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HONOR AND SLAVERY IN *OROONOKO* (1688)
AND *IMOINDA* (2003)

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the interaction between honor and slavery in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: The Royal Slave* (1688) and its operatic adaptation by Joan Anim-Addo, titled *Imoinda, or, She Who Will Lose Her Name* (2003). This article pays special attention to the narrative function of honor in both texts and proposes that a careful consideration of the dynamics of honor might deepen our knowledge of slavery as a social institution. In *Oroonoko*, honor animates a complex social and political economy, functioning both as the capital of distinction and the basis for civil society. The collision of Oroonoko's royal-born honor with his novel slave status in Surinam forms the novella's tragic plot structure. In *Imoinda*, honor works to dispossess the titular character of her selfhood. Honor forces Anim-Addo's Imoinda to make a decision: should she maintain her honor through death, or should she forsake the past to give birth to the Creole nation?

KEYWORDS: Slavery, honor, tragedy, royalty

There are few words more semantically slippery than "honor." As both a noun and a verb, "honor" often takes on a distinct meaning each time it is used. Honor can signify any of these possible meanings: "the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society," an evaluation forming "a nexus between the ideals of a society and their reproduction in the individual through his aspiration to personify them"¹; the acute sensitivity "to the diminutions to which ourselves, our persons

can be victim"²; the precognitive righteousness that inspires immediate action when one's good name is insulted or integrity questioned³; and the right through which one may demand respect from one's peers, admiration from one's inferiors, and recognition from one's betters.⁴ In the West, we tend to think of honor as an archaic form of social control associated with the seigneurial order of things of older, more primitive civilizations. Honor designates a tangible albeit immaterial value to human lives by ordering men and women into *stations* by virtue of whatever honor they may possess or lack. These stations *produce* political economy: within honor's idiom, certain lives are simply *more valuable* than others. Honor, thus, cannot exist without hierarchy. As Hans Speier puts it, honor's function is to "set up boundaries; it disciplines life," by establishing "a specific kind of order," wherein social status is secured by both interpersonal exchanges—the bestowal and recognition of *honors* as well as the *right* to another person's honor—and a particular performance of the self in step with one's duties, expectations, and obligations in society.⁵

As the dominant ideology of a democratic world, liberal humanism can be said to implore its adherents to take issue with many, if not all, of the underlying principles of honor. For one, we are taught from a very young age to believe that human life everywhere is priceless. Honor's axiological imperative that certain lives have different values should immediately inspire philosophical panic. Virtue is accrued by participation in the broader community, acceptance of one's lot in life, and willingness to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of the group. While the latter exists today in the popular forms of heroism and martyrdom, this is largely due to the endurance of honor in traditional institutions. Honor also has the noteworthy property of directing personal and communal ethics. All within the honor group are bound to the same honor code charged with instilling a set of normative prescriptions and limits. By simultaneously *compelling* individuals to act and pointing them toward one or another option, honor systems encourage intense orthodoxy and are generally hostile to transgression. Honor devalues the interests of the individual while encouraging obedience to a code of conduct appropriate to one's "place" and loyal to the broader honor group. What rules in a world of honor is therefore not *identity* but *station*, your inherent, objective *place* in the world, your *lot* in life.

Missing from much of the literature on honor is a thoroughgoing investigation of honor's relationship to enslavement. Slaves are generally considered contemptible and despicable persons with dismissible claims to respect from others. The trope of *slavishness* is similarly inflected by an undignified, sycophantic, or submissive disposition. Honor, it shall be argued, plays a vital

role in shaping the ritual economies of exchange that control how enslaved persons are received and understood. Scholarship detailing the theoretical relationship between honor and bondage is quite lacking: of the handful of discussions that have been published, two are worthy of mention here. The first is Hans Speier's brief discussion of the Roman legal concept of freedom: "In Roman law, it is true, legal honor was restricted to those who were free; freedom, however, was determined not by liberty alone but by this liberty in relation to slavery."⁶ Because honor creates hierarchy, it also establishes within Roman society an equivalence between honor and rights. For the free classes, it was the *right* to the respect of their inferiors. Both ritual deference and legal distinction conspire to project a reality of hierarchical difference.⁷ The second noteworthy discussion is Orlando Patterson's treatment of honor in *Slavery and Social Death*, in which he describes enslaved persons as experiencing a form of "general dishonor" particular to their status as slaves. Patterson offers a rather methodical reading of Hegel's master/slave dialectic and concludes importantly on the slave's triumphal dignity. The permissive suffering of enslavement is a "trial by death" that transforms survivors into persons "afire with the knowledge of and the need for dignity and honor."⁸ As an innate sense of worthiness, dignity affirms the existence of the slave's claim toward fair treatment. The existence of a slave's dignity proves that the slave in some way *has* honor. Without a sense of one's honor, the right to respect apparent in the concept of freedom remains abstract.

In this article, I build on Patterson and Speier's contributions by studying the narrative and ideological configuration of honor and bondage in two works from disparate but interconnected eras: Aphra Behn's 1688 classic *Oroonoko: The Royal Slave* and Joan Anim-Addo's 2003 libretto *Imoinda, or She Who Will Lose Her Name*. Both Behn and Anim-Addo use the innate "drive" component in honor to frame the moral and historical significance of royal Oroonoko and Imoinda's fate as slaves in the New World. Writing at the end of the seventeenth century as a firsthand witness to the political tumult of the Restoration, Behn pens *Oroonoko* as a moral tragedy of an honorable and virtuous African prince who suffered the greatest humiliation: enslavement. Taking place in colonial Surinam, the second half of the novel focuses on the tension between the royal slave's *right to honor* and his captive inability to *oblige others*. As a slave, Oroonoko's honor loses external value, and this increasingly puts him in conflict with his sense of dignity. Anim-Addo expands on the crisis of recognition by rewriting Imoinda's role in the original story. In *Imoinda*, the librettist highlights the gendered character of Imoinda's vulnerability but giving her a greater and more significant voice. These

changes accomplish the task of transforming Behn's passive African Venus into a mythic ancestress for New World Creoles. In narrating the dramatic choice between an honorable death and an ignoble life, Anim-Addo's adaptation *honors* this original icon of New World slavery with her own origin myth.

