THE MEXICAN QUETZALCÓATL
(THE FEATHERED SERPENT):
CULTURAL HERO AND MODERN AESTHETIC

Dr. Cynthia Casas

Join us for a special presentation with Visiting Assistant Professor Cynthia Casas from the UNM Department of Spanish & Portuguese.

This lecture will address an inquiry into the abundant and illuminating appearance of the Feathered Serpent or La Serpiente Emplumada Quetzalcóatl within a modern cultural and literary context. This guardian of civilization, re-creative power, wind, and penitence (in his form as a priest-king) maintains his presence across Mexican history dating back to ancient sources. The recurring references to the Feathered Serpent within modern Mexican literature point to a preoccupation with his significance within the Aztec/Mexica cosmosvision as well as outside of it. The foundational value of this Indianist preoccupation in the modern Mexican cultural and literary imagination operates along a distinct paradigm severed and extracted from Aztec mythology and pre-Hispanic primary sources. As disconnected as this paradigm may be, it still heavily depends upon Aztec images and aesthetic leitmotifs transferred into a modern framework on the part of Mexican writers, primarily Octavio Paz and José Vasconcelos, who inscribe this inherited neo-Aztec aesthetic into a political, historical, cultural, and ideological vision.

The discussion will revolve around the intellectual and cultural symbol Quetzalcóatl within Mexican literary and cultural production as an archetypal emblem of revolution, change, renovation, and a vision towards the future while maintaining the anchor of Mexican ‘tradition’ based on an originary mythical source which resists a eurocentric paradigm of thought. These writers employ this inherited aesthetic, specifically concentrated in Quetzalcóatl as a medium to exercise a political and ideological critique of Mexico after the Revolution.

This event is co-sponsored by the LAII and the Student Organization for Latin American Studies (SOLAS). It is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, contact the LAII at (505) 277-2961 or visit us online at http://laii.unm.edu/events. Photograph provided courtesy of Flickr user Gexydf.