

**Festering Fecundity:
Nahui Olin, Revolutionary Woman of Revolutionary Mexico**

Nahui Olin as otherworldly flame, sacred spark, woman of the sun, a rose opening to the sun, luscious ripe-red fruit of cactus pear, the most beautiful woman in post-revolutionary Mexico. Nahui Olin as daughter of General Mondragón, wife of Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, lover of Dr. Atl, model and muse of Edward Weston, Antonio Garduño, Diego Rivera, and Charlot, and member of the coterie associated with “the Mexican Renaissance” managed by Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos. Through these two gazes, Nahui figures as a great beauty and the intimate of Great Men.

Unstated in these accolades is their short duration. Originally feted, she was eventually forgotten. Nahui Olin died in 1978 without an obituary. From great heights in the 1920s, Nahui fell from grace. Her most recent biographer traces her trajectory poignantly,

She was in the 1920s the most beautiful woman in Mexico City. And there she died, in misery, walking around San Juan de Letrán and selling nude photographs of her youthful beauty at whatever price in order to feed herself and her cats.¹

The insults grew ever harsher as she aged, culminating in the 1970s: “the Powdered Woman”, “the Lunatic”, “the Phantom of the Post Office”, “the Cat Lady”. The harshest referred to her alleged nymphomania and accused this woman in her 80s of accosting young men: “the Bitch”, “the Long Arm”, even “the Rapist”.² Her contemporaries and biographers concur that she went from center to margin, from beauty to hag.

Etymologically, the word “hag” derives originally from “wise” or “holy” woman—whence “Hagia Sofia” and “hagiography.” Likewise, Nahui Olin has been recently rescued from ignominy and redefined as worthy. Her biographers Tomás Zurian, Adriana Malvido, Elena

Poniatowska, and others have, moreover, broadened public appreciation and critical acclaim beyond merely honoring her as muse or beauty. Thanks to their great dedication and judiciousness, Nahui Olin once again wins accolades from the cultural elite.

Cultural elites now acknowledge Nahui Olin as a central figure in the “Renacimiento Mexicano,” the intellectual and artistic “renaissance” emerging in the 1920s after the Mexican Revolution. In 2000, Gerardo Estrada Rodríguez, General Director of the National Institute of Fine Arts, wrote an introduction for an exhibit of her work as an act of rendering homage to “a period and a group of Mexican artists who beyond scandal and particular circumstances left a profound mark on the profile of modern Mexico.” Included in that group with Nahui Olin are Diego Rivera, Tina Modotti, Xavier Guerrero, Edward Weston, Rodríguez Lozano who, he says, “created a bridge between the most authentic expressions of Mexican tradition and folklore, the incipient urban popular culture, and universal culture.”³ Américo Sánchez Hernández, director of the Museo Mural de Diego Rivera, likewise set an exhibit of her work in the context of the “Renacimiento Mexicano”, broadening the definition of artistic creativity to include events, declarations, and other projects of that period, underscoring that mural painting is the axis on which an entire interpretive mechanism had been erected.

Her biographers focus on her rather than her memberships, and in any case they define her memberships beyond the narrow context of Mexico City of the 1920s as is evident in the titles of their biographies: “A woman of her time,”⁴ “A woman of modern times”,⁵ “Woman of the Sun,”⁶ “a Mystery.”⁷ Whereas her contemporaries tended to see her fall as her fault (her madness or meanness); her biographers tend to see it as their fault not hers. Whereas her contemporaries link her rise to her intimacy with great men; her biographers champion her work on its own merits. If her contemporaries condemned her, her biographers redeem her, not

because she would have cared but because we should. Her invisibility impoverishes our vision no less than it denies Nahui Olin her due.

