

Status of Culture Depicts with Immigration in Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain*

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Abstract

Cultural studies are depends upon the behavior, belief and practice of cultural boundaries. It is differ from culture to culture. This paper analyses the cultural behavior that is depended upon the race, class, age and social responsibilities. Cultural studies represents through the novel "The Tortilla Curtain" (1995) was written by T.C. Boyle. He was the American author of symbolism and unity of thought elaborated the novel in masterpiece of his writings. It depicts the culture and immigration of the protagonist Candido and his wife America. The style of writing is simple and the characterization is fabulous to describe them. This paper intends exploring the cultural status and majority of high to suppress the minority.

Keywords: *cultural studies, immigration, suppression of minority, the tortilla curtain, Boyle*

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Introduction

American literature was primarily shaped by the group of colonies that produced the body of written works in the English language in the United States. In nineteenth century, the successful rebellion against the motherland called the United States of America (USA), expanded southward to Gulf of Mexico. Noticeably, the USA emerged as a powerful country among other nations by the end of nineteenth century. The beginning of the nineteenth century paved the way for the theological system called Unitarianism which had replaced Calvinism. The contemporary American writers imitated picaresque structure of black humor and the necessity of 'being human'. They are rejected the 'wasteland outlook' that he associated with the modernism.

They are more focused on the spiritual vision deciphered from Judaism and Transcendentalism. The twentieth century onwards, authors are constructed the culture and cultural behavior in society. This paper addresses the cultural deviation through society representing the novel "*The tortilla curtain*" (1995) written by T.C. Boyle. American novelist and short story writer, Thomas Coraghessan Boyle also known as T.C. Boyle was born on December 2, 1948. His name was Thomas John Boyle, but he changed his middle name to Coraghessan in the age of 17 because of his ancestors. He received his BA English from University of New York and his PhD from University of Iowa. He was published sixteen novels and hundreds of short stories in the mid 1970s. In his third novel, '*World's End*' won the PEN/Faulkner award in 1988. His themes are related to the humor, satire and magical realism. Many of the Boyle's novels and short stories depicted the baby boom generation and their appetites, joys and addictions.

His fiction also explores the nature and the toll human society which is addicted to the environment. His novels were '*World's End*' (1987), '*The Road to Wellville*' (1993) and '*The Tortilla Curtain*' (1995) explores the multi cultural elements along with the environment. This paper focused about the novel '*The Tortilla Curtain*' (1995), it was the winner of France's Prix Medicis Etranger. This award was given for an author whose fame does not yet match his talent. The award goes to work fiction in the French language. His short story collections are '*Descent of Man*' (1979), '*Greasy Lake*' (1985), '*If the river was Whisky*' (1989) and '*Without a Hero*' (1994). His short stories are published in the American magazines, they are 'the New Yorker' and 'the Atlantic Monthly' and 'Playboy' and also in radio shows.

This paper analyses the cultural studies from the novel '*The Tortilla Curtain*' (1995) written by T.C. Boyle. This novel also explores the theme about middle class

values, illegal immigration, poverty and environmental destruction. The background sets up the two countries which are America and Mexico. These two countries depicted the view of cross culture and biculturalism. The definition of biculturalism is the discourse concerning about cultural interactivity and also known as cross culturalism. It may be transferred into multi culturalism and transculturalism. This novel analyses the cultural interaction between the two contemporary Mexican and American Experience.

T.C.Boyle's sixth novel, '*The Tortilla Curtain*' (1995) addresses the clash of cultures in between Mexico and America. The title 'Curtain' refers the border that was separating the Southern California and Mexico, which Mexican immigrants cross illegally in search of work. The protagonists are Candido Rincon as Mexican and Delaney Mossbacher as an American people. Candido Rincon is a Mexican immigrants, he was illegally entered to America. Delaney is an American Citizen, he lived his life in luxurious. This story takes place in the Los Angeles and that time United States was famous for wealth and Mexican population.

