



Artículo de Investigación

## On modernity and the other in Leanne Simpson's work, *Islands of Decolonial Love*

Sobre la modernidad y el otro en la obra *Islands of decolonial love* de Leanne Simpson

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**Abstract:** This work aims to give a brief account of modernity and the other in the work *Islands of Decolonial Love*, by the writer Leanne Simpson. The writer has a persuasive indigenous voice that has attracted the attention of many readers across Canada's borders on land and indigenous issues, extractivism, and the environment. In the focused work, the author brings the non-indigenous reader closer to the construction of indigenous knowledge by presenting a material that goes beyond the written word. The nation which Leanne Simpson belongs to and so many other indigenous peoples have suffered and still suffer from the marks of colonization. To think about the narratives and conversations of the characters in the *Islands of Decolonial Love* is to reflect in the reader the invisible 'cracks' that the civilizing process and its 'obscure' side unleash under the 'ethics' of the rhetoric of modernity and the progressive discourse of capitalism. One cannot deny the existence of the other.

**Keywords:** modernity - coloniality - indigenous - pressure - the other

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**Resumen:** Este trabajo tiene como objetivo discutir la modernidad y el otro en la obra *Islands of Decolonial Love*, de Leanne Simpson. El autor presenta una voz indígena persuasiva que ha atraído la atención de muchos lectores más allá de las fronteras del Canadá sobre cuestiones relacionadas con la tierra y los indígenas, el extractivismo y el medio ambiente. En la obra enfocada, el autor acerca al lector no indígena a la construcción del conocimiento indígena presentando un material que va más allá de la palabra escrita. La nación a la que pertenece Simpson y tantos otros pueblos indígenas han sufrido (y siguen sufriendo) las marcas de la colonización. Pensar en las narraciones y conversaciones de los personajes de *Islands of Decolonial Love* es hacer que el lector reflexione sobre las 'grietas' invisibles que el proceso de civilización y su lado 'oscuro' desatan bajo la 'ética' de la retórica de la modernidad y el discurso progresista del capitalismo. No se puede negar la existencia del otro.

**Palabras clave:** modernidad - colonialidad - indígena - presión - el otro

## 1. Introduction

"i think your cultural heritage is a mighty fine thing to feel proud about leanne and i think it will lead to great success in your studies" (Simpson, 2013, p. 33).

This short digression confers on Canadian and Indian author Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, of *Mississauga Nishnaabeg*<sup>1</sup> origin, a brief introduction on her book *Islands of Decolonial Love*. She is a writer, scholar, and artist as well as a persuasive indigenous voice who has attracted the attention of many readers across Canada's borders on land and indigenous issues, extractivism, and the environment.

This book contains twenty-six chapters, or we can call them islands, mixed with tales, poems, and songs which dialogue with the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. The indigenous use the word, dance, music among other manifestations for the construction of thought, so the author approaches the non-indigenous reader of the construction of indigenous thought by presenting a material that goes beyond the written word.

The islands are independent. They can be read at random, at the pleasure of the reader. Nevertheless, they are interconnected, as an archipelago where each narrative track is independent. The stories and songs permeate people, rivers, indigenous reserves, parks, memory, colonialism, birds, bones, children, grandparents, acceptance, survival that intertwine in various plots. They are stories of characters that distract us, comfort us and enchant us as narratives, but we, at the same time, as readers, are restless, because they are tales that speak of the unrest and the struggle to call attention to the very existence or in- existence.

Throughout these chapters we find several words written in nishnaabemowin language, one of Canada's indigenous languages, with footnotes explaining the contents, as the author in an *Asus Journal* interview (Winder, 2014, our translation) says "I wanted to write these stories for an Indigenous audience first. That's why I included my language, That's why the informal tone and style". In addition, the various words written in the nishnaabemowin language are pertinent to various placements in the narrative, as they have a very particular meaning for the author and are sharply shared with the reader. If on the one hand we see that the native language used in the work is suitable for broad purposes in reading because it is part of the narrator's mental path, on the other hand we see the language of the colonized and the colonizer being woven in the intricacies of the texts.

