

Foreword by Walter D. Mignolo | Afterword by Sandro Mezzadra

# THE ANOMIE OF THE



# EARTH

Philosophy, Politics, and Autonomy  
in Europe and the Americas

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FEDERICO LUISETTI, JOHN PICKLES, & WILSON KAISER, EDS.

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FOREWORD BY Walter D. Mignolo AFTERWORD BY Sandro Mezzadra

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## Anomie, Resurgences, and De-Noming

WALTER D. MIGNOLO

### NOMOS (*noun*)

1. a law, convention, or custom governing human conduct
2. (Greek mythology) the daemon of laws and ordinance

—*Collins English Dictionary* (2011)

### NOMIC

Customary; ordinary;—applied to the usual English spelling, in distinction from strictly phonetic methods.

—*Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* (1913)

### ANOMIE OR ANOMY (*n.*)

1. Social instability caused by erosion of standards and values.
2. Alienation and purposelessness experienced by a person or a class as a result of a lack of standards, values, or ideals: “*We must now brace ourselves for disquisitions on peer pressure, adolescent anomie and rage*” (Charles Krauthammer).

—*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2000)

### RESURGENCE (*n.*)

1. A continuing after interruption; a renewal.
2. A restoration to use, acceptance, activity, or vigor; a revival.

—*The Free Dictionary online*

## Global Linear Thinking and the Second Nomos of the Earth

This book is intended to confront Carl Schmitt’s *nomos of the earth* and, as the editors put it in their introduction, “documents the antagonistic forms of autonomy that are moving away from the Western coordinates of the planetary nomos.” This is indeed one of the crucial aspects of our time that will,



no doubt, dominate the twenty-first century. My endorsement of the general and particular argument hereby put forward highlights the phenomena compressed in the expression “anomie and resurgences.”

To properly understand the global dimension of this shift, of which of course the processes in Latin America documented here are paramount, it would be helpful to understand Schmitt’s *trick*.<sup>1</sup> The *nomos* addressed in this book is indeed Schmitt’s *second nomos*. Which means, obviously, that for him there was a *first nomos*. The first *nomos* was a plurality of them. Before 1500, following Schmitt’s chronology but somehow adding to his conception of the first *nomos*, every socio-cultural-economic configuration (that today we name *civilization*)—ancient China, India, Persia, the Kingdoms of Africa, Mayas, Incas, and Aztecs—had its own *nomos*. Given the scope of this book, let’s concentrate on the *nomos* of ancient civilizations, of what became known as “America,” the fourth continent.

The emergence of the fourth continent, America, in the consciousness of European men of letters is a landmark of Schmitt’s second *nomos*: “The *first nomos* of the earth was destroyed about 500 years ago, when the great oceans of the world were opened up. The earth was circumnavigated; America, a completely new, unknown, not even suspected continent was discovered.”<sup>2</sup>

Notice the relevance for the issues at hand in this book: “America, a completely new, unknown, not even suspected continent was discovered.” The statement is proverbial: America was not known to many people but for different reasons. Europeans had an idea of the world divided into Asia, Africa, and Europe. Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas did not know that America existed because it was invented as such around 1504. What they knew was Tawantinsuyu, Anahuac, and Yóok’ol kaab. At that point in history, what is today Europe was Western Christendom and it was part of the first *nomos*. The second *nomos* of the earth emerged, then, when a group of *indigenous* people of Western Christendom/Europe bumped into the land of *indigenous* people of Ayiti (the indigenous name of the Island that was renamed Dominica by the Spaniards and Saint Domingue by the French). Bottom line of this paragraph: at the moment of what Europeans call “the discovery of America” and more recently Latin American philosophers of history rebaptized “the invention of America,” everyone on planet Earth was living under what Schmitt described as the first *nomos*.

So the second *nomos* inaugurates a planetary European narrative, a narrative that became hegemonic and was consolidated by Hegel’s lesson in the philosophy of history delivered some time between 1822 and 1830. Schmitt

is rehearsing such a narrative and connecting it with international law (*jus publicum Europaeum*). That is to say that the “discovery” that inaugurated the second *nomos* inaugurated at the same time the legal and symbolic European appropriation of the planet. The first *nomos* in Schmitt’s narrative vanished, absorbed in the growing Eurocentric narrative:

A *second nomos* of the earth arose from such discoveries of land and sea. The discoveries were not invited. They were made without visas issued by the discovered peoples. The discoverers were Europeans, who appropriated, divided and utilized the planet. Thus, the second *nomos* of the earth became Eurocentric. The newly discovered continent of America first was utilized in the form of colonies. The Asian land-masses could not be appropriated in the same way. The Eurocentric structure of *nomos* extended only partially, as open land-appropriation, and otherwise in the form of protectorates, leases, trade agreements and spheres of interest; in short, in more elastic form of utilization. Only in the 19th century did the land-appropriating European powers divide up Africa.<sup>3</sup>

Let’s parse this sentence, in the old discourse analysis way. The first line is revealing: the second *nomos* is a European invention. The next two lines, good point: Schmitt, who was very insightful, realized that the second *nomos* came out of invasion. The following line reveals the same blindness as his uses of “discovery”: land appropriation is also land dispossession. Schmitt is operating on the blind spot: what was not known to Europeans was supposed to be unknown to everybody else, including the people inhabiting the land Europeans did not know. Second, Schmitt is already a victim of the idea that what Europeans appropriated were empty lands. For that reason he doesn’t see that dispossession, legalized-theological dispossession that started with the (in)famous *Requirement*.<sup>4</sup>

Then came Asia. Neither Russia nor China were dispossessed. They were disrupted but not colonized like India after Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas. After 1884 Africa was possessed by European states. All that is the work of the second *nomos*. But what happened to the first *nomos*? Schmitt is already into the magic effect of linear time and he thinks of the first *nomos* as one, not as many. It is obvious that the *nomos* of Incas and Aztecs, of Russians and Chinese, of Indians and Africans was not one. But by making them one, Schmitt operates on the already established idea of one linear time, the linear time of European history as narrated by Europeans.

