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Transnational encounters in the Maghreb: Para-colonial writing in the travelogues of German soldiers in colonial Algiers, 1830-1890

Abstract

This essay analyses travel writing by German-speaking soldiers serving in the French military in nineteenth-century colonial Algiers. It suggests that their position – that of Europeans associated with and employed by the French colonial powers without necessarily being culturally or politically aligned with the colonial project – can be described as “para-colonial”. That perspective allowed soldiers writing in German both to participate in and endorse, though also to critique, the process of colonization, albeit it in ambivalent terms. The texts do not describe binary, German-Algerian relationships, but rather “triangular” intercultural encounters, whereby the soldiers’ shifting attitudes to the French influence their feelings and writing about local people and culture, and vice versa. Examining the representations of the “first encounter” of each soldier with the new continent, the triangular intercultural relationship, and the written treatment of urban and rural spaces, the discussion contrasts two travelogues produced in 1840 and 1881 respectively, considering how the absence and, later, the advent of a German colonial Empire left its mark on German writing about the colonization of Algiers.

Keywords: Algiers – colonial – German – soldiers – empire – space

Introduction:

In 1841, a German-speaking Silesian named Robert Jungmann – an aspiring graphic artist who found himself serving in the Foreign Legion in French colonial Algiers – published an account of his experiences in a travelogue entitled *Algier oder Scenen und Skizzen aus dem Leben eines politischen Flüchtlings (Algiers or Scenes and Sketches from the Life of a Political Refugee)*.¹ The existence of this travelogue testifies to the under-researched presence of German-speaking soldiers serving in the Foreign Legion during French colonial rule from 1830 onwards. Yet the text also reveals far more. A dozen pages into his travelogue Jungmann describes the vision of the port of Algiers, giving special attention to the absence of Ottoman forces, who had ruled until their expulsion in 1830, and to evidence of French colonial rule: “the crescent moon has been toppled from the towers of minarets and in its place the flag of a cultivated nation, which flutters welcomingly towards new arrivals [...]” (Jungmann 1841, 12).

The passage itself hints at many of the themes and concepts that will be explored in this essay. Initially, Jungmann’s comments on the displacement of the Islamic crescent moon of the Ottomans by the French flag speak of his apparent support for the presence of “cultivated” French colonials in Algiers. However, he also reveals subtly differing attitudes. As the passage continues, he reflects both on the ill-fated attempt of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to lead an attack on Ottoman Algiers in 1541, and to the ruins of an ancient Roman settlement, which served, he felt, as a “warning” from times long past (12). Jungmann reveals ambivalent attitudes to colonization, hinting at the problems he sees associated with it – whether he is alluding to the risks and dangers that colonial endeavours bring to the colonist or, potentially, to the questionable ethics and cultural traumas associated with such

ventures. This essay explores that ambivalence in two travelogues by German soldiers serving in the French colonial forces during the period: Jungmann's aforementioned text and Emil Bock's *Aus meinem Tagebuch als Soldat in Algerien, 1880-81* (*From my Diary as a Soldier in Algeria, 1880-81*) published in 1883.² The essay does not merely examine how German soldiers wrote about the indigenous peoples and places of Algiers, but considers how their writing about Algiers was caught up in their complex and changing attitudes to the French colonial project and their French employers – a group with whom they, as Europeans in the Maghreb, might be closely identified, but from whom they as Germans remained in many ways distinct.

Historical Contexts: “Paracolonial” Germans and French Colonials in Nineteenth- Century Algiers

In order to conceptualize a “triangulated” relationship between German soldiers, French colonials and indigenous groups, the discussion requires some historical contextualization. Significant developments in French and German history between 1840 and 1881 had a bearing not only on the Algerian colony, but also on Franco-German relations, all of which arguably play out in the experiences and writing of German-speaking soldiers in French employment. The period saw constant seesawing between various forms of republican and imperial government in France. This was not without implications for the colony, as various governments switched back and forth between policies of consolidating French influence of the colonized north and the resumption of expansion into the Algerian interior.³ For all the oscillations between civil and military government, direct and local rule, the drive to expansion, and numerous indigenous rebellions, recent scholarship has testified to the continuing cultural, economic and infrastructural changes that occurred in the colonized territory throughout the period.⁴ Recent studies have focussed on how the urban and rural

spaces of Algeria were transformed during colonization and on how this was reflected in writing and the visual arts (Zarobell 2010, 1-7). Diverse sources attest to how buildings of political, cultural, and religious significance were appropriated, repurposed or destroyed to make way for new colonial structures, and to how rural land was seized for new agricultures, all of which influenced local economies and the movement and domiciling of people (see e.g., Çelik [1997] on these topics). Whilst both soldiers will have witnessed colonization as a continuing *process*, then, the discussion in this article evaluates how that process plays out differently in the two travelogues and traces its shifting locus from urban spaces in the 1840s to the desert interior in the 1880s.

