

**‘AIN’T NO FRIEND OF MINE’: IMMIGRATION POLICY,
THE GATED COMMUNITY, AND THE PROBLEM
WITH THE DISPOSABLE WORKER IN T.C. BOYLE’S
*TORTILLA CURTAIN***

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T.C. Boyle’s novel, *Tortilla Curtain* (1995) begins with an epigraph from John Steinbeck’s novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939): “They ain’t human. . . a human being couldn’t stand it to be so dirty and miserable.” On the one hand, the epigraph is obviously fitting: Boyle’s novel, like Steinbeck’s, is concerned with a migrant worker who comes to California in search of the opportunity to earn for himself and his family a meager portion of the American Dream (Cándido Rincón has come with his pregnant wife, América, recalling Steinbeck’s luckless heroine, Rose of Sharon). On the other hand, Boyle’s allusion to *The Grapes of Wrath* and the Joads is deeply ironic. The Great Depression, which made itinerant workers out of American families such as the Joads, also marked a time in American history that Mexican immigrants like Boyle’s Cándido were decidedly unwelcome since they were considered contributors to the country’s economic woes; as many as 750,000 Mexicans and their American-born children either voluntarily repatriated or were involuntarily deported during the 1930s (Waters and Ueda 508).

America’s immigration policy in general has been erratic to say the least, shaped as it has been by shifting political concerns and varying attitudes towards race and ethnicity. Yet an examination of the history of Mexican immigration in particular reveals a somewhat different picture. Though this immigration policy has also been wildly inconsistent, the logic behind it has been unswerving: it has been determined exclusively by economic interests. Thus, depending on the vicissitudes of the economy, Mexican workers have variously been considered pests who steal jobs, bring crime, and drain tax dollars from deserving Americans or as hard-working immigrants who have provided necessary agricultural, industrial, and domestic labor. In his book *Mexifornia: A State of Becoming* (2003), Victor Davis Hanson

blithely calls Mexican immigrants “human cargo” (10). According to our needs, this “human cargo” can be transported from one side of the border to the next. This sentiment was first formalized into public policy in the Dillingham Commission’s 42-page report, completed in 1911, which concluded that “Mexicans were desirable as workers, but not as citizens” (cited in Cardenas). To be sure: a scant few years after the expulsion of Mexicans during the Depression, the huge vacuum in agricultural labor during World War II (thanks not only to the deployment of troops but to the removal and incarceration of the Japanese) gave birth to the “Bracero” program in which the U.S. government formed an agreement with the Mexican government to import temporary laborers. By the time the program ceased in 1964, some 5 million Braceros had entered the U.S. as temporary workers (Waters and Ueda 508).

As Boyle’s novel *The Tortilla Curtain* further illustrates, this same logic of expedience defines the gated community, especially prevalent in California but spreading across the nation, which depends on immigrant labor at the same time that it seeks to exclude these people from its borders. The gated community embodies in miniature the nation’s schizophrenic relationship with its undocumented immigrants since homeowner associations typically hire immigrants to maintain shared amenities such as pools, tennis courts, and playgrounds and individual homeowners require personal gardeners, house-cleaners, and nannies. Boyle depicts the members of the gated community in his novel, fittingly called Arroyo Blanco (“White Stream”), hiring illegal immigrants to polish their brass, clean their houses, and even build the wall that is meant to keep them out, all for wages so low as to be exploitative. Yet these same citizens balk at the labor exchange located at the bottom of the hill below their subdivision, since, as one character puts it, “I resent having to wade through them all every time I go to the post office. No offense, but it’s beginning to look like fucking Guadalajara or something down there” (192). Though this flagrant hypocrisy may seem to be part and parcel of Boyle’s broad, biting satire, it is sadly an accurate portrait of the attitudes shared among members of such communities.

