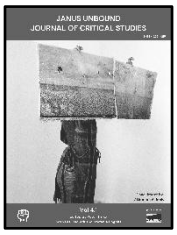
Title: Anton Wilhelm Amo *beyond* "his" time and place Author(s): Fazil Moradi
Source: *Janus Unbound: Journal of Critical Studies*, vol. IV, no. 1 (Winter 2024), pp. 20-45
Published by: *Memorial University of Newfoundland*



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E-ISSN: 2564-2154
4(1) 20-45

Anton Wilhelm Amo *beyond* "his" time and place

Fazil Moradi

Introduction

This text draws on my anthropological inquiry crossing Halle (Saale) in Germany, Accra, and the southern regions of Ghana. The former was a city historically imbued with intellectual significance and the place that was once home to Anton Wilhelm Amo, who lived, studied, taught, and moved within the city's upper echelons. Halle also became central to my academic life between 2011 and 2019, as I pursued and completed my doctoral dissertation at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and earned my Ph.D. from the University of Halle, where I also taught and contributed as a researcher and lecturer.

The text does not aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of Amo's philosophical writings, nor does it aspire to undertake an archival excavation of the limited extant documents or the potential records housed in the Dutch West India Company archives, or the archive of the Brandenburg-Prussian imperial court in Berlin—where I currently reside. Instead, it situates itself within the philosophical space of absence and presence, acknowledging the fragmentary nature of such sources while resisting the reduction of the spectres of Amo to mere archival recovery or analytical classification as essential to knowing and knowledge.

Given that other contributions in this issue engage Amo's early years in Wolfenbüttel, education and intellectual life (Bognitz and Akinbiyi), it is unnecessary to revisit those discussions here. Instead, we are reminded of more than one spectre of Amo, who was born, lived, studied, and excelled in mastering languages and engaging philosophical ideas during one of the most critical times in the history of the Brandenburg-Prussian Empire. Amo's life and existence remain marked by imperial forces that shaped it. Therefore, Amo cannot be *a spectre alone*. Amo's non-present present, anchoring him in the here and now is the coming-back of spectres and an unknowable future. As Jacques Derrida writes, "a specter is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back"* (1994, 11). My contribution thus builds on the understanding that Amo as an autobiographical example is "not a personal story that folds onto itself," but rather "a window onto [political] social and historical processes, as an example of them" (Hartman in Saunders 2008, 5). The life, works, haunting memories, or spectres of Amo invite us to think

hospitably, to research and articulate through writing or speech, to remember or to archive. However, this invitation leads us beyond mere contemplation of the Enlightenment's ideals of "reason and progress." It forces us to confront the paradoxical coexistence of these ideals with the transatlantic trade in humans and slavery plantation as imperial violence that persisted across empires in the 18th century.

Engaging with Amo requires that one speaks with, to, and through spectres; *to speak, to make, or to let* the spectres of Amo *speak*, to borrow from Derrida (1994, 11). It is about both becoming exposed to the spectrality of Amo—an experience of non-present present that cannot entirely belong to knowing and knowledge (see Alpert, Bognitz and Akinbiyi in this issue)—and to "*crossing over*, traversing territories, and abandoning fixed positions, all the time" (Said 2000, 404). Across all the contributions in this issue, including photographs, a poem composed by Amo, and through all other texts and relays, including Amo's writings, handwriting and signature, we not only learn what spectres of Amo allow or prevent us from accessing, but also how they disrupt a linear understanding of time. These spectres urge us to engage with what has been silenced or abandoned to forgetfulness, as well as the persistent and haunting presence of the imperial foundations of Enlightenment and the unimaginable violence that shaped Amo's worlds in both 18th century Europe and the "Gold/Slave Coast" (present-day Ghana).

This encounter with Amo carries a transformative movement that crosses histories, colonial imaginations, and epistemic violence, transcending autobiography as purely portraying a single, isolated life or adhering to a linear time (Moradi 2023). It weaves through multiple places, narratives, haunting memories, and human experiences, crossing both geographical and epistemic, or, conceptual boundaries. In this text, it has meant travelling through the University of Halle, traces of Amo in its archive and museum, each allowing and at the same time blocking access to knowing or an "absolute knowledge" about Amo. This movement has taken me through the World Wide Web, which is central to the global dissemination of Amo's writings, traces, and archives (see Amo's Archive in this issue). It has carried me across the Atlantic to Ghana, specifically to the W. E. B. Du Bois Personal Library in Accra, located in the very place where Du Bois once lived. From there, it extended to the National Archives and the University of Ghana, and finally to the colonial forts and castles along Ghana's coastline. In the solitude of a remote and lonely grave at one of these sites rests the body of Amo.

If Amo's body, like the bodies of the imperial kings who destroyed and transformed his world into "Gold and Slave Coast," does not represent something strange, non-familiar, or a stranger to the Earth, then the movement toward Amo's autobiography in this text becomes a gesture of re/turn: a re/turn to the possibility of hospitality as an earthly experience. Hospitality as "not merely an invitation to reside in proximity; [but] an obligation to revise one's ways of being, living, and thinking, side by side, in a spirit of complementation, not completion" (Bhabha 2021, x). As a countersignature of imperial thinking, be it at the (nation-)state or citizen level, hospitality takes us to what Gayatri

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Chakravorty Spivak calls an *epistemological revolution* that helps revise our ways of thinking, living, co-habiting and being with the Earth: "We must think our individual home as written on the planet as planet," beyond the nation or racialized modes of identification (2013, 26, 349).

In this context, Amo becomes a call for hospitality or an experience of the *beyond* as "a space of intervention in the here and now" (Bhabha 2004, 10). As *beyond*, Amo makes us become "part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to re-inscribe our human [and more-than-human], historic commonality" (10). Thus, this text, by hosting a certain autobiography, certain spectres of Amo, moves beyond the boundaries of imperially constituted modes of identification. These include the imposition of racialized, nationalized, territorialized, sexualized, and isolating forms of memory, crafted as calculated narratives of colonization or *genophilia*[1] that are today at work identifying Amo as either purely African or as embedded within the Heideggerian "Platonico-Christian West" (Derrida 2020, 76).

This imperial heritage or memory of familiar/foreigner and *foreigner* as imminent threat suggests that there is no such thing as "culture" that exists independently of a certain political program of colonization. As Derrida reminds us, "All culture is originarily colonial. … Every culture institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some 'politics' of language. Mastery begins, as we know, through the power of naming, of imposing and legitimating appel- lations" (1998, 39). The political act of cultural making is inseparable from the claim of domination, where the politics of language becomes the battlefield for collective identification or memory control and institutionalization of *difference*. In this sense, every culture as expression of genophilia is haunted by the traces of political domination and confrontation with foreignness or *Otherness* (see also Moradi 2024b). As Derrida writes, "[t]he difference of the One in the form of uniqueness … and the One in the figure of totalizing assemblage ('to an entire people') must make us tremble … As soon as there is One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism" (Derrida 1996, 77-78).

Amo in the Shadow of Empires

Would Amo be remembered if he had not become a philosopher during the early Enlightenment of the 18th century? As a child, Amo was likely one of many enslaved persons, including children, women, and men, forcibly deported from a region that had undergone a transition from "Gold" to "Slave Coast," to Amsterdam by the Dutch West India Company (*West-Indische Compagnie*) in the early years of the 18th century. He was not an African royal prince. Unlike the prince from Sonyo state, whom Captain Frans van Goethem deported to the Dutch colony of Surinam as a "slave" in 1695 and later the Dutch West India Company (Dutch WIC) was forced to locate and return (Potsma 1992, 102–3), we do not know of any similar effort to reclaim Amo as a child. What became of the enslaved children on the slavery plantations? What were their names? How many of them do we still remember? What happened to those children whom "African mothers were forced to abandon prior to the Middle Passage?" (Engmann 2023, 498). How many of the "702" enslaved humans

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who drowned off the coast of Surinam in January 1738, when the Dutch WIC slaver *Leusden* sank (Postma 1992, 164, 203), were children? Who today can claim to know or remember their names? (cf. Sharpe 2016).

