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| Black Girl (1966) |
| La Noire De (1966) |
| *Black Girl* is the first feature-length sub-Saharan African production directed by Ousmane Sembène, also known as the father of African cinema. The film traces the story of a Senegalese nanny, Diouanna, who moves from Dakar to France to continue working for her employers. Instead of the fantasy that she had imagined, life in France is drudgery: her status changes from nanny to maid, she does not get paid, and she is not allowed even little freedoms like wearing her heels in the kitchen. Gradually, she retreats into silence and eventually commits suicide. Sembène combines experimental style with African modes of storytelling in *Black Girl*. For example, hand-held cameras and natural lighting enhance the social realism of the film. At the same time, his belief in the artist as the *griot* — the storyteller and spokesperson — of African people informs the narrative style of the film. The existentialist world-view of Diouanna, conveyed through her silences and voiceover, is invested with the weight of colonial history. Her suicide is equally a personal act and a political refusal to be oppressed. Sembène’s quietly observing camera records and tells Diouanna’s story and, through her character, presents his political and social critique of colonialism, neo-colonialism, the bourgeoisie, and women’s subordination. |
| *Black Girl* is the first feature-length sub-Saharan African production directed by Ousmane Sembène, also known as the father of African cinema. The film traces the story of a Senegalese nanny, Diouanna, who moves from Dakar to France to continue working for her employers. Instead of the fantasy that she had imagined, life in France is drudgery: her status changes from nanny to maid, she does not get paid, and she is not allowed even little freedoms like wearing her heels in the kitchen. Gradually, she retreats into silence and eventually commits suicide. Sembène combines experimental style with African modes of storytelling in *Black Girl*. For example, hand-held cameras and natural lighting enhance the social realism of the film. At the same time, his belief in the artist as the *griot* — the storyteller and spokesperson — of African people informs the narrative style of the film. The existentialist world-view of Diouanna, conveyed through her silences and voiceover, is invested with the weight of colonial history. Her suicide is equally a personal act and a political refusal to be oppressed. Sembène’s quietly observing camera records and tells Diouanna’s story and, through her character, presents his political and social critique of colonialism, neo-colonialism, the bourgeoisie, and women’s subordination.  Source: <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/4066-a-fiftieth-anniversary-celebration-of-black-girl> |
| Further reading:  (Landy)  (Sembene)  (Pfaff, The Cinema of Ousmane Sembène, A Pioneer of African Film)  (Sembene, Okay Africa)  (Pfaff, The Uniqueness of Ousmane Sembène’s Cinema)  (Rosenbaum) |