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ARTICLE

Melancholic Migrations and Affective Objects in Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma*

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Melancholia has been read as an individual pathological response to loss, a national cultural reaction to the end of the British Empire, and as a collective political emotion felt by socially marginalised groups. Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma* (2007) conceives of melancholia as exceeding both individual and national boundaries. The novel illustrates how processes of migrant melancholia are caught up with the gendered, religious and racial relationship of bodies, space and objects. Attempts to alleviate melancholia through investing in objects in line with normal cycles of mourning remain inconclusive due to the way consumerist spaces are structured to normalise whiteness. The novel's engagement with melancholia as political through communal emotions that make visible injustice rejects Freudian notions of melancholia as negatively pathological. In particular, emotion has a didactic function by reminding the reader of structural inequalities and how the history of European imperialism fuels present-day xenophobia. Ultimately, by transforming prior understandings of melancholia, the novel shows how migrants are in a unique position to refute the national project that upholds designations of rights, citizenship and belonging.

Keywords: melancholia; Fadia Faqir; affect; migration; object theory

'[Y]ou are here now so try to get on with it', says the English doctor to the depressed Salma, a Bedouin Arab recently granted asylum to the UK, in Fadia Faqir's 2007 novel *My Name is Salma* (17). Ostracised from her Levantine community for becoming pregnant out of wedlock, Salma ends up in a local prison for her own safety before being smuggled out of the country by a British nun. The non-linear narrative describes these memories mingled with her on-going process of assimilation into life in Exeter after being granted asylum. The novel has been read with critical acclaim and published into thirteen languages, with the American version renamed *The Cry of the Dove* (Chambers 2011, 68). One of the key feelings evoked by Salma's narrative is her prolonged melancholia both as a result of her individual trauma and what David L. Eng and Shinhee Han have termed 'racial melancholia' (2000). Following Freud's understanding of melancholia as the result of an incomplete mourning cycle, Eng and Han argue that melancholia is particularly endemic to migrants because the process of loss involved in melancholia echoes the structure of migration. Melancholia is a 'constellation of affect' (Eng and Kazanijan 2003, 3) and as such can be felt in a variety of ways, whether individually or collectively, spatially or bodily. Indeed, Sara Ahmed has coined the phrase 'melancholic migrants' to account for the way in which visibly unhappy foreign bodies disrupt the perpetuation of happiness as a form of nation building by drawing attention to the social inequalities that prevent their happiness (Ahmed 2010). This is illustrated when, observing Salma's moods, her boss Max comments that 'Arabs are obsessed with sadness' (Faqir 2007, 4). The novel's engagement with melancholia as political through communal emotions that enable the visibility of injustice rejects Freudian notions of melancholia as negatively pathological.

This article will sustain a theorisation of migration through Salma's negotiation of melancholia as both a personal and socio-political collective experience, through a triad of affect in the relationship between bodies, objects and space. I bring together affective object theory with conceptions of melancholia in order to explore migration as an everyday experience within the novel. The primary way the novel engages with processes of melancholia is through affective objects. As I will argue, gendered

consumer objects that hold the affective power of 'happy objects' (Ahmed 2010) are part of Salma's assimilation process. Objects also play a major role in the novel's connections of contemporary xenophobia to the history of British colonialism. Ultimately, I argue that *My Name is Salma* engages with melancholia politically by transcending this nationalistic emotion in order to show the potential of communal emotion as a route to agency. By transforming prior understandings of melancholia, the novel shows how migrants are in a unique position to refute the national project that upholds designations of rights, citizenship and belonging.

More specifically, I will suggest that through migrant negotiations of space and objects, the novel functions to connect the history of European colonialism with everyday xenophobia in line with Paul Gilroy's concept of 'postcolonial melancholia' (Gilroy 2004). This national condition is characterised as 'an anxious, melancholic mood [that] has become part of the cultural infrastructure' seen through the 'obsessive repetition of key themes—invasion, war, contamination, loss of identity' (15). Britain's amnesiac inability to properly mourn the loss of power that came with the end of the empire actively contributes to contemporary distrust of immigrants. Gilroy proposes conviviality as a solution to postcolonial melancholia due to the 'liberating sense of the banality of intermixture and the subversive ordinariness of this country's convivial cultures' (166). Salma's routes to overcoming melancholia, from her specific engagement with everyday objects to her attempts at communal comfort and her imaginings of convivial life, are structured as simultaneous through the non-linear narrative which jumps between temporal moments. The narrative as non-linear demonstrates the particularly everyday quality of melancholia and conviviality. While the novel does not conclude with a solution, indeed Salma leaves her family in Exeter to go back home in search of her lost baby only to be killed by her brother, it does explore the options available to individuals and British culture on the whole at this particular contemporary juncture. Salma's experiences go beyond Gilroy's concept of melancholia to conceive of communal melancholia as non-nationalistic. Shared suffering is reimagined as political in a way that exceeds the national, thus demonstrating that collective emotion does not necessarily heed

