The critical commentary provided specifically in Karen Cordero Reinman's and Olivier Debroise's essays encourages the reader to question Kahlo's motivations when writing her 'diary' and to be aware of the identity constructed within its pages.

The preface of Mexican edition differs considerably from the one in the English, French and German versions. The reason for such disparity perhaps lies in the fact that the audience of the Mexican edition, first and foremost the Mexican population, probably have a better knowledge of Kahlo's life and work, since she is an integral part of the country's artistic culture. They would have a

²⁰The following are some sentences from Didier's *Le journal intime* used to construct the above sentence. *Le journal appartient au mode du discontinu.*(9) *La mémoire n'y joue pas ce rôle organique, organisateur qui*

better understanding of Kahlo's work and the context in which it was written, as well as more general knowledge concerning the social context Kahlo refers to in her work and her 'diary'. The editors seem to have decided that presenting Kahlo's diary in such simplistic one-dimensional terms as the preface to the non-Mexican edition does, would not appeal to Spanish-speaking readers. It would appear that the editors chose a much more complex way of presenting the 'diary' to the Spanish-speaking audience because they consider them to be more critical and more knowledgeable of Kahlo's work and life.

caracterise le rythme de l'autobiographie (9). Prisonnier de son mal, et voyageur dans son propre abîme, le malade aura tendance a tenir un journal qui parfois aide à sa guérison...(13)

Chapter 3: The Work

In this third and final chapter I will focus on the facsimile of Kahlo's 'diary' as such. I will examine the relationship between Kahlo's 'diary' and her artistic production and in the first place, propose that this relationship exists. Secondly, I will show that it exists in the form of a dialogue, a dialogue not only present between her diary and her canvases, but within the diary and between the canvases themselves. More specifically, I will look at the dialogues manifested between the different media and modes of production at work in both her 'diary' and her canvases. I will examine general stylistic and thematic characteristics present in her 'diary' and paintings as well as specific paintings and entries, particularly the collage found on the first page of her 'diary' and the image found on the 'diary's last page. These various dialogues will be demonstrated by descriptive analysis of these products of Kahlo's artistic and creative expression.

Kahlo's 'diary' spans the last ten years of her life. Though the initial entry is undated, most agree²¹ that the 'diary' was begun in 1944 or 1945 and it was kept until her death in 1954. The 'diary' contains 171 pages²² and as seen in Chapter 1, is made up of various media, ranging from paintings and photographs to writing. Kahlo often intertwined both images and text to express herself. It is

²¹ Lowe refers to Kahlo's age (36-37) when she began her 'diary' (on page 26 of her introduction to the English version). Herrera, in her biography of Kahlo, refers to the 'diary' as having been written in the last decade of Kahlo's life (11). Cordero Reinman also refers to it as the product of the last ten years of Kahlo's life on page II of the Spanish version of the 'diary'. Debroise talks about the 'diary' as having been kept between the years of 1944 and 1954 on page VII of the Spanish version.

²² I have counted 171 pages in the facsimile of the 'diary' but we know that in addition to the 171 pages, there are a few left blank which are not accounted for, and there are others which have been torn out.

not uncommon to find a combination of media in a single entry²³. Almost half the entries are made up of a combination of images and text. The colours found in the 'diary' are vibrant and correspond to the colours of many of her paintings; strong reds, oranges, yellows, blues and greens. This is exemplified by the entry entitled "movimiento al danzar" (Image 28, Appendix), where there is a predominance of red, green and yellow; and in her painting in the canvas "El difuntito Dimas Rosas a los tres años de edad" (Image 35, Appendix), where Kahlo uses green, yellow, violet and blue. The colours are often used to fill in a figure outlined in brown, dark blue or black (as is the case in the entry, "movimiento al danzar", Image 28, Appendix), or simply used in contrast with one another within a text (as one can see in her list of definitions of colours, Image 19, Appendix). Most of the images are figurative though there are occasional landscapes, like the entry entitled "Ruinas" where Kahlo depicts a solitary pyramid (Image 34, Appendix), doodles (Image 30, Appendix) and still lifes (Image 33, Appendix).

In the 'diary' Kahlo writes prose (seen in her entry entitled "Las dos Fridas", Image 1-4, Appendix), poetry (plate 14, 210), recipes (as the one for vegetable paint, Image 6, Appendix), definitions (Image 19, Appendix), letters (as the various letters she writes to Diego throughout her diary, Image 18, Appendix), comments and titles for the images in the 'diary' (Image 40-42, Appendix), long lists of seemingly disconnected words (plates 5-7, 203-204) and words that

²³ In numerical terms, there are 80 entries(43%) made up of both images and text, 93 pages (54%) in which images appear, 145 pages (84%) where writing appears. There are 20 pages (12%) of images alone and 68 pages (39%) of text alone.

are the centerpiece of an entry and take on a similar role to that of an image (as is the case in her composition with “Sadja” prominently written in the middle of the page, Image 27, Appendix). Kahlo uses aquarelle, ink, pencils and charcoal to create the images and text within the ‘diary’, often incorporating two or three of these media in one entry. Throughout the ‘diary’ there are blotches of ink which Kahlo transforms into figures or parts of figures . These blotches have soaked through various pages throughout the work which Kahlo transforms, incorporating the ink spot into something different in every entry (Images 20-29, Appendix). She has also created two collages using photographs, cut out pieces of paper and a postcard giving these pages a certain texture (Images 5 and 26, Appendix).

The topics which Kahlo explores in the ‘diary’ are directly related to her work as an artist, her emotional life, her health, her genealogy and her political beliefs. Her husband, Diego Rivera, is a constant from beginning to end. She also expresses her deep concerns for her declining physical health, as one can see at the end of her ‘diary’ where she continuously refers to her amputated leg (Images13-16, Appendix). She talks about her role as an artist in society, more specifically the role her art can play in the “Communist Revolution”. Kahlo’s commitment to Communism is demonstrated on plate 114, 261 where she prints the names of Engels, Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao along with a hammer and sickle. She writes about her life, her family, ethnic and cultural background, as well as that of Mexico, exemplified when she thanks a list of people, “Gracias...al pueblo de México, sobre todo el de Coyoacán donde nació mi primera célula,

que se incubo [sic] en Oaxaca, en el vientre de mi madre, que había nacido ahí, casada con mi padre, Guillermo Kahlo—mi madre Matilde Calderón, morena campanita de Oaxaca...” (plate 150, 280). She comments on the world she lives in, at times condemning it, as in the entry where she says, “La tragedia es lo más ridículo que tiene el ‘hombre’, pero estoy segura, de que los animales, aunque ‘sufren’, no exhiben su ‘pena’ en ‘teatros’ abiertos, ni ‘cerrados’ (los ‘hogares’) (Image 25, Appendix). In other instances Kahlo celebrates life and the world surrounding her: “He logrado mucho. Seguridad al caminar, seguridad al pintar. Amo a Diego más que a mí misma. Mi voluntad es grande, Mi voluntad permanece...” (plate 145, 278). Her vision of the world is therefore complex and often contradictory but always lucid. The tone of the ‘diary’ changes regularly. At times Kahlo expresses herself in more playful and ironical terms as when she comments on love, “El ‘clásico’ ‘amor’sin flechas” and draws tiny spermatazoa underneath her words (Image 23, Appendix). Yet in other entries, the ‘diary’ gives way to a much darker, more desperate tone as is the case in one of her last written entries where she writes, “Espero alegre la salida, y espero no volver jamás (plate 160, 285).

