



Cardiff School of Social Sciences

Paper: 112

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Unsettling Bodies: Frida Khalo's portraits and *in/dividuality*ⁱ

Joanna Latimer

They thought I was a surrealist, but I wasn't. I never painted dreams.
I painted my own reality. (Frida Khalo cited in Kettenman 2002:48)

Introduction

In this chapter I examine the self-portraits of Frida Khalo to explore ideas about the significance of the body for understanding notions of self and reality. Khalo states that her paintings are both of her self and of her own reality: her paintings thus invite examination of how Khalo portrays self, and how she depicts 'reality'.

Portraits are material, mobile, semiotic objects that are produced in a specific cultural and social time-space location. At one level Khalo's portraits work as the art of depicting specific persons as *themselves*. For example, in her early portraits such as *Self Portrait in a Velvet Dress* (1926: <http://www.fridakahlofans.com/c0020.html>) Khalo experiments with Renaissance traditions of portraiture, adopted by portrait painters in Mexican art (Kettenman 2002). Here Khalo's portraits capture and enhance the essence of the personality of the individual as well as depict a realistic physical resemblance. In this way her portraits play upon the idea of the relation between the physical appearance of the body, the uniqueness of the individual and the distinctiveness of how they look from others. But Khalo's paintings do much more than this. At the same time as her paintings portray Frida in all her vivid distinctiveness; Khalo also unsettles the relations between bodies, their form and functions, and ideas about persons and selves: put simply, they change how people think.

In their write up of Khalo for an exhibition of her work, the Tate Modern state:

That for all her apparent naivety, [Khalo's] works frequently reveal an incendiary subtext, whether they are questioning power relationships between developed and developing nations, testing the role of women in a patriarchal society, or attempting to reconcile the global histories and religions of East and West. (Tate Modern 2005)

Specifically, as the film *Frida* (Handprint Entertainment 2002) depicts, Khalo was far from naïve, she was an intellectual and a revolutionary, who read Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Hegel and Marx, amongst others, in her youth. Far from the naïve style she adopts reflecting an underdeveloped and unsophisticated set of understandings about the world, Khalo's painting thinks through her 'thrownness' (Heidegger 1962)ⁱⁱ, questioning the ideas and consciousness she has inherited. Indeed the point of departure for this paper is to explore the ideas that these works trouble, 'the incendiary sub-text', and the vision that her paintings offer. Specifically, at the same time as Khalo makes her fractured and disabled body, maimed by polio and an accident in her youth, the subject of her paintings, her work sufficiently deconstructs dominant ideas of body-self to upset the perspective that produces the figure of the individual. Khalo offers us a different vision of personhood, a vision of irreducibility and relationality, as an extension of what I want to call, following Strathern, *dividual being*.

Frida

In naming her pictures *self-portraits* Khalo shifts the very notion of what self is. Khalo creates a figure of her own body, and the figure of Frida, through the repetition of distinctive features. The famous monobrow, the moustache, the dark eyes in a face whose expression is a scrutinizing look that seems to penetrate whoever is looking at her, including Khalo her creator, with a fierce, sometimes painful, sometimes challenging, courage and candor.

There is thus an iconography that makes Frida recognizable as a distinctive person, a 'somebody'. But while Khalo's portraits depict images of particular people as themselves – Frida, her family, friends, pets - the method of portraiture is not one in which the figure of Frida simply settles into a solid figure of an individual. Rather the particularities of Khalo's methods bring into view all that is usually hidden. The methods can best be described as moving away from traditional methods of portraiture, to those of assemblage and juxtaposition. By assemblage I am not referring to the surrealists' method of making three-dimensional objects from the assembling together of diverse and heterogeneous materials, such as the sculptures of Marcel Duchampⁱⁱⁱ. Rather, following Deleuze and Parnet (1987)^{iv}, assemblage in Khalo is a method of painting that brings together, and yet keeps apart, figures and symbols to portray the relations that go to make her up.

For example, the picture *My Parents, My Grandparents, and I* (Figure 1) does not depict a picture of 'Frida Khalo', the distinctive individual, rather it brings into view what is usually made absent in portraits: how Frida is a creation^v. Here Khalo mimics the form of a family tree, but with miniature portraits of those people who have gone before, instead of names or symbols. The figures of Frida's grandparents, suspended in the sky, are painted in formal dress to portray the multiplicities that make up the class she inherits, as well as the complexity of her ethnicity, as a descendent of German Jewish and Mexican Catholic origins. In the face of her Mexican grandmother (the top right of the painting) we can glimpse the features of the Frida to come. A red ribbon reminiscent of an umbilical cord and a rivulet of blood flows from the figures of her grandparents. A naked child who stands giant-like in the courtyard of Frida's home holds a loop of the ribbon of blood/umbilical cord; the figures of her parents are enfolded in its curves. The loop of ribbon that she holds in her right hand connects the child back to her mother and reflects, in reverse, the arm of her mother that enjoins her husband as Khalo's father. The child stands in front of her father, who prefigures her, and who she refigures (it was her father who was the photographer and amateur artist, and who encouraged Khalo to paint.) Her parents are in their wedding clothes, and from Frida's mother flows the mirror image umbilicus into the navel of a tiny fetus, which is suspended outside her mother's belly^{vi}. As we move down the generations we move from busts, to half bodies to the whole bodies of the child and the fetus.