the distinctions between citizen and illegal immigrant or insider and outsider. 'The nation' is understood here as somewhat fluid and all-encompassing. England and Britain are distinct yet attitudes towards immigration are linked to the history of empire as one of Britishness and therefore it is important to locate Salma's individual experience within this larger cultural framework. As well as existing in a particular British culture through shared imperial history, Salma's experience as geographically located in Exeter engages with a particular sense of Englishness. Considering the setting of Exeter as a place historically important to English history which is also a symbol of nostalgic Englishness as part of the West Country, the novel's communal migrant melancholia is more significant than if it took place in a more typically multicultural setting such as London.

Theorising Melancholia

Prolonged feelings of sadness that she is unable to 'get over', accentuated by narrative movements between memories, mark Salma's immigration experience. In the hostel in Exeter where she first lives, she spends her time either lying in bed refusing to eat or taking long walks around the city at night. Indeed, other characters know Salma for her 'long silences' (Faqir 2007, 139). Salma appears to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) resulting from a combination of her fear of being killed by her family in her home land and her traumatic journey first to Ireland, then to England, and her process of applying for asylum. Yet Salma's experience illustrates that personal feelings cannot be divorced from the gendered, racialized and classed affective capacities of the body. The narrative allows this exploration to be distinctly literary vis-à-vis the formal qualities of the disjunctive narrative, where memories of home and traumatic motifs, such as the figure of her brother with a gun, intersperse with her day-to-day attempts to integrate into life in Exeter. Non-linearity is characteristic of narratives of migration, yet this novel innovatively explores the convergence of emotion – specifically melancholia – with this distinct genre.

Mourning is generally seen as a healthy reaction to loss, commonly the death of a family member or friend. In the most famous theorisation of mourning, Freud

describes it as 'the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal' (Freud, Strachey & Freud 1957, 243). This is consistent with the established societal mourning rituals of Muslim communities. For instance, Salma recalls the ritual of women's wailing and swaying before her aunt's funeral in her Bedouin homeland (Faqir 2007, 292). Mourning can be easily explained when we consider it to be a natural reaction to loss or death. In mourning, 'the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object' (Freud, Strachey & Freud 1957, 244). The ego may cling to the lost object through the medium of 'hallucinatory wishful psychosis' (244) but 'bit by bit' and with 'great expense of time and cachectic energy' (245), the ego will become free again to invest in new objects. For Freud, pathological melancholia is the outcome of a failure to invest in these new objects.

Whereas mourning is generally seen as a healthy cycle of grief that will be overcome after a period of time, Freud sees melancholia as a compulsion that needs to be corrected. This feeling is distinguished by 'profoundly painful dejection [. . .] loss of the capacity to love [. . .] and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings' (244). Salma's melancholia as felt on a day-to-day basis is caused by her continual failed investment in new objects via consumerist culture, including clothing and beauty products. Angela McRobbie has discussed the post-feminist phenomenon whereby consumer culture appears to support 'female empowerment' whilst at the same time tying women to patterns of neurosis as part of sexist culture. A process of displacement and substitution happens where '[t]he young woman is offered a notional form of equality [. . .] through participation in consumer culture [. . .] in place of what a reinvented feminist politics might have to offer' (McRobbie 2008, 2). Following this, I contend that melancholia as felt by migrants is evidently gendered because women cannot divorce their lives from the capitalist system that seeks to manipulate their self-worth for capital gain. Indeed, this understanding of melancholia cannot be reconciled with Freud's wider writing on femininity or the underlying assumption of a male subject in his work on melancholia.

For instance, Luce Irigaray reads Freud's melancholia through his assumption of the female subject as perpetually mourning a lost masculinity. She argues that Freud imagines that all women share the 'misfortune' of their supposed 'castration', the unconscious awareness that they are not anatomically men, which leads to a symptomatic melancholia as distinct from mourning because of his disavowal of female relationships outside of men, particularly that of the mother-daughter (Irigaray 1985, 67). This would suggest that Salma's gendered melancholia is not best read using a Freudian approach, since she is not mourning her femininity; instead the source of her melancholia relates to both individual trauma and how she is treated as a migrant of colour in a sexist society. As she laments, 'here in this new country, only men spoke to me' (Faqir 2007, 29). While I am aware of the problematic nature of Freud's work in terms of gender, his notional articulation of melancholia as stunted mourning caused by object loss is still useful for reading the novel.

