

Frida Kahlo: The Heroine of Pain

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*"I have achieved a lot.
I will be able to walk
I will be able to paint
I love Diego more than I love myself.
My will is great
My will remains".¹*

Frida Kahlo (1907 – 1954) ranks among the most influential figures of 20th century art. In a field dominated by men, she was one of the most important women painters of her generation, perhaps only matched in fame by Georgia O'Keeffe. Her life story has recently been brought to a wider audience through the film "Frida" starring Salma Hayek, whose portrayal of the artist won her an Oscar nomination.

The third of four daughters born to Mathilde Calderón and Guillermo Kahlo, Frida was born on the 6th July 1907, at 8:30am LMT in Coyoacán, Mexico. [Source: Birth Certificate.]

Her mother, Mathilde, was of Native American and Spanish descent. She was remembered by Frida as deeply religious, congenial and intelligent but unable to read or write. Her father, Guillermo, a Hungarian Jew was born in Germany and immigrated to Mexico in 1891. He worked as a professional photographer in Mexico City and introduced her to art, photography, architecture and anthropology.

From a very young age, Frida displayed the force of character and will that became her greatest strength in a life filled with high drama and intense physical suffering. A spirited and fun-loving child, her earliest recollections include an imaginary friend who entertained her with dance and constant laughter. At the age of six she was stricken with polio and bed-ridden for nine months. The disease deformed her right leg making it thinner and slightly shorter than her left.

In her teens she was accepted into one of Mexico's best schools. Her ambition was to become a doctor of medicine. Shortly after her eighteenth birthday fate dealt her a severe blow and forced her to re-think her objectives and change her direction in life. On the 17th

September 1925 she was involved in an accident from which she received horrific injuries. The bus she was travelling in collided with a streetcar. She was pierced by a handrail that entered her body at the hip and exited through her vagina. She suffered haemorrhaging, bruising to a kidney, eleven fractures in her right leg, the crushing of her right foot, a dislocated left elbow, serious spinal fractures, a broken collarbone, two fractured ribs and pelvic damage that rendered her incapable of carrying a pregnancy to full term. So severe were her wounds that the doctors didn't expect her to live. Her injuries condemned her to a life of near constant pain, steel corsets, frequent hospital stays lasting months and over thirty operations.

During her stay in hospital she took up painting. The accident not only changed the course of her life it became the main source of her artistic inspiration. Many of her approximately two hundred paintings relate to her experiences of lifelong physical pain. They range from portraits of sublime beauty to works that are frightening to look at. She purged her soul and emotions on her canvas and held nothing back. Her work was highly original and unique. She refused to be pigeon-holed into any particular style,

"They thought I was a Surrealist but I wasn't. I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality".ⁱⁱ

Her paintings also chronicled her turbulent twenty-five year relationship with the muralist painter Diego Rivera, who was twenty years her senior and a notorious womaniser. A strikingly beautiful woman, Frida soon reacted to Diego's waywardness by conducting affairs of her own with both men and women, including a passionate liaison with Leon Trotsky, whom she dedicated a self-portrait in 1937.

Her personality was sincere, hot-blooded, fiery and self-destructive. She drank heavily, smoked and took drugs to dull the pain in her body and heart. Towards the end of her life her health worsened and her suffering became unbearable. In July 1953 her leg had to be amputated because of gangrene, which led her into deep depression and finally robbed her of her will to live. She tried to kill herself several times by hanging and overdose. One year after the amputation she died. The official cause of death was a pulmonary embolism, but suicide is also speculated.

The Natal Chart

Whichever way you look at Frida's horoscope (*Fig.1*) – from a traditional perspective or a modern standpoint – it has much to say.

Leo rising indicates a proud, self-confident and impressive woman who commanded attention and thrived on drama. Popular and charming, she was at home in the limelight and in the company of creative and cultured people. She had a seductive effect on many people and was loved for her beauty, intelligence, vivaciousness and talent.

With her Ascendant ruler, the Sun, in Cancer, she was fiercely patriotic and attached to her homeland and family. While she gained much acclaim in New York and Paris as an artist, her most fervent desire was to exhibit in Mexico and to be acknowledged by her own people. She did not achieve this ambition until the end of her life.