The writing escapes the canonical standard, with peculiarities such as capital letters, dashes, paragraphs etc. Paragraphs are initialed in lowercase letters as well as proper names. They are the points, commas and quotation marks that give the rhythm of reading, without wanting to normalize, impose or hide some meaning. As if this form of writing rescued some of the indigenous oral heritage.

Taking into account Native Canadians, the Anishinaabe were subdivided into three ethnic confederations, Odawa (traders), Ojibwe (faithkeepers) and Bodwe'aadamiinh (the firekeepers). The offspring of the author, Leanne Simpson, comes from the dissolution of the Anishinaabe in Ojibwe / Ojibwa, on the official basis of the Fifth Treaty of First Nations which institutionalized them, naming them Nishinaabeg, those responsible for guarding the language, the culture, the rites, myths and watch over the preservation of the other generations.

By spatially addressing such divisions of these Indians and the 'agreed' treaties between whites and 'uncivilized', the Anishinaabeg were forced, in large measure, to live in border areas between the United States and Canada. Reasons such as colonization, exploitation of natural and human resources, violence against the natives and their culture have dissolved resulting in abuses, genocide, extinctions, violations, disrespect, and denial of these natives, having as a product the modernity.

In reading the book one can see consecutively that the nation to which Leanne belongs and so many other indigenous peoples have suffered and still suffer from the marks of colonization. To think about the narratives and conversations of the characters in *Islands of Decolonial Love* is to make the reader reflect on the invisible 'cracks' that the civilizing process and its 'obscure' side unleash under the 'ethics' of the rhetoric of modernity and the progressive discourse of capitalism.

## **2. Reflection on modernity based on the work *Islands of Decolonial Love***

According to Mignolo (2008, p. 293), "development was another term in the rhetoric of modernity to conceal the reorganization of the logic of coloniality: the new forms of control and exploitation of the sector of the world",<sup>2</sup> so this logic is made up of the rhetoric of modernity tied to the vigilant and ostensible discourses of control of these minority peoples, giving vigor and robustness to the practices of racialization and appropriation/exploration of these human lives.

This way of shouting the 'enchanted beings' once about to lose themselves in modernity, humming pages of life histories, poetizing ancient customs, and venting

indigenous genocide, was by permission of the nishinaab elders. As Hansen (2014, p. 92) relates "Simpson received permission from her elders to share a portion of the prophecy". Thus, the act of rescuing cultural values also involved some caution with the stigmata that these ancestors felt with the sacred prophecy of the seventh fire, whose men and earth would suffer with the greed for space and power coveted by the white-colonizer gichi-mookomaan as long as there were indigenous generations. In the chapter nogojiwanong such omens are revisited, the characters articulate strategically by legal means, letters are destined to the government. They write in English language and explain their reasons for colonizers do not exploit their reserves, do not violate the mother earth with excavators and add "well that big elevator machine, turns out it not so special after all. It not so magic. while all those white people just sailing down the concrete river riding up and down on that elevator machine ... start to hurt veins of mother earth" (Simpson, 2013, p. 118).

With the 'prophecy' of historical narratives unveiled to indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, Leanne presents a tool of constant struggle that fosters the subversion of the practices of exploitation and cultural appropriation violently inflicted by colonialism. An alternative of the subject being/rebuilding through decolonial love. A strategy to place at the heart of the discussion the existential problematic of the exploitation of natural resources, land, food and the Indian himself having the ability to manipulate the English language and the anishinaabeg language in the subversive, decolonizing aspect. The chapter gezhizhwazh warns the indigenous how to be an active and cautious subject to the discriminatory practices that 'white', gichi-mookomaan<sup>3</sup>, exert on the indigenous and how such acts end up being naturalized and passively accepted by society. Between a speech by an elderly nishinaabe and an urbanized indigenous youth,

then you're not thinking like them", he replied as he ran his big toe slowly up the inside of her leg.  
i am thinking like them, so much so, i sometimes forget i'm me. It's not that", she said.  
then what is it gezh?" he asked nudging his nose into the space between her ear lobe and her neck.  
it's that time their power is all over the place, there is no single target. it's everywhere".  
then start at the beginning, even everywhere starts at the beginning, gezh, maybe the rest will follow". (Simpson, 2013, p. 110).

