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Placed: Respect for Existing Value in Decolonizing Philosophy

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Abstract

In “Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of Existing Value,” G. A. Cohen offers an anticapitalist philosophy of valuing that takes as given the existence itself of particular valuable and valued things, and commitment through time to cherishing relationships to them. In this article, I argue that “being placed,” in precolonial senses, and decolonial “being in” and “seeking place,” are the givens of being valuing, living creatures among valuing, living creatures. Valuing as placed and valuing being placed are intrinsic to decolonial feminist resistance to the gendered, racialized, and denatured ideological warfare on the terms of life. Place is not one among other values; place and placed temporality must be accepted as given. In place, the past is living in the present. Placed decolonial valuing is the only resistance to solipsistic destruction of all that has value, to a coloniality that would fragment the past to destroy the life force of the capacity to value present existing and living. Thus I bring Cohen’s rescuing valuable things, and the capacity to value them, to intergenerational, interspecies, temporally located placedness shared across diverse peoples prior to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century conquests and nineteenth-century imperialism, and in perpetual resistance to contemporary settler societies and coloniality.

[The English] don’t seem to know that this empire business was all wrong and they should, at least, be wearing sackcloth and ashes in token penance of the wrongs committed, the irrevocableness of their bad deeds, for no natural disaster imaginable could equal the harm they did. Actual death might have been better. And so all this fuss over empire—what went wrong here, what went wrong there—always makes me quite crazy, for I can say to them what went wrong: they should never have left their home, their precious England, a place they loved so much, a place they had to leave but could never forget. And so everywhere they went they turned it into England; and everybody they met they turned English. But no place could ever really be England, and nobody who did not look exactly like them would ever be English, so you can imagine the destruction of people and land that came from that.

—Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

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Place-Valuing in Anticolonial Resisting

We ought to attend to place, the rich, living community of which we are an embedded and embodied part, a feature of nature, and to appreciate ourselves as placed in interspecies social relations, interconnected and interdependent, belonging within our particular locality, sensed and valued as historically rooted, intergenerationally connected. This should be taken as given. I take as my point of departure diverse conceptions of decolonial place, struggles resisting uprooting and seeking resituatedness in anticolonial valuing and living. Affinity with this living and thus necessarily complexly rooted sense of place has been normative for many peoples for a very long time despite and before capitalism, as it was before colonialism or feudalism. I bring a philosophy of valuing developed by G. A. Cohen in his critique of capitalism's attack on the very ability to value (Cohen 2007, 2011) to this sense of place shared across diverse peoples prior to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century conquests and nineteenth-century imperialism, and in perpetual resistance to contemporary settler societies and coloniality. I argue that decolonial place is the "given" that Cohen is reaching for in his provocative last work, "Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of Existing Value" (Cohen 2011). Cohen defends radical, small "c"-conservatism as a philosophy of valuing where we are oriented to respect and to cherish what has value for its own sake. Resisting capitalism's degrading valuing by incremental changes in valuers' tolerances for transgressing prior moral boundaries, eventually conditioning focus on the speculative "value" of "development," Cohen argues that respecting and cherishing what has value entails a bias in favor of existence, of accepting that some things are given. I argue that being placed, in a pre-colonial sense, is the given of existence, the given of being valuing, living creatures among valuing, living creatures, as are decolonial and anticolonial being in and seeking place. Valuing as placed, and valuing being placed, is intrinsic to decolonial and anticolonial feminist resistance to gendered, racialized, and denatured ideological warfare on the terms of life.

I argue that Cohen's call for philosophers to attend to respecting and cherishing existing value, to a bias in favor of the things themselves that are valued and valuable, and to embrace conservatism as sensitivity to moral boundedness, provides a basis in English-language terms for a fittingly situated—materially, spiritually, and temporally—resisting-coloniality philosophy of valuing. Reciprocally, I argue that valuing place, an embodied, embedded valuing, is complexly biased in favor of existence; its embodied moral locatedness as sensibility entails an in-time-ness critical to the nature of valuing. Place is not one among other values; place and placed temporality must be accepted as given. In place, the past is living in the present. Placed decolonial valuing is the only resistance to solipsistic destruction of all that has value, to a coloniality that would fragment the past to destroy the life force of our capacity to value present existing and living.

Nation-states, including as directed by multinationals and asset funds, exert ideological pressure on their inhabitants into conformist solipsism. These projection-destructions attack natural inclinations and capacities to value existence itself, including our own existing. Ingested by the repetitious, manufactured appetite of its host narcissism, the solipsistic gaze desensitizes valuing existing things by an ideological feat of replacement of existing value with projected, use-disposability nonvalue. Vandana Shiva calls this "the many shifts of value into non-value" (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 27). Anticolonial and decolonial valuing, then, resist capitalist colonialism's attack on our very capacity to value, and our capacity to value life itself as essentially placed, presently located in historically and ecologically rooted living processes.

A Decolonial Sense of Place

To value place is to be tethered to life. I take a radical, decolonial sense of place, in resistance to uprooting, to connote and to value being embodied as “inside” nature, an inter-relational, intergenerational, and interspecies rootedness in motion. The spatiality and temporality of place in this decolonial sense connote the vibrancy of ecological as cultural as historical embeddedness. I write as placed, temporally placed, in the colonial era of settler societies on lands interconnected with intersecting occupations and uprootings of peoples and their animal communities and ecosystems, rivers, lakes, continents, and with resistance movements to such uprootings.

Place is resisting abstract conceptions of dehistoricized spatiality or “place” denuded of inhabitants, whether of particular peoples or geography or other living creatures (Poole 1998; Kincaid 2011, 26). Place is intergenerational, historical rootedness (Rodney 1973; Oyèwùmí 1997; Alfred 1999; Mies and Shiva 1993/2014; Restall, Sousa, and Terraciano 2005; Alfred 2009; Restall and Lane 2011); and intersubjective, resisting ruptures, seeking to be re-situated (Sweet 2011; Ortega 2014). Place is contextually rooted memory, resisting “green capitalism’s” “green revolutions” and “green imperialism,” and colonial constructs of abstract, consumable space characteristic of the Global North/first-world side of Global South producer <-> Global North consumer or *Le tiers monde* (third-world) <-> first-world webs of relations (Fanon 1961/2016; Mies and Shiva 1993/2014; Guha 1998). Place is rooted, living resistance to colonial constructs of race, gender, nature, and value, not only disembodied and dematerialized, but desacralized (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 170), denuded of confluent temporality and living essence.