In an ethnographic study of a gated community in Irvine, California, “Borders and Social Distinction in the Global Suburb,” Kristin Hill Maher points out that in Orange County, services provided by Latino immigrants account for the fastest growing sector of the economy (283). Yet despite the interdependence of these two populations, the residents of affluent communities install gates and guards to insure that the workers with whom they entrust the care of their homes, their children, and their elderly parents, are effectively barred from

entering when their work is done. With her study of a gated community of 246 homes she calls "Ridgewood," Maher asks the same question that Boyle's novel, *Tortilla Curtain*, likewise poses: "Is there potential for pluralist integration across divisions of class, race, and migrant status, or do new patterns of segregation emerge?" (284). Apparently, segregation reigns. Maher notes that in Ridgewood and all of Orange County, wealthy white homeowners and poor migrant workers are utterly dependent upon each other, yet they live as separately as if the Rio Grande still divided them (287-288). Maher further illuminates the paradoxical relationship between these two groups: though these homeowners feel secure enough to hire Latinos to care for their children and their aging parents and to clean their homes, inside and out, they have actively fought to install a gate and a wall in order to protect themselves from crime. Yet Maher argues that such "crime talk" is not based in reality. For instance, throughout the 1990s, the FBI designated Irvine as one of the "safest cities in the country" (285) and both local law enforcement and community leaders have acknowledged that the negligible crime rate is largely perpetrated by local teens (289).

As Maher asserts and we shall see, the impetus for such determined segregation is driven by the desire to protect personal wealth and property values. The gates and walls function symbolically to maintain the class distinctions that determine the neighborhood's perceived prestige. Just as American policy toward Mexican immigration is driven by economic interests, so, too, the relationship between residents of gated communities and the immigrants they employ is similarly dictated by economic interest. It is precisely this dynamic that Boyle critiques in his novel, and which informs my own argument that such unjustified, anxiety-ridden "crime talk" is meant to mask these residents' desire to render such workers invisible. The residents of such communities or "Common Interest Developments" (CIDs) depend upon the Latino labor that sustain them to disappear when their work is done, and it is conveniently in the best interest of undocumented workers to operate "under the radar." Maher notes that in Ridgewood, "Gardeners stayed close to their trucks and tools. Childcare providers were generally visible only when in the company of their employers' children. Housekeepers were rarely visible." Indeed, the only point during which workers became visible was at the end of their work day, when day laborers made a mass exodus for the bus stop that would transport them out of sight and out of mind until the next morning (288-289).

Until recently, the system has worked reasonably well for residents of such communities. The problem now, as one resident of

Boyle's Arroyo Blanco articulates it, is that "there's just so many of them, they've overwhelmed us, the schools, welfare, the prisons, and now the streets" (185). In other words, the invisible have become inconveniently visible. As Maher points out, in a liberal society where it is no longer legally or socially acceptable to discriminate based on race, it is still permissible to discriminate based on legal status (306). When Boyle's self-proclaimed "liberal humanist" protagonist Delaney hits the unemployed Cándido with his car, his watered-down concern immediately turns to rage when he assumes that his victim must be camping illegally in the canyon below and thinks to himself, "it was people like this Mexican or whatever he was who were responsible, thoughtless people, stupid people, people who wanted to turn the whole world into a garbage dump, a little Tijuana" (11). He self-righteously sends Cándido on his way with nothing more than a twenty-dollar bill, later justifying his behavior to his wife: "I told you, he was *Mexican*" (15). Delaney's crass, cruel dismissal of Cándido and his conflation of his victim's ethnicity with his legal status suggest what is often hidden: Delaney only manages to get away with his crime easily and cheaply because his victim happens to be Mexican, not white. Thus, he quite literally dispenses with Cándido.

In a similar vein, the assumption that workers doing "immigrant" labor are illegal whether they are or not legitimates our determination that they have become a burden on our school and healthcare systems, a bottomless drain of our tax dollars, and must be sent back whence they came. Thus, I further argue that the Common Interest Development or gated community, like the United States' erratic immigration policy, depends upon a labor force that is disposable in order to preserve its false sense of itself as a democratic community, which can be defined as a group that allows for a broadly shared opportunity to participate, a broadly felt responsibility for its members, and a genuine sense of belonging. The construction of gates and walls and the formation of private homeowners' associations effectively insure that although gardeners, housekeepers, nannies, and elder-caregivers may live nearby and oftentimes *live-in*, they are not really members of the community.

Both locally and globally, in other words, Americans have regarded their neighbors not as neighbors, but as mere disposable commodities. In an article entitled "The Figure of the Neighbor: Los Angeles Past and Future," Dana Cuff asserts that the neighbor is a "mediation between self and other: one must be one to have one" (62). The Self, in this sense, cannot exist without the Other. The willful disposal of our neighbor is nothing less than the willing sacrifice of our own humanity.

