DISLOCATED TEMPORALITIES: IMMIGRATION, IDENTITY, AND SEXUALITY IN NAJAT EL HACHMI'S *L'ÚLTIM PATRIARCA*

TEMPORALITATS DISLOCADES: IMMIGRACIÓ, IDENTITAT I SEXUALITAT EN *L'ÚLTIM PATRIARCA*, DE NAJAT EL HACHMI

Josep-Anton Fernàndez
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
jfernandezmont@uoc.edu

Abstract: Recent Catalan criticism has focused on place and space, as well as immigration, but has overlooked temporality. Yet migrations are not only a matter of space (of demographic movements and geographical relocations), but also of time: immigration questions the idea of origins and the possibility of a shared future, and problematizes the rhythms of everyday life. Temporality, in fact, is a key axis in the formation of identities and in cultural conflicts, not just regarding the uses of the past and the projection of societies towards the future, but also in relation to the normative uses of the body. The coexistence of asynchronous temporalities provoked by immigration is a factor in both cultural and psychic conflict. Najat El Hachmi's novel *L'últim patriarca* (2008) is an excellent example of these phenomena. Here the circular temporality, based on the repetition of cycles, of Morocco's traditional society comes to a halt in the failure of the narrator's father to reproduce patriarchal domination in Catalonia. The novel roots this experience in modern referents through a dialogue with the Catalan literary tradition, and questions the idea of temporality understood as succession of generations by problematizing biological reproduction and gender subordination and through the shattering effects of anal sexuality. This article offers an integrated analysis of these issues by reference to psychoanalysis.

Key words: Najat El Hachmi, Catalan literature, immigration, temporality, anal sex, psychoanalysis, Jean Laplanche.

Resum: La crítica catalana recent ha analitzat l'espai, el lloc i la immigració, però ha ignorat la temporalitat. Tanmateix, les migracions no només tenen a veure amb l'espai (amb moviments demogràfics i reubicacions geogràfiques), sinó amb el temps: la immigració qüestiona la idea dels orígens i la possibilitat d'un futur compartit, i problematitza els ritmes de la vida quotidiana. La

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temporalitat és crucial en la formació de les identitats i en els conflictes culturals, no només quant als usos del passat i la projecció de les societats cap al futur, sinó també quant als usos normatius del cos. La coexistència de temporalitats asíncrones causada per la immigració és un factor en els conflictes culturals i psíquics. La novel·la de Najat El Hachmi *L'últim patriarca* (2008) n'és un bon exemple. En aquest text la temporalitat circular, basada en la repetició de cicles, de la societat tradicional del Marroc s'atura de cop a causa de la incapacitat del pare de la narradora de reproduir la dominació patriarcal a Catalunya. Al mateix temps, la novel·la ancora aquesta experiència en referents literaris moderns mitjançant un diàleg amb la tradició literària catalana, i qüestiona la temporalitat entesa com a successió de generacions, tot problematitzant la reproducció biològica i la subordinació de gènere i mitjançant els efectes devastadors de la sexualitat anal. L'article ofereix una anàlisi integrada d'aquestes qüestions des de la psicoanàlisi.

Paraules clau: Najat El Hachmi, literatura catalana, temporalitat, sexe anal, psicoanàlisi, Jean Laplanche.

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Recent Catalan scholarship has tended to focus on issues of place and space (particularly the city), and has paid a great deal of attention to immigration. In both cases the vector of temporality seems to have been largely overlooked. Yet migratory processes are not only a matter of space (of demographic movements and geographical relocations), but also of time: immigration engages and questions the idea of origins and the possibility of a shared future, and renders the rhythms of everyday life visible and therefore problematic. Temporality, in fact, is a key axis in the formation of identities and a site of struggles in cultural conflicts, not just regarding the uses of the past and the projection of societies towards the future, but also in relation to the definition of normative uses of the body. The coexistence of asynchronous temporalities given rise to by immigration has a double effect, as a factor in social and cultural conflicts and as a source of psychic conflict.

Najat El Hachmi's first novel, *L'últim patriarca* (2008), is an excellent example of these phenomena. In this novel, the circular temporality, based on the repetition of cycles, of a traditional society (that of rural Morocco) comes to an abrupt halt in the failure of the protagonist's father to reproduce patriarchal domination in the family's new context of Catalonia. At the same time, the novel roots this experience in modern referents through an intertextual dialogue with the Catalan literary tradition, most notably Víctor Català's *Solitud* and Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*. On the other hand, the novel questions the idea of temporality understood as succession of generations, by means of its critique of gender subordination, and most particularly

through the shattering effects of anal sexuality, which is seen here as both the cause and the strategic means of a radical break with the past.