Painstaking inquiry is the necessary first stage to reclaim anything lost. To amass the dispersed and neglected artifacts, to present their significance, confers significance on their subject and source, in turn redefining our history no less than hers. Such a trove of Nahui - treasure this inquiry has yielded: her paintings, caricatures, feminism, philosophy, poetry, sexuality, animal defense, daily shamanistic ritual, aesthetics and connoisseurship, even music. For example, sundry pieces—a prologue of her book, *Energía Cósmica*, a Guggenheim fellowship application she prepared in the 1940s, letters from Atl and other sources—point to Nahui Olin as a musical performer and composer, including a recital in San Sebastián in 1933.⁸ Critics have reaffirmed her artistic talent, moving beyond the dismissive categorization of her work as “naïve.”⁹ Zurian also recasts the logic that prompted her to pose naked and exhibit the nudes, underscoring that “Nahui doesn’t show her body for perversion, lightness, or frivolity. Far from that, she does it as an act of generosity, of expansion of her radiant energy, to bestow on humanity a little of the exuberance of her body.”¹⁰ She has also been credited with being “one of the first feminists without placards who, with the sole force of her acts, generates an aperture for the feminine condition.”¹¹ She has also gained admiration for her sexual liberation. Poniatowska says that she is considered a precursor of a woman who claims her own instincts. Precursor, yes, and heir? By likening Nahui’s nudes to amphora, Poniatowska deepens the historicity of Nahui’s sculpture-of-self. Yet, according to Poniatowska, it cost her dearly, “Living her sexuality without prejudices ended up destroying her.” The best portrait of Nahui Olin as Revolutionary Woman emerges, then, from the chiaroscuro of all three perspectives—hers, her contemporaries’, and her biographers.

Thanks to the nearly two decades of commitment of her earliest biographers, subsequent scholars can risk untethering Nahui Olin from her time and place, from post-revolutionary Mexico of the 1920s. A volume on Revolutionary Women invites a revolutionary approach: to take her own vision as normative and examine her life and art in terms of it. This chapter interprets Nahui in terms of the Nahua cosmology to which she explicitly linked herself.

In terms of Nahua cosmology, Nahui Olin distinguishes herself by a cyclical constance. She refuses to hew to the linear “rise and fall” pattern often attributed to her by those who focus first on her “beau monde” credentials as artist or artists’ muse in the 1920s, only to trace her tragic “descent” into old age, grotesquerie, frailness, madness, and marginality.¹² Nor does she fit well the conventional “rise and fall” narrative common to ordinary people: launching out from childhood (portrayed as immature or neophyte) climbing to “prime” adulthood (maximum productivity, strength, fertility) then sliding back into the deterioration and death of old age. Rather than either of these “rise and fall” narratives, Nahui Olin exhibits a rare cyclical constance of powerful creation, of sustaining life. Surveying her life from the vantage point of advanced years, Nahui Olin contradicts the rise and fall narrative by asserting constance. She said late in life that she had had a good childhood, a good adulthood, and a good old age.

If we can presume to attempt a reading of Nahui Olin that privileges her own vision, then two motifs register most prominently: creation and light as intimately linked to destruction and dark. Most of her contemporaries note “the dark, destructive side” of Nahui Olin without glimpsing its generative power—as though the phenomenon (or the artist herself) could be dichotomized. Consequently, her biographers have been obliged to reckon with her

contemporaries' negative interpretations, almost to the point of defensiveness given the harshness of some detractors.

If many contemporaries damned Nahui's ersatz darkness and destructiveness, others exalted it. Dr. Atl led with it. No sooner had he met her, 22 July 1921, than Atl rushed home to write in his journal that an "abyss green like the sea: the eyes of a woman" had opened before him and he "fell into that abyss, instantaneously, like a man who slides from a rock and plunges into the ocean." In the next paragraph, he extols her beauty further, reiterating the drama of her eyes and concludes, "Pobre de mi!"¹³ So his first response after he first met Nahui Olin portrayed her as devouring and himself as doomed. His last response, published some 38 years later near the end of his life, continued in the same vein.¹⁴ The first poem entitled, "Carmen" opens with the lines, "Mythological serpent, sinister and plumed, twisted 'round the tree of Good and Evil; from branch to branch you entice toward your abysmal maw, my terrible animal instincts, my conscience without eyes, and the remnants of my will."¹⁵ Likewise, in his opening dedicatory poem published in her volume entitled, *Optica Cerebral*, Atl speaks of Nahui Olin as fire, death, abyss, chaos, desire, illumination, humanity, and renovating power; he spoke of himself as enthralled.¹⁶ Detractors likewise attributed "dark" destructive qualities to her, but they condemned them.

