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Carmen Boullosa's *Duerme* and the Inventing of Difference in Race and Religion

David M. Buyze
dbuyze@hotmail.com

Carmen Boullosa's novel *Sleeping Beauty* (2000) [*Duerme*, 1994], is set in sixteenth century México under Spanish colonialism. Through the main character, Claire, the novel explores the tensions between the colonizer and colonized, and how this confrontation of the "new" and "old" worlds inscribed problems of perception between the differences of viewing the self and Other. The novel further treats issues of identity, nation, race, religion, gender, color, and purity, in reflecting on the colonial condition in México and reciprocally in the world. This novel is significant through how it explores the invention of difference and how this arose through the process of colonialism.

The imagining of difference is acutely important in understanding how the colonial condition contributed to the envisioning of race as a discursive site that the novel particularly explores through the notions of color and purity as negative elements of racial distinction. The inventing of race as difference is inherent in sentiments of nationalism in figuring on who belongs into the idea of the nation. Boullosa situates a re-writing of colonial history that can also help the reader to understand contemporary postcolonial problems of racial distinction and racism that persist in México and Latin America to indigenous peoples and those seen as socially inferior on the basis of the color of their skin. This novel can also serve as an important comparative reading to other postcolonial novels, such as Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay*; these exemplary novels focus on issues of racism, religious bigotry, and problems of human difference that persist in contemporary societies of the world.

Paul Gilroy expounds on the idea of race in the chapter "Race and Right to be Human," of his theoretical work, *Postcolonial Melancholia*: "This is probably a good opportunity to emphasize that by 'race' I do not mean physical variations or differences commonsensically coded in, on, or around the body. For me, 'race' refers primarily to an impersonal, discursive arrangement, the brutal result of the raciological ordering of the world, not its cause" (39). Boullosa's novel contemplates these discursive arrangements through pressuring the problems of dualistic thinking inherent in such binaries as: white/black, old/new, inner/outer, pure/impure, and self/other. Gilroy also stresses the importance in re-visiting colonial perspectives in contemplating or as he articulates "tracking" the notion of race as he writes further, "I hope that

this line of inquiry can raise important historical and conceptual problems about the distinctiveness and continuities of colonial power and government, especially where it has been armored in ignorance and fortified by color-coded disdain (39)." A tactic at stake here in this reading of Boullosa is to think through these levels of ignorance that exist at historical and conceptual levels in the idea of race and how the representational schemes of color have entrenched racist manners of thinking and behaviour.

The idea of religion in this novel is seen as a shifting and transitory outer dimension that is also impacted through colonialism in how difference is marked, seen, and imagined in functioning very similarly to the discourses of race. In regard to the issue of religion, Cornel West has discussed this as a problem of identity from a different angle in discussing identity being about desire and death, in posing this formulation in his article "A Matter of Life and Death" (1992): "How you construct your identity is predicated on how you construct desire and how you conceive of death . . . ." (20). West further articulates this statement as, identity and desire being exemplified as recognition, visibility, association, and through Edward Said's formulation of "affiliation." West places the ideas of identity and death in line with protection, security, and safety. West's formulation of identity in the initial context of his article stands as a simplistic rendering of identity being a positive valuation, he does however go on to amplify this reading when he links identity with religion in the context of what binds people. He writes: "But let's understand: religion not in the theological sense, but in the etymological sense of ligare, which means to bind. Identity is about binding, and it means, on the one hand, that you

can be bound – parochialist, narrow, xenophobic. But it also means that you can be held together . . . identity cuts at that deep existential level where religion resides" (21).

While West is on the mark in suggesting this correlation of religion and identity that is bound or held together, an issue remains as to how West configures that identity can cut at the same existential locus where he locates religion. The issue would seem to be that there rather needs to be a discursive strategy that would cut at the existential space where identity and religion reside. An extremely approachable and seminal work in this regard that speaks to this exact issue is Amin Maalouf's, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* (2000). Maalouf's text strikes a deep resonant chord in providing a modality to understand how humans can adapt new and positive ways of seeing the world. Maalouf writes:

> I dream of a world where religion no longer has any place but of one where the need for spirituality will no longer be associated with the need to belong. A world in which man, while remaining attached to his beliefs, to a faith, or to moral values that may or may not be inspired by scripture, will no longer feel the need to enroll himself among his co-religionists. A world in which religion will no longer serve to bind together warring ethnic groups. It is not enough now to separate Church and State: what has to do with religion must be kept apart from what has to do with identity. And if we want that amalgam to stop feeding fanaticism, terror and ethnic wars, we must find other ways of satisfying the need for identity (96).

