

Identities Lost and Found?
Transcultural Perspectives on
Jamal Mahjoub's Road Novel
Travelling with Djinns

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Introduction

Jamal Mahjoub's road novel *Travelling with Djinns* situates automobility in relation to other experiences of mobility such as migration, exile and travel involving cross-border movements as integral to European history and collective identity. As with many road novels, one of the motivations for the trip seems to be the main character's loss of identity as well as his inability to come to terms with the commonly perceived conceptions of identity. Born of British-Sudanese parents and living in the UK,

Yasin struggles with existing, yet problematic categories, such as British and Sudanese as seemingly stable national signifiers. Consequently, Mahjoub's novel portrays the road as a space for overcoming static concepts and for reflecting on new notions of identity as a result of movement through and across space. While the road novel genre was understood as closely linked to the exploration of the (American) nation state for a long time (Primeau 1995, 15; Brigham 2013, 18), *Travelling with Djinns* focuses on movement across European borders and draws upon a broader cultural and political context. In fact, as Jopi Nyman observes, Mahjoub's work "places Europeaness in a transnational framework by showing the presence of global migration in allegedly homogenous nation-states" (2013, 217). My analysis focuses on how Jamal Mahjoub's road novel, set in Europe, imagines identity, both individual and collective, in flux by portraying the narrator-protagonist as someone moving across cultures and continents.

Notably, the genre of road novel¹ is increasingly deviating from an engagement with the nation state and

¹ Evidently, definitions of this genre vary. In her recent essay "Road Novel: Zur gattungstheoretischen Begriffsbestimmung," Špela Virant highlights the road, the vehicle and the idea of being on the go as defining features of both road novels and road movies (2019, 640). Following Virant, I understand the road novel as a fictional text that is largely set on the road, features a motorised vehicle and, thus, centres on characters who move from one place to another.

instead emphasises transnational and transcultural phenomena (cf. Campbell 2001, 281; Virant 2019, 646). This development, obviously not limited to road novels, has left literary scholars “grappling for new terms” (Varvogli 2012, 118). One possible concept that allows to engage with such narratives without primarily relying on national frameworks is Wolfgang Welsch’s notion of transculturality (1999; 2010). His concept paves the way for a critical understanding of culture in the age of globalisation: firstly, it helps to overcome rigid concepts of culture that do not suffice to frame and understand the processes represented in contemporary road novels like *Travelling with Djinns*; secondly, it allows for intrinsic differentiations of categories previously thought of as homogenous; and thirdly, rather than functioning as an ontological concept, transculturality can be an enabling heuristic, providing entry points from which new ideas and potential solutions can be conceived. While Welsch’s concept has been criticised for being utopian and unpolitical (cf. Schulze-Engler 2009, 90-91 and 95), I argue that instead of imagining a world of utterly peaceful co-existence, the term encompasses an awareness of the contradictory processes that shape globalised modernity (cf. Welsch 1999, 204). Although *Travelling with Djinns* may propose a more fluid, interconnected and thus transcultural understanding of individual and collective European identity, the novel particularly addresses cultural tensions and conflicts arising in the early 21st century as migrants continue to be excluded from certain areas of life.

Engaging with J. A. Kearney's (2007), Yasemin Mohammad's (2017), Maria Jesus Carbacos Traseira's (2012) and Jopi Nyman's (2013) research on Mahjoub's novel, I propose to read *Travelling with Djinn*s through a transcultural lens. I begin by tracing changes in Yasin's understanding of identity towards fluidity and interconnectedness, and then take a closer look at how this identity relates to the construction of Europe as a space of "exchange and interaction" (Welsch 1999, 205). My analysis closes with a reading of selected intertextual references to show how Yasin establishes an entangled history of Europe, creating a network of people and artefacts that stem from particular places but have long since travelled across borders.