As the Dutch Empire expanded its territorial conquests, the demand for gold and enslaved human labour grew significantly. These imperial economic and colonial calculations enabled the Dutch WIC to establish a dominant position in the transatlantic trade of enslaved persons from the continent of Africa (Postma 1992). The Dutch, Postma writes, "got involved in the slave trade in order to supply their newly acquired plantation colony in Brazil during the 1630s. Two decades later the Spanish colonies, via Curacao and through the *asiento* contracts, became the chief market for Dutch slave traders" (299). Count Maurits of Nassau-Siegen, the colonial governor of Dutch Brazil, clearly iterated the imperial call: "it is not possible to effect anything in Brazil without slaves ... and they cannot be dispensed with upon any consideration whatsoever; if anyone feels that this is wrong, it is a futile scruple" (cited in Feinberg 1989, 31). The imperialist assertion of racial superiority was rooted in a way of knowing and seeing that justified the destruction of life forms and the commodification of human existence. This worldview relegated enslaved peoples from the African continent to an artificially constructed lower stage of social and developmental hierarchy, turning their humanity into a site of exploitation (Hall and Schwarz 2017, 104).

After the Dutch colonial forces seized Elmina Castle from the Portuguese and established a headquarters for the Dutch WIC in 1637, they continued to remove the Portuguese colonial forces from their last coastal outposts, including the fort in Axim (French 2021, 247), where Amo is said to have been born. The Dutch WIC had "special agents appointed to specialize in the slave trade" (Postma 1992, 297), and its enslavers deported enslaved women, children and men from the "Slave Coast" to various slavery plantations, including Surinam which was slowly turned into a "slave market" (294). If the date of enslavement and deportation of Amo's brother to one of many slavery plantations in Surinam is unclear, Amo's deportation to Amsterdam occurred between 1700 and 1713, a time known as the "Slave Rush." During this period, "Gold Coast departures soared to quadruple the levels seen during the previous four decades" (254).[2] The Dutch monopoly on the transatlantic trade in enslaved people ended with the 1713 "Peace Treaty" in Utrecht, an agreement among the Dutch, Prussian, Portuguese, French, and British empires. This allowed the British Empire to supply enslaved people from Africa to the Spanish colonies and slowly establish dominance in the Atlantic (Hall and Schwarz 68). How, then, can we untangle Amo from the imperial acts of conquest, centuries of enslavement and plantation economies, and the enduring violence of colonialism? These imperial modes of violence ruptured the "historical connections" of the enslaved and their descendants, perpetuating endless generational violence (15). The forts and castles of the Portuguese, Dutch, English, Danish, Brandenburg-Prussian, Swedish, and French empires stand along today's Cape Coast in Ghana. These were built and maintained using enslaved human labour classified as "castle slaves, company slaves, inventory slaves, factory slaves,

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king's slaves, committee slaves, service slaves," which, together with the enslavers as technologies of transport, conquest and deportation, the forts, castles and lodges as the imperial architecture of enslavement and expansion, and "plantation overseers, attorneys, book-keepers, merchants, medical men and soldiers" (Hall and Schwarz 15) served as the critical infrastructure of imperial nation-building and expansion (Engmann 2023, 498). Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann writes that "central to studies of the transatlantic slave trade are Ghana's forts and castles. … There are more fortifications along the coast of present-day Ghana than in all regions in West Africa combined (or, in fact, in the whole of the Atlantic world)" (496). Between the late fifteenth and late eigh- teenth centuries, the empires built nearly one hundred lodges, forts, and castles along a 300-mile stretch of coastline in present-day Ghana. Stretching from Be- yin in the southwest to Keta in the southeast of today's Ghana, these monu- mental architectures of imperial conquests, destruction of established life forms, and colonial governance were how some empires and imperial nations were being created in the part of the planet that is today called Europe.

The Portuguese Empire built Elmina Castle, Fort St. Sebastian, Cape Coast Castle and Fort Saint Anthony between 1482 and 1555; the Dutch erected Fort Nassau, Ussher Fort, Fort of Good Hope, Fort Orange, Fort Batenstein, Fort Vredenburgh and Fort Patience from 1612 to 1697; the British owned Fort Amsterdam, James Fort, Fort Metal Cross, Fort Apollonia, Fort Vernon and Fort William between 1638 and 1753; Danish-Norwegian collaboration result- ed in Osu or Christiansborg Castle and Fort Fredensborg from 1660 to 1734; the Danish oversaw Fort Kongenstein, Fort Prinzenstein and the Frederiksgave plantation from 1683 into the 1830s; and the Brandenburg-Prussian Empire established Groß-Friedrichsburg Festung (Fort) from 1681 to 1683. Many of these imperial buildings were constructed on the sites of ruins of other forts, and wars among the empires led to changing ownership and names over time (Lawrence 1963; Dantzig 1980; Osei-Tutu and Smith 2018; DeCorse 2001; Adjaye 2018; Green 2020).

Although Christiansborg Castle in Accra has been a government building for the Ghanaian state since its independence in 1957, other castles and forts, preserved as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, have evolved into prominent yet contested tourist destinations. These living imperial architectural monuments embody the coloniality of power or relations of domination and destruction, simultaneously attracting global interest while raising ethical questions about how the histories or memories they embody are remembered and commodified (Osei-Tutu 2004; Kreamer 2004). Visitors—among them African Americans tracing their human relations and memories to those enslaved and deported by the Dutch WIC, as well as tourists from the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands—are drawn to these imperial colonial castles and forts. The monuments, along with others now descending into ruins, serve as enduring violence of imperial conquests, destruction, and acts of annihilation—slavery. Together, as the tour guide would narrate to us visitors in late June 2023, they vividly illustrate how the imperial architecture of colonial violence—embodied in the design of forts, castles, and lodges built to conquer and expand the bor-

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ders of empires, imprison and brutalize the enslaved humans, subjecting them to torture and rape before their departure—stretches the colonial archives. This is how the spectres of Amo's life make "demands" on the living generation—both researchers and readers—by "kidnapping" us (cf. Morrison 2010, xix.), confronting us directly with the colonial archives that have held him under *house arrest* (cf. Derrida 1996, 2), for far too long, exposing the unimaginable cruelties or *inhospitality* of imperial colonialism.

Hospitality, *friendship*, *love*, *care*, *loss*, mourning or responsibility as human practices, relationships, and rights beyond the law, living, and critical imagination lie beyond the domain of empires, whether modern or ancient (Moradi 2024a; 2024c; 2024d, 2023). The right and responsibility of the imperial colonizer or conqueror has always been the destruction of the target people and the conquest of their land. It has never been the right and responsibility toward the other or of the other to cohabit the Earth. Hospitality has, therefore, always been both a countersignature and a welcoming of conquest and exploitation for the racial capitalist imperial colonizer: "From c. 1650 to 1800, approximately one million captive Africans were trafficked from Ghana out of the continent" (Engmann 2023, 496). The "accepted figure" of the United Provinces of the Netherlands was two million in 1795 (Boxer 1965/1990, 304). In his memoir, Stuart Hall writes, "Within the mental imperatives of the plantation the slave could not even be comprehended without the presence of the master. He or she could not properly exist. … *The enslaved had slipped out of memory* (Hall and Schwarz 70, 73, emphasis mine).