Schmitt's trick consists in this: when the second nomos of the earth materialized what happened to the diversity of the first nomos? It became one, all the planet belonged to the *first only nomos* on top of which the second nomos mounted and continued the supposed unilinearity of the first nomos.

Because the multiplicity of *first nomoi* was never superseded by the second nomos today we are witnessing their resurgence all over the planet. What this book is bringing forward is the variegated resurgence in South America, particularly in the Andes (Bolivia and Ecuador), and the South of Mexico (the Zapatistas).

### Resurgences of Plural First Nomoi of the Earth

The first nomoi of the earth were many. Schmitt's trick consisted in two moves. The first was to cast the plurality of cultures and civilizations in terms of nomos and to see them as precursors to his idea of the second nomos. For we shall be clear that there is no ontological first and second nomos. Both were the result of Schmitt's powerful fictional narrative. The second move consisted in converting the plurality of first nomoi into a singular one and to place it *before* the second nomos. But by so doing he reinforced that idea that emerged in the eighteenth century: the idea of the *primitives* that in the unilinear unfolding of history were the precursors of the *modern*. This powerful fiction is cracking in its foundations and the signs are already seen in the awakening and resurgence of the overwhelming majority of people who have been placed beyond the lines of the second nomos and its internal family feuds (e.g., Western Hemisphere, South of Europe). But let's stay within the boundaries of the Western Hemisphere.<sup>5</sup>

Often and increasingly Pueblos Originarios (ab-originales, natives, Indigenous people) are reported as heroes of resistance against corporations. *Avatar* became an emblem of it. A group of Shuar people, from the Ecuadorian Amazon, went to Quito, in three buses, to watch *Avatar*. It was reported after the movie that they all recognized that it is their story and their history.<sup>6</sup> However, seldom were any of their thinkers, intellectuals, scholars, and activists quoted. White intelligentsia still holds the privilege of controlling the word. Let's hear a couple of them, Native Americans to start with. It would be helpful to get the general picture to start with this two-minute video of Richard Twiss, Lakota American: "Richard Twiss: A Theology of Manifest Destiny."<sup>7</sup>

George Tinker, Native American theologian of liberation, tells an interesting story to start his brilliant argument under the title *Spirit and Resis-*

*tance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation*.<sup>8</sup> The story is a sort of *Requerimiento* reframed. It took place in 1803, almost four hundred years after the original. The rhetoric of modernity has changed, and so the logic of coloniality. It was no longer God's design in the pens of Spaniards that guided the *Requerimiento* but God's design in the pens of Anglo-Americans that proclaimed Manifest Destiny in the name of nation-state:

In 1803 the United States purchased the entirety of Osage land—from France. It had to do with something called the Louisiana Purchase and something having to do with some obscure European legal doctrine called “the right of discovery.” What it ever had to do with Osage people, who were never privy to this doctrine or included in the negotiation leading to the purchase, is still a mystery. It was nevertheless a powerful intellectual idea, mere words that, in a sense, enabled Mr. Jefferson to double the size of his country overnight.<sup>9</sup>

Osage were never invited to participate in the negotiation. This is an “oversight” not just of the predators but of the defenders as well. Bartolomé de las Casas, who vehemently protested the *Requerimiento* and put all his energy in defense of “the Indians,” never had the delicacy to invite “Indians” to help set up his arguments. In both cases, there was a business among white men (theologians defending just war and theologians defending the Indians and promoting conversion in the first case; and between French and American men in the second).

Tinker's narrative and argument is a consequence of the first internal scramble, among Western states, for the control of the second nomos of the earth: the Monroe Doctrine and the idea of the Western Hemisphere put a halt to the initial European imperial impulse of possession and dispossession. The Western Hemisphere placed an imaginary line in the Atlantic claiming the rights of Americans to the lands of the Western Hemisphere. Needless to say, “American” meant the United States of America. Explicit demand for auto-nomos of the Western Hemisphere established also a nonexplicit line demarcating the North of the Western Hemisphere from the South (Central America, including Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America). A demarcation in the Americas that was already established in Europe: when France and England took over Spain and Portugal in planetary land and sea, and Germany took over the intellectual legacies of the Italian Renaissance, the “South of Europe” was a dominating symbolic construction that made possible the control of the second nomos of the earth. Thus, in the Americas, the

struggle to recover the land is common to all (Pueblos Originarios/Native Americans/First Nations) but the arguments and the specific claims are tied up to the specific local histories of which particular European imperial state (e.g., Spain, Portugal, France, England, Holland) shaped the land's destiny. That struggle has a name today: resurgence.