El Hachmi's entrance into the Catalan literary field with her autobiographical essay *Jo també sóc catalana* (2004) was a remarkable event: it was saluted by the critics as the emergence of a new literary voice of recent migrants from Northern Africa who, like El Hachmi herself or Laila Karrouch, represented the experience of immigration in Catalonia; the success among the readers of this book contributed to give this experience a great deal of visibility. In 2008 El Hachmi won the Premi Ramon Llull (one of the best endowed Catalan literary awards for non-published works) with her novel *L'últim patriarca*, which was published by Planeta and later translated into several languages, including French and English. Later on, in an attempt to distance herself from the «immigrant writer» persona into which critics and audicences had typecast her, El Hachmi published *La caçadora de cossos* (2011), a harrowing exploration of the limits of female sexuality. In 2015, she returned to the depiction of Northern African immigration in *La filla estrangera*, with which she won another major literary award, the Premi BBVA Sant Joan.

El Hachmi's work has received considerable critical attention outside Catalonia, particularly in English-speaking academia. Many of the readings produced by North-American critics tend to focus on the «multicultural» dimension of the author and her work, against the background of an analysis of the responses to contemporary Moroccan immigration in Spain that authors such as Daniela Flesler (2008) have carried out. Thus critics like Martín-Márquez (2008) and Sanjuán-Pastor (2015) engage with the «border identity» that El Hachmi constructs in *Jo també sóc catalana* and the inner, subjective tensions that this identity brings about; others, such as Celaya-Carrillo (2011), relate this essay with the controversies over language and Spanish nationalism in Catalonia, while Ricci (2007, 2010, 2011) takes El Hachmi's work as an example of the construction of a mixed Amazigh-Catalan identity. On the other hand, a significant group of critics perform feminist readings of *L'últim patriarca*, analysing several aspects related to gender and immigration (Climent Raga 2010, Everly 2011 and 2014), presenting the novel as a possible example of Islamic feminism (Elboubekri 2015) or engaging with the sexual politics of the novel (Folkart 2013).

The reading I present in this essay differs from the point of view of these other critics. Although I focus on the effects and the representation of immigration, I treat this novel as an integral part of the Catalan literary series, and its author as fully incorporated into the Catalan literary and cultural fields, both symbolically and in terms of position. This is not to say that the symbolic value of both author and novel is straightforward, or that their position in the cultural field is free from conflict:

quite the opposite, and in consistence with my own line of thinking that immigration is the crucial factor in the constitution of a differentiated Catalan national identity (Fernàndez 2008: 255-256), my reading assumes that *L'últim patriarca* manifests as a symptom, expresses, and brings into play the conditions of possibility of the construction of contemporary Catalan identity, as well as its risks and dangers.

Although my analysis will primarily draw on psychoanalytic theory, I would like to start by referring to Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, who in *Heritage of Our Times* proposes the concept of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* or non-contemporaneity in order to account for the disjointedness of time, its non-coincidence with itself, the persistence of an apparently superseded past which comes to disrupt the present: «Not all people exist in the same Now», wrote Bloch in 1932. «Older times than the modern ones continue to have an effect in older strata […]. Various years in general beat in the one which is just being counted and prevails. Nor do they flourish in obscurity as in the past, but contradict the Now; very strangely, crookedly, from behind» (Bloch 1991: 97). Historian Enzo Traverso has invoked Bloch's concept to explain the cultural conflicts experienced by second-generation immigrants in Europe (Traverso 2006: 59-60). Yet the effects of the dislocation of time, as Bloch suggests (1991: 108), are not just cultural or social, but also subjective or psychic, and manifest themselves in the form of anxiety, rage, and alienation. And as I will try to show, in *L'últim patriarca* these effects are related to the temporal organization of subjectivity, to complex cultural negotiations with tradition that the novel performs, and to language and sexuality.

