

Brian Moore
1921- 1999

The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne
(1955)

Book Discussion
Irish Cultural Center
October 28
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Norton Room

Discussion Guide:

Brian Moore's life and career spanned much of the 20th century and reflected a familiar pattern for Irish writers, one of self-imposed exile, first to Canada and then to southern California. Born into a Belfast Catholic family, Moore's experiences also include two familiar themes, Irish nationalism and questions of faith. His works (twenty novels--plus others under pen names) reflect diversity in subject and style that few writers can claim. Patricia Craig of *The Irish Times* asserts that he is a "writer who refused to be typecast." A novelist popular with the general readers, Moore seems to resist contemporary trends. Again I quote Craig: "Though he started off as a Joyce enthusiast, and remained one all his life, Brian Moore might be placed at the opposite extreme from Joyce, and indeed from the whole modernist tradition with its denigration of plot-making as something a bit bourgeois and passé" (*The Irish Times*, January 16, 1999).

► John Wilson Foster, in *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction* (1974), says that "*The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* (1955) is perhaps the best novel to come out of Northern Ireland." After your initial reading, consider what aspects of this novel you find worthy of such praise.

► **Describe Judith Hearne** (appearance, behaviors, beliefs, desires). What can you say about the people she comes in contact with? Clearly one theme of the novel relates to loss of faith, but what circumstances (gender, class, and rearing) are operating in this psychological portrayal of a woman in Belfast?

► In *Brian Moore: A Critical Study* (1991), Jo O'Donoghue speaks about Moore's techniques:

As a novelist, Brian Moore always creates a plausible world by the techniques he employs. He is a master of plot, extremely skilled in his exploitation of different points of view, and above all, interesting. Though he never produces novels of great length, his works are consistently thought-provoking, ambitious, experimental, at least in his pairing of technique and subject matter. (xix)

What techniques has Moore used to create a plausible world in *Judith Hearne*? What is Belfast like? How would you characterize his narrative style? Why, for example, has Moore included a variety of points of view about Hearne and Madden in the sixth chapter of the novel?

► **Your discussion leaders can certainly** justify including this work as one by a noted writer of Northern Ireland, but can this novel make a contribution to our theme about "history through literature"?

??More Moore?? Consider *The Emperor of Ice Cream*, *Catholics*, *The Great Victorian Collection*, *Lies of Silence*, and *The Magician's Wife*.



Looking ahead!! December 2: Stuart Neville, *The Ghosts of Belfast* (2010)