The Sun, her vital core and life-force, is heavily aspected and central to understanding how and why her life was so dramatic. Its exact opposition to Mars gives a fighting spirit, great courage and the will to conquer adversity. This aspect is also a classic indicator of accident proneness. With Uranus linked into this pairing a liability to injury is further accentuated. In

addition, Neptune's involvement with these three planets supports her physical fragility and her cravings for intoxicants and stimulants. It also partly explains the unreliability of her husband's fidelity and her own proneness to seduction. Neptune's prominence, too, gives the gift of imagination and inspiration. However, together with Uranus and Mars it can be an indicator of paralysis. NB. Mars and Uranus in the 5th House would have made her prone to back injuries and fertility problems.

Venus, the planet of love and art, is in Gemini and conjunct Pluto. This shows a special artistic giftedness as well as an intensified sex-expression and duality in regard to affairs of the heart. The love she shared with Diego was intense, destructive and all-consuming. By calculation, Venus works out as her *Financial Significator*,ⁱⁱⁱ which is appropriate as her income came from art. It rules her 3rd and 10th Houses and is the Almuten of her 8th House. She communicated through her art. Her vocation was that of the artist; and her subject material was at times dark and confronting, often dealing with death and loss.

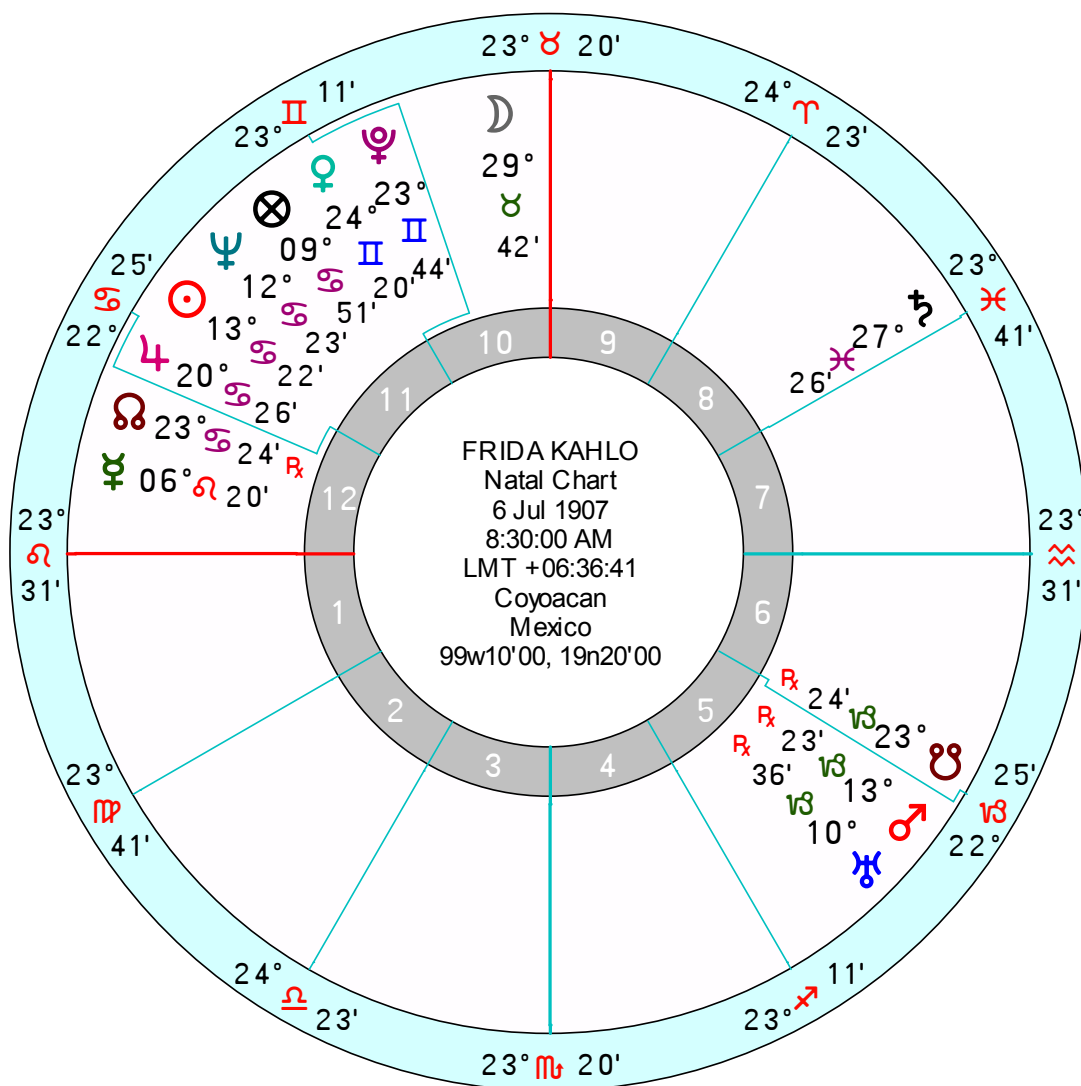


Figure 1

The *Almutem Figuris*^{iv} is the Moon, her most elevated planet. Posited in the 10th House, conjunct the Midheaven and exalted in Taurus, it rules her 12th House. A 10th House Moon in good zodiacal state often produces public recognition. As ruler of the 12th House it emphasises the affairs of this House, which include imprisonment, chronic illness, hospitalisation, depression and mental anguish. According to Abraham Ibn Ezra in his *Liber Navitatum*,

“The most powerful testimony of all is that planet having dominion over the entire chart, which the Saracens called the Almutem, its testimony is equally as powerful as all the other planets taken together”.

The *Almutem Figuris* represents the power that dominates the life of an individual. In Frida’s case she became known for her appreciation of her homeland, her Mexican identity, her connection with her mother and women’s concerns, and her appreciation of spiritual values. She also knew, only too well, the sufferings and misfortunes associated with the 12th House.