When Worlds Collide: Suburban Nation Meets Immigration Nation

Since the official end of the Bracero program in 1964, the Mexican population has increased steadily, from about 4.5 million in 1970 to over 25 million in 2005 (Waters and Ueda 509), and the debate over immigration has reached a fever pitch. The headline on the cover of a recent issue of the *New York Times Magazine* describes well the current state of the debate: "All Immigration Politics is Local" (August 5, 2007). While the immigration issue may dominate debate on the floor of the Senate and the House and stir up anger over the hiring practices at Walmart, the issue is most dramatically on display in our neighborhoods and towns, where the very definition of community is at stake.

When one considers that the majority of Americans now live in the suburbs, it should come as no surprise that the battle over immigration is being waged not in the city but in the nation's suburbs. The 2000 census data indicates that immigrants are now bypassing the central cities and moving directly to the suburbs; more than half of the nation's Latino immigrants now live in the suburbs, having followed the jobs created by the suburban population explosion of the last thirty years, filling low-paying service jobs in lawn care, housecleaning, child and elderly care, etc. (Berube and Kneebone).

In other words, the notion of the suburbs as belonging exclusively to the white middle class no longer applies. Maher's label for these former bedroom communities, "global suburb," is apt indeed. The rapid influx of immigrants to the suburbs is captured well by Boyle in *Tortilla Curtain* when his protagonist, Delaney, suddenly, inconveniently attuned thanks to his collision with the luckless Cándido, notes with wonder that "they were everywhere, these men, ubiquitous, . . . whether it be mopping up the floors at McDonald's, inverting trash cans in the alley out back or Emilio's, or moving purposively behind the rake and blowers that combed the pristine lawns of Arroyo Blanco Estates twice a week. Where had they all come from? What did they all want?" (12). Of course, the reader, if not Delaney himself, recognizes that he has answered his own question: they want work, and have for the most part found it by taking on the tasks of keeping the lawns, households, restaurants, and shops "pristine" for his—and his neighbors'—satisfaction. As Maher further argues, pristine lawns aside, the response to such diversity has been less than welcoming, and in *Tortilla Curtain*, T.C. Boyle chronicles an increasingly typical reaction to these new demographics: the gated community.

The gated community is the unfortunate, logical conclusion of

suburbanization, middle-class fear and resentment, and so-called White Flight. Not surprisingly, the states where gated communities first took root, California and Florida, are also those where foreign immigration has been the highest (Blakely and Snyder 152). As Boyle's protagonist Delaney admits, "The Salvadorans, the Mexicans, the blacks, the gangbangers and taggers and carjackers they read about in the Metro section over their bran toast and coffee. That's why they'd abandoned the flatlands of the Valley and the hills of the Westside to live up here, outside the city limits, in the midst of all this scenic splendor" (39). Boyle captures the ethos of the gated community. In their book, *Fortress America* (1999), Edward Blakely and Mary Snyder note that in Los Angeles, for instance, a resident of the exclusive Brentwood Circle neighborhood described why residents felt it was necessary to privatize their streets, gate their neighborhood, and install a 24-hour guard: "The guards and the gate will keep out the riffraff" (Blakely and Snyder 110). The gated community represents the last frontier for white suburbia.

While white exclusivity in the suburbs was once all but guaranteed with race-restrictive lending practices,¹ the Supreme Court ruling in 1948 outlawed racially restrictive covenants. Thus, homeowner associations quickly learned to rely on covenants that targeted specific behaviors in order to exclude people of color and to protect their all-important property values. Ironically, this approach may have grown out of a proposal from Robert Weaver, the first African American to hold a cabinet position, who suggested replacing restrictive racial covenants with those that targeted instead certain objectionable practices in order to preserve property values (McKenzie 77). As Evan McKenzie points out in *Privatopia* (1994), developers and homeowner associations latched onto Weaver's idea as the next best thing to racially restrictive covenants, and have practiced this underhanded mode of racial discrimination ever since (77). To be sure, Gated communities rely not merely on gates but on restrictive covenants or CC & R's (Codes, Covenants, and Regulations) to maintain class distinctions. Boyle's depiction of Arroyo Blanco Estates, an eerily

¹ Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton argue in *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Boston: Harvard UP, 1993) that the homogeneity of suburban populations was originally the result of the extent to which nonwhites were denied access to the means of suburban home purchase. Taking its cue from the earlier Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC), the FHA maintained the practice of "redlining," a color-coded ratings system that evaluated the risks associated with loans made to specific urban neighborhoods. Those central-city neighborhoods that were racially and ethnically mixed were color-coded red and virtually never received loans (51-54).