The period saw perhaps even more seismic changes in the German speaking territories, which arguably had a bearing on both why Germans approached service in the French colonies and how they felt and wrote about their experiences. When Jungmann wrote in the 1840s Germany was still only an economically connected confederation of states, whose internal politics were concerned more with the premise of a united German nation than serious overseas colonization. By 1871 Germany was an Empire with its capital in Berlin, dominated by ruling elites of the Kingdom of Prussia, and yet it still had no imperial, overseas presence. The German chancellor Otto von Bismarck had famously declared himself “contemptuous of the German colonial dream” and it was not until 1884 that he finally permitted the establishment of overseas German colonies and thus effectively launched Germany into the scramble for Africa (cited in: Crankshaw 1981, 395). Although the Reich was poised on the brink of overseas expansion, the period 1871 to 1884, including the period in which Bock travelled, fought and wrote, still represented a hiatus in which Germany was a real Empire without real colonies. Thus the two German soldiers we shall consider encountered Algiers at different points in German national and colonial history: for Jungmann the notion of serving his own country in overseas territories

would surely represent an unlikely prospect, whilst for Bock it would likely appear a distinct, if still elusive possibility.

Whilst European historical contexts doubtless had some bearing on Jungmann's and Bock's writing, so too did the specifics of the relationship between the soldiers and their employers in the colony itself. Serving in the foreign legion, Jungmann and Bock were both connected to, and yet at one remove from their French superiors. Of course, their presence in the region was entirely facilitated by French colonialism and their employment in the Legion, and in their written encounters with Algiers they might appear to have identified with the attitudes and culture of their European comrades rather than with those of indigenous peoples. However, it does not automatically follow that German soldiers would or could suppress their distinctive cultural identity as German speakers, or identify with the French nation, or, indeed, endorse the colonial project unquestioningly. This essay uses the term "para-colonial" to describe the status of German soldiers in this context. This does not refer, as it has in other scholarship, to an indigenous or local group's overtly counter-colonial uses of the colonists' culture, or indeed to any fixed set of attitudes.⁵ It refers rather to an interstitial cultural space that German soldiers occupied – one which allowed them both to support the French cause, though also to disassociate themselves from it and, on occasion, to critique it.

In written accounts of the triangular intercultural encounters in the colony, we find that German attitudes towards the colonized culture are modified by shifting patterns of admiration and distaste for French military life and for French practices of colonization. In this way, the travelogues might bear traces of the wider tensions, prejudices and rivalries that arose in nineteenth-century Franco-German relations. Only fifteen years separated Jungmann's time in Algiers from the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), which had brought with it huge loss of life, population displacement and infrastructural damage to the German speaking lands, whilst the Franco-Prussian wars

of 1870-71, a decade before Bock's service, had helped to assert the unity and strength of Bismarck's nascent German Empire. Both travelogues, then, could be inflected by a range of differing historical notions associated with France: France as invader, France as Germany's foe and an obstacle to nationhood, or France as an admired neighbour, whose pathway to nationhood and Empire could be emulated and possibly surpassed – though of whom Germany had to remain wary. France's expansion overseas also represented both a real opportunity for German speakers to travel, and a figurative template for German colonialism. Suzanne Zantorp (1997) has showed convincingly that, before the existence of German colonies, literary, non-literary and travel writing in German often showed evidence of "colonial fantasies", of writers rehearsing colonial values and attitudes in their work. The tendency expressed itself in many forms, from works that imagine fictional German characters in the "real" colonies of other nations to the retelling of stories borrowed from the colonial heritage of other cultures, past and present. The case of para-colonial travel-writing by German soldiers in Algiers, I suggest, might include in it such "fantasies", though perhaps opens out a wider range of modalities: just as easily as it could fuel colonial fantasies, the lived experience of, and direct participation in, colonial campaigns could provoke German distaste for and disassociation from colonialism.

In approaching these texts through such lenses, the essay seeks a range of contrasting attitudes towards France on the part of German soldiers, ranging from feelings of envy to the urge to imagine Germany as a future though superior colonial power, and even the naïve impulse to join the French project and live as a vicarious conqueror. These attitudes, as we shall see, shift with the period in which the soldier wrote and travelled and, of course, inflected the representations of local people, culture and places.

Approaching Algiers: Cultural preconceptions of the Orient?

The images of Algiers and its peoples in the travelogues inevitably draw upon long-standing associations with the region and its people, which were embedded in nineteenth-century European culture. On occasion, both travelogues use the term “der Orient” and “orientalisch” – the “Orient” and “oriental” respectively – in describing the locales, peoples and customs of the Maghreb. This potentially implicates them in the phenomenon that Edward Said called “orientalism” in his seminal work of that name. Said asserted that European culture in the Age of Empire tended to represent North African, Middle Eastern and Asian places, peoples and cultures reductively, as the passive “others” of colonial Europe, and ascribed to them a range of characteristics: the Orient was alluring, mysterious, titillating, though also degenerate, corrupt and threatening in equal measure and, most significantly, in need of civilizing and modernizing by European intervention. Despite giving little space to German sources, Said wrote that German thinkers, writers and artists were ultimately guilty of the same conflation of discourse and hegemonic power as their British and French counterparts (Said 1977, 2003: 17-19).