Important Events

The Accident

On the 6th July 1925 Frida celebrated her 18th birthday and entered the thirteen-year Mercury Firdaria,^v and her Ascendant arrived at the 7th House by Profecion.^{vi}

Mercury in the natal chart is in the 12th House, highlighting the affairs and difficulties of this House. By itself, the 12th House Mercury Firdaria doesn’t assume a completely negative period in a person’s life; many people experience 12th House Firdaria phases without tragic events occurring to them. However, in Frida’s case Mercury is linked to her Sun by disposition and her Sun, you’ll recall, is central to understanding her chart through its involvement with Mars, Neptune and Uranus. Hence, accident proneness was always going to be a strong possibility.

Looking now at the Profected Ascendant we note that Saturn is Lord of the year as it rules the 7th House. Saturn is placed in the radix 8th House of crisis and loss. Biologically, the 8th House rules the sex organs and the groin; a physically sensitive area of Frida’s body. We also note a strong 8th House emphasis in her Solar Return (See Fig. 2) for this year, with a conjunction of Mercury, Venus and Mars, plus the North Lunar Node and Neptune in the House.

The accident that ended Frida’s physical freedom happened during the afternoon of the 17th September while she was travelling with her boyfriend on a commuter bus (Mercury) in Mexico City. As the catastrophe involved more than one individual you would expect there to be “accident” signs in the sky. There were. The Moon, Mars and the Sun were all in close conjunction and in opposition to Uranus (See Fig. 3) [This pattern has similarities to the Sun/Mars/Uranus/Neptune combination in Frida’s horoscope.]

These four transits scored a direct hit on Frida’s Venus/Pluto conjunction. Simultaneously, she received terrible wounds to her reproductive organs and a violent awakening of her artistic genius. In addition, transiting Pluto had just passed a conjunction to her Sun and an opposition to her Mars: *Danger to life; physical suffering; the misfortune of having to suffer violent assault; injury.*^{vii} Also, transiting Neptune was exactly conjunct her natal Ascendant and square her natal Midheaven: *Being at the mercy of environmental influences, coupled with a lack of resistance and stamina; extreme sensitivity and vulnerability; insecurity and*

uncertainty with regard to personal direction. And, serving as a backdrop, transiting Saturn was moving through her 3rd House of public transport.

