

# Black Inc. Book Club Notes

**TITLE:** The Inheritors

**AUTHOR:** Hannelore Cayre

**ISBN:** 9781760642662

**PRICE:** \$29.99

**SUBJECT:** Literary Fiction

## Book description

*She had been dead now for four days and I had become rich.  
Unimaginably rich.*

Blanche de Rigny has always considered herself the black sheep of the family. And a black sheep on crutches at that. But it turns out her family tree has branches she didn't even know existed. And many of them are rotten to the core. As Blanche learns more about the legacy left by her wealthy Parisian ancestors, she decides a little family tree pruning might be in order.

But great wealth also brings great responsibility – a form of *richesse oblige*, perhaps – and Blanche has a plan to use her inheritance to cure the world of its ills.

Spanning two centuries, from Paris on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War to the modern day, this unforgettable family saga lays bare the persistent and poisonous injustice of inequality. In her trademark razor-sharp style, Hannelore Cayre again delivers the sardonic humour and devilish creativity that made *The Godmother* an international bestseller.



## About the author

Hannelore Cayre is a French writer, director and criminal lawyer. *The Godmother* won the European Crime Fiction Prize and the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière, and has been shortlisted for a Crime Writers' Association Dagger award. *The Godmother* was also featured on *The New York Times*' '100 Notable Books of 2019' list and has been made into a major film starring Isabelle Huppert. *The Inheritors* is her latest book.



Translated from the French  
by Stephanie Smee.

# Black Inc. Book Club Notes

## Praise for *The Godmother*

‘Rigorous, superbly plotted by an author who clearly knows the territory. Vivid, smoky dialogue and a sly ending that ticks all the boxes ... Masterly.’ —**LE FIGARO**

‘... suspenseful and deliciously black comic crime novel.’  
—**SYDNEY MORNING HERALD AND THE AGE ‘PICK OF THE WEEK’**

‘Cayre is a first-rate novelist and she doesn’t waste a word in this excellent short novel with dealers, traffickers, cops and quirky Frenchmen all getting their time on the page.’  
—**THE GLOBE**

‘The Paris of Cayre’s *The Godmother* is a spicy mix of cultures and classes so deftly evoked you can smell the cigarettes, coffee and Moroccan hash, taste the kebabs and Chamonix Orange cakes, feel the summer sweat trickle down your back and the hot asphalt stick to your feet. Reading this novel is a visceral delight.’ —**ANGELA SAVAGE**

‘Readers will be anxious about the fate of the forthright, sympathetic Patience up to the final page. It’s no surprise that this novel won France’s most prestigious award for crime fiction.’ —**PUBLISHERS WEEKLY STARRED REVIEW**

‘Spectacular’ —**ANNABEL CRABB**

‘Devourable in a sitting and tastes deliciously like one of the narrator’s beloved Rothkos – dark at its centre, pulsing outward through all the more complex flavours.’  
—**SARAH KRASNOSTEIN**

## Discussion Points

1. *The Inheritors* looks at Paris across two centuries, from the Franco-Prussian War to the present day. The author suggests ‘nothing had changed one iota in the last one hundred and fifty years’ (p.179) – that the age-old issues of class and privilege are much the same across the ages. Do you agree? Why/why not?
2. Disability is a big theme in the book with Blanche and her friend Hildegard both experiencing exclusion and discrimination as a result of theirs. How often do you see main characters with a disability? How did Blanche’s experience of disability enrich the story?
3. Blanche describes war as ‘one historical cataclysm hard on the heels of another’ (p.77). The process of military substitution and ‘buying a man’ is one example of how war affects lower classes. How does Auguste feel about his family buying a man to replace him? How does this change his perspective on life?
4. One of the book’s main themes is family history and ancestry. Blanche’s investigations are assisted by modern technologies – how have these changed our experience of family and heritage?
5. After sabotaging Adrienne (resulting in her death) Blanche remarks, ‘I said to myself that the only pure truths were life and death. The rest was just subjective crap, waffle, blather.’ (p.203) How does Blanche justify the actions she takes against her long-lost relatives?
6. Blanche resorts to criminal activity to supplement her income and provide for her daughter. How is motherhood regarded in the book? What importance does the role of the mother have in both the past and the present-day parts of the story?
7. The book goes back and forth from the present day to the past. How does this inform your experience of the story? Do you feel like you are investigating the past along with Blanche?

# Black Inc. Book Club Notes

---

8. There are a number of chance incidents that push the narrative forward, like Clothilde meeting the pregnant Corentine on the train to Saint-Germain-en-Laye (p.196). In what other ways do chance and coincidence alter the lives of the characters?

9. At the end of the book Blanche explains her intentions for the inheritance money and outlines her cruelty-free political agenda (p.223). Were you surprised by this? Do you think Blanche's discovery of Auguste and his political activities influenced her?