Honor in *Oroonoko* (1688)

Given Behn's background as a playwright, it should not surprise us that *Oroonoko* is arranged like a classical tragedy. At its center is the gallant figure of Prince Oroonoko of Coromantien, a faraway land rigidly stratified by an honor system not at all dissimilar from that of Restoration England.⁹ Seated at the apex of Coromantien's social order is Oroonoko's grandfather, the elderly king. As the king's only male heir, Oroonoko is destined to take his place as monarch. Yet, as a prince, he owes his grandfather deference. The conflict at the heart of the novella's first act is centered, then, around conflicting definitions of virtuous conduct. Having fallen in love with Imoinda, the daughter of the king's recently deceased general, and receiving her consent to become his one and only wife, Oroonoko is later faced with an ethical crisis when his grandfather uses his authority as king to conscript Imoinda into his private seraglio. The imparting of the "Royal Veil" cordons off Imoinda from all other suitors: according to the "ceremony of invitation," the king "sends the Lady he has a Mind to honor with his Bed, a Veil, with which she is cover'd, and secur'd for the King's Use." Imoinda has no say in the king's decision: "'tis Death to disobey" as well as "a most impious Disobedience." Behn is very particular in her word choice here: not only is the invitation to the royal bed an instance of the king *honoring* and thus exalting a woman of Imoinda's station, but disobedience of the royal invitation is described as *sinful*, an infringement on religious orthodoxy, a sacrilege. As the narrator describes on the same page, "the Obedience the People pay their King was not at all inferior to what they pay'd their Gods."¹⁰ Thus, "what Love would not oblige Imoinda to do, Duty would compel her to"; she is "oblig'd to suffer herself to be cover'd" by the veil and becomes the king's concubine. Oroonoko learns of his grandfather's scheme and must be stopped by his friends from injuring himself in rage. Even if he were to wait for his grandfather's inevitable death, his marriage to Imoinda would violate social decorum and constitute a grave dishonor for their future children: "that Custom that makes it so vile a Crime for a Son to marry his

Father's Wives and Mistresses, would hinder my Happiness." By choosing love over custom, Oroonoko would "ignobly set an ill [Precedent]" that would rob his and Imoinda's progeny of the honor due to them as issue of the sovereign, as the dishonor of their ancestor would be *theirs* as well. The only option would be to "fly with her to some unknown World, who never heard our Story" (48). Unbeknownst to the prince and his would-be bride, this second option is precisely what happens.

Honor drives the plot of *Oroonoko's* first "act" by framing its hero's ethical dilemma around the inherent tension between virtue and distinction. Should Oroonoko risk his public face and claim Imoinda as his rightful wife, thus transgressing the king's ritual prohibition on her body—on her *honor*—and earning him the ignominy of having committed the "greatest Crime in nature" among his people: "to touch a Woman, after having been possess'd by a Son, a Father, or a Brother?" Or should he fall in line, resigning to his grandfather's jealousy and greed *the woman who chose him*? Here Oroonoko's *duty to honor* his grandfather's will conflicts with the *right to respect* to which his lawful and righteous covenant with Imoinda is due. Eventually, Oroonoko's virtue wins out; with the assistance of his friend Aboan and Onahal, Imoinda's "cast-mistress," he conspires to have a private moment with Imoinda. The two lovers meet in Imoinda's private chambers and have an intimate exchange:

'Tis not to be imagined the Satisfaction of these two young Lovers; nor the Vows she made him, that she remain'd a spotless Maid, till that Night; and that what she did with his Grand-father, had robb'd him of no part of her Virgin-Honour, the Gods, in Mercy and Justice, having reserved that for her plighted Lord, to whom of Right it belong'd. And 'tis impossible to express the Transports he suffer'd while he listen'd to a Discourse so charming, from her lov'd Lips; and clasp'd that Body in his Arms, for whom he had so long languish'd; and nothing now afflicted him, but his suddain Departure from her; for he told her the Necessity, and his Commands; but shou'd depart satisfy'd in this, That since the old King hitherto had not been able to deprive him of those Enjoyments which only belong'd to him, he believ'd for the future he wou'd be less able to injure him; so that, abating the Scandal of the Veil, which was no otherwise so, than that she was Wife to another: He believ'd her safe, even in the Arms of the King, and innocent; yet wou'd he have ventured at the Conquest of the World, and have given it all, to have had her avoided that Honor of receiving the *Royal Veil*. (56)

An attention to the function and demands of honor illuminates the ethical tensions in this passage. For one, Imoinda has managed to resist having sex with the king, preserving her honor—here borne by the concept of *chastity*—for the man to whom it had been promised. Imoinda is rather active in this process, using a variety of techniques to safeguard her virginity from the king's advances: advances toward which *she is honor-bound to oblige*. The revelation of Imoinda's intact honor assures Oroonoko that his plan to simply await his grandfather's impending death is solid: although he only has a few minutes to spend with his mistress, he will be departing with the satisfaction that "since the old King hitherto had not been able to deprive him of those Enjoyments which only belong'd to him," the king would not, in the future, be able to "injure him" by having sex with the woman to whom he is rightfully married. In this paragraph, the honor associated with Imoinda's virginity is expressed explicitly as a *right* of the husband. The sovereign, occupying a position above the husband, intercedes in that relationship in a way that is dishonorable, although the king, as the origin of honor, cannot really act dishonorably. While Oroonoko embodies all the classical characteristics of the honorable hero, his aversion to the social stigma associated with dishonorable conduct—which is another way of saying, his *sense of honor*, his *shame*—prohibits him from acting. His only choice is to simply wait, and that is his ultimate resolution. For this reason, the passage does not end with a concrete course of action but a conjecture on how his circumstances might have been avoided: "yet wou'd he have ventured at the Conquest of the World, and have given it all, *to have had her avoided that Honor of receiving the Royal Veil*" (emphasis mine) (56).

