

major from the capital, but he was also an astute critic of a supposed free-trade agreement that would make the poor even poorer while putting still more money into the hands of Mexico's tiny ruling class, as NAFTA surely has.

The tragedy of Mexico, as Boris Pasternak said of Russia, is in the end her accursed capacity for suffering: With a few exceptions, her people have allowed themselves to be robbed, exploited, expropriated, misled, and misgoverned for generation after generation. Mexico, of course, is not alone; the same might be said of our own country, if one were to put a sharp point on it. But, as Octavio Paz pondered in his still-essential *Labyrinth of Solitude*, Mexico's capacity is deepened by a unique brand of fatalism, one that seems to accept without complaint—but with plenty of jokes and ballads—the fact that the people are lambs, and the rulers and their circle, wolves, and that this is not just the way things are but the way things must be.

There is another proposition hidden in that fatalism, and that is the idea that it is better to shrug one's shoulders and leave rather than stand one's ground and fight. Subcomandante Marcos's calls to arms notwithstanding, the rural dispossessed of Mexico have long looked to the north as a place of refuge and possibility, and it is to the north that they have gone. Just so, their dispossessors have long looked to the United States as a sort of pressure-release valve for social tensions, as a dumping ground for unwanted *campesinos* and excess urban labor; when times are hard, it has proved expedient for the privileged to

let the landless and jobless head north to look for work landscaping in Los Angeles or washing dishes in Boston, remitting paychecks home, a good deal for all concerned except for the workers, most of whom surely would have preferred to stay put.

The tragedy of Mexico is that a political and economic system that reflects the people's industriousness and capacity for thoughtful, careful work—look to any one of countless indigenous arts and shade-tree labors, from silversmithing to auto repair to music to cooking, for examples—has never been put into place. Properly channeled, the energies of the nation's people, and notably of those of her people who have had to leave to work elsewhere, could make of Mexico an economic powerhouse of international significance. Properly channeled, those energies would make Guadalajara a city to rival Barcelona, the Federal District a New World rejoinder to Shanghai, Tokyo, or even London.

Poor Mexico, said onetime ruler Porfirio Diaz a century ago—so far from God and so close to the United States. The tragedy of Mexico is that she is not rich, though she should be, and that she does not lead, though she should do so. The tragedy is that she is not free, least of all her market. The tragedy is that, having suffered so much for so long, she patiently awaits more suffering. But the greatest tragedy is that, as with so much of the world, her body lies not so close to the United States, but so far from her soul. ◊

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## Passage: After Seeing a Photograph of the Himalayas

by Stella Nesanovich

Ridges of blue companions to clouds,  
Mountains smoked with white mists,  
Juxtaposition of earth and thin body:  
Transient flesh prey to gravity's pull.

In the photograph of Posang Pass, against  
The foothills of the world's highest places,  
My friend is dwarfed and changed.

How did she come to this passage?  
What prayers did she offer this morning,  
What blessings request for the day's trek?

Though my journey was pilgrimage  
Played on local stages, I too heard the soul's  
Voice, learned its language and call.

Still, the small figure beckons from  
Mysteries older than language,  
Rising before we named them  
Annapurna, Chomolungma, Himal Ganesh.

## Immigration and the American Future

# IMMIGRATION AND THE American FUTURE

EDITED BY CHILTON WILLIAMSON, JR.

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"Can immigration be expected to change America for better, or for worse? If we accept at face value President George W. Bush's claim that terrorism represents the gravest threat to America, as indeed it may, then we must ask ourselves whether terrorism, by itself, is capable either of obliterating the United States as—say—Rome eradicated Carthage from the map of North Africa, or of destroying it by effectively replacing the existing nation on what historically has been American soil with another and different nation. If the answer is "No," then we must agree that the terrorist threat is in fact a subset of the immigration one—and that **mass immigration is a greater threat to the survival of our country than any terrorist campaign possibly could be.** Which, it seems to me, is saying a very great deal about the dangers posed to the United States by mass immigration."

—From the Foreword, by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

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**Family Gathering**  
*by Stella Nesanovich*

**Julian of Norwich, age 8, 1350**

I joke with my brothers and sisters,  
“We are a wool-gathering family.”  
They smile while shearing our sheep.  
We are blessed, I say, lest they think

I complain and fret. The rivers Yare  
And Wensum give us fish to trade at market,  
Blocks of herrings to choose for supper,  
And these small beasts to keep us in clothing.

We sleep not on straw but soft-spun wool.  
Now I am to travel to Carrow Abbey,  
Where the nuns will continue my study  
Of Latin and the saints, as I pleaded,

Tugging so often on father’s sleeve.  
Surely I was a nuisance. Yet my eagerness  
Will yield to penance on a bed of rough husks,  
And I will miss the scent of lanolin

On my fingers, the matted curls of sheep.  
No black snouts and buff faces to greet  
On strolls, nor kindly eyes to mirror  
The humble Lamb, our Lord and Savior.

“God is our clothing,” Friar John has said.  
“He wraps about us like a cloak, clasps  
And encloses us in His mantle” —  
A pledge of love for all of His sheep.