The complexity of the temporal conflict depicted in the novel is already apparent in its first chapter, significantly entitled chapter 0, as though it were the beginning of a new epoch: «Aquesta és la història de Mimoun, fill de Driouch, fill d'Allal, fill de Mohamed, fill de Mohand, fill de Bouziane, i que nosaltres anomenarem, simplement, Mimoun. És la seva història i la història de l'últim dels grans patriarques que formen la llarga cadena dels avantpassats de Driouch» (El Hachmi 2008: 7). Thus the nameless narrator —later revealed as Mimoun's daughter, who will focalize the narrative in the entire second part of the book— both posits a view of history and time as a coherent chronological line, as the succession of generations, and anticipates its abrupt ending in a radical break with the past. Interestingly, however, this anticipation goes hand in hand with a disavowal of the very idea of origins: «De com es forma un gran patriarca o un patriarca mediocre en sabem ben poques coses, el seu origen es perd en els principis dels temps i aquí no ens interessen els orígens. […] El fet és que Mimoun marca la finalització abrupta d'aquesta línia successòria» (*ibid*.). The author had expressed a similar ambivalence regarding the notion of origins in *Jo també sóc catalana*, where she speaks of her desire to «neutralitzar l'origen» so that it no longer stigmatizes the

immigrant subject (El Hachmi 2004: 12). Yet in fact the nameless narrator of *L'últim patriarca* clearly is interested in origins, to the extent that she constructs a myth of her own origins and development as an autonomous subject, spanning from Mimoun's birth to his migration to Catalonia, his marriage, his abusive relationships with women, all the way to the narrator's birth, her education in Catalonia and adoption of the Catalan language, her trouble understanding her father's erratic behaviour and her mother's depression, her sexual awakening, and ultimately her emancipation from Mimoun's authoritarian grip by means of sexual transgression.

The impulse that mobilizes the construction of this myth, however, perhaps is not so much its neutralization but a desire to reinterpret it or, to use the term of French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche (1999: 265), to «retranslate» it. Yet there is a contradiction inherent in the narrator's statement and the teleology it both resists and reproduces: her break with the family line is an attempt to write her own destiny, but its anticipation here is itself a form of teleology. This contradiction, I would argue, is the sign of a conflict of temporalities manifested in a set of related tensions: a tension in the narrative between anticipation and uncertainty, and a tension between the oral tradition of amazigh culture and the Catalan literary tradition through which El Hachmi mediates the narration of certain events.

The first tension is clearly apparent in the constant movement backwards and forwards in the novel, not just back to the family origin and forward towards the dénouement, but also in the frequent appearance of prolepses and marks of narrative unreliability. I have already mentioned how we are told from the outset that Mimoun will fail to reproduce patriarchal domination in his family; but we are also given throughout the text signals of what is to come. For example, Mimoun's grandmother sees his painless birth as a bad omen (El Hachmi 2008: 14):

> Un mal auguri, filla, els nens que neixen sense dolor. Si no et fan mal en néixer, te n'han de fer la resta de la vida. I així va ser. Aquell dia va néixer Mimoun, l'afortunat, el que tindria l'honor de cloure les generacions i generacions de patriarques destinats a fer del món un lloc ordenat i decent. […] Però ell tot això encara no ho sabia.

Also, the loss of virginity of Mimoun's wife at her wedding night is the anticipation of great misfortune: «aquell dolor a dins de la vagina només era el començament del calvari que l'esperava» (El Hachmi 2008: 107). At the same time, the narration is peppered with marks of uncertainty and doubt: we are told, «Potser va anar així» (El Hachmi 2008: 16) or, «No sabem com va anar del cert» (El Hachmi 2008: 17), and on occasions we are given competing versions of crucial events (as is the case with the so-called «goat's incident», in which it is strongly suggested that an adolescent

Mimoun is anally penetrated by his uncle). Importantly, narrative uncertainty has a clear subjective dimension; early in the second part of the novel, when the family has reunited in Catalonia, the narrator says (El Hachmi 2008: 173):

> Passa, de vegades passa que no saps fins a quin punt el que va passar va passar o no. Si ho vas somiar o ho vas viure, si el record és teu o és de qui t'ho explica una vegada i una altra. Per això mai no he acabat de saber si realment vaig ser testimoni o no de l'estrany incident. Si en vaig ser, va anar així. Si no, els records de la mare ja deuen ser també els meus i no sabré mai on vaig intervenir-hi jo.

The above quotation refers to the uncertain status of traumatic events as they are reported. I will later show the relevance of this. For the moment, let me simply note that the narrator's observation denotes a certain degree of tension and anxiety regarding her own tale and her role in it.