As well as being analysed via gender, melancholia needs to be understood as a consequence of marginalisation. David L. Eng and Shinhee Han have theorised 'racial melancholia' as the psychological condition experienced by minority groups, in their example Asian-Americans, who come up against structural discrimination and pressures to adopt normative models, like heterosexuality and middle-class values, that reiterate whiteness as an ideal (Eng and Han 2000, 670). Drawing upon both Freud and Homi Bhabha's notions of mimicry and ambivalence, Eng and Han highlight the psychological processes that contribute to feelings of loss and depression in individuals who are racially othered in predominantly white societies. They argue that immigration follows the pattern of mourning because '[w]hen one leaves one's country of origin—voluntarily or involuntarily—one must mourn a host of losses both concrete and abstract. These include homeland, family, language, identity, property, status in community' (680). In these terms, although privilege may determine the extent of loss, what all immigrants have in common is a process of mourning. Eng and Han use Freud's structuring of mourning to suggest how immigrants may invest in new objects, for example 'the American dream', in order to find closure. However, social structures that prevent individuals from assimilating,

because the necessary performances of whiteness cause such unease, can lead to immigrants being 'perpetually consigned to a melancholic status' (680). To this end, melancholia becomes depathologised because it is articulated as the 'inherent unfolding and outcome of the mourning process that underwrites the losses of the immigration experience' (680). Melancholia becomes an everyday experience rather than a pathological state to be overcome.

Objects as the Promise of Happiness

Salma's life in Britain is marked by an imperative to assimilate into society through performing aspects of culture in order to 'fit in'. Scholars have problematized assimilation as a concept, questioning its ethnocentric tendencies and the implications of 'fateful passivity and one-wayness' (Rumbaut 1997, 923). Nonetheless, Salma's experience still evidences the way migrant subjectivity is imbued with the pressure to assimilate. Coming from a rural lifestyle as a member of a Bedouin community, Salma's performance of British culture is predominantly centred upon aspects of capitalist society. Specifically, she learns how she is supposed to behave as a woman, and how much this points to the complementary relationship between sexism and capitalism within Western societies, through her interaction with objects and by engaging in social behaviours. Indeed, Esra Santesso has argued that the novel is an 'extended meditation on the possibility of assimilation via superficial change' where Salma's project is essentially 'a performance-experiment based on mimicry' (Santesso 2013, 107).

Objects are not neutral and neither is their role in performances of culture. In her discussion of 'happy objects', Sara Ahmed asks how objects become happiness 'as if happiness is what follows proximity to an object' (Ahmed 2010, 21). The idea that happiness involves a particular kind of intentionality that is 'end oriented' is especially relevant for Salma's obsession with objects as a means to assimilation into British culture. As Ahmed argues,

it is not just that we can be happy *about* something, as a feeling in the present, but some things become happy *for us*, if we imagine they will bring

happiness *to us*. Happiness is often described as “what” we aim for, as an endpoint, or even an end-in-itself [. . .] things become good, or acquire their values as goods, insofar as they point toward happiness. Objects become “happiness means.” (26)

Objects hold emotions and promises due to the processes of capitalist commodification that manipulates individuals' desires. Faced with a xenophobic society, Salma uses objects in order to obtain whiteness because objects are seen as a route to becoming assimilated. As detailed by Eng and Han, the requirement for assimilation by migrants or minorities is often synonymous with adopting whiteness. But the ideals of whiteness remain unattainable for minority groups and thus ‘processes of assimilation are suspended, conflicted, and unresolved [. . .] the irresolution of this process plac[ing] the concept of assimilation within a melancholic framework’ (Eng and Han 2000, 671). This is seen in Salma's relationship with her body as an object. She describes the process of assimilating in these terms: ‘Salma the dark black iris of Hima must try to turn into a Sally, an English rose, white, confident, with an elegant English accent, and a pony’ (Faqir 2007, 10). The imagery of flowers and the comic phrase ‘and a pony’ reveal the incongruity of assimilation, in which there is an assumption that outsiders must adapt to what are perceived as normative characteristics, in particular being middle-class, white and heterosexual.

For Salma, the differences between her relationship to her body in the Levant and in the UK are striking for their rural/city, nomadic/capitalist distinctions. There is less emphasis on her gendered embodied self in her nomadic society and she values herself less in terms of her body there than she does in the UK. Once in England, Salma learns that her body is an object of social capital that can be used to increase her position in society. In the hostel, deciding they must try to find employment, her friend Parvin shouts at Salma, ‘Lighten up! Groom yourself! Sell yourself! [. . .] You are now in a capitalist society that is not your own’ (51). The double meaning of ‘lighten up’ to mean both being happier and being racially lighter in order to succeed is particularly pertinent in relation to Eng and Han's assertion that assimilation is synonymous with adopting whiteness. Through the narrative's temporal

movements, we can see the changes from one society to another. For example, Salma sees her reflection in a mirror for the first time whilst in a convent in Lebanon after fleeing the prison. Looking at her body in the mirror to assess her progress then becomes a repeated image in the hostel (129) and then living in Liz's house, where she looks in the mirror and says to herself 'you have improved recently' (57). Her body becomes something she 'works on', and in light of Ahmed's affective happy objects, the assumption is that the goal of this progress will be happiness.