### De-Noming of the Earth: Resurgences and Border Thinking

We shall give Schmitt the credit he deserves, that of honestly mapping the second nomos of the earth and explaining how crucial was and is international law in establishing, transforming, and maintaining it. The Western Hemisphere was the first scramble among peers; the partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884 the second: all that was within the boundaries of re-noming and accommodating new players within the same family.

The book you have in your hands abounds in arguments that explain the re-noming: the appropriation and expropriation of land by international corporations with the cooperation of nation-states in South and Central America. Today, the politics of states re-noming moves in two directions. The purely financial and economic interests take precedence over any possible social consideration. This is the politics of the *Alianza Pacifico* (Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico). The second is the social taking precedence over the economic. This is the politics of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) (Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Nicaragua). But we shall not be mistaken and confuse the two trajectories of re-noming with that of de-noming. De-noming is the general project of Indigenous political organizations. The difference is radical: while both *Alianza Pacifico* and UNASUR do not question the politics of economic growth and development, Indigenous projects go to the root of the second nomos of the earth: territoriality is a living space where life is regenerated (and not of course, reproduced, which is the concept that defines the economy of accumulation). In order to regenerate, the basic philosophical principle of any of the many first nomoi of the earth (that is, the nomos before the second nomos established regulations for appropriation, expropriation, and exploitation) was based on life regeneration.

De-noming names the processes of erasing the regulation of the second nomos. The task is long and difficult; difficult because the second nomos can neither be avoided nor erased. It has to be overcome. And overcoming needs knowledge and arguments. But not knowledge that unfolds from the very

institutions that were created by actors and institutions that established and maintained the second nomos. Although such knowledge and arguments are important and help in understanding the deadly consequences of the second nomos, the deadly consequences cannot be overcome by means of the same principles that established them, even if such projects are defended by well-meant actors. Amartya Sen's *Development and Freedom* (1998) could be one such example.

De-naming demands the resurgence of knowledges and forms of life, and knowledges that emerge from forms of life who do not build themselves on the ideological principle of "change" and "progress," for "change" is the consequence of the unfolding of life. Nothing remains as is. However, the civilization that was built upon the foundations of the second nomos (e.g., Western civilization) capitalized in "newness" (e.g., the New World) and "change" (progress, development). The ideology is clear upon close inspection: if you "control" change and progress you control the destiny of a civilization, and you hide and repress the fact that "change" always happens whether you want it to or not.

De-naming and resurgences are ethical and political building-processes to supersede and delink from the tyranny of the second nomos. This vision is extremely clear already and also provides the energy, the joy, the enthusiasm, and the motivations of all Pueblos Originarios, Native Americans, First Nations, and Ab-Originals from the Americas to New Zealand and Australia, from Asia to Africa. However, since this book concentrates on the Americas (and the Caribbean) I close this foreword with the voice and insights of Leanne Simpson.

*Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and New Emergence*,<sup>10</sup> addresses many of the issues in this book, particularly the contributions focusing on de-naming in the Andes and Southern Mexico/Guatemala. Difficult to resist the temptation of devoting four or five pages to underscore some of the crucial points Simpson is making. I will restrain myself to a few paragraphs, and then I will tell you shortly why these paragraphs.

The paragraphs are extracted from two chapters: "Nishnaabeg's Resurgence: Stories from Within," and "Theorizing Resurgence from within Nishnaabeg Thought" (34–35) and reads as follows:

- 1) Building diverse, nation-culture-based resurgences means significantly reinvesting in our own ways of being, regenerating our political

and intellectual traditions; articulating and living out legal systems, language learning, ceremonial and spiritual pursuits; creating and using our artistic and performance-based traditions. All of this requires—as individuals and collectives—to diagnose, interrogate and eviscerate the insidious nature of conquest, empire, and imperial thought in every aspect of our lives.<sup>11</sup>

2) Western theory, whether based in post-colonial, critical or even liberation strains of thought, has been exceptional in diagnosing, revealing and even interrogating colonialism. . . . Yet western theories of liberation have for the most part failed to resonate with the vast majority of Indigenous People, scholars or artists. In particular, western-based social movement theory has failed to recognize the broader contextualization of resistance within Indigenous thought, while also ignoring the contestation of colonialism as a starting point. . . . Indigenous thought has the ability to resonate with Indigenous Peoples of all ages. It maps a way out of colonial thinking by confirming Indigenous life-ways or alternative ways of being in the world.<sup>12</sup>

3) Cree scholar, poet and visual artist Neal McLeod has written extensively about the importance of storytelling, . . . Neal writes that the process of storytelling within Cree traditions requires storytellers to remember the ancient stories that made their ancestors “the people they were,” and that this requires a remembering of language. He also emphasizes that storytellers have a responsibility to the future to imagine a social space that is just and where Cree narratives will flourish. Storytelling is at its core decolonizing, because it is a process of remembering, visioning and creating a just reality where Nishnaabeg live as both *Nishnaabeg* and *peoples*. Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism, where we can create models and mirrors where none existed, and where we can experience the spaces of freedom and justice. Storytelling becomes a space where we can escape the gaze and the cage of the Empire, even if it is just for a few minutes.<sup>13</sup>