There are some, like Debroise, as we have seen in Chapter 2, who consider certain topics dealt with in specific parts of the ‘diary’. Another approach suggests that the ‘diary’ is not so easily broken down into rigid thematic divisions but is rather a flexible, freer work throughout which Kahlo explores various topics, allowing them to float easily from one entry to another.

In this chapter, I will investigate whether the 'diary' forms part of Kahlo's work as an artist or is it rather to be viewed as a separate work? Is it in dialogue with her paintings? If so, how does this dialogue manifest itself? And does it help to better understand her work as a whole or do her paintings help to better understand her 'diary'? What do they have in common? How do they differ? Does the fact that the paintings belong to institutional art and that the 'diary', in principle, represents her private self play, a role in Kahlo's artistic expression? How does Kahlo express herself in her 'diary' and in her paintings?

In her article, "Féminité, hybridité, monstruosité: Le journal de Frida Kahlo", Georgiana Colvile writes that, "pris dans un certain ordre, les tableaux racontent une histoire structurée, relevant plutôt du symbolique. L'expérience du journal sera surtout visuelle, défiant toute lecture linéaire et toute interprétation critique." (350). She implies that Kahlo's 'diary' is different from her paintings due to its inherent incoherence, and therefore cannot be considered as making up part of her body of work. She also writes about the 'diary': "...les dessins et autres images y sont pour la plupart présents, sans vraiment chercher à représenter... Cette iconographie esquissée et brouillonne vient s'opposer aux tableaux minutieux et stylisés." (348-349) Though Colvile has a point when contrasting the different styles of the pictures within the 'diary' with her paintings, I believe that the images work together with the text of the 'diary' to represent the various topics mentioned earlier. When Colvile considers the role of the text, she writes, "Texte hybride rassemblant la plupart des écrits de Kahlo, le journal se compose en grande partie d'associations d'idées et d'images provenant des

extrêmes limites du conscient...l'écriture, poésie ou prose, ne se veut pas vraiment rationnelle et ne se distingue jamais tout à fait de l'iconographie. Les encres multicolores contribuent à cet effet" (349). I question this interpretation since, were one to eliminate the text altogether from Kahlo's 'diary', it would indeed become visual, non-linear and defy all critical interpretation. I believe that in most cases (there are certain exceptions) the multimodal aspects of the 'diary', namely the combination of text and images as simultaneous modes or channels of meaning, allow the 'diary' to be deciphered and understood as a prolongation of Kahlo's artistic production.

One of the most obvious characteristics that both Kahlo's paintings and her 'diary' have in common is the combination of images and text. The 'diary' has often been described as hybrid specifically because of its use of these two forms of expression. When text appears in Kahlo's paintings, it usually serves as an explanation for the image it accompanies. Many critics have associated Kahlo's paintings with Mexican 'retablos' or 'ex-votos'. It is widely known that Kahlo admired and was inspired by the artwork of the 'ex-votos' she collected. In these typically Mexican forms of popular art, which depict the scene of a miracle that has taken place and the saint responsible for this miracle, the writing serves as a narration for the events depicted. In general the writing in these 'retablos' is limited to one field, either at the top or bottom of the painting and this field is usually separated from the painting by having a different coloured background. The text gives details such as the date, the place, the person who received the

miracle as well as the one commissioning the painting, the saint responsible for the miracle and the miracle itself.

Many of Kahlo's paintings contain text which, like the 'retablos', narrate the image. They give details similar to those of the 'retablos'. When Kahlo uses the 'retablo' style in her portraits, she generally includes her name, the date and the place where she painted. Such is the case in her painting entitled, "Self-Portrait with Loose Hair" painted in 1947 (Image 39, Appendix). In this painting Kahlo, isolates the text by having it appear on a scroll at the bottom of the canvas. It reads, "Aqui [sic] me pinté yo, Frida Kahlo, con la imagen del espejo. Tengo 37 años, y es el mes de Julio de mil novecientos cuarenta y siete. En Coyoacán, México, lugar donde nací." The script is carefully executed in delicate cursive writing reminiscent of the type of script found on historical paintings of colonial Mexico. The script as well as the formula used on these paintings are there for posterity, to indicate that an important event or person is depicted in the painting. As in most of her paintings where text interacts with the image, the script works to give us more information about the portrait or at least the conditions in which the portrait was produced. The viewer is given the name of the subject, the age, the date, the place and the technique used by Kahlo. This portrait is not made from a photograph but from Kahlo's own image in a mirror. The viewer is invited to imagine Kahlo painting herself, with a mirror held up in front of her. The text works not only to personalize the subject of the portrait but also the painter executing it.

The collage found on the first page of the 'diary' (Image 5, Appendix) translates into meaning on various levels. When one looks at the different modes, media and colours involved in constructing this composition, it becomes apparent that all of these aspects contribute to fully understanding the dialogues taking place between this first entry and the rest of Kahlo's 'diary' but also between it and Kahlo's artistic production. Furthermore the notion of dialogue is also present when we consider the interaction of each of the various elements mentioned above, namely the modes, media and colours, used in this collage.

Lowe's comments for the first entry are as follows,

The diary's first page is a prelude to the journal and the Surreal world found within its pages. "Painted 1916", Kahlo announces in crimson, the year she was nine—an overt prevarication proclaiming her lack of concern for "rational facts". Compounding the sense of irreality, Kahlo's whimsical collage combines a sentimental illustration—complete with a wreath of flowers, a pink ribbon, and a bird—and a strange photographic portrait of herself, probably taken by her friend Lola Álvarez Bravo. The effect is both jarring and provocative, but it is a private joke the viewer is not entitled to understand fully. (202)

I agree, for the most part with Lowe's comments but believe that, since the collage found at the beginning of the 'diary' may be in some way a commentary on what is to follow, it deserves a more in depth analysis. I would like to explore in detail the specific elements making up this composition in order to show that this complex beginning to the 'diary' reflects perfectly the complexity of the ensuing text. This first page of the 'diary' is in direct dialogue with Kahlo's paintings.