A probable representation of decolonial love would be that of Junot Díaz, in his work *Fukú Americanus* (2007). In this work the author elaborates a stigmatized character, Oscar Wao, conceived of a relation of rape, with ability to find a love that united can exert the power to decolonize their bodies and minds, without ignoring previous facts, such as physical rape, cognitive and cultural.

### *2.1 Narrative genre to attract the indigenous audience as well*

In a brief comparison, an author very close to the narrative genre of Leanne Simpson is José Saramago. Both flee standardizations of writing; they have peculiar ways of working their texts. Saramago used to say that "all the said is intended to be heard", or, to better understand:

... it is as an oral narrator that I see myself when I write and that words are written by me both to be read and to be heard. The oral narrator does not use punctuation, he speaks as if composing music and uses the same elements as the musician: sounds and pauses, ups and downs, some, brief and long, others. (Saramago, 1997, p. 223)<sup>4</sup>.

The author seeks a more careful expression, close to her origins to make the reading available to an audience that is also determining for her, the indigenous people. Echevarría (2011, p. 83) points out that in the Spanish golden age “writing was a way to achieve freedom, legitimation”<sup>5</sup>, even though many indigenous societies are also based on orality, the author (Leanne Simpson) knows that colonization imposes writing and it empowers, liberates, and legitimizes.

As the mark of orality prevails over the phonetic writing of the Ojibwe, categorically the language is composed of double vowel system, which allows to identify that a certain phoneme is pronounced in a longer way, similarly in English there are long vowels, exemplifying in nishinaabeg, *ogichidaakwe jijaak doodem* (sacred woman), it is notorious the consecutive repetitions of the vowels.

Being an Algonquian language of the northern Great Lakes of America, there is a close phonemic relationship of the Nishinaabeg language to the English language, probably due to the incursions of the Spanish and French colonizers, linguistic mutability occurred abruptly with the entry of the British mid-seventeenth century, projecting sociolinguistic changes in the Anishinaabeg culture.

In an interview with the *Asus Journal* she comments: “I wanted my Indigenous audience to be able to seamlessly identify with the characters, to see their own strength love and humour reflected back to them” (Winder, 2014). Simpson considers and takes care that there is interest on the part of the indigenous society by her works, because it has ties with her origin and feels responsible in transmitting that knowledge that, throughout her life, has been part of her cultural richness. It is undisputed to think that when one reads the individual is overwhelmed by reading, for, according to Steiner (1988, p. 28-29)

... reading is a form of acting. We attract the presence of the voice of the book. We allow you to enter, even if not without reserve, in our intimate. A magnificent poem, a classic novel forcibly enters our interior; take over and occupy the strong squares of our consciousness. They exercise on our imagination and desires, on our most secret ambitions and dreams, a strange and forceful domain<sup>6</sup>.

In fact, indigenous languages do not have an ample validity, although there is speech and writing, that is, they are “silenced societies”, according to Mignolo (2003, p. 108); however, this author further clarifies that they “are not heard in the planetary production of knowledge, guided by the local histories and local languages of “silencing societies”<sup>7</sup>. When Leanne Simpson puts the nishnaabemowin language and the English language side by side in the same text, we realize that there is a break in the way of treating knowledge, since in indigenous society there is also a historical context, a culture, moreover, is also a decolonial position founded on the language of her people that has resisted coloniality.

