Argus-a
Artes & Humanidades
Arts & Humanities
Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

¿Qué haremos con América? Rodó and Kahlo: Two Instances of Latin American Alternative Modernism

Mariam Bourhan El Din
Cairo University
Egipto

Presented at the International Conference on Alternative Modernism that took place at Cardiff University (UK) from 15th to 18th May 2013.

Latin American essayists (Rodó, Martí, Reyes, Vasconcelos, Ureña or Paz, among others) have, at one time or another, put forth the question: *¿Qué haremos con América?*[1] - *What do we do about America?* The question goes to the core of the whole debate on modernism and alternative modernisms in Latin America: i.e. the issue of identity. In fact, modernism was the first awkward and indeed, awe-inspiring glimpse of the global community, the first real awareness of being part of the global all-connected community that influences and is influenced by all. To fully understand the contribution of Rodó and Kahlo to the global notions of modernism, it is vital to grasp the essence of what it meant to be Latin American during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and how they saw their past and their future. We must start with the first obstacle to any argument regarding modernism vs. alternative modernism in Latin America: the mixed culture reflected in the name itself, because even now there's a geo-linguistic and politically motivated criteria behind the different names given to the peoples of America, called Latin Americans, Iberian Americans or Hispanic Americans[2]. The fact that North, South and Central America were colonized by Spain and the fact that this colonization lasted almost four hundred years are key to understanding the identity issue. From very early on, Latin Americans started using the language of the colonizer. They also partially substituted the native faith(s) with Catholicism. As early as the sixteenth century, Latin Americans were thinking, communicating and expressing themselves in Spanish. The use of native languages such as Quechua, Aymara or Guaraní persisted but was limited and excluded from the colonizer's urban "civilization" - a controversial word and one that reflects the first symptoms of a dual identity since the word took on a new inference in Latin America:

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

the debate civilization vs. barbarity arose almost as soon as the New World was discovered and grew louder with colonization, in order to compare the colonizers, and later on the *criollos* (Latin Americans of European descent), to the native Indians[3].

The colonizers brought the first wave of (Western) "modernity", the first wave of radical change manifested, from a Western viewpoint, in the diffusion of civilization and the limiting of barbarianism; from a native viewpoint, it was the end of *their* civilization and the imposing of new paradigms of thought, faith and culture. In between, a third, fourth and even fifth race (*criollos*, *mestizos*, *mulatos*) had mixed feelings about their identity. By the twentieth century, when Rodó wrote his famous *Ariel* (1900), Latin Americans were already "Hispanic" and "American". Even before Rodó, many writers during the nineteenth century were tackling this identity issue but with modernity - i.e. with the global political power shifts at the end of the century - came a new and very present awareness of this dual identity. The fact that the governing classes, the scholars, the intellectuals, the writers were all *criollos* and therefore in complete harmony with their dual identity, only contributed to the problem given that they all looked at America as the new Europe. They just had to find a solution to the *Other*, the native Indian of America. More than twenty years later, by the time Frida Kahlo started her work, in the avant-garde stage of Western modernism, there was an urgent need to rediscover this native Other's culture. But this culture already showed clear signs of infiltrations by Western notions and concepts regarding customs, faith and social paradigms.

Although we are increasingly becoming aware of the *cliché-esque* quality of the word, we cannot avoid thinking of alternative modernisms in terms of globalization. The debate on globalization, what forms it takes and how the peoples of different countries react to it, revived the other - never really concluded - debate on modernisms cultivated outside the mainstream Western modernism (which itself was not homogenous). The starting line hypothesis is that modernism was imported; it was and still remains perceived as the influence of the West. But in the case of Latin America, the main obstacle to this initial hypothesis is the binary nature of their cultural identity (pre-Colombian and Spanish). The different stages of modernism in Latin America, with clearly defined timeframes between the *modernismo* and avant-garde movements, the

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

emergence of *modernismo* as a Latin American literary movement that was to have a groundbreaking effect on the development of literary language in Spain, the fact that *modernismo* was a direct influence of the French symbolism and parnassianism movements are all points that indicate the fundamental existence of transnational cultural exchanges between Europe and the New World ever since it was first discovered.

Rodó's *Ariel* is textbook aesthetic modernism. The only (monumental) difference is that it's Latin American. That in itself modifies the classical model of modernism and constitutes an alternative modernism. Kahlo's powerful imagery, although maintaining many of the aesthetical approaches stipulated in Rodó's concept of modernism, has come a long way from the elegance and fragility of Dario's (in)famous swan, and presents an alternative paradigm within the paradigm, that is, an alternative to the modernism campaigned for by Rodó and many of his contemporaries. The classical paradigms of Western Modernism is hence twice shifted (full circle?). This paper proposes to reexamine these two instances of Latin American modernism to further understand how alternative modernisms operated and developed. In order to do so, a shift in perception is required, wherein the aim is not the initial ideologies and aesthetics of Latin American alternative modernisms but how they were introduced in Latin America, implemented and modified in the process, thereby creating new patterns in modern culture. We propose to analyze Rodó's *Ariel* and examples of Frida Kahlo's paintings through the analysis of two fundamental factors that have influenced modernist works in Latin America, namely: the politics and the aesthetics surrounding these works[4].

THE POLITICS AND THE AESTHETICS

> *We should pay close attention to how cultural practices and products are linked to the discourses of the political and the social in specific local and national constellations as they develop in transnational exchange. The politics of alternative modernisms are deeply embedded in colonial and postcolonial contexts in which notions such as elite, tradition, popularity assume codings quite different from those in the northern transatlantic then or now.*
>
> A. Huyssen, *Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World: 204*

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

We should reintroduce issues of aesthetic quality and form into our analysis of any and all cultural practices and products. Here the question of criteria is obviously key: rather than privilege the radically new in Western avant-gardist fashion, we may want to focus on the complexity of repetition and rewriting, bricolage and translation, thus expanding our understanding of innovation. The focus might then be on intertextuality, creative mimicry, the power of a text to question ingrained habits through visual or narrative strategies.

A. Huyssen, *Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World: 203-204*

Recognizing the problem of identity: Rodó's *Ariel*

The political and social circumstances of Latin America at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Rodó published his most famous and enduring essay, are the operative factors that shape the cultural trends of the time. Just around the time modernity was gaining momentum in Europe, Latin Americans, concretely the *criollos*, were being necessarily forced into making quick choices regarding their identity. The Anglo-Saxon vs. Latin debate was being won by the latter during the nineteenth century by French-inspired Latin American *criollo* essayists and intellectuals who were already setting the basis of this European-Latin American connection. This is exactly why Latin American modernism cannot be considered a simple copy of European modernism. Long before modernism surfaced in Europe, European models of thought, beliefs and customs were already a part of the Latin American heritage (as were African customs, beliefs and concepts also incorporated since the slave trade started in the sixteenth century)**.** So the mixed genealogy of Latin American modernisms and their contributions to the phenomena must be part of the equation. Hence our belief in a necessary shift in perspective: Latin American modernism was not just a replica nor was it only at the receiving end of a European-made concept.