The top quarter of the collage found on the first page is dominated by the words, "Pint(é) de 1916"²⁴. These words are painted in magenta. Semantically these words lack completeness and coherence. The "é", added on in bright orange to the stem of the verb, almost as an afterthought, represents the first person singular of the past tense. The 'de' in order to signify 'since' would logically have had to be 'desde'. Furthermore, Kahlo was only 9 years old in 1916 and there is no reference to her having painted until she was well into her teens. What is Kahlo trying to communicate in this phrase? As opposed to the text found in her paintings which generally serve as a narration or identification of the image they accompany, the text in this collage creates an enigma. There are however some common elements to be found when comparing this collage to her paintings, specifically her "Self-Portrait with Loose Hair"(Image 39, Appendix). In the first place, both in the collage and in most of her portraits where text appears on a scroll, ribbon or paper, she refers to the act of painting. In other words, she explicitly refers to the medium used to produce the work. She identifies herself as an artist, as a painter.

Secondly, in both cases she mentions a date. In "Self-Portrait with Loose Hair"(Image 39, Appendix), she writes out alphabetically the date on which she has produced the painting, thereby simultaneously giving the viewer the age of the sitter as well as the age of the artist. In contrast with her paintings, the date indicated in the collage remains a mystery. The viewer does not know what she is referring to. Did she paint what lies beneath in 1916? Has she been painting

²⁴ Lowe, in her commentaries, translates this into Painted 1916, which does not take into account the most problematic element of this phrase, the preposition "de".

since 1916? Is one to understand the figure in the photograph as having been the one painting since 1916? Though a date appears in both productions, making this element a common feature, it serves a different purpose in each case.

The third aspect of the text that both this collage and her painting have in common is the invitation to the viewer to imagine how the composition was created. In her painting this is done explicitly by referring to the mirror. In the collage, the viewer is also invited to picture the process of production through the colours used in the text. The first colour Kahlo used was the magenta and she wrote out the phrase, minus the personal inflection. She then added the “é” and drew a line underneath the text. Separating it from the already existing collage. One can assume the collage already existed because the line is broken, meaning that the collage was produced first and then the text was added on, like an afterthought, like the “é” from pint(é). One can therefore deduce that the ‘diary’ started not with language, as one might expect, but rather with image. Just as she first painted her paintings and then added textual commentary²⁵.

Beneath the text, there are premanufactured images pasted onto the page. At the top of the collage we see a dove with a pink ribbon around its neck attached to an open scroll. The scroll, decorated with blue flowers, frames a black and white photograph of Kahlo lying on the floor with her eyes closed. Above and beneath the scroll there are flowers in blue and white. The flowers on the bottom are elaborately arranged and dominate the bottom half of the page.

²⁵ What we are suggesting here is most probably how the composition was constructed yet we realize that there is no way of being certain of this. Alternatives are possible but improbable.

There is yellow within the spaces of the arrangement. The bird appears weighed down by the scroll it must carry and therefore seems to be swooping downward towards the outer left edge of the page. The text and the image are visually separated from each other by the bright orange line that is drawn beneath the text.

As mentioned in the description of the collage, Kahlo uses different media including a photograph, a cut-out from a commercial image as well as paint. Together these media make up a rich composition through which Kahlo expresses herself. The colourful commercial stamp contrasts radically with the black and white photograph found within the scroll. Some of the colours found in the composition are attributed meaning in one of Kahlo's entries where she defines the colours verbally (Image 19, Appendix). Though the mechanical transposition of the definition found on this page of Kahlo's 'diary' to define meaning in the colours used in other entries may be somewhat simplistic, it at the very least demonstrates that Kahlo's choice in colour in her 'diary' in general and in the collage found on the first page in particular, is not wholly arbitrary. According to plate 15, the blue found in the flowers corresponds to purity and electricity; the yellow is attributed madness, sickness, fear, part of the sun, *la alegría* and mystery. She goes on to say, "todos los fantasmas usan trajes de este color, cuando menos ropa interior." (plate 15, 211) The green found in the leaves is defined as leaves, sadness, and all of Germany.

Regarding the iconography of the dove, one can quote at least two examples in her paintings ("Unos cuantos piquetitos" dating from 1935 ,and

"Frida and Diego Rivera" painted in 1931, Image 37, Appendix) where Kahlo uses a bird to carry a ribbon or banner with text. The image of the dove recurs constantly throughout the 'diary' as well: she depicts herself with wings on plate 124, 269 (the text accompanying this image, "¿Te vas? No. Alas rotas", implies that the way to leave would be on wings) on plate 141, 277 (Image 14, Appendix) she writes down the words of a song "se equivocó la paloma, se equivocaba"; she often claims that she has wings as on plate 134, 274, "Pies para que los quiero si tengo alas pa' volar" and on the last page of the diary (Image 38, Appendix), there is a winged figure floating upwards towards the upper right edge of the page. People often referred to the Rivera/Kahlo couple as being "the elephant and the dove", as does Hayden Herrera in the title of one of the chapters of her biography on Kahlo. This nickname refers to Rivera's imposing and corpulent physical stature versus Kahlo's rather delicate and feminine figure. This is evident in her painting "Frida and Diego Rivera"(Image 37, Appendix), where they are depicted standing side by side holding hands. Rivera literally towers over Kahlo, who seems reduced to the background. Over her hovers a pink dove with a pink ribbon in its mouth. On the ribbon one can read, "Aquí nos veis, a mi Frieda Kahlo, junto con mi amado esposo Diego Rivera, pinté estos retratos en la bella ciudad de San Francisco California para nuestro amigo Mr. Albert Bender, y fué [sic] en el mes de abril del año 1931". There is no question that Kahlo identified herself with the dove. It is a recurring image both in her paintings and in her 'diary'. In the collage, the dove seems weighed down. It is plunging downward, unable to support the scroll attached to the

ribbon. Though the ribbon is pink and attached to the scroll with a big bow as though it were a gift, its other end is not held in the dove's mouth as in her paintings, it is wrapped round its neck. The dove is subjugated by the weight of the scroll, it does not have the option of letting go. The downward motion suggested in the dove's trajectory contributes to the heaviness of the collage.

If one takes a closer look at the collage we cannot help but notice that there are certain elements within it that are in opposition to her paintings. Perhaps the most obvious is the inverted role of text and image. What usually appears in her paintings framed into a scroll or ribbon is the text and what is in the background is the image. As mentioned earlier, the collage shows the exact opposite, the scroll contains the image whereas the text is incorporated into the background. Furthermore, the scroll, which is usually situated in the bottom half of the canvas, as is the case with "Self-Portrait with Loose Hair"(Image 39, Appendix), has now been brought to the center of the composition. What in her paintings constitutes a detail, has been transformed into the focal point of the collage. The collage is by no means the only example of Kahlo bringing a detail from her painting to the fore in her 'diary'. The entry on plate 10, 207 (Image 30, Appendix) shows what Lowe describes as a "connect-the-dots ink drawing."
(207) This image bears a striking resemblance to the paintings entitled "Fruit of Life" and "The Chick" (Images 31-32, Appendix). The confusing array of lines in the paintings is reminiscent of the central visual element of this entry.