A decolonial sense of place values those who lived as rooted and those who were denied but seeking situatedness, from the early colonial era to present coloniality. It intends place-based efforts: Indigenous resurgence on what Onkwehonwe (original people) in the northeastern part of the continent call Anówara Kawennote (Turtle Island) rather than “North America” (Alfred 2009); bell hooks belonging in Kentucky (hooks 2009); Indian women keeping seed (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014); Bárbara Falero and other illegally enslaved Caribalí-Oru (of Nigeria) women recreating community by shared memory in social networks and driving freedom suits against unlawful slavery (Ortega 2014); sometimes free, sometimes enslaved Domingos Álvares recreating community by ritual and healing (Sweet 2011); learning and teaching ancestor’s language (Alfred 2009; Kanahle 2011; Kimmerer 2011). My nonchronological naming of these place-based efforts calls spiritual situatedness to our colonial era.

I carry a river.

It is who I am: “Aha Makav.”

This is not a metaphor. (Diaz 2020)

I intend a conception of place that respects localism or “micro-patriotism” (Restall and Lane 2011), including women’s knowledge of biodiversity (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014) and street-walker theorizing (Lugones 2003). I intend a sense of place resisting the coloniality of gender and sexual identities fused with constructs of “race” (Oyèwùmí 1997; Lugones 2003; Sigal 2005; Lugones 2010; 2020). I intend sensing ourselves as understanding through our emotional life, though the “spirit world” (Lugones 2010), a “materialist spirituality” (Plumwood 2002), “ecofeminist spirituality” (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014), through reciprocity, “reciprocation” (Kanahle 2011, 297), and

“entangled empathy” as caring perception in intersubjective relationship; we are called “to radically change whom we cognitively and affectively think we are in a relationship with,” embracing moral anger at racial injustice (Cherry 2017, 448; 2019). Indigenous languages (Alfred 2009; Kimmerer 2011) and naming (Kincaid 2011) capture the past as living and the moral sphere of valuing as life; language is culture, and language is memory (Ortega, 2014). Yet the conceptual scheme of English is ever degrading (Switzer 2021). Listening to subjectivities denied by epistemic violence is everything: of all living creatures (Oyèwùmí 1997; Jensen 2004), rivers (Diaz 2020), and human voices resisting racialized gender oppressions (Dotson 2011; Cherry 2019) through language (Oyèwùmí 1997; Lugones 2003; Alfred 2009; Kimmerer 2011; Kanahele 2011). María Lugones’s lively, placed language for conceiving of and appreciating us-connections through world-traveling, resisting colonial borders with loving perception, orients and carries me (Lugones 2003).

This sense of place, conceived as emanating from the pedestrian view of the aforementioned diverse fields of study, is radically decolonial in its resensitivity to the roots beyond layers of colonial imposition,¹ in appreciating the connection between domination of the earth and uprooting of peoples’ cultural identities and colonial violence, and in rooted resisting and respecting our interconnectedness with living systems and our particularity, and understanding identities or conceptions of self and community and possibilities as placed within them. Decolonial place is resisting the coloniality of gender, as described by Lugones:

The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus of people’s senses of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity, and social, ecological, and cosmological organization. Thus, as Christianity became the most powerful instrument in the mission of transformation, the normativity that connected gender and civilization became intent on erasing community, ecological practices, knowledge of planting, of weaving, of the cosmos, and not only on changing and controlling reproductive and sexual practices. One can begin to appreciate the tie between the colonial introduction of the modern concept of nature central to capitalism, and the colonial introduction of the modern concept of gender, and appreciate it as macabre and heavy in its implications. (Lugones 2010, 745)

Placing Resisting < - > Settler “Values”

Listen for the reverberations of Lugones’s lesson that “[r]esistance will be understood always in the gerund, a resisting” (Lugones 2003, 208). I appeal to Lugones’s call into what is an attuned to in-process temporality existing in resisting, to show there is an attuned to “in-time-ness” temporality existing in valuing as small-c conservatism. Valuing “always in the gerund” is a valuing, a nonsolipsistic living, a sensing.

To appreciate resisting, always in the gerund, is a placed philosophy of resistance. Lugones’s critique of theoreticians who adopt a stance of disengagement from the concrete names what is at stake. “Given this valorization of disengagement,” she writes, “[t]hese interwoven conceptions of theorizing and of subjection to oppression conceptually erase the possibility of theorizing resistance from the subaltern position and from within the concreteness of body-to-body engagement” (207). “Resistance” from the stance of disengagement is reduced to the tactical (207–8), to calculations already

determined by the parameters of coloniality, already closed off from possibilities for genuine resisting. Yet resisting possibilities are located in the past-present particularity of the pedestrian view.

There is the pedestrian view—the perspective from inside the midst of people, from inside the layers of relations and institutions and practices. There is the understanding of place that sees it as already lost, next to the understanding of place in a mythologizing of its eternal meaning, next to the understanding that seizes its endurance in the possibilities of resisting both myth and erasure. (5)

A small-c conservative appreciation of the nature of valuing as biased in favor of existing valued and valuable things is valuing resisting erasure of placed valued and valuable things. There is a convergent, continuity temporality in existing valued and valuable things. Thus, a bias in favor of existence is itself resisting the “out-of-time,” Western time-slice approach to “time,” a lethal abstraction inflicted on embodied, embedded, self-in-community-consciously-situated temporality. Cohen appreciated how capitalism is not just reactive; going beyond Marxist-Leninism’s appreciation of imperialism as the pinnacle of capitalism, like the eco-feminisms of Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, he understood that capitalism creates new realities of consumption and destruction, not only responding but creating and destroying, taking over the very ability to value, the very sense of value and valuing. I develop Cohen’s appreciating that to be valuing is to be explicitly biased in favor of existence, focusing sensibilities and sensitivities on explicitly self-in-community attunement to the temporality of existence, to its living placedness. To be placed as a valuing being biased in favor of existence is necessarily a situatedness in the temporality of the vibrancy of ecological as cultural as historical embeddedness.

A decolonial sense of placed valuing is fit resisting, always in the *gerund*, to the abstract and solipsistic denuding of the place-value of all things to “consumer-ready” in time-slice. To time-slice is to strip existence. To be placed is to be biased in favor of existence.

Shiva says, “[t]he ‘activation’ of what has been, or is being constructed as ‘passive’ according to patriarchal perception, becomes then the most significant step in the renewal of life” (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 34). Cohen’s radical small-c conservatism perceives, as both Mies and Shiva and Val Plumwood do, that valuing itself has been pacified by and within capitalism’s solipsistic “out of time, place, life” ideological and material destruction. Like Lugones, Cohen’s small-c conservatism feels valuing possibilities in existence, not in pacified illusory abstractions. Small c-conservatism calls attention in English-language terms to purposefully limiting shifting moral boundaries of valuing. I extend that account of valuing, something Cohen welcomed, to place, in the radical decolonial sense of embeddedness in concreteness, to which the pedestrian view is attuned in the sense of intergenerational living memory, linguistic communities, the physicality of interconnectedness within ecosystems. My account of placed valuing thus purposefully limits shifting moral boundaries of valuing, mirroring Indigenous spiritual practices of cultural understandings through memory. Shiva says, “[o]vercoming estrangement from nature’s rhythms and cycles of renewal and becoming a conscious participant in them becomes a major source of this activation” (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 34). Activating our sense of valuing “always in the *gerund*” and always conserving moral boundedness, becomes an explicit element of this “most significant step in the renewal of life.”