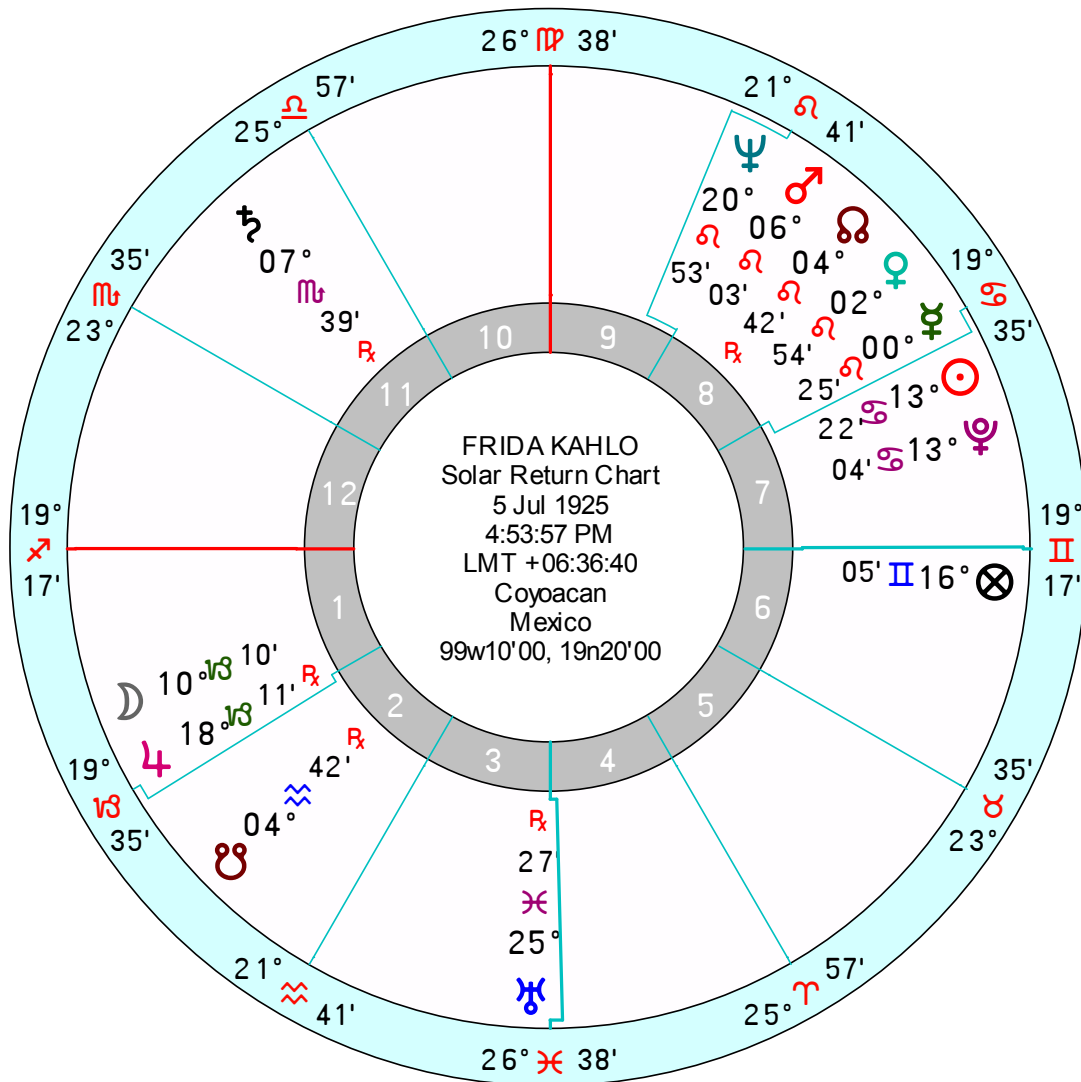


Figure 2

For the period from the 6th September to the 6th October the Ascendant, by Profecion, was the radical 9th House, ruled by Mars and the Sun: *Potential danger to life and injury proneness*. On the actual day of the accident the Ascendant had profected back to the natal 1st House. This House is also ruled by the Sun, so the Sun/Mars/Uranus/Neptune pattern was again a focus on the day.

Inner Wheel
FRIDA KAHLO
Natal Chart
6 Jul 1907
8:30:00 AM
LMT +06:36:41
Coyoacan
99w10'00
19n20'00
Geocentric
Tropical
Alchabitius Semi-Arc

Outer Wheel
FRIDA'S ACCIDENT
Event Chart
17 Sep 1925
3:00:00 PM
MST +07:00:00
Coyoacan
99w10'00
19n20'00
Geocentric
Tropical
Alchabitius Semi-Arc

