

Frida Kahlo: Surrealist Conflicts

Frida Kahlo can be described in numerous ways: icon, cult heroine, wife of famed muralist and painter Diego Rivera, subject of much bad art, some beautiful poetry,¹ and at least nine films...the list could go on ad nauseam.² Hayden Herrera, in her biography *Frida*, quotes Kahlo as having famously said, “I paint my own reality. The only thing I know is that I paint because I need to, and I paint always whatever passes through my head, without any other consideration.”³ Kahlo often expressed that reality in terms of her relationship to her husband, her fateful bus accident and the subsequent surgeries, and her various ailments. The focus here, however, is how to classify the painter through her work. Can she be considered a Surrealist? Or was she simply a modernist?

To attempt to answer the former question we must first arrive at a definition of Surrealism. André Breton, in his “First Manifesto of Surrealism,” explained it as a life philosophy based on the preeminence of dreams and the subconscious associations people make in their dream lives.⁴ Others after him also offered up their definitions of Surrealism, including Max Ernst, who largely concurred with Breton but added the important insight that any definition of the movement would continually flux until the Surrealist movement came to an

¹ Herrera, Juan Felipe. *The Roots of a Thousand Embraces: Dialogues*. This is one of the finer examples of poetry about Kahlo’s works.

² The Kahlo filmography is too extensive to list here. Please see: “<http://www.fridakahlofans.com/filmsenglish.html>”, accessed 4/19/08. Also see: “<http://www.pbs.org/weta/fridakahlo/about/index.html>”, accessed 4/19/08.

³ Herrera, Hayden. *Frida, A Biography*. xi-xii.

⁴ Breton, Andre. “The First Manifesto of Surrealism,” excerpts, from *Art in Theory 1900-2000*. Please see: “<http://www.personal.kent.edu/~areischu/Breton.pdf>”, accessed 4/05/08. Breton created a second manifesto on the same subject in 1929. See Matthew Gale, *dada and Surrealism*, 276-277.

end.⁵ While Surrealism certainly saw its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s, its influence continues in the arts today, and by Ernst's contention the definition is still changing as I write this paper.

If we take Breton's definition at face value, making dreams the stuff and substance of life, and apply it to specific works by Kahlo, there are valid arguments for both sides of the central question of this paper. However, to claim Kahlo as a Surrealist discounts the fact that she primarily painted the actual things and people who surrounded her in her waking life. To argue that she was truly a Surrealist would also require ignoring large portions of her total body of work as well as her verbal critiques of Surrealism.⁶ She definitely took a very cerebral attitude towards her painting and had a keen awareness of Surrealist painters and their art--she even incorporated Surrealist elements into her work--but did not live her life based on dreams and loose associations. In this paper I will look at Kahlo's intersections with Breton and other Surrealists, her contradictory statements about Surrealism, and discuss Surrealist manifestations in some of her key works. As she never fully adopted the Surrealist philosophy or label, Kahlo cannot be considered one of their group.

Andr  Breton first took notice of Kahlo in early 1938, having seen one of her self-portraits on Leon Trotsky's study wall. About the portrait, he wrote: "[Kahlo] has painted herself dressed in a robe of wings gilded with butterflies, and it is exactly in this guise that she draws aside the mental curtain." In June of that year, he visited the Riveras in Guadalajara, Mexico, as

⁵ Ernst, Max. "What is Surrealism?" From *Art in Theory 1900-2000*. Please see: "<http://www.personal.kent.edu/~areischu/Ernst.pdf>", accessed 4/19/08.