## 2.2 Decolonial love

In the chapter “*it takes an ocean not to break*” the narrator shows an obtuse white therapist, who uses the word “aboriginal”, or compares the natives to “refugees”. However, a friend of the narrator, Lucy, argues: “you have to lay all of you Indian shit out on the first day, drug abuse, suicide attempts, all the times you got the beat up, all of that shit. Then you sit back and watch how they react. then you’ll know if they can deal or not” (Simpson, 2013, p. 80); it is perceived that the language of the colonizer

is used to speak of the evils that the whole process of colonization provoked in the native nations. It would be a metaphor very close to the feeling of Caliban, character of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, with respect to Prospero. The colonizer hears and deals with the oppression he imposes on the oppressed in his own hegemonic language.

Fanon argued that colonization requires more than the material subordination of a people. It also provides the means by which people are able to express themselves and to understand each other. He identifies this in radical terms at the heart of language and even in the methods by which the sciences are constructed. This is epistemological colonialism. (Gordon, 2008, p. 15).

Still with regard to language, in the chapter *gezhihwazh* a character asks: "Why you not talking normal? and where is your rez accent? why are not you talking like an Indian?" Then the other character responds: "not everyone listen when i talk in my accent. some people only think that i'm smart when i talk like peter mansbridge" (Simpson, 2013, p. 107). It is noticed by the conversation that the first person thinks that to speak normal is to speak the indigenous language, the mother language. However, the other explains that there is resistance on the part of the public to listen to any speech with an accent, that the most accepted is to speak as a news anchor; that is, the influential, grammatically correct language that comes from a ruling class.

In her word, Pratt (2012, p. 24) argues that "When the colonizers show up, the people they encounter become "indigenous" or "aboriginal". They become, that is, those who were "there/here from the before" – where the before is marked by the arrival of the colonizer". The character has mastery of at least two languages, as we perceive; being one of them with accent for being a foreign language. The learning of a language has as one of the elemental communication scopes. Making ourselves understood clearly does not mean speaking the foreign language as if we were natives. However, the lack of awareness of those who do not tolerate listening to the other because there is an accent in the speech of the enunciator is a peculiarity of those who believe that languages have a border, belonging; In addition, a language such as Portuguese, English, Spanish, for example, supports a large number of accents from its natives, which is characteristic of the region.

The confrontation with the settler is frequent during the reading. In the chapter *smallpox, anyone* a teacher says to the character *Leanne*:

if you would just read more post-colonial theory, you'd understand that your anger is part of the binary of colonialism and therefore colonial and if you just take some of the things from settlers and some of the things from your ancestors, you'll find you can weave them into a really nice tapestry, which will make the colonizers feel ambivalent and then you've altered the power structure. (Simpson, 2013, p. 33-34).

Colonialism is linked to the construction of modernity. Mignolo (2003, p. 81) explains that for some thinkers in Latin America colonialism began in the sixteenth century and ended around the nineteenth century, when modernity starts, which is intrinsically linked to Europe, "While coloniality refers to the perspective of the colonizing country"<sup>8</sup>, still according to the author; in the same way, the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (1992, *apud* Mignolo, 2003, p. 85) speaks of the "coloniality of power", that in this context "the dominated population, in the new identities that had been attributed to them, were also subjected to Eurocentric hegemony as a way of knowing"<sup>9</sup>, this author further explains that the identities "Indio" and "Black" were homogenized by this

coloniality of power, erasing their diversities.

For Mignolo (2003, p. 84), “modernity and coloniality are the two sides of the modern world system”<sup>10</sup>; so that what exists today as a capitalist economy could not have existed without the Americas, or, to enter the geographical context of the book *Islands of Decolonial Love*, the United States and Canada, where the work is set, are areas where riches were taken as reserves of iron, coal and fossil among others and taken to England, France. While those two countries were in the colonial period Europe was already entering into modernity. It made use of the riches brought from beyond the sea to develop its trade, to expand the navigations, and to flourish the arts.