As far as the second nomos of the earth caged regions and people with the foundations of global lines and global linear thinking through its process, the second nomos was not only legal regulations and justification of boundaries and legitimization of economic expropriation and dispossession but, above

and foremost, the creation of arrogant subjectivities and colonial subjects. Colonial subjects had to endure arrogance, and it was a long process until the global veil began to be removed. Leanne Simpson's quoted paragraphs give you an idea of what de-noming means and that it starts from the decoloniality of being. Decoloniality of being, like Freedom, cannot be *given* but has to be *taken*. And de-noming and decolonizing being is not a question of public policies and brilliant theories but is a question of reemerging form of knowledges and sensibilities, knowing and sensing. However, reemergences are not promises of "return" to the "authentic" and "primal" paradise before the second nomos arrived. Re-emergence means to deal with the second nomos out of the ruins and energies that the second nomos attempted to subdue, supersede, and destroy. But it couldn't. Today first nomoi of the earth, in their planetary diversity, are re-emerging in confrontation with the second nomos. Border thinking and doing is implied in re-emerging and resurging because of the sheer fact that de-noming processes have to walk over the ruins of the second nomos. Directly and indirectly, this book documents diverse processes of resurgence and re-existence.

#### NOTES

1. I unfolded this argument in chapters 2 and 3 of *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
2. Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003).
3. Schmitt, *Nomos*, 352.
4. See López de Palacios Rubios, Juan, *El Requerimiento*, 1513. Accessed Oct. 15, 2014. [www.encyclopediavirginia.org/El\\_Requerimiento\\_by\\_Juan\\_Lopez\\_de\\_Palacios\\_Rubios\\_1513](http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/El_Requerimiento_by_Juan_Lopez_de_Palacios_Rubios_1513).
5. For more details on the idea of the Western Hemisphere in relation to this argument, see Walter D. Mignolo, "Coloniality at Large: The Western Hemisphere in the Colonial Horizon of Modernity," *New Centennial Review* (2001), <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ncr/summary/v001/1.2mignolo.html>.
6. See Alexander Zaitchik, "To get the gold, they will have to kill every one of us," *Salon*, February 10, 2013. Accessed October 15, 2014. [www.salon.com/2013/02/10/to\\_get\\_the\\_gold\\_they\\_will\\_have\\_to\\_kill\\_every\\_one\\_of\\_us/](http://www.salon.com/2013/02/10/to_get_the_gold_they_will_have_to_kill_every_one_of_us/).
7. Richard Twiss, "Richard Twiss: A Theology of Manifest Destiny," YouTube video, posted by Wicon International, March 7, 2008. Accessed October 15, 2014. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mEkMy1KNWo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mEkMy1KNWo).
8. George Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004).



9. Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance*, ix.
10. Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2011).
11. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 17–18.
12. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 31–32.
13. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 34–35, citing Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon, Canada: Purich, 2009).

## Autonomy Political Theory/Political Anthropology

FEDERICO LUISETTI, JOHN PICKLES, & WILSON KAISER

The traditional Eurocentric order of international law is foundering today, as is the old *nomos* of the earth. —CARL SCHMITT, *The Nomos of the Earth* (1950)

This book puts in dialogue two of the most intriguing trends in social and political theory: Italian autonomism and Latin American decolonial thinking. In the United States, the emergence of the antiglobalization movement in the 1990s and the publication of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* in 2000 had brought increasing attention to Italian autonomism—arguably one of the most innovative post-1968 radical movements and theoretical paradigms in the West. On the southern border, in the meantime, decolonial thinking, theorized by the likes of Aníbal Quijano and Walter Dignolo, was starting to yield its fruits, connecting its agenda with the indigenous movements that swept the political landscape in Mexico and Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia. This book brings together scholars working in the two fields in order to highlight the historical conversations and growing number of convergences between conceptions of autonomy emanating from both European social movements and decolonial movements in the Americas.

The book explores in particular the ways in which poststructuralist and neo-Marxist autonomist theories, which were originally articulated in the context of a critique of Western capitalist modes of production and labor, have in recent years been engaged and broadened by debates emerging from biopolitics and political anthropology in Europe, and from indigenous and postcolonial studies in the Americas. The main goal of this collection of

essays is thus to address the notion of autonomy from the double perspective of antagonistic voices within mature capitalistic societies and post-colonial theorists who have questioned Western modernity's balance of individual autonomy (freedom) and the institutional order of the nation-state (the law).

Of central concern to many essays in the book is the geophilosophical concept of the *nomos* formulated by Carl Schmitt in *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950).<sup>1</sup> The common meaning of *nomos* as “law” derives for Schmitt from a broader, “spatially conceived” dimension: *nomos* is “the Greek word for the first measurement from which all other measurements are derived, the word for the first taking of the land, for the first partition and division of space, for primitive partition and distribution.”<sup>2</sup> The periodizing, phenomenological category of the *nomos* allows Schmitt to sketch out a topological description of the primitive law that founds the political order, providing a picture of the prepolitical, concrete spatial dynamics operating through mechanisms of land and sea appropriation. Since there is no law without land, the political space is always sustained by geohistorical practices of order and localization (*Ordnung-Ortung*), as demonstrated by the triple meaning of the verb *nemein*, from which *nomos* derives: to take/conquer, to partition/divide, and to cultivate/produce.<sup>3</sup> According to Fredric Jameson, Schmitt's *nomos* indicates, at the same time, an innovative “spatial analysis, which, combining juridical and geographical reference, transcends both”; a “phenomenological spatiality . . . as regressive as Heidegger's ontology”; and “a kind of equivalent of the function of the ‘mode of production’ for Marxism; that is, it names a structure of totality that has taken various historical forms.”<sup>4</sup>