⁶ Herrera, Hayden. 263. Kahlo is quoted in a letter to Antonio Rodriquez, ca. 1952: "...I detest Surrealism. To me it seems to be a decadent manifestation of bourgeois art. A deviation from the true art that people hope for from the artist..."

a side excursion of an official trip on behalf of the French government.⁷ Breton reportedly bored Kahlo, and she was unimpressed, thinking him snobby, vain, and shallow. Kahlo did, however, strike up a friendship with Breton's wife Jacqueline, whom she found charming and, gratefully, lacking the pretentiousness of her husband.⁸ Yet the "Pope of Surrealism's" fascination with Kahlo and his desire to promote her, despite her disdain for him, gave her New York debut that November more hype than she might have attracted as Diego Rivera's wife alone. Breton wrote an essay as part of her show catalogue calling Kahlo "the beautiful and pernicious butterfly who accompanied her monstrous Marxist husband."⁹ The essay culminated with the bold statement: "The art of Frida Kahlo is a ribbon about a bomb."¹⁰ While at once a recommendation for Kahlo and an insult to Rivera, this endorsement jump-started Kahlo's entry into the art world, serving as metaphorical kerosene on a metaphorical fire.

Having been welcomed into the Surrealist scene by the movement's key figure, Kahlo certainly realized the value of preserving ties with Breton and the others involved. Herrera discusses Kahlo's relationship to the Surrealists primarily in business terms.¹¹ Kahlo knew she would sell more art if she was exhibiting in the most prominent circle of the time. Yet her philosophy remained fundamentally independent and detached from the group, and whatever she

⁷ Hubert, Renee Riese, "Portraiture and Revolution: Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera," in *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Partnership*. 347

⁸ Herrera, H. 227. Kahlo played *cadavre exquis* with Jacqueline, scorning Andr  Breton's falsely intellectualized discussions with Trotsky. See [Fig. 1 and Fig. 2] for examples of exquisite corpse collaborations between Kahlo and Lucienne Bloch. Images found in: Chadwick, Whitney. ed. *Mirror Images*. 88-89.

⁹ Herrera, H. 230. Herrera paraphrases Breton here.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 214.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 254.

In contrast, scholar Renee Riese Hubert treats the question of Kahlo's surrealist ties as having lesser importance than the painter's political beliefs, her overly documented definition through Rivera, and her inclusion in feminist circles. In *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, & Partnership*, 346-347.

stood to gain by playing the coquette did not stop her from expressing her opinions. Herrera stated that:

“...Frida’s outlook was vastly different from that of the Surrealists. Her art was not the product of a disillusioned European culture searching for an escape from the limits of logic by plumbing the subconscious. Instead, her fantasy was a product of her temperament, life, and place; it was a way of coming to terms with reality, not of passing beyond reality into another realm.”¹²

Essentially, Kahlo used her painting to work out emotional, political, and psychological difficulties that she encountered in her daily, real, life and had no interest in living from her dreams or illustrating them in her work. Kahlo herself went on record saying, “They thought I was a Surrealist, but I wasn’t. I never painted dreams...”¹³ Herrera suggests that Kahlo was aware of automatist techniques and used them consciously to problem solve through her art,¹⁴ which is a different thing from Breton’s assertion that Kahlo had invented Surrealism without any knowledge of the European beginnings of the movement.¹⁵ Perhaps Herrera’s most astute observation is that Kahlo’s diary contains the most surreal of all her imagery [Fig. 3, Fig. 4].¹⁶ In it Kahlo used ink blots that smeared the pages when she closed the book, and frequently doodled on top of the smears; the text of the diary consists of a string of loose thoughts and several pages

¹² Herrera, H. 258.

¹³ *Ibid.* 266.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 266.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 228. Breton wrote an essay for the Julien Levy show, saying that his “surprise and joy were unbounded when [he] discovered, on [his] arrival in Mexico, that her work had blossomed forth, in her latest paintings, into pure surreality, despite the fact that it had been conceived without any prior knowledge whatsoever of the ideas motivating the activities of [his] friends and [him]self.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 263.

of poetry, mostly dedicated to Rivera [Fig. 5].¹⁷ However, Kahlo never meant it for public consumption and we have no way of knowing if she considered its contents to be finished works.