Figure 1: My Parents, My Grandparents and I (1936)



What Kahlo paints then is a cosmology that borrows from ideas of kinship, and in which what has gone before, portrayed as a flow of substance (in this case, blood), connects persons and helps to make them up. The 'family tree' is obviated in favor of a flow of blood/substance. It also makes visible the multiplicity and plurality of Frida's inheritance, in terms of gender, class and ethnicity. But these flows of substance/blood do not settle into one unique person, the usual image of Western kinship. The usual image of kinship performs *the* trope that informs and underpins modernist ideas of multiplicity and plurality, and that helps constitute the notion of the individual:

...one whole was only a part of another. This was evinced in the biology of procreation and death. A child was endowed with material from both parents, literally formed from parts of them. Yet it was regarded as equivalent to neither mother nor father nor to the relation between them: rather it was a hybrid product in another sense, a genetically unique individual with a life of its own. It was only a part of their life, despite the fact that its genetic material was formed wholly of theirs...Such modernist perspectives had their own pluralizing effect...Parts in turn thus always appear to be cut off from other larger wholes. (Strathern 1992a, 93-94)

The picture of Frida's family is unsettling not just because of the depiction of a flow of blood, or of a fetus still connected to its mother yet lying as if on the outside of the mother's body. Nor does the painting just unsettle because of its temporal contradictions (the baby and the child existing in the same space), or irregularities of scale (the giant-like child at the bottom, off-centre of the picture). Rather, the painting is unsettling because the flow of blood/relations does not settle into a whole, unified, singular Frida. There are, critically, not just two parents, and two lots of two grandparents,

but two Frida's present in the space that the painting makes up. Thus the painting unsettles because all its parts do not settle into a whole, a portrait of Frida. This is reflected in the contradiction between the title of the painting and what the painting depicts^{vii}: the title declares that the painting is of Khalo's parents, grandparents and 'I', but the images that the painting keeps juxtaposed depicts two Fridas, not one; two possible I's, not one. Elsewhere Khalo also portrays more than one Frida in her paintings (see for example, *Two Fridas*, figure 3). The Fridas in the painting above (a baby Frida, and the child Frida) are depicted then as flowing from multiple antecedents – but because of the two Fridas, the painting remains unsettled and unsettling, each person and the part they are playing in the making of the two Fridas, connected, juxtaposed, but distinct and separate.

The assemblage of persons and their connecting ribbon of blood/umbilicus cord is set against a landscape that is equally unsettling: it too is made up of two parts, that are connected, but that do not settle into a whole. Like the two Fridas the landscape is irreducible to a body: it forever divides and yet partially connects - the sea (as image perhaps of Frida's father's migration to Mexico from elsewhere) and Mexico, the family home. The painting makes elements of Frida's conception explicit, her multiplicity and heterogeneity, but these parts do not settle into a whole, so that Khalo does not offer us a simple image of Western plurality, "a world obsessed with ones and the multiplications and divisions of ones" (Strathern, 2004, p. 53).

Figure 2: Self Portrait at the Borderline between Mexico and the U.S. (1932)



Using the idea of a borderline to portray division, and convey a sense in which her body-self is forever in division is frequently painted by Khalo, for example the painting in Figure 2 below of Frida as a borderline that both connects yet holds apart the US and Mexico. In this painting Khalo portrays a sense of the multiplicity of Frida's cultural inheritance, symbolized by Mexico and the US or 'Gringoland'. Here it must be remembered that Khalo is painting at the time of the Mexican Renaissance, and the birth of Mexicanism as the celebration of Mexican consciousness (Herrera 1983; Kettenman 2002).

In this painting Mexico, on the left, is invoked by the juxtaposition of images of ancient artifacts and monuments. The colors of earth and stone, the images of skeletons and roots, convey a sense of depth, of archeology and heritage, and the mystery of the ideas and beliefs that have gone before. A fierce sun and moon, hang inside clouds juxtaposed and yet connected, above the dry, arid landscape; at the point of their connection a fork of lightning flashes. So Mexico is not just being portrayed as having an ancient cultural inheritance but also as a space that is in touch with the forces of nature, as raw, elemental, organic, vibrant. In contrast on the right-hand of the painting the US is made up of industry and technology - machines, smoking chimneys and skyscrapers - images of modernity, and instead of the natural forces of the sun and the moon, the sky is dominated by the American flag, a symbol of an imperial, manmade force. Underground, even roots have been replaced by electric cables wired to the machinery above. Frida stands like a statue on a stone plinth, carved with words, at the borderline in between these images of two distinct cultures, two cultures in which one, the US or 'Gringo-land', is at risk of obliterating the material and the symbolic life that makes up the other. She is dressed in an elegant 'Western' ball-gown, but with a Mexican hairstyle (see her grandmother in the portrait above) and holding a small Mexican flag. Frida thus is being made to stand at, and in a sense to stand for what both connects and yet holds apart, these two 'traditions'. And in portraying herself as barely Mexican, Khalo makes Frida, and thereby her self, stand for the potential obliteration of all that makes Mexico, and Mexican consciousness, up, unless of course she, and Mexico, become modern.

