Good Behaviour
(1981)
(Shortlisted for Booker Prize, 1981)
by
Molly Keane
(1904 – 1996)
Early pen name: M. J. Farrell

McClelland Library
Book Discussions
Saturday, October 26
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Norton Room

Discussion Guide:

► Molly Keane's novels are part of the “Big House” tradition in Irish literature. These novels explore life on the Anglo-Irish estates and trace their decline. For further reading, you might consider some of the following: Maria Edgeworth, Castle Rackrent (1800); Somerville and Ross, The Big House of Inver (1925); Elizabeth Bowen, The Last September (1929); Aidan Higgins, Langrishe, Go Down (1966); Jennifer Johnston, The Captains and the Kings (1972).

► What evidence do you find that the “big house” in Keane's novel is in a state of decline? Speculate on the causes.

► Aroon St. Charles, the daughter, is the narrator. Do you trust her as a narrator? What factors influenced her character? Do you have empathy for her?

► Consider the title: Good Behaviour. How does this expectation affect the characters and actions?

► Significant events form the historical milieu of the novel. How aware of these events are the characters in this novel?

► Did you enjoy the novel? Do you think it is well written? If so, what are some of its strengths? If not, what weaknesses do you want to comment on? Molly Keane was born into such an Anglo-Irish family. Does that fact influence your reading of the novel?