However, our understanding of German cultural engagement with the Orient has changed quite radically over the last two decades. Key scholarly interventions have shown that many German cultural products dedicated to the so-called Orient were produced prior to the period of German colonialism. Scholars have also been quick to emphasize that this did not mean that texts and images from Germany demonstrated no Eurocentric bias at all, but that those cultural products were generated by a wider series of cultural influences including diverse currents in intellectual history, institutional history and by political and religious affiliation. Marchand (2009), for instance, asserts that we should not only seek in German culture the ever-present exercise of soft colonial power and reductive techniques of “othering” Oriental culture, but also look to rescue traditions of “dialogue,” “self-

critique”, and “perspectival re-orientation” (xxv-xxvi), though it should be noted that her examples are drawn almost exclusively from the more sophisticated world of German academic orientalism.⁶ Recognizing the para-colonial perspective afforded to Jungmann and Bock—and the potentially conflicting set of attitudes towards colonialism that might arise from it—this essay also examines critically how these two travellers relate to orientalist modes of thinking and writing. It asks whether or not both men achieve anything of the more nuanced insights of their academic German-speaking peers and, if not, how, why and with what consequences do they reproduce stereotypes of the Orient in writing about their time in Algeria.

Soldiers amongst Others: Jungmann, Bock and the German Presence

Recently, scholars such as Clancy-Smith (2010) have moved away from evaluating the travel writing of more famous German figures to have travelled the Maghreb, and moved towards researching the size and disposition of lesser-known German speaking communities in the region. Amongst these were the numerous soldiers who served in the French Foreign Legion from the invasion of the 1830 onwards. Ernstpeter Ruhe has provided an invaluable repository of digitized soldierly travelogues from the period, and it is from this source that both our texts have been drawn.⁷ Further biographical insight into the lives of Jungmann and Bock will enrich our discussion by sensitizing us to the idiosyncrasies that will have inflected their travelogues.

In scholarship on the Maghreb it is Robert Jungmann’s paintings and ink-line sketches of Algiers and its peoples that are often cited, particularly his volume *Costumes, moeurs et usages des Algériens (Costumes, mores and customs of the Algerians)*, which appeared in French in Strasburg, 1837, and contained forty of his lithographs with accompanying narrative comments. However, there is a more perplexing issue surrounding his identity. Most commentaries accept the description

of Jungmann as a Polish refugee (*réfugié polonais*), who fled to France in the early 1830s, served in the Foreign Legion for four years in Algeria before settling in Strasbourg in 1836 to pursue his vocation as an artist (Clancy-Smith, 2009, 34-44). Yet, fascinatingly, in 1841 the same Robert Jungmann published *Scenes and Sketches* in fluent German. A close reading of this text further complicates Jungmann's national affiliation. In this later title he identifies not as a Polish but as a "political" refugee. Several passages in the text mark his homeland out to be Prussia, rather than Poland, as he describes his homesickness at hearing songs sung by comrades in German during his first sea-crossing to Algiers and a journey home after "four years of banishment" (Jungmann 1841, 200), which appears to lead him back to Prussia where he is moved to see the black eagle (not the white eagle of Poland) on the flag of his homeland.

So what explains Jungmann's Prussian-Polish, Janus-faced identity? The place of publication, Schweidnitz, implies that he may have been a German-speaking Silesian of mixed German-Polish heritage comfortable with interchanging between the two. Was he hiding his Prussian identity in France for reasons of recent historical conflict between the nations? Or did his status as an exile render him an undesirable – one who could hide for a time in the Foreign Legion but later needed to reinvent himself to settle in France? Indeed, did he finally settle in France and, if so, why did he later publish in Prussia in his mother tongue? Whilst further archival work is needed to clarify these matters, by allowing Jungmann his dual identity, or at the very least a bi-lingual publishing career, we can explore fascinating contradictions in the author's attitudes to Algiers, its communities and to the French colonial project. Citing *Costumes* as evidence, most scholars align Jungmann closely with French colonial ideology. Frances Terpak (2009, 90) sees his lithograph *Vue d'Algier (View of the Bay of Algiers)* (1837) as the portrayal of a city still partly in shadow and only partially illuminated by the civilizing light of "France's presence". Perhaps

unsurprisingly in a text pitched at a French audience, Jungmann helps to visualize and endorse the colonial project in word and image. However, this essay examines whether or not a German language publication offers the author a space to articulate a more para-colonial experience. In so doing, the discussion remains alert to the various stances Jungmann might adopt – that of the liberal critic of colonialism, or the vicarious colonialist endorsing the French project in Algeria; the Prussian nationalist who envies the French their colonies, or the refugee alienated from his homeland and in some way aligned either with the French cause in Algeria, or even with the plight of the colonized indigenous peoples.

We know less about Emil Bock than we do about Robert Jungmann, though what we do know seems more certain: he identifies as a Swabian, a native of the south-western German principality of Württemberg. His *Diary*, published at his own costs in 1883, two years after ending a two-year tour of service in the Foreign Legion, reflects many of the changes that had occurred in Algeria since the 1830s. Writing in 1881, Bock is more than just a young legionnaire, but also, potentially, a German proto-colonist straining at the leash. As a well-established coastal French Algeria extended its influence inland, the essay asks whether military service offered Bock the opportunity to test himself, both as a frustrated colonial soldier and a writer, upon the culturally and politically fluid spaces of the African interior. It considers, too, whether and in what ways his sense of identity as a citizen of the young German Empire coloured his writing about service in the French colonies.

