

# AESTHETIC OBJECTS IN CONTEMPORARY FRANCOPHONE LITERATURE AND CINEMA

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the representation of aesthetic objects in contemporary Francophone literature and cinema, with special attention to Francophone African countries, particularly Senegal and Mauritius, and their diasporas. I focus on a range of objects, such as photos, the camera, paintings, personal accessories, and the body, which, I argue, function as a metaphor for the creative process. These 'objects' have a deep link with the character's inner life and enable a process of healing and remembering. Chapter 1 explores the representations of the female body in Ananda Devi, Magali Marson, and Isabelle Boni-Claverie, and how it becomes an artistic 'map' where characters renegotiate their sexuality, thus renewing notions of gender, pleasure, and power dynamics. In chapter 2, drawing on the metaphor of the body as a creative space, I investigate the problematics of belonging, the gaze, and characters' relations to the Other in the films *The Cathedral* (2006) by Harrikrishna Ananden and *Tey* (2016) by Alain Gomis, and in the novel *Infrarouge* (2010) by Nancy Houston. Chapter 3 explores what Walter Benjamin defined as 'historical objects,' respectively in Moufida Tlatli's *La saison des hommes* (2001), Amatal Sewothul's *Made in Mauritius* (2012), and Khaled Osman's *La colombe et le moineau* (2016), which revisit concepts of History, national identities and gender dynamics. My last and forth chapter analyzes the representation of dead, fragmented, and unidentified bodies-objects as a metaphor and a medium for representing the migration crisis in contemporary Francophone and Italian novels and visual texts, such as *Les Irréguliers* (2016) by Patrick Autréaux, *Ceux du large* (2018) by Ananda Devi, *Terraferma* (2011) by Emanuele Crialese, *Les fantômes de la mer* (2016) by Bruce Clarke,

and *The mapping journey project* (2011) by Bouchra Khalili, among others. Revisiting the notion of the object itself, which becomes both a subject and the content of the artistic process in the texts analyzed, my dissertation explores anew the representations of bodies, memories, displacements and borders, be they geographical, social or textual. The conclusion reflects on the aesthetic process that these objects generate as materializations of memories, identities, and H/histories.