On the Road to an Awareness of Rhizomatic Identities

During the road trip, Yasin's identity undergoes a thorough, consequential re-evaluation. The road trip offers the 37-year-old main protagonist the time and space to contemplate his identity and to come to terms with his disorientation in the UK, travelling from Denmark through Germany and France to Spain. In fact, before hitting the road with his 7-year-old son Leo, Yasin laments his feeling of statelessness, which cannot even be amended by the ownership of two passports. His identity crisis is propelled further by his looming divorce, leading Yasin to question his place in Europe. In fact, Yasin declares that he finds himself between

disparate “continental shelves” (Mahjoub 2004, 4). This metaphor of stable shelves suggests an insurmountable divide between his Sudanese/African and his English/European heritage. Simultaneously, this metaphor hints at the great relevance that books and storytelling play in Yasin’s process of identity formation. By the end of the novel, Yasin begins to embrace his experience of having “no fixed locus” (5) by coming to understand motion and travel as inherent to the human condition (cf. 343). This indeterminacy is also supported structurally: the novel’s open end indicates that Yasin’s movement will continue and so will the constant (re-) construction of his identity (cf. Nyman 2013, 234).

The road trip as such creates the backdrop for Yasin’s reassessment of his identity. The spontaneous and aimless trip with its potential for detours allows for a continuous engagement with Europe’s past. Likewise, the changing landscape and architecture present Yasin with never-ending opportunities for contemplation. When father and son pass the cathedral in Metz, for example, Yasin considers the various construction phases, realising that (Christian) Europe was built on the ruins of the (pagan) Roman Empire: “It strikes me that this cathedral, like so many churches, was probably built on Roman ruins” (78). Not only implying the fluid nature of cultural practices but also the movement of people, Yasin debunks the illusion of racial purity in Europe at this early stage of the road trip. Thinking about the begin-

nings of European civilisation, Yasin encounters an empire that expanded over vast stretches of land in which people moved and intermingled. He discovers that shifting borders and cultural transformation are not new in Europe but a historical reality. Thus, by acknowledging that Europeanness is defined by multiplicity, difference and cultural permeation, Yasin takes a first step towards conceptualising a transcultural identity.

The insight into Europe's (creative) past which Yasin gains on the road trip further contributes to the significant change in his self-conception. Yasin reads and learns about other migrants, travellers and exiles who have not only coped with a mixed racial background and the feeling of displacement but used these factors as a source for transformation. All these people on the move, either in the present or the past, are referred to as "djinnns" in the novel, as already indicated in its title. They accompany Yasin on his trip and provide a means for identification. In fact, as Mohammad highlights, the word 'djinn' as such is "of hybrid linguistic origins", so she concludes that this already "suggests the metaphorical and transcultural nature of the trip" (2017, 321). She also notes that "movement opens up a transcultural space in which he [Yasin] negotiates his hybrid identity by interacting with the djinnns of displaced prominent intellectuals and contemporary illegal migrants" (323). The variety of transformative influences becomes particularly clear when considering Yasin's reading materi-

al. He reads widely, including the Japanese poet Basho (Mahjoub 2003, 11), the Persian writer Omar Khayyám (42, 119 and 308), the German author Berthold Brecht (30) and the French writer Arthur Rimbaud (303). Indeed, these authors of heterogeneous background are presented beyond the narrow confines of the nation state as simplistic national attributions do not hold in the novel, which underlines the significance of these authors and their works ‘on the move’, cutting across national and geographical borders. Hence, the books as Yasin’s djinns interconnect various times and cultures in a rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 3-25) structure² which eventually also characterises Yasin’s understanding of his own identity.

After having crossed Germany, France and Spain, Yasin begins to embrace the idea of being an “eternal wanderer” (302). Reading the English translation of Joseph Roth’s *The White Towns*, he contemplates the Jewish author’s life. Having fled Germany in 1933, Roth “remained on the move for the rest of his life, wandering in solitary exile from café to hotel, from city to city, sustained, one imagines, only by his constant writing” (302). Yasin realises that he also belongs to the road, “always moving” (302), a “constant traveller” (Nyman 2013, 234), just like

2 The notion of cultures as rhizomatic is not used by Wolfgang Iser, but by Édouard Glissant in his book *Poétique de la Relation* (1990). In this article, the notion of the rhizome conveys the idea of multiple interconnecting cultural nodes which lack a clear centre and are not subject to a predetermined hierarchy.

Joseph Roth. On the road, Yasin learns how to feel at home independent of his geographical location. He realises that he can potentially identify with every place in Europe, because he knows something about its entangled history. Drawing on his experiences, encounters and reading knowledge, he manages to continuously create a fluid identity that does not restrict him to the initial idea of being “divided, split, incomplete” (87).