There are other distortions of elements of her paintings found in the first entry of the 'diary'. For instance, the style of the text of the collage neither

corresponds to the style of painting nor to the text found typically in Kahlo's canvases. The collage's text is painted rather sloppily, which is a radically different style from the elaborate calligraphy that we usually see in the paintings. And the way the paint has been applied to the paper contrasts drastically with Kahlo's paintings where she would typically use very fine brush strokes to apply the paint evenly onto the canvas making them virtually invisible in order to add a certain realism to the painting (Images 35-36-37, Appendix). The exact opposite effect is produced in the collage; the brush strokes are thick, making them far more evident than what we are accustomed to seeing in her paintings. The method used by Kahlo to paint her words in the collage creates a "painterly" effect, that is to say, it emphasizes the medium used rather than trying to hide it.

I have already commented on the semantic confusion brought about by the phrase, "pint(é) de 1916", but the wording used in this collage is completely different from the eloquent formulas used in her portraits. Kahlo does not even bother to write out a sentence. Though she writes the date, this is done numerically. Furthermore, it must be noted that the only things that are actually painted are the writing and the yellow found in the hollow of the flower arrangements²⁶. Everything else is pasted onto the page: the photograph; and the bird, scroll and flower arrangement are cut outs from commercial stamps or cards²⁷.

²⁶ Though we claim that the hollow is painted, this is not certain since the facsimile does not always make obvious the media used in the 'diary'.

²⁷ Cordero Reinman, in her introductory essay, *¿Desenmascarando el mito?*, describes the media as, "...fotografiada de tal manera que cita al "Obrero en huelga, asesinado" por Manuel Álvarez Bravo, y enmarcada con elementos *kitsch* recortados de tarjetas o estampas comerciales (II)

This collage speaks to the viewer on various levels. The interpretation I would like to put forward covers some of the aspects of this highly complex work. In the first place I would like to consider the text. Since it is painted onto the paper it becomes part of the paper, it cannot be separated from the 'diary', it cannot be separated from Kahlo in the 'diary'. As noted earlier, the magenta text exists without the personal inflection. To a certain extent the text remains generic until the "é" is added on leaving Kahlo's personal imprint on it. The verb without its inflection exists as language in its most primitive form. It is "pre-language". The addition of the "é" converts what was the root of the verb into personal form. However, the inflection does not impose its presence. On the contrary, "é", which semantically represents Kahlo, is added on rather timidly, since it is squeezed into the text and takes up much less space than the rest of the letters. Yet at the same time it stands out because of its prominent colour. The words do not exist exclusively as symbols of language, but through the presence of colour and the very way in which Kahlo executes them, express more than just their verbal meaning. They will not be relegated to the role of detail, as has been the case of words in her painting, but within the 'diary' because of their rich visual presence they will become Kahlo's primary media of expression. The text, converted into image, is the backbone of her 'diary'. No longer framed off into constrained spaces, such as a scroll, the text of the 'diary' is freer to express Kahlo fully. Therefore, on a purely visual level, the dichotomy text/image is not so strictly delineated in the 'diary' since Kahlo paints with words and writes with paint. In her 'diary' Kahlo is free to express herself without being

confined to the framing of official art. The 'diary' may be considered as being Kahlo's production outside the framework of institutional art.

What the collage demonstrates is that what lies outside the frame is of much more spatial and chromatic importance. The image of Kahlo within the frame, is not the primary form of expression. Kahlo leaves her personal imprint on the text and later on in the chapter I shall identify how her identity is also expressed in the commercial stamp used in the collage. The image as such takes up a minimum amount of space within the composition. The spatial dimensions of the decorative flowers and the script above are much more important than the tiny photograph. The vibrant colours used in the text and the flowers make the image fade into the background. Were it not for its central positioning, the photograph would not attract so much attention.

One must keep in mind that what is usually found within the scrolls of Kahlo's portraits are details, a narration. The scroll serves as an accompaniment to the image. If we look at what is happening in the 'diary' it becomes evident that the images, though highly visible, work essentially in the same way as the scrolls of Kahlo's painting. They, for the most part, do not exist independently from the text. We notice in her tale of the origin of "Las dos Fridas" that Kahlo uses images to illustrate parts of her story (Images 1-4, Appendix). There are other cases where the images work at the same level as the text, such as on plates 100-101,253 (Images 40-41, Appendix), where there are two faces on opposite pages. Were it not for the text, the dialogue between the two would not be so obvious. Were it not for the images, the text would leave much to the

imagination. There are also examples where there is a genuine dialogue between images and text, as is the case in the entry entitled “monumento estúpido” (plate 36, 223). The words are communicating and commenting on the image beside it.

In the collage on the first page of the ‘diary’, the dove, which is the connecting figurative element between the text and the image, is a metaphor for Kahlo. It breaks through the physical barrier created by the underlining to join the text and the scroll together. Another way of seeing the dove is by relating it to the pre-language stage of “pint”. The dove alone does not have a symbolic meaning. What gives it its meaning is the context in which it appears. As stated earlier, the dove evokes a downward movement from its position. Below lies the specific image of Frida Kahlo. The image is heavily framed and therefore isolated from the other elements of the collage, not only by the fact that the media is different from the text and the scroll surrounding it, but by the relative space it occupies on the page. As stated above, it is at once the center and the detail of the composition. It is the focal point of this collage because it occupies a preferential space on the page. Also the fact that it is presented within a frame draws the viewers eye to it as being the central subject of the composition. Yet, when considered in relation to Kahlo’s paintings, it occupies a space usually reserved for the detail, the scroll.

In Kahlo’s paintings, the scrolls serve among other things to enhance the viewer’s understanding of the portrait. The image of Kahlo prostrated on the ground with her eyes closed lends itself to various interpretations. One can look

at it as though Kahlo is asleep and what is to follow in the 'diary' would be the contents of a dream, of her subconscious. The two entries directly following the collage are filled with words, corresponding to the Surrealist exercise of automatic writing by which the writer transfers onto the page all the words that cross his/her mind eventually revealing the writer's subconscious thoughts. Many have interpreted the 'diary' as being Kahlo's most surreal work, in that she was openly looking to explore this artistic movement.

Another possibility would be that Kahlo was indeed referring to death, her own maybe, as Karen Cordero Reinman writes,

...fotografiada de tal manera que cita al "Obrero en huelga, asesinado" por Manuel Álvarez Bravo, y enmarcada con elementos *kitsch* recortados de tarjetas o estampas comerciales. Las posibles vías de análisis son muchas. Kahlo está citando una obra que fue tomada por Breton como portada del catálogo de la Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo en México en 1940 y que se convirtió, al igual que la misma Kahlo, en un icono del "México surrealista", en una ilustración de su concepto de México como "el país surrealista por excelencia"; la fotografía de Álvarez Bravo de 1934 también se había constituido en México en un símbolo de lucha obrera. El *collage* de Kahlo ubica esta imagen cargada de significados en un marco que la asocia con la tradición popular de retratar a niños muertos o "angelitos", que había interesado a Kahlo, al igual que a otros artistas de su época (por ejemplo en El difuntito Dimas Rosas a los tres años de edad, de 1937), como una manifestación de la particular sensibilidad mexicana ante la muerte... ¿Trató Kahlo de anunciar la muerte (por su propia mano) de su ser folklorizado y surrealizado? ¿Es un reconocimiento de que su personificación como sensual revolucionaria se desmoronaba? ¿O es una prefiguración irónica de su muerte sensible?(II)