While in Europe, in the years of industrialization, wars, loss of colonies and new scientific discoveries, modernism was being defined in terms of a stand for (utilitarianism) or against (aesthetic modernism) technology and progress, in Latin America, where emancipation was happening, modernism entered into the essential question regarding this emancipation: the Latin American identity. In that sense, not just *Ariel* but indeed Rodó himself is an ideal example of the debate regarding modernisms. A Uruguayan essayist and politician, Rodó's been described as an *Americanist* and as a

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

politicized writer[5]. But we must also stress the point that he was a *criollo*, a Uruguayan of Spanish descent. The governing educated classes and, among them, the writers, or more accurately the ones expressing their thoughts in writing and in languages in use and wide spread to this day (Spanish and Portuguese) - were all *criollos*. So if we consider Huyssen's reference to a change in codings when dealing with notions such as elite, tradition or popularity, in colonial and postcolonial contexts, here we see a very different paradigm to, say, Egypt or China, where the boundaries between the colonizer and the colonized were very clear. The *criollos* were Latin Americans and felt their complete belonging to the southern continent and to their respective nations. A quick revision of the literary works of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (very different from the Native American cultures that depended more on oral and visual forms of expression) confirms that there was a dominant feeling of Americanism but always a Latin (i.e. European) Americanism. The *criollos* didn't consider themselves Europeans but they were hardly native Indians; they had access to both cultures, they belonged to both cultures. In their writings, the issue of identity was translated into what became the classical and controversial dichotomy of civilization vs. barbarity[6] and the no less controversial debate on Anglo-Saxon vs. Latin models for cultural identity. *Ariel* is no exception. In it, Rodó expresses his take on national identity through a sermon that implicitly links the cultural aspect of national identity to the politics of the region. Indeed, *Ariel* has been labeled as a book of the Spanish Generation of 98 as thought and felt from a Latin American viewpoint (Ramsden). In his insightful prologue to *Ariel*, E. Rodríguez Monegal states that "*Ariel* was born under the sign of Disaster" (Rodó 1957:197), the disaster being Spain's defeat and loss of its last remaining transatlantic colonies, the War of Independence in Cuba and the struggling newly-emancipated nations throughout the continent. This means that the timing of *Ariel's* publication, its ideological content and, above all, its form, elucidate one of the two viewpoints of the *criollos* on the issue of their own identity. The governing *criollo* class was torn between two lines of thought: On the one hand, there was a general falling out with the Spanish colonial politics and an admiration for the United States, a modern progressive country[7]. On the other hand, the U.S. military intervention in the second War of

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

Independence in Cuba (1895) and its protracted interference in local politics led many Latin American intellects to express their alarm at the emergence of the new formidable neighbor. Indeed, even before the War of Independence, the Cuban essayist and writer José Martí warned, in his essay *Nuestra América* (1891), against what he called the *yanqui manía* (*Yankee-mania*) when he became aware of how some Latin American thinkers supported the North American model. The essayist José A. Saco also warned, as early as 1848, of what he termed "*annexism*" and its effect on national identity, this national identity being the "Latin" one, the one inherited (principally, from Spain)[8] and recreated to be both Latin and American. The initial shift in how Latin Americans viewed their Latin - concretely Spanish - heritage is key to understanding the modernisms developed in Latin America as it reveals the transnational instead of the international cultural exchanges indicated by Huyssen. Latin Americans' development of the Spanish language and the European ideological and philosophical concepts and cultural trends, created a new, Latin Americanized version of everything, returning the favour and exporting new artistic trends to the world[9]. These two standpoints, European and North American, summarize the nature of modernism, how it was received and recreated in connection to the political situation and ultimately to identity.

As a hardliner of the Latin heritage, Rodó advocated an idealistic view of culture and of the cultural foundations necessary to build the identity of a nation. Rodó encourages the youth of America - i.e., the *criollo* governing classes youth - to reject utilitarianism (symbolized by Caliban[10]) and to embrace the aesthetics and idealism (symbolized by Ariel) of their *own* culture, formulated in Athens and developed in later stages through the Italian Renaissance, the French Enlightenment, etc. Rodó was conscious of the *criollo*'s cosmopolitan nature and prompted the youth of America to value and respect this nature as "a compelling requisite in our formation" (Rodó, *Ariel:* 73)[11]. What Rodó doesn't mention is the indigenous cultural heritage of Latin America. Whenever there is a native-related reference, it's within the classical format of civilization vs. barbarity. Interpreted in modernism/alternative modernism terms, the essay hits an awkward note related to something far removed from the modernism in Europe. Whereas in Europe, the debate was idealism vs. utilitarianism, in Latin America

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

it referred to something much closer to home: the deeply embedded (and indeed bitter) relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, the civilized and the barbarian. Rodó's rejection of utilitarianism isn't just conceptual, it's inherent to the local political and social circumstances of the nations of Latin American. Although he understands that "Without a certain material well-being, the realm of the spirit and the intellect could not exist" (Rodó, *Ariel*: 88) and concedes that the United States "may abound—undoubtedly it does abound—in proposals and productive examples" and "may inspire admiration, amazement, and respect" (Rodó, *Ariel*: 87), he dreads its influence on the people of Latin America**.** Rodó fears the *nordomanía* (*"North-mania"*) and sees that images of this "de-Latinized" America "looms in the nightmares[12] of many who are genuinely concerned about our future" (Rodó, *Ariel*: 71) and were calling for innovation and reform. Rodó is referring to fellow essayists, writers and artists who belong to his *criollo* educated class. But he also fears that the "powerful federation is effecting a kind of moral conquest among us" (Rodó, *Ariel*: 71). Rodó sees how the admiration of the United States' "greatness and power" is winning over the people in government but more so the masses, impressionable and easily fascinated by the image of victory, and concludes that "from admiring to imitating is an easy step" (Rodó, *Ariel*: 71). He repeatedly expresses his concern regarding the potential local Calibans - the masses - who see utilitarianism as the only and ideal way to prosperity. Rodó concludes that these native masses are a hurdle to be overcome. In that sense, democracy was an issue that had to be tackled. Almost grudgingly, he admits his discrepancy with Renan (*Caliban. Continuation of The Tempest*, 1878) and declares that "the spirit of democracy in our civilization is a principal of life it would be futile to resist" (Rodó, *Ariel*: 65). Democracy is necessary, but it must be an educated one; society must be educated to accept the notion of true superiorities. To illustrate his idea and in keeping with the modernist school of referencing, Rodó adopts the ideas of Edgar Quinet who in turn borrows from Oswald Heer's theories on biological evolution the term "prophetic species". Quinet thus claims that, preceding the emergence of "a new type of human being, a new social unity, a new personification of civilization", there is usually "a dispersed and still underdeveloped group" ("prophetic species") that gradually organizes itself into a "variety" and eventually turns into a defined body of citizens with a defined

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

aim: the ruling of the new society ("the group becomes a crowd and rules" - Rodó, *Ariel*: 95).

