Presentation on Marlon James's The Book of Night Women Day 5

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Marlon James,
*The Book of Night Women*
Day 5
Today

Plot levels in *The Book of Night Women*
History in chapter 21
Lilith/Quinn relationship in relation to larger chapter
Slave auction
Plot levels *Night Women*
Write down whatever you can remember for each category.

**Historical forces (e.g. ch 21):**
slave trade, sugar trade, Great Chain of Being, oppression Irish, Enlightenment, colonization Jamaica, slave revolts, Maroons

**Particular history Montpelier plantation (Wilkins era backstory):**

**Plot of events in novel**
Humphrey/Quinn arc, Humphrey/Isobel relationship, Coulibre episode, plot of *Night Women*, Lilith/Quinn

What does this tell us about the rest of the diagram? If you’re James, why include this as part of the plot?

Lilith/Quinn relationship

How does this look upward?

“You’ve got no cause to see me as your enemy, Lilith” (298)

"Suddenly they turn back into slave and master and they both know” (276)
Chapter 21

- Camera draws back—James gives us wider history of Middle Passage, Jamaica, Montpelier, Lilith
- Toni Morrison also uses this technique in Beloved
- The Fire Next Time—reference to long Baldwin essay about simmering dissatisfaction African Americans—written in early 60s before US riots
- What is the effect of placing this chapter here?
What complications does this passage raise?

• “She try to hold on to the Quinn that make her get whip twice a week. But whenever she think of whip she think of blood, and whenever she think of blood she see white woman blood and white pickney and black woman who face she can’t remember. Her hand is as bloody as any white man, that she know. [...] But if Quinn touch her hair or moan or whisper lovey, everything broken. She would have to work up the hate all over again. Something fly up in her head and say, Kill him now. You not a woman until you do” (283).

• Passage 285 “Lilith look at him...”
Slave auction

- What are the details of the slave auction that Lilith witnesses on pages 322-324?
- Why does James choose to include this passage at this point in the narrative?
- (What does it add to the novel, how does it connect to other points in the novel?)