This essay structures its analysis of the two texts around three key experiences about which both soldiers wrote. Firstly, it deals with the experiences of “first encounter”, the first optical view of the Algerian coastline and its settlements, and its representation in writing. Often experienced on board a ship, this constitutes a threshold experience of sorts, as it is the first “lived” encounter with tangible part of the Maghreb. The account of this experience offers insights into the differing attitudes

of the soldiers to their native culture, to the culture of the French and the Algerians, but also reveals their initial thoughts on the reality of exerting military force and cultural control over physical territory. Secondly, the essay treats a number of contrasting examples from both texts, which illustrate both subtle and overt fluctuations in the “triangular” relationship between the German travelling subject, the French colonials, and indigenous communities as expressed in writing. Finally, the discussion teases out and contrasts the treatment both authors give to the representation of colonial space from the para-colonial perspective. As Edward Said (1993) has shown elsewhere, at the heart of much colonial writing we find struggles for the control of space, in the military, social and cultural senses. Both travelogues bear witness to such changes in space and the resultant shifts in the human geography of the colony. Moreover, the soldiers’ writing on those changes sheds further light on their thoughts on the French colonial project and on German nationhood, Empire and colonialism.

First Encounters: Rewriting the Barbary Coast

Many German travelogues from Algiers in the period make much of their first arrival in the new region, and their first lived encounter with its peoples and cultures. Their writing on these experiences can reveal particular insights into their psychology, values and cultural and historical conditioning, as they seek to negotiate between a bewildering range of new impressions and often deep-seated associations and prejudices concerning their new environment (see Hodkinson [2013] on this). Both of our soldiers approached the Algerian colony by sea and their accounts of their voyage and, most significantly, the first optical view of the Algerian coastline and first moments or hours on land are particularly informative. In approaching the Algerian coastline, Jungmann and Bock were approaching a space under French colonial

control, though also a location with a different set of associations derived from European cultural geography. These centre on the powerful trope of the infamous “Barbary Coast”.

The coastal Maghreb had long been a harbour for piracy and the centre of an organized trade in Christian slaves. In the later eighteenth century Barbary corsairs continued those traditions under Ottoman rule, sparking armed conflicts such as the Barbary Wars with the United States (1801-1815). Situated on that infamous stretch of coastline, the city of Algiers itself was a coastal fortress of military repute and also a “bulwark of Islam”. Despite shifting power relations in the region and the growth of European influence, for many less urbane Europeans in the early nineteenth century Algiers and the distant Barbary Coast still effectively formed an orientalist cultural imaginary, which held associations of treacherous peoples and their despotic rulers, violence and the horror of Christian enslavement by Muslim interlopers into the Mediterranean.⁸ Both of our travelogues relate “first encounters” with the coastline, city and peoples of the colony.

Leaving France by ship, Robert Jungmann feels exhilaration as the anchor is raised and the ship makes open water, filling its sails with wind “like a young eagle testing the power of its wings” (2). This initial eagerness to travel to the colonies arguably taps into a symbol of Prussian heraldry and colonial power: that of the iconic eagle. Yet Jungmann does not show himself to be a firebrand proto-colonist. Jungmann’s first glimpse of the Kasbah leads him to rail openly against the tyranny of Ottoman rule and praise the civilizing influence of France, though also to inject doubts about the validity and viability of colonialism when viewed in long-term historical contexts (12-13). His vision of the wider coastline also testifies to competing attitudes. Preconceived notions of a wild coastline, mirroring the culturally negative associations carried by the trope of the Barbary Coast, are swept aside in a moment:

I would have expected a raw, untameable coastline surrounded by stark cliffs, but instead, covered in the most luscious vegetation, soft hills spread out before me, from whose inclines the dazzling white walls of countless rustic houses shimmered through the soft green of the orange, olive and fig trees (10).

Part of the comfort Jungmann draws from this first glimpse is a sense that the coastline is not “untameable” – the word he uses is “unbewirthbar” implying agricultural husbandry as well as cultural control – but is actually fertile, and, indeed, already settled, cultivated, and quite beautiful. However, whilst Jungmann writes of his relief at the relatively civilized nature of the region, he does not at this point make clear whether he is expressing his appreciation for indigenous farming and civilization, or celebrating early French agricultural reform. His first encounter with Algiers, then, opens a field of tension within which he can both champion the colonial project, and also admire aspects of local culture. That tension, as we shall see, continues to play out in his representation of peoples and spaces.

In contrast, Bock’s first encounter with the Algerian colony is neither his first sea journey, nor his first vision of a foreign coastline. He begins his diary as an adventure-seeking drifter gripped by a “drive to travel” (Bock, 1883, 4). His first ever glimpse of the ocean in Marseilles makes a “deep impression” (2) upon him, though he affords no further space to that experience. Nonetheless he organizes a working passage on a touring French steamship, which allows him to travel to Constantinople and back over a period of weeks. He stops at a range of Mediterranean ports en route, though he sees little more than the ubiquitous strip of white rooftops and minarets in the various North African cities of his voyage, remaining on board to discharge his duties; the tone of his comments are those of an impassive neutral observer,

cataloguing the stations along his journey, unmoved by the distant spectacles of foreign landscapes and cities. His subsequent entry into French service is no act of vicarious imperialism. In Marseilles, he is deceived by a fellow German's tales of commercial opportunity in Africa and the possibility of joining "expeditions into the interior" (7), finds himself at a military mustering station and is virtually press-ganged into service, setting sail for Algeria in 1879 on Christmas Eve.