It has been remarked elsewhere that honor interacts curiously with gender. As a mechanism of social control, honor implores women to protect the sanctity of their bodies. Unmarried women maintain honor by remaining virgins and obliging their future husbands with the right to deflower them, ritually transforming them from maidens into women. For married women, the burden of honor lies with their chastity. As Julian Pitt-Rivers observes, a tainted bloodline due to a mother's lecherous conduct soils the honor inherited from one's birth, especially when honor is understood as the product of one's virtuous upbringing and honorable lineage.¹¹ Conversely, a husband's failure to protect the chastity of his wife from the advances of other men is felt as a deep blow to his honor and, by extension, the honor of the family. Such was the case "according to the codes of honor of modern European societies," wherein "an offense lobbied against the chastity or faithfulness of the women of a family was a stain on the honor of the entire family."¹² Halvor Moxnes argues that the heightened vulnerability of women

to dishonor (be it by their own actions or by the actions of dishonorable men) encourages many men to see them as “potential sources of shame.”¹³ This is certainly true for Imoinda. Part of Oroonoko’s honor as a *man* derives from his capacity to protect Imoinda and to assure her chastity, here understood as his husbandly rights to the *enjoyments* of her body.¹⁴ He fails at the first condition by being unable to prevent or undo the imposition of the royal veil, but it is Imoinda who protects her own chastity from the king. When the couple’s circumstances change and both lovers find themselves enslaved and stranded in a foreign land named Surinam, Oroonoko is compelled by honor to protect Imoinda from the desires of other men. As a slave, Imoinda has even less autonomy over her body than she had as a noblewoman subject to the Royal Veil. While law prohibited anyone but the king to *enjoy* her, her slave status leaves her susceptible to the desires of anyone.

In the second “act” of *Oroonoko*, honor plays a more dynamic role in how characters interact with one another. Whereas in the first half of the novella, honor positions the various obstacles of the plot, conscripting the virtuous prince to risk distinction *to honor* the sacred covenant he made with his wife, the second half strips both Oroonoko and Imoinda of their freedom and subjects them to the social dynamics of New World plantation slavery. Imoinda and Onahal are sold after the king finds out about the lovers’ illicit meeting. The former tells a lie, devised by her and Oroonoko: that the latter had “ravish’d her” (57). The king, knowing that Oroonoko still longs for Imoinda, believes her lie but refuses to “honor” her with his bed. Being now known to a man of the king’s bloodline, Imoinda has become “a polluted thing wholly unfit for [the king’s] Embrace.” Out of spite, the king denies Imoinda the punishment to which “a Maid of her Quality” was owed: a noble death. Instead, he has her and Onahal sold “like a common Slave, the greatest Revenge, and the most disgraceful of any.” Imoinda’s person is immediately voided of honor, compelling her to beg for the honor of death: “they a thousand times prefer Death, and implore it; as Imoinda did, but cou’d not obtain that Honour” (58).

Imoinda’s enslavement is a direct result of her infidelity, which to the king was not an infringement *on her person, her honor*, but on *his exclusive right to honors* contained in *her body*. That the king believes the lie that Oroonoko raped Imoinda is ultimately irrelevant. His decision to sell her into slavery, rather than to have her killed, does not respond to her honor but *sets* its value. She is lowered tremendously in station to the status of a “common slave,” no more important, no more valuable, than the very nameless slaves Oroonoko had given to her at their first meeting: “slaves that had been taken in this last Battle, as the Trophies of her Father’s Victories.” (44). Oroonoko’s

enslavement is different from Imoinda's, in that Oroonoko is captured and enslaved in an explicitly despicable manner. As a sovereign with seemingly absolute authority, the king of Coromantien can either amend or infringe the code of honor at will. His decision to enslave Imoinda, rather than subject her to an honor killing, while disagreeable, misogynistic, and autocratic, is ultimately not dishonorable. The dishonor would come from *taking her back*, after she had become known to a man of his bloodline. Thus, Imoinda's enslavement *dishonors* her but is not dishonorable for its subject: the king.

The English ship captain that enslaves Oroonoko is described by the narrator as explicitly deceitful. "A Man of a finer sort of Address, and Conversation, better bred, and more engaging, than most of that sort of Men are," the ship captain is both an anomaly and an attraction at the royal court. His manners appear "to have been bred out of a Court" rather than a life at sea, and thus "was always better received at Court, than most of the Traders to those Countries were." Oroonoko in particular is drawn to the ship captain, being "more civiliz'd, according to the *European Mode*, than any other had been" in Coromantien. This preference facilitated business: "to this Captain, [Oroonoko] sold abundance of his Slaves." It also created a trust that could be exploited. After inviting the prince and his retinue aboard ship, the captain, "who had well laid his Design before, gave the Word, and seized on all his Guests; they clapping great Irons suddenly on the Prince, when he was leap'd down in the Hold, to view that part of the Vessel" (63).

That the slave-dealing Guinean prince was himself made a slave while inspecting the ship's hold is a vivid example of tragic *peripeteia*, but to what end? The reversal of Oroonoko and Imoinda's fortune is oddly asymmetrical. While social decorum demands that Imoinda's punishment for adultery be dire, Oroonoko's capture by the English captain is entirely disconnected from his adulterous actions with Imoinda. Though the novelist would have us believe that no adultery was committed, as Imoinda remained a "spotless Maid" until she could finally consummate her marriage, in the eyes of his society, Oroonoko has committed a great transgression against his family's honor. By infringing upon the Royal Veil and "ravishing" his grandfather's concubine, he has broken a sacred custom, earning him dishonor in the eyes of his peers. His capture is not at all connected to this accrued dishonor; rather, it is *unnervingly random*. Although it is impossible for us to know exactly *how much* of Oroonoko's plot was sourced from Behn's historically accounted-for time in Surinam, it is possible that the historical figure Oroonoko's character represents in the novel may have been captured in a similar fashion. Otherwise, the lack of symmetry between Oroonoko and Imoinda's *peripeteiai* has no narrative significance.

Without a sense of how honor “disciplines life” in the novella’s world, today’s readers of *Oroonoko* may struggle to understand the gravity of its central reversal of fortune. As people “of Quality,” the fetters of captivity fundamentally abase the honor that Imoinda and Oroonoko command and through which they exercise their rights. Slavery in *Oroonoko* is not the nullification of honor, as I shall demonstrate below: rather, it is the nullification of the *right to honor*, which is *the right to be treated honorably*. If we are to follow Julian Pitt-Rivers’ formulation that “honor felt becomes honor claimed, and honor claimed before honor paid,” the *dishonor* of slavery disrupts the payment of honor from one’s peers, inasmuch as the slave’s honor—both external and internal—is always degraded. Symbolically, the slave’s prostration before their master acts out the ritual surrender of personal autonomy as a right. Orlando Patterson highlights this exchange as part of the slave’s social execution, writing: “the dishonor the slave was compelled to experience sprang instead from that raw, human sense of debasement inherent in having no being except as an expression of another’s being.” For Patterson, the slave’s dishonorable capitulation brings them into a dialectical conflict with the master. But it is precisely the tension between the slave’s unanswered claim to honor and the master’s “refusal to engage with what is ugly, base, vulgar, self-serving” that inspires in the former the desire for freedom from the latter.¹⁵

To say that a slave has no honor would therefore be incorrect. All people are motivated by, and therefore have claims to, honor. To be compelled by the honor code implies that one *ennobles oneself* by doing what is honorable. Enslaved persons may have been socially dead to the societies “of reception”¹⁶ in which they lived and worked, but this did not mean that slaves were not themselves capable of establishing honor groups among themselves. Neither Oroonoko nor Imoinda are *voided* of their honor when they are enslaved, but their enslavement nevertheless stains them with an indelible stigma. It is this stigma which exposes Oroonoko and Imoinda to the mercy of their master, Trefry. Although he is described as an honorable man, Trefry ultimately refuses to manumit Oroonoko and Imoinda. As much as Trefry admired Oroonoko, he was never obliged to answer the latter’s pleas for his and his family’s freedom. Honor, after all, is the *basis* of obligation.

