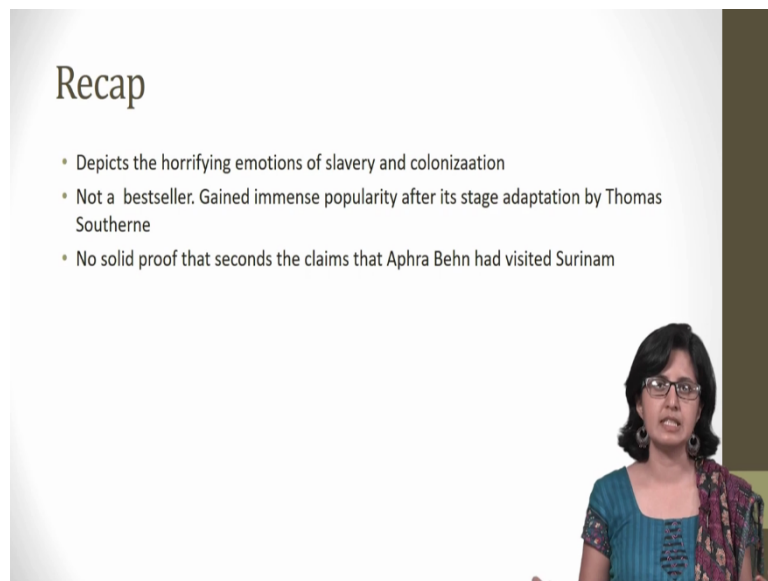


Introduction to World Literature
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Oroonoko - II
Oroonoko by Aphra Behn – Part II

Hello and welcome to today's session where we continue to look at short fiction written by Aphra Behn in the 17th century Oroonoko.

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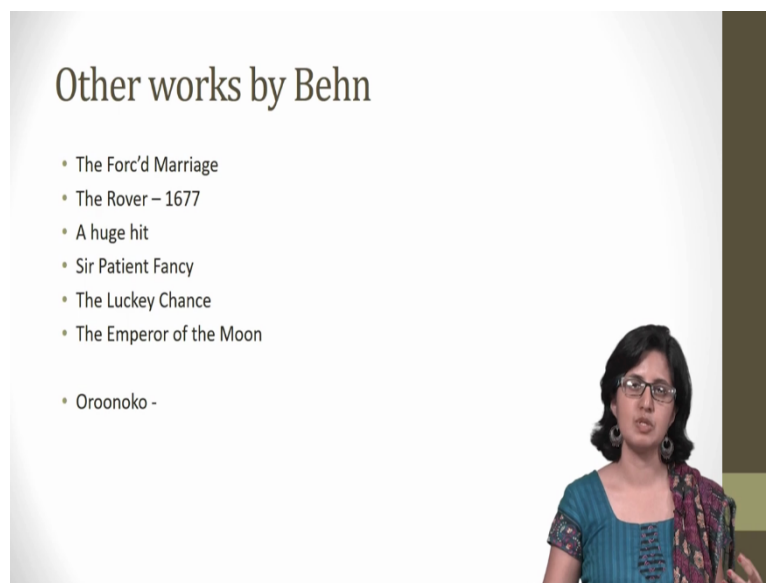
A quick recap, we took look at how this is a novel an early novel which talks about the horrifying effect of slavery. It depicts the horrifying emotions of slavery and colonization. It is also significantly a work written by the first professional female writer Aphra Behn and we also spoke about how she led an interesting life. She was a political spy of Charles II court and she also had written prolifically and in spite of that she died in poverty and this work initially when it was published, it was not a bestseller.

In fact that gained immense popularity only after its stage adaptation by Thomas Southerne. And ever since this work has received the attention of scholars and critics for various reasons, one it talks about the anticolonial rhetoric even before colonization became discourse in the Western discursive spheres. And there is no solid proof that seconds the claims that Aphra Behn had visited Surinam where much of action also takes place in terms of the novel.

But nevertheless there is the text gives us ample evidence to show that she's really familiar with what she's talking about, the setting, the action that she seeks to recreate in the emotions that she successfully conveys though novel as a form was still in its infant form when she was writing. So, all of this also tells us about the kind of immense experience that she had, the vastness of the wealth of experience that she had though she was not **trained to do** trained to be a literary writer, she was not trained to be professional writer.