In *The Nomos of the Earth*, Schmitt concentrates on what he calls the “second *nomos*,” on the spatial and political organization of the earth imposed by the sixteenth-century colonial conquest of the New World and sustained by the seventeenth-century development of the European territorial nation-state system. This *nomos* of modernity replaced the “essentially terrestrial” and localized *nomos* of antiquity and the medieval age, carving a Eurocentric global order, “based on a particular relation between the spatial order of firm land and the spatial order of free sea.”<sup>5</sup> The second *nomos*, mainly structured through a colonial and Atlantic relation of power, is “a completely different spatial order” that “arose with the centralized, spatially self-contained, continental European state . . . : unlimited free space for overseas land-appropriation was open to all such states. The new legal titles

characteristic of this new, state-centered international law . . . were *discovery* and *occupation*.”<sup>6</sup> The political/spatial order of the *nomos* and its “amity line” presided also over what was considered the area of “civilization”—the legal dimension of European international law—separating it from what had to represent the “state of nature” of primitive people and savage lands, where no lawful truce was respected and predation ruled.

According to Schmitt, this Eurocentric *nomos* of the earth, this global arrangement of land-appropriation and industrialization, of civilized Europeans and brutal savages, of territorial states and sea power, lasted until World War I, when the United States took over the “maritime existence” of the British Empire and began to impose a “new *nomos*,” prolonging the destiny of Western planetary hegemony into a nightmarish “total war.”<sup>7</sup>

This volume critically engages Schmitt’s propositions and documents the antagonistic forms of autonomy that are moving away from the Western coordinates of the planetary *nomos*,<sup>8</sup> such as the indigenous, postcolonial, and naturalistic perspectives that are reconceptualizing traditional notions of the political in the Americas and Europe. In their essays, Alvaro Reyes and Mara Kaufman, Gustavo Esteva, Catherine E. Walsh, Zac Zimmer, and Jodi A. Byrd illustrate dramatically the alternative forms of autonomy practiced and conceptualized by the Zapatistas in Chiapas and by Bolivia’s and Ecuador’s indigenous movements, by Andean thinkers turning the Western *nomos* “inside out” and by theorists of indigenous sovereignty challenging the foundations of mainstream political philosophy. Meanwhile, from a Euro-Atlantic perspective, Joost de Bloois, Gareth Williams, Benjamin Noys, Frans-Willem Korsten, and Silvia Federici propose a “transvaluation” of political and cultural values, aligned with postcolonial experiences and aimed at the deconstruction of the Western *nomos* of capitalist modernity and imagination of new commons. In our opinion, it is crucial to foster this conceptual dialogue and political alliance between contemporary movements of dewesternization and the resistance against capitalist labor and biopower coming from workerism and *postautonomia*: in both instances, a line of flight from the central institutions and commitments of Western modernity is calling into question century-old habits of thought and political action, proposing concepts and practices that bypass the lexicon of political modernity and academic cosmopolitanism.

The contributions collected in this book originate from such a geophilosophical interference, having been initially presented and discussed at a conference held in the South of North America, where South and North

American intellectuals and militants met with their European peers, experiencing the exciting forces and political tensions that still inhabit what used to be the route of the transatlantic slave trade and what is now a space crossed by digital cables, cargo vessels, and international flights.<sup>9</sup>

In framing the book title as *The Anomie of the Earth*, thus rephrasing Schmitt's *The Nomos of the Earth*, we draw attention to the chiasmus that anomie/earth and auto/nomy constitute. "Anomie" and "earth" represent in fact a semantic reversal of the term "autonomy," which derives from the Greek *autos* and *nomos*, indicating forms of self-governing rule: instead of the lawful *nomos* of the current nation-states, the anomie of the emerging politics of nature and commons; instead of the *autos* of the political subjects of rights of liberal democracies, an impersonal earth. The chiasmus linking autonomy and the current anomie of the earth thus signals the need to rethink ethical and political communities, as well as traditional notions of nature and society, outside the forms of subjective autonomy and colonial *nomos* that have hitherto dominated Western conceptions of the political.

Our assumption is that the current geopolitical shift—the biopolitical reconfiguration of power within capitalist societies, the progressive erosion of the centrality of the Euro-North Atlantic space, the autonomization of South American and Eastern blocs<sup>10</sup>—is not just a systemic rearrangement of global capitalism, guided by crisis-devices fully controlled by neoliberal practices and ideologies, but can be seen also as a mutation making room for alternative political and micropolitical practices and imaginaries, requiring different conceptual vocabularies and a shift in the understanding of autonomy. The actual antagonistic forms of autonomy and sovereignty are moving away from the Western *nomos*, thus reconceptualizing traditional notions of political autonomy in the Americas and Europe.

In this sense, although Schmitt maintains an uncompromisingly Eurocentric standpoint on the history and construction of a global planetary order, some of his intuitions might be useful for tracing a critical genealogy of modern legal and philosophical concepts. Two centuries before workerist Marxisms transfigured autonomy into a subversive battle cry, staging against capital the rebellious freedom of working-class subjectivities and of social labor, Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), set the theoretical and political standards for modern Western autonomy. The "autonomy of the will," the self-determination of the will and its subjective, "directly legislative" force, are for Kant the "formal supreme principle of pure practical reason" and also the foundation of all political and moral

freedom. From the perspective of Schmitt's second nomos, the universalistic freedom of Kantian practical reason can be interpreted instead against the concrete geohistorical background of Atlantic sea power and European nation-states. The Kantian notion of autonomy, which structures most Eurocentric ontologies of modernity, appears exclusively within this framework of maritime domination and land appropriation, civilized legality and state of nature predation.