Ironically, although denouncing utilitarianism, Rodó is actually exercising the same discrimination as the Northern neighbor. Rodó promotes idealism through a systematic education in European values. The mere idea of considering the indigenous element, its customs, beliefs and traditions, does not exist. For Rodó, the native element represents Caliban and must be eliminated from the equation in order to give rise to a new educated nation. The codings that Huyssen referred to are here indeed quite similar - not "quite different" - from "those in the northern transatlantic then or now" (Huyssen: 204). Indeed, the controversy created by his essay does not lie in the fact that he substitutes one foreign model (European) for another (North American) but in the fact that, in adopting the European paradigm and completely ignoring the native element, he is actually emulating the pragmatism of the model he so rejects[13]. His systematic undermining, and indeed demolishing, of any native element that would hinder the progress of progress is very similar to the pragmatic principals of the utilitarian model. Hence the frailty of Rodó's argument lies in its total disregard of a paramount part of the American people's cultural genealogy. His defenders - and they are as many as his detractors - seemingly choose to ignore the elephant in the room and insist on admiring his call for idealism and for the unity of aesthetics and ethics. At the time, long before the surge of postmodernism and its parochial inside-outside, us-them analysis of modernism and *other* modernisms, critics didn't find fault with his European influence but with his naïve approach to what was happening on the ground. Although this was typical of all practices and works pertaining to the Latin American *modernismo* movement (their ivory tower, far-removed-from-reality- approach to the issues and concerns of the here and now of the people of any nation at the beginning of the twentieth century) in the case of *Ariel*, this characteristic directly affected the Latin American people and an essential part of their identity. Later on, re-discovering and relishing in the very foundations of this essential part, Kahlo brings to her paintings the native element, the local and, till then, peripheral culture(s). Surprisingly, her works reflect how this same essential part of the Latin American identity is already widely

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

infiltrated by European notions originating from the same hybrid genealogy of their culture.

Nevertheless, the aesthetics shown by Rodó did change how Latin Americans looked at themselves, their heritage and their culture. Indeed, *Ariel* remains a mandatory chapter in every textbook on the history of Latin American culture and is iconic of Uruguay's cultural identity (Fig. 1)

Figure 1. Stamp commemorating Ariel´s 75th Anniversary

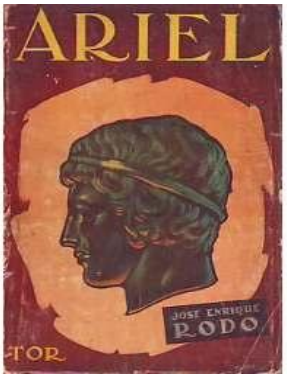
It would seem that, regardless of its idealistic naïve approach (or precisely due to it), it is authentic and very revealing of how the governing classes of Latin America thought and tackled their national and cultural issues at a time when everything was changing very quickly. Benedetti states that, notwithstanding a seemingly obsolete style of writing, its core and inevitable relation with the spirit that generated it makes *Ariel* more personal, more accessible to the people (Benedetti, 1966). In his prologue to the essay, Carlos Fuentes states that it's an insufferable but essential book in the protracted Latin American search for identity. In his book *José Enrique Rodó en el espíritu de su tiempo y en la conciencia de América*, Carlos Martínez Durán (1974) pays tribute to the maestro as does Roberto Fernández Retamar who, in his own essay, *Caliban* (1979), chooses to interpret Rodó's message as a revolutionary one: although Rodó got his symbols wrong[14], he did warn of the dangers of an imminent imperialism.

So *Ariel* was a reflection of the spirit of the times. It was also a reflection of Rodó's thoroughness in his adherence to modernist aesthetics. Gorostiza describes *modernismo*, in its idolization of form, as an orgy to musicality (Earle: 49). *Ariel*

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

presents an exceptionally syrupy specimen of this musicality. Many passages of the essay have the same chocolate-box effect of the images on the many different editions of *Ariel* (Fig. 2)

Figure 2. Samples of the many decorative covers of Ariel



Rodó's devout praise of the "incomparable beauty" (Rodó, *Ariel*: 156) of Athens, of the Grecian heritage which he labels the "*Greek miracle* (…) a sparkling moment in history" (Rodó, *Ariel*: 44)[15], or yet his definitions of how one perceives beauty ("a feeling for beauty is to the sense of the ideal as enamel to the ring. With rough treatment it begins to wear away and is inevitably effaced" - Rodó, *Ariel*: 49), or indeed his symbolism, introducing phrases such as "I find a symbol of what our spirit should be in a story that I evoke from a dusty corner of my memory", not only reflect what Carlos Fuentes described as "Parisian perfume (…) almost faint-provoking"

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

(Rodó, *Ariel*: 17) but Rodó's style, completely adherent to an early romantic *modernismo*.

Through endless cultural references and a series of intertextualities, Rodó manages to create a long-standing debate on Latin America's cultural heritage. Intertextuality is the building block of his essay. Shakespearean characters and an opening scene that emulates the ancient Greek master-disciples format confirm, from the very start, a copy of Western paradigms of thought and representation. The bricklayer or palimpsest effect of these intertextualities should be analyzed, in Crocean terms, as reinterpretations of art works adapted to the author's perspective or in Brechtian terms (Huyssen's fourth point) as a building up of concepts, always directly linked to social rather than aesthetic concepts (Brecht)[16]. Indeed, whereas in *The Tempest*, Ariel is the spirit that helps Prospero in his battles against Caliban, in Rodó's essay, he is no longer a character but a conceptual symbol that represents the moral and aesthetic sublime that the youth of America should aim for. Although in his essay Rodó makes Caliban the representative of utilitarianism, this "metamorphosis" (Belén Castro in her edition of Rodó´s *Ariel*, 2009: 82) is more of an expansion since his main focus is on the local Calibans - the natives - that are now tempted by the prosperity offered by the foreign Caliban. In this sense, Rodó's *Ariel* seems to rely more on Renan's *Caliban. Continuation of The Tempest*, than on Shakespear's original play[17]. In Renan's version, Caliban rises from the working classes to become a tyrant, toppling the noble Prospero and totally eliminating the spirit of Ariel.

Beyond the more comprehensive adoption of Shakespearean characters, the essay is chockfull of references and paraphrases[18]. This extensive referencing, paraphrasing and citing is part of the self-conscious attitude typical of the modernist artist aware of his/her work and drawing attention to the process used in creating it. Rodó considered the modernism exercised and produced in Latin America too naïve, too decadent and too lacking in ideas, showing "insignificant interest in social reality, in the problems of action and in the grave and deep concerns of individual coexistence" (in a letter to Ramón V. Alcalá dated 1911). His detractors point out that this is precisely the fallacy they criticize in *Ariel*: its total and complacent lack of awareness of reality. Like

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

Rubén Darío's or Herrera y Reissig's, Rodó's theories on Art, Beauty and Aesthetics were very naïve, hoping to reconcile art with philosophy by means of very abstract ideas that were hardly applicable to the quickly changing socio-political arena at the beginning of the twentieth century. After WWI, everything changed, not just in Europe where modernism developed into more extreme forms of expression, but in Latin America, where artists like Rivera, Kahlo or even Vasconcelos, and writers such as Borges or Quiroga, held a very different viewpoint from Rodó's ideas on art and civilization. The new generation of *criollos* became much more obsessed with the native element that Rodó fought to educate according to European concepts of Beauty and Ethics. But, once again, they are *criollos* and even their names give away their European heritage. So once again we must refer to the need for a shift in perspective in order to understand the production of modernism in Latin America.