Such projections do enjoy considerable appeal. Indeed, it may be impossible to imagine order without disorder, and certainly disorder has been most often defined as darkness. Historically, cosmogonies have ascribed roles to darkness and light, ranging along a "spectrum" from a dualism that damns darkness and reveres light to a holistic embrace of both. Certainly the Nahua, or Aztec, creation story with which Nahui Olin identified herself celebrates deities such

as the god, Tezcatlipoca, and the goddess, Tlaltecuhltli—each of whom exercises simultaneous powers of Creation and Destruction. Nahui Olin explicitly recognizes the regenerative powers of destruction. In her signature poem “Insaciable Sed,” it is above all her spirit that is insatiably thirsty “to create, possess, and destroy with another creation of greater magnitude than the one it destroyed.”¹⁷ Five times in this short poem, she reiterates her act of creating “new worlds” without ceasing; once she mentions destruction of a world.

Such holistic models notwithstanding, the dualistic model predominates. The tragic legacy of this dualistic model is that darkness and destruction have become erroneously associated with evil. Their powers of generation and regeneration have been denied. NO’s personal history has suffered from similar crude misperceptions of “darkness,” ironically from critics and admirers alike. Though the facts are much disputed, her critics’ claims against her conform perfectly to classic misogynist “Evil Woman” archetypes: Woman as baby-killer¹⁸; Woman as destroyer of her mates (Atl later claimed she threatened to shoot him); Woman as sexually impure (She wrote about desire even as a child, “I know that pleasure comes from a desire to let a little of our infinity emerge through our skin.”¹⁹ As an adult she scandalized the public by hosting an exhibit of Antonio Garduño’s photos of her in the nude in September 1927, perhaps the first woman in Mexico to display pubic hair in public as art. And the inscription on her photo exhorted Atl to, “wet the eyes of your beloved with the semen of your life.”²⁰ Elena Poniatowska reported that she received guests naked, serving them elixirs of fertility and that into her 80s she grabbed at young strangers on public transportation²¹); Woman as woman-hater (Atl reported her as so jealous that he once soaked her with water, bound her up and left her alone all day as punishment for it.) Woman as unstable and chaotic; Woman as lunatic.

Not only did Nahui embody the many archetypes of Evil Woman, but she also failed to embody the few archetypes of female decency. She did not conform to narrow standards of innocent girl, nor virtuous wife and mother, nor dignified crone. If piety might have redeemed Nahui for her failings as girl, wife and mother, or crone, she was not pious either. Though atheism defined the majority of Mexico's post-revolutionary elite, NO's rejection of conventional religiosity was her own, long predating the anti-clerical political posturing that polarized Mexico in the 1920s. Unlike her contemporaries among the artists and intellectuals for whom radical secularism became a badge of revolutionary zeal, NO defined herself independent of the church while still a child.

If the external perceptions of her contemporaries are Nahui Olin as Evil Woman then the obvious first task, is to counter these. And her biographers have performed that task well. Rather than let the proponents of "rise and fall" paradigm dictate the parameters of Nahui Olin's history, this essay privileges her own words of verifiable attribution—those she published. Fortunately, her published work covers an unusual range given that some of her childhood writings also reached print. For her youth, we have *Calinement, je suis dedans*, and *A dix ans sur mon pupitre*; for her adulthood, *Optica Cerebral* and *Energía Cós mica*. Further research would include her letters and other sources.

Fundamental to Nahui Olin's art, thought, and life is the paradigm of creation without end. Indeed, the name that she took in the early 1920s²² and kept until her death in 1978 derives from the "Nahui Ollin" of Aztec cosmogony, which translates as "Four Movement," the regenerating life force of the Fifth Sun. Embedded within the macrocosm of Life was the microcosm of her own life, conceived likewise as eternally regenerating, without beginning or

end. On the subject of her name, boundlessness, and the tension between the one and the many, Nahui wrote the following,

My name is like that of all other things:
without beginning or end,
and nonetheless without isolating myself from the totality
by my distinct evolution within this infinite set,
the words that most closely name me
are Nahui Olin.²³

To that extent, the paradigm is one of constance, rather than “rise and fall.” If we recast normativity as “Nahui Ollin” rather than the linear progression exalted by modernity, then fluid constance becomes the normative paradigm. Nahui discredits stability as antithetical to “Nahui Ollin” and condemns predictable progress, stagnation, or paralysis. “You became gangrenous in your stability,” she chastises, juxtaposing instead the “fluidity of beauty-color that things and people have, is nothing if not the vibration of instability.”²⁴

The episode that most resembles a deviation from Nahui’s norm of fluidity was her marriage. Indeed, her stint as the wife of Manuel Rodriguez Lozano may be the closest thing to a “fall” that we might identify by her terms. Ironically, her period of greatest conformity to convention—complete with white bridal gown and veil, anonymity, and few known works—correspond to the 9 years of her stable, unhappy marriage. Neither childhood nor dotage silenced her so effectively. According to third parties, she balked first at the prospect of her imminent wedding and later at the prospect of remaining wedded. Her mother’s coercion succeeded in

forcing her to marry, but her family's refusal to endorse divorce did not succeed in confining her to marriage.