Constructing Europe as a Transcultural Space

Mahjoub’s road novel is constructed around Yasin’s and Leo’s movement through different European towns and cities. By constantly portraying border crossings, the novel undermines the notion of homogenous nation states and instead indicates that “a long chain of human mobility has been essential to the making of Europe” (Nyman 2013, 236). Europe is represented as a transcultural space in which cultural transformations continue to have a distinct presence. Yet, while the novel portrays the impact of different cultural communications on Yasin’s identity formation as positive, it simultaneously addresses social and political problems and evokes various tensions which arise from Europe’s transcultural condition. Two issues are particularly present in the novel: firstly, the practice of patrolling national borders and of racial profiling as experienced by Yasin; and secondly, the vilification and condemnation of (illegal) immigration that (partially) results from Europe’s colonial histo-

ry as well as the ongoing marginalisation of immigrants in Europe. Both practices are explicitly criticised in *Travelling with Djinnns* in an attempt “to develop and spread a broader concept of European identity” (Panebianco 2003, cited in Nyman 2013, 237).

Travelling with Djinnns evokes Europe as a place of cultural interactions by featuring various meetings with other characters. Yasin encounters numerous mobile characters, such as the young prostitute Haya, whose place in society is equally liminal as that of the other African refugees Yasin observes in front of the Louvre. Yasin meets Haya late one night in a Parisian café. She is “about nineteen” (120) and when she says she is from Paris at first, Yasin probes into her past, asking her where she came from “before that” (121). She tells him her story and Yasin relates it for the reader: “She is from Western Sahara. She grew up in a refugee camp in the desert. She didn’t know her father. He was away fighting the Moroccans” (122). The narrative implies that Haya must have come to Europe as a refugee. She has friends in Aix-en-Provence (123), indicating that she may have established a network of acquaintances throughout France. By encountering characters like Haya and taking the time to understand their trajectories, Yasin reveals Europe’s diverse society in which cultures are bound to transgress clearly marked borders.

Europe is further constructed as a heterogenous space in *Travelling with Djinnns* by means of invoking the greater

history of travelling. The plurality in Europe is a result of the continent's past of Empires, reaching back to the Romans; its colonial history, particularly on the African continent; and current processes of globalisation, in which new, both legal and illegal, flows of migration significantly contribute to its ever-changing shape. Europe is represented as a continent that is not limited by national boundaries but characterised by an all-embracing transnational movement, in which “[c]ontemporary experiences of postcolonial migrations are but the latest episodes of movements and encounters of people in a history of the world and of Europe in particular” (Carbacos Traseira 2012, 198). Yasin becomes acutely aware of this while spending time with his new acquaintance Haya. In a late-night conversation with her, Yasin realises:

The face of this continent is scarred by the passage of people. From east to west, north to south. From the earliest neolithic wanderers to the Mongol hordes, from the Huguenots to the Calvinists, pilgrims, refugees, gypsies. It is a history of railway tracks and roads. A history of transgression, of frontiers and border lines being crossed and recrossed. The Romans, the Visigoths, the Jews, Bosnians, Albanians, Kosovans, the blind, the sick, the old, the crippled. These are the people upon whose sacrifice the history of Europe is written, and our collective destiny is written in the course of those migrations. (173)

Hence, Europe's history of mobility not only legitimises Yasin's own condition, but it also forecloses ideals of stability, of homogenous nation states and of a singular origin. As Nyman puts it, "[t]o understand Europe is to understand the intertwined histories between it and its Others and to recognize the various cultural and historical layers of Europe that are often forgotten and to see it as a transcultural construct" (2013, 235). *Travelling with Djinnns* therefore excavates Europe's entangled past and re-imagines it as a transcultural space.

Intertextuality is another striking feature in the novel, discussed in more detail below, but integral to the heterogeneous representation of Europe. Intertextual references disclose that Europe's inhabitants were never racially pure and add to Europe's diverse past. They illustrate how national borders have been constantly crossed and re-crossed by cultural artefacts. The circulation of literary texts, often only enabled by travellers, as well as their respective translation and reception hint at the cultural permeations that took place both in and outside the fictional realm. Hence, intertextual references contribute to *Travelling with Djinnns'* transcultural re-imagination of Europe.