The temporal oscillation in the novel is akin to the double movement of anticipation and retrospection that, according to psychoanalysis, organizes psychic time. Jacques Lacan accounts for this phenomenon in two different ways. In his early essay, «Le Temps logique et l'assertion de certitude anticipée», he argues that the subject's interaction with the other and the uncertainty regarding its own identifications results in a temporal tension that is resolved through an anticipation of certitude which also prompts a move to action (Lacan 1999a). On the other hand, in «Fonction and champ de la parole et du langage», Lacan posits the grammatical tense of the future anterior to describe the imaginary temporality of the ego: «Je m'identifie dans le langage, mais seulement à m'y perdre comme un objet. Ce qui se réalise dans mon histoire, n'est pas le passé défini de ce qui fut puisqu'il n'est plus, ni même le parfait de ce qui a été dans ce que je suis, mais le futur antérieur de ce qui j'aurai été pour ce que je suis en train de devenir» (1999b: 298). The future anterior, as Tim Dean puts it, «eclipses the uncertainties of the present by anticipating a future self with the capacity to retrospectively view its former state from a safe distance» (Dean 2011: 84).

Lacan's account of subjective time may help us make more sense of the quotation from the novel I gave a little earlier. For the tension expressed by the narrator isn't simply related to the epistemological status of the events she reports. Her anxiety has to do primarily with her origins, as the uncertainties in her own account question the coherence of the speaking subject who narrates her story from the vantage point of her future anterior. Yet this anxiety also affects her future: indeed, do the events narrated provide sufficient justification for her final decision, her act of betrayal that will finish the job of doing away with patriarchy in her family? Will her sacrifice at the end of the novel actually mean that she will be able to write her own destiny?

But let's not anticipate things. For now, I will deal with the second of the tensions I outlined earlier, related to orality. When the novel was published, Catalan critics

remarked the oral, conversational style of El Hachmi's novel (Cortadellas 2008; Pla i Arxé 2008), and stressed the importance of Amazigh oral tradition in this text (Isarch 2008: 131), a tradition mostly transmitted by women. But it has also been observed that El Hachmi establishes a dialogue with the Catalan literary tradition, in particular that of women authors (Víctor Català and Mercè Rodoreda) (Guillamon 2008; Julià 2012: 259). In her review of *L'últim patriarca*, Simona Škrabec (2008) stated that El Hachmi carries out «una lectura molt pobra» of *Solitud* and *La plaça del Diamant*, but I beg to disagree. It is not just that El Hachmi is anchoring the conflicts of immigration in the Catalan tradition, which is interesting in itself; the narrator is also retrospectively interpreting the events she reports through the lens of the Catalan texts, and operating an inversion of them. Thus for example, just as Natàlia is renamed Colometa, Mimoun is renamed Manel (El Hachmi 2008: 83); the episode in which Mimoun meets his future wife is highly reminiscent of the beginning of *La plaça*, but it is focalized from Mimoun's point of view (El Hachmi 2008: 152). References to *Solitud* are also significant: the narrator's mother —who is nameless too— cleans her husband's apartment upon her arrival in Catalonia, in a scene that evokes the famous chapter «Neteja». However, while the narrator speaks of the mother's «capacitat transformadora de la realitat», unlike Mila the narrator's mother simply cleans the flat, in the sense that, far from metaphorically representing the autonomous subject of the Modernist artist like Mila, she reconfirms and perpetuates the patriarchal laws that her daughter will set out to destroy. The main confrontation between the mother and Mimoun is also presented by reference to the heroines of the two Catalan classics, but here the wife fights to keep an abusive and unfaithful husband.

El Hachmi's use of the Catalan written tradition, however, does not delineate a narrative of progress, nor a straight chronological line, but rather a movement of retrospection and inversion which, as we will see below, links language, culture, and sexuality. At this point I would like to introduce Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, variously translated as belatedness or afterwardsness. This term designates the temporality of trauma: typically, a sexual incident occurring in adolescence triggers the unconscious memory of another event from childhood, which is now retroactively understood as sexual and as traumatic. *Nachträglichkeit* or afterwardsness thus refers to the impact of the present on the past, the retroactive interpretation of events that the child was not able to metabolize and therefore has repressed. For French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche this concept describes psychic temporality in general; sexuality, he argues, is by definition traumatic because it always arrives too early, when the child's psychic apparatus is unable to process all sorts of actions and images, coming from the adult world, of an unconscious sexual nature. These actions or images are «enigmatic signifiers» (Laplanche 1999: 78) traumatically implanted in the child, and

become an «internal foreign body» (Laplanche 1999: 65) inside it, an otherness that is constitutive of human subjectivity. The enigmatic signifiers that the subject will have to detranslate and retranslate also include what the child hears: what is heard is «l'histoire, ou la légende, des parents, ce discours parlé ou secret, préablable au sujet, où il doit advenir et se repérer» (Laplanche & Pontalis 1985: 67).