Frantz Fanon's critical anthropological account demonstrates that the spectres of slavery continue to haunt the very foundation of present-day Europe: "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the underdeveloped peoples. The ports of Holland, the docks of Bordeaux and Liverpool were specialized in the Negro slave trade, and owe their renown to millions of deported slaves" (2004, 102). At issue is also an imperial consolidation of what Aníbal Quijano (2000) calls the "coloniality of power." Beginning already in 1492, coloniality highlights relations of domination that were anchored in the codification of distinctions between conquerors and the conquered in the idea of "race" naturalizing a racial hierarchy—superior and inferior races—as tied to the legitimization and institutionalization of control over labour, including racial slavery and serfdom, extractive capitalism or ecological exploitation, and settler-colonialism. In the imperial context of dehumanization, dispossession, the commodification of human lives, plunder of knowledge systems, destruction of heritages and languages, and widespread ecological destruction across Africa and the Americas were naturalized as the order of empire. The languages of the enslaved were either strictly controlled or entirely banned to suppress any potential for mobilization of collective resistance (Hall and Schwarz 2017, 74–75), which in today's understanding can be understood as "linguifam," linguistic starvation or linguicide, murder of language (Wa Thiong'o 2009, 17).

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Deferred Remembrance, Forgetting Amo

On Tuesday, 18 October 2016, almost three centuries—270 years to be precise—after Amo departed from the territory of the Prussian Empire and his subsequent "return" to the "Slave Coast" in 1747, I received Professor Arjun Appadurai, a distinguished anthropologist and critical theorist, at the Halle (Saale) central train station. We walked to the Dormer Hotel located on Leipziger Strasse. Appadurai had travelled from Berlin and needed to rest and prepare his Anton Wilhelm Amo Lecture, which he was expected to deliver at 6pm in Hörsaal XX at Melanchthonianum of the Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, hereafter referred to as the University of Halle.

The Anton Wilhelm Amo Lecture series, which began in 2012, interrupted the historical silence and silencing of Amo's life and work during the early Enlightenment in Halle and Wittenberg. It was organized by Professor Richard Rottenburg, then the chair of the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, and Professor Matthias Kaufmann, then the chair of the Department of Philosophy, and funded by the research clusters Society and Culture in Motion and Enlightenment, Religion, Knowledge of the University of Halle. Richard had told me in a conversation that the memorial plaque on the building where Amo had once lived in Wittenberg led him to work with Matthias toward the organization of the Amo lecture series.

The inscription on the memorial plaque reads:

Anton Wilhelm Amo

(um 1700 – nach 1775) Philosoph. 1. afrikan. Student 1730 – 1735 in Wittenberg

Another plaque, in fact, the only one remembering Amo as *Aufklärungsphilosoph,* Enlightenment philosopher, can be located in Jena. It is affixed to the building where Amo resided at Jenergasse 9:

Zur Erinnerung an den Aufklärungsphilosophen Anton Wilhelm Amo aus Axim in Ghana 1739 Dozent ander Universität Jena Wohnte hier in der Jenergasse

Several hours later, I returned to the hotel and accompanied Appadurai on a walk to Universitätsplatz, a square where the buildings Robertinum (1889), Melanchthonianum (1900–1902), Thomasianum (1910), and Löwengebäude converge. The Robertinum, named after the archaeologist and philologist Carl Robert (1850–1922), houses a bust of the ancient poet Homer ("8th century BCE"). The Löwengebäude, or Lion Building, is adorned with paintings and numerous busts of prominent thinkers and theologians, defined and identified as German, who represent the "white" male-dominated history of the universi-

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ties of Halle and Wittenberg. Among these figures are Martin Luther (1483–1546), Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), and Christian Thomasius (1655–1728). The Melanchthonianum is named after Philip Melanchthon, a key collaborator of Martin Luther. In the early 16th century, Melanchthon served as rector of the Academia Leucorea in Wittenberg.

In the early 19th century, two historical institutions—the Academia Leucorea, established by Electoral Prince Friedrich der Weise von Sachsen in 1502, and the Academia Fridericiana, founded in 1694 by Electoral Prince Friedrich III of Brandenburg (who would later ascend as King Friedrich I of Prussia)—were merged to form the *(Königliche) Vereinigte Friedrichs-Universität Halle-Wittenberg*. This union symbolized not just the consolidation of academic traditions but also the broader ambitions of the Prussian Empire to centralize and elevate educational standards. With the ascension of Friedrich Wilhelm II (1744–1797) to the throne of Prussia in 1786 and the appointment of Johann Christoph Wöllner as Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs on July 3, 1788, the Prussian state turned to the Christian supremacy and domination of the right to think and write critically. On July 9, 1788, Religionsedikt (the Edict of Religion) was issued, followed on December 19, 1788, by Zensuredikts (the Edict of Censorship) were established to ban or control whatever that appeared to contest the "spirit of Christianity" under the rule of a "Christian prince" (see Wiggermann 2010; Kuehn 2002, 341). The Prussian kingdom that once aligned with the ideals of *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) became a political organization that sought to control intellectual freedom..

On 10 November 1933, during the 450th anniversary of Luther's birth, the Nazi regime in Germany renamed the University of Halle-Wittenberg to "Martin-Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg." This renaming was not unexpected, as Luther was both anti-Semite and anti-women. In December 1542, Luther declared that women were destined to "bear children to death" and openly called for the destruction of "the Jews" (Federici 2018, 30; Nolting 1999).

The buildings, the assembly of exclusive iterations of men and names, and the very name of this university itself act as a powerful technology of unification, forging a homogenous narrative of belonging and identification by erasing heterogeneity in pursuit of an "ideal configuration." The Universitätsplatz, as *Lieux de mémoire*, has become the manifestation binding memory and identification into a singular, unified narrative of a different and unique nation. This *Oneness*, this *Lieux de mémoire* is important for understanding Amo's place in Halle and contemporary Germany at large.

As Appadurai and I walked toward Universitätsplatz, he asked me, "Who was Amo?" He was already familiar with the usual story of Amo's birth in present-day Ghana in the early 18th century and his "abduction." Knowing this, he stopped me from repeating the widely accepted naturalized narrative that often defines Amo's life. Instead, he asked, "Do we have his writings? Are there publications that can teach us about his work?" I could only respond, "Yes, some of his writings are in the archive." There is no book authored by Amo available in any university library or bookstore in Germany. Instead, his work is preserved in the university archive in Halle. In this archive, you can find Amo's hand-

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written name and signature in the student registry book from Academia Fridericiana, dated 1727 (see Amo's Archive in this issue), along with his dissertations written in Latin. These dissertations were "discovered" by librarian Wolfram Suchier in 1916 and were later republished by Burchardt Brentjes in 1976.

As we were walking and talking, we arrived at the two bronze sculptures on a stone base, which I wanted Appadurai to see. One depicts a man with a piece of cloth draped around his waist. This sculpture is intended to represent "the African" in anatomical terms. The man stands behind and slightly to the right of a woman, who is wearing a long skirt, a camisole, and a turban-like head wrap. Situated behind the Löwengebäude and close to the main entrance of the Robertinum, the sculptures emerge as a solitary monument. Absent of images, portraits, or paintings, the male sculpture is intended to evoke the presence of Amo, serving as a catalyst for remembrance and a means to render visible the memory of belonging and identification. With their arms resting at their sides and hands unoccupied, the two figures are united in a shared gaze toward an uncertain future.