As Kahlo's involvement with Breton and the others increased, so did her vocal criticisms of them, regardless of her promotional needs. Breton invited her to Paris for an exhibition that, while not a one-person show, centered on her work. She stayed with the Bretons for part of the time she was there, but found that Breton hadn't organized the show that he claimed was ready. On February 16, 1939, Kahlo wrote angrily to Nickolas Muray:

"Until I came the paintings were still in the custom house, because the s. of a b. of Breton didn't take the trouble to get them out. The photographs which you sent *ages ago*, *he never received*--so he says--the gallery was not arranged for the exhibit *at all* and Breton has no gallery of his own long ago. So I had to wait days and days just like an idiot till I met Marcel Duchamp (marvelous painter) who is the only one who has his feet on the earth, among all this bunch of cocoo lunatic sons of bitches of the surrealists...I had to lend to Breton 200 bucks (Dls) for the restoration [of 14 oils of the XIX century] because he doesn't have a penny...Pierre Colle, an old bastard and son of a bitch, saw my paintings and found that only *two* were possible to be shown, because the rest are too '*shocking*' for the public!! I could kill of that guy and eat it afterwards..."¹⁸

Of course, this was a private letter to a friend, and not a public denouncement--Kahlo kept that much sense with her business transactions--but it clearly shows she felt no great affection for Breton, nor for Colle, who was the art dealer for Dalí and some others.¹⁹ She fell ill during this time with a virulent colibacili infection in her kidneys and blamed it on having eaten something bad in Breton's house, saying, "You don't have any idea of the dirt those people live in, and the

¹⁷ Kahlo, Frida, with Phyllis Freeman, ed. *Diario Frida Kahlo: Autorretrato Íntimo*. Various.

¹⁸ Herrera, H. 242. Apparently Kahlo had a fondness for *italics*. I don't want to know what the "it" she would later eat referred to...

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 244.

kind of food they eat...I never seen anything like it before in my damn life.”²⁰ The only positive quote from Kahlo that I found about any of the Surrealists concerned Pavel Tchelitchew [Fig. 6], about whom she supposedly said, “I like this guy. I like his work because it has freaks in it.”²¹ She apparently related to Tchelitchew because of her own “freakishness,” with her bad leg and scars from her teenage bus accident. Again, she felt an affinity for him not because she admired anything dreamlike about his work, but because of its relevance to her actual life.

Renee Riese Hubert, in her essay “Portraiture and Revolution: Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera,” points out that André Breton’s complete unfamiliarity with the tropical imagery of the Mexican landscape may have been what first led him to claim Kahlo for the Surrealists.²² Then what in her style and compositions allows many to not question her classification in that group? Kahlo’s two paintings frequently heralded as the most surreal of her works are *What the Water Gave Me* (1938) [Fig. 7] and *The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico), Diego, Me, and Señor Xolotl* (1949) [Fig. 8].²³

In *What the Water Gave Me*, Kahlo depicted a menagerie: miniaturized bodies floating in bath water, a volcano with a building erupting from the crater, two women rafting on a sponge, a

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 242-3.

Kahlo also wrote, in general reference to the Parisian Surrealist clique and their cohorts: “You have no idea the kind of bitches these people are. They make me vomit. They are so damn ‘intellectual’ and rotten that I can’t stand them any more. It is really too much for my character. I rather sit on the floor in the market of Toluca and sell tortillas, than to have any thing to do with those ‘artistic’ bitches of Paris...they don’t have any thing to eat in their houses because *none of them work* and they live as parasites of the bunch of rich bitches who admire their ‘genius’ of ‘artists.’ *shit* and only *shit* is what they are. I never seen Diego or you [Murray], wasting their time on stupid gossip and ‘intellectual’ discussions. That is why you are real *men* and not lousy ‘artists.’” Also in Herrera, H. 245-246. Lack of capitalization of “shit”, and other grammatical errors, come directly courtesy of the original.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 234.

²² Hubert, Renee Riese. *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Partnership*. 349.