This last point returns us to oral tradition and emphasizes the importance of language in relation to sexuality and the body in *L'últim patriarca*. Indeed, bodily acts may be read as signifiers in Laplanche's sense, as suggested by the traumatic event that marks Mimoun's entrance into subjectivity: the slap his father gives him when he's six months old «havia sonat així, plaf, sorda» (El Hachmi 2008: 15), whereas the «bufetada» Mimoun gives his wife shortly before the narrator's conception is «plaaf […] sonora» (El Hachmi 2008: 137). Voiced vs. unvoiced: linguistic difference is thus traumatically inscribed on the body through foundational violence. The construction of the subject is in this text explicitly linked to language. In the second part of the novel, a teenage narrator starts reading the *Diccionari de la llengua catalana* and in each chapter she relates the action to her reading of the entries for a letter in the alphabet. It is therefore unsurprising that the narrator's mastery of the Catalan language through her reading of the dictionary gives her a measure of imaginary control over her sense of self. Yet at the same time, the dictionary provides her with a substitute for the orgasms that she, as a child, cannot have, a *jouissance* that would help her fulfil her desire to empty herself (El Hachmi 2008: 181):

> Per escapar del *poltergeist*, […] has de riure molt, fins a sentir que tens les costelles a punt de petar, o has de plorar molt, fins a sentir que t'has buidat, o has de tenir un orgasme, que, fet i fet, també és buidar-se. Jo encara no en sabia, de tenir orgasmes, al pare no li agradava que ningú plorés i a la mare no li agradava que ningú rigués. De manera que vaig començar a llegir, paraula per paraula, aquell diccionari de la llengua catalana. Tothom deia quina nena més intel·ligent, quina nena més estudiosa, però només era per buscar una de les tres coses.

As Climent Raga puts it, «[g]ràcies al diccionari, la narradora fa un parèntesi a la distòpia per tal d'aconseguir tornar a suspendre el temps narratiu en el *no res*, allà on la relaxació i el repòs psicològic són possibles» (2010: 32). The nothingness Climent Raga refers to is tantamount to a linguistic *jouissance* that the narrator uses as a means of escaping, at the cost of her own subjective boundaries, from what she calls her «poltergeist», a sexual nightmare she cannot understand: an out-of-control Mimoun boasts in front of his preadolescent daughter his sexual exploits with his Catholic lovers, and in a highly sexualised household presided over by physical and linguistic violence, the father «em parlava de coses que jo no entenia però que ara les rebobino i tenen sentit. Deia sempre allò que la Rosa només li demanava de fer-ho pel darrere i jo no sabia ni què era fer-ho ni el darrere de què» (El Hachmi 2008: 210).

The sexual is for the narrator an enigmatic signifier violently implanted by her father which only makes sense retrospectively, as she tries to detranslate it and retranslate it.

The mention of «el darrere» brings us logically to the end. The metaphor of «rebobinar» suggests once again Laplanche's use of the term *Nachträglichkeit* or afterwardsness. This concept, describing the impact of the present on the past, is highly relevant because in El Hachmi's novel the end of the patriarchy, the break with the past, is located in the past itself, and is prior to the gender conflict between father and daughter. Whereas the women in the family are presented as the main actors in the legitimation and maintenance of masculine domination («L'àvia i les germanes havien educat [Mimoun] per fer de senyor i la mare havia continuat la tasca» [El Hachmi 2008: 30]), it is adolescent Mimoun who commits the violent act that will later result in his own demise as patriarch: «Era la primera vegada que un fill pegava al seu pare, era un capgirar l'ordre natural de les coses, era allò que ningú s'havia imaginat mai» (El Hachmi 2008: 47). Furthermore, Mimoun's desire to have a daughter corresponds to his desire to avoid phallic competition with his offspring (El Hachmi 2008: 147):

> Mimoun era tan feliç d'haver procreat […] perquè veia acomplert el seu somni de tenir una filla. Les nenes són més lleials als pares, et fan més cas i t'estimen de tot cor, no pas per l'obligació de ser els teus fills. I t'ho demostren, les nenes et demostren que t'estimen facis el que facis i el seu amor és sempre incondicional.