As slaves, Oroonoko and Imoinda *cannot* oblige others to treat them with respect. While the narrator acknowledges the great shame of slave status, this stigma seems only superficial. Even in the New World, Oroonoko unwittingly commands a certain attention:

In their passage up the River, they put in at several Houses for Refreshment; and ever when they landed, numbers of People wou’d

flock to behold this man; not but their Eyes were daily entertain'd with the sights of Slaves, but the Fame of *Oroonoko* was gone before him, and all People were in Admiration of his Beauty. Besides, he had a rich Habit on, in which he was taken, so different from the rest, and which the Captain cou'd not strip him of, because he was forc'd to surprize his Person in the Minute he sold him. When he found his Habit made him liable, as he thought, to be gaz'd at the more, he begg'd *Trefry* to give him something more befitting a Slave; which he did, and took off his Robes. Nevertheless, he shone through all; and his *Osenbrigs* (a sort of brown Holland suit he had on) cou'd not conceal the Graces of his Looks and Mien; and he had no less Admirers, than when he had his dazeling Habit on: the Royal Youth appear'd in spite of the Slave, and People cou'd not help treating him after a different manner, without designing it. As soon as they approach'd him, they venerated and esteem'd him; his Eyes insensibly commanded Respect, and his Behavior insinuated it into every Soul. (68)

What is important about this passage is how the reverence that Oroonoko seems to demand is not something he wills himself; rather, his innate sense of distinction *compels* others to respect him. As Anita Pacheco argues, Behn's concept of honor in *Oroonoko* is a melange of "connotations of virtue with high birth (in this case, royal birth)" that serve to ascribe to individual value a particular *naturalism* that manifests in the beautiful royal body. The distinctiveness of royalty is located for Pacheco in the "mysteries of the blood," through which "virtue is supposedly transmitted from one generation of the ruling class to the next, so that power is legitimated on the grounds of worthiness, authority presented as hereditary and innate." The body therefore becomes a beacon out of which the "innate" honor associated with high birth shines. The people of colonial Surinam gather in crowds to marvel at Oroonoko, as his "Fame" and "Beauty" precede him wherever he goes. Even as a "stranger" to Surinamese society, Behn's "endorsement of the claims of birth and rank" in the description of his reception highlights the apparentness of "Oroonoko's inherent quality."¹⁷ In the novella's world, the noble distinction which Oroonoko is made to symbolize transcends social and cultural particularity. His "quality" shines through the common osnaburg garments of a slave, for "the Royal Youth appear'd in spite of the Slave," interpolating them to respect him "without designing it."¹⁸ The emphasis on the lack of intention and the settlers' compulsion to honor Oroonoko seems to contradict the lowly station of the slave, inasmuch as Oroonoko is described as having "insensibly commanded Respect" of people

who ostensibly owed him nothing. Despite the dishonor of enslavement, Oroonoko's royalty transcends social ontology.

From our first introduction to Oroonoko, we are made to see him as an avatar of honor. He embodies the romantic hero in his gallantry, his beauty and intelligence. As his counterpart, "the beautiful *Black Venus* to our young Mars," Imoinda is described as equally virtuous and honorable as Oroonoko. Imoinda commands a certain appreciation too, particularly as a sexual object of desire. In our first introduction to Imoinda, the narrator describes how she had "seen an hundred *White Men* sighing after her, and making a thousand Vows at her Feet, all vain, and unsuccessful." The only person worthy of her hand is "a Prince of her own Nation"; she is "too great" for all else, including white men (44). That said, Imoinda—known in the New World by her slave name, Clemene—elicits various forms of attention with her own distinctiveness:

Trefry, who was naturally Amorous, and lov'd to talk of Love as well as any body, proceeded to tell him, they had the most charming Black that ever was beheld on their *Plantation*, about Fifteen or Sixteen Years old, as he guest; that, for his part, he had done nothing but Sigh for her ever since she came; and that all the white Beautys he had seen, never charm'd him so absolutely as this fine Creature had done; and that no Man, of any Nation, ever beheld her, that did not fall in Love with her; and that she had all the *Slaves* perpetually at her Feet; and the whole Country resounded with [the] Fame of *Clemene*, for so said he, we have Christ'ned her: But she denies us all with such a noble Disdain, that 'tis a Miracle to see, that she, who can give such eternal Desires, should herself be all Ice, and all Unconcern. She is adorn'd with the most Graceful Modesty that ever beautified Youth; the softest Sigher — that, if she were capable of Love, one would swear she languish'd for some absent happy Man; and so retir'd, as if she fear'd a Rape even from the God of Days; or that the Breezes would steal Kisses from her delicate Mouth. (70–71)

At this point in the novella, Oroonoko does not know that the woman his master is describing is his wife, Imoinda. Trefry describes her as more fetching than "all the white Beautys he had seen," and so enrapturing a sight that "no Man, of any Nation, ever beheld her that did not fall in Love with her" on the spot. Even Trefry, her master, longs for her: "for his part, he had done nothing but Sigh for her ever since she came." Just as Oroonoko's honor manifests as a form of external beauty that hails on the

veneration of others, so too does Imoinda's inborn beauty and quality inspire the *desire* of all men who look upon her. But she takes interest in no one, not even a man of Trefry's power and authority. Clemene's "Unconcern" before her master puzzles Oroonoko, who boldly asks Trefry: "why, being your Slave, you do not oblige her to yield?" As a captive, Clemene has no meaningful right to sexual sovereignty; as chattel, the rights to her enjoyment are her master's alone. Thus, the description of her "Ice" and "Unconcern" strikes Oroonoko as strange: why not simply *force her* to submit? Trefry then confesses that he had tried to do just that: "when I have, against her will, entertain'd her with Love so long, as to be transported by my Passion; even above Decency, I have been ready to make use of those advantages of Strength and Force Nature has given me" to take what is rightfully his. It is only through "that Modesty and Weeping so tender and so moving, that I retire, and thank my Stars she overcame me" (71). Just as Imoinda had managed to outwit the licentious Coromantien king, so too could she "disarm" her master through appeals to natural honor. Of course, the admission of Trefry's failure to rape his own slave is met with laughter by the people listening on: "the Company laugh'd at his Civility to a *Slave*," for them a fruitless gesture. Oroonoko, interestingly, applauds "the nobleness of [Trefry's] Passion" which seemed to recognize in Clemene "true Notions of Honor and Virtue" (71). Had he not detected in Trefry's description Clemene's innate dignity, one might suspect that Oroonoko would have also laughed at Trefry's unnecessary "Civility."