Bock's written account of his first experiences of Algeria shows not only clearer marks of European cultural influence than Jungmann's text, but also describes the infrastructure and technologies that underpinned mid-to-late- nineteenth-century colonialism. A networked telegraphic system allows for the swift relay of information across distance and enhanced both the military control of geographical space and its political administration – and, in his case, the transfer of German money from his parents (7). By the time he arrives for his first posting he is already well travelled and familiar with the North African coast, but makes nothing in writing of the view of Oran from the sea. French colonial influence now firmly extends to Oran, over 400 km to the West of Algiers, and it is to this smaller city that Bock is posted. Socializing on the terrace of the fort at which he is first stationed, Bock finally recounts the view that was to be had: the sea to the north with its many international sailing vessels, the quays of the docks in which hundreds of Arabs load and offload cargo, and Oran itself stretching to the east of his position (9). Whilst the physical elevation of the terrace affords him a great view of the region, it also evidences the economic and cultural control that France had established over urban Algeria. Here Bock's text, with its characteristic lack of psychological depth and moribund style, contrasts strongly with Jungmann's writing. The texts' differences also flow, in part, from the very different historical context in which both men wrote. The Orientalist nightmare of the Barbary coast and its corsairs that had initially nagged at Jungmann's thoughts has been displaced in Bock's writing, though in its place we do not find a more respectful

European engagement with indigenous culture on its own terms, but modern French Algeria, dominated by a hegemonic European culture. Also, Bock's unquestioning acceptance of these facts arguably begins to reveal an author who is at ease with colonialism.

Algeria – France – Germany: The Intercultural Triangle in Para-colonial German Travelogues

Both travelogues contain intertwining accounts of the authors' changing relationships to the French colonials and indigenous communities. It is perhaps becoming clear that Jungmann's *Scenes and Sketches* shows how his painterly sensitivity to colour, texture, and movement make for vividly descriptive prose with similar attention to visual elements. It is precisely in its attention to the "beauty" of indigenous culture and the value he attaches to it that the tensions in his views on French colonialism come to the fore most strongly. Jungmann adopts two different approaches in writing about the street life of Algiers. On the one hand, he relates with a degree of excitement the rich mix of European and North African groups in public spaces, referring to the dizzying whorl of languages he hears by alluding to the biblical Tower of Babel (14). Elsewhere he engages in a more taxonomical approach, presenting a lengthy set of descriptions of indigenous communities, including Moors, Jews, the "Kulughi" descendants of Ottoman Turks, sub-Saharan Africans and others (49-63). Jungmann describes with varying degrees of detail the customs and occupations of these groups, often providing particularly lavish descriptions of clothing and costumes, drawing on much of the material that informed his French publication *Costumes*. Though he refrains from establishing an overt hierarchy of groups, Jungmann's attention to the description of clothing demarcates sharply between

communities, offering an ethnic typology of the colony constructed around established European models.⁹

Elsewhere, this same sensitivity to the aesthetic qualities of indigenous culture seems to realign Jungmann's sympathies. From early in his narrative, his views on the French were tempered by his dislike for their hierarchical value systems: he describes how, as a foreign soldier on a French ship, he was forced to eat his meals in conditions that would be unfit for animals by German standards, whilst the French officer classes dined in luxury (5-6). Later, whilst traversing the city of Algiers, he notes with some distaste how French colonials have begun to marginalize local peoples and their traditions:

How much times have changed recently! There, where the beauty of the south dared show itself unveiled [...] now resides the unshaven Grenadier; there, where the Muslim called out to his Prophet, touching his forehead on the flowing marble of the floor, now resound the profane songs of the frivolous Gauls; the marble halls of the courtyards are partly in ruins, the dazzling white walls of the rooms blackened by smoke from the field kitchens [...] (20-21).

Jungmann expresses an admiration for the architecture and ambience of mosques, for the piety of Muslims and the sounds of Islamic prayer, but a dislike of the drinking songs of the French and their conduct generally as colonizers. In contrast to the narrative commentaries in his text *Costumes*, the germanophone publication both allows him to preach the legitimacy of colonialism and offers an opportunity, if not a certain requirement, to critique it. Perhaps Jungmann intended *Scenes and Sketches* to speak solely to the anonymous "Circle of Letitia" to whom it was dedicated in a melancholic sonnet prefacing the work: the circle apparently comprised estranged friends back home with whom Jungmann had spent many joyous hours and whom he

sorely missed (i). Or, alternatively, the narrative represents a critical condescension to French colonialism conceived to help him salvage some sense of himself as a patriotic Prussian following the unnamed offences that drove him from his homeland. Either way, the position Jungmann adopts in relation to both the French and the indigenous communities remains problematic, if not contradictory. The contradiction arises not only from his juxtaposition of apparently pro- and counter-colonial attitudes, but also from the fact that his objections to French colonialism themselves evoke a nostalgic, painterly ideal of pre-colonial Algerian culture as an undamaged, even exoticized Islamic paradise – an ideal which, in turn, runs the risk of displacing more heterogeneous and nuanced representations of indigenous peoples and culture in the orientalist mode described by Said.