We find her becoming one in the process of leading away interesting a multifaceted life.

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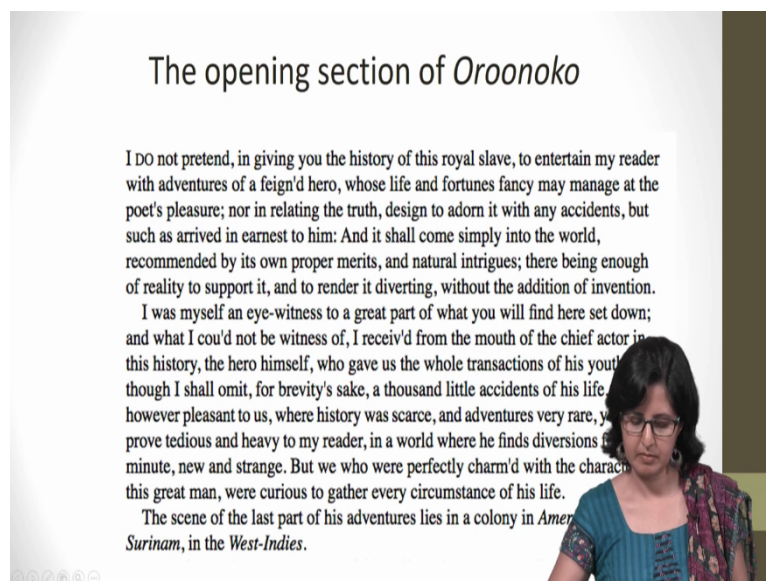
There are a lot of works which are credited to Aphra Behn as we already noted, some of the important works are, The Forc'd marriage, so The Rover which was considered as a important comedy of the restoration times it was an instant hit, it was a huge hit to such an extent that it's considered as one of the most successful plays which generated a lot of revenues during that time. The other significant works includes, Patient Fancy, The Luckey Chance, The Emperor of the Moon and Oroonoko published in 1688, this was published just a year before her death and this also ensured her a lasting literary reputation and this is one work that still continues to be talked about whenever restoration times, whenever female writers, whenever Aphra Behn in particular is mentioned in the literary critical tradition.

And interestingly enough it is also important to know that when we, when one talks about Oroonoko it's also in a way that the work disrupts the tradition, the literary tradition a what Oroonoko perhaps had done to the writings of those times, to the writers of those times and to

the critical tradition of those times, the prevalent norms of those times was to entirely disrupted.

So, Oroonoko continues to be significant mostly in that regard and the text itself may read a bit dated there are lot of current interest that one can find in the text even today. I do encourage you to take a look at the text which is currently in circulation to get a hang of the kind of writing that she did and also to get a hang of the ways in which these very profound themes were built into this (())(3:49).

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This is the opening section of Oroonoko, this is how the this (())(3:55) begins. “I do not pretend, in giving you the history of this royal slave, to entertain my reader with adventures of a feign’d hero, whose life and fortunes fancy may manage at the poets pleasure; nor in relating the truth, designed to adorn it with any accidents, but such as arrived in earnest to him: And it shall come simply into the world, recommended by its own proper merits, and natural intrigues; there being enough of reality to support it, and to render it diverting, without the addition of invention.