vacuum-sealed upper-middle-class subdivision, is scathing but all too accurate. It is

a private community, comprising a golf course, ten tennis courts, a community center and some two hundred and fifty homes, each set on one-point-five acres and strictly conforming to the covenants, conditions, and restrictions set forth in the 1973 articles of incorporation. The houses were all of the Spanish Mission style, painted in one of three prescribed shades of white, with orange tile roofs. (30)

In other words, if you live in Arroyo Blanco Estates, you are either White, White, or White. Difference is simply not tolerated. As much of an exaggeration as this may seem, if anything, the “real-life” gated community that Maher describes is even more restrictive. Among the formal and informal rules and regulations meant to distinguish Ridgewood from lower class, non-white neighborhoods: residents cannot hang laundry nor can they park pick-up trucks that they use for business on the streets. Residents consciously opted not to relegate space for a basketball court since, according to one resident, basketball courts “would attract unsavory people from other places,” laying bare the racial subtext to their decision (296).

Paradoxically, the same “unsavory” “riffraff” that these residents seek to exclude with gates, guards, and CC & Rs have the power to confer status when working in the service of these residents. Maher notes that as long as these workers’ status was immediately “legible,” residents looked upon these workers favorably since they contributed to the community’s “aesthetics of prestige” (298). Residents of Maher’s Ridgewood noted that such workers were “hard-working, sweet people” who only “want a better life for themselves” (297).

Yet it is also clear that such positive sentiments were dependent upon their clear “legibility” as service workers. As long as they were operating a lawn mower or accompanying their “charges” to the community pool, these workers were welcome. When Maher interviewed several residents about their feelings concerning live-in workers using the community facilities during their time off and without their “charges” and perhaps with family members of their own living outside the community, the residents were clearly discomfited. One resident allowed that “[i]t wouldn’t bother me personally, unless people were getting out of hand. Or—now this isn’t very nice—but unless it was attracting some sort of riffraff into the community” (300). Conveniently for these concerned residents, live-in workers, though technically residents, were not inclined to step over the invisible boundaries drawn for them. A Ridgewood resident acknowledges that the live-in workers in the neighborhood are “probably better about not abusing [the use of common facilities] than some of the residents that used to

[live here]. . . legal residents that aren't here anymore . . . they have much more respect for the whole system" (299). "The whole system," as this woman implicitly defines it, is one that assumes that these live-in workers, who are technically residents, nevertheless should not enjoy the same privileges as "legal residents." Another resident spells out the formula that has come to work so well for the residents: "Because most of the workers here are very illegal, they don't want to attract a lot of attention anyway, I don't think" (300).

While the battle over immigration across the country, such as that being waged in Carpentersville, Illinois, in which town counsel members are seeking to make English the official language (Kotlowitz), ostensibly rests on Hispanics' 'refusal' to properly assimilate, U.S. immigration policy toward Mexico has depended on these workers' willingness *not* to assimilate, to do the work that aspiring Americans will not. This same logic is at work in communities like Ridgewood, where residents depend on their labor force to recognize their place as outsiders, unentitled to the privileges of those who belong. Research indicates that the gates around affluent communities work literally and symbolically to isolate the poor from meaningful contact with the individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society, making it that much more difficult for those looking to improve their situation by entering the job network (Blakely and Snyder 153). These communities maintain their supply of inexpensive labor by curtailing their advancement.

Boyle exposes the flagrant hypocrisy of such thinking in his novel: the residents of Boyle's Arroyo Blanco "tolerate" a labor exchange at the 7-11 convenience store at the bottom of their development; here, the residents and their contractors hire help for cleaning, yard work, construction projects and any other work they want done cheaply. However, when the exchange grows too crowded, Kyra, Delaney's wife, determines that such unsightliness will surely affect the development's property values and moves promptly to shut it down. The beauty of disposable labor is just that: when they are no longer convenient, they can be disposed of like so many of the goods purchased at the 7-11 convenience store.

What's Mine is Mine: The Privatization of "Community"

T.C. Boyle wrote *Tortilla Curtain* in the wake of California's passage in 1994 (by a full 60 percent of voters) of Proposition 187, a bill—ultimately deemed unconstitutional—intended to deny medical care, schooling, and other services from illegal immigrants and their children" (Mailman 3). Boyle captures the national mood, especially

prevalent in California, through Delaney's neighbor Jack Jardine, who rails, "The ones coming in through the Tortilla Curtain down there, those are the ones that are killing us. They're peasants, my friend. No education, no resources, no skills. . . The illegals in San Diego County contributed seventy million in tax revenues and at the same time, they used up two hundred and forty million in services—welfare, emergency care, schooling and the like. You want to pay for that? And for the crime that comes with it?" (101-102).

