

UNE SAISON BLANCHE ET SÈCHE

de Euzhan PALCY

FICHE TECHNIQUE

Titre original : A dry white season

Pays : USA

Durée : 1h46

Année : 1989

Genre : Drame

Scénario : Colin WELLAND, Euzhan PALCY, d'après le roman d'André BRINK (Ed. Stock)

Directeur de la photographie : Kevin PIKE, Pierre-William GLENN

Chef décorateur : John FENNER

Musique : Dave GRUSIN

Coproduction : Metro Goldwyn Mayer / Star Partners II Ltd. / Davros Films

Distribution : UIP

Interprètes : Donald SUTHERLAND (Benjamin Du Toit), Janet SUZMAN (Susan Du Toit), Zakes MOKAE (Stanley Makhaya), Jürgen PROCHNOW (Capitaine Stolz), Susan SARANDON (Melanie Bruwer), Marlon BRANDO (Ian Mc Kenzie, l'avocat)

Sortie : 8 novembre 1989

SYNOPSIS

Afrique du Sud, 1976. Benjamin Du Toit, pacifique professeur d'Histoire dans un collège de Johannesburg, vit entre sa femme et ses deux enfants l'existence ordinaire d'un Afrikaner. Jonathan, fils de son jardinier noir Gordon Ngubene, disparaît après avoir participé à une manifestation de lycéens. Ben intervient alors, sur la demande de Gordon. Il apprend alors que l'enfant a été tué et demande le concours de Mc Kenzie, célèbre avocat anti-ségrégationniste. Gordon, qui enquête de son côté, est arrêté et meurt sous la torture.

Au tribunal, Mc Kenzie cherche à confondre la capitaine Stolz, chef de la « section spéciale », mais le juge conclut au suicide. Ben décide alors d'aller plus loin et prend contact avec des militants noirs. La police le persécute, sa femme, sa fille, le quittent, ses collègues l'évitent et il perd son emploi. Alors que seul son fils Johan est resté avec lui, il est assassiné par Stolz, lequel est abattu par un Noir passé à l'action violente.

(d'après *la Saison cinématographique* – 1989)

For a long complete synopsis in English, visit www.suntimes.com/ebert_reviews/

AUTOUR DU FILM

The novel

The narrator, a white South-African writer is asked by his former school friend Ben Du Toit to keep important documents for him and to use them if necessary. When Ben is killed, the narrator delves into the papers and unravels the threads of Ben's discoveries concerning the South African police and how they torture and kill Blacks.

A short biography of André Brink

He was born in South Africa in 1935. He is the author of 11 novels in English, including *A Dry White Season* (1979) which was banned in South Africa. He has written in English, Afrikaans and French, and has twice been shortlisted for the Booker Prize. His novels have been translated in 29 languages. He is a Professor of English at the university of Cape Town.

Nadine Gordimer, André Brink and J.M. Coetzee played an essential role in the apartheid years, awakening people's conscience inside and outside the country.

Petit dossier sur l'Apartheid

En 1980, la population de l'Afrique du Sud se répartissait comme suit :

- Noirs 21,1 millions
- Métis 2,6
- Indiens 0,8
- Blancs 4,5
- **Total 29 millions**

La population blanche se divisait en deux groupes principaux :

- les Afrikaners (= Boers, 58%), qui parlent une langue dérivée du Néerlandais, l'Afrikaans, et se sont établis dans le pays aux 17^e et 18^e siècles ;
- les anglophones (37%), arrivés depuis le début du 19^e siècle, qui dirigent la plupart des entreprises du secteur privé.

Les 5% restants sont d'origines diverses : Allemands, Portugais, Grecs...

Le mot « apartheid », issu de la langue afrikaans, signifie littéralement « mise à part, séparation ». Officiellement, il s'agit du développement séparé des races, qui dans la réalité, aboutit à l'asservissement politique, économique, social et culturel des Noirs par une minorité blanche.

Historique

Aux 17^e et 18^e siècles, des colons hollandais débarquent dans la région du Cap. Persuadés de leur supériorité « naturelle », ils font travailler leurs fermes par des esclaves, souvent importés d'autres régions d'Afrique, et surtout d'Asie (à l'origine des métis aujourd'hui). Un racisme immédiat se développe, comme dans tout processus de colonisation. Mais des colons anglais débarquent, et en 1814, le pays passe sous administration britannique. Lassés de cette domination, de nombreux fermiers boers s'expatrient vers le nord-est (1835-1844), formant les républiques d'Orange et du Transvaal. Ces dernières sont attaquées et annexées par les Anglais, lors de la très cruelle guerre des Boers (1899-1900). L'Union Sud-Africaine, créée en 1910, est une domination de l'empire britannique. La différence d'état d'esprit entre les Afrikaners et les anglophones reste vivace dans le pays actuel.