Tortilla Curtain is a story of the intersection of two couples from utterly different backgrounds. The first couple is rich, white and privileged who 'care' about the environment and mistreatment of animals but have a complete disregard for illegal immigrants. The second is a homeless Mexican couple who are in a struggle to make follow their American Dreams. The Mexican protagonist Candido Rincon and his wife America, she is pregnant in the age of seventeen year. They are homeless and then they try to make his life as a better one in USA. At the same time, the American protagonist Delaney and his wife Kyra lived their life in wealthy and enjoyed a privileged life in an exclusion gated community called Arroyo Blanco.

These two characters are parallel in the theme which is poverty and wealthy. Candido and America was surviving their life in camp that was located in nearby Delaney house. Delaney's wives Kyra are strongly against the illegal immigration from Mexico. This kind of attitude shown in the scene when one of their dogs killed by a Coyote, an emotional point of the novel that reveals the foolishness and fragility of this out of touch Angeleno couple. He explained the coyote, "one coyote, who makes his living on the fringes of my community, has learned to simply chew his way through the plastic irrigation pipes whenever he wants to drink." (*The tortilla curtain*, p 212).

These kinds of pliability and hardiness, Candido were lived in the shack hidden by nature. Simultaneously, Delaney and Kyra were removed from their 'real world'.

These two couples intertwined by accident, Delaney accidentally injure Candido hitting him while driving. Delaney thinks that “He tried to reduce it to abstract terms, an accident in a world of accidents, the collision of opposing forces...” (*The tortilla curtain*) he narrates his thoughts as he hit the man like a “feral animal”. After that incident, Candido is unable to work. The Mexican people are slave in American Country. While Delaney hit the Candido, he described his appearance that,

“Red – flecked eyes, the rectus of the mouth, the rotten teeth and incongruous shock of gray in the heavy black brush of the mustache” (*The Tortilla Curtain*).

Candido is not taking any action for accident. Delaney was not involved any problems, so he gave twenty dollars to Candido. Candido accepted his money because of his survival. But this incident cause Delaney’s life in misery. Delaney’s wife Kyra was a workaholic real estate agent, she loves property values and she will do anything for that property. These couples are causing trouble for their neighborhood.

Candido has taken this incident as a good one to threaten Delaney. He threatens the Delaney to set fire to their Arroyo Blanco. Those walls are totally damaged and their home also got fire. Simultaneously, Candido’s wife America delivers her baby but the baby was affected because of sexually transmitted disease. The story ends in a tragic moment. The final moments of the story, the characters Delaney, Candido, America and Kyra all are swept away by a river nearby Canyon. But all are escaped from the river but they lose America’s baby. This powerful novel ends with the powerful one that is river. River is the powerful energy in this world. It will swallow all things and also their pride, race, untouchability in their soul.

This novel ‘*The Tortilla Curtain*’ (1995) is divided into three parts and the parts divided into eight chapters. Chapter one of this novel, the characters are introduced and they are lived in different life like poor (Candido and America) and rich (Delaney and Kyra), high class and low class and racism. Chapter two introduces the life style of the characters that Candido and America both are lived as an animal meanwhile, Delaney and Kyra are lived as nature lovers. In this chapter, Candido was injured by car accident that he cannot go to work. America was pregnant and she goes to work for her husband’s illness. But Candido was very shameful because of his wife’s attitude. Simultaneously, Delaney was straight forward person that his wife wants to do anything for household responsibilities. This is the scene we understand that the characters are come from different cultures and their perspectives are different.

This novel analyses the socio economic problems arising in the Mexican and American society. Americans are addressed as valueless because of the car accident. They are demonstrated that their only peace of mind is money and also Mexicans are demonstrated as slave and they sell themselves cheaply for money. The themes are explored the socio economic and political oriented. The most important theme is immigration issue in United States. Mexican people are lived as a slave and they worked blue collar jobs. The author T.C. Boyle satirically explores the physical barriers of the Mexican people. Boyle draws two contrasting characters who meet through a random event, when a wealthy white liberal, Delaney Mossbacher, accidentally hits with his car a poor working-class Mexican American, Candido Rincon.