It is not clear how the location of the solitary monument was decided, but the two sculptures were linked to the global politics of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1949 to 1990. During this time, East Germany maintained political relationships with anti-imperial movements across the continent of Africa and with the newly independent state of Ghana. In the early 1960s, the sculptor Gerhard Geyer was tasked with travelling to Ghana and Guinea. Geyer travelled to Ghana with his friend and fellow artist, Walter Howard. Their mission was to create artworks inspired by their experiences and artistic exploration of postcolonial Ghana (see also Brentjes 1976). Geyer was tasked with creating a piece for the GDR to present as a gift to the Ghanaian Trade Union Congress, while Howard was to produce a work to be gifted to the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée.[3] The political upheavals in both postcolonial countries prevented the artworks from being completed and presented as ideological gifts. In 1965, Geyer produced a series of artworks he referred to as "African sculptures" that were showcased at Moritzburg, a historical castle from the late 15th century that currently functions as both a heritage site and an art museum in Halle (Saale). In that same year, two sculptures titled "Freies Afrika" (Free/Liberated Africa), originally conceived as a political gift from the GDR to the Republic of Ghana, were installed where they can be found today. The male sculpture was intended to represent or stand in for Amo. It is recounted that Kwame Nkrumah, once the Prime Minister of the "Gold Coast" from 1952 to 1957 during the twilight of British imperial rule, and later became the first President of a liberated Ghana (1957–1966), was invited to the ceremony and to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Halle, where Amo's own intellectual life had once unfolded.[4] At the University Archive in Halle in 2022, Stefanie Bognitz (see her contributions in this issue) and I were informed that the invitation letter that was prepared to be sent to Nkrumah was undergoing restoration in Leipzig. By the early 1960s, Nkrumah's intellectual focus had already shifted toward Amo. In his 1964 work *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-colonization and Development with*

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Particular Reference to the African Revolution, Nkrumah explicitly engages Amo's philosophical writings, referring to him as "the Ghanaian philosopher." This recognition reflects Nkrumah's broader project of reclaiming African intellectual heritage, the Africanization of Amo or Amo as a foundational critique of the imperial narrative of "white racial superiority" and "black racial inferiority." In the same historical breath, Nkrumah, standing at the helm of a newly liberated Ghana, invited Du Bois to both "celebrate the final constitutional separation from Britain, as Ghana became a Republic," and to edit the *Encyclopedia Africana* (Gates 2000, 215). Du Bois, born in Massachusetts in 1868, became the first Black scholar to earn a doctoral degree from Harvard University in 1895. His dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870*,[5] was a landmark work, later published in 1896 (Lewis 1995, 2). In July 1892, a young Du Bois embarked on his journey to imperial Europe. It was just eight years after the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, which, as empires' navigation of violence between themselves followed the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and Peace Treaty in Utrecht in 1713, had divided the continent of Africa to satisfy the imperialist capitalist ambitions and racial dominance of European empires. Du Bois' journey was also about twelve years before imperial Germany, which had already colonized what they called "German South West Africa," committed genocide against Nama and Herero people in present-day Namibia between 1904 and 1908 (Biwa 2017).

In his autobiography, Du Bois (2007, 99) writes:

> I crossed the ocean in a trance. Always I seemed to be saying, "It is not real; I must be dreaming!" I can live it again—the little, Dutch ship—the blue waters—the smell of new-mown hay—Holland and the Rhine. I saw the Wartburg and Berlin; I made the *Hartzreise* and climbed the Brocken; I saw the Hansa towns and the cities and dorfs of South Germany; I saw the Alps at Berne, the Cathedral at Milan, Florence, Rome, Venice, Vienna, and Pest; I looked on the boundaries of Russia; and I sat in Paris and London. On mountain and valley, in home and school, I met men and women as I had never met them before. Slowly they became, not white folks, but folks. The unity beneath all life clutched me. I was not less fanatically a Negro, but "Negro" meant a greater, broader sense of humanity and world fellowship.

Du Bois crossed the Atlantic to imperial Berlin, where he enrolled at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität to study economics, history, sociology, and politics. During three semesters, he had the privilege of being close to and learning from some of the most influential thinkers of the time, including Gustav Friedrich Schmoller, Adolf Wagner, the "fire-eating Pan-German," Heinrich von Treitschke, and the renowned Max Weber (104).

In Berlin, he also could not only hear his "German companions sing *'Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles in der Welt'*," with "the march of soldiers, the saluting of magnificent uniforms, and the martial music and rhythm of movement," stirring his senses, but he also had the opportunity to observe Emperor Wilhelm II, King of Prussia, parading on horseback: "I even trimmed my beard and mustache to a fashion like his [Wilhelm II] and still follow it. If I a

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stranger was thus influenced, what about the youth of Germany? I began to feel that dichotomy which all my life has characterized my thought: how far can love for my oppressed race accord with love for the oppressing country? And when these loyalties diverge, where shall my soul find refuge?" (106).

At ninety, just before his move to Ghana in 1961, Du Bois returned to his alma mater, renamed Humboldt University in Berlin, now in the grip of the GDR, to receive an honorary diploma—"the degree of Doctor of Economics, *honoris causa*"—in early November 1958 (Appiah 2014, 1–3). This was amidst sweeping imperial and geopolitical transformations; the GDR forged connections with growing decolonial states across the African continent, intertwining its socialist politics with the aspirations of African nations in a postcolonial world (Pugach 2022; Glass 1980).

At the launch of the *Encyclopedia Africana* in late 1962 at the University of Ghana, Du Bois shared that the idea had lived within him since 1909—the very year Nkrumah was born—and that "It is logical that such a work had to wait for independent Africans to carry it out" (Gates 1995, 323). The idea at the heart of the *Encyclopedia*, Gates writes, was that it "would refute the Enlightenment notion of blacks as devoid of civilization and the hallmarks of humanity" (203). In 1963, at 95, Du Bois became a Ghanaian citizen after the U.S. Embassy in Accra refused him a passport.

He died on August 27 and was laid to rest outside and next to one of the walls of Christiansborg Castle, poised between the entrance gate and the Atlantic Ocean. His remains were later exhumed and reinterred beside his home in Accra. Unlike Amo's lonely and abandoned grave, to which I will return further below, the tomb of Du Bois and his partner (wife) Shirley Graham is situated within a temple-like edifice, attracts visitors from the United States at large, the postcolonial President(s) of Ghana, and tourists from around the world.

In June 2023, haunted by the spectres of Amo, Stefanie Bognitz and I spent a week at the W. E. B. Du Bois Center and the National Archives in Accra, searching for traces of Amo. We learned that Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, haunted by the spectres of Du Bois, visits and pursues learning in his library. Like Spivak, within the "Du Bois Personal Library" we encountered a collection of books enshrouded in dust and decay. There is a copy of the 1977 edition of *The Encyclopedia Africana: Dictionary of African Biographies*, edited by L. H. Ofosu-Appiah, which includes an entry titled "Amo, A. W." written by K. A. Britwum. The website of the Du Bois Center celebrates Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), Wole Soyinka (1923-), Cheikh Anta Diop (1923-1986), and Dr. Abdias do Nascimento (1914-2011) as "eminent African scholars." At the National Archives in Accra, the Nkrumah "agendas" or "diaries" document various daily activities and meetings during his presidency of Ghana. Among these records are entries noting meetings with Du Bois. However, the details of their discussions remain unspecified, and there is no record of the invitation from the University of Halle

It is also during this historical moment of profound political and epistemological upheaval in the 1960s that Burchard Brentjes (1929–2012) begins working on the person he identified as "the black philosopher in Halle" (1976).