Travelling with Djinnns, however, does not glorify or romanticise the idea of a transcultural European space. While noting a potentially positive effect, it does not present the various events that led to Europe's current cultural

condition as inevitably peaceful or beneficial. Rather, it evokes how marginalised groups endure(d) oppression, experience(d) expulsion as well as prosecution and often live(d) in precarious conditions. The “sacrifice” (163) of their lives, as Yasin calls it, *should* have some effect in the present, but alarming conditions persist. This is exactly why Yasin vehemently criticises the conditions to which immigrants often are subjected in Europe. The following two examples of his criticism that relate to racial profiling and social exclusion serve to illustrate his social criticism.

Yasin himself is subject to racial profiling when crossing the German border. The border force demands him to pull over and the guards “checked [his] name against the list of internationally wanted suspects” and “against any known act of terrorism perpetrated over the last thirty years, any crime or misdemeanour committed in the western hemisphere by anyone with a name similar to [his]” (10). The reason for this overly meticulous investigation is not clear: it is made either on assumptions about Yasin’s “Third World car” (9), his appearance or his ‘foreign’ name. Yasin’s criticism is directed against the practice of suspecting him on grounds of his race or ethnicity, not on the grounds of any actual evidence. Furthermore, the guards ignore the Schengen Agreement, according to which national borders “are now open” (10). Nation states within the European Union have technically agreed to suspend border controls;

however, Mahjoub's road novel suggests that Europe's national borders, both internal and external, continue to be safeguarded in order to enforce mechanisms to control who belongs and who does not. Additionally, this scene represents Yasin as being prejudiced against Germany: "Perhaps I am biased about the Germans, but why did I have the feeling that I was more likely to be victimised here than anywhere else?" (10). Yasin, influenced by medialised representations of Germany, reciprocates the guards' demeanour and equally suspects them. Hence, the novel suggests that cultural fusions do not necessarily end in harmony, as oppression and prejudice occur on both sides.

Yasin frequently criticises the state of, mostly African, illegal immigrants that are part of present-day Europe. When in Paris, he refers to political and social issues related to migration while queueing to visit the Louvre. Yasin observes numerous men from "places like Dakar and Conakry, from Lomé, Abidjan and Bamako" selling "a selection of compact discs and sunglasses" (105) in front of the museum and assumes that they have never seen the artworks exhibited inside. Clearly, the author criticises Europe for ignoring and forgetting the immigrants who are pushed to live on the social periphery. They are unemployed, homeless and have few to no opportunities of changing their lives in which they try "to eke out a living from the pavements" (105). While Yasin can contemplate and reinterpret Europe's past due to

his education, these men, as Nyman states, “have no full access to the memorials of the European (colonialist) culture [...]” (Nyman 2017, 164). The overpriced Louvre exhibition about ‘The Lost Art of Memory’, for example, displays prehistoric drawings, found, amongst others, at Tamrit and Yabbaren. Hence, these objects are not just a part of “European (colonialist) culture” (164), as Nyman suggests, but of Africa’s past long before colonisation. Under colonialism, they have been appropriated by European museums which present Africa’s past in a way that serves the institution’s needs (cf. Erll 2008, 5). Ironically, then, while the museum’s collection suggests that cultural overlaps have been integral to Europe’s and Africa’s past to enable the existence of such a collection, the museum’s policies of exclusion and of capitalist marketing of culture seem to foreclose further exchange in the present. Artworks which could be opened to reinterpretation by migrants are sealed off from them and have more or less been reduced to a form of entertainment for the wealthy. Hence, European (state) institutions find themselves in a strange conflict where a variety of cultural perspectives is rarely provided despite the evident potential and need for them. Mahjoub’s novel identifies and narrates those strategies pursued by numerous cultural institutions in Europe. Thereby, *Travelling with Djinns* takes a first step towards re-imagining Europe and offers new perspectives for understanding and negotiating the continent’s complex entanglements. In the future, representations like this

may effect a change in how European institutions handle their entangled collections³ (cf. Aldrich 2009, 153-154 and Thomas 2010, 1-11).

Intertextuality as Transculturality: The Role of References to Music, Films and Books in *Travelling with Djinns*

During his time on the road, Yasin continuously refers to literature, art and films, so *Travelling with Djinns* is replete with intertextual references. Arguably, the novel achieves transculturality through intertextuality by showing how cultural artefacts and ideas travel across linguistic and geographical borders. The references arguably fulfil four main functions: the travelling objects hint at the complex processes involved in (cultural) translation and transformation; they attest to Europe's diverse heritage; they dismantle the nation state as the only frame of reference; and they serve Yasin in his struggle for an alternative perspective on his identity. Having already addressed Europe's transcultural past and Yasin's individual identity, I will to add to previous observations by drawing on more salient examples from the novel.

