

A poem

NEZAHUAL COYOTL

Prince of Tezcoco, Mexico. (1402-1472).

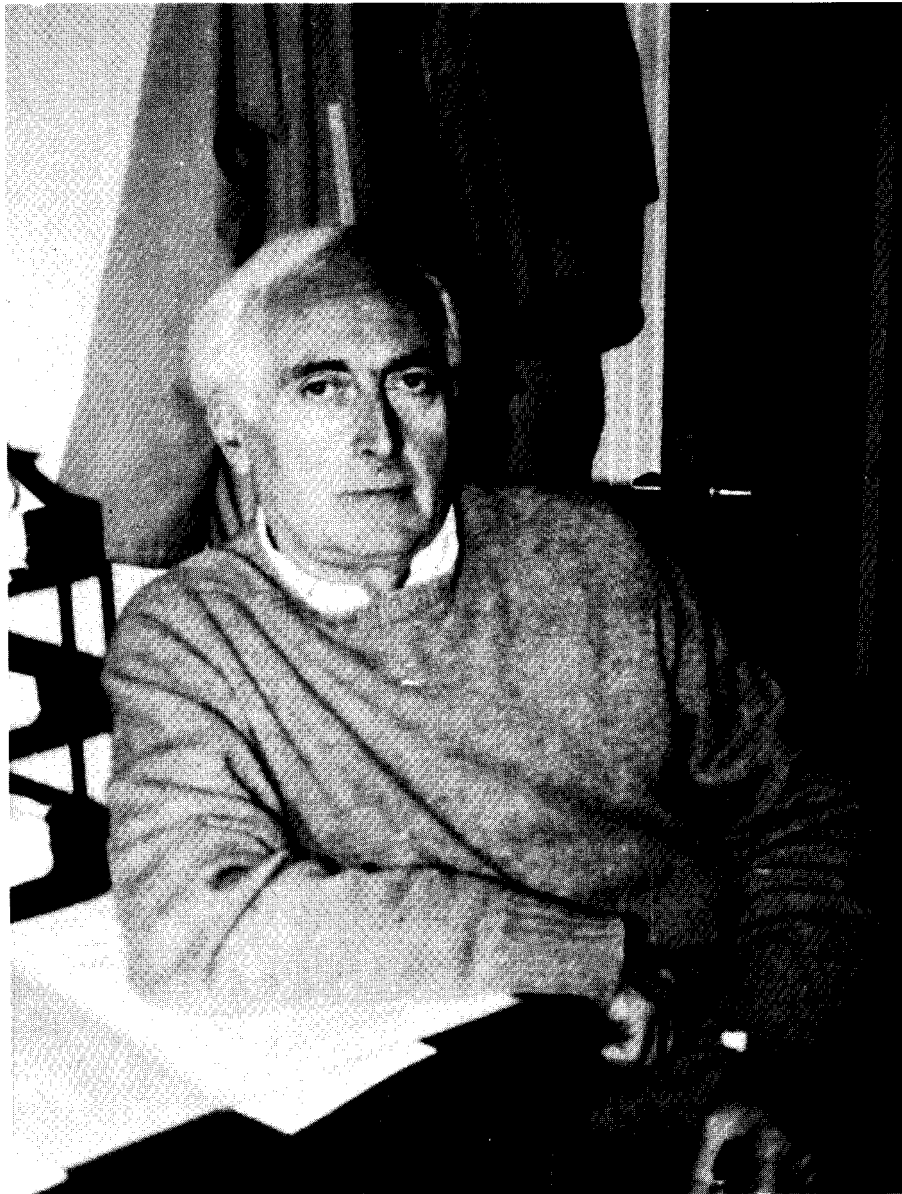
Listen to me, my lords!
I have solved the mystery,
I know the secret.
I know what we are:
We are all of us mortals!

All men who were born like us on this earth
have to move on from stage to stage of our lives:
all of us have to die, here on this earth...

We all will fade like a painting,
we all will droop like a flower,
we all will move on to our end,
like even the dazzling plumage of the zacuan bird,
that precious bird with a neck of sheen.

Think hard about it, my lords!
Think hard you, eagles and tigers.
Even if you were made of jade,
even if you were made of gold,
still you would have to go to the land of the dead.
We have got to go: we must disappear.
No one can remain!

*This is one of a series of poems written by the prince, originally in a Nahuatlac dialect, and later translated into Spanish by his descendant, the historian Ixtlilxochitl.
Free translation into English by Robert W Torrance and Carolina Larraín.*



Luis Izquierdo
(1928-1992).