If marriage silenced Nahui Olin in her early 20s, certainly her writings before and after that period loudly denounce patriarchy. These writings challenge not only the patriarchal control exercised by fathers and husbands, but also the laws, religions, and governments that exercise patriarchal power outside the household. As a child ten years old, she chafed at “being destined to be sold as slaves formerly were to a husband. I protest despite my age for being under my parents' tutelage.”²⁵ Twenty years later, she dedicates two of the short essays in her volume to a feminist challenge. The latter essay, entitled, “El cáncer que nos roba vida” [“The cancer that robs us of life”] denounces that cancer as one “with which we are born—the stigma of womanhood—”. She contrasts women who have been dwarfed by sexist laws and mores with those women “of tremendous spirit and virile strength” who likewise have been subject to similar constraints but who fight to free themselves.²⁶ The preceding essay in *Optica Cerebral* likewise speaks to the entrapment and seething tension of women subject to sexism, yet it treats the women as one rather than rank those who resist as superior to those who conform. The poem likens women to Mexico's volcano, anthropomorphized as the Aztec princess, Iztatzihuatl—both beautiful yet buried by a “deathly inertia” which they long to overthrow. She writes,

Under the death-grip of human laws, sleeps the world mass of women, in eternal silence, in deathly inertia... but underneath exists a dynamic force that accumulates from instant to instant, a tremendous power of rebellion that will activate their soul trapped in perpetual snows, in human laws of ferocious tyranny.²⁷

Her most renowned poem expresses the essence of Nahui Olin as eternal creatrix for whom destruction spawns new life. The poem, entitled, “Insaciable Sed,” expresses her “crazy thirst” to create ceaselessly. In it, she also reconciles antitheses. By recognizing the simultaneous oneness and multiplicity of reality, and by acknowledging that the thirst springs from both the body and the spirit that collaborate in creation, Nahui rejects false dichotomies. Accorded pride of place as first in her volume, this poem is arguably her manifesto. She concludes it by underscoring the constant cyclical creation to which she is committed despite the risk of being consumed,

And from this admirable thirst is born the power of creation—
and it is a fire that my body cannot resist, that in continuous
renovation of the youth of flesh and spirit, is
one and thousands, because it is insatiable thirst.

And my spirit and my body have always crazy
thirst...

In his introduction to the exhibit of thirty centuries of art in Mexico, Octavio Paz defined the quintessential artist’s commitment as a “will to form.” Surveying 3000 years, his definition grounds art as an act of transforming matter from unformed to formed. But perhaps this view privileges positivist, even phallic, presumptions. It certainly ignores the totality central to indigenous art/life, the indivisibility of the cycle: creation-destruction-regeneration. Unlike Paz, Nahui Olin defines herself within indigenous cosmology. Long after “indigenismo” popular in the 1920s had fallen from fashion, Nahui committed ever more with the passing years until by the end she sees herself as daily guide and guardian of the Sun who accompanies her in turn. Throughout her life, from childhood on, her writings and life choices affirm the cyclical, keenly

aware of dissolution of form as intimately linked to the emergence of form. [intuits it as a child where die of love, first love poem to atl where they merge, death of cat and her momentary sojourn into world beyond, etc. plug in here all the dissolution of form moments in her art/ life/ writings]. Cognizant of Nahui's openness to the power of dissolution, some observers fetishized it in her. But by ignoring it as part of a totality, they projected an exaggerated expression of it on her—portraying her as a festering rawness, an abyss, a volcano, a danger, destructive power. She did give full, unfettered expression to the “dark side,” but to limit her to only that is to ignore the wholeness of the cycle which defined her vision, life, and art.