Avec l'industrialisation forte des années 1880-1900, les Noirs, dont on a besoin comme main d'œuvre, sont sentis par les Blancs comme une menace potentielle. Ces derniers mettent en place une politique générale de ségrégation :

- une loi de 1913 sépare les terres en zones blanches (majoritaires) et en réserves noires,
- en 1948, le « parti nationaliste », à base d'Afrikaners, remporte de justesse les élections (où ne votent que des Blancs), et met en place le système de l'apartheid : la ségrégation résidentielle est radicalisée, les Noirs sont obligés de posséder un « pass » qui permet de contrôler leurs déplacements. Les discriminations sociales et raciales sont systématiques.

Avec la colonisation mondiale d'après 1945 (l'Inde devient indépendante en 1947, le Tchad en 1960, l'Angola et le Mozambique en 1975), l'Afrique du Sud devient de plus en plus isolée face au reste du monde.

Les résistances

En 1909, naît l'ANC (Afric National Congress), premier mouvement destiné à défendre les droits des Noirs. Sa lutte est modérée jusqu'aux années 40, plus radicale après 1948 : désobéissance à la loi sur le « pass » ; ses membres se retrouvent en prison. Un leader se dégage dans ses rangs : Nelson Mandela, arrêté en 1962 et condamné à la prison à vie.

En 1960, une répression fait 69 morts à Sharpeville (au sud de Johannesburg), et l'ANC est interdit. La répression politique et policière culmine dans les années 1970-1977. Les villes noires (« Townships ») connaissent des vagues de protestations. Ce sont ces événements qui sont relatés dans *Une saison blanche et sèche*.

PISTES PÉDAGOGIQUES EN FRANÇAIS

1 – Le point de vue

Dans le roman, Ben Du Toit fait parvenir ses documents à un ami romancier pour que celui-ci les rédige : un écrivain (fictif) interprète les événements, comme si la vérité était un secret difficile à découvrir. La réalité est vue à travers le point de vue particulier de Du Toit. Dans le film, le point de vue n'est plus particulier et unique, mais multiple : différents points de vue nous mettent en prise avec tous les éléments du récit. Les faits, pourtant ne sont pas donnés bruts, mais toujours porteurs d'une signification claire, apportée par le contexte ; le spectateur relie les différentes scènes pour en dégager la signification.

2 – Le début

La première séquence, symbolique, peut se lire comme un rêve, un idéal, ou l'affirmation d'un espoir. Peu à peu dans le récit, le spectateur s'identifie de plus en plus au point de vue de Du Toit. Dans le roman au contraire, le lecteur partage d'emblée le point de vue de Du Toit.

3 – Le nœud

Il tient dans la séquence du procès, charnière du film. Le spectateur en tire une conclusion très claire : l'apartheid est un système injuste. L'évolution de Du Toit est capitale : il perd toute illusion sur la justice blanche et officielle. Dans le roman, ce passage est traité avec une distance qui élimine tout spectaculaire.

4 – La fin

La tension dramatique s'accroît jusqu'aux dernières images. Les relations familiales sont toujours un thème sensible, émouvant, pour le grand public. Le réalisateur du film en joue fortement. On glisse à un duel en règle entre Du Toit (le bon) et le capitaine Stolz (le méchant). Le procédé est simpliste, commercial. Stolz assassine lui-même Du Toit, alors que le roman reste muet sur l'identité de l'assassin. Le face à face final entre Stolz et Stanley, pure invention du film, menace sa crédibilité.

5 – Retour au roman

Dans le roman, Du Toit évolue par des réflexions personnelles ; dans le film, toujours sous le coup des événements extérieurs. La conscience de Ben apparaissait, dans le roman, au lecteur par le biais du journal intime.

Roman et film utilisent des moyens différents et privilégient des moments, des aspects différents de la même histoire.

PISTES PÉDAGOGIQUES EN ANGLAIS

1 – Teaching materials:

- p. 60 *Your Way Term Tech*: passage unabridged
- p. 166 *Broad Ways Term L,ES,S*: another extract from the novel
- p. 48-49 *Looking Forward 1^{ère}*: extract from *African Songs*, Richard Rive, 1963 (Whites only bench)
- p. 54 *Looking Forward 1^{ère}*: cartoon about the end of apartheid
- p. 108-119 *Crossroads 2^{nde}*: dossier South Africa
- p. 35 *Broad Ways 2^{nde}*: info South Africa

2 – Activities

- South Africa: a timeline

1650s Arrival of the first Europeans; creation of a system of slavery.