The couple reunite and remarry. Soon after, Imoinda becomes pregnant with Oroonoko's child, making him "more Impatient of Liberty, and he was every Day treating with *Trefry* for his and *Clemene's* liberty" (74). In their stead, the prince offers "either Gold, or a vast quantity of Slaves" equal to his and his wife's value (85). His master delays, and Oroonoko grows increasingly nervous that "they wou'd delay him till the time of his Wives delivery, and make a Slave of that too, For all the Breed is theirs to whom the Parents belong" (74). When Imoinda begins "to shew she was with Child," Oroonoko can wait no longer. He organizes a mass exodus of slaves into the woods but is eventually tracked down by Trefry and the colonial authorities. When confrontation leads to bloodshed, the enslaved women and children, "seeing their Husbands so treated, being of fearful Cowardly Dispositions, and hearing the English cry out, *Yield and Live, Yield and be Pardon'd*" (89), convince everyone but Oroonoko, the pregnant Imoinda, and Tuscan, "a tall Negro of some more Quality than the rest," to surrender (87). Oroonoko and Tuscan are savagely whipped "in a most deplorable and inhumane manner" for their involvement in the revolt (91).

The whipping unsettles something in Oroonoko, who vows revenge on “all those he thought had inrag’d him,” knowing that such a plan would come at the cost of his own life (94). The realization of his imminent death doesn’t faze him, but the thought of what will happen to Imoinda does. In acting out his revenge, he would leave “his lovely *Imoinda*, a *Prey*, or at best a *Slave*, to the inrag’d Multitude” (94). The fear of potentially exposing Imoinda to the “nasty Lusts” of the scornful masses compels him to kill her to spare her the shame of sexual violation as retaliation. As an honorable woman and a loyal wife, Imoinda affirms her husband’s uxoricidal intent: “he found the Heroick Wife faster pleading for Death than he was to propose it, when she found his fix’d Resolution; and, on her Knees, besought him, not to leave her a Prey to his Enemies.” Oroonoko is both “griev’d to death” and “pleased” by his wife’s “noble Resolution,” lovingly taking her life to spare her the shame of exposure (95).

The novella ends immediately after Imoinda’s death. Driven into a rage, Oroonoko languishes and mourns Imoinda’s death for two days before he is found and apprehended, albeit after a long and drawn-out confrontation. Oroonoko fails to take his own life and is subjected to a public execution described in rather vivid detail. The death of Oroonoko is contrastingly honorable and dishonorable. While the royal slave dies maintaining his dignity, refusing to utter a groan and smoking away at his tobacco pipe as his limbs are chopped off, the manner in which he dies is explicitly ignoble. Oroonoko honors his wife in decapitation, but his ignoble death, before the eyes of the colony, serves to enforce the subjection of the slave class. “They cut Caesar in Quarters, and sent them to several chief Plantations” around the country, hoping to telegraph to the enslaved persons thereon that even a man as honorable, famous, and universally admired as Oroonoko was still a valueless expendable slave (100).

Honor in *Imoinda* (2003)

Joan Anim-Addo’s operatic adaptation of *Oroonoko* changes several important aspects of the novella’s story, including the narrative function of honor. *Imoinda* emphasizes the stakes of the titular character’s choice to *survive* when her honor compels her to take her own life. Like in *Oroonoko*, honor organizes the events of the opera’s plot by framing the ethical possibilities of Imoinda and Oroonoko’s situation when faced with unforeseen circumstances. What is different, however, is how Anim-Addo manipulates the

dynamics of characters and contexts to transform the *Oroonoko* narrative into an origin story for a new kind of subject: the “Creole,” the first of modernity’s many inventions. The play’s subtitle (“She Who Will Lose Her Name”) earmarks both a process of forgetting orchestrated by the exigencies of colonial humanism and an open-ended question that assesses the formative possibilities of an essential loss. If Caribbean life was born from the violent encounter of subjects that had, hitherto, belonged to *different worlds*, and if *postcolonial modernity* has come to signify the gradual but inevitable decay of the former world of tradition, the pregnant Imoinda, forced to bear the child of her rapist and *be remade in* the process, functions as an originary image for “our time.” Hers was a loss that ensured her survival, a severance with the past that made a new future possible. These are the elements Anim-Addo saw in the Imoinda figure. In the author’s eyes, Behn simply could not have been aware of the significance of Imoinda for future generations of Black British women like Anim-Addo, who identifies in Imoinda “the first fictionalised black woman character” in the English literary imagination. Imoinda is a beginning, and Anim-Addo’s opera is her epic hagiography.

Like in *Oroonoko*, honor in *Imoinda* frames a struggle between tradition and modernity by representing a concept of social worth that makes important demands of its bearers. In both stories, the value of Oroonoko and Imoinda’s honor is jeopardized by the novel circumstances of the colonial venture abroad. What Anim-Addo adds to the Oroonoko myth is a more robust and representative representation of how mercy and caprice influence the reception of slaves’ appeals to honor. As a slave woman in the New Land, Imoinda is exposed flesh; she lacks access to the institutions that should normally protect her and, in the process, gender her as a *woman*. Marriage among slaves is voided of significance in the eyes of their betters: a slave husband can be cuckolded with impunity, as the respect due to a marriage is only ever merciful when the subject is a slave. In *Oroonoko*, the honor due to Imoinda protects her from the sexual desires of other men, and her performance of feminine vulnerability forestalls both Trefry and the Coromantien king from taking what was, by law, rightfully theirs. When Oroonoko and Imoinda are reunited and finally allowed to marry, the reader is left with the impression that the honor due to him *also* protects her from the sexual advances of others. In Anim-Addo’s adaptation, neither Oroonoko’s honor as husband nor Imoinda’s inborn dignity is respected. While Behn’s narrative of Oroonoko and Imoinda’s experience in Surinam describes the uneasy cohabitation of their distinction and their rights, Anim-Addo’s “New Land” sequences primarily draw tension between the couple’s struggles with duty.