Solipsistic Settler-Tourist Displaced “Values”

In Anglo-capitalist culture, valuing is conceived as fragmented “assessments” of options pertaining to values conceived as at a distance, part of the more general “rationalist” method of seeing the observer as outside and those affected as remote. The disengagement methodology of this “rationalist economy,” rides, in Plumwood’s terms, on the hierarchical dualism of “subject”/“object” (Plumwood 2002, 41).

[Pa]ssification of the objectified is a prelude to their instrumentalisation; since as a vacuum of agency, will and purpose they are empty vessels to be filled with another’s purpose and will. As a corollary to this passification, the subject/object division backgrounds or denies the agency of the one studied and any limits respect for this might impose on the knower. (46)

“Rationalist valuing” is aimed at the colonized as fundamentally Other. Indeed, the process of modernity became defined as the increased ability to distance oneself from one’s cultural traditions (Alcoff 2006, 22). The concreteness of “place” was supplanted in modernity’s schemes by the contest of the giants, abstract “space” and “time.” “The subordination of place to space culminates in the seventeenth century; the subordination of space to time continues during the next two-and-a-half centuries” (Casey 2009, 10, 8). “[T]his erasure of place has profound consequences for our understanding of culture, knowledge, nature, and economy” (Escobar 2001, 141). The colonial mark on moral philosophy is apparent in the dominance of “temporalist” conceptions of ethics, where the ultimate moral agent is (masculinist, whitely) abstract, his intentions and actions isolable. Yet Miguel Martinez-Saenz argues, “[u]nderstanding an individual’s place in enduring social structures is a necessary condition for explaining individual responsibility because the temporalist perspective conceives of the individual independent of social relations and cannot adequately establish his responsibility” (Martinez-Saenz 2004, 17).

This solipsistic-by-nature displacement from social relations and responsibility is named in Kincaid’s introduction to *A Small Place* by speaking to this perspective of the white tourist displaced from the Antiguan Black experience. “[S]ince you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought, and so has to watch carefully every drop of fresh water used (while at the same time surrounded by a sea on one side and an ocean—the Caribbean Sea on one side, the Atlantic Ocean on the other), must never cross your mind” (Kincaid 1998, 4). The white tourist’s colonial illusion of Antigua is a solipsistic, temporalist perspective as “individual” outside time and place and moral responsibility, in Martinez-Saenz’s sense.

This is immoral because “amoral” is outside time, place, and moral responsibility; solipsism is diagnosed in two other familiar decolonial feminist analyses of sex tourism and tango tourism, and equally solipsistic liberal and conservative theoreticians’ accounts of them: Mies’s analysis of sex tourism and liberal and conservative theorists’ “aesthetic voyeurism simulation of Nature” (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 155), and Lugones’s calling tango tourism’s and the aficionado’s heteronormative projection, “this idealized [the] fuck out of time and space,” also in Martinez-Saenz’s sense. Mies and Lugones each identify reduction to the tactical that such theorizing entails. Discussing “liberals and leftists, using a superficial left–right dichotomy,” leaving “all these feelings to the rightists” (157), “thought-taboo around issues like motherhood,

land, and so on,” Mies writes, “often leads to merely tactical statements” (159). Discussing “the spatiality of theory,” Lugones writes of disengaged theoreticians: “At best, resistance within this concreteness is reduced to the tactical” (Lugones, 2003, 207). “Satisfaction of the needs for rootedness and ‘belonging,’ for warmth, motherliness, freedom and adventure is sought not by working in co-operation with nature but by consumerism, by purchasing images” (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 143). An aesthetic-voyeuristic simulation of Nature, an exhibitionism of destruction, translates nature “into an abstract idea, both for conservatives and progressives, neither of which are concerned to end the warfare between man and nature, man and woman, metropolises and colonies” (155).

They reach out for what they are destroying. And this reaching out, this searching for the beautiful illusion of nature, protects those who organize this warfare in the name of profit from public criticism and conceals the ugly face of modernity: the war of all against all, the insensible machine-like corpse-like character of the world of commodities. The beautiful illusion of Nature, the simulation of originality and spontaneity, the aesthetic and symbolic representation of Nature makes this world of machines more tolerable. The market opportunities for selling these symbolic representations of Nature grow in proportion to people’s growing frustrations with the hollow benefits of modern civilization. (155)

Decolonial place is resisting shopping for representations of Nature, including women and sex.

Of the tango-tourist representation of Robert Duval and Jorge Luis Borges, Lugones writes:

Robert Duval, an American tango aficionado and a self-proclaimed authority on the tango, confuses it with a dance and finds its attraction in the impression that “here is a people that know that men are men and women are women and are not all embarrassed about it,” a claim he makes with a great sense of pride having found a people so close to his own sensibilities. By this he means that men lead —on the floor of life as it were—and women follow, in a debased sense of the word. The tango for him is a dance understood to be a quintessentially heterosexual performance of the active/submissive understanding of masculinity/femininity. No sexual ambiguities, thus no ambiguities about agency. (Lugones 2012, 51–52)

Lugones’s analysis of Borges’s “affinity with Robert Duval,” who “imagines the spatiality of tango as an explosive mimicry of male-on-male violence” (52), diagnoses a solipsistic displacement. Borges did not see the deep poverty of the marginalized men of the *bajo fondo* negotiating for survival as “what called for violence; violence, rather, is for him the essence of autochthonous masculinity” (53).

I want to add some descriptive reflections of what I learned from dancing the tango. Then I want to add some of the elements that constitute the mere focus on movement without geography and geography without meaning as misguided and as fitting rather the idealized tourist fuck out of time and space. If tango tourism sells the stereotyping of gender that I describe here, and that stereotyping constitutes the dances as a rehearsing of sex, and the dance takes the ones who “follow” to be quasi-inanimate, passive, then the tourist can only be “satisfied”

if he is satisfied with very little, or if his desire is a necrophiliac's desire. But notice that it's all in his head. (53–54)

Place is not “antimodernism,” as colonial, noise-making silencing erasures pretend, for the modern state whose purpose colonialism is to establish is not totalizing. Solipsistic projections of what is in the tourist's head back to himself are not reality. Place in geography with meaning is where we live, “seizing its endurance in the possibilities of resisting both myth and erasure” (5) of and by the tourist's fantasy-reality.