The flip side: Frida Kahlo's cultural merges

Kahlo's work, her belated fame and the reinterpretations regarding her life's work (more her life than her work) go to the core of the debate regarding how alternative modernisms' approaches (to the past, to modernity, to other modernisms) have been assessed (mostly by postmodernist theories) or should be reassessed now in terms of how modernisms operated globally. In Kahlo's Mexico, the revolution changed forever the country's social and cultural arena. By the time she was in her twenties, Mexico was just starting to find its way to stability. In the cultural arena, the Mexican educated governing classes were no longer purely *criollos* and far from rejecting or ignoring the natives as representatives of barbarity, they were now bent upon rediscovering this indigenous past: "Folkloric elements were rediscovered by composers, and architects returned to forms and materials from the past, exuding a spirit of nationalism" (Block & Hoffman-Jeep: 8). But frequently this wave of nationalism in arts was reduced to representations (in drama, comic strips, music…etc.) of the indigenous use of language, their dress code and their general behavior that only managed to stereotype the indigenous element (Block & Hoffman-Jeep)[19]. Nevertheless, an avalanche of artworks championing all things Mexican, covered and

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

coloured Mexico with native motifs derived from the Aztec civilization and revived in fresco paintings all over Mexico City.

Kahlo was a living personification of this cultural campaign of *Mexicandad*, particularly since her marriage to Rivera, when she adopted the Tehuana dress code. Practically anyone who wrote about Frida Kahlo has, at one point or another, addressed the meaning behind her dress code and how it embodied the new cultural tendencies endorsed by the Mexican post-revolution government20. Indeed, absolutely everything about Kahlo, her life, her style, her dress and her work relates to the politics, the aesthetics and the national identity issues that define Latin American alternative modernisms. Two very indicative paintings of how Kahlo portrays her own personal reality through a direct reflection on the Latin American identity issue are *Self-portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and The United States* (1932) and *The Two Fridas* (1939). In both, Kahlo conveys her personal experiences through cultural identity. *Self-portrait on the Borderline*… (Fig. 3) is representative of how she only depicts subjects/objects inasmuch as they affect her and her own reality. In this case, how she views the United States in relation to herself and to *her* Mexico. Painted during her stay in Detroit, it tackles the issue of cultural identity through two forms of modernism: the American and the Mexican. The dichotomy is depicted through a dual image of symbolic elements representing Mexico and the United States, with Frida herself standing on the frontier between both.

Figure 3. Self-portrait on the Border between Mexico and the United States

Argus-a
Artes & Humanidades
Arts & Humanities
Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

This technique of dividing the image into two completely opposite images goes back to the Aztec belief of the eternal struggle between the Aztec gods Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca. Similar to the Chinese Yin and Yang, the continuous struggle between the two Aztec gods guarantees eternal balance in Nature. Kahlo expresses her acceptance of the two worlds as parts of one cycle, complementing each other, albeit a clear tendency to nationalism. Mexico is represented by its history: monuments to Aztec deities, a Nayarit idol and natural powers represented in the sun and moon (the sun is bleeding as a sign of the end and new beginning; the sun and moon symbolizing the cycle of life and death). Underneath, vegetation is another sign of natural life. The United States is represented by its flag, clouded by the smoke coming out of the Ford factory, machines, skyscrapers and gadgets symbolizing modern technology. The image is dominated by hues of grey and neutrals. Frida stands in the middle, holding a Mexican flag and the iconic cigarette that appears in many of her paintings and photographs. The pedestal on which she stands has a socket into which an electric cord is inserted. This cord comes from an engine, on the United States side, from which another cord connects to the roots of foliage on the Mexican side. The painting is ambivalent; Kahlo seems to acknowledge the power of utilitarianism while seeming to connect it with the natural life coming out of Mexico.

Figure 4. The Two Fridas

In *The Two Fridas* (Fig. 4), Kahlo once again associates her emotional crisis (this time the bitterness she felt after Diego Rivera decides to finalize their divorce) with her dual identity, the European and the Indigenous. The painting depicts one Frida in European hairdo and apparel, with pompously elegant frills and lace. To her left, her

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

indigenous alter-ego, in a toned down version of her Tehuana costume. Both Fridas' hearts are exposed and connected by one artery. Another artery, coming out of the indigenous Frida's heart, is connected to a locket holding an image of Diego Rivera as a young child (a family heirloom today on exhibition at the Frida museum). Frida holds the locket in her hand, indicating Diego Rivera's emotional connection to her native identity. The European Frida's heart has a second artery connected to a pair of scissors that barely impedes the European Frida from bleeding to death. The painting is striking in the many layered connections of Frida's dual personality and in the connotations of her own awareness of this duality and how it affects and is affected by her life. This duality echoes the Mexican one that only took centre stage after the revolution. Hence the close connections between identity and sociopolitical circumstances.

Indeed, Kahlo's life and work were little known outside of Mexico, and the little that was known was due to cultural activities inherent to political circumstances that affected art and culture worldwide and even then, only within artistic circles. Real widespread fame came to Kahlo posthumously, as part of the colossal new wave of rediscoveries and reinterpretations carried out by the controversial postmodernist movement. Indeed, since the mid-eighties (when fictional reinterpretations of historical events and figures were all the rage) various artworks (film, literature, music, etc.) have reassessed her art in relation to her personal life, to the Mexican culture and to the political and social situation in Mexico. The attraction to Kahlo has remained to this day loyal to a postmodern perspective, i.e. inherent to her personal saga and to a romantic perspective of post-revolution Mexico and the Mexican cultural arena perceived, almost always, as a potential dramatic backdrop to any story. Indeed, her life has all the ingredients of a good story: the nationalistic wave that took Mexico's artistic life by storm, the accident that marked her for life, her obsessive love for Rivera, her many sentimental entanglements, her notorious relationship with Trotsky, etc. were all part of a really good story especially because it really did happen and, more importantly, because it really did reflect the spirit of an important fraction of history.

Like Rodó, she belonged to the *criollo* educated class but unlike him, she belonged to a later generation that now incorporated *mestizos*: Frida - or Frieda as she at

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

first signed her name - was a *criolla*: her father was a German immigrant and her mother was a *mestiza* (of mixed Indian–Spanish descent). When Kahlo started painting, more than twenty years had passed since the publication of Rodó's *Ariel*. Although idealism was still a driving force behind artistic works, it had developed into a very different idealism, unlike the idyllic Greek model sponsored by Rodó. In post-revolution Mexico, idealism was directly connected to two fundamental issues: the revival of the Mexican identity through native symbols and elements and, like in most Latin American countries, communism. These were now idealism's two responses to the utilitarian model of the "Giant of the North".