As spouses, Oroonoko and Imoinda are bound by duty to their marriage contract, which demands that Imoinda protect her chastity and Oroonoko protect Imoinda. However, her new *station* as a slave woman means no one is obliged to respect her marriage covenant or her vow of wifely chastity, *especially* her master. Oroonoko learns of his master's breach after believing to have stopped Overseer from doing just the same:

OKO:

Now, let me taste you. (*They kiss*)

What is this mound between us?

(*Music — "Moon Witness, Enchanted Night" Theme*)

Between us stands a mound of belly

That was not that there before. Alas!

Imoinda, I remember you

Every part, every texture, every curve.

IMOINDA:

Yes! I am a slave woman; game to all.

Don't close your eyes. It is what you see.

OKO:

I will kill the bastard with these bare hands,
then die like a man.¹⁹

We can read Oroonoko's reaction to the "mound of belly" in two ways. The music to be played in this scene corresponds to earlier sequences of intimacy between Oroonoko and Imoinda. "Moon Witness" is the track that plays when Oroonoko and Imoinda presumably consummate their marriage, before the Chief arrives to "take" his bride. It appears later in the penultimate sequence of the opera, when Imoinda contemplates suicide. In each scene in which it appears, "Moon Witness" voices Imoinda's compulsion to honor a marriage covenant; in its latter appearances, the tune also dramatizes how the precarity resulting from her desocialization²⁰ increasingly brings her duty to honor that covenant into crisis. Additionally, the theme "Enchanted Night" is associated with Oroonoko and Imoinda's true love for one another. The positive associations between marital duty on the one hand and amorous love on the other suggest that one way of reading Oroonoko's reaction is one of excitement at the prospects of both fatherhood and expanded kinship. It

was exactly this possibility that hastened Behn's Oroonoko to agitate for his freedom and eventually rebel. This is, however, the *optimistic* reading; it is just as appropriate for Oroonoko's reaction to be one of betrayal, rather than pride. Sensing the "mound of belly" that he had not noticed before, Oroonoko in this scenario immediately understands that Imoinda's child is not his; this realization for the viewer can be justified by several details of exposition in earlier scenes. For one, Imoinda states to her handmaiden Esteizme that she has not "known Prince Oko / since [they] set foot upon this land" (3.2). Her absence for "many moons" would suggest, by timing alone, that the child is not Oroonoko's. His anger also confirms the suspicions Driver sows in Oroonoko's mind in an earlier encounter. When Imoinda's absence from the plantation prompts Oroonoko to inquire about her whereabouts, Driver toys with him: "She go with Massa Boss brother. / She present for his bride, maybe. She make his bed? She in his bed?" The insinuation that Imoinda has become "game" to her master compels Oroonoko to fight Driver. The overseer gets involved; he puts Oroonoko in his place, first with words and then with the whip: "Even the fingers on your hands / You cannot claim. / All were purchased by another" (3.1).

In both *Oroonoko* and *Imoinda*, the prince represents a masculine excellence associated with an ideal vision of traditional society. In both texts, this ideal *cannot* adapt to colonialism's new order. For Behn, the novelty of the slave trade and the rapid settlement of the New World had such unforeseen ramifications in European social life as to unsettle a primordial order of things associated with honor and the infallibility of hierarchy. For Anim-Addo, Oroonoko is meant to represent a particular pattern of life that could not survive under the novel conditions of New World slavery. "Any attempt at clinging to a privileged past is positively life-threatening in such circumstances," the librettist writes. "Who cares who Imoinda *was*? There are too many other more pressing concerns" than (past) identity. The lowly servant Esteizme and a broader "network of women willing to support her in her changed role and lowered status" help Imoinda "build the bridge" and give birth to her Creole child (3.5).²¹ To do this, the titular heroine must "adapt" and, in the process, *become someone else*. Oroonoko cannot do this because his commitments to his honor so firmly associate his self-worth with the evaluation of others. Anim-Addo's Guinea is more explicitly misogynistic, settling debts with the bodies of princesses, and these customs inform Oroonoko's ideal but inherently patriarchal performance of maleness. But as a slave, Oroonoko enjoys none of the benefits of manhood because none are obliged by his pleas for respect. He is thus left with only one choice after

discovering his wife and true love has become “game” to another man: he can die with honor, or he can live without it. His choice is death, but in *Imoinda*, he dies by his own hand. In *Oroonoko*, he is subjected to a punishment suiting a regicide, arguably the most dishonorable form of death.²²

The emphasis placed on Imoinda’s situation in Anim-Addo’s libretto exposes another dimension of Oroonoko’s tragic plight, which is his struggle to maintain his *reputation* in the eyes of others. Imoinda’s violation is a stain on this reputation; that she was not a consenting party to the violation is irrelevant to the masculine subject of honor, who suffers dishonor from the breach of his right to exclusivity. By focusing on the Black woman’s experience, Anim-Addo theorizes how honor first subjected Imoinda to precarity by demanding her obedience. In Behn’s novella, Imoinda is made to represent, in both Coromantien and Surinam, an idea of feminine excellence and wifely duty. As Margaret Ferguson writes, the Imoinda character “is an uncanny amalgam of European ideals of wifely subservience and European fantasies about wives of Oriental despots,” thus “the perfect embodiment, with the exception of her dark hue, of an image of the ideal English wife as the property, body, and soul, of her husband.”²³ In *Oroonoko*, being gendered as female exposes Imoinda to the will of men of higher station, namely the impotent king of Coromantien, whose royal veil ritually exclusivizes access to her body. In Anim-Addo’s adaptation, Imoinda is similarly stripped of autonomy when the king marries her to Chief Sitiangolu in order to broker peace between their rival kingdoms. In both situations, her betrothal covenant was breached *from outside and above*, but the breach was to be experienced as *an honor*. Thus, the Coromantien king “honors” Imoinda with his bed, and the courtiers at the Guinean king’s palace assure the visiting chief, “on the King’s honour, the woman is yours” (I.4). Even Anim-Addo’s Oroonoko acknowledges that he could simply “command” Imoinda’s hand in marriage, but “it will not be the same.” Their love would mean something different if Imoinda were not a willing participant, and thus he asks her to choose. “The more you hate me, I will love you more,” he coos, blending coercion with romance (I.3).

