Julia O’Faolain

*No Country for Young Men*

1980

(Nominated for Booker Prize)

Irish Center Book Discussions

Dec. 7, 2019

10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

McClelland Library – Norton Room

Discussion Guide:

► About this novel, Robert Nye said, “One of the very best books of its kind that it has ever been my pain and pleasure to read.” The questions for us: What kind of book is it? Why did he think it was so good? Why painful? Do you agree?

► The title is a variation of a line from Yeats’s “Sailing to Byzantium”:

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another’s arms, birds in the trees

Think about the significance of O’Faolain’s modification.

► What narrative threads are woven together to create this suspenseful novel? Are the characters well developed and believable?

► Last month, we saw the devastating effects on children who grew up in a loveless home with a ruling code for “good behavior.” Are there negative influences on children in O’Faolain’s novel?

► Julia O’Faolain’s parents, Sean and Eileen O’Faolain, became disillusioned romantics in de Valera’s Ireland. Julia is definitely not a romantic; she challenges myths and versions of modern history. Think about the narrative devices she uses to mount these challenges. How do interpretations of myth and history differ according to gender?