Céspedes del Castillo (*apud* Mignolo, 2003, p. 90) observes that “the main beneficiaries of this trafficking were European intermediaries: merchants, bankers, shipbuilding and other industries”<sup>11</sup>, all of which enhanced the arts on the continent and “subsequent European economic policy”.

In *gezhizhwazh*, in the fragment *she sang them home*, it is written “it’s over now, you can cry now, it’s over, we’re all going to be ok now, they’re gone. and there is more of us waiting to be born” (Simpson, 2003, p. 126). We realized that crying was inhibited, pain was mute, there were limits to subordinates; staying well now suggests that the inclement, the insensitive that was weakening is gone, the oppression has lost its breath, strength and there are many more about to come, waiting to be born and to be recognized as superior human beings, and begin to change what is subaltern, which is on the sidelines. The colonialism seen by Simpson (interview given to Naomi Klein, 2013) is the one that puts itself in the right to extract ideas, resources, without respecting the knowledge, the culture of the other, or usurpation without any recognition, as hegemony of one people over another.

colonialism has always extracted the indigenous – extraction of indigenous knowledge, indigenous women, indigenous peoples. Children from parents. Children from families. Children from the land. Children from our political system and our system of governance. Children - our most precious gift. In this kind of thinking, every part of our culture that is seemingly useful to the extractivist mindset gets extracted. The canoe, the kayak, any technology that we had that was useful was extracted and assimilated into the culture of the settlers without regard for the people and the knowledge that created it (Klein, 2013).

Simpson (in an interview) explains that “... the purpose of life then is this continuous rebirth, it’s to promote more life” (Klein, 2013). This purpose comes from the traditions, the knowledge, the rituals, the legends told by the elders, the wisdom that is always transmitted and preserved. Everything is shared as seeds that are cultivated with great care so that they can bear fruit vigorously.

Part of this continuous rebirth is found in *asinykwe* (Simpson, 2013, p. 127); a holy woman who persistently reaps the fragments of the earth that have been scattered after the creation, and travels through indigenous territories placing in a basket souvenirs of ceremonies, dances and songs causing indigenous people of many nations to remember their traditions. Everything was taught to young women and all these teachings were then planted and passed on to future generations as seeds.

Since then, the etymology of the Ojibwe/Ojibwa emanates the essence of the “keepers of the faith” (the faithkeepers), those responsible for memories, whether these be joyful or painful. Connecting to ancestors through dreams, ceremonies, is to establish future

protective and/or active actions, placing the power of vision/omen for descendants. Maintain generational inheritances without ceasing, decolonize minds and practices.

Only by understanding the local contexts does the insertion of the dominant fill the spaces of ownership over the lives of many minority groups. In this perspective, the Nishinaabe community is currently capable of uttering decolonial attitudes and ideas, without undoing its indigenous identity, without changing its ancestry/descent, without repealing what by natural conception belonged to them: the land as mother and guardian of natural children.

To spiritualize, energize, reborn and redecorate the philosophy of life, living well - cultivating opportunities of social and geopolitical relations that interlace in a proposal of sharing, of collaboration between people, thus achieving what Leanne Simpson affirms when being interviewed by Klein (2013) "to promote more life".

To carry out the 'decolonial turn' is to get rid of the dominant theoretical apparatus, to dissociate itself from the eurocentric and imperialist nomenclatures. By listing the *mino bimaadiziwin* in the Anishisnaabeg community in order to expand this millenarian interaction in three prefixal modes re - to resist, to renew and to regenerate - leading to the central axiom of her work in analysis, decolonial love, to be dialogued in diverse hierarchies of gender, race, power and language.