Thus the end of the patriarchy in the Driouch family comes from behind, *pel darrere*, from an unfinished past that, like Bloch's *Ungleichzeitigkeit* or non-contemporaneity, comes to disrupt present times. Literally from behind, too. The event that constitutes the final nail belongs to something excluded from discourse yet perfectly integrated in culture as a practice. For in *L'últim patriarca* we find a literary, written tradition, and an oral tradition, but also an *anal* tradition where «[a]nal sex embodies a "backwards" act» (Folkart 2013: 371). Integrated in culture: girls back in the Moroccan village freely discuss anal sex as an alternative to vaginal penetration (El Hachmi 2008: 277), while Mimoun demands it of his Catalan lovers presenting it as «un precepte religiós» (El Hachmi 2008: 90). Excluded from discourse: if anal sex is a religious sacrifice, it is an act for which there is no word in the liturgy, it remains non-symbolized, an «allò» that amounts to an unspeakable vice. Non-symbolized, too, because anal penetration at the hands of his uncle marks the traumatic entrance of pubescent Mimoun into the world of adult sexuality (El Hachmi 2008: 34):

> [E]l primogènit dels Driouch devia entrar de ple en el món dels adults acomplint el paper que els solia tocar als membres de la família d'aquestes edats per aquelles contrades. Tenint en compte que el germà de l'àvia havia pujat del riu poc després que Mimoun, no és estranya la possibilitat que, cansat d'envestir ases i gallines, aprofités l'eufòria del moment per buscar una cavitat més humana on introduir el seu membre erecte. No hauria estat cap fet inusual que li

> hagués dit baixa una mica Mimoun, no et faré mal, no, no et faré mal, Mimoun, para quiet, deixa't anar, deixa't anar, així, sí, així no et farà tant mal.

This shattering event is never discussed, and is instead referred to as the mysterious and terrifying apparition of a goat.

And so we come to the end of the novel. The narrator, having finally managed to emancipate herself from the domination of the last patriarch of her family, orchestrates her final act of revenge against Mimoun, who keeps stalking her. She has received the visit of her uncle, her father's rival, and makes sure that Mimoun can see how she is fucked in the ass. «Ho has fet mai pel darrere?», asks her uncle. «Qui millor que el teu oncle per ensenyar-te aquesta mena de coses, eh? Són la mena de coses que han de quedar en família» (El Hachmi 2008: 331). Penetration is both traumatic and leading to *jouissance*: «Va dir deixa't anar, així, i jo només de tenir-lo a sobre ja havia tingut un orgasme. Vaig tornar-hi quan em va fer mal i el dolor no se sabia on s'acabava o on era que continuava amb el plaer. M'hauria volgut morir, del mal, i encara em vaig tornar a escórrer» (El Hachmi 2008: 331-332). Anal sex thus provides the ecstatic emptiness that reading the dictionary did not offer. And although the Catalan literary tradition is once again invoked, the narrator's betrayal amounts to a failure of language, the anus's simultaneous entrance in and exclusion from discourse: «Jo no era Mercè Rodoreda, però havia d'acabar amb l'ordre que ja feia temps que em perseguia. Que millor que un secret tan gran que ja no pogués tornar-ne a parlar mai més ningú. Que millor que un fet tan repugnant que al pare ja no li quedés altre remei que callar» (El Hachmi 2008: 331). The conflicts, both cultural and psychic, arising from dislocated temporalities are thus resolved not by means of a talking cure, but through a form of the return of the repressed.

Or to put it in other words: through the narrator's sacrifice, the death of an oral tradition is traumatically brought about by anal sex and its inscription into a literary, written tradition that is at once foreign and *pròpia*, familiar and uncanny. In so doing, Najat El Hachmi is redescribing both the conditions of possibility and the dangers of the construction of contemporary Catalan identity.

Josep-Anton Fernàndez
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
jfernandezmont@uoc.edu
ORCID 0000-0003-1672-2414

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