Radical intellectuals positioned in postcolonial studies, autonomous Marxism, Foucaultian biopolitics, or Deleuzian geophilosophy have been among the most aware of the exhaustion of the framework of Western political modernity and the need to introduce other interpretative categories, beyond the horizon of Schmitt's Eurocentric nomos. This book showcases several examples of this increasing awareness. Chapters focus on the critical potential of a minor "savage political anthropology" that questions the foundational "state of nature" of modern political philosophy (de Bloois), the Zapatistas' reshaping of political autonomy through a confrontation with the Mexican institutional left (Reyes and Kaufman), and the non-Western-centric forms of life and agency that are being experimented with by South America's *buen vivir* and indigenous movements (Esteva, Walsh). Others show the urgency and aporias of "indigenous sovereignty" (Byrd) or the communal potential of the "unenclosed" theorized by Andean thinkers (Zimmer), while some criticize the notion of hegemony that infuses much contemporary critical theory (Williams), unmasking the Hegelian foundation of the ontologies of life of insurrectional anarchism and neovitalisms (Noys). Finally, two chapters address the anticapitalist micropolitics of lifestyles (Korsten) and the resistance of the "autonomous powers" of life's reproduction to the fascination of capitalist technologies (Federici).

Since the notion of autonomy has been the crucial site of theoretical investigation and political militancy for the Italian workerist movement (*operaismo*) of the 1960s, and later for the postworkerist (*postoperaismo*) or autonomist movements (*autonomia*) of the 1970s and 1980s, several chapters of this book openly engage these workerist and postworkerist positions, taking issue with the ideas of Mario Tronti and Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno and Franco "Bifo" Berardi. Recalling the genealogy of Italian workerism, and its successive transformation into *autonomia* and then into a global anticapitalist discourse through the work of Hardt and Negri, might be useful, then, for grasping the political conjunctions, but also the historical divergences, between conceptions of autonomy of Euro-North

American descent and the contemporary postcolonial and indigenous autonomist movements.<sup>11</sup>

Operaismo, like the Socialism ou Barbarie group in France, developed around journals—*Quaderni rossi* and later *Classe operaia*—and outside of the direct influence of the Italian Communist Party and institutional trade unions. Operaismo's protagonists—Renato Panzieri, Mario Tronti, Sergio Bologna, and Antonio Negri among them—came from a variety of backgrounds: revolutionary syndicalism, anarchic socialism, militant Catholicism. They were united by a common refusal of the official Gramscian line of the Italian Communist Party, of the historicism and idealism associated with Antonio Gramsci's "philosophy of praxis," to which they opposed a return to Marx's texts, in particular the *Grundrisse*.<sup>12</sup> This genesis of Italian workerism explains its distance from the mostly Gramscian and humanist Marxism of the British New Left, of India's subaltern studies and Anglo-American cultural studies. Workerism followed instead the anti-Hegelian and antihistoricist lesson of Italian positivist philosopher Galvano della Volpe, eluding the appeal to the "workers' culture" and the Gramscian apparatus of the national-popular, hegemony, and passive revolution.<sup>13</sup> "Della Volpe took apart, piece by piece, the cultural line of the Italian Communists. . . . Marx *contra* Hegel, like Galileo against the Scholastics, or Aristotle against the Platonists. . . . What, then, is *operaismo*? . . . an attempted cultural revolution in the West."<sup>14</sup> This programmatic shift away from the national and progressive agenda of most European Communist parties is summed up by the slogan of the editorial of the first issue, in 1963, of *Classe operaia*: "first the workers, then capital," and translated into a method of attributing immediate political value to the struggles against work taking place in the large factories of the industrial north of Italy.

Tronti's epoch-making book *Operai e capitale* (1966), a key text for Italian workerism, theorized the political and epistemic localization of the workers' struggles, embracing the irreducible partiality of their subjectivities against the national-popular of Gramscian Marxism and the universalistic and progressive democratic strategy of the Italian Communist Party.<sup>15</sup> Workerism thus produced a map of "neocapitalism" by concentrating on workers' autonomous subjectivities and demands, promoting sociological "militant investigations" into the living conditions and apparently unpolitical behaviors of factory workers.

