

Wyndham Lewis's Encounter with Colonial Morocco in *Journey into Barbary*

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Introduction

Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) is one of the twentieth century's most important artistic and intellectual figures: painter, novelist, poet, dramatist, short-story writer, cultural critic, political commentator, walking encyclopaedia, raconteur, critic, journalist, essayist, pamphleteer, and traveller.¹ Lewis was, and continues to be, unique as a man and as a modernist.² Still, Lewis, in his own time and since, has been thought of as an abstract artist who revolted against modernism after the First World War and rejected most of his original principles. There are some contemporaries by whom Lewis gets influenced and whom he lambasts such as T.S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, George Orwell, and Gertrude Stein, to name but a few prominent writers. Lewis is also without equal a critic of visual, literary, architectural, balletic, and musical modernisms. He was linked with emerging art tendencies and movements, most notably Cubism, Expressionism, Italian Futurism, and Kandinskyan abstraction.

Having experienced the World War I at hand, Lewis was initially eager to reconvene the Vorticists and to continue with the pre-war avant-gardist project. But he gradually came to believe that post-war English society had transformed decisively and that the avant-gardism he favoured could only play a minimal role in helping to effect the social and cultural transformation he desired. His critical project was eventually split into several individually published works, among them such main critical texts as *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), *Time and Western Man*, and *The Lion and the Fox* (1927), on the one hand, and remarkable novels like *The Childermass* (1928) and *The Apes of God* (1930), on the other. In the broadest sense, these books were collectively devoted, as Lewis put it, "to the work of radical analysis of the ideas by which our society has been taught to live."³

Like Shakespearean King Lear, "more sinned against than sinning," Lewis casts himself in the role of victim for the purpose of his melodramatic "Hail and Farewell!" His claim that he travelled "unaccompanied" is false, as his wife Gladys Anne was with him for the entire trip. Lewis conceals this fact in order to highlight the dramatic gesture of solitary leave-taking, emerging as a kind of innocent abroad,

1. Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering: An Autobiography, 1914-1926* (London: John Calder, 1982), 3.

2. Andrzej Gasiorek and Nathan Waddell, *Wyndham Lewis: A Critical Guide*. eds. (Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2015).

3. Wyndham Lewis, *The Enemy* 3, ed. (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1994), 49.

who has casually prepared at the last minute for a difficult journey.⁴ His departure, he claims, was “in the heroic style,” although this heroism and the previous drama are inflected with a tone of sarcasm as he caricatures both the romantic conventions of travel and his own covert impulses: “shrouded in anonymity I ‘stole silently away’.”⁵ As he leaves, the petty bickering of Bloomsbury merges into the global conflicts of the European powers: “The sedentary habits of six years of work had begun, I confess, to weary me. Then the atmosphere of our dying European society is to me profoundly depressing. Some relief is necessary from the daily spectacle of those expiring Lions and Eagles, who obviously will never recover from the death-blows they dealt each other (foolish beasts and birds) from 1914 to 1918.”⁶

Wyndham Lewis is a modernist traveller and intellectual; we can say that travel and travel writing were influenced by literary modernism and vice versa. According to David G Farley, the main techniques modernist writers deploy in their works emanate from these writers’ encounter with foreign scenes and exotic landscapes: “The fragmented forms, montage techniques, and streams of consciousness that are the salient and distinguishing features of modernist style and experimentation owe much to the foreign scenes, exotic locales, wrenching perspectives, and uncanny displacements that were the result of a generation unmoored from convention and enlivened by foreign travel.”⁷ At the onset of the twentieth century, and more obviously in the interwar years, Wyndham Lewis had acquired what Ford Madox Ford dubbed “the habit of flux.” Increasingly, in the twentieth century travel writing “has come out of travel undertaken specifically for the sake of writing about it.”⁸ In this vein, the distinction Helen Carr has done about the interwar travel writing between “travelling writers” and actual “travel writers” is very pertinent. In her perspective, the tendency for the present day travel book to draw as much on a fragmentary interiority as on an objective reality, had its origin during the modern period; she points out that “in the twentieth century [travel writing] has become a more subjective form, more memoir than manual, and often an alternative form of writing for novelists.”⁹

Lewis made a trip to Morocco in the summer of 1931. It is true that Lewis tried to publish the current book, *Journey into Barbary*, in two parts known as *Filibusters in Barbary* and *Kasbahs and Souks*, but failed to do so. The compilation and publication of these two books in one was completed in 1983, that is some 52 years after the actual trip had taken place, and 23 years after the death of Lewis in 1957. The possible reasons behind the delay of this publication will be mentioned in due course. In

4. David G. Farley, *Modernist Travel Writing: Intellectuals Abroad* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 118.

5. Wyndham Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, edited by C.F.Fox (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, [1932], 1983), 24.

6. *Ibid.*, 24.

7. Farley, 1.

8. Helen Carr “Modernism and Travel (1880-1940).” In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 70-86.

9. *Ibid.*, 74.

contrast to other British travellers who sailed to the Rock and then to Tangier as the gate of Morocco, Lewis travelled from London via Paris to southern France. From there he went to Oran, Algeria. He continued his peregrination by going to Tlemcen and across into Morocco to Oujda and Fez, then to Marrakesh through Casablanca. From the city of Morocco, Lewis penetrated into the southwestern town of Agadir and “on into the *bled*, or semi-wilderness, of the Sous area, with its great forts – the Kasbahs – built by the Berbers Finally he reached a thin line of beleaguered French military outposts. Beyond that lay the Rio de Oro, the vast stretch of Western Sahara wasteland.”¹⁰ His description of his departure from England is replete with the conventions of the travel genre, beginning with his dramatic leave-taking:

“I sold my goods, “liquidated” my belongings, sold my barrels, upon which stood my lamps, put in store my books. The “Luther of Ossington Street” (as the naughty, naughty post-Ninetyish old and young kittens call him) left that ultra-Lutheran spot, he kicked the dust of moralist and immoralist England off his un-Lutheran feet, determined for a while to exchange it against the red dust of the Sand – Wind of the Rio de Oro!”¹¹

With a map of the Sahara and one of the High, Middle and Anti-Atlas, the traveller's main objective of his foray is to head for the High Atlas, then the Sous, and the Rio de Oro – to the *bled* or to the heart of wilderness. Through his track into the heart of Barbary, Wyndham Lewis focuses on some names, reproduces or renames them in accordance with the Western colonial agenda and historiography. So, naming and renaming Moroccan spaces to suit his imperialist visions in Morocco are very crucial in his travelogue. Once he sets up his trip for Barbary, he (re)deploys names such as “*bled*,” “Rio de Oro,” “French North Africa,” “French Morocco,” “Zone of Insecurity,” “dissidence,” “Spanish Sahara,” “Occidental Sahara,” “No Man's Land,” etc.

In his chapter entitled “By Whom is French North Africa Inhabited?,” the author interrogates about the inhabitants of North Africa by stating that “when you first begin looking about you after landing in French Africa you gradually come to discover by whom Algeria and Morocco are at present peopled.”¹² The traveller creates a new reality, the purpose of which is to buttress his imperialist tendencies in this colony. North African is purely French, and it is colonized and appropriated by the French, not by any other imperial nations. The colonialist discourse takes over by taking over, revealing and concealing the appropriating impulse in certain rhetorical gestures. David Spurr asserts that colonial discourse “implicitly claims territory surveyed as the colonizer's own; the colonizer speaks as an inheritor whose very vision is charged with racial ambition.”¹³

10. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, x.