The native folklore is a constant in her work. Instead of the Greek classics, the Italian Renaissance or the French Enlightenment sponsored by Rodó, Kahlo was a hardliner of the government campaign to revive the indigenous cultures and a fervent advocate of this fundamental, and yet to be discovered element of the Mexican cultural heritage and how it bestowed uniqueness to Mexican identity. Symbols like the moon and sun, the snail and shell (symbol of love and sexuality), the skeleton, the idols, the Mexican flora and fauna all turn into trademarks of Kahlo's artwork[21]. Kahlo also managed to reveal various aspects of the different Mexican civilizations and cultures: her Tehuana dress, Aztec gods or Nayarit idols reflect the versatility of Mexican pre-Colombian civilizations with their various beliefs and artistic tendencies[22].

But our focus here is on some of the paintings that reflect one particular aspect of Kahlo's modernism that derives from reinterpretations of Mexico's merged binary cultural heritage. Kahlo represents a new generation that takes pride in its *mestizo* genealogy, the hybrid heritage that combines and reinterprets local and universal beliefs and artistic tendencies. A first and salient example is Kahlo's mimicry of the *ex-votos*, an art form brought to America with the Spanish missionaries to facilitate the teaching of Christianity to the natives, through recognizable images more familiar and accessible to the masses. In Mexico, *ex-votos* eventually developed into a sort of offering or gift in gratitude or thanksgiving for a prayer answered[23].

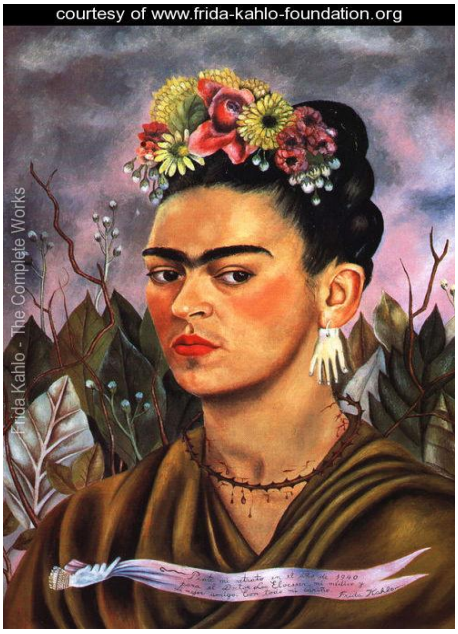
Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

In *Retablo* (1943) (Fig. 5), Frida mimics the *ex-voto* form, presenting an image of the accident she suffered in her youth and that marked her life thereon. On the upper left side there is an image of La Virgen de los Dolores and at the bottom a message giving thanks to her for having saved her life: *The marriage Guillermo Kahlo and Matilde C. Kahlo give thanks to the Virgin of Los Dolores for having saved their child Frida from the accident that took place in 1925*. Kahlo barely makes any changes, adopting the *ex-voto* form to her own accident (Kettenmann: 17-18).

In *Self-portrait dedicated to Dr. Eloesser* (1940) (Fig. 6), Frida parodies another tradition that reflects the binary genealogy of Mexican culture: the small charms called *"milagritos"* (small miracles) that worshipers offer to Jesus, Mary or the saint responsible for healing an ailment.

Figure 6. Self-Portrait Dedicated to Dr. Eloesser

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina



The *"milagritos"* are placed at the shrine of the saint responsible for the miracle. These charms often depict the part of the body that has been healed[24]. Frida substitutes Dr. Eloesser for the saint, dedicating her self-portrait to him after he was able to heal her hand. At the bottom of her self-portrait, the message reads *I painted this portrait in the year 1940 for Dr. Leo Eloesser, my doctor and my best friend. With all my affection. Frida Kahlo*. The message is in the form of a ribbon supported with a hand that also appears as an earring she is wearing in reference to her own healed hand. This symbolism was and remains very common in Mexico and one which Kahlo integrated into her own form of modernism.

Another example of modernist reinterpretations derived from religious references originates from European Catholicism: In *The wounded table* (Fig. 7), presented at the surrealist exhibition in Mexico (1940), Kahlo parodies Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. But Kahlo reinterprets the Catholic symbols through motifs inspired by her personal life and native Mexican codings.

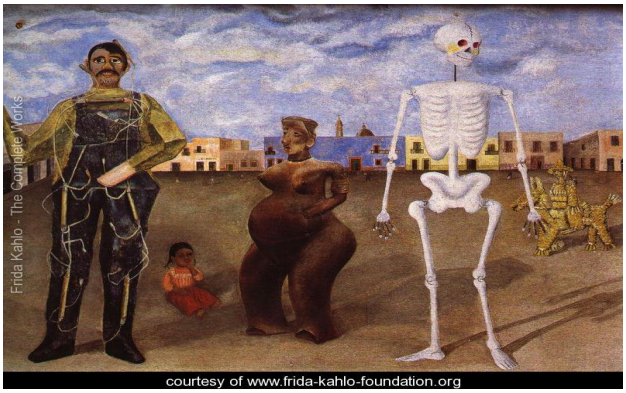
Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

Figure 7. The Wounded Table

In the painting, Frida is surrounded by her niece and nephew standing at the far left end of the table and her pet fawn at the far right of it. Sitting at the table and surrounding Frida are Diego Rivera at her right, represented by the blue overalls and with his hands *on the table*, substituting Judas (Luke, 22:21) - in reference to Diego's betrayal of Frida – and, at her left, a skeleton, representing death (tugging at Frida's hair, a possible sign of her fatal ailments), and a Nayarit idol that sits between her and the skeleton. Frida and the Nayarit idol share the same arm, reflecting Frida's deep connections to her indigenous heritage. Finally, Frida herself substitutes Christ in reference to her own suffering[25].The skeleton and the pre-Columbian idol had already appeared in *The Four Inhabitants of Mexico* (1938) (Fig. 8), a painting that once again confirms the shift in modernist paradigms since Rodó's *Ariel*. Rodó's romantic idolization of Latin America's Greek heritage is now replaced by a very credible reinterpretation of Mexico's distinctive heritage. *The Four Inhabitants of Mexico* was exhibited in Kahlo's first solo exhibition in 1938, in the Julien Levy Gallery in New York. The painting was presented under the very revealing title of "The Square Is Theirs", with which Kahlo clearly expresses her complete awareness of, and integration with, her indigenous heritage.

Argus-a
Artes & Humanidades
Arts & Humanities
Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

Figure 8. The Four Inhabitants of Mexico



In the forefront of the painting, three colossal figures standing next to each other depict Kahlo's perception of her own personal Mexican reality. In their shadow sits a small native girl, dressed in typical Tehauna dress, sucking her thumb and looking on at the three giant characters. At the far right – and in much smaller proportions – sits the fourth inhabitant: a tiny straw man on a straw donkey. Kahlo chooses this figure as one of the four representatives of her own perception of Mexican life "because he is weak, and at the same time has such elegance and is so easy to destroy"[26]. Judas stands at the far left and is once again represented by Rivera's overalls (Rivera would always represent betrayal). Standing on the right is the smiling skeleton (representing death, it's a recurrent symbol in Kahlo's work). Between them, a Columbian female pregnant idol, strong, silent, almost passive in contrast to the defiant figure of Judas. One and all are oblivious of the little girl, while they stand in the middle of a deserted arid plaza (Kahlo points out it's "because too much revolution has left Mexico empty"[27]), near Kahlo's home in Coyoacan. *La Rosita*, a bar frequented by Frida, can be seen in the backdrop.