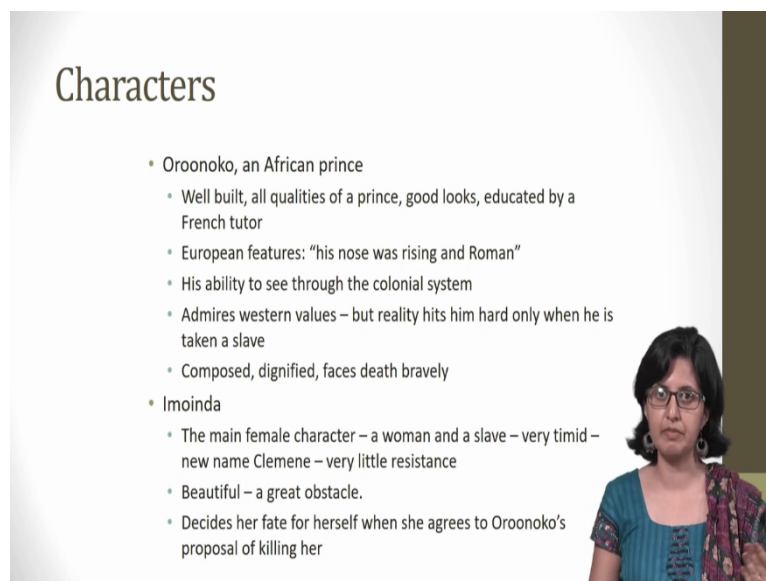
I was myself an eye-witness to a great part of what you will find here set down; and what I could not be witness of, I received from the mouth of the chief actor in this history, the hero himself, who gave us the whole transactions of his youth and though I shall not omit, for brevity’s sake, a thousand little accidents of his life, which however pleasant to ask, where history was scarce, and adventures very rare, yet might prove tedious and heavy to my reader, in a world where he finds diversions for every minute, new and strange. But we who are

perfectly charm'd with the character of this great man, were curious to gather every circumstance of his life. The scene of the last part of his adventures lies in a colony in America called Surinam, in the West-Indies.”

So, what is this opening session tell us, the opening section tells us that the narrator, the author wants to present this **as a** as an eyewitness account and that the narrator who is being presented over here had either experience the event which are being described or had received firsthand account. The other significant thing is that it addresses the reader and that's again an interesting thing to notice. , at least twice in this excerpt we find the narrator addressing the reader as my reader.


So, this is something which is written as a first person account, as an eyewitness account it is more or less a truth and it also has a specific reader in mind. It is also being targeted to a reader in the 17th century and this is something the way in which the novelist, the writer address the reader that something we notice in many of the writers later on and the one of the best examples being Jane Austen's oft quoted line reader I married him.

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Characters

- Oroonoko, an African prince
 - Well built, all qualities of a prince, good looks, educated by a French tutor
 - European features: “his nose was rising and Roman”
 - His ability to see through the colonial system
 - Admires western values – but reality hits him hard only when he is taken a slave
 - Composed, dignified, faces death bravely
- Imoinda
 - The main female character – a woman and a slave – very timid – new name Clemene – very little resistance
 - Beautiful – a great obstacle.
 - Decides her fate for herself when she agrees to Oroonoko's proposal of killing her



Coming back to discussing this text Oroonoko, these are the important characters, Oroonoko himself who is an African prince and the way in which Oroonoko is described in the text the way he looks, the personality, the characteristics it's very interesting. He is (06:35) well-built man with all qualities of a prince, he is good-looking and he is very very importantly educated by a French tutor.

So, look at the way in which Oroonoko gets positioned over here. He also has a European features somewhere in the text it's mentioned "his nose was rising and Roman" and his education, his ability to see life through a western lens has access to the educational system and ways of looking at the world through the civilization and education system. So, the West, that is given him an ability to see through the colonial system and we find him being very very wise in that sense.

But there is also a change that comes about in his spectrum, this is when he begins to, this is when he is first presented as someone who admires the western values because his education, his background had prepared him to do that and he also had all the more rational reasons to it. But the reality hits him hard only when he is taken as a slave and but nevertheless but the way in which he is presented here is in quite a significant away from the prevalent stereotypes of Africans but on the other hand it also tries to fit Oroonoko into the European framework by his looks, by the way he thinks and by the kinds of choices that he makes.

And we also find that Oroonoko comes across as a very composed, dignified person throughout and even at the end when he gets killed he faces death very very bravely. So, here I want to I want you to pay attention to the way in which Oroonoko is presented. Of course Aphra Behn is a white writer, a white female writer, though she tries to critique the framework of colonialism though she tries to draw her attention to the debates in the context of colonization and anti-colonization.