She insisted in equal measure on giving full, unfettered expression to the creative, sustaining part of life-as-cycle. The most explicit example of life-affirming expression in her art is the painting in which Agosín's head protrudes through the “concha” of San Sebastian as though the EarthMother were birthing him from the bay-as-womb through the narrow portal into the wide sea. Insert that photo here; less-conventional examples of her “will to form” include preserving the corpses of her animals, head and all, in the form of a blanket. That is to say that Nahui insisted on expressing (in art and life) both dissolution and will to form. Therein lies the power of Nahui's art and especially her life-as-art. Because she always embraced the full cycle, her creative expression remained unsullied by the *chaos-kampf* agenda that tainted much post-Revolutionary art (by essentializing peasants, for example).²⁸

Nahui Olin's “will to form” found wide-ranging expression, though not always conventional. Much of that expression could be tolerated, even admired, by art circles then and now. Her first exhibit in Mexico, soon after her return from exile in Spain, featured caricatures. Zurian has recently curated a major retrospective to bring this work to the public that she deserved. Her paintings, though they did not conform to the didactic agenda of Revolutionary

art and have been dismissed as “naïve”, also find easily an appreciative audience. But much of her “will to form” is not counted as legitimate artistic expression. Transgressing the boundaries of what counts as art is the love poem to Atl that she scrawled hugely on a brick wall, the Agosin wall-hanging which served her as blanket and dead-lover’s embrace, and her nudity. Three masterpieces of body-as-art in which Nahui blurred the boundary between form and formlessness: Nahui unadorned in the sea, Nahui in the desert, Nahui in stark light where shadow has more substance than flesh. Nahui commands the cameras and the viewers to reckon with a nude so naked as to be newborn—reborn. Like all artists, Nahui dares. She ventures beyond. “Beyond” in a cyclical conception requires a “return” as the full completion of “forward” progress. At those thresholds where she moved ahead of us, her audience balks...or budes.

For all the power of cyclical creation-destruction that she claims for herself, Nahui does not presume to claim exclusive power to create and destroy. On the contrary, that power belongs to the natural order. In her 20s, Nahui writes, “Time in unconscious evolution, destroys and fertilizes marvels and in its multiple potential as regenerative and destructive element, devours what it has in its claws, and sublimely remakes each time a world better than the one it entombed.”²⁹ Her writings suggest that humans can gain this power of nature by “thirsting” or otherwise struggling for it. It is said that by her 70s, Nahui Olin exercised still greater powers of creation and destruction. She claimed to bring the sun up in the morning and put it down at night. [footnote that]. Whether or not she said it is open to debate given that detractors can prove unreliable as sources. And if she said it, then her intention also merits consideration given that she might have been performing the “loca” or witch to amuse or alarm her audience. If indeed, she came to see herself as controlling the sun, then she saw herself as exercising the supreme power, according to the theory she expounded in *Energía Cómica*. In her text entitled, “On

duration and the difference in the beings, elements, and things,” she wrote that the very duration of existence of “los seres” is determined by the intensity of the force of the electric movement that formed them, which itself derives from the sun.³⁰

There is much to celebrate about Nahui if we define a Revolutionary Woman in familiar terms as: 1) a woman of modern times, one ahead of her time, 2), an original artistic vision and expression, one of uncompromising authenticity, 3) a woman of great influence on revolutionary figures and historical developments. But in case these celebrations succeed mostly in championing the gaze of others, then we do well to reverse the gaze: Nahui looking out, in, and beyond. Nahui painted everyone’s eyes like her own, always yoni-shaped. Of the mouth as universal orifice (also painted alike for male and female), of the public pubis. She who experienced the quotidian and the material as hierophany. Our Trinity of Openings—eyes, mouth, yoni--that we seek to close, control and conceal. Not Nahui Olin. She opened them all. She refused to conceal and control them. Not only when she was in her “prime,” when it is at least somewhat permitted for a woman to project herself through these orifices, to delight in the give and take through these portals. No, she opened them and herself, before and after it was permitted—as a child and as a crone. Nor did she limit them to the sanctioned purpose of wife and mother. Hers was a rare and raw human sensibility, open to the festering fecundity, the Nahui Ollin, life force that cyclically and eternally creates, reabsorbs, and recreates the world. She was a figure akin to the Tlaltecuhli recently uncovered in el Templo Mayor precinct. Sundown to sundown, birth to death, conquest to conquest, age to age, Revolution to revolution.

