



© Derek Shapton

Claire Messud

Novelist

Cambridge, Mass.

Born in 1966 in Greenwich, Connecticut

Studied Comparative Literature at Yale University and English Literature at the University of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Photo: Derek Shapton

PROJECT

Novel in Progress

While at the Wissenschaftskolleg, I will continue work on an as yet untitled novel set in the contemporary United States, telling the story of a family and its unraveling. The novel opens with the sudden death of its widowed patriarch, Paul Thevenet, a French expatriate, in a nursing home in Miami, and the return of his daughter Isabel from London to arrange his burial.

Unfolding in reverse chronological order, the book consists of ten chapters, each set approximately five years apart; and will show, like the peeling of an onion, how the family's foundering was inevitable from the outset.

The novel's primary focus is Paul Thevenet himself and his relationship with his wife Patricia, an American Brahmin from Boston. The complex legacy of Paul's French childhood during the war; his decision to abandon that past in favor of starting anew in the United States; the importance of a mythical America in his construction of himself and of his family; and the inevitable clashes between his myth and the realities - these are the book's central themes.

Recommended Reading

Messud, Claire. *The Emperor's Children* (novel). New York: Knopf, 2006. (Also published in German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Dutch.)

- *The Hunters: Two Short Novels*. New York: Harcourt, 2001. (Also published in German and French.)

- *The Last Life* (novel). New York: Harcourt, 1999. (Also published in German, French, Italian, and Swedish.)

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Messud, Claire (Norman, Okla.,2012)

An American in Berlin

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1045334189>

Messud, Claire (New York,2007)

When the world was steady

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=669202223>

Messud, Claire (New York, NY,2006)

The emperor's children

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=505817152>

Messud, Claire (San Diego [u.a.],2002)

The hunters : two novellas

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1601859368>

A Harvest book

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1601859368>

Messud, Claire (Köln,2001)

Und dazwischen das Meer

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=329568590>

The last life <dt.>

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=329568590>