Anim-Addo leaves intact the patriarchal undertones of the honor associated with the gender role of husband to highlight that Imoinda’s novel circumstances will not be remedied by seeking solace in an irrecoverable past. Enslavement so profoundly distorts the external reception of one’s dignity that some people would rather not endure it. His sense of worth compels Oroonoko to choose his freedom over his life. Honor makes similar demands of Imoinda when she finds Oroonoko’s corpse:

ESTEIZME:

Heed the spirits. Trust your eyes.
They speak through our bodies. You'll hear no lies.

IMOINDA:

I'll tear this cage wide open
So that our blood mingles and beside him
I might know the taste of happy death.

ESTEIZME

Ease yourself a little. Dance.

IMOINDA:

How I've ached for this man
An ache so deep, so wide.
Like a gorge cutting into my soul.
No point, no point in living.

WOMAN:

Can't get far from the nightmare canoe.
(MUSIC — "*Nightmare Canoe*")
It's made of my death wish,
Your death wish, their death wish.

CHORUS:

After the nightmare canoe
The silence of tongues cut out.
There's still worse to come.
And all our own questions ride the wind in silence!

IMOINDA:

Leave me alone! Let me get the knife!

ESTEIZME:

You have the pikin to think of.

IMOINDA:

Death is better. Let me get the knife. (III.5)

According to the librettist, Imoinda's is a story about "becoming creolized." "In this encounter the African is newly transplanted. She stands to lose, among other things, language status, culture, and family."²⁴ Stripping the subject of the luxuries of belonging does not void the *desire* for belonging symbolized now by the rupture with the past. Instead, this denied desire surges in the subject as a death drive in opposition to the ignominy of survival. In Behn's novella, Oroonoko takes the life of his pregnant wife to spare her the dishonor of sexual violence enacted on her person as revenge. If her willing participation in her own murder strikes us as curious, it is precisely because Imoinda's character is made to embody the feminine ideal of submissiveness, read another way as the honor due to one's husband *as one's superior*. In Behn's account, Oroonoko's uxoricide and Imoinda's willingness to die are construed as the honorable things to do, for the honor of dying by the hand of one's husband trumps the stigma of *surviving* his death and in the process becoming "game to all." In *Imoinda*, Oroonoko takes his own life, perhaps with the expectation that his wife will follow in his footsteps, as honor commands her. In the above passage, we witness the competing pressures of Imoinda's wifely *duty to die* and the will to survive, even if survival is uncertain. The choice here is between the past and the future, dying with dignity, with one's name, or losing that name to become someone new. As Imoinda struggles to make her decision, she goes into labor and is forced to make a "stark" choice: "find a way to survive in the new and hostile environment or else."²⁵ The delivery of the healthy baby girl marks the beginning of a new chapter. The circumstances are dire and arguably unlivable, yet life endures. As conches blow, the opera ends with a cast of women gathered to celebrate the birth of another of their rank. "Though this be only life of sorts," Imoinda sings. "They shall not have the final victory. I have chosen life" (3.5).

Although Anim-Addo is somewhat hesitant to prescribe an interpretation for her opera, she has been quite vocal in interviews and articles about her intentions behind the piece. Among her reasons for adapting *Oroonoko* for the operatic stage, Anim-Addo most often notes her desire to find in Imoinda "a speaking subject" that she had not found in Behn's text. "I could not tolerate Imoinda silenced," she writes. "I knew that she had plenty to say, whether or not what she said could be entirely trusted. I knew also that, catapulted into a different world, denuded, transformed, raped, and facing motherhood in such circumstances, Imoinda was a significant figure representative of the birth of the present day Caribbean."²⁶ Anim-Addo rewrites Imoinda's story to ultimately dramatize the social circumstances of New World enslavement and to theorize how the nullification of kin

forced Black women to choose their lives and their futures over their honor and their past. Imoinda's story "give[s] voice to the creolised mother of the Caribbean region as Nation, thus inserting black women visibly into the history of the region" as an explicit rewriting of not only Anglophone Caribbean letters but also the often-androcentric histories of the postcolonial Caribbean. With Imoinda, the playwright pens an epic of creolization and places as her heroine the "black Venus" Imoinda, who chose to live when honor commanded her to die.²⁷

Honor may be an obsolete concept, but it is far from dead. Its connotation with tradition and opposition to modernity seem unlikely to change in "our" time, which is, increasingly, the time of the individual subject. What I have attempted to do in this article is stage a reading of honor in all its heteronyms that can illuminate the tension between agency and necessity in *Oroonoko* and *Imoinda*. This tension is closely associated with formal tragedy, and throughout my reading I have tried to pay special attention to how honor "organizes" or "disciplines" Behn and Anim-Addo's works by compelling characters to act in ways that jeopardize their newly precarious positions in the world. To accomplish this reading, I have relied on accounts by intellectual historians, sociologists, and anthropologists to describe the various ways in which honor drives and controls social participation in the worlds described by Behn and Anim-Addo. The honor theme in *Oroonoko* accomplishes the novelist's mission to write a parable of the demise of an older, perhaps more gallant, but invariably less egalitarian idiom of honor. In *Imoinda*, the librettist honors an original icon of Caribbean womanhood, celebrating her as the ancestress who forsook her honor, her name, in order to survive.

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Notes

1. Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status" in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. John G. Peristiany, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 22.

2. Lucien Febvre, « *Honneur et patrie*, » ed. Thérèse Charmasson and Brigitte Mazon (Perrin, 1996): 76. Febvre refers to honor as a social awareness that engenders "a demanding and rather disquieting respect for one's self, a great sense of the beauty of one's life," whose ultimate obligation is "to not survive an affront, which is to say to erase all stain, to free oneself from all attacks in order to demonstrate within one's purity the identity of their person, to remain truthful to what one is" (76, translation mine).

3. "Honor is, finally, a force of action, and a force that is steadfast in action, and not in speculation. Honor commits man to action without hesitation or second guessing" (Febvre « *Honneur*, » 76).