Temporally Situated Valuing Is Resisting

Placed cultural traditions and identities of Indigenous and colonized peoples were and are an obstacle to the totalizing project of global capitalism, the fantasy of humans as portable calculators of the abstract, the delusion of consumer identity as “individual” imagined as out of any place, cultural or natural, instrumentalizing every valuable thing. Life may be wasted at whim in the heads of those conceiving of themselves as individuals “measuring” in abstraction what is valuable as radically distinct from or outside of themselves; all living and nonliving things are reduced to “their” tools or they are nothing, the consequence of fetishizing control and thus “choice” in uncritical worship of “rational” evaluation devoid of feeling.

Vigilant in opposing capitalism's annihilation of all things good, Cohen sought to defend the radical truth in small-c conservatism that many philosophers ignore, but “that *everyone* who is sane recognizes and honors in practice to some degree”: a justified bias toward existing value, against capitalist ideology peddling abstract or potential value while it destroys all valuable things (Cohen 2011, 211) in its insatiable drive to consume what it has isolated, “othered,” fragmented, instrumentalized, and made destructible. Ian Baucom identifies the historical moment this happened, situating us in the long twentieth century of the Atlantic slave trade: the 1791 Zong massacre turned life into financial transactions whose “value” is measured upon its destruction (Baucom 2005).

I argue that appreciating valuing always in the gerund, in existence, entails valuing as placed. As Lugones does for resisting always in the gerund, and Plumwood does for rationality in nature: our conceptions of valuing must be as animals, embodied temporal creatures like all others. Abstract “valuing,” like abstract “rationality,” and tactical “resistance” is displaced as if out of time, totally disconnected from the objects of concern. The small c-conservative presumption in favor of existing value, I argue, entails an implicit temporal and placed sense of identity in valuing. Explicit in a decolonial place sense, small-c conservatism is resisting a culturally specific, industrial notion of time divided into incremental periods, whereas most living creatures relate to time in relation to the sun and by the seasons, depending on their place.

From Cherishing to a Sense of Place

Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing.
—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Cohen set out to expose the failure to understand what it means to value, to say that to appreciate value, the value(s) of a particular thing, is to cherish it (or to recognize that another has reason to cherish it). In this section I show that in “cherishing” and the connection to identity Cohen appreciated, a concept of place is nascent—albeit a

human-centered one. The core ideas of embracing what is, accepting certain things from nature, and contentment in commitment with what has value, are there, fit for decolonial place.

First, Cohen argues there must be a presumption in favor of existing value, what exists now. Existence, as it were, is essential to value being value. The actual is what has value that demands respect, always over and above abstract potential. The rushing and fearing of capitalist ideology drives from consciousness and being attunement to existing value. Second, “cherishing” connotes continuity through time, a grounded relational connection of a certain duration, and contentment with that commitment. In capitalist society, “value” ceases to call up such respect, a fatality of fragmentation. Cohen’s account of cherishing shares with Cherry’s use of “entangled empathy” (Cherry 2017), and Dotson’s “radical love” (Dotson 2013) an emphasis on cherishing commitments continuous through time, and identity grounded in such (Cherry 2017, 448). The justified bias in favor of existing cherishing relationships, a bias for life as intersubjectively experienced from the pedestrian view, as I—hearing Lugones—voice it, derives from the nature of embodied value and valuing. This is precisely why its denial in “rationalist valuing” is so ideologically perverse and potently macabre.

Carrying the point to situatedness in time, Cohen was concerned to identify what the unliving pace of change under capitalism does to our sense of time and capacity to embrace what is and to cherish our own identities.

If we are conservatives in my sense, then we have reason to change slowly because we have reason to be what we are and to carry on with what we have: we cannot simply erase our background and replace it by something better. A conservative regulation gives life continuity. We cannot reinvent ourselves, or our language, or anything that really matters, every day according to what our resources now are and what our opportunities now are. We cannot keep everything “under review.” (Cohen 2011, 223)

Our being is with what has value, and some of it together with us as part of our identity, and so for appropriate durations; hence his attention to “cherishing” as the appropriate attitude toward what has value, and of ongoing relationships with particular cherished values as essential to identity. Implicit in valorizing existing identity, I am arguing, some core of placedness is implicit. The temporal groundedness I am suggesting Cohen meant to invoke with the notion of continuity essential to identity is also, I am arguing, a groundedness in place. “We are attached to particular things because we need to *belong* to something, and therefore need some things to belong to us. We cannot belong to something abstract” (223). Since it ought to stay that way, with the appropriate qualifications, this implies that we stay with it as located with it for some period of time.

Though initially stated in only human terms, when brought to decolonial place, Cohen’s “embracing what is” resonates with Indigenous resurgence as with contextualism. Attending to our nature as animal, we may add to Cohen’s nascent appreciation of place, appreciation that our being is situated, part of what has value in the natural world of our locality, part of vast (nonhierarchical) interspecies and intergenerational interdependencies. To value appropriately, then, requires that we cherish particular valuable things (or recognize that another has reason to cherish), and to cherish is to appreciate the place of what has value and one’s place with it, not only spatially, but spiritually, to be and feel oneself as placed. Like diverse decolonial movements and thought, Cohen’s “embracing what is” grounds itself in contingency as the alternative to chasing

abstraction. To embrace in resistance colonialism's racialized gendered identities is to refuse abstract notions of equality that especially pretend to deny ethno-racial, spiritually situated identities by fiat; it is to embrace living value within complex pedestrian culturally vibrant identities. This is likewise small-c conservative respect for what has value, embracing the contingency of "what is," of "the given." Cohen's notorious reclaiming, in this case of "conservatism," akin to Plumwood's reclaiming of "rationality," enables us to appreciate that groundedness in the given contests capital-C political Conservatism promoting capitalist consumption of the "othered," of cultural identities, of lands, of life. Understanding his notions of embracing what is and contentment in commitment, while embracing our cultural nature as animal, placed in locality in world-traveling identity, is worthy of our cherishing.

The length of time it is appropriate to stay with a cherished value or identity depends. Likewise, there is no assumption that all valuable things are measurable by a single standard, or commensurable (Cohen 2011, 205), nor general principle dictating when place gets priority over other values. A volcanic eruption or tsunami may demand speedy departure from one's locality and the likely death of one's living identity with it, though not of all of one's shared history and memory. Slow departures are appropriate when they involve regret, even when the results are benign. Neither of these diminishes what is most important here. A refusal to depart in the face of corporate or military takeover, whether of universities or lands or water, is justified on small-c conservative grounds of conserving one's identity as placed within a particular locality, of cherishing the value of one's particular place. Some people die on the land to which they belong rather than be uprooted; others live with the harm of being uprooted, reconnecting to a new place if they are able. Valorizing being placed in particular places is thus not pernicious essentialism. What is essential is that because what has value is placed, valuing is necessarily placed; like Plumwood, Cohen exposes abstract valuing is "valuing" what doesn't exist (Plumwood 2002, 16), which is not valuing at all. As Baucom demonstrated, it is insurance-industry "valuing" only what has been extinguished (Baucom 2005).