If Salma is entrenched in the compulsion to perform whiteness in order to invest in the new culture, then it is through commodities that promise happiness that this investment takes place. As Bill Brown explains, 'we use objects to make meaning, to make or re-make ourselves, to organize our anxieties and affections, to sublimate our fears and shape our fantasies' (Brown 2003, 4). Walking around a pharmacy, Salma describes the promises inherent in beauty products: 'the chemists promised that their dye would permanently cover grey hair, their body lotions would turn skin to smooth silk and their facial creams would iron out any wrinkles' (Faqir 2007, 19–20). These products as 'happy objects' are interwoven with her sense of belonging because they are denied to her through her foreignness. The sales assistant will not give her a free sample. This leads Salma to reproach herself: 'if I were her I would have thrown me out of the shop, a woman like me, trash' (20). The traits that characterise melancholia, including self-reproach, are wrapped up with purchasing products as an investment in her new life as a way out of her depression. Later on, she describes buying 'hair colour, facial scrub, breath freshener, shampoo, E45 cream, Big Drum toilet cleaner' as having 'got carried away this time' (50). This resonates with Brown's understanding of how we designate ideas to objects, which give them an interiority and even a subjectivity (Brown 2003, 7–8). Yet the idea that an object can hold promises, and thus happiness, is deeply problematic because, as Brown notes, objects are brought into being through human power and social interaction (8).

The way Salma interacts with objects also illuminates how everyday consumerist space and items are structured to privilege white bodies. In this case, to have a different body is to be already barred from these types of capitalist interactions and thus results in a perpetuation of consumerist actions in a bid to obtain whiteness.

Gillian Rose argues against masculinist, racist theorising which envisions the body as neutral, because bodies are, in fact, 'maps of the relation between power and identity' (Rose 1999, 361). She details how the assumption of corporeal boundaries in social relations means bodies cannot be seen as 'colourless': '[w]hiteness retains its hegemonic position by denying its own colour and so becoming transparent to the critical gaze' (362). Salma's experience of culture through objects attests to this ongoing idealisation of whiteness as normative yet transparent. For instance, she talks about magazines and her spending habits,

In *Cosmopolitan* there was an article about women addicted to chocolate, which had chemicals similar to those produced when falling in love, but there wasn't a single word about women like me addicted to glossy magazines. Whenever my morale dropped a notch or two I would go to the newsagent and buy some chewing gum, a bar of chocolate and a glossy magazine. (Faqir 2007, 206)

That her happiness is so dependent on behaving like a consumer, even though the promise of happiness inherent in this process is denied to her, shows the way the system is set up to fail her. Salma's consideration of *Cosmopolitan* shows it to function in the wider schema of women's empowerment as a substitution for more explicitly political strategies whose purpose is to further the interests of women as a socioeconomic group, in line with Angela McRobbie's argument that elements of contemporary popular culture are effective at 'undoing' feminism at the same time as appearing to establish themselves as an effective response to feminism (2008, 11). The magazine promises to help women understand their problems with consumerism by, ironically, forcing them to act like consumers. The phrase 'women like me' has a double meaning, showing Salma's self-awareness as both an 'addicted' consumer of magazines and as an outsider to the magazine's normative whiteness. This process echoes Ahmed's argument about the way objects become subsumed into one's identity: '[o]bjects that give us pleasure take up residence within our bodily horizon. We come to have our likes, which might even establish *what we are like*' (Ahmed

2010, 24). Indeed, Salma's understanding of 'what she is like' is caught up with her position as a consumer in a sexist culture.

Muslim Melancholia

Homi Bhabha has discussed how the 'melancholic revolt' of colonial subjects must not be taken 'at face value for its apparent victimage and passivity' but instead as a 'mental constellation of revolt' in the deconstructionist vein of 'narrative metonymy... outside the sentence, bit by bit [through] its insistent self-exposure' (Bhabha 1992, 65). There is an inversion of meaning in this melancholic discourse: 'it "incorporates" the loss or lack in its own body, displaying its own weeping wounds is also an act of "disincorporating" the authority of the Master' (65). What appears to be inverted melancholia can, in fact, evidence a source of insurgent commentary on particular socio-political conditions. In the contemporary context of Asian-Americans, Eng and Han argue that perpetual foreignness, designated by bodies rather than citizenship, exemplifies the way society is constructed to normalise whiteness. Thus, 'mainstream refusal to see Asian Americans as part and parcel of the American "melting pot" is less an individual failure to blend in with the whole than a socially determined interdiction' (Eng and Han 2000, 671).