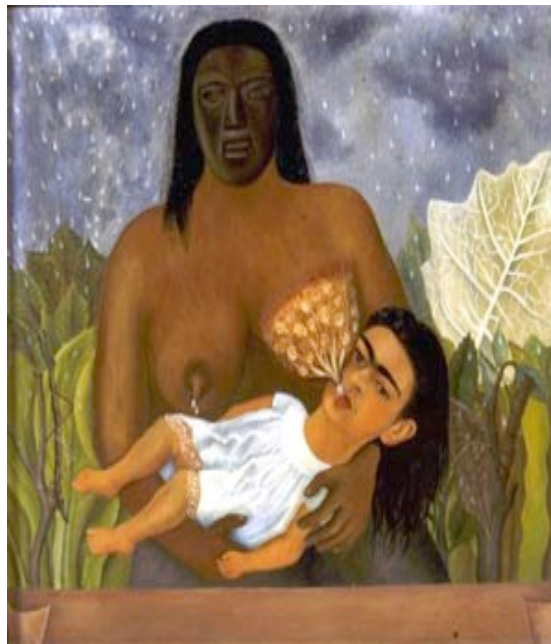
Figure 3: Two Fridas (1939)



As portrayed, then, Frida's parts never quite conjoin to form the pronouns I or me, or into a hybrid whole, the image of the complex individual. The parts are *kept* in juxtaposition; the tropes are not reconciled or reduced. In this way, Khalo's methods of assemblage and juxtaposition make explicit the complex, heterogeneous nature of reality and selfhood, as at the same time they resist the resolution of part to whole. Khalo's pictures offer a different vision of what makes up body-persons. For example, the ways in which she depicts bodies and bodily functions.

Khalo makes explicit the openness, fragility and leakiness of the body-self, as not just object and subject, but also as always potentially 'abject' (Kristeva 1982): as well as ribbons of blood/umbilicus cords, and fetuses, there are many pictures in which milk, tears or blood drips. Beck (2006) suggests how this opening up of the body splits open the world, as we know it. But I want to press that Khalo does more than this: in many of these paintings what the flow of bodily substance depicts is a flow of relations, and how persons are made up, substantially as well as figuratively, of these relations. Some of these are 'personal' – such as in the flow of blood that connects Frida with her grandparents and parents, or the Two Fridas, to portray a sense of family and relatedness. But some suggest a much broader notion of the flow of relations, and a flow of substance that makes up and nurtures Frida. For example in 'My Nurse and I, or I Suckle'.

Figure 4: My nurse and I or I suckle (1937)



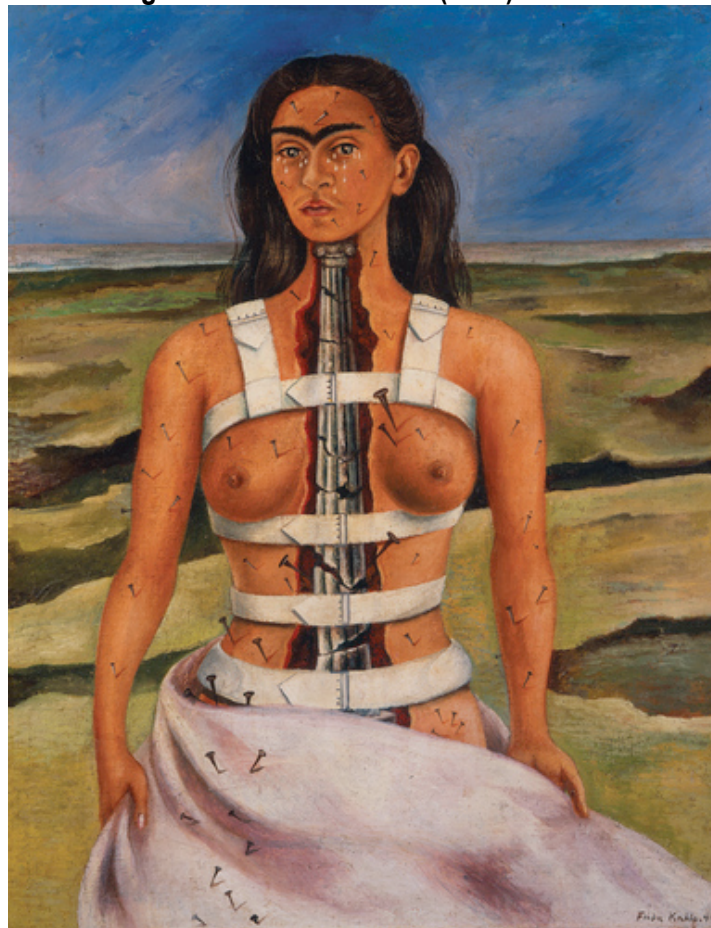
In this painting an adult Frida's head is painted onto the body of a small child. The image is made even more unsettling because the baby-adult Frida suckles on the breast of a sinister, dark masked figure, the nurse. This figure is painted to resonate with an ancient icon that symbolises Mexico. The breast of the figure at which Frida suckles is painted to make visible the ducts and flow of milk. So that what nurtures Frida, what Frida's body absorbs into itself and grows from, is all the sustaining milk of Mexico itself. Khalo thus in many different ways breaches the borderline that separates the outside from the inside, things from persons, the self from others, the past from

the present, and thereby some of the foundations of the integrated, discrete body-individual. And yet she does not offer us a picture of a divided body-self. On the contrary, she illuminates a different vision altogether. A vision in which she refuses to allow Frida to be reduced to a singular perspective, a singular category, or even to some story of multiple realities. In this sense as at the same time as Khalo portrays her own reality, and her 'self' as made up and by many parts, these parts are only partially connected. She preserves the contrast between the different worlds these parts conjure up as irreducible.