Placed values and cultural identities respectful of them have a presumptive claim to respect.

My small-c conservative defense of decolonial place, like Cohen's defense of existing value more generally, is about placed being; it is not mere caution about looking before leaping into the unknown (Cohen 2011, 223). Cohen cites *The Communist Manifesto's* pointedly prescient charge that under capitalism, "[a]ll that is solid melts into air." Whereas earlier forms of inequality were consistent with conservative respect for what has value, capitalism "comprehensively transforms everything, including itself." Cohen's essential observation is this: "The propensity of capitalism" is to "maximize a certain kind of value, in sovereign disregard of the value of any *things*" (225). We treat *what* has value as a mere carrier of value; thus, all becomes replaceable, disposable. Feminist accounts of pernicious objectification were preposterously criticized for being too broad in scope (Nussbaum 1995); yet the ideological trend of objectification is totalizing, targeting life itself (Baucom 2005). Hence the crucial importance of distinguishing conserving the valuable or particular valuable things from conserving "value" (by disposal and replacement) in the abstract (Cohen 2011, 210).

My focus on identity in decolonial place is resisting capitalism's connection to life itself "melting into air." Inside distractions from living, felt by senses honed to the "exciting" monotony of the market, capitalism seeks to drown out rhythm with the vagaries and necessities of life, to rupture healthy relations with ecosystems, its myriad

species and our own, to rupture a sense of interconnectedness. Cohen exposed the ramifications of abstracting value out of the world; ecological decolonial philosophies expose the ramifications of simultaneously abstracting ourselves out of interdependency with life systems. Underlying capitalist valuing pressuring failure to cherish, which troubled Cohen, is uprooting. Under one aspect, rushing eclipses locatedness fitting continuity temporality; under the other, value projected as outside embodied relationality is no longer perceptible.

Once a use-value is assigned, the valuable thing is devalued. Anything put into use in a capitalist society will be devalued. The only thing that can't be devalued isn't real, abstract finance value; its unreality is violence perpetrated on diverse colonized peoples.

As the next section will illustrate, I follow colonial historians in taking the cultural disconnect that concerned Cohen to follow from the uprooting from the particular living and natural systems of which we each are a part, understanding of which is carried through memory.

The Nahua: Illustrating Colonialism's Onslaught against Connection to Place

There is a language older by far and deeper than words. It is the language of bodies, of body on body, wind on snow, rain on trees, wave on stone. It is the language of dream, gesture, symbol, memory. We have forgotten this language. We do not even remember that it exists.

—Derrick Jensen, *A Language Older Than Words*

The impact of a money economy on the Nahua (known by the misnomer “Aztec”) demonstrates the propensity of capitalism to destroy a sense of place. Here I follow recent scholarship that renounces Eurocentrism in the historiography of capitalism and globalization by emphasizing the role New World societies played in global capitalism (Tutino 2011). Native-language writings from colonial Mexico document such destructive impact on the Nahua of Tlaxcala. In 1553, the native *cabildo*, or municipal town council made up of Nahua lords, laments the effects of cultivation of a dye called cochineal, European demand for which had increased to supply the European textile industry, to the detriment of food crops for the local community (Restall, Sousa, and Terraciano 2005). To appreciate their lament, bear in mind the distinction between a human economy whose social currencies, as anthropologist David Graeber describes it, “are used to measure, assess, and maintain relationships between people, and only perhaps incidentally to acquire material goods,” and a money economy where the role of sheer physical violence is essential (Graeber 2011, 165). Colonization was a long, protracted process of perpetual violence, particularly against women, not a more or less single short-lived, if horrible, event. “In a human economy, money is not a way of buying or trading human beings, but a way of expressing just how much one cannot do so” (208). As Chandra Talpade Mohanty explains: “Women are not subordinate because of the *fact* of exchange, but because of the *modes* of exchanges instituted and the values attached to these modes” (Mohanty 1984, 341). Appreciated in these terms, this case concerns the imposition of a Spanish colonial money economy on an existing Nahua human economy. What the case of the Nahua exemplifies is that whereas human economies depend on people having a sense of themselves as placed, for money economies to supplant them, such a connection must be broken. “We have perhaps a general principle: to make something saleable in a human economy, one needs to first rip it from its context” (Graeber 2011, 146).

According to the *cabildo*, over the course of eight or nine years, the cochineal cactus came to be planted throughout Tlaxcala, the direct result of Spanish demand for its bright red dye. Food—maize, chiles, and beans—once inexpensive, became expensive. The Nahua lords observed that cultivation of cochineal cactus was distracting the *macehuales* or “commoners” from their moral duties. No longer respecting the cycles of harvest where crops are rotated to preserve balance in the soils, fields were overgrown with grass, and famine had arrived. Those involved in the production of cochineal, the lords decried, were made into wasteful braggarts, drunken and generally neglectful of social duties. Furthermore: “Of those [men] who hire themselves out, many are likewise ruined, because some are now slaves in the hands of the Spaniards.” In the historians’ summary analysis: “As a result of this newfound wealth, [the *macehuales*] neglected their other duties such as maize cultivation, they squandered the profits on luxury goods and conspicuous consumption, and, in general, they subverted the natural social and moral order of the community” (Restall, Sousa, and Terraciano 2005, 130). The introduction of the capitalist *qua* colonial profit motive brings a radical shift in values, and with it, alienation from the habits of the system of social obligations, which because bound by a sense of place, until then had successfully sustained the community. The *cabildo*’s language is telling of the role of identity in such alienation. “It makes [cochineal producers] arrogant and deluded so that it is clear that they esteem themselves only through wealth” (131). In the context of the text their meaning is transparent: for the Nahua lords, to esteem oneself in terms of wealth is delusion. And yet, the lords continue, in a phrase as perfect today: “The wealth they have only makes them vain and swaggering” (132). Alienation from a system of social obligations turns on such a shift in identity. Core to the demise of connection to community and to the land that sustains it is reducing the value of a person to a singular and immoral use-measure, whether monetary—wealth in this case, labor in others—or sexual “service.” The language of the *cabildo*’s lament toward the end of the document aptly captures a loss of sense of place. The Nahua lords state what is obvious in a human economy: money, cacao, and cloth cannot be eaten (133). They appreciate that an identity that values wealth is inherently disvaluable, possible only through delusion, and that such delusion is due to a disconnect from the reality of what can and cannot be eaten, from what values and comportment can and cannot sustain a community. The pursuit of vanity and conspicuous consumption entails forgetting what sustains us, our land and relations with it and with each other, as if their fruits had always come from nothing and could be taken for granted. In a money economy, people may quickly lose their sense of place, of the value of what sustains them, both human and ecological.