A final example that clearly illustrates the frailty of any argument for modernism as a purely Western concept is *The Mask* (1945) (Fig. 9), a solid example of Latin American magic realism. Much like García Márquez in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where he had psychics predicting the past when the people of Macondo lost their memory, Kahlo also inverts universal beliefs: while her many self-portraits are like a mask, not revealing any emotion, when she does paint *The mask*, it reveals what her face does not.

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

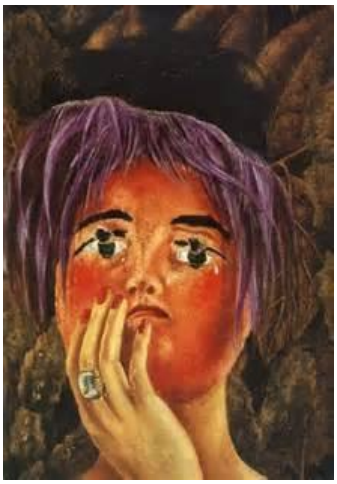


Figure 9. The Mask

Although some have argued for the surrealist nature of this painting, we must consider the long-standing tradition of masks in Mexico[28]. This tradition lends credibility and logic to Kahlo's own assertion that she portrayed her own reality[29]. Likewise, Rodó also portrayed his own reality. Both were modernists. But Kahlo's modernism, like Latin America itself, had evolved from the beginnings - the *modernismo* initiated by Rubén Darío - to the avant-garde movement that takes over not only to *wring the swans neck* (E. González Martínez, among others) but to explore and further expand the techniques modernists had only begun to experiment with. Thus, new artistic movements start popping up all over the southern continent (magical realism or the Marvelous Real) and are now engrained in our cultural memories as distinctly Latin American.

Latin American modernism is a solid and very authentic reflection of Latin America's binary culture. So, is our perspective all wrong? Is the problem in our way of looking at modernism and alternative modernisms? Although Huyssen puts forth concrete suggestions in order to change a long-standing tradition of thought that automatically deals with all cultural phenomena as originating from and categorized and evaluated by a Western viewpoint, he is quick to point out that these suggestions will probably reveal that "such de-Westernization of modernism and modernity will remain limited because of the Western genealogy of the concepts themselves" (Huyssen: 200-201). But, in actual fact, what has to change is our outlook on this whole original-sin-of-the-West (Huyssen: 191) attitude that Huyssen himself rejects. A shift in

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

perspective - modernism is not an exclusively Western concept - is probably the only way to tackle alternative modernisms from an objective (globalization-free?) standpoint. Cultural genealogies must be taken into account as well as circulation, manipulation and modifications carried out in different places at different times. A simple example is the term *magic realism* referred to above and which today is globally used in connection with the Boom generation of Latin American writers. But the term first originated in Germany (Franz Roh, 1925) to indicate the post-expressionist works of the New Objectivity movement. Another term, *lo real maravilloso americano* (the American Marvelous Real) was first coined by the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier. But if we replace "American" with, say, "Arabic" - which at some point some critic must have done, inadvertently, not really knowing the term already existed - we can definitely apply it to Naguib Mahfouz's or El Tayeb Saleh's narrative works. Indeed, this is a phenomena we'll see repeated frequently: similar aesthetics, similar genre techniques implemented in different places at different times. The coining of certain phrases and the greater or lesser extent of an artist's or writer's fame should be taken into account. The Boom generation itself is another case in point: precisely called that due to the "boom" their works caused in literary circles, the Boom generation became one partly due to the efforts of Carmen Balcells, the literary agent chiefly responsible for getting worldwide renown for the then relatively unknown Latin American writers. Obviously, this is not a denial of the unique creative quality of their literary works – which remains a powerful, inspirational and influential part of universal literature today - but it's an indication of how trends and waves may have a wider and more significant effect depending on the extent of their diffusion. So we must keep in mind two things: firstly, the difference between the phenomena and it's getting known, and secondly, that the Latin America culture particularly is a dual one: Latin and American.

Both Rodó and Kahlo created landmarks in Latin American culture; both were controversial, both produced "alternative" modernisms. Through their work, Latin American modernism has come a long way from what started as a revolutionizing of Hispanic poetics by Ruben Darío. To reassess their contribution to Latin American

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

modernisms, their work must be reassessed from a present day *post* postmodernist viewpoint, as the natural recycling of multiple and continuously developing reinterpretations of esthetic concepts and strategies that produce new ideological and artistic forms.

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

NOTES

1 In "El ensayo hispanoamericano, del modernismo a la modernidad", Peter G. Earle revises the various instances in which this question appears explicitly or implicitly in Latin American literary works: Rodó, José Marti in *Nuestra América* (1890), Manuel González Prada in *Páginas libres* (1894), Alcides Arguedas in *Pueblo enfermo* (1909), Martínez Estrada en *Radiografía de la pampa* (1933), Alfonso Reyes in *Última Tule* (1942), Pedro Henríquez Ureña in his *Sies ensayos en busca de nuestra expresión* (1928), José Carlos Mariátiegui in *Siete ensayos de interpretación sobre la realidad peruana* (1928), Eduardo Mallea, *Historia de una pasión argentina* (1937), Octavio Paz in *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950) and *Posdata* (1969) among others.

2 In his speech (1971) commemorating the tenth anniversary of his victory at the Bay of Pigs, Fidel Castro states that: "We do not even have a name. We still do not have a name. We are practically without baptism. They call us Latin Americans, Iberian Americans, Indo-Americans" (LANIC). Besides the clear reference to the problem of identity, Fidel Castro's use of the noun "baptism" denotes the already mixed heritage, the infiltration of Catholicism and its merging with native faiths.

3 Indeed, the debate civilization vs. barbarity is the first and most comprehensive manifestation of the issue of Latin American identity. The controversial formula is latent in the chronicles of the first encounters between settlers and natives, and becomes more explicit during the colonial era and during the years leading up to and during the course of independence. Although political gain was at the fundamental root of this debate, nevertheless, ideological and even religious reasoning was, often times, the motivation behind it. We have only to think of the chronicles of, among many others, Hernán Cortés, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and Guamán Poma, or the outrageous 18th century theories propounded by Georges Louis Lecler, Count of Buffon in his *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière* (1749- 1788), where he tries to justify the barbarity of the people in the New World, or Corneille de Pauw's *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains ou memories intéressants pour servir á l'histoire de l'espéce humaine* (1771) wherein the author proposes the inferiority of the indigenous Americans. In one and all, the common denominator is the us-them/ civilization-barbarity attitude adopted in their accounts.

4 Our analysis will revise Andrea Huyssen's approach to alternative modernisms as one of the salient and widely comprehensive theories put forth on how to approach the issue of alternative modernisms.