Khalo's portraits offer us a way of imagining self that resists the very notion of subsuming self to a singular, categorical identity. Like Probyn, Khalo puts Frida 'outside belongings' (Probyn 1996) in the trivial sense of being subsumed to social or cultural categories, such as male or female, Mexican or American, child or adult, human or animal, self or other: she depicts self as made up of all of these things simultaneously, but in ways that do not settle comfortably into a hybrid whole.

In making the abjectivity of her fractured and fragmented body, her cyborg-body^{viii}, explicit, Khalo paints something usually hidden. Khalo reveals, even unconceals (Heidegger 1986), not just the existential fact of embodied ambivalence and its fragmentation (Ankori 2002), but all the work that goes into the perspective that produces the figure of the individual as an undivided, integrated, self-contained solid. The fragility of, and the extraordinary effort and machinery it takes to hold all the fragments together to produce an image of a whole, is portrayed in *Broken Column* (figure 5).

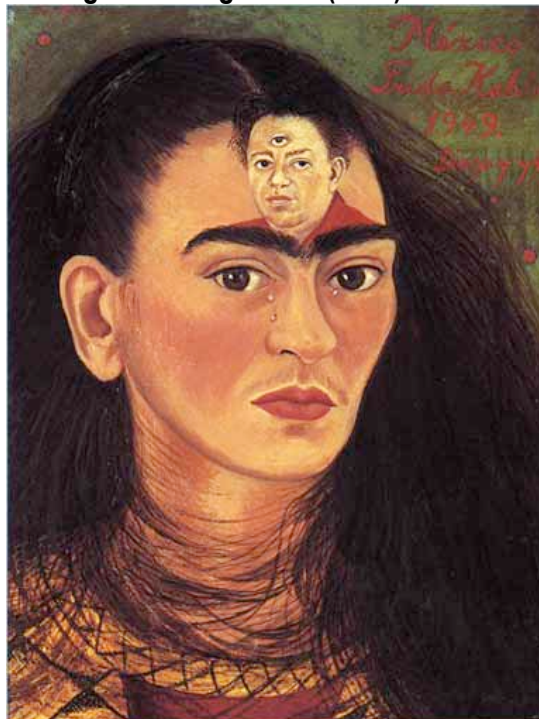
Figure 5: Broken Column (1944)



At face value, this is certainly a portrait of cyborg-Frida. Frida's face looking at the onlooker (her self? Us?) with clear, dark eyes, is difficult to read, it is ambiguous, as it is in many of her paintings^x. The torture and the pain are conveyed by the image of her body pierced like St Sebastian's by needles, and the tears that flow from her eyes. But Frida's look penetrates: she is not going to turn away from the horror of her pain, and in a sense she challenges the observer of the painting to also look the pain of being Frida in the face. In the picture Khalo depicts Frida's broken spine as a broken stone column, a symbol of solidity associated for me with Greek architecture and the columnous ideas of civilizations foundations^x. Here these foundations are portrayed as quite fragile. So that it is not just the solidity of Frida's individual body that is being undermined by the fractured and broken 'spinal' column. Civilization is the central column that held Frida's body upright and that Frida embodies (and of course it is the distinctive mark of the human to have walked upright). This is one more aspect of what Khalo is making Frida's body-self portray: her own fractured and broken state of being portrays how the very foundations of civilization, and her distinctive humanness, are so easily undermined. Khalo paints her body as embodying civilization, held together and 'up' by the machinery of the medical corset, painted in such a way that resonates with an image of a straightjacket. The mood of the painting is reinforced by the landscape, itself bleak and dry, and fractured into parts.

Khalo portrays multiple, unstable Fridas as embodying and as made up of many heterogeneous parts. These parts are both connected to Frida, and yet some are in a sense, like the broken column, painted as distinct, as painful. The parts that make up Frida, that are and yet are not Frida, are of different kinds. They include images of members of her family, of things that evoke her Mexican heritage, and US and 'Western' consciousness. Frida is portrayed then as made up of many others, not just her biological relations, but of many different others, for example her husband.

Figure 6: Diego and I (1949)



In *Diego and I* (figure 6), Frida depicts Diego Rivera's (her husband's) face as her third eye; Diego's third eye is an eye. In this painting then Diego is not just in Frida's thoughts or a part of her consciousness, Frida actually embodies Diego. This substantive relationality is not easy, it is painful and unsettling: again Frida weeps.