The feeling of contempt and inferiority is perceptible in countless situations throughout the reading; in a given passage the narrator attentive to the fact that in her identity card there is the "status indian printed beside my name, and the word slut is released, corroding my veins, erasing my lungs" (Simpson, 2013, p. 54); Judith Butler (2010, p. 167) explains that "performativity ... is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norm"<sup>12</sup>, since "India" and "whore" are stigmatized words, legitimation of what is inferior, or as Butler (2010, p. 167) puts the human close, in an interview with Patricia Knudsen, "there is a way in which the category of the human at the same time allows the recognition of certain humans and produces an impossibility for others. And these others we call human? What do we call them?"<sup>13</sup> (Knudsen, 2010, p. 167).

The same uneasiness occurs in the *Ishpadinaa* chapter, when in a park in Toronto there is a plaque which reads: "when an indian dies on a picnic table in downtown Toronto, call 911" (Simpson, 2013, p. 95). In parks it is common warning signs not to give food to animals, not to approach them, not to soil, however, what the narrator reads is evidenced that the Indian is treated as an object, an animal, and at the same time is the question why an Indian would die on a table in the middle of a park? Why is there a need for such a warning? The idea is a completely senseless scene.

Aimé Césaire (1978, p. 26, author's emphasis) writes that "the colonizer, in order to give himself a good conscience, is accustomed to seeing the *animal* in the other, to treat him as an animal, to transform himself, in *animal*"<sup>14</sup>. The Indians were taken from their means, their rituals, their beliefs, and habits and come to live with fear, subservience, affliction, low self-esteem. The scene of a dead Indian on a table in a park looks like a paradox. Usually, parks are bucolic, places of diversion, symmetry with nature, however, the fact that there is a warning like this passes the notion that there is tolerance on the part of the rest of the non-indigenous population in the face of such a grotesque warning; thus, they are part of a complicity and legitimacy granted to the natives.



The Indian name in the identity of the narrator, as had been previously said, is a way of segregating, marking the individual, dominating his consciousness, yet a heterosexual or white individual is not distinguished in the same way in any situation. The infamous treatment of segregation also received the Jews, who walked with a yellow insignia by imposition of the church in century XIV, in Venice - Italy, besides the second Great War to be more easily differentiated by the Nazis. In addition, we see that the author brings, through the indigenous legacy, an identity that is founded on the same principles as any other people such as philosophy, dreams, worldview, responsibility, and respect for others and for nature.

Goffman (*apud* Falcão & Camargo, 2016, p. 93, author's italics) in his studies on stigmas, with regard to social identity, states that the Greeks created the term stigma "to refer to bodily signs", and that through them an individual would have his moral *status* depreciated. This being would be "a blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided", especially in public space. The author stresses that the most disadvantageous "undesirable attributes" are those that run away from preestablished models for "a given type of individual". Thus, for example, the stigmatization of someone or a group, such as that of indigenous, black, Jewish or homosexuals, is an attempt to confirm "usualness of another", as in the case of whites, Christians and heterosexuals.

The stigmatized may, according to the author, be in the condition of discredited or discreditable. The first includes cases such as those of Indians, gays, Jews, blacks where stigma falls on "blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty" among others. The second would be one who "is neither known by those present nor immediately perceivable by them". The stigmatized is seen as not being "quite human" since those considered normal will always insist on the inferiority of the stigmatized subject.

*Buffalo on* starts in this manner: "right off the bat, let's just admit we're both from places that have been fucked up through no fault of our own in a thousand different ways for seven different generations and that takes a toll on how we treat each other. it just does" (Simpson, 2013, p. 85). This paragraph has something relevant to say, it seems a line in time linking the past tense to the present day. The numeral *both* used in the above paragraph invites the reader to a dialogue that goes beyond a simple reading. *Islands of Decolonial Love* is filled with search for "recognition, coexistence, bond and love", these relationships are perceived in each chapter, or island. Colonialism was violent and brought enormous damage, however, we have realized through the characters, stories, and songs that the indigenous nations have tried to unite these ties among them in a salutary and rich way. The colonizers attacked, humiliated, assaulted, beaten, however, it is necessary to know how to survive, to stand up, to fight, or, as the narrator says: "you're not the first person to go through this" (Simpson, 2013, p. 85).