Whether discussing immigration policy or the decision to gate a community, both are dictated by the desire to control one's environment and protect one's economic interests. Blakely and Snyder note the various reasons that people may be drawn to a gated community: they "want control—over their homes, their streets, their neighborhoods. Through gates, guards, and walls they seek this control in the ability to exclude outsiders from their territory" (125). The need to control is so fierce that it trumps longstanding political and social convictions. Boyle captures well the rub when, at a "community" meeting to discuss the installation of a gate, Jack Cherrystone, an Arroyo Blanco resident, protests,

I'm as liberal as anybody in this room—my father chaired Adlai Stevenson's campaign committee, for christsakes—but I say we've got to put an end to this. . . I'd like to open my arms to everybody in the world, no matter how poor they are or what country they come from; . . .but you know as well as I do that those days are past. . . You want to save the world, go to Calcutta and sign on with Mother Teresa. (44)

In laying claim to a liberal heritage that stretches back to the (failed) presidential bid of that paradigm of elite, effete liberalism, Adlai Stevenson, while defending his current muscular position against "the ones coming in through the Tortilla Curtain," Cherrystone embodies the trajectory that has taken liberal guilt from its sympathy with radical causes to its current apostasy. In her essay, "A Short History of Liberal Guilt," Julie Ellison provides a diagnosis for the moral quandary in which card-carrying "liberals" such as Cherrystone find themselves: "Liberal guilt signifies a loss of control. Increasingly, too, it signifies a loss of money, as though the donor individual or class cannot afford to give anything away without impoverishing itself" (353). Blakely and Snyder quote one angry resident of a gated community outside of San Francisco who says, "People are tired of the way the government has managed the issues and the freedom the voters have given them to do things. Because it's been so mismanaged, and because you don't really have control over how the money is spent. . . . I'm going to put myself in a situation where I feel I have a little more control over how I live my life" (60-61).

The gated community is part of a national trend toward privatization in everything from schools and hospitals to prisons. Like Maher, the liberal economist Robert Reich sees the rise of the gated community as the function of the new global economy, in which upper-middle class people “are quietly seceding from the large and diverse publics of America into homogenous enclaves, within which their earnings need not be redistributed to people less fortunate than themselves” (cited in Wolfe 12). He calls the phenomenon the “secession of the successful,” whereby residents pay privately for services traditionally subsidized publicly—everything from repairing roads and hauling garbage to cleaning swimming pools and maintaining parks—thereby gaining the control they seek while rendering themselves immune from the blight just beyond their periphery (Reich).

Though he might well have been echoing Robert Reich and describing the residents of today’s gated communities, Alexis de Tocqueville observed in 1830, “[T]here are more and more people who, though neither rich nor powerful enough to have much hold over others, have gained or kept enough wealth and enough understanding to look after their own needs. . . They form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imagine that their whole destiny is in their hands” (208). Nevertheless, the social landscape Tocqueville would have encountered in the early 1800s would have been an agrarian society, where community would have been paramount, and economic self-interest would have been tempered by Protestant Christianity, personal ties, and a practical, egalitarian sense of community responsibility.

The gated community embodies Tocqueville’s observations of this peculiar American brand of individualism, now untempered by religious or civic concerns or any sense of responsibility to the community at large. Though these enclaves ostensibly operate as “communities,” residents hardly seem bound by “custom or personal ties,” but instead are guided purely by self-interest. Blakely and Snyder note, for instance, that within the affluent gated community of Blackhawk, residents do not feel compelled to get involved with the messy politics of the adjacent city, Danville. At the time of Blakely and Snyder’s interviews, a tax or bond issue was proposed to benefit the county of which Blackhawk is a part. Residents defended their right not to vote in favor of such a proposal. As one resident explained, whatever the reasons were for such a tax hike, chances were that Blackhawk already provided these services for its residents: “The gate gives you an option, and you don’t have to feel guilty either way” (60). Thus, gates not only serve to preserve property values, but also a carefully constructed if fragile sense of self-righteousness

among its residents.