In her paintings then the figure of Frida is not just in a flow of relations, it is *made up* of a flow of relations. In addition to portraying the relationality of being, Khalo's portraits also trouble the usual methods for fixing identity by assigning persons into social and cultural categories. As well as keeping in play her ethnic plurality (as Western and Mexican, Jewish and catholic) Khalo depicts a sense of ambivalence by playing with symbols of Frida's femininity and masculinity. In *Self With Cropped Hair* (figure 7), for example, Frida is portrayed in a suit, having just cut off her long her. Khalo messes with the aesthetics of body-self relations – at the same time as she paints her feminine beauty – her breasts are perfect, her face and figure exquisite - she persists in depicting the heaviness and masculinity by accentuating her moustache or her famous 'unibrow' or 'monobrow'. The monobrow or synophrys has been in Western thought traced to developmental and personality problems. For example, Lombroso (1895) connects the monobrow to a lack of the proper bodily symmetry associated with the perfection of the white Western body, and as evidence of the criminal personality. Most people see it as an aesthetic problem – they pluck it, wax it, in order to settle their brows into distinct parts^{xi}. For me Khalo's insistence on the monobrow is a further indication of Khalo's refusal to let the images of Frida settle into the image of an individual, and another example of her ferocious courage.

Khalo thus does not attempt to settle these opposing features as hybrids but holds their difference apart. For example, the Fridas of the *Two Fridas* look alike, but are only partially connected, they hold hands and are linked by a tiny river of blood, and the dresses overlap at the hem. Frida's different faces are not quite blank, they stare out, poised, but what they convey is a site of difficulty and pain: the blood for example, flows out of herself as the gringo bride (*Two Fridas*) or as tears in *Diego and I*.

Figure 6: Self-portrait with cropped hair (1940)



Critically, in her shifts in extension she shows both an adding on and a doubling of parts, as an adding on and a doubling of relations (Latimer 2001; Latimer and Munro 2006; Munro 1996, Strathern 1991, 1995): not as a dialectical relation of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, but as something almost incommensurate, and *irreducible*. This then is different from a simple reproduction of the relation of part to whole that underpins so much Western thought, and that Strathern has helped us to understand as embedded by notions of kinship: there is no synthetic effect, people, and the many Fridas, and things remain juxtaposed, and only partially connected.

The Individual

In this chapter I have set out to show how Khalo's paintings unsettle many of the dominant body-self divisions that allow us to see the body-self as an individual: person-category, inside-outside, self-other, mind-body. Instead she creates Frida as made up of many diverse parts of others, which, while they are partially connected, are portrayed as irreducible and 'non-coherent' (Law 2004). This is not to detract from the individuality and uniqueness of Frida, and the powerful vision of reality that Khalo's portraiting of self portrays. Rather it offers us a different vision of embodiment, persons, self and reality than that embedded in the notion of the individual as a singular, unitary subject.

This vision is not of a divided self, Laing's schizophrenic (1998[1960])^{xii} or Nietzsche's (1878) *individuum*^{xiii}. Nor is it a vision of hybridity: Frida does not coalesce into a body multiple (Mol 2002), a composite of multiple, heterogeneous parts (Harraway 1991). Rather, Khalo offers us a vision that unsettles the perspective that can reduce all the parts to a hybrid whole. She offers a vision of reality and self that preserves all the pain and the wondrousness of non-coherence, of resistance to being subsumed to a single social or cultural category (such as female, human, adult, wife, Mexican), of being *in process*, of being *bodied*. So that Khalo offers us a perspective through which a notion of the dividuality of personhood can come into view. What this vision helps to make explicit is all the work that goes into reducing being to the figure of the individual, and the individual-society duality, that underpins not just the biopolitics of modern forms of social organization, but most social theory.

The relation between the integral, contained, defined body and the individual helps perform the figure of the subject, and of the autonomous and possessive individual, a cultural figure that underpins most contemporary forms of social organisation in the West (Skeggs 2004). Critically, the way we think the body in Euro-American cultures is as constituting us as discrete persons, as a somebody rather than an anybody or a nobody. It does this by performing the body as integral and unitary, with an inside and an outside, and as distinctive and unique to an individual. This way of imagining the body helps to produce the very notion of self as a subject, as well as the possibility of the Other, as that which is outside, and apart.

Social philosophers and anthropologists, such as Deleuze and Foucault, have helped us to understand that social relations connect to 'ideas' of the body and to how these ideas perform ideas of our 'selves' as persons. For example, the individual is deeply connected to ideas of a specifically human nature (Habermas 2003), one that involves the possibility of agency, responsibility, autonomy, subjectivity and choice (Strathern 1988, 1992a) and that can possess both cultural and economic capital (Skeggs 2004), and that can be in a relation to society in ways that accord particular rights and obligations (Parsons 1951).

Alongside this idea of the individuated body-person, runs the paradoxical and parallel seam of Western thought that detaches rational knowledge from the body: the individual at moments of choice, and autonomous decision-making, to be rational, must have knowledge from a

singular, undivided perspective, a perspective that stands outside the plane of personal (that is bodily) action (Latimer 2007; Strathern 1988, 1991, 1992a). Western ideas of knowledge rest upon an idea of perspective as a form of distance. It is this 'detachment', this 'seeing' things from a standpoint that is removed from the plane of action, that facilitates an objective, and therefore clear and distinct, view of 'what is'. To have such a singular perspective man (sic)^{xiv} must be able to *disembody*:

Many features of contemporary knowledges – knowledges based on the presumption of a singular reality, pre-existent representational categories, and an unambiguous terminology able to be produced and utilized by a singular, rational, and unified knowing subject who is unhampered by personal "concerns" – can be linked to man's disembodiment, his detachment from his manliness in producing knowledge or truth. (Grosz 1999: 205).