The collage suggests an aura of death. Be it through the flowers or the image of Kahlo with her eyes closed, the thought of death seems very present in the work. Basing myself strictly on what is present in the 'diary' and what I see in

her paintings the collage hints at Kahlo's idea of death. As I have demonstrated above, the dove is intimately linked to Kahlo's identity. In her 'diary', whenever Kahlo refers to the dove, or to wings in general, it is within the context of death or suffering. She associates death or the liberation of her suffering with wings. Death only becomes possible when Kahlo is no longer grounded on earth, but can use her "wings" to float away from the suffering she describes in her 'diary'. If I am to read the collage in this light, the dove is being weighed down by life. What comes to mind is the painting Kahlo made of Luther Burbank (Image 36, Appendix), in which she depicts the scientist sprouting from the earth as would a tree. The roots from his transformed figure grow from a prostrated skeleton found beneath the earth. In this portrait Kahlo depicts life and death as partaking in a cycle. From the dead decomposing body sprouts new life. Though death lies underneath, it is in this painting the essence of life. The photo of Kahlo found in the scroll shows Kahlo in the same position of the skeleton found in this painting. She may be quoting Álvarez Bravo's famous photograph, or referring to the Mexican tradition of painting dead children (Image 35, Appendix). Or it may be a Surrealist image having its own dialogue with the text above it. Though there is a reference to death, it is rather playful. Kahlo may be in fact alluding to life. The photograph, the *kitsch* surrounding it, is very evidently a construction. This is Kahlo at her artistic and creative peak. She is recognized by her peers and she recognizes herself as an artist, as a painter. Yet the dove is weighed down by this recognition, by the life inherent in the act of creation. The dove is being weighed down, grounded in this (sur)reality.

The 'diary' begins with fairly dense images and combinations of images and text. There is a repetitive use of lines and forms, making for rather complex compositions. This is evident in the series of ten consecutive entries we referred to in Chapter 1 (Images 20-29, Appendix). As the 'diary' progresses the images become less chaotic, less cluttered. The compositions are much simpler and the subject of the entries becomes clearer. They lack the detail found in the first entries. This coincides with the idea of less weighty images to "pull Kahlo down", figuratively speaking. Throughout her 'diary' Kahlo refers to wings, to birds, to flying and this imagery intensifies towards the end of her 'diary'. In some entries (plates 124, 269 and Image 14, Appendix) she is shown having achieved the winged status, yet the text tells the reader that the wings are broken. As her 'diary' comes to an end, Kahlo's desire to fly away becomes greater. The references to birds, wings and flight are more frequent, both in her images and in her text. The last entry (Image 38, Appendix) shows a winged figure (most probably Kahlo) floating upwards, no longer weighed down by life. The visual progression of the 'diary' coincides with the feeling of lightness, in terms of compositional density, that reaches its peak in the final image. There are no words in this entry, only colour and form. The wings of the figure are green, the colour Kahlo attributed to sadness, yet also to science and leaves. The face shows traces of blue which Kahlo described as meaning distance and also tenderness. The colours are applied much in the same way as the paint in the initial collage yet in a more uncontrolled manner. The figure looks intently upward as though heading towards something specific which is beyond the edge

of the page, beyond the viewer's field of vision, yet somehow it is understood by the viewer that what lies above is the release from the weight of suffering described in the last entries, specifically those corresponding to Kahlo's amputation. This final entry, which Lowe qualifies as the last painting Kahlo ever made (287) contrasts sharply with the initial collage. Kahlo is perhaps dealing with the same topic in both entries, namely death, but the treatment is completely different. Whereas the collage appears to have been carefully constructed, the last entry gives no signs of having been premeditated. The collage incorporates various media, the last image on the other hand is exclusively made from paint. Probably the most striking difference is the opposite directions taken by the winged figures in these entries; whereas the first entry suggests a downward motion, the final one seems to be floating up. Their destination, however, may ultimately be the same.

I have attempted to answer the questions asked at the beginning of this chapter by looking in detail but not exclusively, at the first and last entries of the 'diary'. The collage demonstrates a direct dialogue with her paintings. Kahlo quotes stylistic as well as thematic elements found in many of her portraits, at times distorting, inverting and transgressing them. As stated earlier, I consider that the 'diary' deserves to be viewed as an integral part of Kahlo's artistic production. She treats many of the same themes as in her painting, yet she does so in a much freer sense. She is not confined to a canvas and to the aesthetic formulae expected from her. She expresses herself much more freely and in some entries seems to experiment a great deal, bringing the 'diary' closer to

Surrealism where “psychic automatism or automatic drawing was used to bypass the rational mind and unlock the unconscious.” (Lowe 27) I do not think that the ‘diary’ should be seen simply as Kahlo’s sketchbook though there is one entry which eventually was transformed into a painting (Image 29, Appendix). Kahlo’s ‘diary’ as much as inspiring her paintings was inspired by them. In this sense it gives insight into her painting just as much as the paintings also allow to better understand the contents of the ‘diary’.

Conclusion

Frida Kahlo's 'diary' is a highly complex work in all of the aspects I have studied. I have looked at it as a diary, as a book and as a work of art. Kahlo's 'diary' shows a great deal of inconsistency, in each of these aspects, which makes it unique when compared to other diaries, books and works produced by her contemporaries.

Frida Kahlo's 'diary' manages to fit into the diary category at the same time that it escapes such classification. As mentioned in Chapter 1, where I explore the diary genre in detail as defined primarily by Béatrice Didier and Valérie Raoul, Kahlo's 'diary' does, and at the same time, does not correspond to the title given to it: The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait and Diario de Frida Kahlo: autorretrato íntimo. Summarizing the aspects which most clearly reflect the diary genre, I notice that it definitely is for the most part a fragmented oeuvre. Kahlo's 'diary', both through the use of foreign languages as seen in the German entry, and the frequent changes in subject evident in the ten consecutive entries, Images 20-29 of the Appendix, as well as the juxtaposition of different media, which I explore in the third chapter, shows the fragmentation Didier describes as fundamental to any diary. Kahlo's 'diary' is furthermore fragmented by the missing pages, both accounted and unaccounted for at the time of publication as a book. It belongs, for the most part, to the diary genre in its concentration on the Self. Though there are certain entries where Kahlo collaborated with others, as in the case of the recipe for paint where Rivera's hand writing is clearly noticeable (Image 6, Appendix), the diary was written by

Kahlo and is not a collective work. Where the diary classification becomes less relevant or obvious is in regard to the thematic content of the 'diary'. Though it essentially talks about Kahlo, there are a great many entries where the role of the Other becomes intimately intertwined with Kahlo's own. Kahlo's *'journal intime'* also breaks with the idea of intimacy within the diary genre when considering for whom the text was written. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, there are a great many entries in which Kahlo goes back to touch up the text or image appearing in them or crossing them out altogether (Images 1-4, Appendix). However, there are certain entries, particularly the ones referring to her amputation in which one gets the distinct impression that Kahlo, though perhaps knowing that her 'diary' would eventually be read by others is, at the very moment of writing, doing so for herself. Though Raoul talks about the initial motivation for writing as being a primarily emotional malaise, in Kahlo's case, it is rather a questioning and exploration of an artistic movement, as the long lists of words at the beginning of the 'diary', reminiscent of Surrealism, demonstrate.