Eng and Han detail the stereotypical dichotomy for Asian-Americans as that of the eccentric individual vs. the 'model minority' who is 'inhumanely productive' (Eng and Han 2000, 671). Stereotypical dichotomies also exist for British Muslims. Mahmood Mamdani has theorised the post-9/11 good Muslim/bad Muslim dichotomy as the way in which religious experience is turned into a political category by differentiating Muslims as good or bad rather than as terrorists or civilians (Mamdani 2002). In the same way Eng and Han theorise a melancholia experienced by a particular socio-ethnic group based on specific stereotypes, we can conceive of a melancholia as specific to Muslims in contemporary Britain. In particular, Muslims in the UK are systematically conceptualised as the 'outsider within', where multifarious religious and social cultural behaviours are continually viewed with suspicion and as incompatible with Britishness by a non-Muslim majority (Ansari 2004, 14). Characterisations of Muslims in Britain are distinct from Eng and Han's example of Asian-Americans

because this group is determined by religious affiliation rather than solely geographical or racial grouping. Despite this distinction, what makes this comparison applicable is precisely the processes of stereotyping, static characterisation and assignment of dichotomies.

These stereotyping processes place Muslims in Britain into a position of perpetual foreignness. Salma's experience operates within a particular context of contemporary racism that depicts people of colour as illegal. Conceptualising the anti-Muslim 'new racism' post-7/7, Ambalavaner Sivanandan argues that the simultaneous 'war on terror' and 'war on asylum' have converged 'to produce a racism which cannot tell a settler from an immigrant, an immigrant from an asylum seeker, and asylum seeker from a Muslim, a Muslim from a terrorist' where 'all of us Blacks and Asians, [are] at first sight terrorists or illegals' (Sivanandan 2006, 2). In this way, Muslims live in a society where difference itself is stigmatised to connote illegality, which in turn has an effect on feelings of belonging. Salma's approach towards alcohol as an affective, performative object evidences a melancholia specific to Muslims in Britain. She does not drink alcohol because of her religious cultural beliefs as a Muslim. Yet whilst in the UK, she understands that she has to appear comfortable being near alcohol and must appear to drink it. Salma regularly orders apple juice, under the guise of drinking beer, when alone in pubs. This is part of a performance in which she invests in her life in the UK by mimicking certain social codes. She frequents nightclubs where she speaks to men who make her feel uncomfortable, lying about where she is from because she feels like a criminal. In her words, like 'a key witness in a Mafia crime case I changed my name, address, past and even changed countries to erase my footsteps' (Faqir 2007, 249). In fact, her first taste of champagne at her friend Parvin's wedding leads her to feel a distinct feeling of unhomeliness:

'Damned is the carrier, buyer and drinker of alcohol,' I heard my father's voice. My hand trembled carrying the forbidden drink to my lips. It had been almost sixteen years since I last saw them. It was only me, the dark haunting trees, the vast moonless sky and the pipe [. . .] the made-up woman with the meek voice dressed in satin and georgette was not me. I had nothing to do

with that nineteenth-century mansion, the thick even lawns, the wide stone stairs, the naked statues, the old trees. I was a shepherdess. (265–6)

Due to the normative, social aspect of alcohol consumption in Britain, not to partake of such a culture represents a barrier to assimilation. In Salma's journey of mourning, it is then a barrier to overcoming her loss, thus contributing to her melancholia. Taking part in normative, social behaviours through drinking alcohol does not simply solve Salma's melancholia, instead it causes her to have distinct feelings of dissociation and nostalgia. According to Ahmed, objects have an affective life due to the power of the human imagination to pre-empt our feelings that result from an encounter with an object (Ahmed 2010, 27). Through the same structure that enables objects to be seen as the source of happiness, we can see objects as causing melancholia because of their resonance in a particular culture's imagination, in this case a Muslim's relationship to alcohol. Objects are seen to be the route of feeling; an affect is caused by the proximity to an object. But as Ahmed suggests, '[t]he very tendency to attribute an affect to an object depends upon "closeness of association" where such forms of closeness are already given' (27). Therefore, what survives encounters is the element of proximity: 'the proximity between an affect and object is preserved through habit' (28). Salma's relationship to alcohol evidences the notion of an affective afterlife of objects as learnt through habit. From the culture in which she has grown up, she has prior negative associative feelings with this entity, as echoed in her memory of her father's voice. Ultimately, melancholia as distinct to Muslims in Britain is shown through Salma's inability to reconcile the need to behave comfortably with these objects in order to mimic normalised British social codes and the prior affective power these objects have over her.