11. *Ibid.*, 24.

12. *Ibid.*, 43.

13. *Ibid.*, 28.

Bill Ashcroft remarks that “maps have continued to be a prime means of ‘textualizing’ the spatial reality of colonized peoples, by enforcing a Eurocentric view of spatiality, and naming, or renaming, existing places a demonstration of power.”¹⁴ For the author again, the dynamic of naming becomes a primary colonizing process because it appropriates, defines, captures the place in language. Moreover, “[t]o name place is to announce discursive control over it by the very act of inscription, because through names, location becomes metonymic of those processes of travel, annexation and colonization which effect the dominance of imperial powers over the non-European world.”¹⁵ Indeed, by naming things, we take possession of them; these names acquire an ontological status of their own, thus obscuring or concealing the original act of appropriation. Wyndham Lewis has the desire to appropriate Barbary to his vision of the West. “French Morocco” becomes a reality and a topos that is infused with the “civilizing” myths of the French and surrounded by an aureole of humanity and justice. To quote Lewis: “French Morocco is the last great European enterprise of that order, magnificently carried out by a great soldier – one of the last of the great European military figures. It shows the French at their best – as the humane, civilizing, most genially-acquisitive, of all powers, able and good-humoured.”¹⁶

Theories of colonial discourse have been fundamental to the emergence of the wider field of post-colonial cultural theory. Colonial discourse analysis is comprised of a set of interpretative practices that critically examine the role played by a variety of representational apparatuses in the regulation of colonial and imperial subjectivities. Colonialist discourse, hence, feeds on such strategies and apparatuses to perpetuate its presence and legitimacy. Before embarking on colonizing the “uncivilized and inferior Other” and its space, the latter should be created in a new reality. Lewis engages vociferously in such strategies. After claiming that North Africa is purely appropriated by the French, he continues on asking questions by posing “By whom North Africa is Peopled?” It is peopled by the French, Arabs, Turks, Jews, Blacks and Berbers, Lewis argues. He focuses on the latter’s race throughout his travelogue. Berbers are different from the Arabs by their peculiar clothes and physical mien and they mostly settle in “*bled*.” This is a name that is deployed by the author throughout the account, and it connotes wilderness, darkness, disorder, anarchy, periphery, misgovernment, filibustering, *inter alia*. The following definition by the author is worth quoting: “It is the *bled* (you cannot translate *bled* champaign or countryside nor yet quite wilderness. It is what is not *city* in Maghreb ... but nine-tenths wilderness and or tufa steppe).”¹⁷

This *bled* is the signifier of the Moroccan other that is associated with the above epithets. In attempting to differentiate among the various cities he visits and in the

14. Bill Ashcroft, *Postcolonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001), 133.

15. *Ibid.*, 134.

16. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 76.

17. *Ibid.*, 115 (emphasis in original).

interest of driving his polemic home, Lewis finds himself struggling to contain the very notion of history that has been let loose in the modern world. In his journey from Tlemcen to Casablanca to Marrakech to Agadir to the coast of the Rio de Oro, we see Lewis struggling to accommodate the pictorial and the historical, as “the experimental form of his modernist satire comes into conflict with the political impurity of his polemic [...]”¹⁸ To exemplify, while in the city of Casablanca, Wyndham Lewis remarks that “the pseudo-Paleface is far outnumbered by the dark faces come out of *bled*: Casa is swarming with nomads, just as half its *soi-disant* permanent population are nomads of some kind as well: it was built by nomads: perhaps one day it will be destroyed by nomads.”¹⁹ While in Morocco, Lewis portrays the cities he visits – Casablanca, Marrakech, Agadir and Rio de Oro – in terms of their relative stability or their resistance to the overweening influence of the European presence and to various forces of dissolution.

1. Colonial Casablanca: A “Makeshift” City

As Lewis enters Morocco proper the question of history will take on a new valence and it will be a more crucial element of the thesis that he is advancing about the state of the west and his political remedies for it. The first city Lewis visits in Morocco is Casablanca, a city he describes as the “city that Lyautey built,” and “the pearl of the French Renaissance,”²⁰ invoking the city’s “founder” in the convention of the historical chronicle or epic. At the same time, fixing this originary moment in this way rubs out any history of the indigenous peoples. Lewis further wipes out the city’s native identity as he describes it as a “huge marine outpost of Europe”²¹ and “an enormous whitewashed fungus-town.”²² Casablanca is for Lewis “emblematic of the precarious post-war power of France. It is perhaps the place that holds the secret of the destiny of this astonishing latter-day colonial conquest.” Whereas for Lewis the history of Tlemcen itself was important for understanding its present, here “[t]he history of Casablanca, or Dar el Beida, is not important.”²³ History is unimportant here for Lewis because the population is composed either of nomads or of European settlers who have no claim to the city. In other words, history is not just unimportant, it doesn’t exist. It is, Lewis acknowledges, an ancient city, and yet it is a city peculiarly without continuity or traditions implying that Casablanca itself is a kind of blank slate, completely lacking in history or it is historyless.

In spite of finding history to be insignificant in Casablanca, Lewis refers to various travel books on the city that describe the history of its peculiar racial and ethnic complexion. He refers, for example, to Arthur Leared’s *Morocco and the Moors* (1876). Leared visited the city in the second half of the nineteenth century. Gazing at Casablanca from the sea, Leared asserted that “if we must acknowledge

18. Farley, *Modernist Travel Writing: Intellectuals Abroad*, 128.

19. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 74.

20. *Ibid.*, 65.

21. *Ibid.*, 65.

22. *Ibid.*, 73.

23. *Ibid.*, 65.

disappointment on landing at Tangier, it was great still in the case of Casa Blanca. Viewed from the sea its compact-looking walls, batteries, and couple of minarets, give it a respectable appearance, but inside the walls *it is the dirtiest, most tumble-down place ever seen.*²⁴ Lewis also subsumes within this account other texts that describe the city as filthy and that show the preponderance of beggars and indigenes, the most common of whom is Joseph Thomson. Thomson describes the city of Casablanca as follows, a rendition Lewis quotes himself:

“Casablanca occupies a flat, low-lying piece of ground close to the sea; the houses have not a single feature worth remarking; the principal street is a running sewer of filth [...] the people are more ugly and dirty, the donkeys worse treated and more mangy, the dogs more numerous and repulsive, and the beggars in greater numbers and decidedly more importunate and loathsome, than in any of the other places we had yet seen.”²⁵

Casablanca, for Lewis, is reminiscent of these nineteenth-century depictions in that it is comprised primarily of what he calls “an auxiliary population of nomads.”²⁶

Casablanca was a small Moroccan harbour town of the Atlantic Ocean with 12,000 inhabitants before French colonization. By the end of the 1910s, Casablanca had experienced significant urban growth as the result of construction of a new railway, a modern port, and industrial expansion. It also became a major centre for French colonial administration and economy, and was considered the main European urban centre in this part of North Africa. In his “Planning Prostitution in Colonial Morocco: Bousbir, Casablanca’s *quartiers réservés*,” Jean-François Staszak states that

“The French architect and town-planner Henri Prost (1874-1959) led the design of Casablanca’s master plan (1917-22). He was eager to build a rational city, modern and beautiful, and to segregate European and ‘indigenous’ populations and activities. Different architectural teams designed the European districts according to modern French planning and design styles (art nouveau and art deco), but they also drew part of their inspiration for the Moroccan district from local architecture and urban morphology.”²⁷

The Europeans, especially the French, brought to Casablanca an infrastructure that provided hygiene through the construction of sewage systems: “Europe has brought its drains and lavatories with it, all stinks are banished and middens

24. Arthur Leared, *Morocco and the Moors: Being an Account of Travels, with a General Description of the Country and its People* (London: Sampson Low, 1876), 55-56, emphasis added.