“Accepting the Given” from Nature

I think the highest earthly result of imagination is local adaptation.
—Wendell Berry, *Imagination in Place*

A placed small-c conservative conviction that some things must be “accepted as given” defends life and human, cultural, ecological, and historical identity, particularly the value of placed identities, against the kind of destruction illustrated above. There is no place for existing value(s) where the logic of the system is to try to commodify every aspect of life, to bend all of it to the aims of the market. Not everything should be shaped by our aims.

Given things that are of value ought to be retained, but, beyond that, we need some things to be given quite apart from whether they have value other than *because* they are given. It is essential that some things should be taken as given: The attitude of universal mastery over everything is repugnant, and, at the limit, insane. (Cohen 2011, 207)

The capitalist norm of treating particular things that have value as mere carriers of value makes for the entrenched habit of treating all things that are valuable as replaceable, hence disposable. This ideological feat obliterates respect for the existence of particular things due to that very existence. The constant repetitive appeal to potential value, an ideological push to draw inspiration, creativity, imagination, and fantasy out of time and place and into the netherworld of “potentiality,” makes the solipsist necessarily fail to cherish (or to recognize the cherish-worthiness of) existing value. Rendered mere “carriers,” all particular things are thereby radically subject to be shaped by consumer aims. Cohen diagnosed the problem as a conflation of the value of a particular thing with value in the abstract said to “reside in it.” The conflation is an “error nourished by much academic work, especially in economics, but no doubt the error is of deeper than merely academic origin—it is an error to think that being rational about value requires the merely abstract accounting of it that denies the value of particular things as such” (215–16). One hundred and thirty-two persons were killed, one hundred and thirty-three persons thrown overboard the Zong slaving vessel. Each person was worth more dead (Baucom 2005). Insured. “For women farmers the essence of the seed is the continuity of life. For multinational corporations, the value of the seed lies in the discontinuity of life” (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 172).

Offering an account of value other than of the universal that resides in the thing valued, Cohen uses the term “particular value” to denote the value of the (particular) thing that has value, to draw our attention to *it* as what we care about (207). (“Personal value” is an additional attachment one has to certain of those things.) We want particular valuable things to continue to exist, not to be chasing some abstract notion of value. Small-c conservatism “explores modes of finding oneself in the other”; in accepting the given, valuing the valuable, and valuing the valued, “the subject is at peace with the object” (203). If there were no justified bias toward existing value, then nothing would ever be (deemed) valuable while it existed, except as potential. If any particular valuable thing fails in virtue of its *being* to give us reason to cherish it (or to recognize that another has reason to cherish it), then any potential value, once actualized or brought into being, finds itself in the same position. Against the ideological notion of “universal mastery,” against this crushing capitalist threat, Cohen demands a basic reorientation toward accepting some things from nature, including certain things about ourselves—from respect for human flesh to our need for identity, including certain of our particular identities (208–10). He meant the claim to apply to material objects as well as to processes, persons, and other living things, and expressed interest in my adaptation, which explicitly includes living and nonliving constituents of the natural place-world (Cohen 2007).

Against ratiocentrism, a distorted, fetishized “rationality” to the exclusion of all else, most important, morality and aesthetics, Plumwood recommends reclaiming a mutualistic subject–subject orientation dating back to the later Plato, like the one present in the humanities, “which treats the other studied as a mindful, intentional or ‘subjective’ being who is the subject of a life narrative, and with whom we can experience solidarity and sympathy,” but not confined to humans, one where, as Indigenous “objects of

study” call on anthropology to respect, “knowledge is based on the consenting and cooperative disclosure of other active subjects, and which carries an ethic of care for, attention and accountability to those who are studied” (Plumwood 2002, 50–54). Like Plumwood, Cohen demonstrates the implications of the slide to the abstract that renders the particular invisible and hence dispensable. Where Plumwood attends to what is done to the concept of “rationality” and to those who are objectified in the methodologies of disengagement as “sado-dispassionate” practice (41), Cohen attends to what is done to the conception of the nature of value itself and to the practice of valuing, and to the very claim of any human being, whether as “subject” or as “othered,” to be attached to particular valuable things. In the long twentieth century, valuing has been, in decolonial place terms, uprooted from life. It is abstract accounting that invites denial of the value of particular things as such, so that far from being cherished, they may be treated as disposable. It is the sense of there being a rush that encourages disposing, unthinkingly, unfeelingly. In that rush, as with the Nahua cochineal producers, the solipsistic would dispose of our very claim to be attached, to belong to, to identify with particular valuable things, beings, processes. Where Baucom identifies the historical moment that situates the current world order of finance-capital valuing, Cohen develops a resisting valuing inside that historical moment that is our present.

Against the tidal force of that ideological rush—felt as if it were “necessity” due to the force of abstraction illusion—I am arguing that Cohen’s grounding valuing in “accepting the given” is in tune and time with Edward Casey’s effort to “get us back into place” where (industrial) “time” is the would-be dominant world-order.

[Daily] lives are grasped and ordered in terms of time. Scheduled and overscheduled, we look to the clock or the calendar for guidance and solace, even judgment! . . . We are lost because of our conviction that time, not only the world’s time but *our time*, the only time we have, is always running out or down. All time, it seems, is “closing time.” (Casey 2009, 10)

“To turn to place is to effect a paradigm shift away from temporocentrist understandings of human culture and personal development—understandings that assume time to be the operative medium of human experience . . .” (xxii). “Accepting the given from nature” places valuing as grounded, against industrial “time.”

Another crucial contribution of small c-conservatism to well-developed criticisms of ratiocentrism, abstraction, and temporocentrism is to tread conservatively, cherishing, in our own self-reflection on valuing.

[W]e also know that once thus plasticized, people would favor more plasticization, and, perhaps, unending plasticization, as each successive plasticization renders people insensitive to the extra plasticness of the next one. Then we have strong reason to bring about less plasticization than we think optimal. . . . The problem that we face is not that we do not know where the line should be, but that, if we draw it at that point, then *they*, or, for that matter we, later, will draw the line improperly elsewhere, given what their, or our, desires and tolerances will consequently have come to be. (Cohen 2011, 208)

With colonial history and decolonial philosophy, I submit that such degenerative identity processes are “unsustainable but not only for that undesirable pace of change” that

Cohen laments, but as exemplified in the case of the Nahua above, an impossible disconnect from the place, community, and sense of responsibility that reproduces our life.

