

## The Axolotl

Concerning the axolotl, or mud puppy, I have only two authorities handy that are trustworthy: one, Sahagún, author of *Things of New Spain*; the other, the author of my days.

"*Simillima mulierbus!*" thus exclaimed the observant Father when he examined thoroughly similar parts in the little body of this siren of Mexican ponds.

A small lizard of jelly. A large waterworm with smooth flat tail and ears of coral polyp. With beautiful ruby eyes, the axolotl is a transparently genital *lingam*. So much so, that women should not bathe in waters where these imperceptible, shiny creatures glide about without taking precautions. (In a town near ours my mother treated a woman who was mortally impregnated with axolotls.)

To get back to Bernardino de Sahagún: "...and its flesh is more delicate than capon's and may be eaten when abstaining from meat. But it can upset the body juices and is bad for continence. The old folks who ate roast axolotls told me that these fish came from an important lady who was having her period, and that a señor from another town had taken her by force, that she did not want to have a child by him, so she douched herself in the lagoon called Axolitla, and that is where the axolotls come from."

I need only add that Nemilov and Jean Rostand are in agreement, pointing out that the female axolotl is one of four animals that suffer the cycle of more or less menstrual biological catastrophes. The other three are the female bat, women, and a certain anthropoid monkey.

From: *Confabulario and Other Inventions* by Juan José Arreola. Translated by George D. Schade (University of Texas Press, Austin, 1964). Contributed by Hobart Smith.