1700s-1800s The British and the Boers*(who speak Afrikaans*) disputed the different territories.

1899-1902 Boer War: the British defeated the Boer Republics.

1910 Formation of the Union of South Africa by former British colonies and the Boer Republics.

1912 Native National Congress founded, later renamed the African National Congress (ANC).

1913 Land Act introduced to prevent Blacks from buying lands outside reserves.

1914 National Party (NP) founded.

- 1948** Policy of Apartheid adopted when NP takes power.
- 1950** Group Areas Act; Separate Amenities Act. ANC responds with campaign of civil disobedience, led by Nelson Mandela.
- 1951** Homelands* established.
- 1960** 70 black demonstrators killed at Sharpeville. ANC banned.
- 1961** South Africa declared a republic, leaves the Commonwealth.
- 1960s** International pressure against government begins.
- 1964** ANC leader Nelson Mandela sentenced to life imprisonment.
- 1970s** Over 3 million people forcibly resettled in black 'homelands'.
- 1976** More than 600 killed in black uprisings which started in Soweto.
- 1984-1989** Township* violence spreads, state of emergency declared.
- 1989** F.W De Klerk becomes president, meets Mandela. Desegregation begins. Many ANC activists freed.
- 1990** ANC ban lifted, Mandela released.
- 1991** De Klerk repeals remaining apartheid laws, international sanctions lifted.
- 1994** ANC wins first non-racial elections. Mandela becomes president, Government of National Unity formed, Commonwealth membership restored, remaining sanctions lifted. South Africa takes seat in UN general assembly after 20-year absence.
- 1995** Creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- 1996** Parliament adopt new constitution. National Party withdraws from coalition.
- 1999** ANC wins general elections, Thabo Mbeki takes over as president.

*Afrikaans: a language developed from 17th century Dutch spoken by the Boers.

*Boers, later called Afrikaners: white people who live in South Africa and whose ancestors were Dutch.

*Homeland: territory (less than 1/10th of the country) that was set aside for Black South Africans under apartheid.

*Township: a town or part of a town where only black people lived.

Using the timeline, state whether the affirmations are right or wrong. Justify your answers.

Affirmations	Right	Wrong	Justification
1. The language spoken by all white South Africans is Afrikaans.			
2. Under the Apartheid regime, everything was done to prevent Blacks from owning lands.			
3. The apartheid era lasted more than half a century.			
4. South Africa remained isolated from the rest of the world for about 30 years.			
5. Under F.W. de Klerk's presidency, efforts were made to put an end to segregation.			
6. The 1994 elections were the first non-racial elections ever to have taken place in South Africa.			

- Apartheid Era

Apartheid, literally the state of being apart, was established in 1948 by the newly-elected National Party. Under this system of segregation, mixed marriages were prohibited, individuals were classified by race and physically separated (Group areas Act). The Separate Amenities Act created separate public facilities- separate beaches, separate buses, separate toilets, separate schools and separate benches.

In the late 1960s, the National Party perfected their aim: to confine the entire black population to the unfertile homelands. Finally, in the 1970s, the world woke up to the realities of Apartheid. Exclusion from international sporting competitions and economic sanctions followed. In South Africa, strikes and demonstrations came to a peak in 1976, with the uprising and massacre of black schoolchildren in the township of Soweto. Support for apartheid weakened and the long road towards reform began.

Complete the following sentences:

1. Apartheid means
2. It was in 1948 that
3. The apartheid regime introduced
4. Black people were not allowed
5. For years the world
6. The 1976 massacre marked

3 – An extract from the novel

- A disquieting meeting

The moment he telephoned I knew something was wrong. For it was a Friday morning and he was supposed to be at school.

“Can you meet me in town?” he asked impatiently, before I could recover from the surprise of his call. “It’s rather urgent. I’m phoning from the station.”

“You on your way somewhere?”

“No, not at all.” As irritably as before. “Can you spare me the time?”

“Of course. But why don’t you come to my office?”

“It’s difficult. I can’t explain right now. Will you meet me at Bakker’s bookshop in an hour?”

“If you insist. But-”

“See you then.”

“Goodbye, Ben.” But he’d already put down the receiver.

For a while, I remained confused. Annoyed, too, at the prospect of driving into the city centre from the journal’s premises in Auckland Park. Parking on Fridays. Still, I felt intrigued, after the long time we hadn’t seen each other; and since the journal had gone to press two days before there wasn’t all that much to do in the office.

