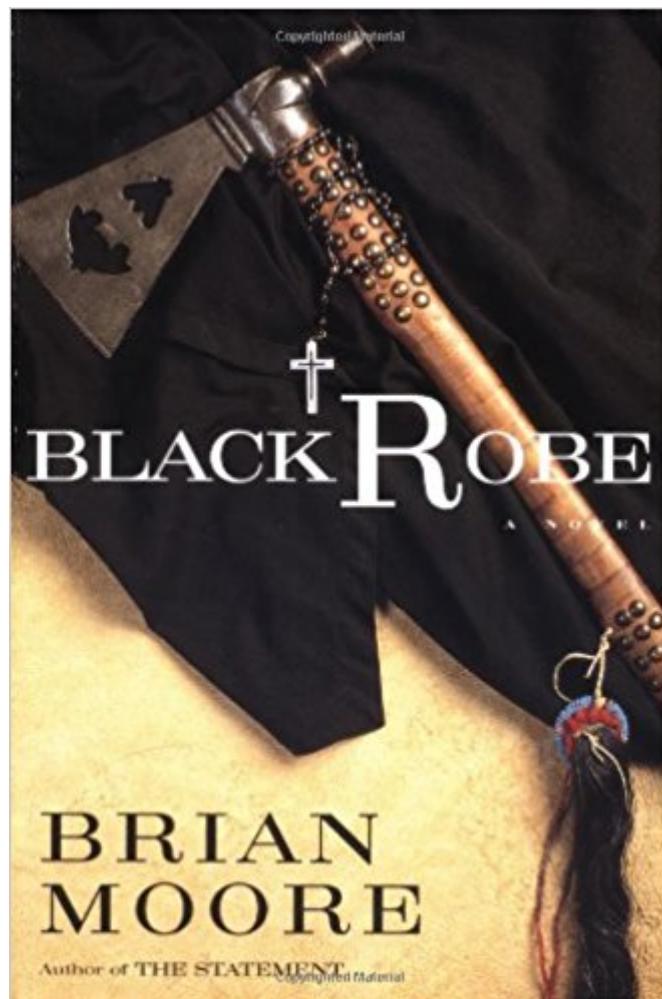


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Black Robe: A Novel



Synopsis

His name is Father Laforgue, a young Jesuit missionary come from Europe to the New World to bring the word of God to the heathen. He is given minimal aid by the governor of the vast territory that is proudly named New France but is in reality still ruled by the Huron, Iroquois, and Algonkin tribes who have roamed it since the dawn of time and whom the French call Savages. His mission is to reach and bring salvation to an isolated Huron tribe decimated by disease in the far north before incoming winter closes off his path to them. His guides are a group of Savages who mock his faith and their pledges even as they accept muskets as their payment. Father Laforgue is about to enter a world of pagan power and sexual license, awesome courage and terrible cruelty, that will test him to the breaking point as both a man and a priest, and alter him in ways he cannot dream. In weaving a tautly suspenseful tale of physical and spiritual adventure in a wilderness frontier on the cusp of change, Brian Moore has written a novel that rivals Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in its exploration of the confrontation between Western ideology and native peoples, and its meditation upon Good and Evil in the human heart.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Moore is at the height of his considerable powers as a narrator." • Colm Tóibín "A rousing, terrifying, breathtakingly paced adventure." • People "A remarkable tour de force....Compulsive reading." • Sunday Telegraph --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Brian Moore is the author of nineteen novels, including *The Statement*, *No Other Life*, *Lies Of Silence* and *The Lonely Passion Of Judith Hearne*. Mr. Moore was short-listed three times for Britain's Booker Prize. He passed away in 1999.

This is a culture clash saga that grabs the reader at gut level and won't let go. Young Father Paul Laforgue is a French Jesuit priest, newly arrived at the missions of 17th century Canada, and eager to take up his first assignment. Like all Jesuits, he is the product of ten years of rigorous training that tests candidates on a physical, intellectual and spiritual level. In a system like this, weaklings wash out, and Lafarge is not portrayed as a weak man. Nonetheless, as is usually the case when radically different worlds collide, Father Paul is about to get a whole lot more than he bargained for. What is perhaps most striking here is the intense, almost feverish sensuality of Laforgue's immersion in the Native American world. The priest experiences this "savage" culture, in which basic human appetites, whether for food or sex, are seen as both natural and good, as challenging at an existential level. His whole training in the Jesuit novitiate has been to overcome "animal" appetites so as to attain self-mastery, the essential path to God according to a theological mindset which perceives the natural world as a kind of theatre of temptation. Especially fascinating in this context is Laforgue's journey to sexual self-discovery, which, predictably in this context, leads not to joy but to horror and self-loathing. Used to the privacy and solitude essential to the spiritual development of a Catholic celibate, Father Paul is catapulted into a society where privacy is virtually non-existent. His discovery of his young French companion indulging in oral and anal sex with a beautiful (if unwashed) Huron girl draws him into a powerful voyeuristic participation in their love-making--the kind of scene that makes *Black Robe* anything but hagiography. The only thing that might have made this novel even stronger would have been a further development of doubt in Father Paul's psychology, doubt both as to the reality of his own faith and of the validity of the rigid theology handed down to him. Moore plays with this theme in some interesting ways, but leaves the issue of his protagonist's individual conscience versus his inherited religious tradition largely unresolved. Despite the reservations expressed in the last paragraph of this review, however, I have to recommended *Black Robe* as a gripping, and thought-provoking, read.

What a find this author has been - the second book I've read by Moore and each book has been such a diverse and captivating read. I remember seeing the movie adaption of the novel many years ago and tend to think that the novel itself way surpasses the movie. The story is of Father Laforgue,

a Jesuit missionary comfortable in his faith who travels to an isolated mission in the wilds of Quebec to relieve fellow Missionaries and bring the word of God to the Savages. The journey becomes one of endurance, hardship and brutality when the worlds of the Savages and the Jesuits collide. The book is violent and brutal in parts. The portrait painted of an early Quebec, the isolation, starkness of the wilderness and the customs and beliefs of the Natives are "visual" and quite breath taking. A wonderful author whose other novels are quickly becoming a 'must read'

I saw the movie years ago and loved it. The novel is even better. It's scrupulously researched, fast-moving, and shows the conflicts between different cultures better than anything I've read. I was sorry when it ended. I may read it again in a few days.

new upon receipt

good read. good film.. Check out Francis Parkman who histories were the source material for this book.

I enjoyed the book, fast read and different way of looking at American Indian and Colonist lives.

life as the people portrayed lived it--a great historical read

Outstanding book. It finally made clear the basis for the catholic religion that dominates South Louisiana. Brutal presentation of the church's attempts to convert North American Indians. This is not for dainty PC types.

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