Nahui’s use of space also reflects her motif of cyclical constance. Open spaces recur in her work and life: la plaza, la azotea, la calle, el mar. Rounded spaces figure in her work: concha-shaped bays, bull rings, hamlets encircled by water and hills. Her space was layered in

that the background and foreground were rarely empty, rarely serving as frame for a single central object. Her movement through space had a wayfaring quality, out and back, like a pilgrimage or a labyrinth. From San Sebastian in her proper married days she returned with Agosín; from Paris to as close as she could get, a French restaurant in Mexico City every two weeks. The ultimate cyclical constance: Nahui Olin died in the same house where she was born.

Conclusion

Late in life, Dr. Atl denied Nahui Olin her Nahuatl name, though he preserved his own. In a book published only five years before his death, he referred to her as Carmen and to himself as Dr. Atl, a name given him by Leopoldo Lugones in Italy some sixty years previous. Indeed, he gave his assumed name prominence by entitling the volume, “Poemas del Dr. Atl.” Published in 1959, some 38 years after he fell into the abyss of her eyes, the volume begins with a single word in the middle of the first page, “Carmen.” If he fancied he could re-baptize or infantilize her, he was mistaken. Nahui never reclaimed her original name, yet never denied her original self. According to her writings, “Nahui Olin” signified the power that produced light and life. As a child, she found life full of marvels, including light, that resonated with her spirit. As a crone, she devoted herself to the Nahua role of guide and companion to the Sun and Stars.³¹ Throughout her life, she gave artistic expression to everything that attracted her attention, yes everything. “Sí, de todo,” she wrote at age 10, “I long to create sensations of beauty...from everything that attracts my attention. Yes, everything. Everything that reaches my spirit resounds and responds.”³² Thirty years later, her vision had grown complex enough to embrace the destructive powers required also as part of creation. In her texts entitled, “Totality,” and

“Matemáticas” she theorized that everything was connected to everything but that the balance operative on Earth could be threatened in the realm of the Universe, that “relativity of space...permits all matter of any species to evolve distinctly but always within the enormous and terrible totality which crushes and nullifies us.”³³

Nahui Olin-née-Carmen Mondragón, she who renamed herself after the creative force of the Nahua universe, is also well-defined by the Nahua concept of light. The intricate meanings and derivations of *Tlahuiztli*—light, brightness, glow—merit full treatment here as fitting conclusion to an interpretation of Nahui Olin as Revolutionary Woman. Aztecs idealized the concept of *Tlahuiztli* to the point of using it to accord high status. Its multiple permutations represent well Nahui’s legacy: *Tlahui*, “to give off light like the stars do”; *Tlahuilia* “to illuminate others, to educate, to shed light on new or strange ideas. A related concept, *Tlamacaz*, resonates with the trajectory of Nahui’s life in which her vision as elder drew from her vision as child. *Tlamacaz* means “perfected human being, someone who deeply understands life and acts with rectitude,” “one who assimilates the sufferings of the world”; *Tlamacazqui*, “youthfulness—whose experience is filled with *Tlamahizolli* (marvels, miracles and the supernatural). With proper training, it leads to *Tlamatiliztli* “wisdom” embodied in the *Tlamatini*, the wise person who guards the tradition and gathers knowledge and transmits it to future generations. In the closing poem in *Optica Cerebral*, Nahui Olin illuminated the complex relationship between life and death when she exhorted that the following epitaph be carved (all in capital letters) into the tombstones of herself and all others “of Asia, Africa, America, y Europe” who chose to live freely and fully:

INDEPENDIENTE FUI, PARA NO PERMITIR PUDRIRME SIN RENOVARME;
HOY, INDEPENDIENTE, PUDRIENDOME ME RENUEVO PARA VIVIR.

INDEPENDENT I WAS, SO AS NOT TO PERMIT MYSELF TO ROT WITHOUT
RENOVATING MYSELF;
NOW, INDEPENDENT AND ROTTING, I RENEW MYSELF IN ORDER TO LIVE.³⁴