²³ Señor Xolotl is the rat-like dog resting on night’s arm in *The Love Embrace*. Kahlo kept several of these Mexican hairless dogs as pets at the Blue House, and he was one of her favorites. See figures 9 and 10. The breed name from the Mexican Indian native language is Xoloitzcuintli or Itzcuintli. From Billeter, Erika, ed. *The Blue House*. 24.

portrait of her parents' heads growing out of water plants...along with the only three things that she could have actually been painting from life---the bathtub, its pull-chain and stopper, and her own (though bloody) feet. Hubert discusses Kahlo's disproportionate representations of the figures as well as the strange use of scale for the relationships of the objects in the bathtub to each other; but ultimately she concludes that even though so many things about this painting are "off," the fact that the viewer shares Kahlo's viewpoint inside the bathtub, looking at her feet, trumps any judgement of the surreality of the images.²⁴ Herrera points out that the painting references Dali "in its plethora of minute and irrationally juxtaposed detail," but that it also shows Kahlo's love of Heironymus Bosch and Breughel.²⁵

The Love Embrace [Fig. 8] is a giant triple hug that almost defies description; in it Kahlo painted a cloudlike figure, half day and half night, surrounding a mother-earth figure who holds Kahlo in an embrace, just as Kahlo holds Rivera.²⁶ In this work the only real people are Kahlo and Rivera; their dog, Mr. Xolotl, and the vegetation are the only other true to life representations. Kahlo painted Rivera as a huge pallid baby with an enormous third eye on his forehead, and it gets stranger from there. The expressionless mother earth has a huge ravine-like rift opening in the green expanse of her chest; milk flows through the ravine and drips from the figure's visible (left) breast. Night and day appear mostly as clouds, united as one cycle of darkness and light with their arms connecting at the base of the painting; half of day's face hovers over mother earth's shoulder. Herrera does not group this painting with those having surrealistic tendencies, instead contending that it resulted from Rivera's affair with Maria Fèlix;

²⁴ Hubert, 349.

²⁵ Herrera, H. 257. In her analysis Herrera seems to be unaware that Dali was expelled from the Surrealists by Breton at any time.

²⁶ Hubert, 363.

Herrera sees Kahlo as the “weeping Madonna,” distraught over the (temporary) loss of her “child.”²⁷ As wild and fantasy-based as *The Love Embrace* seems, once again, Herrera argues for its firm foundation in reality---namely because of the timeframe of its creation.

For Hubert, the timeline and the Riveras’ infidelity issues are irrelevant in the face of Kahlo’s philosophy--which, she writes, matters more than the easily identifiable Surrealist traits of *The Love Embrace*.²⁸ The question, Hubert says, is not the Surrealist presentation of spacial relationships, but what Kahlo’s ideology shares, if anything, with Surrealist thought. Kahlo wrote a “portrait essay” around the same date as the painting, stating that “The forms of Diego [of] an affectionate monster, inspired by fear and hunger, created by the ancient concealer, a necessary and eternal element, the primal mother of all men and all the gods that man has invented in his delirium...Woman among all of them, I would always want to cradle him like a newborn child.” Hubert interprets this as Kahlo having made a transition during that time from the directly personal to the universal.²⁹ In other words, unlike Herrera’s limiting references back to Kahlo’s relationship with Diego, Hubert understands this work as emblematic of Kahlo not merely having depicted specific hurt, but as having placed herself in a larger macrocosm of humanity: pain, heartache, love, all these things belong to more than just Kahlo and Rivera’s intimate world.

Aside from these two works with their obvious surreal visual elements, Kahlo painted numerous self-portraits. Whitney Chadwick classifies Kahlo as a Surrealist because of her links to Breton’s group, as well as her tendency to use double images of herself. Chadwick, along

²⁷ Herrera, H. 375, 378.

