

A question concerning etymology and Wolfish intent...

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 01 Feb 2001

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M Smith — 01 Feb 2001, 04:31

Gutentag,

I'm not sure if this has been discussed yet...but I've been pondering the etymology and significance of Patera Quetzal's name for a while. Could it have something to do with Quetzalcoatl? Perhaps some ties with the Aztecs, since they were involved in bloody rituals (the inhumu connection?)? I know Wolfe is familiar with American mythologies("Native American" would seem too inclusive, I think), besides every other classical mythology out there.

An asimi to whomever can piece this together.

M.D. Smith

"Mundus vult decipi"

Michael Andre-Driussi — 01 Feb 2001, 08:32 · follows M Smith

M.D. Smith wrote:

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Yes, Quetzal's name has a definite connection to the Toltec/Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. (To me at least: I wasn't familiar with the quetzal bird when I first read NIGHTSIDE THE LONG SUN, but I certainly knew about Quetzalcoatl.)

The parallels between the god and the character are open to debate. For me, the primary ones are: a "reptilian" nature (the god is called "plumed serpent" and the inhumu has snake-like features); a dual nature (the god, for one reason or another, is also a mortal hero; the character is an inhumu posing as human); an aversion to human sacrifice (the god is noteworthy as being one of the few, if not the only one, of the Aztec gods who did not want human sacrifice; the character has halted human sacrifice on the Whorl); one who fights on the side of light/life against the forces of dark/death (the god as mortal was killed by the treacherous warrior of dark/death; the character seems to have been struggling against inhumu who were preying upon the humans on the Whorl).

As it turns out, the quetzal bird really was the animal symbol of Quetzalcoatl (as owls to Athena, peacocks to Hera).

=mantis=

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.