He was waiting in front of the bookshop when I arrived. At first I hardly recognised him, he’d grown so old and thin. [...]

“But what’s the matter, Ben?”

“No use burdening you with it. All I want to know is whether I may send you some stuff to keep for me.”

“Stolen goods?” I said playfully. [...]

“I want you to keep my notes and journals. And to use them if necessary.”

“How will I know if it’s necessary or not?”

“You’ll know, don’t worry.” [...]

“What have you done, Ben?”

“Nothing, I assure you. Nothing at all. But I can’t go on for very much longer, and I think they know it too. All I’m asking of you is to keep my papers.”

“But if the whole thing is really all that innocent-”

“Are you also turning against me now?”

There was something paranoid in his attitude, as if he’d lost his grasp on the world, as if he weren’t really in that street in that city at that moment, as if he weren’t aware of my presence at all. As if, in fact, he himself were a stranger whose slight and superficial resemblance to the Ben Du Toit I’d once known was pure coincidence.

"Of course I'll keep your stuff for you," I said, the way one would comfort or humour a child. "Why don't you bring it to my house tonight, then we can have a quiet chat over a glass of wine?"

He looked even more perturbed than before. "No, no, I can't do that. I'll make sure it gets to you. I don't want to cause you any problems."

"All right then." I sighed with resignation. All the sob stories I'd seen in my time. "I'll look through it and let you know."

"I don't want you to let me know. Just keep the stuff like I told you. And if something happens--"

"Nothing will happen, Ben", I insisted, not without some irritation. "It's just hypertension. All you need is a good holiday."

(Two weeks later he was dead.)

André BRINK – *A Dry White Season* – 1979

- Reading grid

Part 1: from l.1 to l.17

1. Characters?
2. Characters' jobs?
3. Sum up this part in one sentence with these words: *narrator-Ben-phone-tell-see-urgently*.

Part 2: from l.18 to l.48

1. Quote the sentence that clearly states what Ben expects from the narrator.
2. What are Ben's reasons for asking for help?
 - The narrator is the only friend Ben can trust. (faire confiance à)
 - Ben wants the narrator to write a novel about him.
 - Ben wants to protect his family.
 - Ben doesn't want his notes to be found.
3. What are the ingredients of mystery in the passage?
4. l.30 "they" could be...

<input type="checkbox"/> Ben's family	<input type="checkbox"/> the government	<input type="checkbox"/> spies (espions)
<input type="checkbox"/> the police	<input type="checkbox"/> gangsters	<input type="checkbox"/> terrorists
<input type="checkbox"/> journalists	<input type="checkbox"/> Ben's colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> Ben's friends
5. Pick out elements that show the narrator doesn't take Ben seriously.
6. Guess what the last line (l.49) of the story is.
7. What is the effect produced by the juxtaposition of the last two sentences?
8. How does the last sentence put the conversation into a new perspective?
9. Guess what Ben's notes and documents may be about.

- Practise

Complete with the verbs in the past, simple form or had + VEN:

1. When the narrator (meet) Ben, he (not know) that his friend (be investigating) the death of a man who (work) for him.
2. He (not see) him for quite a long time, not since he (spend) a holiday at his house some years before.
3. At university, Ben (be) the sort of student everybody (like) but no one particularly (notice).
4. What nobody (know) was that he (have) a devastating experience as a child: his family (lose) all their sheep in a terrible draught, and they (have) to start from scratch again.
5. When he (find) out his own daughter (betray) him, he (decide) to give all his papers to a friend.
6. When he (die), his friend (already receive) the parcel with the documents in it.

Complete with the verbs in the past or present, have + VEN form (= present-perfect)

1. For a very long time, violence, crime and despair (be) the rule in the township of Soweto, South Africa. But since the end of apartheid in 1994, Soweto (find) a new ideal to live for. For about 10 years now, the people in Soweto (have) a good reason to believe in the future.
2. The nightmare is over and peace and hope (now come).
3. Soweto (always be) South Africa's most famous township.

4. Eighty years ago, in the 1930s, lawyers like Nelson Mandela (live) side by side with workers. Then, Soweto (become) the home of most of the leaders of the ANC, demanding equal rights for Blacks.
5. Over the past few years, the ANC (be) especially attentive to Soweto. It (recently build) roads, libraries and shopping malls. Political violence (almost disappear) now.

For or since?

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| - the elections | - the British conquest | - three centuries |
| - 1994 | - Mandela was released | - a long time |
| - almost thirty years | - the Soweto massacre | - ages |

SITOGRAFIE

- ▶ www.madameve.co.za: Madam and Eve comic-strips
- ▶ www.mg.co.za: a South African newspaper