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TO
PROFESSOR MAX CRAWFORD
AND TO
JOHN

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Antipodean Australia can seem very remote from Mesoamerica and the centres of Aztec studies to the north. But as I sit at my typewriter facing south towards the penguins, I comfort myself that distance too has its advantages. At least it gives a long perspective.

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Literary Material and Illustrations

Color illustrations: New Fire Ceremony; a page from a *tonalamatl*; Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca; the festival of Ochpaniztli; Tlazolteotl giving birth: From the Codex Borbonicus, by courtesy of Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt: Codices Selecti (Series C, Mesoamerican Manuscript), Vol. 44, Complete true-colour facsimile edition, and the Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale Française, Paris. Feathered headdress: By courtesy of the Museum für Volkerkunde, Vienna. Warrior costumes: From Codex Mendoza, by courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The 'Milk Tree': From Vaticanus Latinus 3738 (Codex Vaticanus A., 'Rios'), photograph Biblioteca Vaticana, by courtesy of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome. Coatlicue; Coyolxauhqui Relief, Templo Mayor Project: By courtesy INAH.-CNCA.-MEX., Mexico. Seated Xipe Totec: By courtesy of the Museum für Volkerkunde und Schweizerisches Museum für Volkskunde, Basel. The red Xipe Totec: Courtesy of F. Hébert-Stevens and Claude Arthaud.

Black and white illustrations: The Spanish view of ritual killings: Codex Magliabechiano, by courtesy of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence. 'Tira de la peregrinación': By courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City. The Eagle Man flies upwards: Malinalco Drum, by courtesy of INAH.-CNCA.-MEX., Mexico. 'The Face of Battle', Tlazolteotl giving birth: By courtesy of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, Washington, D.C. Aragonite squash; granite rattlesnake: By courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London. Quetzalcoatl figure: Upright Feathered Serpent: By courtesy of the Museum für Volkerkunde, Vienna. Red porphyry Quetzalcoatl: By courtesy of the Musée de l'Homme, Paris. Deerskin screenfold: By courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the National Museums and

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Galleries on Merseyside. The Spanish penetrate the main temple precinct of Tenochtitlan: Lienzo de Tlaxcala, by courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

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NOTE ON NAHUATL

The Aztecs, or more properly the ‘Culhua Mexica’, together with most of the peoples of Central Mexico, spoke the language called Nahuatl. Names of places and persons as written here will no more than approximate complex Nahuatl sounds. Readers will notice variations in spellings between different scholars cited, but the variations are minor, and ought not impede understanding. I will call the ruler of Tenochtitlan ‘Moctezoma’, a most imperfect but recognizable approximation of the Nahuatl pronunciation. Nahuatl words will be italicized only for their first appearance. The accent, which commonly falls on the second-to-last syllable, will not be marked. Pluralizations will not follow Nahuatl practice, but our own.

The basic pronunciation rules are simple. Each vowel is given its full value. Single consonants have approximately the same values as in English, for example, as in ‘Cihuacoatl’, excepting the following:

b is pronounced *bw* as in ‘Huitzilopochtli’

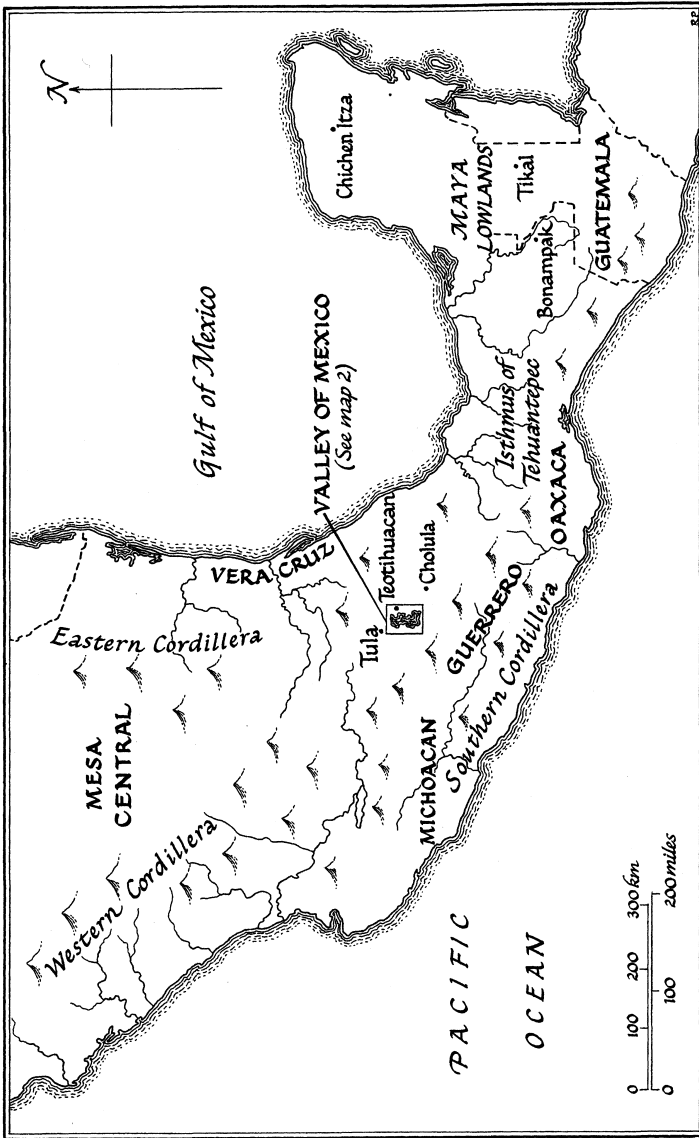
qua, *quo* is pronounced *kw* as in ‘Etzalqualiztli’