The context for the emergence of workerism is the late and rapid industrialization of Italy in the 1950s and 1960s, accompanied by a spreading

conflict in the large Taylorist factories of the north, where peasants who had emigrated from southern Italy were subsumed into the processes of capitalist mass production. The *operaisti* saw these events as an opportunity for reviving the great workers' struggles of 1930s America and the unique possibility of challenging the national and progressive agenda of Italian communism and trade unionism.<sup>16</sup> More than a combat against an abstract capitalist system, at stake was thus the attempt to transform the political anthropology of a Western society, defeating "bourgeois populism" and implanting a "post-proletarian aristocracy of the people." Nurtured by the "culture of the crisis" and a "passionate love affair" with "nineteenth-century Central European thought," operaismo mobilized the high aristocratic culture of European negative thought and nihilism, even reinventing Nietzsche's critique of Western civilization and bourgeois culture as a leftist political tool for achieving new forms of life, outside the "ideology of the workers as a 'universal class,' saturated with Kantian ethics," of institutional communism.<sup>17</sup>

The widespread student movement of 1968 and the "hot autumn" of the massive industrial workers' mobilization of 1969 marked a rupture between early workerism and the postworkerist forms of autonomy of the 1970s. The result was Italy's long 1968, the violent decade of the "years of lead," of state-sponsored terrorism and antagonistic insurgencies, culminating with the 1977 revolutionary movements, the Red Brigade's assassination of Italy's prime minister, Aldo Moro, in 1978, the suppression of numerous workerist and postworkerist autonomous experiences in Italy, and the political exile in France of leading militants of autonomia such as Antonio Negri and Oreste Scalzone.

Groups such as Potere Operaio, Lotta Continua, and later Autonomia Operaia—a noncentralized archipelago of autonomist organizations and social movements—prolonged and reshaped early workerism well into the 1970s. The description of labor broadened to include categories of immaterial labor and social reproduction, abandoning the centrality of the industrial workers (the "mass workers" of operaismo) and embracing practices of mass illegality and sabotage, in order to intensify political antagonism and prepare an insurrectionary situation.<sup>18</sup>

The "social workers" of the "social factory"—unemployed and precarious workers, students, women, migrants—became the new subjects of "constituent power," and autonomia spread throughout Europe, creating a rich field of experimentation for new forms of political action and social organization.



These trans-European experiences were not coordinated around a single philosophical paradigm or political project but developed independently according to historically situated conditions. In France, for example, autonomism successfully intersected with poststructuralist theories in the work of intellectuals such as Michel Foucault, Félix Guattari, and Gilles Deleuze, adding a vitalist, biopolitical, and micropolitical toolbox to the originary Marxist lexicon of Italian workerism.

During the past two decades, theorists such as Franco “Bifo” Berardi, Silvia Federici, Andrea Fumagalli, Maurizio Lazzarato, Christian Marazzi, Sandro Mezzadra, Carlo Vercellone, and Paolo Virno have articulated new connections between Marxist categories, Spinozan materialism, and feminist, anthropological, semiotic, and economic motives, elaborating concepts such as “general intellect,” “cognitive capitalism,” and “exodus,” and expanding the focus of autonomia to questions of life’s reproduction and to technological and financial mechanisms of production and control. With the publication of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* (2000), antagonism finds a new political subject in the “multitude,” and world capitalism takes the shape of a global imperial biopolitical apparatus of domination. In postworkerist texts such as Hardt and Negri’s *Multitude* (2004) and *Commonwealth* (2009), Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), and Sandro Mezzadra’s *La condizione postcoloniale* (2008), the attention shifts across the Atlantic, testing the hermeneutical and political potential of autonomy on questions of globalization and decolonization. While forcing workerism to expand its previously European political matrix and rethink the efficacy and latitude of its theoretical categories, this development reconnects the experience of autonomia with some of its inspirational sources: the struggles for decolonization that, from Algeria to Palestine, from Nicaragua to Vietnam, were shaking the global order after World War II.

By observing autonomist Marxism through the lenses of postcolonial studies and political anthropologies; by moving along the path traced by the “provincialization of Europe” set forth by Dipesh Chakrabarty and subaltern studies; or by rehearsing the critique of capitalist development and mobilizing of indigenous knowledge exemplified by liberation theology, the contributors to this collective book are staging a productively disorienting conversation that reformulates the rich history of thought centered on autonomy from state politics, across the current struggles for commons, and against new waves of enclosures. Despite their different backgrounds and approaches, the authors of this book recognize the necessity to rethink the

universalizing concepts of Eurocentric political theory. Their strategies do not always converge, but their latitude demonstrates the vitality of the current alternatives to the paradigm of the *homo economicus*.

A distinctive feature of this book is the desire to avoid any philosophical or political synthesis. What takes place across these pages is instead a complex and often conflictual interchange that projects an impressive picture of the fissures of the Western nomos. Around the battle cry of autonomy, a constellation of terms such as “forms-of-life” and “nature,” “new commons” and “re-enchantment,” are dancing on the stage of thought, suggesting a variety of practices of decolonization and the experimentation of modes of resistance to capitalist accumulation. In order to preserve the embodiment of ideas within their sociogeographical and geopolitical contexts, and escape a disembodied theoretical hubris, this book has chosen the form of the counterpoint, not reducing but dramatizing the heterogeneous discursive strategies adopted by intellectuals rooted in such diverse milieus as Dutch academia, the insurgent social movements of Chiapas, Ecuador, and U.S. college campuses. Linked by several conceptual genealogies and a common anticapitalist horizon, the contributors have produced a collective transatlantic exchange, focused on the multiplicity of existing practices of radical autonomy from the apparatus of Western modernity.