25. Joseph Thomson, *Travels in the Atlas and Southern Morocco: A Narrative of Exploration* (London: George Philip & Son, 1889), 33.

26. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 67.

27. Jean-François Staszak, “Planning Prostitution in Colonial Morocco: Bousbir, Casablanca’s *quartiers réservés*,” in *(Sub)Urban Sexscapes: Geographies and Regulation of the Sex Industry*, edited by Paul J. Maginn and Christine Steinmetz, (London: Routledge, 2015), 179.

frowned upon.”²⁸ Thus the colonial presence was in part beneficial to Casablanca notwithstanding it remains for Lewis a city of nomads without its own history.

Lewis describes the populations of the city as nomadic or semi-nomadic; he first sees the various “Arab villages,” or “*nouala*” villages, that are “an important nomad or semi-nomad settlement composed of many hundreds of families, come there to work.”²⁹ Lewis sees these settlements throughout Morocco, but their existence in Casablanca in particular suggests to him the odd uprootedness and “dislocation” of Western life. These nomads “prowl round and smell out the work and the money... If hundreds of hands are wanted, soon there is a caboose-city,”³⁰ or *kabbousah*. These nomads are for him symptomatic of both the advantage of the French colonial government and of the drawbacks of capitalism: “In Casablanca, for instance, there is a vast settlement that the French have named “Bidonville.” It is a city within the city, in fact. It consists of small huts mainly composed of petrol-tins. “Petrol-tin Town” ... is again a mushroom settlement of nomads, attracted by the dollars to be picked up in this Babylon of the Nazarene half-finished.”³¹ By 1920, Casablanca’s population had grown to 100,000, some 40,000 of whom Europeans. The latter lived in the new city built by French authorities. In contrast, Moroccan workers, many of whom had migrated from the countryside, lived in specifically designed settlements (*ville indigène*) or in the spontaneous self-made *Bidonvilles* – a term coined in the 1930s in Casablanca to designate local slums partly made out of metal cans (*bidons*) on the periphery of the city.

With the double effect of job scarcity and unemployment, migration to major cities like Casablanca provided an alternative source of revenue. For some women as subaltern subjects, prostitution was their main source of income, and the *quartier réservé* of Casablanca represented the largest space in which prostitution was organized and regularized under French colonial authorities. Hence prostitution developed in Casablanca in response to growing demands of European males and to the upsurge of migration. At the end of the 1910s, a decision was made to forbid street prostitution within the city and to build a new district out of town, where “sex workers” could be more easily confined and controlled. Above the “sedentary Bidonville” “tower the dazzling white palaces of the *quartier réservé* – which could be called “Brothel-Town” or ... “Strumpet-ville.” Let us call it “Strumpetville” to match “Bidonville.”³² As a prostitutional space, *Quartier réservé* is synonymous with Moroccan dialect *Derb Bousbir*. As Driss Maghraoui usefully put it,

“The original name of the *quartier* was Rue Prosper, which was rendered as *Derb Bousbir* in Moroccan dialect. Prosper Ferrieu, who was born in Casablanca in 1866 and held several key positions including the consul of

28. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 67.

29. *Ibid.*, 69-70.

30. *Ibid.*, 70.

31. *Ibid.*, 71.

32. *Ibid.*

France in Casablanca and the political consultant of General d'Amade, was clearly not delighted to have the *quartier* named after him and had been initially opposed to it. In 1923, the *quartier* was bought by a French real estate firm known as *La Cressioniere*.³³

Derb Bousbir was repositioned away from the old medina. Called now the *quartier réservé de Bousbir*, it became part of the “modern” quarters (or *ville nouvelle*) of the city in 1923. As opposed to the *ville Européenne*, which was inhabited predominantly by the French colonialists, the *ville nouvelle* had a vast majority of Moroccans who came to the city as part of the growing waves of migration. This “modern city” “was therefore the result of an urban extension of Casablanca. Neither part of the *ville Européenne* nor the *ville nouvelle*, the *quartier réservé* was very much part of a marginalized urban space. The *quartier* had 175 houses, eight cafes, and a movie theater that were all under permanent surveillance.”³⁴ In crude terms, *Bousbir* was indeed a secluded and self-contained city, “a city within the city,” “a true town – a microcosm of the greater metropolitan area.”³⁵

Bousbir, to which Lewis refers hazily in his travelogue, and who ambivalently discloses his support of French colonial policy of the district as a means to end debauchery and wantonness, was envisaged to include three district “sex workers”: Moorish, Jewish and European. *Bousbir* was a segregated city because the socio-spatial and racial divisions of the district were gender-based. From the perspective of colonial politics, and if we take into account the prostitional space as part of the colonial policy of urbanization, we notice that the *ville Européenne* had to be preserved from biological, ethnic, and cultural contamination as perceived by colonial authorities. The French colonialists, hence, made strict rules that regimented the inter-racial mixing between a wide range of clientele and sex workers. Moorish women sex workers were debased and were allowed to proffer sexual services to any men whomsoever (Moorish, Jewish, European and African); Jewish women “sex workers” were permitted to have Jewish or European clients, whereas European women could offer services to European clients only. Moreover, “certain days were allocated to clients from different ethnic backgrounds. French and Senegalese soldiers, for example, were assigned even days (e.g. 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and so on) whereas Moroccans were allocated odd days (1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th and so on). This tactic was basically used in an effort to limit contact between colonial and indigenous clients.”³⁶

The imaginative geographies of *Bousbir*'s (sub)urban sexscape and architecture are explored via an orientalist lens (Said 1978). *Bousbir* is seen as the purveyor of both exotica and erotica. The imaginative construction of spatial difference shades

33. Driss Maghraoui, “Gendering Urban Colonial Casablanca: The Case of the *Quartier Réserve* of Bousbir,” in *Gendering Urban Space in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa*, edited by Martina Rieker and Kamran Asdar Ali (London Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 31.

34. *Ibid.*, 32.

35. Jean-François Staszak, “Planning Prostitution in Colonial Morocco: Bousbir, Casablanca's quarters réservé,” 180.

36. *Ibid.*, 182.

into themes of cultural difference. Moorish women sex workers in Bousbir occupy a different or unfamiliar territory, and they are believed to be different in mentality, culture and civilization. As Pramod K. Nayar notes, “imaginative geography reads cultural difference into space and spatial difference into cultures.”³⁷ From the French colonialists' perspective, *Bousbir* should be designed in a manner that would not make the new district full of disorder and mess. These colonialists need to bring orderliness to *Bousbir* to substantiate rational town planning ideals. In this manner, they follow what Michel Foucault dubs in his *History of Madness* as “great confinement,” “a multifaceted process through which modern European societies tried to produce and reproduce ‘rational’ social norms by segregating and marginalizing their outcasts (such as the mad, vagrants and prostitutes), confined in new dedicated coercive institutions.”³⁸ Put otherwise, the social and the spatial regulation of *Bousbir* aimed to regiment Moorish women's body and sexuality and to facilitate white male heterosexual domination. As an apparatus set up to exercise social, moral, ideological and medical control over prostitution, *Bousbir* only managed to give the illusion that this “necessary evil” was under control. If anything, *Bousbir* unwittingly and unconsciously presented a more acceptable image of prostitution. *Bousbir* is a site simultaneously located inside and outside of Casablanca; an urban landscape that acted as a signifier of socio-spatial regulation and control but also signified a space of sexual transgression for its colonial masters and tourists.