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Brentjes' book, *Anton Wilhelm Amo: Der Schwarze Philosoph in Halle*, remains the only historical documentation or key publication in German dedicated to Amo, highlighting the broader lack of academic interest with Amo's life and work within German scholarship. A photograph in the book (87) archives the GDR's Ambassador to Ghana, Johannes Vogel, alongside Kwaw Freiku II, the President of the Chieftain's Chamber of Ghana's Western Region. The two can be seen standing before Amo's grave in Shama on 11 September 1974.

In 1975, a memorial plaque was installed in front of the sculptures: "to commemorate the first African student and lecturer at the University of Halle-Wittenberg and Jena, 1727–1747." This mode of remembering carries the spectres of Amo beyond the borders of contemporary Germany. Positioned prominently to the right of the entrance to the Department of Philosophy and Classics[6] at the University of Ghana in Accra, a golden plaque reads:

> Dedicated by the
> Martin-Luther-University
> of Halle-Wittenberg
> in the German Democratic Republic
> to its former student
> and lecturer 1727 – 1747 An-
> ton Wilhelm Amo from Axim The
> great African Philosopher
> of the modern age

The plaque is believed to have been gifted to the University of Ghana in the 1980s. Since we could not meet in person during my visit to the university, I e-mailed Dr. Hasskei Mohammed Majeed, a distinguished scholar from the Department of Philosophy and Classics at the University of Ghana in Accra. Answering my questions, in one of his emails, he wrote, "I am sorry to inform you that there's no record of the date when the plaque was transferred to the department, and the department does not teach a course on Amo. We intend to develop one in the near future though."

Appadurai's "Sidenote" or Epistemic Justice *to Come*

Leaving the "Liberated Africa" sculpture behind, Appadurai and I went to Hörsaal XX at the Melanchthonianum. Here, Appadurai delivered his lecture, titled "The Precarious Future of National Sovereignty." His abstract opened with the words, "National sovereignty today operates in a changed ecology..." and concluded with a profound assertion: "More than three centuries after the Treaty of Westphalia [1648], Europe (and the world) are in desperate need of a new narrative of sovereignty."

He started with a "sidenote":

> I must admit that I did not know [very much about Amo] till today. When I was on the train from Berlin to here [Halle], I looked up the name [Amo]. … And in the course of the day and through some conversations with people here, *I am feeling a little less ashamed because I see that I am in the very big company of people*

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> *who do not know what they should know about Amo*. Because this is a completely stunning story. I am committed to be learning whatever can be learned about this extraordinary person about whom I gather the archival traces are not many and that may partly account for why he is not talked about all the time … Not only was I amazed by this man and his history in this crucial century, in this crucial moment, in this time in Germany, in Europe more generally. I am really very affected by the condition of his working life, his stature and his sad, I guess, return to Ghana and apparently his death under somewhat obscure circumstances. I am especially affected, because I have a small book that I am thinking about … trying to look again at the very old question or old issue, which is not so much discussed, which is how could the European Enlightenment co-exist with the global imperial regime of Europe which in every way, point by point, contradicts the ideas of Enlightenment. Now, there are some obvious and available answers but I think they are poor answers, which say that ideas won't matter, that this is just hypocrisy, that empire was really about property, wealth and power and these ideas were just kind of [*sic*] side point or some such things. Well, I am not convinced by any of these and I think there is something much deeper which needs to be tackled to understand how you could have these great ideas as well as this disturbing world moment of European conquest, control, domination, hegemony and indeed savagery on a worldwide basis. This is not a small thing. Then, I see this story of Amo and, I think, oh my… Here is a Black man, planted here, abducted indeed, and then gifted, commoditized, moved around, though in very privileged circumstances, and then becomes an extraordinary savant, a learned man in the height of the Enlightenment but coming from the most difficult spaces of the early modern world in Europe. Just stunning. I have both reasons to be stunned by this individual and my own project to think what does a story like this tell us about the co-existence of Enlightenment and empire (Appadurai 2016, emphasis mine).

Amo's writings have yet to be recognized as "sufficiently" philosophical and worthy of inclusion not only in the curriculum at Halle but also at other universities across Germany, Ghana and the world at large. How, then, can we learn what we should know about Amo?

Appadurai (2017) then transitioned to what he termed a "global perspective," grounding his discourse in the intricate web of finance capitalism, the monetization of everyday life, and the contemporary infrastructure of human relationships. He explored the movement of people and ideas, focusing on refugees fleeing political violence and migrants displaced in search of new homes—hospitality. Appadurai also shared his reading of the influence of feminist, ecological, and anti-poverty movements as global phenomena in the 21st century. But also, how these movements challenge the enduring political memory established by the Treaty of Westphalia, which has shaped transgenerational notions of sovereignty and state-centric governance. These living and political traditions and unexpected historical shifts reveal that the nation-state cannot exist in isolation, directly challenging the "worldwide politics of fear," which gains power by demonizing "migrants, refugees, and outsiders." This fear-driven politics clings to the notion of territorial sovereignty, rooted in a racialized imperial state—the very state that once denied sovereignty to others,

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particularly those subjected to the violence of conquest and slavery and condemned to life on colonial plantations, that is, conquered land.

The very existence of the state within the context of colonialism, dating back to the late 15th century—often seen as the birth of the colonial or imperial state (Mamdani 2020; Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Dussel 2000; 1995)—was intricately linked to the lives and ideas of certain philosophers, shaping and being shaped by the imperial language of their time. Language was central to the 2017 Amo Lecture, "Decolonizing the History of Philosophy," presented by Professor Souleymane Bachir Diagne. In his lecture, Diagne continued the thought introduced by Appadurai in his *sidenote*, the deep and inseparable connection between imperial-colonialism and the history of philosophy: "The coloniality of power requires the task of epistemological decolonization" or revolution (Walsh, Mignolo and Segato 2024, 2). As Fanon writes in *Toward the African Revolution,* "Before [Aimé] Césaire, West Indian literature was a literature of Europeans. The West Indian identified himself with the white man, adopted a white man's attitude, 'was a white man' " (1967, 26). The "white man" persists as an imperial colonial technology of identification or *difference*—a scaffold for conquest, domination, and nation-building that remains active in the 21st century.

After critiquing the concept of "European humanity" as *the humanity* in G.W.F. Hegel, Edmund Husserl, and Emmanuel Levinas, Diagne proposed a decolonizing perspective. He emphasized that the flow of knowledge, or *translatio studiorum,* is not limited to the traditional path of Jerusalem-Athens-Rome-Paris-London-Heidelberg, but also includes routes like Athens-Nishapur-Baghdad and Cordoba-Fez-Timbuktu. In fact, decolonization as a critical field of scientific, historical, philosophical, or artistic inquiry needs to be extended beyond the city state of Athens as the "origin" of language, thought, and humanness (Bernal 2006). For example, as Paul Ernest (1977, 230) writes, "mathematics as a discipline or discursive formation crossed the thresholds of positivity and epistemologization in Mesopotamia. […] Something of the order of two thousand years were to pass before it crossed the threshold of formalization in the hands of Euclid" (see also Joseph 2011). At issue is the question of epistemic justice beyond colonizing education or the imperial colonial mode of identification or claim of culture, a commitment to embracing the heterogeneous plurality of languages, resisting the violence that is always already at work in any attempt to reduce philosophy to a singular, controlled movement toward a uniform language, culture, nation, or genophilia: "As soon as there is One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism" (Derrida 1996, 78).