This book argues that in this sociohistorical moment, a multiplicity of cross-currents are generating alternative geopolitics of knowledge, holding the promise of reconfiguring the modern Eurocentric episteme. For this reason, drawing the shifting conceptual contours of contemporary anti-capitalist movements—from Afro-Colombian indigenous insurgencies to the Spanish *indignados*’ protests, from the Zapatistas’ *mandar-obedeciendo* autonomy to the Occupy Wall Street tactics in North America—requires us not only to recognize the mutual influences between decolonial and postworkerist practices, nurtured by processes of cross-fertilization and decades of contacts between militants, but also the existence of a pluricentric map of struggles for political autonomy and conceptual definitions. The essays here reflect this complexity, documenting for instance the primitivist and antimodern line of “savage” political anthropology (de Bloois), the decolonial legacy of the Austrian-born Catholic priest Ivan Illich’s theories of “deschooling” and “conviviality” (Esteva), and the naturalistic potential of a body politics centered on the sphere of reproduction (Federici).

In order to trace the new lines of the “colonial difference” and the never-ending actuality of primitive accumulation,<sup>19</sup> the book presents a series of

reflections on the new nomos, highlighting the disorienting translations, the interchanges, and the irreducible divergences between autonomisms of different kinds. These include: Byrd's emphasis on "indigenous sovereignty" and its divergence from Reyes and Kaufman's illustration of the Zapatistas' "tendential unmaking of sovereignty" as well as their rejection of any critical potential of the discourse of "savagery"—a position shared by most postcolonial intellectuals—and one that stands in sharp contrast with de Bloois's mobilization of the Lévi-Strauss, Clastres, Deleuze-Guattari, Viveiros de Castro lineage of savage political anthropology.<sup>20</sup> Noys's critique of the alliance between poststructuralist neo-vitalisms and insurrectional anarchism targets the presuppositions of the "savage ontologies" of life maintained by many post-Deleuzian, post-Foucauldian, and postautonomist analyses dealing with desiring machines and constituent power. At the same time, Federici, a protagonist of Italian autonomist thinking, calls for a shift away from the technophilic and productivist imaginary of Eurocentric postworkerism, advocating a rethinking of technology and nature, the commons and bodily experience.

The exchanges between European and North/South American theorizations of autonomy and the new nomos are organized around three complementary areas of investigation—geographies, commons, and forms of life. Joost de Bloois's opening essay starts the work of bridging autonomism and decoloniality through the notion of "savage thought" and establishes very useful links between Negri's "alter-modernity" and Mignolo's "de-coloniality." Alvaro Reyes and Mara Kaufman look at Chiapas to glean from Zapatismo a refusal of the state (and therefore of the very notion of sovereignty) and a new conception of power (*Mandar obedeciendo*) that could in turn be re-deployed in the "civilizational crisis of 'the West.'" In Part II, the idea of the commons starts taking a poststatist path, a position of autonomy from the state, with Gustavo Esteva's opening essay, and with Catherine E. Walsh's following one, which looks at the limits of the state even at its most progressive point of development—as in the constitutional attempts of Ecuador and Bolivia to include not only indigenous movements but also nature as subjects of state rights. This withering away of the state from the stage of autonomist and decolonial thought poses of course the question: on which community, precisely, should the "common" be based? The issue of indigeneity, already present in Walsh, then becomes the main topic for both Jody A. Byrd and Zac Zimmer. Their essays, surprisingly, question the very category of "indigeneity" from the perspective of a progressive politics. Their

question is simple: how is it possible to imagine a common that does not close on any “indigenous” or “nativist” claim to ownership? It is from this question that Gareth Williams’s quest for a “post-hegemonic forms of thought” begins, opening Part III. This is followed by Noys’s trenchant critique of what he sees as the re-ontologization of the forms of life in debates about indigeneity and autonomy, Frans-Willem Korsten then goes back to one of autonomy’s most central concerns—time—to engage in a very interesting, if at times a little too distant from properly decolonial concerns, discussion of “preciosity.” Silvia Federici’s last essay could in itself be an apt conclusion to the book, as it pulls together the various threads—buen vivir, nature, biopolitics, the state, technology—that were laid out in the preceding essay to propose the possibility of a “reenchantment of the world” as the very goal of autonomist and decolonial politics.

In his contribution (chapter 1), Joost de Bloois traces the genealogical line connecting European (and especially Italian) autonomist movements to the diverse struggles for, and debates about, autonomy in current decolonial movements in North and South America. De Bloois argues that the Italian movements of the 1970s understood their position as a point of transition between older Marxist-Leninist models of state-oriented politics and an emerging postautonomist political anthropology that resists the dominant liberal democratic Western consensus. Following theorists of *operaismo* and *autonomia* such as Franco Berardi and Mario Tronti, de Bloois asks whether the 1970s signaled the end of the modern emancipatory ideal and concurrent modes of struggle, precipitating the emergence of a new kind of political subject, one that demands the overcoming of the sociopolitical anthropology of the liberal democratic *homo economicus*. By drawing on Pierre Clastres’s “savage ethnography,” these approaches to autonomy have challenged the Hobbesian conception of a violent, prepolitical “state of nature,” the Rousseauian myth of political consensus, and the Kantian ethic of a self-disciplinary citizenship. Whereas for Hobbes the savage is a negative limit-condition of permanent war, for Clastres the savage becomes the guarantor of the social, an affirmative subject that obstructs the advent of the repressive apparatus of the nation-state. In place of Hobbes’s *bellum omnium contra omnes*, primitive sociality instantiates a constructive society-for-war in which power is shared within and among local communities in the process of negotiating shifting territories. As Antonio Negri has argued, this “savage” political praxis implies that postautonomia movements are in the process of shifting and deconstructing the founding Western