Altogether Out of the Sphere': The Invisible Men and Women in Our Midst

It is precisely this sort of blithe dismissal of those beyond the privileged boundaries of affluent communities such as Blackhawk that has provided fodder for critics of the suburbs and their even more exclusive child, the gated community, who have noted that as American cities filled up with immigrants and the very poor, the choice to live in the suburbs began to seem more particularly a choice to live in exclusively wealthy, white enclaves. As Alan Wolfe puts it, "Suburbanization, from this point of view, represents the retreat from community, not the desire to embrace it, if community is understood to include the dependent, the needy, and the less fortunate" (182). By removing themselves from "the dependent, the needy, and the less fortunate," the residents of such "communities" not only strive to escape crime and poverty, but the bothersome guilt associated with witnessing those less fortunate than oneself.

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith reasons that while it may be worthy to take the imaginative leap to understand the suffering of "our brother on the rack," there is nothing but anxiety to be gained from imagining the misfortunes of those "placed altogether out of the sphere of our activity." After all, he wonders, "To what purpose should we trouble ourselves about the world in the moon?" (140). As Maher notes, the laborers who work in communities such as Boyle's barely fictional Arroyo Blanco may live in proximity, yet once they finish their work and find their way to the bus stops that will carry them to whatever they call home, they are "altogether out of the sphere" of the "community."

In fact, Robert Reich sees the gated community as a final attempt to keep those less fortunate out of sight and beyond the reach of old-fashioned liberal guilt. After all, since most people in these communities are essentially on the same economic plane, there is no cause for a guilty conscience or the anxiety it causes. As the reasoning goes, "If inhabitants of another area are poorer, let them look to one another. Why should we pay for *their* schools?" Through such reasoning, it has become possible to maintain a self-image of generosity toward, and solidarity with, one's 'community' without bearing any responsibility to 'them'—the other 'community'" (Reich).

Boyle's novel imagines what happens to such residents when the immigrants in their midst—"the other 'community'"—cease to

be invisible. On the one hand, such sudden recognition can inspire rage. In a hideous burlesque of community spirit, Delaney and his neighbors gather together after being evacuated because of fire, and when they see two Hispanic men approaching, they erupt as an angry mob, spitting racist epithets: "'Arsonist!' somebody shouted. 'Spic!' . . . They were out here in the night, outside the walls, forced out of their shells, and there was nothing to restrain them" (288). Delaney, the self-proclaimed liberal humanist, has been reduced to something that "ain't human." On the other hand, such recognition has redemptive power. Having hit and wounded Cándido, Delaney is haunted by him, and when he sees him again, he is pierced by "the look of him, the face layered with scab like old paint" which "brought all Delaney's guilt back to the surface, a wound that refused to heal" (105). Similarly, while negotiating the price of building a fence in her backyard, Kyra inconveniently recognizes Cándido as the man her husband had hit with his car: "[S]he felt a space open up inside her, a great sad empty space that made her feel as if she'd given birth to something weak and unformed. And as he passed by her again, jaunty on his bad leg, the space opened so wide it could have sucked in the whole universe" (161).

Echoing Dana Cuff's existentialist assertion, noted earlier in this essay, that a neighbor is a "mediation between self and other: one must be one to have one," Delaney's and Kyra's very humanity is dependent upon their ability to see the people they have conveniently rendered invisible. In the apocalyptic conclusion to his novel, Boyle amplifies this argument. Wreaking havoc on the gated community he has created with both a fire and a flood, Boyle nevertheless offers the possibility of a reimagined, redeemed community. And ultimately, it is Cándido who offers salvation when he extends his hand to the drowning Delaney. The gesture echoes Rose of Sharon's offer of her breast to a complete stranger at the end of *The Grapes of Wrath*, but in this case, it is crucial that the two men are *not* strangers: indeed, though Delaney may fear Cándido as "one of them," the two men have become oddly intimate, their lives, though wildly different, quite literally on parallel crash courses. Despite Delaney's wealth, he is washing away on the same current as the luckless Cándido. Cándido is the man on the moon whom Adam Smith had so casually dismissed, and he is not only altogether *in* Delaney's sphere but availing himself at just the right moment. It is Cándido, whom Delaney had earlier considered "some feral thing, like a stray dog," (4), who reveals the depth of his compassion: "[W]hen he saw the white face surge up out of the black swirl of the current and the white hand grasping at the tiles, he reached down and took hold of it" (355). If all immigration politics

are local, their formulation starts here, with Cándido's outstretched hand and a recognition of our common humanity.

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