²⁸ Hubert. 364.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 364.

with many other scholars, continually refers to the concept of duality in Kahlo's portraits (self and otherwise). Chadwick describes this duality in various ways, including night and day, European and Mexican,³⁰ past and present, sickness and wellness, civilization and the wild, the physical and spiritual realms...the list goes on.³¹ Yet whatever symbolism Kahlo used in her self-portraits and other paintings, even when it seemed disjointed or illogical, Kahlo always grounded it in daily life, be it her own reality or the world at large. Many of the self-portraits she completed as studies to teach herself the craft of painting, and in them we see that she struggled to learn perspective and proportion, just as most artists do. In several she painted herself in an idealized manner, with an elongated neck, yet characteristically emphasized her mustache and (almost) unibrow. In *Self-Portrait* (1930) [Fig. 11], for example, the head is too small in proportion to the rest of her body and Kahlo's understanding of light is limited as well--it is difficult to locate the light source. Later on, as her rendering abilities improved, she certainly had acquired the skill to depict details "accurately" from life, but often chose not to. Instead, she elected to continue emphasizing certain features while preserving others--namely her youth--but this decision was not out of any belief in Surrealism. She perceived her life in an emotionally driven way and wanted to convey that perception through her works.

Ultimately, Kahlo did not identify with any of the Surrealist tenets; because she didn't subscribe to their system, she cannot be swept into their clan. She strikes me as the type who would not have wanted to join any club that would have taken her as a member.³² She knew how

³⁰ Prignitz-Poda, Helga. *Frida Kahlo*, 9. Kahlo's father was a Hungarian Jew, while her mother was of Mexican descent.

³¹ Chadwick, Whitney. "Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation," in *Mirror Images*, 30.

³² Paraphrased from a quote variously ascribed to W.C. Fields, John Lennon, and Woody Allen, but most likely from a Groucho Marx routine about a telegram he supposedly sent as a resignation. I apologize for the missing cultural reference.

to use the Breton crowd for her purposes, though she probably wouldn't have admitted her motives; here I agree with Herrera in that Kahlo viewed the Parisian scene as a business venture and not much more, with the exception of Duchamp and possibly Jacqueline Breton. If Kahlo invented something independent of the Surrealists, it was her own version of art therapy. Part of Kahlo's cult status owes its debt to her having worn her heart "on her sleeve"--in painting "her own reality,"³³ she helped encourage other artists, women and men alike, to find their own voices. Kahlo's rejection of Surrealism was, in the end, her assertion of self.

³³ Herrera, H. 266.

Annotated Bibliography

Billeter, Erika, ed. *The Blue House: The World of Frida Kahlo*. Houston: University of Washington Press, 1993.

This collection is amazing for its beautiful images: not just the full color reproductions of Kahlo's paintings, including some of her lesser-known still lifes, but the photographs. German-born photographer Fritz Henle took several photographs of Kahlo and Rivera during trips to Mexico in 1936 and 1943-1944; Henle caught the occupants of the blue house in some quiet and private moments that, prior to the publication of Billeter's text, had remained private.

Block, Rebecca, and Lynda Hoffman-Jeep. "Fashioning National Identity: Frida Kahlo in 'Gringolandia,'" *Woman's Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (Autumn 1998-Winter 1999): 8-12.

This analysis of the significance of Kahlo's choice to dress in traditional Mexican indigenous attire has little relevance to her identity as a Surrealist, or as a painter for that matter. It does, however, contain some interesting interpretations of the symbolism behind specific clothing and jewelry items worn in famous photographs of Kahlo by Imogen Cunningham, Peter Juley, and Dora Maar, as well as decent-sized black-and-white reproductions of those images.

Breton, André. "The First Manifesto of Surrealism," excerpts, from *Art in Theory 1900-2000*, as found on Albert Reischuck's website: "<http://www.personal.kent.edu/~areischu/Breton.pdf>", accessed 4/05/08.

These excerpts from Breton's essay provide a good understanding of some of the basic premises of Surrealism at its inception. Although Breton gives excessive credit to Freud and tends to err towards the slightly arrogant and at times even a little grandiose, it is one of his clearest writings in my lexicon. His definition of Surrealism, which by necessity must be deconstructed, is nonetheless useful for contextualizing the work of those who claimed to subscribe to the Surrealist movement.