Maalouf's envisioning of the world is grandiose and perhaps utopian, but it does provide a possible strategy that would unravel identity away from the individual drives of wanting to associate, affiliate, or belong. Maalouf is trying to place identity in a global context whereby recognition of difference would be positive acknowledgement of each other's multiple identities.

Identity and how it has functioned through and under the guise of religion, nation, and culture needs to be cut through, or as Maalouf suggests, religion and identity need to kept apart. In this regard, Cornel West has referred to an important problem concerning identity, "that when people speak about identity, they always begin by talking about the victims" (21-2). West further develops, in light of this issue that identity needs to be alternatively seen in how it functions as, "identity-from-above" and "identity-from-below" (22). For example, what needs to be noticed is how a regional ethnic identity, or the stereotyped identity of a group of people functions in relation to what is seen and imaged as the national identity. Boullosa's novel allows for considering both of the perspectives that West is suggesting in how identity is signified as difference through race and religion. These modalities of identification signify negatively through the effects of colonialization and its reaction in the manifestation of nationalism.

Colonial Beginnings and National Paradigms: Thinking through Race & Religion

> The ocean is where the world is seen as something complete. There is something of everything in it, even the stewpot with its salty water, and whatever there is found whole. Away from it, on dry land, everything is seen as divided. Look – "I point out the corner of the wall of an enormous convent, cut off in front of a sky dyed an intense, luminous blue. "Why did they cut it off there, exactly? If there were buildings on the ocean, they would never end, or they would end at the point they got tired. On dry land everything seems broken, divided, fragmented, cut off...there is never anything whole and complete. Carmen Boullosa - *Sleeping Beauty* (38)

> Succinctly put, Columbus did not discover America, for in terms of the imaginary cartographic and geographical knowledge of his time, the meaning and existence of a space that could be America did not exist. Is it possible to discover that which does not exist? Added to this logic are the facts of Columbus's biography; to his dying day and after four voyages across the Atlantic, he believed that he had discovered what did in fact exist, either the shores of Cathay or a watery route to the Indian seas. Charles H. Long – *Significations* (87)

> If, as Avicenna and Hippocrates seem to think, the best water is that which seems most like air, that which heats up and cools the fastest, that which, when boiled, leaves no crust inside the pot, that which cooks greens in the least time, and, finally, that which is most quick, then there is none preferable to ours (Cervantes de Salazar). Carmen Boullosa – *Sleeping Beauty* (1)

The image of water has been strongly represented through the ocean as the image of Christopher Columbus's pathway to the discovery of the so-called "new world." As Long has pointed out this was an imagining of the ocean and place, as the meaning, space, and idea of America did not yet exist. This is to say that the imagining of space in the world had a much different meaning in the time of Columbus, compared to how we now imagine space and the world. This is not exclusively an aspect of the imagining of space but this was also dependent on Western thought which Long analyses through the thinking of Edmundo O'Gorman in terms of the differences between invention and discovery. O'Gorman's argument rests on the distinction that America was not discovered by Columbus, since this implies an aspect of religious faith in terms of creating that which does not exist and is only imagined. O'Gorman instead suggests

that America became invented as a process of Western thinking in terms of purposefully wanting to think and write about the unknown or Other. This became a discovery of thought that as Long states through commenting on O'Gorman, came into being by Amerigo Vespucci discovering America in the manner of intently wanting to represent the world differently (87-8).[1] Through these modalities of representation, the thinking and imaging of an "old world" and a "new world" came into being.

Carmen Boullosa writes of how the world is seen as complete and whole in terms of the ocean, and that this imagining becomes broken by dry land. Boullosa's metaphor could be extended to the ocean and dry land being represented by the imaginary division of the old and new world. Within the conquest of the "new world," there is the arrival of a "colonial consciousness," that through the sense of taste brought the signifying and separating of aesthetic and ethical judgement in terms of the self and the Other. This would foster different repercussions between the Spaniards and the Mexicans, and between peoples of México, which would lend different understandings of exchange and materiality. An example that is illustrative of this suggests how it is possible to speak of water in terms of value, as reflected in the words of Cervantes de Salazar in the third opening epigraph.

Can the taste of water be described as something or nothing in terms of its qualities in representation? Water is often represented as that which purifies taste, and as the element that in purifying the palate readies the experience of taste to be felt anew. Water is also a religious

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[1] Long goes into further analysis of the larger scope of this issue in the chapter "Primitive/Civilized: The Locus of a Problem," of *Significations: Sign, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (79-96). An essay by Neil Larsen that bears further analysis of this issue is "Phenomenology and Colony: Edmundo O'Gorman's *The Invention of America*" in his text *Reading North by South*.