³ These debates have recently gained more traction as heated discussions around the return of the Benin Bronzes (see for example Dan Hicks's *The Brutish Museums* published in 2020) and various initiatives towards the decolonisation of museums in Europe show.

A striking instance of cultural translation and transformation occurs when Yasin and Leo stop in Metz. During their visit of the cathedral, they wonder about the gargoyles that decorate the architectural structure. Yasin ponders the origins of the word gargoyle, contemplating whether it refers to the gurgling sound these creatures make when they drain rainwater, but then he explains to his son:

These are more like chimères, which were believed to keep evil spirits at bay. [...] “Dernières ressources des malheureux!” Rousseau called them. Chimères were mythological monsters that were hybrids, composed of different kinds of creatures. (77, emphasis in original)

First of all, Yasin is familiar with Rousseau and shows a solid knowledge of the French language. Not offering a literal translation of the term *chimères*, he instead describes it with all its implicit meanings in English, so that Leo is able to understand the concept. However, it is unlikely that a seven-year-old understands the reference to monsters being unhappy or misfortunate (*malheureux*). The passage is more likely to animate the reader to look up the quote and to interpret it. This episode also demonstrates how effortlessly the novel slips other languages into the English body of text. Notably, the French term *chimère* is assembled into the English language in this paragraph, as it is no longer italicised the

second time it is mentioned. The novel therefore renders the English language permeable and transcultural. Leo's reply to Yasin's statement is furthermore relevant. To his father's observation about the chimères being of mixed origin, Leo promptly replies "like us" (77). Here, Leo transfers the description of artistic objects to his own situation, translating and transforming Rousseau's idea to draw conclusions about the present. The idea that originates in French is first rephrased in English and then appropriated by Leo to describe his diverse family background.

To portray Europe's rich cultural heritage, a vast amount of intertextual references is featured in *Travelling with Djinnns*. Most of the time, Yasin mentions authors, artists or other creatives because they combine numerous influences from which they create something new. What is most important in *Travelling with Djinnns* is that Europe is not depicted as the (postcolonial) centre. Rather, the intertextual references stand in for "innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 1977, 146). This notion perfectly fits with the metaphor of the rhizome which vehemently opposes the idea of culture as one singular root. With Yasin frequently citing Arab writers like Ibn Arabi, Idries Shah and Omar Khayyám (86, 119), Western writers like Brecht, Rimbaud and Shakespeare as well as Asian writers like Basho (11), he not only insists on their significant impact on and shared presence within Europe's cultural heritage but also questions these national, con-

tinental or spatial categories. The references to the Sufi poet Omar Khayyám are a case in point. His brother Muk writes Yasin a postcard containing the English translation of a poem by this well-known Persian writer. Those “cryptic lines” (119) leave Yasin puzzled. However, when in Paris, Haya, the young prostitute whom Yasin meets, links the poem to “Wallada” (119). Wallada, she explains, is both her mother’s name and the name of the most beautiful Andalusian woman described in Ibn Zaydun’s synonymous poem (119-123). Haya enlarges the web of intertextual references with the mention of Ibn Zaydun, an African migrant living in Córdoba in the 11th century. This already complex net is further extended when the riddle of the poem is solved at the end of the trip. Yasin finally learns that this quote features in the 1951 film *The Flying Dutchman*, where an open book containing this poem is shown. In Barcelona, where he and Leo make their last stop and reunite with Muk, a statue is devoted to the main female actress Ava Gardner, paired with the inscription of Khayyám’s poem on a block of stone. Nyman (cf. 2013, 235) and Carbacos Traseira (cf. 2012, 196) have both pointed out how this poem is linked to popular media rather than to literature and thereby also indicates processes that recent scholarship terms “transmediality” (Rajewsky 2013, 21-22). Combining these two modes of going *through and beyond*, intertextuality therefore comes to epitomise the “entanglement, intermixing and commonness” (Welsch 1999, 205) of cultures in *Travelling with Djinn*s.