4. See Frank Henderson Stewart, *Honor* (University of Chicago Press, 1994). Stewart attempts to part with the "bipartite" theory of honor that breaks it down into two rather distinct dimensions, one external and one internal. Instead, he posits that "we look on honor as a right, roughly speaking, the right to be treated as having a certain worth." Stewart is admittedly hesitant about the object of honor's right: "What honor is a right to is not the same in all cases, and I am unable to offer a precise general character." Thus, to say honor is a right to respect (which might here be understood as a "horizontal" form of regard) is only right in certain circumstances. According to Stewart, his concern is not to argue that honor "is a right to some particular thing" but a *claim-right*, "a right that something be done by another" (21).

5. Hans Speier, "Honor and Social Structure," *Social Research* 2, no. 1 (1935): 84. Hereafter cited by page number.

6. Speier, 88.

7. Speier, 89.

8. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard University Press, 1982), 100.

9. See George Guffey, "Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: Occasion and Accomplishment," in *Two English Novelists, Aphra Behn and Anthony Trollope* (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1975), 3–41. In his study of *Oroonoko* as an allegory of the Restoration era, George Guffey declares his skepticism of Behn's description of Oroonoko's homeland. "Aphra Behn's picture of life on the Gold Coast of Africa [...] differs greatly from the descriptions left us by traders who obviously knew the region well," Guffey writes. "Perhaps she was unaware of the conditions which actually prevailed there; or, if she had read books about those countries, she chose to represent them as far more attractive than they actually were." The dissonance between contemporary accounts of the West African littoral kingdoms and Behn's description of them in *Oroonoko* suggests to Guffey that the kingdoms being described in the opening half of the novella "are more like those of Restoration England than those of the Gold Coast of seventeenth-century Africa" (Guffey, 28–9).

10. Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000 [1688]), 47. Hereafter cited by page number.

11. Julian Pitt-Rivers, "La maladie de l'honneur," in *L'honneur: image de soi ou don de soi, un idéal équivoque*, ed. Marie Gautheron (Autrement, 1991), 28–9. "The greatest attack on honor consists in treating a man like a 'son of a bitch' (*fils de putain*) which is to accuse him of being born without a father, and thus to a mother without shame (*dépourvue de vergogne*)." What is connoted by the epithet *son of a bitch* is, for Julian Pitt-Rivers, the understanding that one's "illegitimacy is due to the morally deficient qualities of one's mother."

12. Diego Venturino, "Introduction" to *Penser et vivre l'honneur à l'époque moderne*, eds. Hervé Drévilon and Diego Venturino (Presses Universitaires de Rennes), 17.

13. Halvor Moxnes, "Honors and Shame," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 23, no. 4 (1993): 168.

14. I use Behn's own word here: *enjoyment* earmarks not only the pleasure with which a possessed object is used but also the right to its very use. In *Oroonoko*, the right of the honorable husband comes into conflict with the license of the monarch, and the object of such claims target, unequivocally, sex with Imoinda: "the old King had hitherto not been able to *deprive him of those Enjoyments which only belong'd to him*, he believ'd for the future he wou'd be less able to injure him" (56).

15. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 101.

16. See Claude Meillassoux's detailed description of the social economy of slavery in *Anthropologie de l'esclavage: le ventre de fer et d'argent* (Presses universitaires de France, 1986), Chapter 5. For Meillassoux, the slave's transformation into an object of property involves multiple steps of *estrangement*. In the step described as "desocialization," the slave is integrated into their "host society" (*société d'accueil*) as a permanent stranger "absolutely without rights." As "unborn persons," the desocialized slave "accords, by opposition, the status of 'born,' and thus 'kin' and 'citizen,' to the members of the host society" (107).

17. Pacheco, Anita. "Royalism and Honor in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 34, no. 3 (1994): 494.

18. Behn, *Oroonoko*, 68.

19. Joan Anim-Addo, *Imoinda, or She Who Lose Her Name: A Play for Twelve Voices in Three Acts* (Mango Publishing, 2008), 3.4; hereafter cited by act and scene number.

20. Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l'esclavage*, 101–108.

21. Esteizme is a character patterned on Behn's Onahal, one of the former wives of the Coromantien king. She is paralleled in both texts by Behn's Aboan, Oroonoko's attendant, and Anim-Addo's Baku, the prince's tutor. Baku originally admonishes Oroonoko for fancying a woman like Imoinda: "It is better always to have a woman / who shows respect and knows her duty" and "it is not as it should be" that the prince would "make a woman master of [his] will" (3.1). Although the character only appears during the scenes set in Guinea, Baku's character—a composite of Oroonoko's French tutor and Aboan—functions primarily to represent the moral standard. As Oroonoko's tutor, he most explicitly represents the concept of virtue as it is dictated by the traditional concept of male authority. Esteizme's characterization discards Onahal's sexual appetite and homely description, making her into a more thoroughly maternal figure to Imoinda. Whereas Behn's Onahal had been a "Cast-Mistress," or discarded former concubine of the king, Esteizme is Imoinda's "maidservant." Her status is notably lower than all of the characters in the Guinea act; even the libretto refers to her merely as "Maid" prior to the crossing sequence, when Esteizme's name is ironically *returned* to her through enslavement. While Baku represents the idea of virtuous conduct as something a prince must both learn and inherit, Esteizme's role in the opera more importantly grounds Imoinda within a world of action.

22. "As many have noted, the manner of Oroonoko's death comes alarmingly close to the traditional English execution for regicide or high treason—that of being hanged, drawn, and quartered. Although the procedure is not followed exactly—Oroonoko is sentenced to hang but never does, and he disembowels himself—the correspondences are striking, particularly in the employment of castration as part of the ritual and the fact that Oroonoko's limbs, like those of English traitors, were scattered throughout the colony and put on display as a warning to others." Megan Griffin, "Dismembering the Sovereign in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*," *ELH* 86, no. 1 (2019): 111.

23. Margaret Ferguson, "Juggling the categories of race, class and gender: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*," *Women's Studies* 19, no. 2 (1991): 169.

24. Joan Anim-Addo, "Imoinda Birthing the Creole Nation: Rewriting Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*," in *Revisiting and Reinterpreting Aphra Behn*, eds. Margarete Rubik, Jorge Figueroa-Dorrego, and Bernard Dhuicq (Bilingua GA, 2003), 77.

25. Anim-Addo, "Imoinda Birthing the Creole Nation," 77.

26. Joan Anim-Addo, "To Begin Our Knowing": The Claiming of Authority and the Writing of 'Imoinda,' in *Voci femminili caraibiche e interculturalità*, ed. Giovanna Covi (Università degli Studi de Trento Dipartimento di Scienze Filologiche et Storiche, 2003), 85.

27. Anim-Addo, "To Begin Our Knowing," 76.