5 "Escritor politizado" in Belén Castro's edition of Rodó´s *Ariel*: 29). This and subsequent translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

6 Among many examples: D. F. Sarmiento writes *Civilización y Barbarie* (1845), Esteban Echevarría writes *El matadero* (written in 1839 but published in 1871) and José Eustacio Rivera writes *La Vorágine* (1924) further validating the now classical format of us-them/ civilization-barbarity.

7 Faustino Sarmiento was one of the earliest hardliners of the North American utilitarian model. See particularly his essays *Commentarios sobre la constitución*, *Informes sobre educación*, *Las Escuelas, base de la prosperidad y de la república en los Estados Unidos*.

8 One of the first reactions to the new Northern power is that Spain's image as colonizer quickly transforms into an image of the motherland, the giver of language, art, literature and faith.

9 Perception becomes participation that alters the object perceived. Once again, we refer to W. Heisenberg's *Physicist's Conception of Nature*. Heisenberg studies the emergence of quantum physics (Planck, 1858-1947) and its revelations regarding how the act of observing or studying a physical phenomenon affects and ultimately alters it. Quantum physics' scientists were able to verify the impossibility of observing or studying any physical activity of matter without modifying it. The instrument or apparatus used in the experiments changed existing variables or added new ones. Accordingly, Nature compels us to recognize our role within it. Applied to literature, we could cite a number of examples of how these modified variables (Huyssen's transnational exchanges) occur: Rubén Darío transformed the Spanish language through his reinterpretations of French Symbolism and Parnassianism; Carpentier put forth his own interpretation of Latin America ("the American Marvelous Real") through his European musical heritage, the Spanish language and the American geography; the character of *El Zorro* is similar to Robin Hood but it is not an identical copy of it. In time, *El Zorro* went on to inspire several movies, television series, books, etc. inside and outside of Latin America. This also applies to different areas of lifestyle and even language. The phrase he/she is *good people*, for example, has infiltrated American slang phraseology through the Latino community and is a direct translation of the very common Latin American phrase *buena gente*.

10 Many have already indicated the play on words, Caliban being an anagram of cannibal. See, among others, Belén Castro's edition of Rodó's *Ariel* and Enrique Luengo's "La otredad indígena en los discursos sobre la identidad Latino Americano".

11 José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel*. All citations of *Ariel* are from this English edition; translation by Sayers Peden.

12 Rodó uses the more positive word "sueños" (dreams). This nuance is important because, unlike Sayers Peden's translation, Rodó's words are indicative of the viewpoint of many

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

politicians and intellects ("*genuinely concerned about our future"*) who, far from discouraging utilitarianism, were actually championing the U.S. model.

13 Borges adequately summarizes the problem stating that Rodó "was a North American, not a Yankee, but a chair professor from Boston, full of illusions about being Latin and Hispanic" ("fue un norteamericano, no un yankee, pero sí un catedrático de Boston, relleno de ilusiones sobre latinidad e hispanidad"), in his prologue to *Antología de la poesía de vanguardia*, cited by Belén Castro in her edition of Rodó´s *Ariel*; footnote 164: 111

14 "mistook the symbols…our symbol isn't Ariel, as Rodó thought, but Caliban (…) What is our history, our culture but the history, the culture of Caliban", in his essay *Calibán*, cited by Belén Castro in her edition to Rodó´s *Ariel*; footnote 181: 117

15 On this occasion, like on many others throughout the essay, Sayers Peden's translation neutralizes Rodó´s overwhelmingly romantic rhetoric. Rodó´s words, which Sayers Peden translates as "a sparkling moment in history", translate literally into "a smile of History".

16 Garcia Monsivais points out the many instances, in his extensive correspondence with other writers, in which Rodó expresses his literary and social intentions: In his *Autobiografía*, Rodó declares that "I have tried to spread, in American literature, an interest for ideas, separating it from the narrow and egotistical individualism that has characterized the very new manifestations of our literary activity, incased in pure art and pure individual emotion" (García Monsivais: 99). In a letter to Unamuno (dated 1901), Rodó declares his intention of creating a "literature of ideas", rejecting "decadent frivolity and triviality". Instead, he calls for "seriousness of thought and transparency and firmness in form" (letter to Ureña dated 1910). Rodó "saw himself as a link in the chain of a lettered body of men that, like Fernández de Lizardi, on the eve of Latin American independence, fought to create a literary life that would be influential in the social course" (Belén Castro in her edition of Rodó's *Ariel*: 27). Gutiérrez Girardot also confirms Rodó's main objective was to 'mediate' between society and power through cultural projects that would "create and educate a reading public" (Belén Castro in her edition of Rodó's *Ariel*: 27).

17 Belén Castro in her edition of Rodó´s *Ariel*: 82

18 One of the more extravagant examples of modernist referencing and paraphrasing is found at the end of the essay. In a final subtitle, Rodó declares that "Thus spoke Prospero". Besides Nietzche, several other philosophers, writers and artists parade throughout the essay. Franciso de Asís, Tennyson, Byron, Diogenes, Eduard Von Harmann are but a few of the many names cited or paraphrased in the essay.

19 Block and Hoffman-Jeep stress these stereotype representations citing a beauty contest held in Mexico City in 1921: "A particularly poignant example of the (ab)use of *lo indígena* was the

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

case of *la India Bonita*, a beauty contest (…) sponsored by the periodical *El Universal Ilustrado*. Young women arrayed in their indigenous finery posed for photographers and promenaded in front of the judges, whose job it was to select "la más bella" (the most beautiful). The winner was described in *El Universal Ilustrado*: '*She arrived here accompanied by her grandmother, a pure meschica Indian, who doesn't speak any Spanish (...) Her name is María Bibiana Uribe and she's 18 years old'* María Bibiana Uribe then had "five o'clock tea" with Alberto Pani, Secretary of Foreign Relations, and other dignitaries, and her native beauty was exploited to push "el Jabón Flores del Campo" (Wildflower Soap). Other than this, there was no attempt on the part of the competition organizers to assimilate the indigenous culture they had wished to exalt and honor" (Block and Hoffmann-Jeep: 8). Here the authors wish to convey the superficial glorification of indigenous identity. More importantly for our study is the fact that the young girl is not completely native (Spanish surname), confirming the mixed genealogy of the people and their culture. So, once again, we can only stress the fact that alternative modernisms in Latin America must be regarded through a shift in perspective: from the onset, modernism wasn't a mere copy (alternative) to an original but a different original.

20 See, among many others, Carlos Fuentes' introduction to *El diario de Frida Kahlo. Un íntimo autoretrato*; Herrera's comments regarding Kahlo's dress code and the reactions of those who saw her during her trip to San Francisco, in *A biography*; Block & Hoffman-Jeep's "Fashioning National Identity. Frida Kahlo in 'Gringolandia'".