Caws, Mary Ann, ed. *Surrealist Painters and Poets: An Anthology*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001.

This is a fascinating compilation of letters, essays, and other contemplations by everyone from De Chirico to Ernst to Eluard. However, the contribution from Frida Kahlo is a disappointingly brief letter to Jacqueline Lamba (possibly Jacqueline Breton), in which Kahlo laments the physical distance between herself and the recipient; the letter has no relevance for my purposes in tracing Kahlo's Surrealist roots.

Chadwick, Whitney, ed. *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998.

This collection includes useful insights from the editor herself in her introductory essay, "Women, Surrealism and Self Representation." The Dawn Ades piece, "Orbits of the Savage Moon: Surrealism and the Representation of the Female Subject in Mexico and Postwar Paris," is less relevant where Kahlo is concerned--she gets minimal mention---but interesting nonetheless. The essay devoted entirely to Kahlo, Salomon Grimberg's segment, takes the angle that Kahlo defined herself through her image and as a conflict of opposites. The most curious additions here are the reproductions of some exquisite corpse drawings done by Kahlo and Lucienne Bloch from 1932.

Gale, Matthew. *Dada and Surrealism*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1997.

In this useful text delineating the evolution from dada to Surrealism, Gale manages to compile an overwhelming amount of information about both. His strength is his exhaustive research; for the purposes of this paper, the citations from André Breton's two manifestos of Surrealism are the most valuable. As for Kahlo, Gale credits her as "the most important of the painters" instrumental in a major change in Surrealism when it crossed the Atlantic to the Americas in the late 1930s. He does not mention her at length and includes only two small images of her work, both self-portraits.

Grimberg, Salomon. "Frida Kahlo's Memory: the piercing of the heart by the arrow of divine Love," *Woman's Art Journal* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1990--Winter 1991) : 3-8.

Written by a practicing child psychiatrist, this essay attempts to delve into Kahlo's Catholic past and draw a parallel between Kahlo and St. Teresa de Avila. This piece is frankly not relevant or useful in the realm of artistic analysis, Surrealist or otherwise.

Grimberg, Salomon. "Thinking of Death," reviews of Kahlo scholarship in *Woman's Art Journal* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1993--Winter 1994) : 44-50.

This piece reviews five books on Kahlo: Raquel Tibol's *Frida Kahlo: An Open Life*, Sarah Lowe's *Frida Kahlo*, Andrea Kettenmann's *Frida Kahlo, 1907-1954: Pain and Passion*, Malka Drucker's *Frida Kahlo: Torment and Triumph in Her Life and Art*, and Martha Zamora's *Frida Kahlo: The Brush of Anguish*. Overall, Grimberg seems to find favor with anyone who writes about Kahlo and reluctantly points out a few faults here and there; as the reviewed titles suggest, these books deal primarily with Kahlo's biographical material and to a secondary extent, her art. This article is a good reference for anyone overwhelmed with the scholarship on Kahlo, but who wants to know some of the best places to discover the basics on her life.

Herrera, Hayden. *Frida, A Biography of Frida Kahlo*. New York: Harper and Row, 1983.

This quintessential biography of Kahlo does a thorough job of telling the subject's life story. Much of the later scholarship on Kahlo relies heavily on this book and tends to duplicate Herrera's research. This book consists primarily of text, but includes several nice full-color, if somewhat small, reproductions of her work, as well as copies of black- and-white photographs of Kahlo, her friends, and family. It is invaluable in ascertaining Kahlo's relationship to Breton and the Surrealists, containing several excerpts from letters where she mentions Breton extensively. There are also some blatant quotes from Kahlo in which she denounces Surrealism, and Breton in particular, in very clear terms.

Herrera, Juan Felipe. *The Roots of a Thousand Embraces: Dialogues*. San Francisco: Manic D Press, 1994.