image in terms of supposedly sanctifying, baptizing, absolving, or purifying a person or land. Water has become an image of purity and purification. Water is a symbol of taste in accordance with the distribution of water from different nations on a global level, a commodity, wherein the water often judged or imaged to be the best is European. Water in most lands that were colonized is not pure, it is dirty, diseased, and polluted – this water has become one of the Other's symbols of its own Otherness. In many formerly colonized countries, water is precious and "clean" water is often not available to all. Water is ethically imaged as being bad and good according to not only the health issue, but as well the national origin of water. Water is of course distinguished and separated from land. Water, has been a place of exile for the incarceration of the "mad," and as a means of shipping human cargo in terms of the slave trade. Water has been the pathway to "discovery," conquest, and colonialism. Water has multiple images, yet one of its most ardent resonances is that of purity of taste that through this metaphor ethically divides and identifies humans in setting forth judgement. In *Sleeping Beauty*, Carmen Boullosa addresses the particularity of how the world is divided – water from land, and how the representations and reflections of these divisions shape ethical and ethnic difference, in creating a world of duality:

> The world is divided in two. The Old and the New. Light and darkness. Silence and noise. White and black. Water and land. Good and Evil. Men and women. Europeans and those of other races. No one becomes aware of this last division who never leaves his own land. There, people would like to believe the diversity is quite broad, what with the English, French, Belgians, Chinese, Portuguese, Catalans. But I challenge anyone to wear Indian garments like

I'm doing and then tell me how people are divided. "In two," you will answer me," the whites and the Indians" (48).

The images and representations of how the world is divided,[2] has been in part instantiated through the views of the self and Other in determining how the world is perceived. The world, represented as dualistic has in turn created the imaging of class, gender, ethnicity, race, and color as a means to distinguish one's self from the Other. The main character of Boullosa's novel establishes that the image of race or ethnicity is predicated on whiteness and blackness,[3] in terms of imagining how the world and reality is constructed dualistically.[4] This

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[2] This philosophical shift in thinking and representation that effected how the world is thought and constructed must also be reflected on in terms of such primary figures as: Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Hegel.

[3] The imaging of "blackness" is not to do with skin color, but it is rather the imaging of Otherness or what is not understood – what constitutes difference. Indians may be imaged to have "darkness," yet this is well carries the image of the other that is ascribed as "blackness." Sander L. Gilman points to this matter, in the sense of how Jews are imaged as "blackness," "That blacks are the antithesis of the mirage of whiteness, the ideal of European aesthetic values, strikes the reader as an extension of some "real," perceived difference to which the qualities of "good" and "bad" have been erroneously applied. But the very concept of color is a quality of Otherness, not of reality. For not only are blacks black in this amorphous world of projection, so too are Jews" (*Difference & Pathology,* 30).

[4] Salman Rushdie has pointed to this problematic of whites and blacks in terms of reality and the power of what is imaged. In this regard he points to the importance of literature as a means of countering and understanding reality and the world, as he writes: "The black American writer Richard Wright once wrote that black and white Americans were engaged in a war over the nature of reality. Their descriptions were incompatible. So it is clear that redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it. And particularly when the State takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory, become politicized. "The struggle of man against power," Milan Kundera has written, "is the struggle of memory against forgetting." Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth" ("Imaginary," 13-14). I would also add that the novel is a means of understanding and refuting other views on truth and reality in the perception of consciousness.

imaging of race has created an internal problem in the Other's own Otherness, a problem of the reflection of the representation of consciousness in inscribing the self in Otherness. What is other to one's self is not understood because of how one is supposed to imagine and think the consciousness of self.

How can this be understood or reflected upon through this reading of *Sleeping Beauty*? Boullosa's novel is reflexive in terms of a colonial narrative of arrival. Yet the arrival of the main character Claire, in the narrative, sets into question what it means to "arrive," within the constructions of subjectivity and identity. In a very perceptive article by Salvador Oropesa entitled, "Cross-Dressing and the Birth of a Nation: *Duerme* by Carmen Boullosa (1997)," he aptly situates how the character of Claire functions in the novel, "Claire is a signifier, and its void/presence can be filled by the different meanings necessary to explain the new social construct that is México" (102). Boullosa's manner of constructing this narrative about México revolves centrally around the issue of purity. This issue is entwined with the multiple masking of Claire bearing Mexican Indian identity that is substituted and illusory in terms of the issues of purity, within the portrayal of her shifting identity. This is to say that the ideas of purity and identity are called into question as always being impure in how one is always impacted and shaped by one's Otherness. Claire is not pure and her identity cannot be interpreted as a rigid portrayal or category in the naming of her. Claire is portrayed as being French, questioned as to

possibly being Spanish according to the Castilian she speaks, is a woman dressed as a man,[5] is thought to be Protestant and perhaps Jewish, or even worse that she could possibly be a Catholic Christian. Claire is further stereotyped as being ethically bad in that she is a prostitute, pirate, and a dealer in contraband, and for this she is being sentenced to death. The basis of this construction and veiling of identity is not explicitly external (an image of the body) but is rather imaged as occurring internally through the supposed purification of her French blood (the image of her constructed identity and ethnic essence), that is performed through water that is imaged as being Mexican, and which is poured into her body through a wound. The water that is used for this "ritual" is symbolized as being from internal waters of the land of Mexico and hence untainted by the ocean, which has been metaphorically contaminated by it being the Spanish colonial pathway. This physical purification is a substitution of identity that is imaged as an illusion of purity, as Boullosa writes of an Indian woman addressing Claire and which I quote at length in order to demonstrate the point:

> Señor, you French gentleman, you who are a man when dressed and a woman when not, you do not deserve to die. And you are not going to die on the scaffold today, that is certain. Just allow me to empty a little more water into your wound. It is water from the lakes of ancient times. It was a water so pure that even when stored in these clay pots now for many tens of years it shows no signs of spoiling or going stagnant. This water contains some water from each of the lakes, sweet and salt, from each canal, all mixed together. It has been a healing treatment ever

[5] Salvador Oropesa historically contextualizes why Claire wears men's clothing in the novel. "The historians Rudolph M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol have documented that during the sixteenth century many women traveled from Europe to the colonies dressed as men: 'In the early modern era passing oneself off as a man was a real and viable option for women who had fallen into bad times and were struggling to overcome their difficult circumstances'" (99-100).

> since our fathers and our grandfathers, and it never has been given to a Spaniard. This water was so pure –" she goes on talking while I, my back to the door, undo my clothing over my left breast, which is open still but not bleeding, "that our grandfathers never even urinated in it. Every day canoes went around collecting their urine and took it from Temixtitan and the other neighborhoods and from it they extracted fixatives for paints and dyes, the ones that our magnificent artists used to use, and also the liquids to soak the yarn in for embroidering or making fabrics. In those days our fabrics were not white...I filled the pitcher with that water last night and this morning I went back to fill it up again. Two whole pitchers will protect your blood from death. This water is of the purest, never contaminated by anything related to the Spanish, nor their horses nor their waste. You who are neither man nor woman, neither Nahua nor Spaniard nor mestizo, neither Conde nor Encomendado, you do not deserve death. They say you come from the sea, that you have been with those who snatch away from the Spaniards what they are taking away from here. You do not deserve to die (*Sleeping,* 16-7).

This image of the body sets forth a problematic issue, in that the construction of her identity is rather an entire erasure of her identity, and all that remains is the corporeal symbol of the purification through the element of water. In a sense, Claire signifies the image of a person without qualities – imagined and constructed on a void of identity. Humanity has become so accustomed to seeing the world through identity and religious or cultural orientations that this unsettles the reader. The problem herein is that water is represented as bearing identity, and as simultaneously possessing the means of washing away and cleansing all other manifestations of identity. Claire is imaged at times as possessing no identity, or as being constructed as a

"wandering"[6] or exiled person that is solely inscribed with the symbol of water and purity. This is suggestive to her being representative of being beyond a specific identity. The condition of Claire's imaged purity functions as a parody of identity and national orientation. Parody in this sense is a mockery of identity and nationality.

In this novel, the image of water is portrayed as the ultimate symbol of purity that is also caught on the threshold of disease – this representation of disease also bears the image of the contamination of purity through other identities. Water is simultaneously imaged as caught at the nexus of purity and disease. The image and signifying of water continues through *Sleeping Beauty* as the most prominent symbol, and it is constructed as a means that both inscribes and destroys identity – and the representation and destruction of self. This loss of self and ethnic identification is signified by the sensation of an "aftertaste," that is placed in reference to the ingestion of the water in the body – within the masking of identity, ethnicity, and race, as Boullosa writes of Claire:

> But I feel, and with an aftertaste I can't understand, that my person is gradually being completely shredded as if I were leaving bits of clothing and flesh behind on the façades of the buildings we go past, because I feel so huge, about to burst. Perhaps this is a result of this water-logged breast that I had to push around so to get inside my Spanish garments (*Sleeping,* 22).

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[6] As mentioned earlier, Claire is considered at one point in the text to possibly being Jewish (Boullosa, *Sleeping*, 4) It could be suggested that she is in a wandering state, that can be reflected upon in terms of the idea of the "wandering Jew," an image that has proliferated through many periods of time. Jay Geller in a public lecture entitled, "The Unmanning of the Wandering Jew," speaks of the negative image of the wandering Jew, "The wandering Jew more frequently was emblematic of a contemporary Jewry marked by its contemptible national or racial character."