A decolonized or deconstructive love of knowledge or philosophy, therefore, centres on the human pursuit of learning and freedom, as well as the experience of inheritance or heritage through translational practices that cannot be confined to *One-ness*. It engages with more than one language, a heterogeneous language, continually evolving and crossing boundaries—be they linguistic, generational, or geographical. This philosophy is not tied to a specific people, language, land, or origin; instead, it remains in constant motion, crossing and connecting worlds. At issue is the *dissemination of learning and knowledge*, which carries a responsibility toward learning that demands hospitality toward

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each other. This reflection must go beyond mere attachment to national or genophilic boundaries, language and even translation, transcending logocentrism, linguistic ownership, and the politics of knowledge and memory. It calls for a deeper understanding that challenges imperial colonial boundaries and recognizes the broader implications of how knowledge travels and is shared (Diagne 2018a; Bevilacqua 2018; Adamson 2016; Dabashi; 2015; Graeber and Wengrow 2021; Derrida 1998). Decolonizing the history of philosophy is, then, not about seeking a "new origin." It is rather the call of epistemic justice or the scholarly responsibility to deconstruct the "white man/mythology" as the imperial measure of living and knowing, along with the identification of the worlds that are at once defined and erased as "non-white" or "non-European" (Diagne 2018b). Diagne expands the history of philosophy beyond the confines of "European humanity," a narrow perspective that some philosophers uphold and fail to transcend. He challenges the philosophical nationalism that preserves and prioritizes the memory of specific genders, nationalities, "races," and definitions of humanity. Echoing Derrida (2020), Diagne call for philosophy to transcend the constraints of racialization—whether identified as "white, black, or brown"—and to move beyond the exceptionalism embedded in its historical narration

Diagne's lecture resonates with Amo's life and work, as both explorations of crossing worlds and languages, and as a call for living and thinking hospitably (see also Alpert and Bognitz in this issue). It connects with Johann Gottfried Kraus (1680–1739), the rector and Council of the Academia Leucorea during Amo's time there, highlighting a shared intellectual heritage and commitment to fostering understanding across the world. In a letter dated May 24, 1733, which is featured in Amo's philosophical dissertation *De humanae mentis ἀπαθεία* (On the Impassivity of the Human Mind), Kraus explicitly addresses the historical "debt that letters owe to Africa," emphasizing the profound and often overlooked contributions of African thought to the development of intellectual traditions:

> Africa in the past had great honor, whether with regard to its [fertility in human] natural aptitude, devotion to letters, or religious teaching. For it brought forth a great many very eminent men, by whose natural aptitude and devotion divine as much as human wisdom has been taught. … And even though the great force of the Arabs, spread throughout Africa, brought great change, it is far from true that their dominion extinguished all the light either of natural aptitude or of letters. For in the teaching of this people, to whom letters seem to have been transferred, liberal learning was cultivated, and when the Moors crossed from Africa into Spain, the ancient writers whom they brought over with them gave much assistance to the cultivation of letters, which was then beginning to emerge from the darkness. (Cited in Menn and Smith 2020, 191)

.

Kraus's reference to the "Moors" crossing from the Arab-Islamic world, Africa and Asia to present-day Spain highlights the historic movement of both people and knowledge that played a foundational role not only in the intellectual life or the birth of Enlightenment in Halle and other cities in Europe but

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worldwide. The birth of the Enlightenment in Halle cannot be isolated or separated from the 8th century *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad under the ʿAbbāsid imperial rule that lasted for five centuries (Al-Khalili 2012; Lyons 2010) or Al-Andalus (711–1492) with Toledo and Cordoba under Umayyād imperial rule in the Iberian Peninsula. The ʿAbbāsid and Umayyād empires were also profoundly influenced by the flow of knowledge from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Phoenicia, China, Greece, India and elsewhere. However, these empires were also fundamentally shaped by imperial violence, the control of women's human capabilities and slavery.

It is not my task here to explain Amo's metaphysical argument for the immaterial nature of *De humanae mentis*—the human mind, which he writes "belongs to the genus of spirits," as opposed to "material concepts." He acknowledges and repeats that at issue is "contrary opposites," "wherever spirituality is present, materiality is absent, and vice versa" (see the English translation in Menn and Smith 2020, 159, 163). Herein, I also cannot engage the implications of Amo's philosophy of the spiritual/material divide for understanding slavery: Does his distinction between the materiality of sensory experiences and the unconquerability of the spirit shed light on the experience of enslavement? What I find critical, however, is how Amo does not begin his philosophical dissertation with the concept of *mind* alone. It is important that Amo begins with *human* instead of "mind" or "Man." The title of the thesis *De jure Maurorum in Europa* (On the Rights of Moors in Europe or Concerning the Law of the Moors in Europe), which Amo is said to have defended in 1729 (see Bognitz in this issue), and that is missing or perhaps never written, reflects Amo's interest in the questions of law, rights, certain freedoms or human-ness beyond the black/white binary. In their *Foreword* to Diagne's Amo Lecture (2018b, 11), *Decolonizing the History of Philosophy*, Matthias Kaufmann, Richard Rottenburg, and Reinhold Sackmann write, "Amo, with his critique of obscure, irrational laws, of legal interpretations that are guided solely by the interests of the lawmakers, and his call for humanity in jurisprudence—which, in cases of doubt, should always take precedence over strict law—has proven himself to be a humanist and an early advocate of human rights."[7] Facing Amo within and *beyond* the context of his time and place leads us to certain experiences of hospitality or an invitation to rethink the very foundations of imperial knowledge and *difference* or to an *epistemological revolution*, where educating into what Spivak (2013, 345) calls a "planetary imperative," tangled with *responsibility-as-right* and *social practice of responsibility,* becomes an urgency. In other words, education into "white mythology" as education into the *hegemony of the homogenous* and political modernity will only constitute and perpetuate historical, political and epistemic violence all at once.

Intellectuals or philosophers like Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and G.W.F. Hegel, and numerous others upheld an epistemic violence that placed "Man—the white man" at the top of a fabricated racial hierarchy (see Eze 1997; Van Norden 2017; Alpert 2020; Moradi 2024b). In this particular political, historical and epistemic context, the definition of "whiteness" as the standard of being human and the pinnacle of humanity "requires a juridical-economic colonial presence" (Mignolo 2021, 426), and the im-

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perial infrastructure—army, weapon, ships, forts, castles, lodges, slavery plantations, sugar, coffee and so forth. Blumenbach, for instance, wrote that the "white or Caucasian" is "the first and most beautiful and talented race" (Bernal 1991, 219). Imperial knowledge is a profound act of epistemic violence. Scholars have long recognized that colonialism is inseparable from epistemicide—the systematic suppression, destruction, and plunder of diverse ways of knowing, seeing, and being. It enforces epistemic violence, denying histories of the movement of people and knowledge while privileging a single dominant worldview (Grosfoguel 2013, Menon 2022, Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Dussel 1993; Said, 1993, 1994; Darke 2024; Moradi 2022; 2023).

The very conditions of colonialism, which created and guarded relations of domination, are inextricably bound to "metaphysics" itself. Colonial power is not just a rhetorical or material force—it is a metaphysical imposition, creating, shaping reality and dictating what is deemed knowing and knowledge, truth, and being. "Metaphysics," wrote Derrida (1982, 213), takes us to "the white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own *logos*, that is, the *mythos* of his idiom, for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason. Which does not go uncontested."