Emil Bock's relationship both with his French employers and indigenous peoples pivots around an unequivocal and far more robust sense of his identity as a German soldier. He serves against the backdrop of an increasingly influential German Empire in the 1880s, reflected both in Bock's descriptions of German Imperial consulates around the Mediterranean and in his proud acknowledgement of the growing reputation of German soldiers abroad (6). At times, his views seem indistinguishable from those of a French colonial soldier. One example of this can be found in a somewhat incongruous passage dedicated to the social lot of Moorish women (19-24). Bock explicitly states that these reflections draw from first-hand experiences – something not typical in an otherwise taciturn soldierly account that relates little of its author's activities as a *flâneur* and contains virtually no reflection on cultural matters. He recalls his shock at the comments of a Moorish merchant in a café, who boasts that he has both the right and the power to kill his wife just as he would swat a fly (20). Bock then extends his sketch of women in local culture, where he sees them treated as a cattle-like commodity to be bought and sold for marriage and child rearing purposes (22-3). Bock experiences these events in the company of

his French-speaking comrades, but it is also with them that he is allowed to “view” the wives of a local Arab man on the final night of their posting in the area.

Concluding the section by observing that there are both beautiful and repugnant indigenous women and noting that “Once they are married, their facial features tend to harden” (24), Bock’s comments are driven by an urge to glimpse the beauties of this local harem and express his relative disappointment at what he glimpses. This undercuts his initial social identification with the position of woman in Algerian society, and finds him, along with his French compatriots, complicit both in a patriarchal, colonial gaze and in using the common trope of the initially alluring, though later repugnant, Oriental woman.¹⁰

Later in the travelogue, whilst soldiering in the interior, Bock’s perspective again appears to align with that of the French. On 23 April 1881 he is promoted to Corporal and takes a leading role in quelling one of the many Arabic tribal insurrections against the new civil authorities in territories to the south that were seen as ‘wild’ (25). In describing the battle he refers to his Arabic “enemies”, representing them as a mass of “brown riders” wearing white *burnus*, who were impressive but barbarous as they had kidnapped and murdered women and children from a nearby Spanish settler community (33). The strongly ethnicized, negatively connoted representation doubtless closely resembles the French colonial perception of the Arabs. However, as Bock experiences extreme hardship and set-backs during subsequent campaigns in the interior, he openly critiques French military policy, particularly with regard to the treatment of soldiers in the Foreign Legion:

Yes, when we first returned to El Kreider [...] I watched with my own eyes as grievously ill French soldiers were pulled out of transport wagons, only to have their places taken by Arabic prisoners. It may be right to show the Arabs that they are in humane hands, but to risk the lives of one’s own people in so

doing, is to go too far – and in truth two of the displaced sick men died, before medical help could reach them. In this way France wishes to make itself civilizer of the world. (34)

Bock empathizes strongly with the lower ranking French soldiers, who are treated badly in order that locals may be seen to receive good treatment. These feelings override any acknowledgement that there is, for reasons moral or expedient, some virtue in the demonstrably favourable treatment of Arabic prisoners. Bock lambasts the elitism of the French officer classes and their disdain for the common foot soldier, emphasizing how such attitudes are not befitting of a nation that presents itself as a civilizing, global colonial power. This criticism does not shake his faith in empire and colony, nor indeed drive him to sympathize with colonized peoples; yet it is more through his artistic appreciation of indigenous Algerian culture that he critiques French colonialism.

Urban shifts and the taming of interior: space and colonial power in para-colonial writing

Jungmann writes little about armed conflict or his involvement in it, and a great deal more about towns, architecture and landscapes. Again, it is in this mode of writing that his views on the French colonial project in Algeria come to the fore. In the second half of his travelogue he offers short chapters describing a sequence of Algerian towns, including Bona (Bône), Oran, and Constantine. These accounts read more like a hybrid of the diaries of some itinerant art-historian and early nineteenth-century ethnographer than soldier. Accounts of colonial invasion, local insurrections and armed conflict figure more as second-hand reports – indeed, more focus is given

to the effects of war on these different locales than on descriptions of military activity. Writing on Bona, for example, he offers extended descriptions of the surrounding landscape and the town's extensive fortifications, followed by a short, depersonalized account of how the town fared through recent conflicts. He differentiates between the more Europeanized Moors inhabiting the town, to whom he appears well disposed, and the "terrible and warlike tribes" of the surrounding wilderness (169). The Moors had greeted the arrival of French troops with great joy. After the troops had been subsequently re-stationed Jungmann speaks of the city being defended bravely by the Moors against insurgent tribes seeking to punish any collaboration with the French (168). The city, then, is represented as a militarily secure space, populated by what Jungmann viewed as acceptable, indigenous people, and which he sharply demarcated from the untamed space beyond and its barbarous inhabitants.