This moment of Claire's self-narration is an important site in the text, for it is here that the idea of taste is entwined with identity and the loss of self-representation. Claire's aftertastes of the water in her body signify a transformation of her purification through a contamination of her person. There is a simultaneous loss of how Claire was initially signified, that is replaced with an indeterminate sense of subjectivity. Claire's indeterminate subjectivity is the construction of a vague sense of Otherness that signifies reality differently. The problem of a "vague other" is again inscribed and perpetuated as a lack of meaning. This lack exists because of the Other's own Otherness. This vagueness or illusory sense of creating Otherness within the self can be noted through Claire imaged as bearing illusory immortality in that the water in her body is able to hold off death by hanging – and is eventually signified as being "holy water" (Boullosa, *Sleeping,* 24). The water is imaged as Otherness in the manner of changing sense, perception, and representation of Claire to herself:

> The water from the lakes has saved me. I think I hear the lakes´ timid surf inside me. I breathe their purity, their variety, not the fetidness sobbing its stagnant murmuring beneath the boats and canoes, as if this were an infected pasture and they were sick cattle....The water traveling through my veins sounds like the wind blowing down a hallway. Its gentle passage sheathes my body and my memory, arranging everything differently – things, feelings, every part of me (Boullosa, *Sleeping,* 23-4).

In this manner, Boullosa has constructed a discourse on purity and memory that is set in a Proustian manner of trying to regain and re-inscribe what has been lost in time. Boullosa is trying to demonstrate what simultaneously can or cannot be regained in the construction of purity

in identity – in identity constructing an unknown (or other) sense of perception to the self. The manner of trying to deal with this loss of purity and memory is a product of colonialism in that it wants to simultaneously retreat away from, and propel towards this orientation of self and its representation of identity that was instilled through a "colonial consciousness." Yet this retreat and propulsion to and from sense and subjectivity through the sanctification of water (the creation of purity) reveals new problems in the representation and signifying of the self, Other, and Otherness that Boullosa poses. This problem is the imaging of race in the creation of a self out of the Other's own Otherness. This problem is steeped in the imaging of water signifying a national origin or ethnic purity of Mexican Indian identity. This water that either masks or creates identity anew is set in distinction to the earth and this point of distinction or difference is heavily symbolic, in referring to water as life, and earth as death. Boullosa points to the image (that was noted earlier) of how the world became represented dualistically, as she initially sets forth the images of water/land and old world/new world. The primary manifestation of this dualism or separating is the signifying of self and other. This juncture of an arrival of sorts, or form of contact between water and land is illustrative of the colonial contact (between self and other), and the arrival of a "colonial consciousness." Boullosa draws this point of contact through a metaphorical portrayal of Claire's sense of identity. This is defined and masked through the significations of water and land, as she writes of Claire after she has escaped her own death through masking her identity:

> Thick tears run down my face, coloring it; I know because I brush them away with my hand. I must look like those savages I saw when we were on the Island of Sacrifices. That must be the way I look now, my face painted with mud like

> the cannibals, and all the worse because the earth that has become my makeup is for covering the dead. But this mask helps me to feel real, to forget the strange sensations provoked by the waters of the lakes untouched by foreign urine, blood, greed, and shit – this water that runs through my veins (Boullosa, *Sleeping*, 37).

Water is once again symbolized as purity in comparison to dirt signifying death and defilement. Land and dirt being the locus of the realities of conquest and colonization are represented as sacrifice and savagery (symbolized as excess and excrement).

The construction of Mexican Indian identity through the purity of water is given the image of being a non-reality that implies a loss of orientation to the world. One manner of reading Boullosa's portrayal of this is that any return to a supposed "pure" state is not possible; it is imaginary and does not exist in identity or the world. This can be understood in the sense of Salman Rushdie's idea of "imaginary homelands,"[7] and how this is manifested in loss of place, uncertainty, and the incapacity to return to a previous state of national belonging, as this is a condition of the imagination. Hence, any construction of identity is shaped and represented through the defilement of conquest and colonization that is situated in the impact of the idea of culture. In this regard, it is difficult to suggest that this present era is postcolonial, as every form of national orientation remains steeped in a consciousness that was and is shaped by colonialism.

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[7] Rushdie speaks of this in regard to the writer, in this light, he is speaking of South Asian writers, but the point refers to other writers and peoples of this perspective, as he writes in an article entitled "Imaginary Homelands": "It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (10).