More than two centuries after Amo crossed the imperial borders of Brandenburg-Prussia and the European empires to the "Slave Coast," Fanon turns to the experience of the *right to narrate* in 1952, "In the white world … I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects. … I took myself far off from my own presence" (cited in Bhabha 2004, 60; see also Fanon 1986, 84–85) This is "an enigmatic questioning," Bhabha writes, as "the very nature of humanity becomes estranged in the colonial condition" or in "the genocidal Middle Passage" (Bhabha 2004, 187). This is where the human as "Man" and humanity, despite this history of political and epistemic violence and racial slavery, Amo as a philosopher is talking "of *negotiation* rather than *negation*," to borrow from Bhabha (2004, 37). In other words, the very *life* and *existence* of Amo as an Enlightenment philosopher will have to be a questioning of the imperial epistemology of domination that reserved the highest intellectual and moral status for "white men" and their myths of belonging or gender, colour, race or class.

In *Anton Wilhelm Amo's Philosophical Dissertations on Mind and Body*, Stephen Menn and Justin E. H. Smith (2020) not only edit and translate Amo's works from Latin to English but also trace the philosophical "origin" of the mind/body binary to Aristotle, Epicurus, and Lucretius, and then "fast-forward" to René Descartes. Amo, they write, "was very much a philosopher of his time and place: a contributor to and mirror of the philosophical debates of early eighteenth-century Germany" (3). Herein, the frame of reference is rooted in the coloniality of knowledge, framing the Enlightenment as an exclusionary "white mythology."

While Amo is situated within a philosophical context, interpreted as a reiteration or continuation of figures like Aristotle, Descartes, or Leibniz, these same thinkers are paradoxically regarded as "original" or "authentic"—existing

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without context, as if they could think or write independently of the established epistemological traditions that provided them with access to libraries and translations of works by Plato, Aristotle, and others. This contrast exposes the illusion of *One-ness*. For example, to ask how Menn and Smith learned that the mind/body binary traces back to Aristotle is to understand how the history of this concept "can be traced back to the introduction and Latinization of Arabic thought and Aristotelian philosophy in the twelfth century. It was with the translation of Avicenna's [Ibn Sīnā] *De anima* and the subsequent translation and discussion of Aristotle's *De anima* and Averroes' [Ibn Rushd] commentaries that the discussion [on mind/body binary] began that continues today" (Lagerlund 2007, 1). The act of translating and engaging with philosophical texts transforms the so-called "original" works, challenging the illusion of epistemic ownership or the politics of knowledge or memory. It is, then, no surprise that Descartes was not the first philosopher to articulate the mind/body binary and that it belongs to a broader philosophical tradition. That is, long before Descartes, Ibn Sīnā's text (980–1037 CE) *Floating Human* (*Alrajul almuʿallaq*), discusses how our awareness of human existence can exist entirely independent of sensory experience or acquired knowledge (Alwishah 2013; see also Black 2013, 138–39).

Unlike philosophers who used the imperial acts of conquest and slavery and "imaginative geographies" that insisted on "difference" and "distance" between people (Said 1994, 71) to assert the superiority of "Reason" as inherently "white," Amo comes to us from *beyond* the politics of identification and location, "infus[ing] a new rhythm, specific to a new generation … with a new language and a new humanity," to borrow from Fanon (2004, 2).

Amo in Absence and Beyond

Beyond the Amo Lecture series, growing interest in Amo's life has sparked significant movements in Halle. A student network and the university's Rectorate Commission have actively called for "an appropriate commemoration of Anton Wilhelm Amo (c. 1703–after 1753) and to honor Amo as the first 'Afro-German' member of the university." The commission has set up a dedicated webpage[8] for Amo on the university's website. In December 2021, they also added a plaque at the base of the 1965 "Liberated Africa" monument and below the 1975 memorial plaque. A link to the Amo webpage and a QR code are also available.

> **Liberated Africa (1965)**
>
> by Gerhard Geyer (1907-1989).
>
> The bronze sculpture pays tribute to Ghana's anti-colonial trajectory. Since 1975, a commemorative plaque has also referred to the philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo, who was born in Ghana, deported to Germany as an enslaved person and worked as a private lecturer at the University of Halle between 1736 and 1739.

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> However, this connection of the sculpture with the person Amo is problematic in today's terms. The Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, the city of Halle (Saale) and the Anton Wilhelm Amo Alliance Halle (Saale) have therefore been working on a concept for the commemoration of Amo since October 2019.[9]

Inside the university museum, an inscription marks the non-present present of Amo, reading: "Anton Wilhelm Amo um 1700 bis nach 1752, Philosoph, erster Student und Gelehrter afrik. Herkunft"—"Anton Wilhelm Amo, around 1700 to 1752, philosopher, first student and scholar of African origin." His name, inscribed on the wall, is a quiet testament to a life that defied the boundaries of racialization and political modes of identification. Surrounding him are the grand portraits of towering figures—Luther, Melanchthon, Thomasius—symbols of religious and intellectual heritage carved deeply into national memory of *One-ness* in Germany. Next to Amo, the name of Dorothea Christiana Erxleben (1715–1762), the first woman to study medicine at Halle's Academia, forms a fragile but enduring echo of marginalized voices breaking through. However, outside of the museum and inside the Löwengebäude, only the likenesses of identified "white men" are immortalized in busts, reinforcing the silent, invisible boundary that persists between the "racial" or national heroes and the foreigner. Amo's and Erxleben's names remain inscribed, not in marble, but on a wall—a poignant reminder of the spaces still denied, even as their spectres continue to haunt. Their non-present present within the museum speaks to the tension between inside/outside, us/them, the symbolic weight of memory, and the long struggle to be fully seen within the grand narratives of the history of Enlightenment.

Amo's autobiography in Halle is an illumination of colonial mimicry (see Bhabha 2004, 122), where Amo becomes almost an Enlightenment thinker but not quite. That is to say, in order to participate "properly" in the Enlightenment philosophy, it was not enough to be a "man" or become a philosopher. The desire of the imperial education was to produce a "reformed, recognizable" Amo, yet a foreigner forever, an "African" that is still discrete and irreconcilably different. This "between worlds" (Said 1998) and *beyond* that is symptomatic of the imperial colonial discourse and space produce Amo as both an iteration of "hybrid forms of life and art that do not have a prior existence within the discrete world of any single culture or language" (Bhabha 2004, xiii), and as someone whose life is simultaneously affirmed and denied belonging in both postcolonial Germany and Brandenburg-Prussian imperial history.

Amo's final resting place lies just to the left of the entrance to Fort St. Sebastian (São Sebastião) in Shama, overlooking the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. Here, on this windswept coast, imperial violence pulses through every stone, for it rests only 75 kilometres from the once-mighty Brandenburg-Prussian Groß-Friedrichsburg Festung (1681–1683) in Princes Town. Fort St. Sebastian, constructed by the Portuguese Empire between 1520 and 1526, was more than a mere fortress; it became, in time, a technology of unspeakable human destruction. In the 1640s, it fell into the hands of the Dutch WIC, and

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what had been an outpost of the empire was transformed and attached to the infrastructure of the transatlantic trade in enslaved humans. Beneath its cold walls, enslaved humans, torn from their homes, dispossessed of any claim to humanity, were shackled and broken, awaiting the brutal cross of the genocidal and epistemicidal Middle Passage to plantations in the so-called "New World." Nearly two and a half centuries later, in 1872, this fortress of destruction, along with the coast of what is now Ghana, became part of the British Empire. Today, Fort St. Sebastian is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It is said that Amo's remains were unearthed from a Dutch cemetery before the inexorable currents of the Pra River submerged it beneath the waters of time. In the 1920s, under the shadow of British colonial rule in Ghana, his body found a new resting place near the enduring walls of Fort St. Sebastian. His grave, forged from stone and cement, bears the weight of a cross and tomb with an inscription, though now faded, that reads: "Dr. Anton (or Anthony) William Amo, 1703–1784." Enclosed by two crumbling low cement walls, it rests quietly in a humble fishing community. Here, neighbouring residents lay out their freshly washed clothes as the cemented grave makes for a quick dry. The solitary grave, overshadowed by the imperial fort, embodies the inseparability of Amo's autobiography and imperial-colonial histories, spectres that haunt and shape the here and now.