Wyndham Lewis states that the main concern of the French colonialist engineers, among whom Lyautey,³⁹ was hygiene and the salubrity of cities. The Protectorate government claimed to fight the filth in the cities and to bring in some hygiene and to get rid of venereal diseases such as syphilis. The colonial policy in Morocco, yet, was racially segregationist in that they try to make Moroccan cities liveable for the new European comers, tourists and *flibusters*, showing to the Moroccan populations the material benefits of French civilization. The connection between urbanism and hygiene was in fact part of a scientific discourse since the middle of the nineteenth century in Europe. It became clear that this “physical” and “moral” contamination had a major gender dimension and that the prostitutes were specifically seen as the harbingers of urban ills and diseases.

37. Pramod K. Nayar, *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 93.

38. Jean-François Staszak, 183.

39. Born in Nancy on 17 November 1854, Louis Gonzalve Hubert Lyautey served as the first *résident général* in Morocco from 30 April 1912 until his resignation in October 1925, and died in Thorey (Meurthe-et-Moselle) on 27 July 1934. A graduate of the St. Cyr military academy, Lyautey's military career culminated with success on the Algerian-Moroccan border near Oujda that placed him in the position of head of the Oran division and made him a possible choice to head the new French protectorate in Morocco in 1912. His policies, inspired most obviously by his experience of Gallieni's policies in Madagascar (from 1900) and his own experiences in Algeria (from 1907), were based on an explicit blend of political and military strategy in which military action was minimized and served primarily to complement thorough preparatory intelligence and sociopolitical policies aimed at persuading key indigenous figures, and groups, of the advantages of cooperating with the French; Stacy Holden, “An Islamized Mausoleum for Maréchal Hubert Lyautey, *Hespéris-Tamuda* LII (2) (2017): 151-77.

“Bidonville” and *Bousbir* were toponyms designating specific districts in Casablanca: after the 1930s, and with greater success and permanence for the first, these place names acquired generic meaning, designating marginal or illegal zones of occupation and spaces of prostitutions elsewhere in the francophone world. Urban planning may have arisen in Casablanca; that *Bousbir* and “Bidonville” would be its only memorable achievements attests to the failure of the urban project undertaken there. From the very outset of the Protectorate in 1912, Morocco was a site of experimentation for French colonialists, officials and engineers. Indeed, “urbanism, architecture, and “urban ethnography” were an important part of the colonial productions of knowledge.”⁴⁰

Nonetheless, Casablanca, for Lewis, is a precarious and makeshift city as it was an unstable space fraught with a lot of hurly-burly and contradictions far removed from the space he aspired to when he departed from the octopus-like and claustrophobic city of London. Eleanor Elsner, a British woman traveller who journeyed into Morocco in 1928, and whose first landing was in Casablanca, expressed the same claim as Lewis’s by arguing in her *The Magic of Morocco* that “the French must be so proud of Casablanca, and well indeed they may be, and yet – and yet, *there is to me something almost terrifying about it.*” Elsner continues on to state that due to the capitalist increase, “millions of pounds have been spent on it, a hundred thousand emigrants came to it, it grew like the proverbial mushroom.”⁴¹ Elsner exclaims plaintively:

“As a stupendous human effort, a triumph of engineering and building over Nature’s measures it stands supreme, and it is no wonder it is a beautiful modern town. But, all the same, *it has something terrifying about it.* ... a strange menace broods over Casablanca in spite of its white palaces, its broad boulevards, its magnificent offices, theatres, factories, and its most remarkable harbour.”⁴²

In order for a region to have a “history” in Lewis’s mind, it must have a degree of stability, either a growing stability as engineered by city planners and colonialists or a declining stability like that of Europe which had abandoned its vivacity for the uncertain permanence of Liberal Democracy. For David G. Farley, “Lewis’s portrayal of Casablanca figures as a warning to the West, and its “lack of history” is for Lewis the ultimate cost of uprootedness.”⁴³

Still, the author draws a cogent comparison between Morocco and the West, in this case America. He witnessed that the nomadic life the Berbers lived outside the

40. Maghraoui, “Gendering Urban Colonial Casablanca: The Case of the *Quartier Réservé* of Bousbir,” 21; Pascal Blanchard, Dominic Thomas, Christelle Taraud, Gilles Boëtsch, Nicolas Bancel, *Sexe, race & colonies. La domination des corps du XV^e siècle à nos jours*, (Paris: La Découverte, 2018).

41. Eleanor Elsner, *The Magic of Morocco* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited 3 York Street, St. James, 1928), 20, emphasis added.

42. *Ibid.*, 21.

43. David G. Farley, *Modernist Travel Writing: Intellectuals Abroad*, 133.

city of Tlemcen indicated their nobility and their ability to adapt to any outsiders' penetration. The residents of Casablanca, however, are less stable because of the more sedentary nature of their existence, bringing to mind the shantytowns of America; Lewis juxtaposes between America and Morocco or between capitalism and Barbary as both these latter tropes bring about the same results:

“By the Petrol-tin Town, or *Bidonville*, of Casablanca, one is irresistibly reminded of another excrescence of the same sort, recently described in the English newspapers, namely the sub-city, or shack-town, growing up outside Chicago. *Capitalism and Barbary breed the same forms* – but how odd! The world-slump that hit America with the velocity of a tornado, spewed out onto the streets millions of decent people, not necessarily passionately nomad.”⁴⁴

According to Lewis, the stark difference between the situations in Casablanca and America is that whilst the inhabitants of the Petrol-tin towns outside of Casablanca are “the creation of born nomads, who are, by choice, the inhabitants of a tent or a caboose,”⁴⁵ the denizens of the Chicago shantytowns were forced into their conditions by the crisis of capitalism.

Lewis finally sees the mainly black populations of these Petrol-tin towns and the white populations of the Chicago shantytowns as on opposite paths, whereas the desired common ground for both these populations would be a common European way of life: Americans are, Lewis claims, “being thrown back into Barbary – not invited to issue out of Barbary into the advantageous plane of the civilized European life.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Lewis sums up his impressions of Casablanca by asserting that despite the French presence, Casablanca is “a city upon the American model. . . An impression of kaleidoscopic unreality of the same order as that that disengages from the ‘canyons’ of Manhattan, assails you as you enter it for the first time.” He further argues that “from both emanate the same unmistakable sensations of violent impermanence.”⁴⁷ Such impermanence and such unreality were for Lewis the result of a loss of the stability that existed before the war and that the French, especially in the person of Lyautey, were trying to reclaim in Morocco through the civilizing influences of colonialism.

Lyautey's method of ruling was not to triumph over and control the native populations, but to pacify them by setting up a joint rule with the local lords and Caid. By this means, France could affirm the “civilizing influences” of European culture through the structures of the native government and through the progressive ventures of city planning and expanded commerce rather than through absolute conquest. In his own colonial and paternalistic discourse, Lyautey wanted otherwise to “rationalize” Morocco at different levels of society including the urban space. But

44. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 71.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*, 73.