Melancholic Migrants

Much of Salma's interaction with other migrants is based on a shared sadness or disillusionment which overall evidences a symbolism resonant with Ahmed's figuration of 'melancholic migrants'. Discussing the novel, Fadia Faqir has suggested that 'all of the characters are tragic figures' (Bower 2012, 7). Salma is connected

with many individuals of migrant or minority background, including British born friend of Pakistani descent Parvin, Pakistani corner shop owner Sadiq, and the Arab father and his British born son who run a falafel van near Exeter Cathedral. She even describes her university tutor and later husband, John, as a foreigner for being a northerner in Exeter. Furthermore, Liz, the alcoholic landlord with whom Salma lives, grew up in colonial India and as a result has alcohol-induced hallucinations about being back amongst her Indian servants. Through this communal melancholia, the novel strives to go beyond the nationalistic by relegating emotion outside of clear insider/outsider demarcations.

Melancholia as a way of negotiating historical events in the present day permeates the migrant characters' experiences as described through Salma's first-person narrative. The character of Liz and her relationship to Salma as an immigrant is significant for how it reminds the reader of the connections between British colonial history and present day xenophobic attitudes. Liz frequently recalls her life growing up in colonial India at the same time as verbally abusing Salma based on her refugee status. As Salma narrates, '[Liz] would speak to me as if I were her servant in India, where she used to live, not her tenant who pays her forty pounds a week plus bills' (Faqir 2007, 48). The figure of Liz illustrates Gilroy's notion of 'postcolonial melancholia', and suggests that Britain's disillusionment with multiculturalism and anxiety over immigration is part of a national amnesia about colonial history and the unmentioned loss of power. Whilst Gilroy moves beyond Freud, he does draw on his sense of pathological neurotic states to identify 'the melancholic pattern [as] the mechanism that sustains the unstable edifice of increasingly brittle and empty national identity' (Gilroy 2004, 116). Liz encapsulates this especially neurotic national pathology whilst, ironically, holding a type of migrant status herself. Having grown up in India during British rule and subsequently having to leave, Liz has also gone through the process of migration, albeit encompassing a privileged position. However, this is not a source of shared experience over which Liz can identify with Salma. Instead, Liz continually attempts to reinforce the hierarchy of her colonial upbringing by racially abusing and bullying Salma.

This connection between mourning for empire and xenophobic attitudes is negotiated through the use of affective objects. Bill Brown's articulation of 'things' as distinct from objects through their subjective relationship to people is helpful here. Objects have codes 'by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts' (Brown 2001, 4). This includes what they tell us about society, culture or indeed ourselves as individuals. Yet once an object stops working within its function in 'circuits of production and distribution', we are confronted by its thingness, showing the 'changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation' (4).

This 'subject-object relation' is brought to the fore through the symbolic fragments of empire that litter Liz's untidy bedroom. These include old letters from her Indian lover, a horse whip, and a Victorian bed with medallions 'cast in the shape of the letters V, R and I, "Viceroy to India"' (Faqir 2007, 133). These objects serve as symbols for her family's fall in status after decolonization as they physically and psychologically surround Liz as a figure who also abuses Salma. This relation is physically manifest in one particular instance. Whilst hallucinating that she is back in India, Liz whips Salma, causing her to go to the hospital, where they assume that her injury is self-harm because of her asylum-seeking background. Thus, Salma is physically harmed, if indirectly, as a result of postcolonial melancholia.

Imperial objects languishing in Liz's bedroom function within the melancholic framework because they are out-of-place in this suburban English house. They hold a power onto themselves through their languishing. In the manner of Brown, they stress their 'thingness' through their contrasting location in the emotional surroundings: letters that circulated within master/servant colonial relationships and a bed that conveys the power of the owner. When taken out of the context of imperial India, they become symbols of postcolonial melancholia. The way this transitions to Liz's ongoing xenophobic attitude to Salma must be understood through these things as affective. They make up the domestic environment of postcolonial melancholia wherein Liz becomes a symbol for this once-powerful nation, confused about its

