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Spring 2015

Presentation on Marlon James's *The Book of Night Women* Day 3

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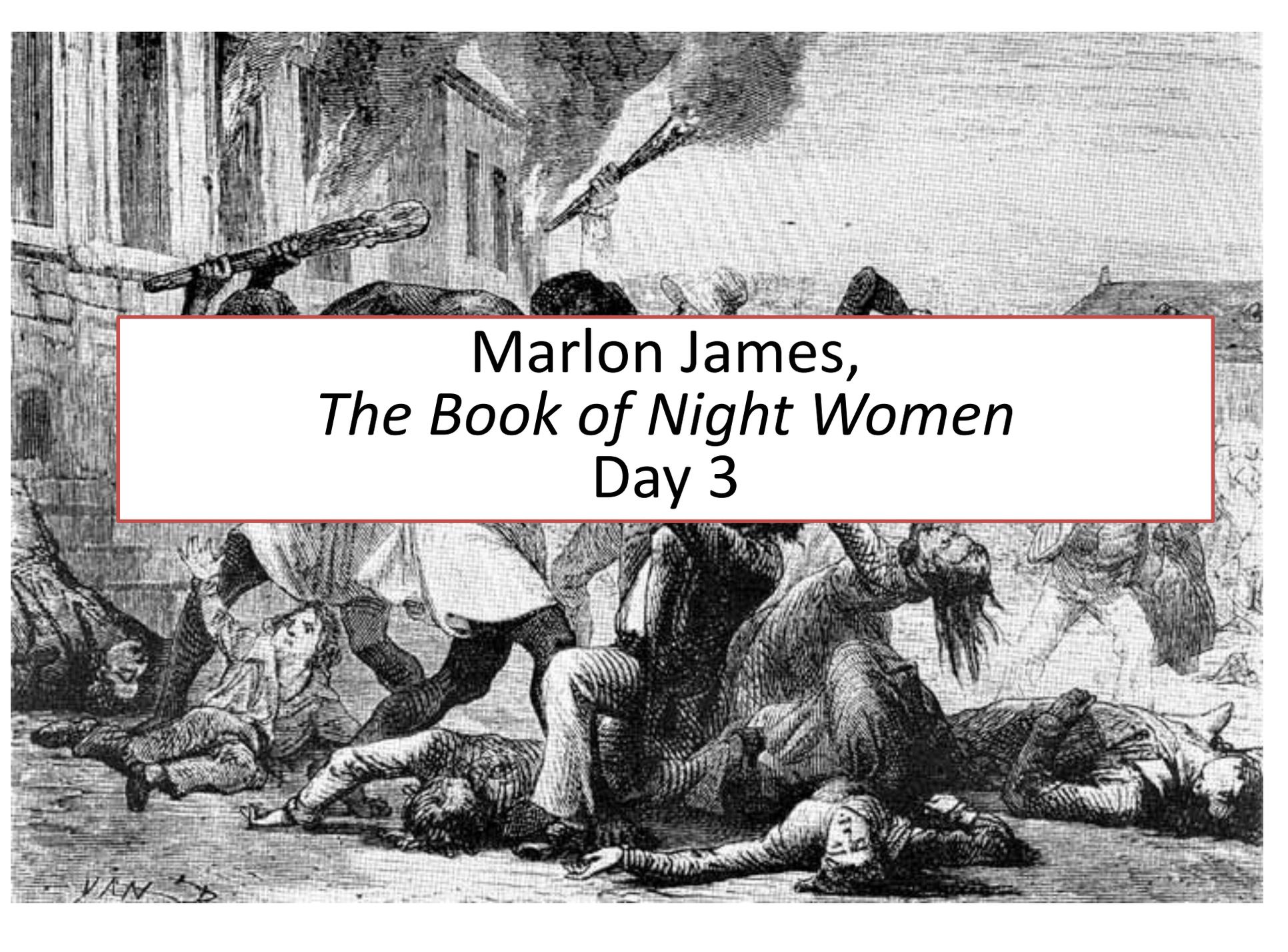


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Repository Citation

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Marlon James,
The Book of Night Women
Day 3

Today

Coulibre

Differences between Coulibre, Montpelier

Literacy & Joseph Andrews

“Walk in a circle” passage

Coulibre

- Not a real place name. Name may mean
 - Bottom-liberation?
 - Bottom-freedom
 - Ass-freedom
- Start with analysis of violence of language 180-181
- Look at the deliberate way that Isobel misunderstands Lilith and Homer.
- How would you characterize the verbal violence of Isobel's words here?

Coulibre

“Montpelier must be some different place to rahtid” (no shit)

- List details that you remember about Coulibre
- What seems different about Coulibre from Montpelier?
- For example, how does the whipping on page 189 differ from other whippings we see at Montpelier?
- Or how does the sexual treatment of Dulcimena (193) differ from the sexual violence we see at Montpelier?
- “It strike her how this house so hard with all the stone, but every room noisy and light cover the walls” (195).

Effect on Lilith

- Homer says to Lilith on page 222 “You different. You have more darkness ‘bout you now” (222)
- How does Coulibre “train” Lilith to think differently about her circumstances?

Literacy & Joseph Andrews

Trace Lilith's relationship with Fielding

In a range of slave narratives, literacy and freedom are bound together—e.g. “Autobiography of Frederick Douglass”

“I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom...I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read.”

Heterodox passage—discussion between Barnaby and Adams on danger of plays (213)

“Joseph want her to be a woman of the sort she don't want to be” (223)

Look at account of book on 225. What does James suggest about the position of the book in Lilith's life? How is it unlike the position of books in Douglass's life?

Night Women and Joseph Andrews

- James, then, presents a complicated account of Lilith and Andrews—the novel is simultaneously alienating, inspiring, and comforting.
- What does this suggest about the complications of James's own account of slavery?

Respond to this passage

- “Every Negro walk in a circle. Take that and make of it what you will. But sometime the circle squeeze in on itself and get smaller and smaller like a mark, or a head. A head so small that the negro have one chance to stomp it with her foot, stomp it good. Lilith know. She learn and she learn it good. Plenty things be a sin, but every sin come with temptation and chance” (223)