21 Later on, these same motifs that defined Kahlo's work would become recurrent motifs symbolizing the Mexico of her time: "the movie's [*Frida*, 2002], ultra-vibrant terracotta reds and primary blues and yellows sign in for the performance of an authentic Mexican identity. The bright colors along with a *mise-en-scène* filled with jungle-like foliage, tropical flowers, and monkeys are part of a signifying scheme linking Mexico with the contemporary commodificatioin of Latinidad" (I. Molina Guzmán: 240)

22 With globalization, these nuances would later disappear into a blurred mashed up idea of all things Mexican. Indeed, a salient aspect of globalization is the quick and easy generalizing of everything. I. Molina Guzmán aptly maintains that a "syncretic Latina identity was produced and positioned as authentic within global commodity culture" (I. Molina Guzmán: 239).

23 "As common folk experienced ownership of religious expression, local artists were hired to draw the account of how the individual was cured or saved from a disaster through the intercession of a patron saint. The work of the artist paid less attention to conventional or ecclesiastical artistic criteria and was inspired more by the person's experience and the artist's imagination. The drawing was accompanied by a written text expressing the petitioner's gratitude or narrative account of the miracle and identifying the saint who was responsible for the miracle" (Pineda: 372).

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

24 "Here the faithful travel to offer their *milagritos* to Jesus, Mary, and saints who have interceded and granted requests for help. The *milagritos* sometimes are miniature representations of kneeling or standing people as well as body parts (legs, heads, eyes, arms, hearts, feet, hands, fingers, breasts, lungs) to show either the fervor of the petitioner or the part of the body that was healed" (Pineda: 369).

25 Hayden Herrera seems to be the pioneer of this interpretation of Kahlo's work in reference to her personal life. See Roberta Ann Quance's *Mujer o árbol. Mitología y modernidad en el arte y la literatura de nuestro tiempo*.

26 Kahlo at the Julian Levy Gallery exhibition (1938). See, among others, Hayden Herrera's *Frida Kahlo* and Martha Zamora's *Frida Kahlo: The Brush of Anguish*.

27 Kahlo at the Julian Levy Gallery exhibition (1938). See, among others, Hayden Herrera's *Frida Kahlo* and Martha Zamora's *Frida Kahlo: The Brush of Anguish*.

28 Five years after Kahlo presents *The Mask*, Octavio Paz dedicates a chapter of his essay *El laberinto de la soledad* to "Mexican Masks" in which the Mexican poet and author explores the cultural connotations of the mask in Mexican culture, pointing out that when the average Mexican shows himself, he is actually hiding it (26-41).

29 Many, including Kahlo herself, have referred to André Bretón's opinion on her work as fundamentally surrealist while Kahlo herself has always maintained that she never considered herself a surrealist, that she painted her own reality in her own way, without any other considerations. See, among others, Kettenmann's *Frida Kahlo. 1907-1954. Dolor y pasión*, Hayden Herrera's *Frida: Una biografía de Frida Kahlo*, Gérard de Cortanze's *Frida Kahlo. La terrible belleza*.

REFERENCES

BENEDETTI, Mario. *Genio y figura de José Enrique Rodó*. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1966.

BLOCK, Rebeca & HOFFMAN-JEEP, Lynda. "Fashioning National Identity. Frida Kahlo in 'Gringolandia'", *Women's Art Journal*, 19:2 (1999); 8-12

BRECHT, Bertolt. "The Popular and the Realistic. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*". Ed. and trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang 1957; 107-114.

CORTANZE, Gérard de. *Frida Kahlo. La terrible belleza*. Traducción de Nuria Petit Fonseré. Barcelona: Paidós, 2012.

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

DEVÉS VALDÉS, Eduardo. *El pensamiento latinoamericano en el siglo XX. Entre la modernización y la identidad. Tomo I. Del Ariel de Rodó a la CEPAL (1900 – 1950)*. Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2000

EARLE, Peter G. "El ensayo hispanoamericano, del modernismo a la modernidad", *Revista Iberoamericana* 118-119 (1982); 47-49.

GARCÍA MONSIVAIS, Blanca M. "Entornos, contornos y contextos literarios de *Ariel*. José Enrique Rodó y el ensayo", *Escritos, Revista del Centro de Ciencias del Lenguaje*, 28 (2003); 91-104.

HERRERA, Hayden. *Frida Kahlo*. Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1978

HUYSSEN, Andreas. "Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World". *New German Critique* 100, 34:1 (2007); 189-207.

KAHLO, Frida. *El diario de Frida Kahlo. Un íntimo autoretrato*. Introduction by Carlos Fuentes. Essay and commentaries by Sarah M. Lowe. Mexico: La Vaca Independiente, 2010 (1st edition 1995)

…….. *Ahí lejos de mi retrato. Apuntes personales*. Prologue by Ana María Moix. Introduction and notes by Raquel Tibol. Barcelona: Lumen, 2011 (1st edition 2005)

KETTENMANN, Andrea. *Frida Kahlo. 1907-1954. Dolor y pasión.* Köln: Taschen, 2012

LUENGO, Enrique. "La otredad indígena en los discursos sobre la identidad Latino Americana". Sweden: *Anales Nueva Época*, 1 (1998); 37-54

MARTÍNEZ DURÁN, Carlos. *José Enrique Rodó en el espíritu de su tiempo y en la conciencia de América*. Caracas: Central University of Venezuela, 1974

MOLINA GUZMÁN, Isabel. "Mediating Frida: Negotiating Discourses of Latina/o Authenticity in Global Media Representations of Ethnic Identity", *Critical Studies in Media Communications*, 23:3 (2006), 232-251

OVIEDO, José Miguel. "La América de Rodó", in *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*. 2. *Del romanticismo al modernismo*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2001; 326-327

PAZ, Octavio. *El laberinto de la soledad*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970 (1st edition 1950)

PINEDA, Ana María. "Imágenes de Dios en el camino: Retablos, Ex-votos, *Milagritos*, and Murals", *Theological Studies* 65 (2004); 364-379

QUANCE, Roberta Ann. *Mujer o árbol. Mitología y modernidad en el arte y la literatura de nuestro tiempo*. Madrid: Visor, 2000

RAMSDEN, Herbert. "*Ariel*, ¿libro del 98?", *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 302 (1975); 446-454

Vol. V Edición Nº 18
Octubre 2015
ISSN: 1853-9904
California - U.S.A.
Bs. As. - Argentina

REAL DE AZÚA, Carlos. *Medio siglo de Ariel (Su significación y trascendencia literario-filosófica)*. Uruguay: Academia Nacional de Letras, 2001

RODÓ, José Enrique. *Obras completas*. Edition, introduction and prologue by Emir Rodríguez Monegal. Madrid: Aguilar, 1957

---. *Ariel*. Belén Castro's edition and introduction. Madrid: Cátedra, 2009 (1st edition 2000)

---. *Ariel*. Translation by Margaret Sayers Peden, foreword by James W. Symington, prologue by Carlos Fuentes. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988

RODRÍGUEZ MONEGAL, E. *Obras completas de José Enrique Rodó*. Madrid: Aguilar, 1967 (1st edition 1957)

ZAMORA, Martha. *Frida Kahlo: The Brush of Anguish*. London: Art Data, 1990

-