Accepting the Given of Place

Taking Cohen's defiant claim against (academic) philosophers that nature is basic, and that our acceptance of it ought to be "given," I bring "the local," and being placed within our historically and ecologically rich locality, as part of our identity, as givens from nature we ought to accept, treating place as an embodied, relational aspect of the nature he insists we must take as basic. Being placed denotes the particular habitat with which we as embodied social and cultural creatures have a present and historical or present and future living connection, by shared memory and history, or by a shared sense of future and culture, of a size conceivable by the senses, where we are attuned to our networks of dependency and responsibility. Many peoples, in myriad ecologically conscious cultural meanings, live and value the local.

Against proglobalization "flat earthers," geographer Harm de Blij outlines disparities between "globals" and "locals" in multiple domains (de Blij 2009). Yet he does not question the whitely assumption that we ought to equalize by making it possible for locals to be more like globals, that the West or North are the standard to which "locals" aspire, what Mies calls the "myth of catching up development" (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 60). Small-c conservatism justifies respect for locals' claims to their own identities. Their cherishing values in locality and a sense of identity in it demands respect and should be taken as given.

Placed identities have tremendous ecological, social, cultural, and moral value. Whereas proponents of empiricist philosophy valued the material or physical world but failed to challenge the Eurocentric assumption of power and manipulation (Plumwood 2002, 47), placed peoples never assumed such. Placed conceptions of biodiversity are the only legitimate ones. The "alternative" is dangerous abstract illusion. "Diversity in the dominant world-view is seen as a numerical and arithmetical factor, not an ecological one" (Mies and Shiva 1993/2014, 171). In most cultures, women have been the custodians of biodiversity, and yet as Shiva shows, their role "has been rendered as non-work and non-knowledge" (168). Biodiversity "as epitomized in *navdanya*," the symbol of diversity and balance, is relational, not reductionist; "the conservation of relatedness involves a notion of sacredness and inviolability" and "the self-provisioning nature of most sustainable agricultural systems implies a closed cycle of production and consumption" (169–70). "Women keeping seed" have a claim to their particular cultural identities as producer-consumers, and their way of valuing is cherishing existing valuable processes and life forms as interrelated with them.

To "accept the given" is to embrace the beauty of our being living creatures in this particular place, born of a wonder of contingencies. Poet Mariano Zaro imagined grasping at once the chance of his grandparents meeting, the concurrence of chance events required for that to happen, and their grandparents' grandparents meeting, and so on.² To open the senses and imagination to our capacity to appreciate such, environmental poet philosopher and activist Derrick Jensen, resisting violence, moves the reader of *A Language Older Than Words* to feel the immense vibrancy of encounters with coyotes, mice, geese, trees, and snow to which the culture of dominance deafens our senses, and to listen again to the language of bodies on bodies (Jensen 2004). To value being placed is to revel in such.

From Uprooted to Belonging

In *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, hooks tells her story of belonging and returning to Kentucky; it is her grandmother's placed wisdom—wisdom her mother, who seeks all things modern, rejects—whose truth hooks finally comes around to appreciate and fully embrace (hooks 2009). Small-c conservatism makes explicit the grounds that hooks, her mother, and her grandmother each has to her own identity: it is hers. What are the implications for hooks's argument for moving from uprooted to belonging? A small-c conservative treatment of identity commitments as given does not entail restraint from seeking belonging in place. First, small-c conservative respect for what has value requires that we ought to change slowly when it is not sensible to act quickly to avoid ill consequence; it is not an argument against change *per se*. Second, moral claims still govern all (Cohen 2011, 204). Thus, responsibilities to one's ancestors, community, and land may legitimately be invoked to alter colonized commitments.

We know from decolonial philosophy how to engage: respecting that identities and values are embodied commitments, cherished, lived—even as engaging decolonization, embracing place. Taiaiake Alfred, a Kahnàwa:ke Mohawk, structures *Wasáse* in dialogue form, engaging diverse Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Onkwehonwe, including those with whom he disagrees, as he argues against colonized identities that aspire to Euro-American values and a racist system (Alfred 2009). The highly political global economy of knowledge is dominated by Northern paradigms; we must incorporate into it theorizing from the Global South since the time of colonization (Connell 2014). Feminism from the Global South demands that we not presume to speak or know for those whose experience and community are distant from our own, nor to generalize from our own experience to that of others (Mohanty 2002). Lugones's "world-traveling" against nonreciprocal "arrogant perception" is women exercising different worlds of perception, experience, and perspective across racial lines in a spirit of playfulness and openness. Arrogant perception is displaced; world-traveling is rooted resisting through an openness to appreciating existing particular valuable things not yet unexperienced. Openness is not contrary to place, but a condition of the possibility of appreciating placed valuable things, beings, and processes. Place is not inert or fixed, but living. Indeed, the purpose of the Nahua case is to illustrate that such arrogance is due to uprootedness from grounded moral community. "Places embody values," situate them (Casey 2009, 265). Traveling from uprooted to belonging entails disposing against abstraction, engaging world-traveling identities as fluid, as theorists on multiculturalism and immigration do (Modood 2007; Scott 2007), yet following Charles Taylor, as bounded by horizons (Taylor 1989). Identity is neither displaced nor fixed through time.

Cohen's is a radical argument for respect for what has value, not a reformist apology for taking justice claims slowly. He called it "a major and disastrous error of the Enlightenment and therefore of the socialist tradition" that it fails to appreciate the normative roots of ethnic conflict, "which drive down to the conservation of personal and particular value" (Cohen 2007, 38).

The mutability of identity is precisely what creates susceptibility to manipulation into the robotic or plastic, into the solipsist's "arrogant perceiving" of the abstract accounting model. The (masculinist, whitely) valuer caught up in the accounting method "values" the object as not placed with it, as if "outside" any particular location. Such a valuer conceives of "himself" as radically distinct, of a different kind, because essentially disconnected from the object "he" values, as justified in knowing and judging it precisely in virtue of that distance; far from being a responsive, sensing, aesthetic

being, claiming dominance, “he” anoints himself “rational” and in control. This is only real in “his” head. The imperative of belonging, and of valuing as belonging in and from a particular place, of seeking belonging once uprooted, is being oriented to life, being interconnected and interdependent, and is not subject to “his” influence.

Value

Life-Centered Realism

Truth is a way of life rather than what corresponds to facts “out there.”
—Cornel West, *Examined Life*

To appreciate that particular values exist independently of human projection is a fundamental radical commitment (Babbitt 1993). To deny this erases resisting capitalist manipulation of attitudes, perceptions, ways of being, values, of the ideological structures that confine daily life. It takes what are in fact colonial, racist, misogynist, human-centered, technocratic-scientific, bureaucratic legacies peddled in the market and treats them instead as attitudes that apparently quite naturally or reasonably emanate from individual persons. Denial is characteristic of a consumer culture insensitive to all life outside the consumer mind.