47. *Ibid.*, 73-74.

Lyautey did not mean to radically transform Morocco. He was instead interested in modernizing the country without destroying its “traditional” structures. But “modernizing” Morocco was a very selective process in which the public facilities of Moroccans were often neglected, while the French enjoyed much of the modernizing project that Lyautey was talking about. In terms of the organization of space, the inequality of this system led to more segregation of the populations along religious and ethnic lines.

Lewis thinks highly of the semi-nomadic nature of the towns that paradoxically signify to him a tendency towards stability rather than a decline. Lewis’s conclusions about Casablanca are confusing since by 1931 the city had been further overrun by foreign, European freebooters and filibusters, a subject to which his travel account turns with more frequency and greater invective from this point on. Lyautey’s control of the Protectorate had weakened as a result of the combination of the agitation of Abd-el-Krim, the Moroccan nationalist and Amir, who occupied the Spanish controlled Riff, and the increased presence in the region of European freebooters, or as Lewis calls them “*filibusters*,” who sought profit and gain in various legal and illegal activities and ruined the spirit of “mutual accommodation” sponsored by the French by exploiting both the native population and Europeans alike. Lewis notes that Casa’s inhabitants “are a huge scratch-population, blown together by a big newspaper puff from the four ends of the earth, gold-diggers in posh city-quarters, ten-a-penny filibusters in plaster palaces... the biggest “men of substance” here, you feel, would, anywhere else, be straw-magnates, with big question-marks against their names.”⁴⁸

These makeshift cities such as Casablanca reveal the wide gap between capitalism and Barbary, even as they point out some common ground: “The gamut of human advance,” Lewis claims, “is to the stable from the unstable,”⁴⁹ and for Lewis, Lyautey’s impulses were conspicuously towards stability. Lewis hero-worshipped Lyautey because the latter controlled as best he could the European freebooters who exploited the lack of stability of Casablanca, but this stability was also helped along by the born nomads who were trending towards stability anyway. This leads Lewis to explicitly laud the French colonialism, which sought to limit the claims of these outsiders/freebooters:

“French Morocco is the last great European enterprise of that order, magnificently carried through by a great soldier – one of the last of the great European military figures. It shows the French at their best – as the humane, civilizing, most genially – acquisitive, of all powers, able and good-humoured – something like what the Normans must have been, when mellowed a little by the benefits of conquest. But *their protectorate is built upon sand*, in every conceivable sense. The type of “European” who is running it is as

48. *Ibid.*, 74.

49. *Ibid.*, 75.

unfixed, restless and incalculable in everything as is the nomad, semi-nomad, "transhumant" or only technically "sedentary" population he is invited to boss. All that is essentially stable is the military."⁵⁰

For Lewis, the makeshift aspect of Casablanca is reflective of the precarious nature of French Morocco and the French presence in Barbary; the French genius "as in the nature of a *sand-castle*, [is] built upon the sands of a desert, without the promise of much permanence."⁵¹ He continues on to stress that "the type of 'European' who is running it is as unfixed, restless and incalculable in everything as is he nomad, semi-nomad, "transhumant" or only technically 'sedentary' population he is invited to boss."⁵² Lewis does see an important connection between Barbary and the West notwithstanding Casablanca does not make a good impression in general. In spite of his admiration of Moroccans for peripheral reasons, Lewis strips them of their histories and shows his complicity with the colonial enterprise which he esteems a great deal.

2. "We Must Never Open Agadir!"

While the history of the city of Casablanca is relatively unimportant, his arrival at the city of Agadir as his itinerary after Marrakech conjures up history of some sort. This type of history is embodied mainly in what and how he sees. Indeed, the kind of history the traveller-narrator encounters in Agadir is virtually of artificial aspect and it is tinged with outlandish and frightening qualities. Lewis embarks his depiction of the city of Agadir by the declaration that the history of this city and the history of the West are closely linked: "Agadir has its name in our European history books. For us *Agadir* is a word that consorts, in a rather cheap and sinister fashion, with *Kaiser*."⁵³ "Agadir" invokes various other names and phrases for Lewis, such as "a gunboat of the name of *Panther*," the "Exile of Doorn," names that while they sound exotic and romantic, refer to names and events that were in the news in the run up to the First World War. In 1911, Kaiser Goering Hermann Wilhelm II (1893-1946), the German Nazi military commander, ordered a naval destroyer, *Panther*, to make a show of force off of the coast of French controlled Agadir, a move that was a part of the pre-war pomposity of the great powers, in a showdown that was eventually quelled by a treaty that paved the way to the formation of the Protectorate.⁵⁴ These phrases that assault Lewis vaguely recall these events: "*Agadir* will stand for a dream-town in the old *Welt-politik* world, whose horizons were swept with clattering imperial eagles, a vanished breed."⁵⁵ Lewis implies that these phrases are loaded with historical

50. Ibid., 76.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 100.

54. The gunboat *Panther* evokes the crisis of Agadir in 1911 between the two imperial nations France and Germany. The latter sent its naval destroyer, *Panther*, to the shores of Agadir to symbolically make its case for a fair share of the spoils from the partition in Africa. Through such an act, Germany aimed at imposing pressures on France into making territorial concessions elsewhere. On 4 November 1911, the Franco-German Treaty concluded negotiations providing for German abandonment of claims in return for concessions in Moyen Congo.

55. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 100.

significance and, against his advice when he was in Tlemcen, “he becomes for a moment distinctly “historically-minded” when recounting these pre-war ventures, intrigues, and diplomatic missions. Lewis presents these images in a manner that suggests that the worldview that they conjure is passé, out of date, as he once again mocks an aspect of historical knowledge.”⁵⁶

Why does Wyndham Lewis head towards the South? It is a question that needs to be inscribed within social, cultural, ideological, historical and strategic contextualizing backgrounds. In the very early of the 1930s, the French still found it difficult to take completely over this region. That is why the traveller-writer reproduces some names or endorses them to underpin the French colonial rhetorical pomposity in the region. Most parts of the South, and the Sus in particular, is labeled under the naming of “*bled*”; that is, a place that evokes impenetrability and opacity. Lewis draws a comparison between the “historically-minded” European and the blank slate of barbarism, whose rituals and exoticism exist in an enigmatic present, invoking the novella of Joseph Conrad, who similarly projected the problem of the West onto the blank slate and dark heart of Africa. Even when Lewis explores distant and darkest past, it is one that entails the arrival of Westerners as a marker of historical chronology. For Lewis, the accidental resemblance between his name to that of the first freebooter prods him to think about his own role as an outsider in Barbary. Lewis does not condemn all outsiders, but only those who came to Agadir and whose main mission was to profit, freeboot and exploit. This historical snapshot of the first filibuster is for the traveller-narrator a kind of originary moment of the whole colonial project.