Kahlo's 'diary' when seen in terms of its adherence to the genre assigned to it in the title of the books published in 1995, is problematic. It would appear that most of the accompanying essays²⁸ also view the identity of this work as a diary as somewhat controversial, since they refer to the 'diary' in italics or quotation marks.

The second chapter of this study has viewed the 'diary' in terms of the consumer object into which it was transformed when it was published as a book.

²⁸ These essays include Carlos Fuentes' introduction, and Karen Cordero Reinman's as well as Olivier Debrouse's essays.

I have demonstrated that the reception of Kahlo's 'diary' is greatly influenced by the texts accompanying it, namely the introduction and prefatory essays. I have concluded in this chapter that the 'diary' as produced and packaged for the non-Mexican mass market is completely different from the book read by the Spanish speaking, primarily Mexican, readers. Genette's reflections on what constitutes a *paratexte* and what impact the latter has on the reception of the book, has greatly contributed to the understanding of the importance of the various *paratextes* of the different versions. I have demonstrated that the English, French and German versions present a much more simplistic, uniform and cohesive view of the 'diary' and of Kahlo as an artist. Fuentes' introduction, which focuses primarily on the life of Kahlo, is complemented by Lowe's rather superficial approach to the 'diary'. Both introduction and essay contribute to heightening the readers' curiosity concerning what lies within the diary's pages by mythologizing her and dramatizing her life. I also note that the editors of the 'diary' chose to package it in this way because of the current trend in Fridamania as described by Margaret Lindauer.

The prefatory essays of the Spanish version of Kahlo's 'diary' is much more in keeping with its complexities. The essays following Fuentes' introduction offer different interpretations of the diary. Cordero Reinman's essay entitled "¿Desenmascarando el mito? (Notas para una lectura del "Diario" de Frida Kahlo)", which immediately follows Fuentes' introduction, understands the 'diary' as a dialogical work exploring the Surrealist movement. She compares the 'diary' with one of Kahlo's paintings, "La máscara" in order to show how Kahlo

was questioning the identity she had constructed for herself. The next essay, Olivier Debroise's "¿Sadja o vivir en Coyoacán?" deconstructs many (mis)interpretations of Kahlo's 'diary' by giving factual information about her life, for instance concerning the entry where Kahlo writes, "Espero con ansia la salida y espero no volver jamás". Rather than understand this sentence as a final farewell to life, Debroise pragmatically demonstrates that she is merely referring to her release from hospital. Such an interpretation calls into question the commentaries made by Lowe later on in the 'diary'. The final essay, by Graciela Martínez-Zalce, most probably the least insightful of those included in the Spanish edition, plagiarizes Béatrice Didier's text to describe Kahlo's 'diary'. Unfortunately, for this reader, the arguments presented are rather unconvincing since she takes Didier's words—written with regard to the diary genre in general and not to Kahlo's 'diary'—and applies them to describe a 'diary' which at times does not correspond to the description given.

Apart from the unfortunate inclusion of Martínez-Zalce's essay, the prologue of the Spanish version of the 'diary' gives the reader a fair idea of its complexities and contradictions. It suggests to the reader different interpretations of Kahlo's 'diary' which seem more complete than the English, French and German editions. The reason behind such a difference between the Spanish edition and the others is due to the projected expectations of the Mexican readership. Since Kahlo is recognized as one of Mexico's most important painters in the twentieth century, perhaps the Mexican mass market would be critical of the simplistic approach proposed in the other versions.

The final chapter of my study has focused entirely on the facsimile of Kahlo's 'diary' and offers its own interpretation of it. This chapter suggests that there are various levels of dialogue unfolding within the 'diary' itself, as well as between it and Kahlo's artistic production, namely her portraits. It illustrates these dialogues by concentrating on the first and last entries of the 'diary'. I have shown how Kahlo in her 'diary' consciously inverts and transgresses certain elements of her painting. For example, I demonstrate how Kahlo's paintings usually assigned a secondary role to text, generally having it appear as a detail on a scroll or ribbon. In contrast the first entry of the 'diary', a collage, does the exact opposite by assigning the image to the scroll and making the text the primary focus of the painting through, among other things, chromatic elements. The diary/painting dialogue is further demonstrated by referring to the common characteristics existing between the two, such as the emphasis on the act of painting and the method of production used to create her works of art. The idea of dialogue was also illustrated by looking at the thematic content within the 'diary' itself and comparing it to her paintings. I looked at the treatment of death in Kahlo's portrait of Luther Burbank and compare it to the collage found on the first page. In both cases, the idea of life and death is seen as a cycle. I also examined the interrelation between the different modes and media within her 'diary' and in her painting. I show how at times Kahlo painted with words. That is to say, that the words, the text specifically, do not only transmit verbal meaning but also visual meaning through its stylistic execution and through the colors used in the text. The chromatic elements are important in the interpretation of

the first and last entries because of the meaning assigned to them on plate 15, 211 (Image 19, Appendix). In the third chapter, I proposed that the initial entry reflects Kahlo at the height of her creative activity, very much alive and ironic. I have related it to the final image of the diary, where one is confronted with a completely different mode and medium. Kahlo in her final entry does not use text. She uses only paint to make the image of a winged figure heading upwards towards the right edge of the page. One notes a general progression towards this final image throughout the diary. Though it begins with a highly complex and rich multimodal composition, Kahlo's 'diary' ends with a relatively simple and sketchy image of herself. Perhaps it is in this final entry that Kahlo is painting only for herself without regard to the image she has constructed of her own identity.

In this study I have attempted to demonstrate different facets of Kahlo's 'diary'. It is however, by no means an exhaustive study of the 'diary' left behind by Frida Kahlo. I have barely covered the surface of this rich work. Though I have attempted to show the dialogues existing between Kahlo's 'diary' and the rest of her artistic production, there needs to be a more in depth study of the interrelation of text and image within her 'diary' as well as in her painting. There is also a need for a serious study of her diary as a whole, a critical edition of the 'diary', with detailed commentary on the entries and their cultural and historical context, as well as an artistic and semiotic perspective on the various media and modes that Kahlo puts to work.

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Image 1

ORIGEN DE LAS DOS FRIDAS.