The use of intertextual references furthermore serves to undermine the nation state as the single point of reference. In fact, the border-crossings during the road trip are echoed in the transnational and transcultural artefacts mentioned along the way. Yasin again and again contemplates connections between authors, artists and himself. Hence, he conceives of being “on the move” as a shared experience (178). Yasin’s repeated engagement with Goethe is one central example of how intertextuality is used to question the nation state: As far as Yasin is concerned, the supposedly German national poet “adored the Persian poet Hafiz” (Mahjoub 2004, 175). This admiration manifests itself “regardless of their national identities” (2012, 196), as Carbacos Tra-seira underlines. After having elaborated on “Sufism and Dervishes in general”, Yasin suggests that Goethe was “fascinated by all that” (175). Here, Goethe is depicted as an initiator of cross-cultural exchange. Thus, common ideas about the containment of both the nation and its literature are undermined in favour of a more globally connected network of culture and literature. Goethe, in fact, is mentioned multiple times. In another episode, Yasin reflects on conceptual changes concerning Goethe’s term ‘World Literature’ when relating an episode about his previous job at BBC radio. He states that his interviews with authors from “Lahore, Calcutta, Manitoba, Ivory Coast” present “World Literature as Goethe never imagined it” (258). To Yasin, World Literature encompasses the entire globe, and not just the lim-

ited 'world' known to Goethe. Therefore, by means of intertextual references, *Travelling with Djinns* "reveals the mutual dependence of Europe and its Others, it shows the traces left by cultural contacts and mixing" (Nyman 2013, 236). By referring to numerous novels, films and artworks, homogenous nation states are dismantled as constructed and illusory. Instead, literature serves as an example for constant border-crossing resulting in fruitful transcultural exchange.

Intertextual references, of course, also come into play regarding Yasin's identity. Besides literature, film and fine arts have an impact on Yasin's self-image. In Paris, for example, Yasin is intrigued by a print of Cézanne's *La Montagne Sainte Victoire*. He discerns a "subtle order" in the dots and facets "that somehow make coherent sense" (71). Metaphorically speaking, then, these pointillist brush marks might refer to his own identity which, at this point, is still split and consists of numerous different pieces. Looking at this painting might be one of the key experiences for Yasin to rethink his image of himself and of Europe because "[t]here is something about the way in which all the little pieces add up which holds me there" (72). Just like the fragments that make up the painting's structure, he begins to conjoin the various pieces of his past together to create a new identity. He begins to form a coherent self by transforming the multiple, sometimes even contradicting influences into a novel whole. Thus, together with other works of art,

Cézanne's *La Montagne Sainte Victoire* supports Yasin in his inner struggle for a coherent sense of identity.

I have demonstrated that intertextual references serve four distinct, but related functions as indicators of transcultural processes in the novel; namely, underlining cultural translation, demonstrating diversity, questioning the nation state and shaping identity. The analysis of these four functions has made it clear that Mahjoub's use of intertextuality is one of *Travelling with Djinns*' richest and most productive methods for portraying and propelling cultural permeation.

Conclusion

I have argued that the narrative of the road trip plays an integral role in how *Travelling with Djinns* maps 21st century Europe. The trip makes the reader reimagine the main character's sense of identity on the one hand and of Europe as a continent marked by internal and external mobility on the other. Drawing on Welsch's term, I have shown that transculturality can be a productive lens through which it is possible to approach complex cultural processes as negotiated in *Travelling with Djinns*. Mahjoub's novel employs salient strategies with which it carefully constructs Europe's entangled past and present, *imagining* Europe as neither singular nor homogeneous. While *Travelling with Djinns* stresses the positive potential of transculturality, it also criticises mechanisms

of exclusion and cultural exploitation. Most importantly, perhaps, the novel imagines transnational and transcultural entanglements as integral parts of European identity, constantly insisting on the transcultural processes that have occurred and continue to occur in the social, cultural and historic sphere. Since *Travelling with Djinnns* deals with a variety of other texts and media, bringing them together into a multi-layered network, it becomes “a transcultural artefact” (Carbacos Traseira 2012, 197). Also, by means of translating the road trip narrative from an American and nation-based context into a previously disregarded and unexplored transnational European framework, the novelist provides a fresh perspective on the road novel in the 21st century. As an example of contemporary road narratives, *Travelling with Djinnns* stands in for a larger body of texts in which border crossings and cultural interactions are becoming increasingly key features. It shows that the genre of road novel needs to be addressed from a global perspective rather than a nation-based framework.

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