The history of Agadir from Captain Wyndham’s arrival (1551) was one of continued and, for the most part, successful resistance to exploitation by Europeans, at least until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the French military established control of the city. In his description of the city of Agadir, Lewis describes it as verboten and impenetrable. The city of Agadir is the gate of the South of Morocco and it is of various interests for the French officials and policy-makers: strategic, commercial and military. It is the key to the main riches of the Sahara. Agadir is “particularly isolated from the civilized world,” and it is grotesque and sometimes exotic and erotic, so the author engraves it within the naming of “*bled*,” calling for colonial complete domination and supporting the French violent-cum-aggressive movements and attacks:

“In the future it might again be found that the isolation from the rest of Morocco of the Sous valley would tempt the enemies of the French rule to use this backwater, with the enormous deserts to the south, in the same manner as they did the Riff. For the Politician, one feels, this must be a highly interesting spot. For the Artist, it is even more so.”⁵⁷

56. David G. Farley, *Modernist Travel Writing: Intellectuals Abroad*, 136.

57. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 111.

Indeed, "for the artist, it is even more so." The question that has been posed earlier regarding the traveller's main reasons behind his journey into the South is partly answered in this context. In his visit of the *bousbir* of Agadir and its *quartiers réservés*, the traveller-writer gives a very detailed description of the city of Agadir as the *bled* which deserves to be quoted in some length:

"I write about it [Agadir] mainly because its brothel does demonstrate the extent to which Agadir is still the wild frontier township – "here we are in the *bled!* In the *bled!*" as someone shouted at me when he asked me if I liked his langoustes and I did not answer quickly enough to please him ... and as far as St.-Louis-du-Sénégal – for such Langoustes: and of course therefore the *bled* in that respect was the *bled* and not the *bled* – since we were where the luxury fish of the cities come from."⁵⁸

The military presence in Agadir, according to Lewis, served as a further source of stability and protected the city, in Lewis's view, from foreign exploitation that had destabilized other regions of Morocco. Lewis again extols Marshal Lyautey for his policy of keeping Agadir closed against rogue adventurers and international speculators. He cites approvingly the Resident General's "ominous" pronouncement, "*We must never open Agadir!*" Indeed, the French adhered to Lyautey's advice and "every person against whom the *Not-open* order was directed was comfortably installed, and making as much of a nuisance of himself as he could, without risking his precious skin." However, despite Lyautey's efforts, and soon after he was removed from power by the "Paris politicians," the "embargo" was off and the "door was thrown wide open. *Agadir was open*"⁵⁹ to foreign interests other than the French, and a civilian government was established. Yet, the latter was less efficient than the military government in running the city, which "got disgustingly dirty" and that everyone "cursed the day when the military had ceased to administer it."⁶⁰

The opening of Agadir gave freedom to the numerous foreign speculators who had built up connections in the region surrounding Agadir over the years and who were waiting for the French to leave the city. Lewis mentions, for example, the Mannesmann brothers, German industrialists who had entered into various agreements with the local Caids in the region since before the First World War. When the French ceded control of Agadir and after the Germans left, many British bought up the rights to the city that the Germans had formerly possessed. The various foreign groups, who subsequently installed themselves on the land, were compelled to interact through a series of "capitulations," by which each foreign government asserted its own rights on the city without establishing a rule of law that took into consideration the native population. The result of these capitulations, according to Lewis, was a kind of lawlessness that destabilized the entire region.

58. *Ibid.*, 115

59. *Ibid.*, 103.

60. *Ibid.*, 104.

This history fostered the rise of the kind of filibuster for whom Lewis reserves his most concentrated satire.

While in Agadir, Lewis visits one of the British filibusters who, he claims, had bought up land in the region from one of the local lords or Caids. This filibuster, “this old dog,” or this “swarthy British Bulldog,” as Lewis refers to him, is never named, although Lewis is fairly specific about certain details regarding the man. He lived, for instance, “outside Agadir in a smug white ‘Arab’ house he [had] built for himself.” He is, according to Lewis, a distinct British type: “the good, solid, pink, fetch-and-carry order of faithful dog-Toby of a man.”⁶¹

Lewis asks some inoffensive questions about wanting to travel into the area of the Ikounka, outside of Agadir, to which the “British Bulldog” reacts defensively, disheartening Lewis from travelling any further, and suggesting that the French had established a security zone around the area that only he could penetrate. Lewis is sceptical of the “British Bulldog’s” characterization of the French security zone, seeing it as an unnecessary mystification of the few remnants of French rule. The British filibuster says to Lewis that travelling into the French zone is risky and that “you have to have *guts*,”⁶² a statement that Lewis takes as conceited. For Lewis it was these types or “British Bulldogs”, this class of Briton who, by engaging in the illegal purchase of land and by exploiting the lack of order in the region, were immobilizing “the march of progress upon the sea-front,”⁶³ and stood as a real impediment to the civilizational project Lyautey wanted to substantiate in Morocco.

Lewis left Agadir in late July, 1931, and remarking plaintively that “there were blank spaces over which shady and vociferous house-agents of Casa, Bulldogs of Mogador, deposed Sheiks and others are wrangling with the French Commissaries and will wrangle till the Crack of Doom.”⁶⁴ For Lewis, like the precarious city of Casablanca, Agadir will become “an important mushroom-city – which will represent, when it is up, enormous capitals, and observe closely if not sympathetically all the spiders ... spinning their preliminary webs.”⁶⁵

3. Rio De Oro: “An Enormous Nothingness”

Lewis peregrinates beyond the contours of the Sus as *bled* into the heart of the desert, or more specifically into “Rio de Oro.” The only outsiders who have managed to circulate within this region regularly are the pilots of the French aero-postal service. After having travelled from the “expiring octopus” that was “over-moist” England, through the numerous cities of Northern Africa that were in various states of stability, Lewis is suddenly faced with a land that, metaphorically, is so unstable as to be transient, through which the only way to travel is by air: “For the first time

61. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 107.

62. *Ibid.*, 108.

63. *Ibid.*, 107.

64. *Ibid.*, 110.

65. *Ibid.*

in the Earth's history we have to take into count a new territory – namely the upper atmosphere.” At the beginning of his journey, Lewis had expressed an interest in going to the top of the Atlas mountains and looking down on interwar Europe from an exalted perspective, but here he finds that there is an even higher, more detached view than that: “But now, higher even than the mountains, we have to take into our conspectus that new, very solitary, not by any means numerous, people, who for all practical purposes live in those superior altitudes. So, when we are speaking of the nomads of the Rio de Oro, the fact that there are *other* nomads higher up cannot be ignored.”⁶⁶

Mockingly, on the one hand, Lewis seems to esteem the “Airmen of the Rio de Oro,” the Romantic nomads of the sky who “have lived amongst clouds and storms” (Lewis 1983:171), and who “live in those superior altitudes.” These Berbers/nomads or “Blue Men” are of “noble dignity.” Whereas Lewis condemns the false Romantic views of the “exoticists,” “filibusters” and the “globe-trotting buccaneers,” here he sees these pilots as heroic figures, pioneers, who possess a nobility of their own. It was perhaps for their glorious perspective as much as any Romantic trappings for which Lewis admired these pilots. But we again see the strain in Lewis's “argument” here, an argument that has been largely against the *filibuster* and the exoticist, figures who have their analogues in interwar London art circles in the pseudo artists and art racketeers. While in Morocco Lewis finds himself swayed by a certain kind of authenticity that is often hard to distinguish from the very fakes that he is criticizing.