Taste, sense, and judgement inscribe culture in the acts of colonialism and this is configured as an endless masking of the Other to itself. This orientation of the world was created and given the power of reflection in representation through the self/other schematization, that created the dualistic struggle of the self within the Other's own otherness (a reflection of the Other unto itself).[8] The problem inherent in this construction of Otherness, or transplantation of consciousness, is the inscribing of the idea of self that is reflected on differently through colonialism and colonial contact and exchange. This inscribing of the self in its own otherness is a product of a "colonial consciousness." In Boullosa's creation of the main character, water is not turned into wine (blood) in the Christian mythical sense; Claire is not given mortality but immortality through her blood being exchanged for water – a reversal of the Christian image (a reversal of the colonial condition). Boullosa creates a further articulation of this when Claire steps on a machete and does not bleed, Claire self-narrates, "What have the waters coursing through my veins turned me into" (*Sleeping,* 61)? Claire is increasingly constructed as a mythical or phantastical Other to her own self (via the reflections of representation). The realization that her blood is now water causes Claire to reflect*:* "The slash in my foot not only gave me the chance to discover the void in my veins, it also saw fit to stifle the flow of the voice that had been telling me about those events and that eventually would have driven me crazy" (Boullosa, *Sleeping*, 62). Claire's void in her veins, the substitution of water for blood –

[8] In regard to the issues of reflection, representation, and Otherness, see Michel Foucault's first chapter, "Las Meninas" in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 3-16. Particular to this chapter, I am thinking of the idea of Otherness in regard to what is hidden in the reflection of representation.

is the loss of that which makes her human, a transcendence of mortality that leaves her as character under erasure – a phantasm.

In a manner of speaking, it could be said that Boullosa has created a character in mockery of the constructions and images of self/other, ethnic essences, and nationalistic ambitions. In another moment in the text, the creation of Claire's constructed identity is apparently lost after being raped by the character of the *Conde* (Count), as stated in Claire's self-narration: "When he's done he sets me down half naked amid the servants and puts his spurs to the horse. I watch him riding off, losing himself in the distance, carrying with him the identity I had constructed for myself" (Boullosa, *Sleeping,* 43). Oropesa discusses this moment in the text in a different manner that addresses the signifying value of clothing in symbolizing class and constructing identity in México that was particular to the sixteenth century:

> It should be understood that during the hierarchical society of the sixteenth century the social being, the class, the state (social status) are more important than the individual. This is why clothes are so important because they literally define identity. When Claire is dressed as an Indian woman, the count rapes her and other Spanish men attempt to rape her because she is considered Indian in spite of the color of her skin. The color does not work as a deterrent; the logic of the European man is that if another European man raped this Indian's mother, he can do the same (103).

The identity of being Indian or indigenous functions on the basis of clothing as class, and with the imaged color of the skin being a moot characteristic according to Oropesa's reading. While it could certainly be colluded that clothing was a particular visible representation of social status in sixteenth century México, it is difficult to make the assumption that this has nothing to do with

the imaging of the color of skin which functions in the imagination. It could more correctly be stated that clothing as representative of social status and the problem of color in terms of the indigenous population are still constant issues that persist in Mexican society from the sixteenth century till the present day. Oropesa is more precise in terms of what is at stake here when he articulates that, "The image produced is that Mexico became a Western nation, forgetting its indigenous past and present" (109). Oropesa further comments that Boullosa's novel is situated in telling, "the first modernity of Mexico as a Western nation" (101). This is to say that her novel not only explores the results of the contact and exchange between the Western Spanish colonizers and the Mexican colonized, but more significantly she addresses the birth of the internal colonization of indigenous people in México. It could be stated that this type of colonizing of the internal Other in the nation is a Western formulation of how the identity of the nation should function in terms of the images of blackness and whiteness in shaping one's own other of the nation.

The patterns of masking and substituting identity parody the creation of identity as a sense of self that is constituted on the basis of purity in terms of class and color. This parody runs on dangerous ground in two intertwined ways that have come into effect in countries that have been colonized. Both manners are perpetuated out of the imaging and imagining of difference in terms of color, race, ethnicity, language, culture, and aesthetics.

In the first instance, the imaging and imagining of difference has created an internal sense of "self-hatred,"[9] that is for example reflected in *Sleeping Beauty*, through the character of Claire. This "self-hatred" arises through how the aesthetic and ethical idea of self is imaged to be best obtained internal to society. The discourses of "self-hatred" are represented in stereotyped images of color in terms of: whiteness and blackness, the representation of race in terms of physiognomy, and a wide range of aesthetic, ethical, and religious significations, traditions, practices, and perceptions in terms of desiring to obtain how one should best act, dress, perform, and even think. These discourses also inscribe a hiding of language or unspokenness. This hiddenness (the internal representation of "self-hatred") is signified as exterior in the desire of that which may be seen as foreign or unknown to the Other that was inscribed in sense, taste, and judgement through colonialism. This is as well represented in a colonized country through mimetic[10] desires, articulations, and images of what may be judged to be ethically or aesthetically better, because it is represented to be foreign. This form of obsession of the foreign or exotic is xenophilia. This can of course stem out of any country in terms of eroticization of the Other. The desire in this mimicry or xenophilic behavior in this case is imaged through the ethics and aesthetics of an Enlightenment episteme that has conditioned taste through the perception of how human experience should be sensed and lived. This instilment of sense in consciousness is a mirroring of self that is unknown but perceived or imagined to be

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[9] In the use of the term "self-hatred," see Sander L. Gilman's *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*. In this regard, I am speaking of a similar hiddenness that is created in language, yet in my use I am thinking of it in terms of colonial repercussions.