Recuerdos
 Debo haber tenido diez años.
 Cuando viví intensamente
 la amistad imaginaria
 con una niña de mi mismo edad.
 En la vidriera del escaparate
 entonces era mi encanto,
 y que daba a la calle
 de Allende, sobre uno de
 los cristales de la vidriera.
 Con el dedo dibujaba
 una "puerta".
 Por esa "puerta" salía en la
 imaginación con una gran
 alegría y urgencia. Atravesaba
 todo el barrio que se
 miraba hasta llegar

Image 2

a una habitación que
 se llamaba PINZÓN... Por
 la ^{miraba} de PINZÓN entraba,
 y bajaba al interior
 de la tierra, donde
 mi amiga imaginaria me
 esperaba siempre. No recuerdo
 su imagen ni su
 color. Pero sí sé que era
 alegre. Se reía mucho.
 Sin sonreír. Era ágil.
 y bailaba como si no
 tuviera peso ninguno. Yo
 la seguía en todos sus
 movimientos y le contaba
 mientras ella bailaba
 mis problemas secretos.
 ¿Qué? No recuerdo. Pero ella

Image 3

Sabía que mi voz todavía
 estaba... Cuando ya regre-
 saba a la ventana dibujaba
 por la misma puerta dibujada
 en el cristal. ¿Cuándo?
 Por cuánto tiempo había estado
 en "allá"? No sé. Pudo
 ser un segundo o miles de
 años... Lo era feliz. Desde
 dibujaba la "puerta" con el
 dedo y "desaparecía". Corría
 con mi secreto y me ale-
 graba hasta el último rincón
 del patio de mi casa y
 siempre en el mismo lu-
 gar. Debajo de un árbol
 de cedro. gritaba
 hacia el otro lado de la

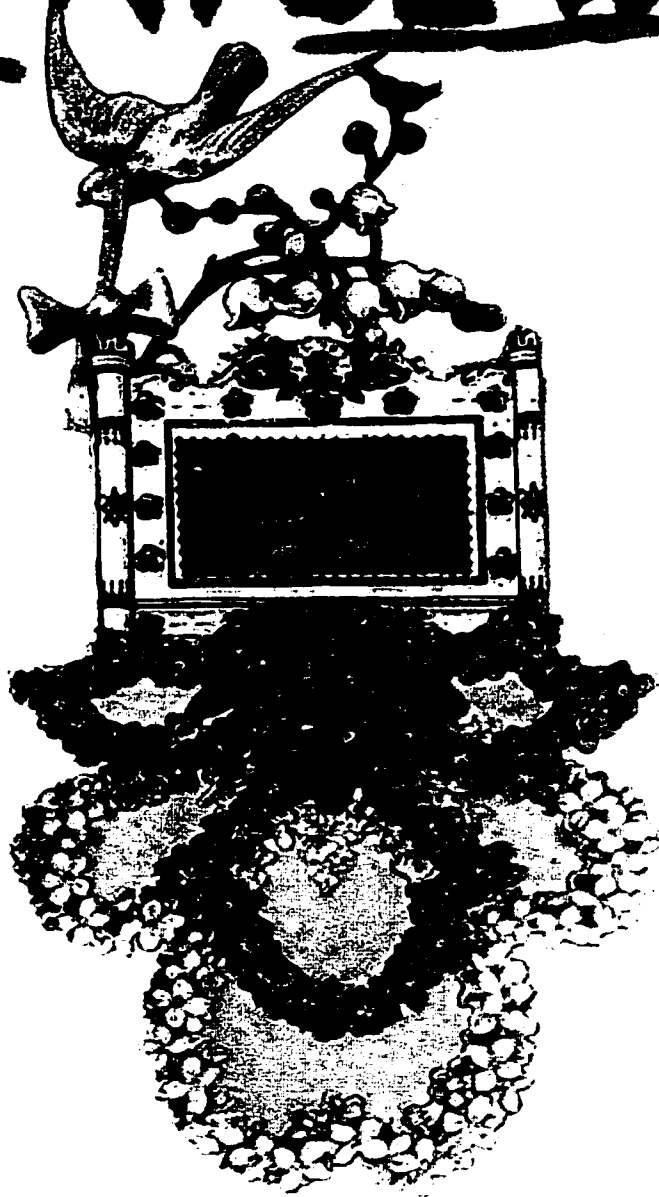
Image 4

Sola con mi gran felicidad
 y mi recuerdo ^{de} una niña.
 Una niña que pasó 34 años
 desde que viví esa amistad
 mágica y cada vez que la
 recuerdo se aviva y se acre-
 ciona más y más dentro
 de mi memoria.
 DÍA 7 de Mayo. Frida Kahlo



Image 5

PINTE DE 1916



Esperanza de mi vida.
 1910. - nací en el estado
 de la península entre Lombos
 y Alameda. Coyocacán.
 La abuela de la mamá
 me. Mis abuelos paternos
 húngaros. nacido en Hungría
 y un gran ya casado
 sufre en a vida a Alemania
 donde usó varios de
 sus hilos entre ellos me
 los dió en Baden Baden
 Alemania. Schillerens Her
 Vdo. María y. Fernández
 Paula y otros. En el campo
 en México en el Siglo 19.
 Ralices aser. siempre toda
 con vida. Se casó con una
 muchacha mexicana, ma
 de de mi hermanitas

Quisita y Margarita.
 Al morir voy con sus
 Na se casó con mi madre
 Matilda Calderón y Jorgel.
 hija entre los de mi
 Abuelo Fraterno Calderón
 de Morelia de rayón
 mexicana mexicana milton
 un hijo de mi abuelita
 y Sabal González y Jorge
 hijo de mi General López
 que al morir puso a ella
 y a su hermanita
 Cristina en el convento de
 las vicarias de San
 Pedro a la casa de mi ma
 madre - de San Juan
 de los rios de San Juan
 de los rios de San Juan
 de los rios de San Juan
 de los rios de San Juan
 de los rios de San Juan

mi vida fue maravillosa
 porque aunque mi padre era
 un enfermo (tenia un tumor en
 mas y me dio que en un tiempo
 siempre para me de tener de
 trabajo (Fotografar también y para
 y sobre todo de comisiones para
 poder vivir tranquilos que desde
 los Cuatro años fuí jefe de
 un cole de niños. Tenia 4 años.
 Recuerdo que en 11 años.
 cuando los depe me trajeron.
 yo quedé con mis ojos
 la buena Caspicián de
 Zapala con los Caracan
 en la. Mi Sincera fue
 muy sana. Mi mamá por
 los calle de Morelia - ademas
 de Salcedo. Los de los
 cosas a los repetidos

he estado que los hijos
y los amigos saldán por
los raldos de un país
la 1ª sala. Ellos son
of. los datos. gónditas de ensine
único alienta que en el...

