



The Emperor's Children

By Claire Messud

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NATIONAL BESTSELLER

A New York Times Book Review Best Book of the Year

The Emperor's Children is a richly drawn, brilliantly observed novel of fate and fortune—about the intersections in the lives of three friends, now on the cusp of their thirties, making their way--and not-- in New York City. In this tour de force, the celebrated author Claire Messud brings to life a city, a generation, and the way we live in this moment.

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The Emperor's Children By Claire Messud Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Marina Thwaite, Danielle Minkoff and Julian Clarke were buddies at Brown, certain that they would soon do something important in the world. But as all near 30, Danielle is struggling as a TV documentary maker, and Julius is barely surviving financially as a freelance critic. Marina, the startlingly beautiful daughter of celebrated social activist, journalist and hob-nobber Murray Thwaite, is living with her parents on the Upper West Side, unable to finish her book "titled *The Emperor's Children Have No Clothes* (on how changing fashions in children's clothes mirror changes in society). Two arrivals upset the group stasis: Ludovic, a fiercely ambitious Aussie who woos Marina to gain entrée into society (meanwhile planning to destroy Murray's reputation), and Murray's nephew, Frederick "Bootie" Tubb, an immature, idealistic college dropout and autodidact who is determined to live the life of a New York intellectual. The group orbits around the post-September 11 city with disconcerting entitlement and around Murray, who is, in a sense, the emperor. Messud, in her fourth novel, remains wickedly observant of pretensions intellectual, sexual, class and gender. Her writing is so fluid, and her plot so cleverly constructed, that events seem inevitable, yet the narrative is ultimately surprising and masterful as a contemporary comedy of manners. *100,00 announced first printing; author tour.*(Sept. 4)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

In this witty examination of New York's chattering classes, which opens in the spring of 2001, the despot of the title is Murray Thwaite, a famous journalist who made his name in the Vietnam era. The next generation, however, is having trouble gaining traction. Murray's daughter, Marina, unable to complete a long-overdue book on the cultural significance of children's clothing, has moved back into her parents' Upper West Side apartment and is doing a lot of yoga. Her two best friends—Danielle, a television producer, and Julius, a gay freelance critic—are similarly ambitious and entitled, without being particularly driven. All three find sex the easiest way to transform themselves. Only Murray's brainy and profoundly disenfranchised nephew from upstate aggressively pursues his belief in the true and the good, but he proves to be a sort of literary terrorist, threatening to blow the family apart. The humorous intimacies of Messud's portraits do not, finally, soften the judgments behind them: If this is what's become of the liberal imagination, is it worth fighting for?

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Claire Messud, the author of PEN/Faulkner Award finalists *When the World Was Steady* (1995), a novel, and *The Hunters* (2001), a collection of novellas, delivers a powerful, stylistically complex narrative that explores New York society from the inside out. More than one critic compared Messud's prose to that of Henry James, American modernist and novelist of manners at the turn of the last century. The technique translates well into fiction that uses the last days of relative innocence before 9/11 and the chaotic immediate aftermath as its backdrop. The novel's texture, multiple layers digging deep beneath and exposing society in such captivating detail, comes from Messud's ability to create dramatic tension even while writing pointed social satire.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Leininger:

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Daniel Starnes:

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