Elsewhere, though, Jungmann treats the impact of colonization on space differently. In his writing on Algiers and surrounding area, we find a lengthy description of a working mosque, its structure, decoration, and hushed interiors. Jungmann laments how the French soldiers enter the spaces forbidden to Christians wearing muddy boots, laughing, and "with their usual disregard" whispering and mocking Muslims at prayer, seemingly intent on insulting these "subjugated people" (39). Not only is Jungmann critical of the desecration of sacred spaces of a colonized people, but he dislikes the denigration of Islam to be found in the comments of the French soldiers. Elsewhere Jungmann extends his comments to public spaces. He describes how the chiming of mechanized European clocks, installed on city market places, is fast displacing the five Islamic calls to prayer that marked out the day within the city's traditional sonic architecture (35). Here he notes how a modern, Western system of temporal management, which is measured and mechanized, is displacing an experience of time derived from different cultural coordinates (35). He even criticizes the French treatment of agricultural land, criticizing the "uncouth" French farmers for

their “killing ways,” describing how they uproot indigenous trees to plant the potatoes and rice needed for a European diet (21). Art, architecture, religion and even the horticulture of Algeria are destroyed in the process of colonization pursued by the philistine French. Jungmann’s treatment of space again exposes ambivalent, multi-layered attitudes to colonialism and local populations; he identifies with the French military at times, remains supportive of the political and social order brought by colonialism to the region, though also writes of how colonialism displaces and devalues local peoples and their cultures. In mounting his “defence” of indigenous culture, Jungmann again evokes a rather simplistic sense of the legitimacy and authenticity of Algerian art, architecture, traditions and religious beliefs – one that precludes writing a more complex Algerian cultural geography, avoids drawing on the voices of local informants and appears more concerned with critiquing French conduct, than with deepening understanding or sympathy with all things Algerian.

Bock’s *Diary* demonstrates more militarized, unequivocally pro-colonial attitudes to space. His descriptions of urban Oran reflect the reconfiguration of built environment and socio-cultural space that had been part of the process of colonial urban transformation over the preceding fifty years. The re-modelling of public spaces through demolition and new building are in evidence, though Bock notices and affords less space to such matters and describes what is, for him, already a relatively Europeanized space. Oran’s buildings are shown to illustrate different historical and cultural strata, though these are contained within an increasingly colonial infrastructure. Whilst houses and shops are built in close proximity and appear to be visited by milling crowds in the manner of a bazaar, the streets themselves are constructed to have an admirably “regular” (“regelmäßig”) character, lead, significantly, to a railway station and boast an opera house (9). By day, the markets and thoroughfares are described in terms of their mixed human and cultural geographies: Bock writes of the “buntes Leben” (“colourful life”) to be found there,

the German phrase implying both the literal colour of the diverse styles of clothing, though also the culturally heterogeneous nature of these spaces. However, Bock shifts mode to write about the city more as a statistical and cartographical abstraction, listing the population as comprising the urban majority Spanish population,¹¹ and the non-European groups who “reside in their own quarter, in the *village nègre*, as it is commonly known in Algeria” (9). So whilst 1880s Oran is a culturally diverse city, that diversity is contained and divided within the physical and ideological architectures of colonialism, with non-whites moving freely enough, though domiciled in what has been identified by historically inclined social scientists as Arabic-African ghettos (Benkada 1998). Whilst Bock admires some of the European facilities on offer in the city, these patterns of segregation are not something he criticizes or justifies – they are listed and described as the incontrovertible facts of colonial life.

Bock devotes more of his narrative to describing his exploits as a soldier in the desert interior. His account begins with a portrayal of himself as a naïve tourist who gradually develops into a well-integrated and effective legionnaire. Distinctive in Bock’s later writing is the importance attached to physical space in the theatre of war and how he personally and soldiers generally fare within it. Bock gives paragraph-long accounts of his march through the Saharan Atlas Mountains to an outpost at El Abiodh Sidi Cheikh, constantly referring to geographical locations and often citing precise numerical distances in metres, especially when this relates to the canny tactics of Arab and Kabyle insurgents, who, in numerous skirmishes, remain beyond the range of French artillery (24-36). This, of course, is a soldier recording the logistics of war in the manner of an official report, though it also marks the first experiences of a new kind of warfare for the German soldier, which not only involves him controlling a territory on an alien continent and in unaccustomed climate, but doing so over vast

distances, far not only from his German homelands, but in a space where European power and control *per se* were, at best, tenuous.

Bock begins to reflect on this new form of soldiering in a number of extended passages. He writes, for instance, of the existence of the legionnaire upon the “immeasurable plains” of the Algerian interior and how this requires learning about a kind of warfare unfamiliar to Germans:

The African soldier does not have the same sublime feelings as the German soldier, who battles for his king and country in the field: out there, in the desert, he crawls around like a skeleton, fighting only to save his own hide and in so doing forgets all the endless toiling which the forced marches and the month-long encampments in the hot sands bring and demand of him (31).

Bock first contrasts German soldiers in Europe and in Africa: caught in a far more desperate fight for survival the latter cannot enjoy the sublime feelings enjoyed by the former, who fights on home territory for patriotic reasons. However, Bock writes of a certain positive toughening that exposure to the African climate and distance from home seemingly brings with it, asserting that the colonial soldier endures and adapts to his hardships, and sees the vast unfilled spaces of Africa as a *tabula rasa* upon which he can impress himself (31). However dehumanizing such experiences at first appear, they toughen the soldier, deepen his ambitions and extend his skills, challenging him to forge a new world. For Bock, it was German soldiers with African experience who were best equipped for overseas expansion.¹³

