

= White Dog (Gary novel) =

White Dog , released in France as Chien Blanc , is a fictional autobiographical novel written by Romain Gary . Originally published as a short story in Life in 1970 (9 October) , the full novel was published in 1970 in French in France by Éditions Gallimard . Gary 's English version of the novel was published in North America in the same year by New American Library . The novel provides a fictionalized account of Gary and his wife 's experiences in the 1960s with a stray Alabama police dog trained to attack black people on sight , and their attempts to have the dog reprogrammed .

Gary uses the novel as a vehicle to denounce both racism and the activists supporting African @-@ American rights , including his own ex @-@ wife and Marlon Brando . He also examines whether human responses to situations , including racism , are learned social behavior and whether they can be unlearned . In 1981 , it was adapted into the controversial film of the same name , in which director Samuel Fuller made various changes to the novel 's story to focus more on the dog and present a more pessimistic ending than the original novel . The film 's American release after negative press from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) led to concerns of boycotts .

= = Plot synopsis = =

A fictionalized memoir set in both the United States and France during the 1960s American civil rights movement , White Dog focuses on the events that occur after Gary and his then @-@ wife Jean Seberg , an actress and an activist , adopt a handsome and clearly well @-@ trained German Shepherd dog who comes back to their home with one of their other dogs . At first , the dog , which they name Batka , is an ideal new member of the family : intelligent , devoted , and quickly befriending the couple 's assortment of other animals . To their dismay , they discover that the dog , a former Alabama police dog , was trained to attack black people on sight . Although they are told the dog is too old to be retrained , they take him to a black dog trainer to try . Instead , the man trains the dog to attack white people , including Gary himself . Gary states that he changed the ending of the American version to be more optimistic .

= = Publication history = =

White Dog was first released as an English short story that appeared in Life magazine in 1968 . It was published as a full novel in 1970 in two languages and two countries . A French @-@ language version was published in France under the title Chien Blanc by Éditions Gallimard (ISBN 207027022X) in April 1970 . Gary , who was multi @-@ lingual , also wrote an English version , which was published by New American Library in 1970 under its Signet label .

French

1970 , France , Éditions Gallimard (ISBN 207027022X) , 256 pages , paperback

1972 , France , Éditions Gallimard (ISBN 2070360504) , 220 pages , paperback

English

1970 , United States , New American Library , 279 pages , paperback

2004 , United States , University Of Chicago Press (ISBN 0226284301) , 290 pages , paperback

= = Themes = =

With the use of a " flippant tone and [an] uncomfortable use of sarcasm , " White Dog is Gary 's dissection of the paranoia generated by both racism and classism as he juxtaposes McCarthyism @-@ American , in which there is an " obsessive sniffing out of ' subversives ' and violent race riots , " against the barricades and race riots of France in 1968 . The violence depicted also provides a discourse on revolutionary social change , as it also leads to " a new order , a new reality . " Gary " excoriates American racism , black activism , and movie @-@ colony liberalism " and reflects on American race relations as a whole . He also documents his own " intolerance of intolerance that is

the curse of tolerance " . Through the dog , Gary examines whether a learned response can be unlearned . He also poses the question of how much freedom and uniqueness a person can claim if humans responses are indeed learned by " social indoctrination . "

Within the novel , Gary makes " scathing attacks on self @-@ aggrandising Jewish pro @-@ black sentiment and self @-@ serving celebrity campaigners " , while making explicit attacks against Marlon Brando and Seberg for their involvement in civil rights movements and the latter 's involvement with the Black Panthers organization . In an interview about the novel , Gary states that as a " typical American idealist " she was an easy mark for people seeking money for causes , and he depicts this in the novel by having her frequently appearing in activist events writing checks . After her death , he called the novel the " story of her crusade " .

= = Reception = =

White Dog quickly became a bestseller in the United States after its English release . Phoebe Adams of The Atlantic felt the story was ironic , and noted that it was " presumably " true . She felt the depiction of Marlon Brando was " tartly funny " and that story as a whole served " as an excuse for Mr. Gary 's comments on racial affairs in this country , a matter on which is somewhat less pessimistic than the natives and a good deal more sensible . " The Globe and Mail 's H. J. Kirchhoff considered it a " riveting , thoughtful work " that serves as a metaphor for American racism . Julien Roumette felt Romain 's depiction of the racial tensions in America at the time was " meticulously reconstituted , with a realistic , even documentary , rather exceptional dimension . " Julia Weldon of Harper 's Magazine remarked with amusement that the events of the novel were ones that " only a Frenchman " could have found himself in . She felt the novel was a " decathlon event " in which Gary turned a " household crisis into a full @-@ scale allegory . " Overall , she praised the book as a " memorable portrait of guilt and largess in black and white " , noting she felt Gary had lived to " witness his own maturity " though she also wondered if he stretched the truth to " make himself a legend in his own time . "

= = Film adaptation = =

Paramount Pictures purchased the film rights for White Dog in 1975 , though the film itself was not produced until 1981 , after Gary 's suicide . Various changes were made from the original novel 's story , including the removal of Gary himself and a tighter focus on the dog . Gary 's wife was replaced in the script with a young , unmarried actress as Paramount wanted the film to show a strong contrast between the loving relationship between the protagonist and the dog 's random attacks . The novel 's hate @-@ filled Muslim black trainer was converted into the character named Keys , who genuinely wished to cure the animal . The novel 's original ending was also changed to make it more pessimistic . Directed by Samuel Fuller and starring Paul Winfield and Kristy McNichol , the film 's theatrical release was suppressed in the United States out of concern of negative press after rumors began circulating from the NAACP that the film was racist . It was released internationally in France and the United Kingdom in 1982 , and broadcast on various American cable television channels . Its first official American release came in December 2008 when The Criterion Collection released the original uncut film to DVD .

In reflecting on the film , Fuller notes that he had known Gary before being offered the chance to direct the White Dog adaptation , and greatly admired both Gary and the novel . He wanted to have the film dedicated to Gary , who had committed suicide before the film was completed , but the studio declined . In an interview with the Los Angeles Times , he stated " I know [Gary would] have liked it . And he 'd have been pleased because his other books (The Roots of Heaven , etc) had not done well as films . "