Although the two live in almost contiguous neighborhoods, class, race, citizenship, and a highway separate them. For his silence, Delaney offers a few dollars to Candido, who does not want to involve the police because he is undocumented. This is evidenced in this quote that, “everyone deserves a chance immigrants are the lifeblood of this country” (*The tortilla curtain, p101*). As he quoted this scene as “chewing up resources of the planet like locusts” (*The tortilla curtain, p 82*) and the contempt and atrocity of racists is shown in Delaney when he hits Candido with his car and pays off a bloody \$20 bill” (*The tortilla curtain, p.13*).

This chance encounter sets in motion a series of further coincidences that highlight the contrasts between them. Without documents and lacking money, Candido and his pregnant wife are homeless and cannot even buy food, while Delaney and his wife occupy a well-appointed condo in a new development.

The author uses the unique kind of subject to satire the society. He used multi cultural urban world to emphasize the characters. The novel is sometimes seen as a hollow mockery rather than a meaningful satire. The characters “Candido and America” is represented by American musical group “*Eddie from Ohio’s song*”. It was American folk style song that the author used to explore the character. The novel ‘*The tortilla curtain*’ (1995) represents the conflict between culture and value. The antagonists this time are illegal immigrants from Mexico and well-heeled Southern California suburbanites, though the antagonism is mostly biased, with the middle-class whites fearing that the invasion from the south is growing out of control. Another divergence occurs with nature, much less easy to operate and rationalize than human endeavors. Here Boyle combines the dilemma of the impoverished, materialism, racism, and natural forces to erect a deliberately didactic message. Candido felt that the sense of despair in their lives. He says that “Sometimes we felt

like we were getting somewhere, but the truth was, like most people, we were just marking time". (*The tortilla curtain*).

The author T.C. Boyle's style of writing is intertwined the characters and unity of thought is the masterpiece for his successful writing. The wall is a symbol for separation between American and Mexican immigrants. This kind of separation is keeping the cultures apart. The characteristic of cultural behavior is depending on the situations occurring by the characters. Cultures are social behavior how they treat the people in society. Culture is not an innate ability and it learned from society, and then it is cultivated to next generation. It is known as "Enculturation". In this novel, author uses many symbols to represent their characters because of culture variation. Candido uses the poor cultural behavior it is avoided by the middle class people. The most important symbolic feature is 'language', which is separated the cultures in high and low class. The comparison of Indian novel "*Jasmine*" is written by Bharati Mukherjee. The character Jasmine is trying to adapt the American life to be a survivor. Mukherjee was experienced the displacement and dislocation in her life. It helps the character as immigrant experience of the novel. This novel "*Jasmine*" adapts the different culture and behavior.

Like wise "*The tortilla curtain*" (1995), author depicts the multi culturalism and cultural behavior and enculturation through the different aspects of race, class and social responsibilities. Mexican Immigration is a cultural behavior, author followed by environment. The society strictly leads the people in low class culture and it leads many struggles. Culture is the prominent theme it was make the character of a society.

In conclusion, Boyle admits that the characters as struggle and survival of the society. Multi culturalism is an international like (India, china and America and Mexico). It leads many customs and fences to the people which they are struggle to survive in the society. In cross culture system that the characters are work together and they understand the perspectives of problems. On the other hand, the demerits of cross culture are that minority of low class people was suffered because of majority in high class people. It may occur many language problems, dress code and cultural behavior in society.

This paper addresses the cultural deviations and cultural behavior through the characters Candido and Delaney. Both the characters are survived their life style because of money. But Candido was lived his life as a slave and he forgot his cultural behavior because of immigration. It suppressed the character to make robbery

and steal money and food for his survival. Meanwhile, Delaney has the cultural behavior which he takes his life as responsible and materialistic one.

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