que, *qui* is pronounced *k*, as in ‘Quetzalcoatl’, ‘Panquetzaliztli’,
 ‘Coyolxauq(h)ui’

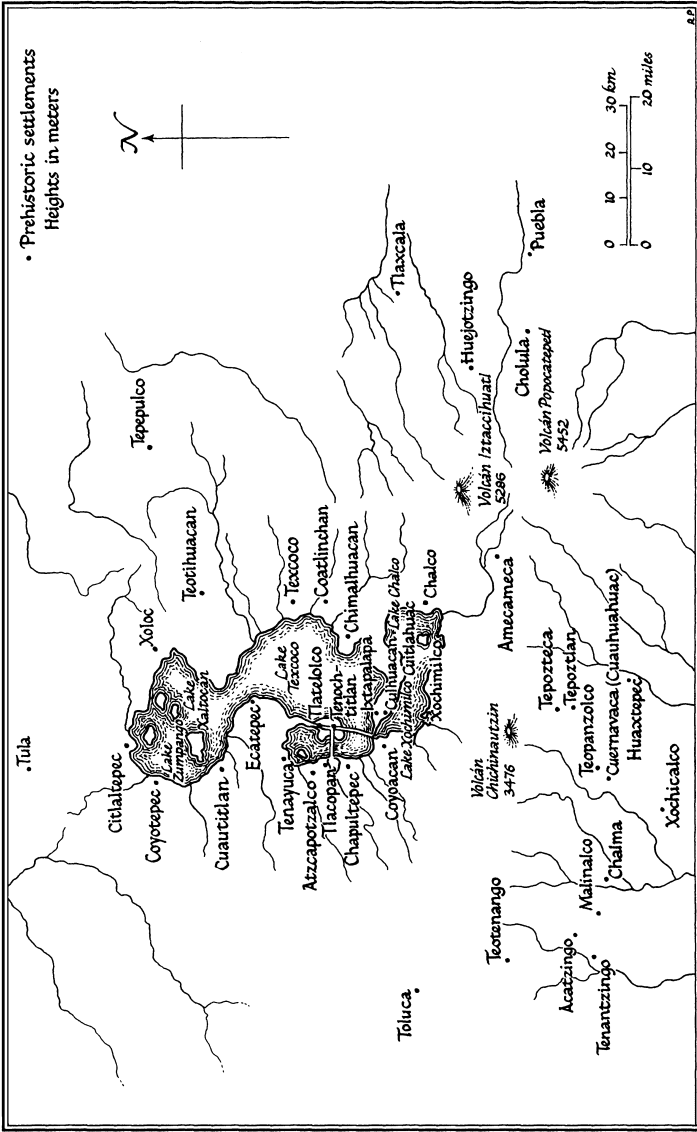
tl is pronounced like the English ‘atlas’, as in ‘Tlaxcala’, ‘Tlaloc’,
 ‘Tlatelolco’

x is pronounced *sh*, as in ‘Xipe Totec’, ‘Coyolxauqhui’, ‘Xilonen’

z is pronounced *s* as in ‘sat’.



MAP I. Mexico.



MAP 2. Valley of Mexico.

The ancient masters were subtle, mysterious, profound,
responsive.

The depth of their knowledge is unfathomable.
Because it is unfathomable,
All we can do is describe their appearance.

Watchful, like men crossing a winter stream.
Alert, like men aware of danger.
Yielding, like ice about to melt.
Simple, like uncarved blocks of wood.
Hollow, like caves.
Opaque, like muddy pools.

Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?

Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*