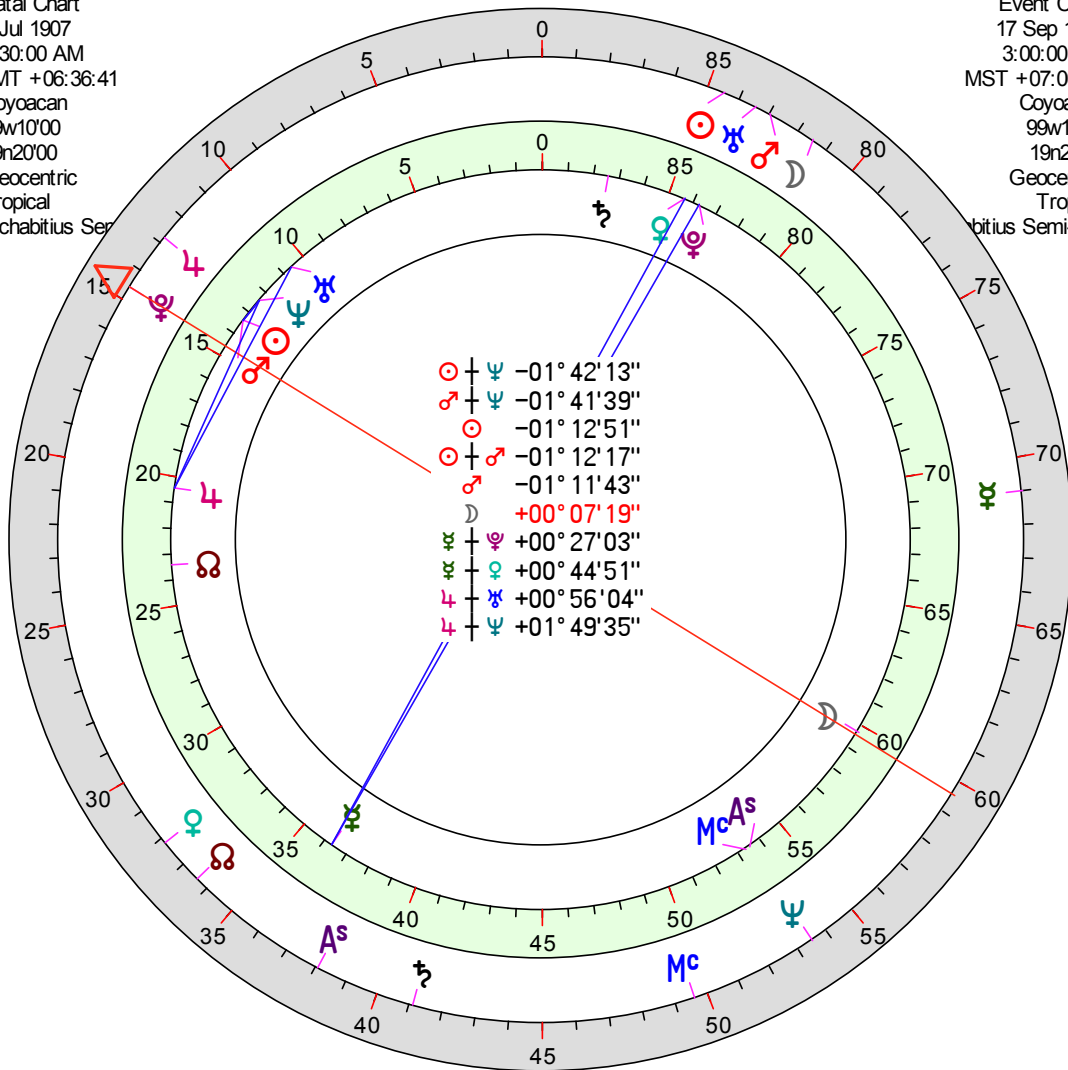


Figure 3

Marriage

Shortly after her 22nd birthday Frida and Diego married in a civil ceremony on the 21st August 1929. Her mother disapproved of the marriage; she considered him to be a fat, ugly and ungodly communist. He was all of these things. He was also immensely talented, intelligent, humorous and devoted to Frida. The relationship, though stormy, held together until Frida's death. The bond between them was impassioned and powerful, despite mutual unfaithfulness. They loved one another deeply and were strongly supportive and respectful of each other's art. The day Frida died Diego said it was the most tragic day of his life. The

wedding took place during the Saturn sub-period of Frida's Mercury Firdaria. Saturn rules her 7th House of marriage. Transiting Saturn was exactly opposing her natal Venus, suggesting a marriage with a person older than herself, and one that would have its difficulties, but also the capacity for longevity.