Biography

Fazil Moradi is a Japan Society for Promotion of Science Fellow and serves as a Visiting Researcher at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hiroshima University. Dr. Moradi is also an Associate Researcher at the Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences, and an Affiliated Scholar at the Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes against Humanity at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, Graduate Center—City University of New York. Dr. Moradi served as a Visiting Associate Professor at the University of Johannesburg (Nov. 2021–Oct. 2024) and held Research Fellowships at the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study, has been a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and a Research Fellow with the International Max Planck Research School on Retaliation, Mediation, and Punishment in Germany, and collaborated with medical scientists at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, to study the long-term effects of chemical weapons on the human body. Dr. Moradi's publications include: Being Human: Political Modernity and Hospitality in Kurdistan-Iraq (Rutgers University Press, January 2024); "In Search of Decolonised Political Futures: Engaging Mahmood Mamdani's Neither Settler nor Native," a Special Issue in Anthropological Theory (2023); and Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation (co-edited with Maria Six-Hohenbalken and Ralph Buchenhorst, Routledge, 2017).

Acknowledgements

This work on Amo has been a call of hospitality, responsibility, and the critical care of colleagues over more than two years. I am grateful to Richard Rotten-

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burg and Matthias Kaufmann for introducing us to Amo, to Stefanie Bognitz, Avram Alpert, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Arjun Appadurai, Akinbode Akinbiyi, Peter Trnka, and the anonymous reviewers for their critical interest, and to the entire team at *Janus Unbound: Journal of Critical Studies* for their dedicated efforts in bringing this Special Issue on Amo to the world.

Notes

1. Genophilia as "love of 'race' and 'racial' belonging or a both calculated and affectionate attachment to 'our race', blood, history, people, nation, language, land, or heritage. This imperial institution of genophilia thrives on the condition of putting out heterogeneity and heterogeneous histories, memories, and epistemologies for erasure, non-existence, or even destruction" (Moradi 2024b, 38–39).
2. Published in 2020, *Anton Wilhelm Amo's Philosophical Dissertations on Mind and Body*, edited and translated by Stephen Menn and Justin E. H. Smith, includes a 147-page Introduction. Menn and Smith rely on the works of "some scholars" and "documentary evidence" to write Amo's life. The Introduction starts with: "Early in the 18th century Anton Wilhelm Amo was *taken*, while still a small boy, from West Africa to Amsterdam. From there, he was soon *sent* to Germany *to work as a servant* in the court of Duke Anton Ulrich of Braunschweig-Lüneburg in Wolfenbüttel. He was baptized in 1708, and in 1727 matriculated at the University of Halle" (2020, 1, emphasis mine). After writing, "there is significant uncertainty about the *circumstances* of Amo's arrival in Europe" (7, emphasis mine), Menn and Smith invoke certain speculations: "[i]f Amo had not been *transported to* Europe with the agreement of his parents, it is unlikely that his family name would have been known upon arrival…. "Amo" is not strictly speaking a family name in the European sense (5) … He was *sent to* the Netherlands in 1707 … for the purpose of training as a pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church" (5). They then turn to Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein (c. 1717–1747), to argue that Capitein "was himself initially *taken as a slave*, and *sold to* the Dutch captain Arnold Steenhart in 1725," but upon arrival in United Provinces (the Netherlands) gained his freedom and later became a pastor (emphasis mine). They follow Capitein and others, to emphasize that in "the greater part of the Holy Roman Empire, where Amo spent most of his life" (5) slavery was illegal, including in the Netherlands (9-10) and "Germany" (13). This calculation serves to both create and homogenize the "Holy Roman Empire" as a place of rights and freedoms, and to classify Amo as one of the "African servants" who enjoyed "the possibility of significant social advancement" (7). This speculation follows the imperial colonial narrative of "white superiority" that relegated people from the continent of Africa to the "lower order of human beings permanently confined to an inferior stage of social development" (Hall and Schwarz, 104). Moreover, the phrasing "taken" in reference to Amo and Capitein is part of a broader effort to revise the narrative of slavery, suggesting

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it was solely an African enterprise. This position/view implies that Africans were solely responsible for capturing "individuals," while the Dutch merely acted as purchasers. It subtly shifts the focus, portraying slavery as an internal African matter, conveniently minimizing the critical role played by the rising empires in today's Europe in the transatlantic trade in enslaved humans or what Stuart Hall (2017) refers to as "the genocidal Middle Passage," and global ecological exploitation and destruction of life forms.

3. See Ralf-Torsten Speler, "Speler zur Plastik 'Freies Afrika' von Gerhard Geyer." Anton Wilhelm Amo at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg website, https://www.amo.uni-halle.de.
4. Ralf-Torsten Speler also states that Nkrumah would have also become a member of the Senate of the University of Halle and that his senator's robes were still in the archive.
5. The digital copy of the book is available at: https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.suppressionofafr00dubo/?sp=7&st=image.
6. In June 2023, the philosophy courses showcased within glass-case display outside the department featured "Philosophical Questions; Problems of Philosophy; Civilizations of the Ancient World; Outlines of Graeco-Roman Civilization; Outlines of Graeco-Roman Literatures; Roman Epic Drama; Africa in the Ancient Roman World; Slavery in Graeco-Roman Antiquity; Republican Rome; Gender in Ancient Rome; Gender in Ancient Greece; Reading Latin I; Reading Latin II; Reading Greek I: Reading Greek II; Roman Philosophy and Science; Roman Literature and Society; Leaders of Ancient Rome; Roman Historiography; Greek Historiography; Art and Government in Ancient Greek World; Themes in Classical Studies; Law, Individual and Society in Ancient Rome; Selected Greek Text/Author; Selected Roman Text/Author; Graeco-Roman Political Thought; Leaders in Ancient Greece; Element of Formal Logic; Stoicism; Tacitus; Pre-Socratic Philosophy; Socratic Philosophy, The Philosophy of Plato; Homer; Plato; Aristophanes; Thucydides; Research Method; Deductive Logic; Moral Philosophy; Philosophy of Mind; Philosophy of Human Sciences; Rationalism; Modern Analytic Tradition; Contemporary Metaphysics; Contemporary Issues in Philosophy; African Philosophy; African Philosophy: Traditional and Modern; Global Justice."
7. The original text in German reads: "Anton Wilhelm Amo hat sich mit seiner Kritik an dunklen, rational nicht zu begründenden Gesetzen, an Rechtsauslegungen, die sich allein am Wohl der Gesetzgeber ausrichten, und der Mahnung zur Humanität in der Jurisprudenz, die im Zweifelsfall immer Vorrang vor dem strengen Recht haben soll, als ein Humanist und früher Verfechter der Menschenrechte erwiesen."
8. See Anton Wilhelm Amo at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg website. https://www.amo.uni-halle.de.
9. Anton Wilhelm Amo at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg website. https://www.amo.uni-halle.de/?lang=en.

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