introya el primer conapora a
Coyacan. En el mismo cuadro
de Moravia Matate Adre
Yo (Frida) y Orisli, la chi
fante. Van de arriba con
vorte. Los nombres clar
y precisa que me me. y uotes
de la " por tuam que
Cama. fue la best para
que a los 13 años de
adit en quora en la
fuente Comandante

no me olvidaban las cosas
interven en 1944. Siguió
Se extra di me. góndite.
Se hacia propiamente el
-tianguis- de Coyacan a
famos de Zapata. Con conido
que Posada. Kóndite. Costa-
ban los raldos. góndite.
y 18 y Orisli. Comandante
morcadas en un gran
papas que día a noche.
miente en una de y me
papa. raldos. por raldos
papa no era en un de
los queri llet. Yore-
cuando con raldos. hoido
Comandante. Comandante
En fuente. A Rio de Coyacan

Un momento de un momento
un momento de un momento
un momento de un momento

Probaré los raxices tajados al
punto incirite que mira su
bra adelante:

El verde - liza fibra y buena
Sollerino - ateca. TLAPALI rija
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Sango de tuna. el mal
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ vivo y antiguo

Un color de mole, la hoja pas



electricidad y pureza amor.
madres negro - realmente nada
hoja, tinta, tinta, tinta
nada nada nada nada

Color de anuncios malos.
de buenos negocios.

distancia También

la Ternera puede ser
de este árbol.

cuando? Pues, quien sabe!

Image 30



Image 31



Image 32



Image 33



Image 34



Image 35



Image 36



Image 37



Image 38

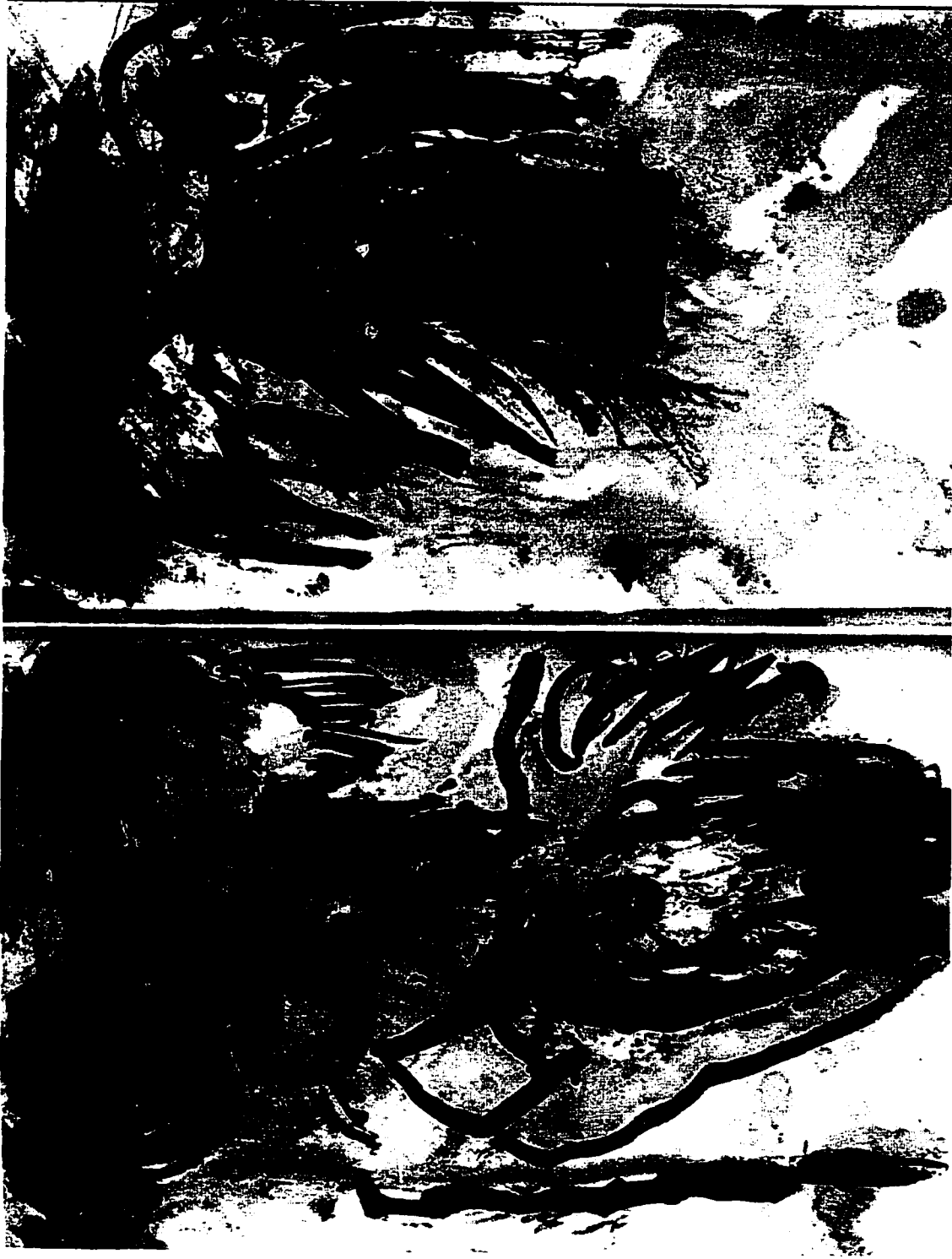


Image 39



Image 40



Image 41

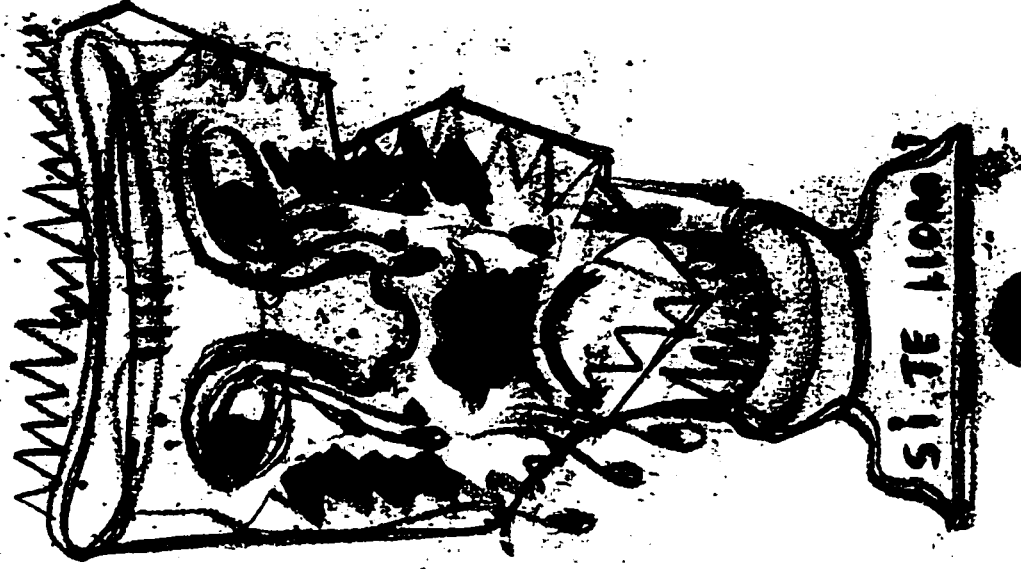


Image 42