Diego's Affair with Cristina

In 1934 Diego commenced an eighteen month affair with Frida's youngest sister, Cristina. Frida became aware of the affair in the autumn when transiting Saturn retrograded across her 7th House cusp. Of all the infidelities she knew about this one hurt her the deepest because it involved the two people she loved the most in her life. The affair almost destroyed the marriage and the relationship between the two sisters. Frida could not handle Diego's unfaithfulness but not this disloyalty. Loyalty was the one thing she'd insisted of him before they married. The incident proved to be a major turning point in Frida's life. She changed from being the adoring bride of the famous painter to the complex woman and artist in her own right. In keeping with a Saturn transit across the Descendant, the marriage was strongly tested. Frida and Diego lived separate lives for several months then reconciled. It took years before the two sisters made up.

Frida's Affair with Trotsky

The Riveras were a highly political couple with strong Marxist leanings. In January 1937 they sheltered Leon Trotsky and his wife at their home in Coyoacán. Trotsky fell under Frida's spell, charmed by her beauty and impressed with her spirit. The love-affair took place in the Venus sub-period of the Mercury Firdaria during her Saturn Return as the transiting South Lunar Node conjoined her natal Venus. (NB. Trotsky was assassinated in August 1940 during the Saturn sub-period of Frida's Moon Firdaria).

International Success

Public recognition for her art took an upward turn when Frida entered her Moon Firdaria. Her natal Moon is in excellent zodiacal state and located at the Midheaven in the 10th House of acknowledgement and fame. In November 1938 her work was exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York, and in Paris in 1939 to enthusiastic reviews. In Paris she met Picasso, Duchamp and Kandinsky. Picasso so admired her work that he was compelled to write to Diego,

"Neither Derain nor I nor you are able to paint a head like those of Frida Kahlo".^{viii}

The New York exhibition opened on the 1st November as transiting Jupiter crossed her natal Descendant and squared her Midheaven: *Successes and recognition; meetings with influential people.*

Mexican Exhibition

From the 13th to the 27th of April 1953 Frida got her wish to exhibit her work in Mexico at the Galería de Arte Contemporáneo. Transiting Jupiter was exactly conjunct her Midheaven on opening day! Her most prized personal success was realised.

Death

Frida died in the night of the 13th July 1954 a week after her 47th birthday. She was in the Venus sub-period of her Saturn Firdaria. Venus is the Almuten of her 8th House of death and Saturn is in the House. Transiting Pluto was exactly conjunct her Ascendant and transiting Jupiter was conjunct her Neptune. Charles Carter has noted that Jupiter/Neptune syndromes are often present at the time of a person's passing. The last entry in her diary reads

"I hope the exit is joyful. And I hope never to return".^{ix}

Frida Kahlo was a fascinating and courageous woman. Her story is at once inspiring and confronting. From an astrological perspective it is uncommon to have a chart speak as clearly as Frida's does on so many levels. She was the foremost female Mexican painter of her day. Fifty years after her death she is being appreciated more and more as a great woman artist, who was innovative and well ahead of her time. "Before Kahlo," biographer Sarah Lowe points out, "Western art was unused to images of birthing or miscarriage, double portraits with visible internal organs or cross-dressing, as subjects for 'high art'." As an observer of her work you cannot help but get a strong sense of the struggles she endured: the struggles of physical pain, of being a lover, an artist and, ultimately, of being a woman.

ⁱ Frida Kahlo from her Journal. Frida: Bringing Frida Kahlo's Life and Art to Film, Newmarket Press, NY 2002, pp. 158

ⁱⁱ See www.fridakahlo.com/bio

ⁱⁱⁱ Financial Significator calculation outlined in Robert Zoller's Course in Medieval Astrology

^{iv} Almutem Figuris calculation outlined in Robert Zoller's Course in Medieval Astrology

^v Firdaria outlined in Robert Zoller's Course in Medieval Astrology

^{vi} Profecion outlined in Robert Zoller's Course in Medieval Astrology

^{vii} Reinhold Ebertin. The Combination of Stellar Influences. Pub. American Federation of Astrologers, 1972

^{viii} Frida Kahlo: An Open Life, Raquel Tibol, University of New Mexico Press 1983, pp. 130

^{ix} Frida: Bringing Frida Kahlo's Life and Art to Film, Newmarket Press, NY 2002, pp. 156