The text draws a reflection between the reading and the reader because it urges the last one to understand the complex indigenous question beyond reading because, as Steiner (1988, p. 22) argues about literature, it "deals essentially and constantly with the image of man, with the form and the stimulus of human conduct"<sup>15</sup>. The work shows attitudes of resistance without hatred, and through the characters shows the human, who goes beyond words.

Continuing from the perspective of the individual, *buffalo on* is divided into four sections, the second tells about the infidelity of a white policeman, *Garry*, against his

partner, the narrator, an Indian woman. After the flagrant of betrayal happens the narrator argues: "you're sitting there, expecting me to freak, expecting me to be mad and cry and throw random objects at you and call you a loser and selfish and a cheater. And you're all ready to defend yourself and tell me she means nothing and that it will never happen again" (Simpson, 2013, p. 89).

The narrator's speech breaks with the preconception that the betrayed woman needs to cry, shout, or beg for the partner's affection. Maybe do not. However, freaking out is commonplace among betrayed people, or particularly frail, languid, and sexually passive women. But as an indigenous and marginal person she is aware of patriarchy and colonialism. According to Hooks (1995, p. 469) "white culture had to produce an iconography of black bodies that resisted representing them as highly endowed with sex, the perfect incarnation of primitive and unbridled eroticism"<sup>16</sup>, i.e. the slavers took the bodies of the slaves because they were aware that they had paid for them, they were their owners and their bodies passed on an idea of aggressive sensuality; in the case of the natives the colonizers held the bodies of the indigenous women because they belonged to the nature which they themselves colonized.

In Pero Vaz de Caminha's letter to the King of Portugal, after the discovery of Brazil, this scrivener highlights the beauty of the Indians women in this way: "and one of those girls was all dyed. And it was so well made and so round, and her shame (which she had not) so gracious, that the many women of our land, seeing such features, had made her ashamed, because they did not have hers like her"<sup>17</sup>. It is perceived that there is a lowering of the body of the European women compared to that of the indigenous woman, which seems more sensual, attractive and likely to be seen as free, without modesty, in the mind of the colonizer. We can say that the character of Leanne Simpson's work appears in a heroic role, not in the idealized indigenist perspective, as for example by the Brazilian novelist José de Alencar, but as a synthesis from the action of the colonizer; she does not freak and knows she was raised to survive, to be strong, to join forces and to continue to live.

*Birds in a cage* is a tale about two women.

me and vera talk and talk that second night and that third night and then that fourth week. the bar plays an endless loop of metallica, bon jovi, guns n' roses, ac/dc and stairway to heaven. It's going good, me and vera. no drama. no mess. It's easy. It's normal (Simpson, 2013, p. 50).

Julie Greenberg (*apud* Lugones, 2007, p. 194) argues that "sex is still presumed to be binary and easily determinable by an analysis of biological factors"; the categories of man and woman are demarcated in the modern colonial system. The author goes on to explain that "despite anthropological and medical studies to the contrary, society presumes an unambiguous binary sex paradigm in which all individuals can be classified neatly as male or female", that is, the law defines sex binarily and whoever does not adhere to this standard is considered marginal, it is the margins of society.

Lugones (2007, p. 195) says that in many tribal societies, prior to colonization, intersex individuals were ordinarily settled in their communities, there was no assimilation to sexual binarism. The narrator is very confident in saying: "me and vera. no drama. no mess. It's easy. It's normal". The search for an individual passes through another individual, independent of sexuality, because this is the condition of the human being.

Thus, the character transgresses the standard colonial model of the woman idealized for procreation and extends the conditions of gender. Many subjects have difficulties in defining their sex; this definition is a colonial standard imposition because the individual is classified biologically by sex, male or female.