As the map the editor inserts at the very beginning of the travelogue indicates, Rio de Oro is a colonialist naming *par excellence*. Witness how Lewis represents this region as a naming:

“This desert that begins just south of the Oued Sous is several times the size of Morocco. It has never been properly penetrated or explored by Europeans. It is inhabited by what are certainly among the most savage people on earth – the Mauritanian nomads. And a big section of it is occupied by what is technically (and strictly on the map) a Spanish possession, called *Rio de Oro*.”⁶⁷

Rio de Oro is represented as dark, mysterious, dangerous and fraught with adventures and conflicts. Rio de Oro is virtually unheard except within “the doors of the Royal Geographical Society, or it may be the Foreign Office – and those monosyllables pregnant with adventure will fall upon uncomprehending ears. “Rio de Oro?” the person to whom you say it will repeat. “*Rio de* what?” For everybody it is a *great blank*, just as it is a great blank for the cartographer.”⁶⁸ This vast territory is unknown and it is an enormous nothingness: “The Rio de Oro would be nothing to us but a big resonant meaningless name – the label for an enormous nothingness, which, whatever else may be there, contains neither the waters of a river, nor the glint

66. *Ibid.*, 170.

67. *Ibid.*, 160.

68. *Ibid.*, 169.

of gold if it were not for the airmen.”⁶⁹ What is more, Rio de Oro is also verboten and impenetrable: “There are only two forbidden lands. One is in equatorial or sub-tropical South America. The other is the Rio de Oro.”⁷⁰

As a vehicle of imperial authority, the travelogue denotes and in some cases performs the act of taking possession. As Tiffin C. and A. Lawson aver, “imperial textuality appropriates, distorts, erases, but it also *contains*.”⁷¹ Once Lewis settles there, he tries to take hold of the Barbary space narratively by rendering it void, vast, “uninhabited” and domestic and by erasing any signs of the others’ lives; it needs to be peopled and occupied. Lewis manifests that Rio de Oro is “an almost complete *terra incognita*, as are other deserts in which it merges on all sides.”⁷²

The traveller claims that he has an omniscient authority on the people and the space being represented. David Harvey characterizes the period of modern imperialism as one in which “the world’s spaces were deterritorialized, stripped of their preceding significations, and then reterritorialized according to the convenience of colonial and imperial administration.”⁷³ This understanding is echoed in Robert Young’s suggestion that both the material operations and symbolic dimensions of colonialism might be best understood in terms of “palimpsestual inscription and reinscription.” This notion of colonialism as a “territorial writing-machine” acknowledges “The extent to which cultures were not simply destroyed but rather layered on top of each other, giving rise to struggles that themselves only increased the imbrications of each with the other and their translation into increasingly uncertain patchwork identities.”⁷⁴

Rio de Oro (Spanish for “Gold River,” Arabic *Wadi Ddahab*) or the “Occidental Sahara” is “No man’s land,”⁷⁵ as the author declares; the South of Morocco is given such a name as it is the fringe and the dividing line that separates the French colony from the Spanish one. It is a Spanish territory as it had been taken as a Spanish possession in the late nineteenth century, but it is, the traveller-writer postulates, replete with many dangers for the French. The traveller endorses the French presence and their outpost there. To quote him, “The Spaniards now have a fort or Kasbah there, which is also (or was until recently) a penal colony. Besides that (and this is the most important thing about it) it is a station of the French Aéropostale Service.”⁷⁶ As the colonizer’s spokesman, Lewis wants this region to be mysterious and conflictual to

69. *Ibid.*, 170.

70. *Ibid.*, 169

71. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, *De-scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality*, eds. (London: Routledge, 1994), 9.

72. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 161.

73. David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 264.

74. Robert J. C. Young, *The Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 173-174.

75. “In the South of Morocco the words *Rio de Oro* brighten up any company. All the tongues start wagging together at *Rio de Oro* – this vast No man’s Land is like a dark, always stormy, uncrossed ocean, whose sinister sand-billows lash the south of the Sous, and whose neighbourhood breeds numberless stories of adventure” (Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 168).

76. *Ibid.*, 161.

perpetuate Western hegemony. This western vision over this much disputed territory has been consolidated by a great number of writers who have produced both fictional and non-fictional works on Morocco and on this region.

The erstwhile colonizers evacuated from the Sahara, but the underlying ideological and the political agendas of this colonizer have loomed large with the creation of the Polisario Front. After Mauritania retreated from this region, Morocco and the Polisario remained the sole belligerent foes in the region. This belligerence has not been yet resolved. Besides, a cease-fire has been in effect since 1991. Morocco has dominance over the parts to the west of Rio de Oro, and the Polisario Front-held Free Zone, under the control of the so-called "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic" to the east. These zones are temporary divisions negotiated as a part of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) ceasefire. Wyndham Lewis would be happy now as the erstwhile colonizers have managed to perpetuate the conflict up till the present time. *Rio de Oro* is mapped and projected today as "No man's Land" in the Google Earth Map and in many TV channels worldwide notwithstanding Morocco argued that the Western Sahara was not a *terra nullis* (a no man's land) prior to European conquest because Moroccan sultans maintained long-standing historical and cultural ties of sovereignty and allegiance with the local population.⁷⁷ As this space is rendered mysterious, unknown, erotic and out-of-bounds, so do its inhabitants; they are "uncivilized" and "anarchistic."

Lewis headed towards the South for the imperialist reason that this part of Morocco was the center and target of many disputes between colonial nations, especially the Spanish, the German and the French. For Lewis, "The Southern part of the Spanish Sahara is an ideal spot for an unlimited number of *coups de main*. It possesses a deserted coast, it is outside the French zone, it is only Spanish in name. It is as completely isolated as it is possible to be. Filibusters are as irresistibly attracted towards it as fashionable people are drawn in train-loads every spring to the Cote d'Azur."⁷⁸

Stephen Greenblatt notes that spatial nullity has existed in travel narratives even in those who lived alongside with Christopher Columbus, and this spatial nullity can be attributed, for Greenblatt again, to some medieval concepts of natural law, "according to medieval concepts of natural law, uninhabited territories become the possession of the first to discover them. We might say that Columbus's formalism tries to make the new lands uninhabited – *terrae nullius* – by emptying out the category of the other. The other exists only as an empty sign, a cipher."⁷⁹

Since the early modern period, the language of colonization has frequently saturated with the naming motif, enabling European travellers/writers to represent

77. Abdeslam Maghraoui, "Ambiguities of Sovereignty: Morocco, the Hague and the Western Sahara Dispute," *Mediterranean Politics*, 8:1, (2003), 113-126.

78. Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, 182.

79. *Ibid.*, 60.

the newly “discovered” and “named” lands as an empty space, a *tabula rasa* on which they could inscribe their linguistic, cultural, and later, territorial claims. Rhetorically, this trope of naming took on shifting, multiple meanings within British colonial discourse, being constantly refurbished and mobilized in the service of other colonizing enterprises, such as *civilizing*, *rescuing*, and *idealizing* or *demonizing* their Moorish subjects as “others.”⁸⁰

Naming set up a synchronous time frame for the colonies: though not Europe, they were declared to be contiguous to Europe, and subject and secondary to it. This is a process by which one culture tries to subordinate the other, as David Spurr points out in the following: “The very process by which one culture subordinates another begins in the act of naming and leaving unnamed, of marking on an unknown territory the lines of division and uniformity, of boundary and community.”⁸¹ In the same vein, Boehmer maintains that “to name a foreign land, to make of that land and its ways a textual artefact, was to exercise mastery.”⁸² Colonial discourse makes use of the power of language in its subtle manifestations to exert all aspects of mastery and domination and makes control of the people being rendered: “One of the most subtle demonstrations of the power of language is the means by which it provides, through the function of naming, a technique for knowing a colonised place or people. To name the world is to ‘understand’ it, to know it and to have control over it.”⁸³ The names mentioned above are contrived for the purpose of colonialism and of perpetuating it. Thus, these names joined other forms of nineteenth and early twentieth century imperial culture, whose ideology was based, in the words of Edward Said, on “notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination.”⁸⁴

