



## *Take a sad song and make it better :* **Frida in the spotlight**

“Feet, why do I need them if I have wings to fly?”. It’s surprising how these words, which sound fairly optimistic and confident, were actually uttered by a woman who had to face enormous obstacles that came in her way throughout her life. There she was, Frida Kahlo, staring at me from her *“Self-Portrait with Monkey and Parrot”* (1942) at the Malba museum.

For some reason I couldn’t take my eyes off her – that deep, intense and sharp look. Her expression said much more than words can explain. It showed that she wasn’t afraid of being there, in the spotlight. She was strong enough to deal with it and to face who she really was. As I gazed at the painting, it reminded me of a song, but at first I couldn’t tell which. Then I started humming it... Its name was on the tip of my tongue, but I couldn’t recall it. I remembered what I had heard about Frida’s troubled life and how she had struggled through it... and then it came to me: “Take a sad song and make it better”. Yes, The Beatles! Suddenly, I had the odd feeling that that song could have been Frida’s personal “anthem”, that those words could have been her life motto: a reflection of the way in which she overcame obstacles and lived a sad and rough life, which she was able to “make better” thanks to her art, her talent and her courage.

Frida was born in Mexico in 1907 during the Mexican revolution, which is quite a coincidence considering that this movement can be directly related to this artist: strong, independent and contemporary. There were

some events and people that were very significant in her life. First of all, she suffered from terrible illnesses: at the age of 6 she contracted polio and, as a consequence, her right leg ended up thinner than her left one. Later on, in 1925 she had a car accident which caused her serious injuries, such as a broken backbone, a broken pelvis, many fractures and, most serious of all, a pierced uterus which damaged her reproductive capacity. However, her optimism and inner strength were key to her recovery. During the time she was bedridden, she used a mirror to paint herself. As a result, many of her works provide clear evidence of the soreness she felt. As she once said: “My painting carries with it the message of pain.”

Another strong influence on her life was her marriage to well-known artist Diego Rivera. Not only was she expected to fulfil the role of a model wife but she was also involved in a loving, yet stormy relationship full of lies and cheating. This emotional torment made Frida grow as an artist and, once again, she reflected her anguish and her passion in her paintings.

On the whole, I believe that Frida Kahlo did something remarkable: she fought against prejudice, fear and misery. She was an astonishing woman with a bright way of thinking. Borges once said: “Nothing is lost if you are brave enough to admit that everything has been lost and you have to start all over again”. Frida was living proof of this, as well as of the Beatles’ lines I recalled as I stared at her portrait: she never looked back, and she turned her sadness and sorrow into a legacy of beauty and wisdom for the benefit of humankind.

**Florencia Agustina Bergius**

**4<sup>th</sup> year, CAE II Level student**

***Boston College***