In these ways the integral, discrete body is what helps to create the figure of the individual, but the individual, to be truly human, and transcend their bodiedness, must be able to 'disembody'. The human, distinguished by the fact of consciousness, is much more than the sum of bodily parts. This is one of the paradoxes of dominant body-self relations^{xv}.

Contemporary challenges to the idea of an undivided body-self emphasise the multiple ways in which the body is performed and enacted, and emphasise its instability, hybridity and heterogeneity. For example, humans can be shown to be in extension with prosthetics in ways that make explicit their hybridity as 'cyborg' (Haraway 1991). But even here, where the multiplicity and heterogeneity that makes up bodies is made visible, body-selves, however hybrid, seem to settle into an individuated body or as Mol suggests '*the body multiple*' (2002). That is, at moments the multiplicity and heterogeneity is reduced to a hybrid body-self, its heterogeneous parts reconciled, into an individuated, solid, undivided self. Khalo offers us a different vision of self and reality.

In/Dividuality

Strathern (1992a, 1992b, 2004) in her work on Melanesian and Euro-American thought, shows that even though the latter believe that bodily substance is made up of parts coming from biological kin, this substance settles into a unique whole, 'the individual', an undivided self. Melanesians on the other hand imagine persons as made up of the parts of others, never to completely settle into wholes, but forever in extension, partially connecting and disconnecting to produce a notion of persons as 'dividuals'. Strathern's description of dividuals, like Khalo's portraits, seems to me to stress a completely different vision from the one offered by the notion of the body multiple, or cyborgs. Specifically, this is because dividual beings are not hybrids:

Far from being regarded as unique entities, Melanesian persons are as dividually as they are individually conceived. They contain a generalized sociality within. Indeed, persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them. The singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm. (1988:34)

I want to suggest therefore that as at the same time as Khalo portraits her self, her portraits also perform dividuality as an alternative vision of personhood to that which dominates Western thought and the biopolitics of social organization. Here it must be stressed that conceiving of persons as dividual is neither an individual simply in division, nor a divided self, nor is it simply a way of making explicit the hybridity that makes up the figure of the person.

For Euro-Americans selves in division are anathema, partly because of their ambivalence. We are used to thinking how people at a borderline, who are betwixt and between categories,

neither one thing nor another (for example, neither a he or a she, or black or white), as dangerous. Similarly, those persons unable to maintain the appearance of unity and containment, integration and closure, especially the separation between the inside from the outside, and the self from the Other, as deeply problematic. These kinds of body-selves are abject (Kristeva 1982), they are ambiguous, they leak, are penetrable, and their parts keep fragmenting and coming into view as parts: they make visible the space between the object and the subject. A body-self that is explicitly in division is deeply problematic (Laing 1998), its dis-integration unconcealed, mad, polluting, desperately in need of making whole again. Divided body-selves are for Euro-Americans like dirt, 'good to think' (Douglas 1966).

On the contrary the idea of dividuals deconstructs the very object-subject, self-other relations that underpin our forms of social organization. Indeed the idea of the dividual deconstructs the idea of the subject-self and the perspective that underpins the individual-society relation itself. Khalo's portraits do not make visible the multiplicity and heterogeneity of what makes up body-persons simply to settle them either into an idea of a hybrid or a self in division. Rather by making all the parts that make up Frida present, partially connected yet not reduced to wholes, Khalo undoes the notion of the individual and dominant body-self relations. Let me explain a little further what I mean drawing on the ideas of the surrealists and the genre the *cadaver exquisite* ('exquisite corpses', also known as "exquisite cadaver" or "rotating corpse").