Therefore, many people undergo surgical corrections with the intention of defining sex according to gender, because the definition does not happen biologically, that is, having a male organ means being a man or having a female organ means being a woman. It is not something complete. Lugones (2007, p. 195, emphasis added) argues that “he cosmetic and substantive corrections to biology make very clear that “gender” is antecedent to the “biological” traits and gives them meaning”. Dias (2014, p. 9) dialogues with the same reasoning adding that before colonization many societies accepted more than two representations of gender, such as: transsexual, asexual and the third gender.

### 3. Final considerations

Simpson’s work (2013) highlights situations of domination when the designation “India” must come adjacent to the name in the identity; or the possibility of a dead Indian at a picnic table, and even when he needs to camouflage his own indigenous accent to hide the origin of the speech. These situations mark, differentiate, exclude, excuse, and, in this way, marks of separation are created, or modes of submission to show violence and power, highlighting the submission of the other, or its denial.

Possession is the way in which an entity, although existing, is partially denied. It is not just that the entity is an instrument and a tool - it means a means; it is also an end - consumable, it is food and, in the enjoyment, it is offered, given, depends on me. Vision, of course, measures my power over the object, but it is already enjoyment. The encounter with another person consists in the fact that, despite the extent of my domination over him and his submission, I do not own him. (Lévinas, 2010, p. 30).

The existence of the other cannot be denied. This is the aim of the work, proposing, for example, to highlight the non-standardization of grammar, in addition to drawing attention to the numerous forms of pressure and suppression of a people. Can we omit ourselves in the face of human suffering, becoming indifferent because we do not feel what the other feels?

Lévinas points out that when we did something we did not want to do, we ended up doing countless other things we did not want to do, “when I reached out to get a chair close, I folded my coat sleeve, scratched the park, I dropped the ash from my cigarette” (Lévinas, 2010, p. 23-24). In other words, according to the philosopher, we leave traces of all our actions, and that if we try to erase them, we will also leave other traces. Or rather, for each attempt to erase the other in its entirety we create situations that turn against us. We are all involved in this mechanism, and trying to take a step forward, in fact, we are regressing against ourselves, as it is necessary to have sensitivity and responsibility towards the other, since this other gives meaning to our existence.

When God asks Cain about his brother Abel, he replies: “I don’t know; Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Biblia Hebraica, 2006, p. 13-14). Now Lévinas (2010, p. 138) says that “Cain’s answer is sincere. His answer is lacking only in ethics; there is only ontology in it: I am me and he is he. We are ontologically separated beings”. What Cain lacked was the responsibility and sensitivity in front of his brother Abel, of an equal nature is what we found in multiple passages when reading *Islands of Decolonial Love*.

So, why point out in an identity card that someone is an Indian? What makes me think that the other has not reached a humanity that is noble, worthy of respect? It is more like dehumanization, a non-responsibility of one being towards the other.

Leanne Simpson is a constant voice in matters of extractivism, indigenous lands and environment, that is, there is the concern of her people to leave a world that is better, but at least in very good conditions for future generations. This concern demonstrates ethics, responsibility, and sensitivity towards the other. This produces affection, in addition to adding value to others, to others. The insertion in the search for a better world shows that the relationship with the other needs to be very close, that it is the other that constitutes me as myself, a relationship of reciprocity.

The actions of the indigenous people portrayed in Simpson's work (2013) are the search for dignity, respect, ethics, and a way of presenting literarily and literally that they are noble, worthy of respect, like any human being, regardless of any condition.

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### Notes

1. This group is descended from the Algonquian and Ojibwa peoples. The great concentration of their communities is in the northern United States, Dakota, Minnesota, Lake Huson and Canada, mainly in the great lakes, Ontario, and Manitoba areas. Historically, Anishisnaabe are peaceful, and the origin of their tribal name means: "original people". Therefore, on Canadian soil, these indigenous people prefer to be called First Nations or the first peoples.

2. free translation done by the authors.
3. Gichi-mookomaan means white man.
4. free translation done by the authors.
5. free translation done by the authors.
6. free translation done by the authors.
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