Hearing Jensen, my approach differs importantly from Cohen’s unapologetic defiance in embracing naïve value realism (Jensen 2004, 21). With decolonial philosophy and history, I foreground a world of other species as perceivers and conceivers appreciating particular valuable things. The silly academic worry that the nature of value is philosophically mysterious if we take human perceivers “out of the picture” evaporates when we face the absurdity of colonial anthropocentrism and admit valuing was never predominantly our domain, let alone uniquely so.

Masculinist humanist philosophy’s pretense that objectivity comes from a position of superiority, inherited from Christianity, impaired sensitivity to the reality that valuable things are knowable (White 1967). This pretense prompted the whitely response of poststructuralist critics to think that to theoretically “oppose” colonialism and its legacies entails giving up claims to value being knowable. Yet the decolonial philosophies and histories cherished here self-consciously decouple the association of superiority, difference, and being outside from the possibility of connection with, understanding of, and respect for what has value. “Creativities, meanings, and spiritual presences have always been multiple, widely distributed and able to be discerned within the world, not located above or beyond it” (Plumwood 2002, 223). Natalie Diaz’s poetic expression of her carrying the Colorado River is not a metaphor (Diaz 2020).

To be placed is to valorize our capacity for connection with value. Values exist and our senses are capable of appreciating them. From the pedestrian view, this is appreciated by many peoples; as a small child innately perceives—we are far from the only species to appreciate value. Each does in their particular way. Those who listen knew that plants communicate, though in capitalist culture it is newsworthy that scientists recently “discovered” this truth (Jensen 2004, 292–304; *Economist* 2013).

Resisting Ideological Idealism

Descartes became the prototypical modern man. He also established the simple most important rule of Western philosophy: if it doesn’t fit the model, it doesn’t exist.

—Jensen, *A Language Older Than Words*

With terrifying speed over five centuries, the “reality” of the “dominant” is out of this earthly world, as market choices. A profound philosophical idealism that mirrors the idealism demanded by the market logic of consumer culture plagues academic moral and political philosophy. Placelessness is ideological idealism. Value is already misconceived as dependent on a human valuer and is broken into increasingly minute, disconnected bits, so the thing valued is rendered effectively nonexistent. In capitalist market-logic, since value is made to depend on a valuer who is distracted by the constant promise of greater value, where what might have value at one instant does not at the next, it never does. Consumer culture does not merely radically diminish any given thing’s value, it radically diminishes the very *thing* itself. Each thing itself is effectively annihilated as the effect of its never being attended to. The solipsist has internalized finance valuing. Not only do particular things that have value only “carry” value as long as the consumer-valuer is perceiving them, their existence as what are now value “vessels” lasts only as long as the valuer does not perceive anything else of allegedly equal or greater, or maybe just different “value.”

Coloniality does to all valuable things what it does to women, to the colonized in all their gender fluidity and multiplicity fused with race—interchangeability entails a kind of nonexistence.

Onkwehonwe and Migration

Many peoples have appreciated their nature as essentially placed—sedentary, semisedentary, but also nonsedentary peoples. Contrary to the implicitly racist assumptions in the “hunter gatherer” misnomer, we can safely assume even where we do not know specifics that nonsedentary peoples were not moving unthinkingly, insensibly, without a sense of the terrain they were crossing. They had considerable knowledge about climate, habitat, species, and interconnectedness that some survivors of technological industrialization have lost. Contrary to the fear that gender, sexuality, and ethno-racial oppression will be facilitated by small-c conservative respect for identity in locality, there were particular peoples in particular places whose meanings have been extinguished by colonial or imperialist capitalism whose old meanings included respect for women as persons (Oyèwùmí 1997), worship of masculine <-> feminine (nonbinary) gods (Sigal 2005), and peoples as of a place, not a nation-state, and which did not include a meaning for “race” or “homosexuality” because there were no such categories of dissection (Lugones 2003). We know also that women and place were not invisible. Indigenous women in the Americas were at the center of placed knowledge, of its production and communication (Schiebinger 2004). “The Rotinoshonni concept *konoronkwa* links the three notions of ‘female-insurmountable-ours’” (Alfred 2009, 255). Gender stratification in Yoruba culture is entirely a colonial legacy (Oyèwùmí 1997). Across Africa as in India, it is colonialism that redefined men’s work as modern and women’s work as “backwards” or not productive (Rodney 1973; Mies and Shiva 1993/2014). Confucian role-bearers have no place for the fiction of “the individual” (Rosemont 2015).

A small-c conservative defense of place respects Indigenous resurgence, Onkwehonwe claims to cultural identity, language, and land (Alfred 2009), hooks’s claims to land stewardship of Black farmers, past and present (hooks 2009), “women saving seed” as biodiversity conservation (Shiva 2001), and more. It respects the claim of generations of migrants, of climate, economic, and war refugees, to a new identity as placed in a new locale, and against perpetual uprooting. Even many “natural

disasters” are the result of industrialization and mass demands changing previously accepted norms of place. Memory, social bonds, and history connect the new locality to that of one’s earlier identity: where group migration is due to colonial or imperialist domination and oppression of homeplace or of connection to it, where lands are inhospitable or uninhabitable whether permanently through ecological catastrophe, or for some time through war or violence, or threat of such, or poverty.

A humanist cannot object that uprooted people will always choose human community over their old place. Documents from 1560 criticizing the colonial practice of *congregación*, the Spanish practice of relocation of peoples to recreate the semblance of Mediterranean cities, show otherwise. “The indigenous response to this policy was invariably negative. People were not willing to leave their ancestral homes and fields, and often returned to them after they had been relocated” (Restall, Sousa, and Terraciano 2005, 75).

The Nahuas’ connection to their plants, their sense of memory of ancestors as connected to soil and the life it bears, their sense of home as life-centered, cannot be ignored simply because it doesn’t fit the model.

Accepting the Given of (Decolonial) Place

My purpose in developing the implications of “accepting the given” of place has been to develop a decolonial, small-c conservative valuing consciousness to resist the coloniality of “development” and imperialism, corporations who destroy life, expansionist nationalists, developers, and gentrifiers.

The resistance Cohen endorses “is against making errors that are in time self-legitimizing and that thereby destroy old meanings” (Cohen 2011, 224). By 1533, twelve years after the Spaniards destroyed Tenochtitlan (Mexico City), we have documentation that the Nahuas lords saw cochineal production erode the social and moral order within a span of only eight or nine years. By 1781, “valuing” according to our contemporary global financial system was discontinuity of life. In colonial solipsism, life has no meaning. Yet resisting valuing in decolonial place perceives and creates daily meanings from the pedestrian view of moral boundedness.

“A true revolution is spiritual at its core” (Alfred 2009, 22). My project has been a world-traveling, seeking, and listening endeavor.

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Notes

1 I intend *decolonial* in Lugones’s and in Alfred’s senses, against the bureaucratic sense of decolonization that Indigenous resurgence resists (Alfred 2009, 44).

2 Zaro. Private communication, 2010.

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