Conclusion

Travel writing as a genre is linked to seeing and writing which become forms of epistemic appropriation. Writing about the colonized and their space is essentially inured by a narrative strategy substantially predicated on verboten, impenetrable and bleary spaces and settings that are different in essence but most importantly allure European exploration and stimulates the writer’s desire to launch his narrative and discursive invasion of the land. Put otherwise, travel narrative often emphasizes the risks connected to the journey to the extent of making spaces savage, violent and unwelcoming; it in fact prepares the European traveller to a relentless readiness for eventual danger and constant threat and tacitly enhances an urgent need for an eventual legitimate intrusion. On the one hand, Wyndham Lewis stresses the impenetrability of the Moorish setting. The traveller attempts to tame the Moorish/Barbarous space

80. Jyotsna G. Singh, *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: “Discoveries” of India in the Language of Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.

81. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (London: Duke UP), 1993, 4.

82. Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphor* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 19.

83. Bill Ashcroft Gareth G. and Helen Tiffin, *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), 283.

84. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), 9.

by demystifying the contours and boundaries of its wilderness, its hazy spatiality to eventually proffer a narrative map for the European collective explorer. The space of Western Barbary is egregiously inscribed in the inner interstice of the narrative pastiche. That is, representations of human space have been the most powerful and hegemonic purveyors of Eurocentrism in modern times. On the other hand, at certain moments Lewis was aware of the fact that he was describing the shabby remnants of the tapestry of otherness their predecessors had woven.

For Lewis, modernity in the shape of tourists, colonialists, and/or what he dubs *filibusters*, is about to sweep away the picturesque customs and mesmerizing landscape he has come to seek. He lucidly underpins Lyautey's colonizing enterprise in Morocco as a "genius," who managed to "modernize" a barbaric and historyless people and land. Lewis's *Journey into Barbary* is indeed a contribution to the French *Documents et renseignements de la Direction Générales des Affaires Indigènes* and to the French colonial archive.

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الخلاصة: لقاء ويندهام لويس مع المغرب الاستعماري من خلال كتابه رحلة إلى بلاد بربريا

تكشف هذه المقالة عن تأييد ويندهام لويس للمقيم العام الفرنسي، هوبرت ج. ليوطي، باعتباره رائد البعثة المدنية الفرنسية في المغرب. ويتناول كتابه رحلة إلى بلاد بربريا مرحلة من مراحل تاريخ الاستعمار الفرنسي في المغرب عند أوائل الثلاثينيات من القرن العشرين. ويكرس لويس ويندهام بشكل قاطع أهمية سياسة ليوطي التحديشية في المغرب باعتباره "مهندساً" و"عبقرياً" مهمته الرئيسية هي تنوير حياة أقوام بدائيين يسيطر عليهم الجمود والتعصب بغية وضعهم في سكة الرقي والتقدم. كما يبدي لويس ويندهام إعجاباً بليوطي الذي بذل قصارى جهده لمقاومة المعارضين لمشروعه الحضاري في المغرب. ومع ذلك، تؤكد هذه المقالة أن الوجود الاستعماري الفرنسي غير المستقر في المغرب دليل على أن مشروع "الحماية الفرنسية مبني على الرمال"، ويدل أيضاً على ضعف المستعمر الفرنسي معنوياً رغم إمكانياته العسكرية الهائلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المغرب الفرنسي، ويندهام لويس، المجال، التاريخ، ليوطي، البدو.

Résumé: La rencontre de Wyndham Lewis avec le Maroc colonial dans *Journey into Barbary*

Cet article met en évidence l'appui de Wyndham Lewis au résident général français Hubert G. Lyautey en tant que promoteur de la soi-disante mission civilisatrice française au Maroc. Son récit de voyage, *Journey into Barbary*, souligne quelques aspects relatifs à l'histoire du colonialisme français au Maroc au début des années trente. Lewis soutient de manière convaincante la politique de modernisation adoptée par Lyautey au Maroc en tant qu' "initiateur" "ingénieur" dont la mission principale était d'éclairer un peuple décrit comme étant primitif et fanatiquement stagnant. En veillant aussi à urbaniser les espaces du

Maroc, Lyautey a essayé d'inciter sa population à prendre part à la marche de l'histoire. En outre, Lewis, ne cache pas son admiration de Lyautey qui a réussi à vaincre ses détracteurs qui s'opposaient avec acharnement selon lui à sa mission civilisatrice. Cependant, cet article démontre sur la base du même récit du voyage écrit par Wyndham Lewis, à quel point la position du colonisateur français était en réalité très fragile et vulnérable à plusieurs niveaux et indique que le "protectorat français était bâti sur du sable."

Mots-clés: Maroc français, Wyndham Lewis, espace, histoire, Lyautey, civilisation, nomades.

Abstract: Wyndham Lewis's Encounter with Colonial Morocco in *Journey into Barbary*

This article uncovers Wyndham Lewis's endorsement of the French Resident-General, Hubert G. Lyautey, as the quintessence of the French *Mission Civilisatrice* in Morocco. His travelogue, *Journey into Barbary*, underscores the history of French colonialism in Morocco in the early 1930s. Lewis cogently consolidates Lyautey's modernizing policy in Morocco as an "engineer" and a "genius" whose main mission was to enlighten a primitive and a fanatically stagnant people and urbanize their spaces and goad them into the march of history. Lewis also admires Lyautey because the latter did his best to constraint the activities of *filibusters* and rogue speculators in different regions of Morocco as the main impediment to Lyautey's civilizing missions. This paper argues that the colonializer's unstable presence in Morocco indicates that French "protectorate is built upon sand", manifesting the vulnerability of the French colonizer's discursive grandiloquence.

Keywords: French Morocco, Wyndham Lewis, Space, History, Lyautey, Nomads, Civilization

Resumen: El encuentro de Wyndham Lewis con el Marruecos colonial en *Journey into Barbary*

Este artículo destaca el apoyo de Wyndham Lewis al general residente francés Hubert G. Lyautey como promotor de la llamada misión civilizadora francesa en Marruecos. Su cuenta de viaje, *Journey into Barbary*, destaca algunos aspectos de la historia del colonialismo francés en Marruecos a principios de los años treinta. Lewis apoya de manera convincente la política de modernización adoptada por Lyautey en Marruecos como un «ingenioso» iniciador cuya misión principal era iluminar a un pueblo descrito como primitivo y fanáticamente estancado. Al ocuparse también de urbanizar los espacios de Marruecos, Lyautey trató de alentar a su población a participar en la marcha de la historia. Además, Lewis, no oculta su admiración por Lyautey que logró derrotar a sus críticos, quienes se opusieron ferozmente a su punto de vista de su misión civilizadora. Sin embargo, este artículo demuestra, en base al mismo relato del viaje de Wyndham Lewis, hasta qué punto la posición del colonizador francés era de hecho muy frágil y vulnerable en muchos niveles e indica que el "protectorado francés se construyó sobre arena."

Palabras clave: Marruecos francés, Wyndham Lewis, espacio, historia, Lyautey, civilización, nómadas