This extraordinary collection of poetry based on Kahlo's paintings is not particularly relevant for the argument of my paper...although some of the poems definitely border on the surreal. Of particular noteworthiness is his poetic analysis of *The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico), Diego, Me, and Senor Xolotl* (1949), as well as his poem based on *My Dress Hangs There* (1933). I had the good fortune of interviewing Juan Felipe Herrera twelve years ago for a literature research paper and found him refreshingly down to earth, although much of his work is way over my head. He analyzes Kahlo in terms of her metaphorical Chicana status, an icon whose heritage often left her straddling the "line" between Mexico and the United States.

Hopkins, David. "Surrealism: Desire Unbound, London and New York," *The Burlington Magazine* 143, no. 1185 (Dec. 2001) : 774-777.

This review of the Tate Modern exhibition gives a nice overview of the show as a whole but does not go into much detail with regard to the Kahlo piece included, *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940). Hopkins mentions her in a group of female Surrealists with the astute comment that the curators "tactless(ly)" defined the women in the show through Max Ernst.

Hubert, Renee Riese. *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Partnership*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.

This collection analyzes the impact partnerships, collaborations, or marriages between female Surrealist artists and other artists had on both parties' artwork. Hubert looks at the relationships between such artist couples as Lee Miller and Man Ray, Leonora Carrington and Max Ernst, and Remedios Varo and Benjamin Peret. While Hubert's focus is on the female partner, she also takes an interest in the male artist's portraits of the woman. Her chapter on Kahlo and Rivera goes beyond the stereotypical traumatization of Kahlo by

Rivera and delves deeper, addressing politics and questioning Kahlo's relationship to Surrealism. I found it refreshingly, and surprisingly, useful.

Kahlo, Frida, with Phyllis Freeman, ed. *Diario Frida Kahlo: Autorretrato Intimo*. Zamora: La Vaca Independiente, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995.

Frida Kahlo's diary in the original Spanish contains beautiful images and numerous drawings I had not seen reproduced elsewhere. In the back of the book, there is a page-by-page transcription to make up for the numerous places that Kahlo's handwriting becomes blurred or illegible. Many of her entries have to do with her husband Diego, and there is some lovely but sad poetry included here. Kahlo's text is also accompanied by some introductory essays by Karen Cordero, Olivier Debrouse, Sarah M. Lowe, and Graciela Martinez-Zalce.

Prignitz-Poda, Helga. *Frida Kahlo: Life and Work*. Berlin: Schirmer/Mosel, 2007.

I found this oversized book useful for its many gorgeous, almost cover-to-cover, full page reproductions of Kahlo's works; some of the images are blown up to poster size. Prignitz-Poda also does a decent job of contextualizing Kahlo's life with the works illustrated, even if there are no (notably) major new revelations over previous scholarship covering similar ground.

Taylor, Sue. "Surreal Reflections," review of *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation*, Whitney Chadwick, ed. *Art Journal* 58, no. 2 (Summer 1999) : 118-119.

This brief review of the Chadwick book is mostly favorable, especially with regard to essays on Claude Cahun, Frida Kahlo, Yayoi Kusama, Ana Mendieta, Cindy Sherman, and Francesca Woodman. However, in its brevity it serves as a mere laundry list and doesn't do its subject justice.

Unknown.

Please see the website: "<http://www.fridakahlofans.com/filmsenglish.html>", accessed 4/20/08.

This is an independent website compiled by a Frida aficionado (read=freak) named on the site only as "Mike," and as such may not be the most reliable source, but it conveniently lists a (primarily English-language) filmography of nine films. I include it as an example of the Kahlo culthood.

Washington Educational Television Association.

Please see the website: "<http://www.pbs.org/weta/fridakahlo/about/index.html>", accessed 4/20/08.

This website gives a brief synopsis of the educational television film *The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo*, which first aired in March of 2005. The director is Amy Stechler, and although I haven't seen this film to evaluate it, I list it here simply as another example of the continually growing cultural fascination with Kahlo.