place in the world and suspicious of foreignness. Whilst drunk one day, Liz envisions Salma as her servant, reminiscing, 'ayah, I wish I had never set foot in India. Everyone looked up to me and served me. Servants carried me to school, you dressed me. . .' (201) This last sentence transitions from third person to second person, where the colonial servant becomes substituted by Salma. Liz transposes a historical colonial relationship, that of master and servant, onto this contemporary exchange between white British-born and asylum seeker. The sense of this relationship as melancholic is reverberated by Liz's admission that she wishes she had never lived in India, suggesting in a wider sense that the loss of empire was so great it outweighed any benefits. With her feigned sense of superiority, Liz mocks Salma's English and is disgusted by her long, dark hair as an emblem for foreignness. For instance, when the two of them watch the satirical puppet TV show *Spitting Image*, Salma asks who the puppets are. In response, Liz says 'Foreigners! Aliens like you [. . .] illegal immigrants' to which Salma, suddenly losing her linguistic fluency, replies 'I no illegal' (26). Liz's anxiety about Salma's long hair falling out and infiltrating her domestic space echoes historical colonial tensions about upholding the inferiority of 'natives'. Indeed, continuing the flow of affect from the colonial bedroom items to Liz's xenophobia and thence to Salma's self-conception, Salma links her hair to her feeling of non-belonging: 'no more unwanted black hair; no more 'What did you say your name is?'' (108).

Salma's positioning as an asylum seeker helps exceed Gilroy's melancholia as nationalistic because it is a subjectivity that exists outside of national distinctions. For example, Salma eavesdrops on conversations between the Arab father and his friend who work in a takeaway van. In one instance, the father laments that his son is too British. Blaming his English wife, he says '[i]n the war of liberation in Algeria I joined the resistance. We kicked the French out of our country. We lose millions and now the European bastards claimed my son. He is no longer Arab, no longer a man' (252). The man's melancholy as a result of disillusionment about the effects of decolonisation and of his son growing up mixed race in Europe shows how colonial histories permeate migrant life. Indeed, after talking to his friend, his moustache is insulted by a racist passer-by, 'Nice handlebar moustache, Mokhammad! [sic]' (252).

Whilst Salma and the man may be tarnished by the homogeneous brush of racism, they do not come from the same country nor share the same history. Yet her voyeuristic affiliation with them points to collective emotion that goes beyond the national. Salma's perspective as an asylum seeker who has won British citizenship helps transcend melancholia as contained by national commonalities.

Communal Melancholia

Transformative communal emotion is also a route to overcoming the compulsion of happiness as a form of nation building. Through her figuration of 'melancholic migrants', Ahmed describes how contemporary racial politics is not only a 'direct inheritance' of colonial history but also 'a social obligation to remember the history of empire *as a history of happiness*' (Ahmed 2010, 130). This is contained within popular negative attitudes about immigration, as Ahmed writes that '[t]his memory of happiness has even become a form of nation building. To be a national subject might involve expressing happiness *about imperial history*' (130). In light of this national obligation of happiness, she discusses how the figure of the 'melancholic migrant' has become a sore point within the nation because this figure refuses to 'participate in the national game' (142) of particularly neo-imperial brands of happiness. Migrants must express more happiness because of the implications of their foreignness. Yet Salma's rejection of the compulsion of happiness, and her narration of other migrants doing the same, enables her to go beyond the particularly national trait of melancholia as perceived by Gilroy. Gilroy understands the nation as melancholic which is then manifested through both individual and collective responses to foreignness and multiculturalism. But Salma's subject positioning as an asylum seeker who has been granted British nationality complicates this because she rejects both 'the national game' of happiness as a migrant and the mourning of empire inherent in Britishness and instead presents a new form of collective, or communal, melancholia. Ahmed's understanding of symbolic melancholia as the collective sum of individual migrants is more resonant with the novel's narration of Salma's relationship to others. But the novel also pushes at the seams of this idea by suggesting there are ways for migrants to take ownership of the nation

space without having to hide their melancholia. The novel, therefore, resonates with elements of both understandings of melancholia while also challenging them.

Ahmed argues that the existence of unhappy migrants reminds us of parts of the nation's colonial history that we would rather forget, since their symbolic existence is a 'sore point' (141). This allows us to envision a political power in melancholia as an everyday lived reality for many individuals, particularly those who are socially disenfranchised. In contrast to Freud's understanding of pathology as negative, communal emotion thus has the potential to bring to the fore the everyday reality of structural inequality and xenophobia. Despite becoming a British citizen after winning asylum, Salma is still relegated to the status of outsider; as she recounts in her experience of being held in a detention centre as being her founding experience of Britain: 'to be introduced first to four walls covered with metal sheets did not help' (170). The communal feeling of melancholia, mediated through her first-person narrative, disrupts the assumption that this emotion can be regulated simply along the lines of national distinctions, of local citizens and immigrants.

An example of collective affiliation can be seen with Salma's eavesdropping of the Arab men at the kebab van. The shared feeling of instability demonstrates how public space privileges white bodies as local over othered bodies. The Arab men experience a continual paranoia that they are being spied upon. Salma spends time with them due to her feelings of affiliation, which lead them to ponder whether she is a spy. In one instance, Salma is drawn to the falafel van because of 'the smell of familiarity, freedom and home' (Faqir 2007, 34) and overhears them talking about her:

'Balak: is that girl MI5?' the old man said.

