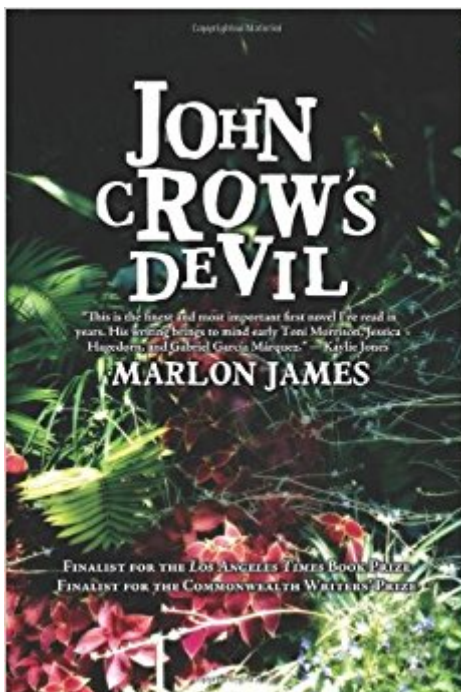


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# John Crow's Devil



## Synopsis

The incredible debut novel from 2015 Man Booker Prize winner Marlon James "A powerful first novel . . . Writing with assurance and control, James uses his small-town drama to suggest the larger anguish of a postcolonial society struggling for its own identity." --New York Times Book Review (Editors' Choice) "Elements coalesce in a Jamaican stew spicier than jerk chicken. First novelist James moves effortlessly between lyrical patois and trenchant observations . . . It's 150-proof literary rum guaranteed to intoxicate and enchant. Highly recommended." --Library Journal (\*starred\* review) This stunning debut novel tells the story of a biblical struggle in a remote Jamaican village in 1957 with language as taut as classic works by Cormac McCarthy and a richness reminiscent of early Toni Morrison. Marlon James was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1970. His second novel, *The Book of Night Women*, a New York Times Editors' Choice, was released in 2009 to widespread critical acclaim. Currently a professor of literature and creative writing at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, he divides his time between Jamaica, New York City, and the Twin Cities.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Set in James's native Jamaica, this dynamic, vernacular debut sings of the fierce battle between two flawed preachers. In 1957, the village of Gibbeah is a dusty remnant of the plantation era, halfheartedly ministered to by drunken Pastor Hector Bligh, aka the Rum Preacher. On a day beginning with a bad omen—black vultures, locally called John Crows, crash through the church windows—a man calling himself Apostle York "set[s] pon Pastor Bligh like when you beat a mangy

dog" and takes over his church. Bligh takes refuge in the home of another village outcast, while York's commanding presence whips Gibbeah into a frenzy of repentance. Lucinda, long reviled as the town slut, sets her sights on salvation and the Apostle, while Clarence, with whom she had a dalliance, becomes one of "The Five," a group of young men eager to enforce York's decrees against sin. It isn't long before group cohesion becomes mob mentality, and punishments grow increasingly brutal and public. Bligh returns to the fray, and the resulting confrontations set the village on a path to destruction. With gruesome and sometimes gratuitous descriptions of sex and gore, this isn't a tale for the faint of heart, but those eager for fire-and-brimstone lyricism will find this an exciting read. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Vultures, or John Crows, descend on Gibbeah, a vine-entangled Jamaican village where a catastrophic spiritual battle takes place between the Preacher and the Apostle. Pastor Hector Bligh's leadership of the Holy Sepulchral Full Gospel Church has eroded into drunken muttering by the time Apostle York arrives with his fire-and-brimstone manner and ironclad rules for holy living. As the Apostle and his five deacons engage in maniacal power-mongering, the black villagers are forced to submit to the harshness of a god in York's diseased image. Will a transformed Bligh be able to save the village? First-novelist James combines evangelical ideas about spiritual warfare with the folk traditions of voodoo and magic, producing a transfixing blend of horror and metaphor that echoes Austin Clark's Barbados tales. The result is a mesmerizing treatise on the nature of good and evil, faith and madness, guilt and forgiveness, eloquently captured in a microcosm of society. Jennifer Baker Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I absolutely loved reading this book. Actually, there were certainly some pieces of the book so disturbing I can only hope to forget them. What makes a good book to you? That is the question. I read James's "The Book of the Night Women". I would say this book was much more graphic than the book of the night women. I understood most of it as I have studied the cultural and religious trends discussed in the book. But if certain themes are totally foreign to you, you may not pick up on what the author is hinting at. It was a stupendous, real, gritty work.

I have just read Mr. James three available novels in reverse order, reading John Crow's Devil just now. Even after a steady diet of his books one after another, every one is fresh and engrossing. In

this case the eternal conflict of good versus evil is played out in many fascinating twists and turns. The descriptions of both character and countryside are gorgeous, and as in "Seven Killings" terrific humor and phenomenal presentation of dialect is a strong suit for Mr. James.

This is an extremely powerful and original story, exposing a very talented and creative author with great promise. It is a dramatic portrait of social relations in a small rural village in Jamaica in the 1950s that rings true to the people and their culture, particularly the role of religion in their lives. Most of the dialogue is in Jamaican dialect or patwa. It is also a story about the ambiguities of good and evil that approaches biblical proportions. I was mesmerized by the book until the end, which I found very disappointing. The story is often raw, graphic, even shocking, unnecessarily so in my view. I look forward to more polished efforts from Marlon James. Incidentally, Johncrow is a Jamaican term for the turkey vulture, a large, soaring scavenger commonly seen if not ubiquitous.

Spellbinding, Could'nt put it down. Thank you Marlon James for bring to life Jamaican Folklore in a new and excited way. Love! Love ! it. I am on to the second and Third book waiting for the next.

I picked up this book based on positive reviews it had received online (I believe via Bookslut), and I was not disappointed. It reminded me at times of Graham Greene's *The Power and The Glory* (one of my favorite novels, and another book about struggles with faith and religion gone wrong), and as other reviewers have noted, it's the kind of book that is hard to put down. It's also a harrowing story about abuses of power, which can make the novel's images hard to confront at times. *The Book Of Night Women* may be his current calling card, but James' work here is also worth your time.

Not a narrative I would normally follow but it was a good book with a fast ending ....it could have been a smoother transition in the end but ok

This book was well written. Captivating story, believable dialogue, and excellent description of a time long gone. A story that speaks of despair and of redemption. Worth reading.

I read James' second novel ("*The Book of Night Women*") first and loved it, so I started looking for other novels written by him and found this one. I haven't finished reading it but it's wonderfully written. I am Jamaican-American and grew up listening to my Jamaican-born parents speaking patois and using the same lyrical phrases that James references in his novel. The plot is very

interesting and the religious overtones and poetic verses are what James does best! I can't wait to see how this ends. Another great read from Marlon James...he never disappoints.

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