[10]An important work for further thought and reflection on the idea of mimesis is, Michael T. Taussig's *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*.

better. Through the impact of these discourses, signs, symbols, and images the self may always feel a sense of lack because the ideal self remains always illusory.

An example in speaking to the issue of "self-hatred" is the reportage of a common occurrence in late nineteenth and early twentieth century México under the dictatorship regime of Porfirio Díaz, as Tulio Halperín Donghi comments on what occurred in México City:
On important state occasions, the police force herded people of Indian appearance away from the central district of the capital city so that foreign visitors would not get the "wrong idea" about the country (181).

Halperín Donghi elaborates this by articulating that, "most leaders of the regime had more of a European vision of México" (181). An impression of what this European vision implied is obviously suggested in that people of "Indian" appearance must be kept out of the foreign gaze. The "Indian" in this case might be those who appear darker in skin color, or seem too "native" or appear to be too "uncultured" according to the standards of an imposed Western aesthetic. In either scenario, the "Indian" or indigenous is imaged on the plane of "blackness" in distinguishing this Mexican instance of "self-hatred" of its own people. Salvador Oropesa in citing Guillermo Bonfil Batalla situates this issue in a different manner that is defined as:

> *Desindianización* [the eradication of indigenous cultures] ... is a historical process by which populations that had originally possessed a distinct identity of their own, based on their own culture, are forced to renounce this identity....This is not the result of biological miscegenation, but rather the action of ethnic forces that end up impeding the historical continuity of a community as a socially and differentiated entity (105).

This process of *desindianización* functions in two manners whereby the higher Mexican social classes desired to diminish the presence of the indigenous peoples that functioned differently through the aegis of how the concept of ethnicity was established to demarcate difference in society during and after colonization. Secondly, this process functioned through xenophilic indigenous self-hatred in the desire to be more fully recognized in the new "Western" México in trying to shed indigenous characteristics and behavior. José Joaquín Brunner in an essay entitled "Latin American Identity – Dramatized" speaks to the issue of xenophilic or mimetic behavior and how this arose due to colonial presence and continued imperial domination in Latin America. In this section, he is addressing the crisis of identity, and comments on a quote by Aníbal Quijano that speaks to the problem of how the Other is not interiorized within the culture or nation because of the dominant presence of "foreign" models that further present and construct how one should live, act, think, and perceive:

> Out of this comes a manifest impossibility of identity, with pathological characteristics as stressed by Quijano: a true "schizophrenic acculturation." It is an identity crisis, therefore, that fragments, superimposes and causes its components to collide; in this case as Edmundo O'Gorman would suggest much earlier, one wants to "be like others in order to be oneself." Other authors that complement this reading speak of a culturally penetrated and subordinated identity that is, therefore, distorted. Out of this torn identity, in which the dominant internal groups imitate the cultural masters of the dominating groups, the dominated are subject to an implacable expropriation of their own traditional communal identity (Brunner, 112).

The important issue that Brunner addresses here is not the fragmentation of identity, for identity is never whole or complete but is rather always in a state of flux. The problem is the borrowing of a false identity or superficial identity through imitation or mimicry of the external Other – that is in turn used as a form of power over the dominated internal groups that because of their Otherness are lesser or inferior others.

In stating this problem of mimicry or xenophilia more directly and in a wider context, Edward Said quotes from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965), in a section that describes the colonial city and more importantly the tension between the colonizer and colonized:

> The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession – all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man (Said, *The World*, 49).

This problem of how the colonizer, or to extend this further, how an imperial presence is perceived and in turn possibly envied or even admired is a crucial problem that persists in Latin American till this day. In order to elaborate the danger in this type of thinking, Malcolm X has discussed this issue in a similar manner in terms of Blacks in America. He has discussed through commenting on the terms "house Negro" or "Uncle Tom" which describe Blacks that seek to appease whites. This phenomenon extends throughout the Black experience of America in false ambitions to be "token-integrated" Blacks (X, 284). Or to think of this on the other end of this spectrum as Malcolm X has articulated, "But it has historically been the case with white people, in their regard for black people, that even though we might be *with* them, we weren't considered

of them" (27). This is a quick glossing of a complex problem yet this serves as an example to further illuminate the problematic situation of minorities and indigenous peoples in "Latin American" internal to the society and nation that functions in a similar yet different manner for Blacks in America.