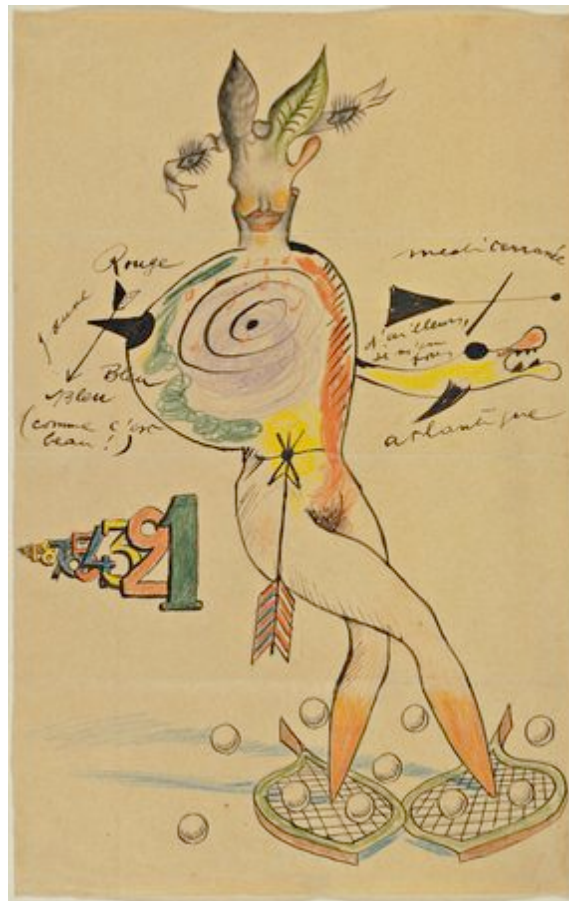


Figure 7: *Exquisite Corpse*, 1926-27 - Man Ray, Yves Tanguy, Joan Miró, Max Morise. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Cadaver Exquisite is a method by which words or images are collectively assembled to make up an image of a whole figure whose heterogeneity, ambivalence and multiplicity is made blatant. Each part is authored by a different collaborator-artist. Each collaborator in the project adds to a composition in sequence, either by following a rule or by being allowed to see the end of what the previous person contributed (a bit like the game of consequences). The irony is that all these heterogeneous parts can be reconciled and reduced into a whole by settling them into a recognizable form, in this case that simulates the body of a person. In this sense then the cadaver exquisite resembles Mol's body multiple: the ways that at moments a perspective (that of the figure) can settle all the fragments and heterogeneous parts that make up bodies-persons into an integrated, if hybrid form, an 'individual'. Critically, then, although elsewhere Khalo has produced several exquisite corpses with colleagues and friends in a series of drawings, she never adopts this kind of assemblage as a constant motif in her paintings. Rather, Khalo's Frida never settles entirely into a body multiple, into a *cadaver exquisite*, a corpse. Rather, Khalo's method of keeping parts in juxtaposition offers us a vision of relationality, of partial connection, of persons as the 'plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them'.

Discussion

I have shown how Frida Khalo makes her portraits of self and reality. I have explored what it is that these portraits can be understood as portraying and examined some of their effects.

While it can be taken as read that Khalo works in a tradition that defies any possibility of representation, my focus in the current chapter has been on the particular methods of her portraiture and how these methods accomplish and put into play very different ways of knowing bodies and very different ideas about what it is that the portraying of bodies can be made to mean than those encapsulated in the very idea of the individual.

Khalo makes explicit how bodies and persons are made up of fragmented and multiple substances and parts. As at the same time as Khalo's self portraits seem to perform the relation between the body and the self as unstable, ambiguous, ambivalent, undecidable - at moments abject, object and subject, at others none of these things - Khalo does not leave us with a vision of a divided self. This is because it is the very perspective that constructs the possibility of an undivided subject-self that her paintings trouble.

I want to suggest therefore that Khalo's pictures perform an idea of 'dividuals', whose relationality is what makes them up as always in 'partial connections', who can never be entirely settled into wholes, especially not the social categories that so pin persons down. All the parts that make Frida up, the flows of substance and relations, are never completely reducible into either a self, or an I, however hybrid. They remain unsettled, at some level irreducible, and yet connected, and, to use Law's (1998) term, in tension. In a sense then as her paintings both celebrate all the parts, all that has gone before in the making up of Frida, her inheritance, Frida never settles into the image of an individual, and yet her paintings convey an extraordinary powerful vision of a 'somebody', and of reality. Here what is striking is how Khalo makes reality, not multiple realities, but reality as made up of and out of the many worlds, and people, past and present, that she keeps in juxtaposition in her paintings.

So that I want to suggest that Khalo's portraits make explicit the divided nature of embodiment, of being forever in division, as not just her own reality, but as a perspective, a way of knowing being. So that Khalo's portraits do not just offer us an existential insight into being bodied

as lived, as central to lived reality, but to a way of knowing bodies that both resists and makes clear all the work that goes into humanism *as a perspective*, and as a way of unknowing being. A way of unknowing the body not as an undivided self, and that gives a perspective that forces the body into a representation of the individual as undivided, as a whole, however hybrid, and as able, in some extraordinary way, to transcend its bodiedness. Understanding body-persons as individuals, however momentarily, helps illuminate all the unknowing of the dominant perspective it unsettles – all that would reduce persons into wholes, as composites.

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ⁱ Forthcoming In *Un/Knowing Bodies*, Latimer J. and Schillmeier M. (eds) Sociological Review Monograph Series, Oxford: Blackwell. Many thanks to all those colleagues and post graduate students at the Social Theory Seminar *In/dividual*, or who have read the paper, for their comments and suggestions.