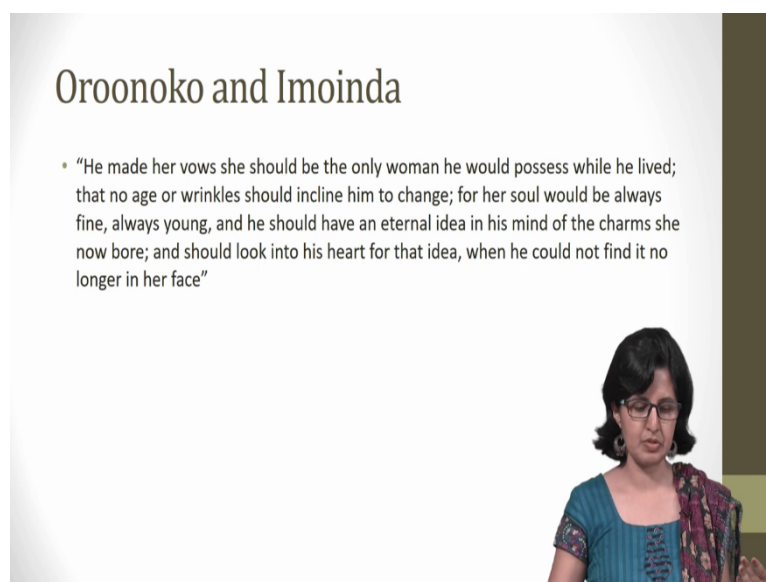
We find that she also chooses to present, see also chooses to projects her protagonist in a predominantly Western framework. Imoinda is the main female character, she is also the wife of Oroonoko she they had fell in love rather adventurously and had got married the story tells us all about that. But as a woman and as a slave she comes across his very very timid, she's also taken in the slavery along with Oroonoko and all the slaves (08:45) new name this is to take away the idea of their identity and subject so that completely changed them into something else.

And we find Imoinda not resisting this at all, in fact with very little resistance we find her getting adapted to different things that life is throwing at her and she is given a new name Clemene which she seems to not not perhaps happily but she seems to get adjusted to in a in a (09:21). She is presented as a very beautiful woman, but this is also an obstacle in the story as we would say initially Oroonoko's grandfather himself wanted to get married to her because of her beauty and this was always an obstacle and we find that the men in the colony

they are also getting immensely attracted to her and this is seen as a threat throughout the story.

So, she is also present the woman without an agency. We do not find her making any decision for herself, thinking for herself and we find her as an ever present shadow alongside Oroonoko. But what is also interesting is that Aphra Behn has given adequate presents for her throughout the story, allowing her to allowing us to see her from different perspectives and from different angles. And the only time perhaps Imoinda gets chance to decide her fate for herself is when she agrees very gracefully agrees to Oroonoko's proposal of killing her before he also gets killed at the end.


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And there are certain very beautiful descriptions about the kind of love that they share. the narrator tells us, "He made her vows she should be the only woman he would possess while he lived; that no age or wrinkles should incline him to change; for her soul would always be find, always young, and he should have an eternal idea in his mind of the charms she now bore, and she should and should look into is heart for that idea, when he could not find it no longer in a face".

So many critics have also spoken about the kind of love story this or that Oroonoko is that underneath the profound powerful, strong satirical discussions about colonization, Aphra Behn has also managed to weave a beautiful love story.

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Other characters:

- Aboan, Oroonoko's friend
- The king
- The colonists Bannister, Byam, Trefry and others

But we shall not be going into the details of those. There are other characters such as Aboan who is Oroonoko friend, The King and the colonists a number of columnists, some of them bannister, Byam, Terfry and others.

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The narrator

- A nameless English woman dwelling on Parham plantation
 - A detailed overview of Surinam, the plantation, its residents, the surroundings
- Waiting for a ship to take her back to England
- Meets Oroonoko and his wife Imoinda
- Narrates Oroonoko's story