The second modality functions as a reaction to colonization, which is an internal "containment" of the Other's own otherness through a desiring of the purity of self.[11] This "containment" becomes projected in the movements and formations of nation-states, nationalism, ambitions of ethnic purity (exemplified in ethnic cleansing), and forces of proselytization to eradicate religious difference. These projections of self-identification in the cultural languages of nationalism and other significations are most often prompted by, as Edward Said has articulated: "*returns* to culture and tradition. In the formerly colonized world, these *returns* have produced varieties of religious and nationalist fundamentalism" (*Culture,* xiii). These "returns" create real or imagined spaces of national sentiment or ethnic essentialization through how culture has come to operate in the same guise as religion. This trend and orientation of "returning" is in the desire (that Rushdie has addressed) of creating what becomes nothing more than an "imaginary homeland," however the desires of making this image or illusion a reality has only succeeded in propelling these dangerous forces of nationalism. What needs to occur is a modality of thinking human experience that is outside of the orientation of culture through taste, which has imaged the world as thought through a "colonial consciousness." This modality must

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[11] My use of containment differs in this context, yet it is important to bear in mind J. Hillis Miller's use of the term "containing" as developed in J. Hillis Miller's, *Black Holes*; and Manuel Asensi, *J. Hillis Miller; or, Boustrophedonic Reading,* 145.

also be able to rigorously address the dualism of self/other and how it needs to be thought and perceived otherwise. Boullosa writes further in terms of the issue of how the world is dualistically constructed:

> What I'm saying is that the world is divided strictly into two parts, and even though it's the truth, the truth makes a liar out of me. Although perhaps my Indian getup is convincing, it is so for one reason – the third part. They look at my white behaviour, my white body, my Indian clothing – and they say, "She's mestiza." I'm not lying. I'm just reacting to the way the Spaniards have learned to count in this land. For them, three is two, there's no doubt about that. It's that same mistake that makes me say, "our streets," and "us," caught in the trap of a three that shouldn't exist. Because the world is divided in two . . ." (*Sleeping,* 49).

The reader is once again struck with the images of Otherness that are structured on whiteness and blackness, and what is always represented as the vague third (inscribed as a loss of purity) – the grey area of the images of race and color. A further problem is demonstrated here in the language that speaks of an "us" or a "we,"[12] for when this locus is constructed on a racial, ethnic, national, or religious orientation it initiates senses of inclusive belonging, that are usually exclusive – and that also perpetuate imposed judgement of an "other." Brett Levinson elaborates on this issue in regard to *mestizaje* and the general problem inherent in the "Latin American" nation:

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[12] Charles H. Long addressed this problem in speaking of a "we" in the U.S., in a public lecture entitled, "We the People, The Multicultural Reality."

> Born through the clash of and intermingling of worlds, the Latin American nation is from its inception a contaminated site, a topos of mestizaje. However, the formation of the Latin American nation-state was founded on the conviction that the Creole elite was the true or essential Latin American. All others, the "half-breeds" or indigenous peoples, were deemed, de facto or de jure, invaders whose defilements had to be cleaned out, viciously if necessary. And vicious such acts could not help but be: since the defilements were proper to the nation, inside its guts rather than outside forces, they had to be yanked out, not gently shifted aside (*The Ends of Literature*, 183-4).

This is a common practice in Latin American countries that is also directed towards racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and other minorities internal to the nation.[13] In light of this difficult issue, this approach has inscribed the site of a problem in thinking about the framework and representation of colonialism, nationalism, and culture in Carmen Boullosa's novel *Duerme*. There is an urgency in understanding how this novel enables the reader to re-consider the historical trajectory of race and religion that unsettles any typical or traditional understanding of how these notions and discourses are signified and represented in the contemporary world. In this regard, there is distinct importance at hand here for the study of religion, comparative literature, Latin American studies, global studies, and the human condition.

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[13] A corollary example in this regard in terms of what has occurred in México are "Dirty War" practices that involved the torture and disappearance of leftists in México from the late 1960's through the early 80's. Ginger Thompson and Tim Weiner clarify this situation that has been recently highlighted by the former president of México, Luis Echeverría being charged with the killing of twenty-five student protesters in 1971. This issue is not limited to this instance alone in México as, "The effort was begun with a groundbreaking report in 2001 by the National Human Rights Commission, which named at least 74 government officials involved in a campaign of torture and disappearances against suspected leftists during the so-called Dirty War from the late 1960's into the early 1980's. The commission documented the disappearances of at least 275 people in that era" (Thompson & Weiner 2004).

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