ⁱⁱ "This characteristic of Dasein's Being – this 'that it is' – is veiled in its 'whence' and 'whither', yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the 'thrownness' of this entity into its 'there'; indeed, it is thrown in

such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the 'there'. The expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*." Heidegger, 1962.

iiii 'In 1961 the Museum of Modern Art mounted the exhibition *The Art of Assemblage*. Curated by William Seitz, this exhibition marked the first time the term "assemblage" was put into popular use and also the first time "assembled art" was recognized for its importance in the context of modern art. Seitz set out to refine the definition of "assemblage" in order "cover all forms of composite art and modes of juxtaposition". The exhibition was significant in that it presented "assemblage" as one of the two most important innovations in modern art, the first being abstraction.' (Zwirner and Wirth Assemblage exhibition. <http://www.zwirnerandwirth.com/exhibitions/2003/1103Assemblage/press.html>)

iv "The author is a subject of enunciation, but the writer – who is not an author - is not. The writer invents assemblages starting from assemblages which have invented him, he makes one multiplicity pass into another." (Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 51-52). In the current context, for writer, read painter. Khalo extends and extends her method of portraiture by assembling and juxtaposing all the relations that make up Frida to the point of making the iconographic figure of Frida almost absent, as in the painting 'What the Water Gave Me' (1938) in which the parts of Frida's body that we see in our perspective of being Frida lying in the bath, are her bare feet, and yet the painting is full of other parts that are Frida (<http://www.fridakahlofans.com/c0270.html>)

v In the painting 'Moses the Nucleus of Creation' (1945) Khalo makes explicit how she is recreating the creation story with her embryo-'self' centred in the split open nutshell.

vi The foetus is another motif of Khalo's. One aspect of her biography that makes this motif even more poignant is that Khalo lost a baby during pregnancy and could not have children.

vii As with Magritte's "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*".

viii "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction." Haraway 1991, <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>.

ix I have noted how in painted portraits people rarely smile. In photographic portraits people usually smile.

A famous exception is the Mona Lisa

x e.g. Seven Pillars of wisdom. Book on Derrida that shows Derrida smashing up the columns of thought that hold up modernity.

xi For other examples of how the monobrow has become a site of resistance see <http://unibrow.blog.com/> or <http://www.unibrowclub.com/>.

xii Robert Young (1966) in his review of *The Divided Self* gives this succinct account of Laing's theory here: ".we are given the following picture of the origins and phenomenology of schizophrenia: The inner core of a person is his 'self'. The self is in the world and relates to the world by means of its body. Most people — most of the time — feel basically safe in the world; Laing calls this 'primary ontological security'. Some persons, however, become ontologically insecure, i.e., they feel persecuted by reality itself. We are not clearly told how this occurs, though the life experiences in his case studies make it plausible that they would feel this way; but one is still left wondering why others with similar experiences did not become schizophrenic. The man who becomes schizophrenic becomes preoccupied with preserving rather than gratifying himself; the ordinary circumstances of living threaten his low threshold of security. His dread of his own dissolution into non-being becomes so great that the self retreats into a central citadel; by being unembodied it seeks to transcend the world and hence to be safe. The self becomes dissociated both from its own body and from the whole external world of people and events. It is thereby precluded from having a direct relationship with real things and real people; it relates instead to objects of its own imagination and memory. Its own bodily experiences and actions become alien — part of a false-self system. Thus, the self becomes 'a relationship which relates itself to itself' (Cf. *supra*). This relationship sustains an illusion of omnipotence and freedom within (and only within) the circle of its own shut-upness in fantasy. The psychotic's freedom consists in being inaccessible. Action is the dead end of possibility. It scleroses freedom. Laing concludes that there is one basic defence in every form of psychosis: 'the denial of being as a means of preserving being'."

^{xiii} Nietzsche suggested that the basis of man's morality is a form of ' *dividuum*', this is were man (sic) is divided in himself:

Moral of the people as *Selbstzerteilung*

57.

Morality as the self-division of man .— A good author whose heart is really in his subject wishes that someone would come and annihilate him by presenting the same subject with greater clarity and resolving all the questions contained in it. The girl in love wishes that she might prove the devoted faithfulness of her love through her lover's faithlessness. The soldier wishes that he might fall on the battlefield for his victorious fatherland, for in the victory of his fatherland his greatest desire is also victorious. The mother gives the child what she takes from herself: sleep, the best food, in some instances even her health, her wealth.

Are all these really selfless states, however? Are these acts of morality *miracles* because they are, to use Schopenhauer's phrase, "impossible and yet real"? Isn't it clear that, in all these cases, man is loving *something of himself* , a thought, a longing, an offspring, more than *something else of himself* ; that he is thus *dividing up* his being and sacrificing one part for the other? Is it something *essentially* different when a pigheaded man says, "I would rather be shot at once than move an inch to get out of that man's way'.

The *inclination towards something* (a wish, a drive, a longing) is present in all the above-mentioned cases; to yield to it, with all its consequences, is in any case not "selfless." In morality, man treats himself not as an **individuum** , but as a **dividuum** .

[Terms of Scholastic philosophy: *individuum*: that which cannot be divided without destroying its essence, *dividuum* : that which is composite and lacks an individual essence.]

^{xiv} In many ways we have to understand that the individual is an invention of very specific masculine ideas of being.

^{xv} Agamben (2002) draws out a double paradox here – classical and religious texts portray how humans in the moment of their return to paradise, are restored as animal, because it is their consciousness that is both a cause and effect of their fall from grace. Currently there is a proliferation of interest in recovering the 'magic' of ourselves as not divided from, but as one of the animals. (e.g. Haraway 2007) Khalo of course painted Frida as part human, part deer in the self-portrait *The Wounded Deer* (1946: <http://www.fridakahlofans.com/c0540.html>).