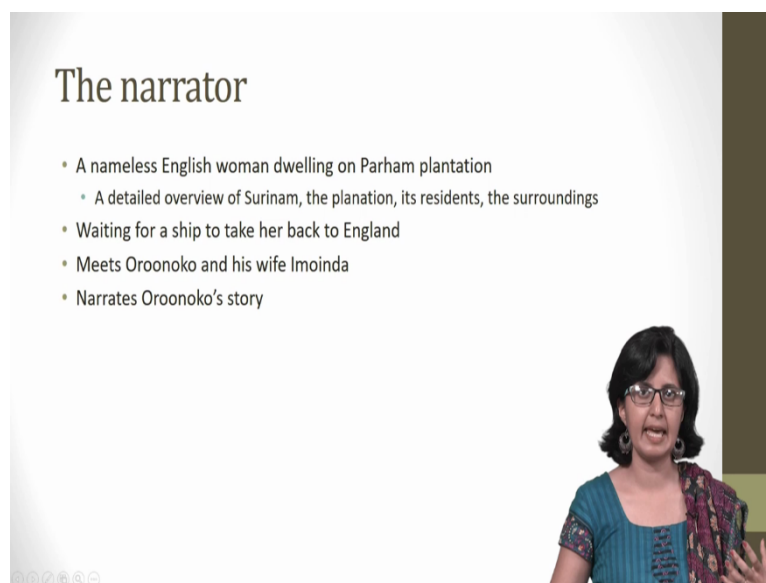
The narrator, the narrator has (())(11:35) a nameless Englishwoman, now we do not get to know any details about her just like Aphra Behn's own personal history, she also remains rather obscure there is a very little that is known with certainty about the narrator. she when we meet her she's dwelling on Perham plantation and she also gives us a detail overview of Surinam, the plantation, its residents, the surroundings and those are the details which also

makes us believe and rather suspect that perhaps Aphra Behn herself had spent a considerable number of time, a considerable amount of time in Surinam as a political spy.

So, at the outset of this story we also know that the narrator is waiting for a ship to take her back to England and she the narrator is also white female woman. the narrator is also a white woman and she meets Oroonoko and his wife Imoinda and she becomes good friends with them and the rest of the story the major part of the story is about the narrator narrating Oroonoko story, Oroonoko's tale from the time he was a prince and his adventures and his love story and how he became a slave and what happened to him in the colony and finally his death.

So, apart from that this very little that we know about the narrator but what makes it where it is significant is that the story that being told to us it is through the eyes of this narrator and it also tells us about the perspectives that the narrator has about the various things which are discussed in this story, the main framework (13:15) colonisation.

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The narrator

- A nameless English woman dwelling on Parham plantation
 - A detailed overview of Surinam, the plantation, its residents, the surroundings
- Waiting for a ship to take her back to England
- Meets Oroonoko and his wife Imoinda
- Narrates Oroonoko's story

The slide features a video inset in the bottom right corner showing a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue top, speaking and gesturing with her hands. At the bottom left of the slide, there are small navigation icons.

And for the same reason one of the most important themes discussed as part of the story is this ongoing debate, the dialogue and even the hostile relation between colonization and anti-colonization. And it may be useful to remember that this is much before the anticolonial rhetoric, the (13:39) colonialism had become powerful in the West and as we know by the 1990 early 20th century it also becomes a movement.

The colonists in this story, the colonists Mr Tefrey, Byam and bannister they are all seen as greedy, dishonest brutal rulers. This goes very much against the grain of the predominant

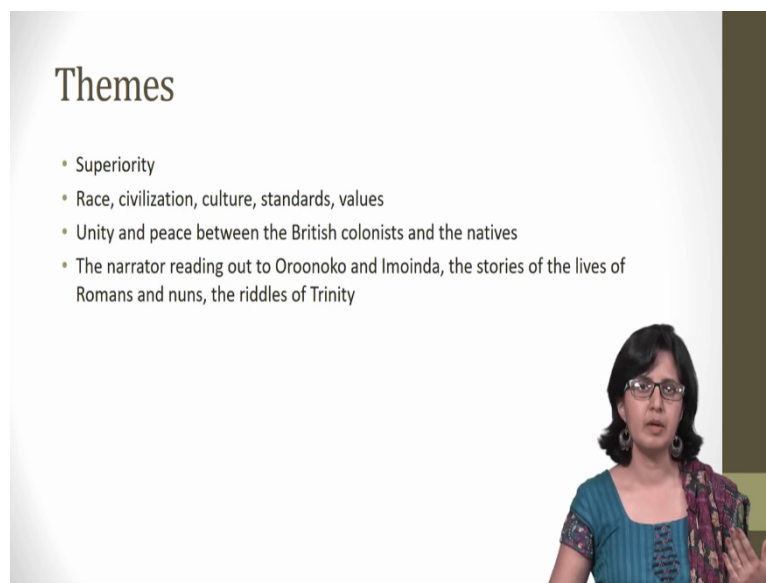
thought that it was a white man's burden which has sent him all the way to these different distant parts of the world. And there is a very touching instance in the story where Trefry, the British captain, he in fact befriends Oroonoko only to betray him. And his death is also a result of these many many betrayers and many complications that happen in the story.