'What's wrong with you? Agents don't go around dressed like Arab tramps. They wear big hats like Philsy, innit? White, blond, with a cigar in their mouth,' said the young man.

'You mean Philby, you idiot. And these days agents look like anything, look like Jesus Christ himself. How do I know?' said the old man in a North African accent.

'You are paranoid and all. At night when the leaves sway you think an American satellite is taking shots of you,' said the young man. (34)

This comic exchange highlights the paranoia of individuals who are culturally othered due to the pervasive characterisation of Arabs or Muslims as criminal. This migrant anxiety is related to political climates that encourage people to spy on others who may appear to be Muslim. It is through the particular structure of Salma eavesdropping on them that we get a sense of collective melancholia. Salma has just come from a date with a British man which she wanted to leave sooner but felt she could not because her 'immigrant A-Z' had always warned her against such behaviour (33). Just as the old Arab man is paranoid that things are not the way they seem, Salma is aware of breaking social rules as an immigrant even though she is now a British citizen. After overhearing the man's paranoia, Salma feels great affection for him, declaring that she wished she could kiss 'the green protruding veins on the back of his ageing flaky hand' (35). To perform this intimate act would be to conform to the codes of her home in the Levant, exhibiting a solidarity with this man through the particularly affective element of this act. Such encounters reconfigure the political as intimate, everyday and emotional. Solidarity is not shown through, say, public protests, but through communal melancholia.

In contrast to the Arab men's paranoid conception of space, Salma's narration of public space can be viewed through Gilroy's sense of convivial culture, where a mature response to diversity can be 'oriented by routine, everyday exposure to difference' (Gilroy 2004, 109). Gilroy's assertion of conviviality not as a utopian future but as evident in the 'underworld' where there is 'spontaneous tolerance and openness' (144) can be seen in the following extract,

At five o'clock the English normally rush back home to their cats and dogs and empty castle. I could see them in their small kitchens sticking the frozen chicken nuggets in the oven and frying frozen potato chips. In the early evening the city belonged to us, the homeless, drug addicts, alcoholics and

immigrants, to those who were either without a family or were trying to blot out their history. In this space between five and seven we would spread and conquer like moss that grows between the cracks in the pavement.
(Faqir 2007, 28–9)

This marginalised space and time as granting agency is hardly resonant of a fully tolerant society where difference no longer matters, rather it evokes Gilroy's emphasis on conviviality as quotidian, as holding 'emancipatory possibilities' that 'align with the ordinary, spontaneous antiracism' in society (161). Whilst this potential is usually overshadowed by the weight of xenophobia and racism, Gilroy believes it is from these moments that Britain can begin to build a more convivial future. The potential of emotive space to grant agency to migrant experience can be seen in the above quote in terms of collective experience. These experiences come not from migrants alone but more general marginalised persons as forming the daily life of the city. Indeed, the metaphor of moss growing in the cracks of the pavement envisions a stubborn claim to the city and on a larger scale, national space.

My Name is Salma illustrates how processes of migrant melancholia are caught up with the gendered, religious and racial relationship of bodies, space and objects. Attempts to alleviate melancholia through investing in objects in line with normal cycles of mourning remain inconclusive due to the way consumerist spaces are structured to normalise whiteness. The novel captures the affective power of gendered consumerist products to promise happiness, and in particular how this is caught up with migration as a process of loss. Yet collective melancholia transcends the characterising of such a feeling as negatively pathological, and the way in which the novel depicts melancholia can be seen to serve a didactic function by reminding the reader of structural inequalities and how the history of European imperialism informs present-day xenophobia. The use of affect in the novel is particularly significant because it helps to account for the way these issues are negotiated in day-to-day life. The novel presents a political melancholia that goes beyond collective emotion as nationalistic as argued by Gilroy, through Salma's perspective as a former asylum seeker, a positioning that informs her view of national identity as

performative. The novel also asks us to consider collective marginal experience outside of national frameworks by positioning communal emotion not in terms of citizen/immigrant but as shared suffering and, consequently, a shared potential in a convivial future.

The use of emotion throughout the novel also signals the wider contribution affect theory can make to on-going discussions about cultural constructions of Muslim identity in Britain. A critical outlook focused on emotions and affect complements established literary criticism in the field of postcolonialism and contemporary literature which seeks to analyse how literature responds to the increased politicisation of Muslim and migrant identity as well as the reality of Islamophobia and xenophobia. By arguing that a key concern of *My Name is Salma* involves the place of affective objects in processes of melancholia, this article builds on this area of criticism to encourage considerations of emotion and affect in debates about migrant and Muslim identity.

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Competing Interests

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