Conclusion

Produced from a para-colonial position the two travelogues considered here both triangulate impressions of Algerian peoples, spaces and cultures with writing about French colonials and colonialism, but do so in ways that articulate different attitudes to national origins held by the two authors and their different aspirations to Empire and colony. Poised to become a colonial soldier of the Reich, Bock remains largely derisive of indigenous peoples, especially when narrating experiences of conflict and tension. He admires the French colonial project and identifies with French legionnaires, whilst showing he has learned in the wilderness to surpass them as colonial soldiers. By contrast, the enigmatic Jungmann vacillates not only between languages and national identities, but also between pro- and anti-colonial sentiments. His travelogue shows support for the civilizing ideology underlying French colonialism in North Africa, and at times he draws on established racialized and taxonomical ethnographies of Algerian peoples to inform his readership, though he also expresses at length his distaste for French colonial conduct. His position, though, remains one of critique and he does not suggest some superior form of German colonialism in any substantive way. For him, artistic appreciation of indigenous Algerian culture becomes the vehicle of criticism. That appreciation, though, evokes ideals of Algeria as a pre-colonial Oriental idyll. Although on one level this serves to symbolize the notion of a culture, community and territory undamaged by colonialism, and speaks of Jungmann's wish in some way to protect that idyll, this also shows the author sliding into classically orientalist practices and values which simplify the complexities of local people, culture and spaces. His position thus remains highly problematic and underscores his own deep ambivalence to and at least partial implication in the French colonial project.

In dealing with these travelogues there is perhaps a temptation to write of a uniformly para-colonial German experience of nineteenth-century Algeria. Yet a reading of these texts, together with a brief recollection of the sophistication expected

of contemporary readers of travel literature, reminds us that we must remain sensitive not only to the complexities of the “local” culture, but also to the heterogeneity of the “travelling” culture, the idiosyncrasies of its itinerant subjects and the diverse insights into multiple, diverging histories to be found in their writing.¹⁴

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Notes

¹ Jungmann's text is referred to hereafter as *Scenes and Sketches*. All translations are my own.

² Bock's text is referred to hereafter as *Diary*. All my translations are my own.

³ Following the absorption of the coastal regions into the French state in 1848, military rule was initially maintained over the more untamed regions of the Algerian interior. However, Napoleon III halted inland expansion from 1860 and issued a number of decrees enshrining the autonomy of the tribal leaders he had come to admire. The civil government subsequently put in place by the Third French Republic later resumed expansion inland, partly in a bid to resettle French Alsatians displaced by the Franco-Prussian Wars, all of which provoked further insurrection by Arabic and Kabyle tribal groups.

⁴ Sessions (2011) emphasizes that political control and infrastructural development of colonized spaces transcended the chaos of French governmental forms throughout the nineteenth century (3-4).

⁵ The term is not synonymous with Stephanie Newell's use of the term, for instance, which describes the attempts of indigenous communities to carve out a new cultural identity by borrowing from and subverting the culture of the colonizer (Newell 2002, 27-9).

⁶ Marchand (2009) seeks these alternative modalities of writing about the Orient largely in the history of Germanophone academic oriental studies. She writes at length against Said's theoretically predicated notion of occidental-oriental encounters as a static, self-other binary, favouring instead a source-led approach that exposes different forms of European engagement with the Orient, influenced by institutional and intellectual history, scholarly methodology and the personal circumstances of the Orientalists concerned (xxv-xxix). She discusses, for example, the works of the scholar Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930), whose *History of the Koran* (1860) marked a

sophisticated departure in European Islamic scholarship. In reconstructing the origins of the Koran, Nöldeke privileged Islamic sources over Christian texts and thus broke generally with the long tradition of presenting Mohammed as the imposter of religious history (174-5). This, though, did not mark a simple Islamophilia on his part, but a genuine drive to philological accuracy. When, at times, Nöldeke wrote condescendingly on the spiritual value of the Koran, this was no simple Islamophobia: it marked a Western, Eurocentric gesture perhaps, but one that expressed the scholar's increasing drift towards rational secularism, rather than a bias against Oriental religion. To collapse Nöldeke's complex position on Islam, partly dialogical, partly sympathetic, though equally dismissive, into a form of unilateral othering is to be wholly reductive, according to Marchand (176).

⁷ See: http://www.romanistik.uni-wuerzburg.de/mitarbeiter/emeriti_und_ehemalige_mitarbeiter/ruhe/forschung/reiseberichte_maghreb/. Accessed 13.03.16.

⁸ On associations and representations of the barbary coast in German culture see Ruhe (1993).

⁹ Clancy-Smith (2009, 34) shows that Jungmann draws on an ethnic typology first laid out by Thomas Shaw in his *Travels and observations relating to several parts of Barbary and the Levant* (1738).

¹⁰ Ulrike Stamm (2013) examines a number of nineteenth-century francophone and germanophone texts, exploring different forms of sexual domination of oriental women by male European colonists and exposing patterns of male revulsion for oriental women following sexual conquest.

¹¹ The longstanding Spanish colonial presence in Oran comprised the descendants of colonists from the period of Spanish colonial rule ca. 1509-1792, and more recent economic migrants who arrived after 1830.

¹³ Bock closes his travelogue by expressing his affection for individual French comrades, but offers a protracted and detailed explanation of why the French military is inferior to the German Imperial army, citing everything from the lack of camaraderie between ranks to the rigid repetitiveness of training manoeuvres (58-68).

¹⁴ A recent survey of the diverse range of approaches to travel literature, which sheds light on historical epochs and genres can be found in Moroz, Grzegorz, Sztachelska, Jolanta (2010).