The narrator interestingly behaves in the same manner as the colonists. She called herself as a friend of Oroonoko but she's not there when they need her in that sense. In fact, she also runs away when Oroonoko runs into trouble and we get a very terrifying picture of slavery and Oroonoko is beaten up cruelly in one instance, pepper is put on his wounds so that's a kind of graphic details that the story gives us and it also tells us about how brutal the colonists were when it came to getting the work done through the slaves.

The slaves were also forced to change their names. So, there is a loss of identity which is a significant thing and it hits Oroonoko all the more because he was a prince before and the slaves are also compelled to leave their family and friends behind. In this theme while it may look very compelling and real today it (())(15:18) to be remember that in the 17th century slaves were seen as a common thing, it was no big deal to use slaves to get to work done in the colonies, they were seen as one of the ways in which a revenue could be added to the **to the** English nation.

And it also talks about in terms of slavery, how the native social system was influence, how the change had come about. Oroonoko during his frame as a prince we find that he also used to sell war captives as slaves, because there was a time in his life when he was raining as a prince, he also believed that this fate befits men who lose wars but only when he becomes a slave himself he begins to realize what that is and the reality really becomes to sinking.

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Themes

- Superiority
- Race, civilization, culture, standards, values
- Unity and peace between the British colonists and the natives
- The narrator reading out to Oroonoko and Imoinda, the stories of the lives of Romans and nuns, the riddles of Trinity

And some of the other important themes are of superiority and when the novel talks about superiority (16:15) racial superiority how the West feel superior in terms of its civilisation, the culture, the standards and values and the **the the** premise in the story from the beginning and this is what we see through the lens of the narrator that she maintains that there is unity and peace between the British colonists and the natives, that is the perspective of the narrator.

But Aphra Behn is also using that efficiently very powerfully as a tool to critique the system for what it is because it really helps to have a narrator who has an opposite point of view and that also allows Aphra Behn to put the narrators perspective under critical lens and also to showcase at in a more critical way as far as the readers are concern.

So, there is an instance in the story where the narrator is reading out to Oroonoko and Imoinda the story is of the lives of Romans and nuns and that was something which laid the bedrock, the foundation of the Western civilisation, the Western value system. So, we find the narrator trying to impart the same, the same kind of standard for same kind of value system and also invite Oroonoko into this more civilised, sophisticated systems and values.

Also tries to explain to him the riddles of Trinity and we find Christianity also becoming a framework through which this kind of superiority gets exerted and exercised. So, throughout the story it's very hard to miss the different ways in which the racially or in terms of civilization or cultural standards, values or systems, the West, the Europeans, the English particularly in this case we find that superiority being presented in multiple ways throughout.

As you begin to wrap up, I would also invite you to take away quick look at the way this story is presented, it is currently accessible in many digital forms so I do encourage you to take a look at the story and to read through it at least in parts to get a hang of a the kind of language used then and also to see how novel as a form (18:50) as a form has come a long way from them and it's also it also will be useful exercise to go through the words used and how the form itself is still getting into shape this is a 17th century end of the, this is the end of the 17th century when novel as a form, novel as a literary form had not yet taken a definite shape.

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So, with this we come to the ending of the story and I read to you the (19:21) leave you with that. “Thus died this great man, worthy of a better fate, and are more sublime wit than mine to write his praise; yet, I hope, the reputation of my pen is considerably enough to make his glorious name to survive to all ages with that of the brave, the beautiful, and the constant Imoinda.

This sums up the objective and intention of this (19:44) and it also tells us that the narrators intention more than anything is the document the story of Oroonoko, the African prince who is forced to live as a slave and then gets killed at the slave and if this had not been documented the story would have been lost forever, Oroonoko’s history would never have got written and as for me I think this is a greatest message that a tale such as a Oroonoko is sending out person like Aphra Behn is trying to send out that it is very important to document everything, it is very important to tell the tales which are otherwise excluded,

which are otherwise in the margins, which are otherwise not seen as tales fit enough to be told.

And with this I leave you to read this story and thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next session.