Notes

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- ¹ Adriana Malvido, *Nahui Olin: La mujer del sol*, (Mexico City: Edivision, Compañía Editorial, SA, 1999), 17.
- ² Elena Poniatowska, *Las Siete Cabritas*, 82.
- ³ pp. 21-22, intro to the catalog for the exhibit in Diego Rivera museum, cosponsored by INBA
- ⁴ Alejandra Osorio, p. 135.
- ⁵ Az
- ⁶ A. Malvido
- ⁷ Jorge Vasquez Pinon
- ⁸ Tomás Zurian, *Nahui Olin: una mujer en los tiempos modernos*, (143-44); Elena Poniatowska, *Las Siete Cabritas*, (Mexico D.F., Ediciones Era, 2001), 74.
- ⁹ Zurian, 150.
- ¹⁰ Zurian, 137
- ¹¹ EP, citing TZ's interpretation of N as early feminist, *7 cabritas*, p. 70.
- ¹² Zurian, 116 reports that people who met her in her later years considered her ugly and very fat.
- ¹³ Zurian, 68.
- ¹⁴ Nahui's original biographer, distinguished by his thoroughness and judiciousness, writes that these love poems date to the early period of their relationship. (See Zurian, *Nahui Olin*, 68). Nonetheless, Atl's intention remains suspect given that he could have acknowledged in that volume her preference for the name "Nahui Olin" and that he disregarded her demand to have her letters returned by making copies for himself which he later published unauthorized.
- ¹⁵ Dr. Atl, *Poemas del Dr. Atl*, (México D.F.: Biblioteca Aportación Histórica, Editor Vargas Rea, 1959), 7.
- ¹⁶ Dr. Atl, "Nahui Olin," published in *Optica Cerebral: poemas dinámicos* by Nahui Olin, (México D.F.: Ediciones Mexico Moderno,
- ¹⁷ Nahui Olin, Poem I, "Insaciable Sed," in *Optica Cerebral*, 12.
- ¹⁸ The most damning testimony here comes from a painter named Nefero, a disciple of Manuel Rodriguez Lozano's who portrayed Nahui as guilty of killing the child, that Manuel was innocent and worried, and that he already detected in her back then signs of madness, probably congenital. See the reference in Zurian, 60. Zurian, for his part, weighs the evidence and deems it unlikely that she killed a baby. (Raoul Fournier, p. 65 in *7 cabritas*, who was Manuel's friend and said that they had had a daughter or son who had died under mysterious circumstances. [and biographer].
- ¹⁹ Nahui Olin, *Calinement. Jes suis dedans*. Libreria Guillot, Mexico, 1923, 53-54, as quoted in Zurian, 66

²⁰ as quoted in Zurian, 36

²¹ EP, 72, 82

²² At the exhibit in Mexico dated 29 September 1921, Nahui Olin's married name, Carmen Mondragón de Rodríguez Lozano, figures on the formal program. Yet she represented herself as XIU, interpreted by Zurian as a word derived from the Nahuatl word "Xihuitl." Tomás Zurian, "Nahui Olin: Opera Varia (Mexico D.F.: Museo Mural Diego Rivero, 2000) 12.

²³ Nahui Olin, *Nahui Olin*, (Mexico City: Imprenta Mundial, 1927) 1, as quoted in Zurian, 31.

²⁴ Nahui Olin, Poem III, "Sabiduría—Lepra Humana," in *Optica Cerebral*, 21.

²⁵ Nahui Olin, *A dix ans sur mon pupitre*, as quoted in Malvido, 19.

²⁶ Nahui Olin, Poem XXIII, "El cáncer que nos roba vida," in *Optica Cerebral*, 103-104.

²⁷ Nahui Olin, Poem XII, "Bajo la mortaja de nieve duerme la Iztatzihuatl en su inercia de muerte," *Optica Cerebral*, 57.

²⁸ 'chaos-kampf' impulse (unlike famous artists and muralists patronized by José Vasconcelos, Minister of Education, who were bringing order to Mexico post-rev by building a new nationalism to accomplish national integration. Artists and intellectuals are helping shape the agenda of the nation.)

²⁹ Nahui Olin, "La enorme montaña que tiene en la cima una tumba—el tiempo," *Optica Cerebral*, 33.

³⁰ Jorge Vazquez Piñon, *Carmen Mondragón Valseca: Nahui Olin, Aproximación a un misterio*, (Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 2007), 229.

³¹ This is according to Homero Aridjis who met Nahui in the Alameda and observed her ministrations with sympathy. As cited in EP, 82.

³² Nahui Olin, "Mi Alma Está Triste Hasta Morir," published in *A dix ans sur mon pupitre*, Mexico: Editorial Cultural, 1924.

³³ Nahui Olin, *Energía Cósmica*, (Mexico D.F.: casa editorial Botas, 1937), as quoted in Vazquez, 228.

³⁴ Nahui Olin, Poem XXVII, "Sobre mi Lapida," in *Optica Cerebral*, 121.