

TWO FILIBUSTERS IN BARBARY:
WYNDHAM LEWIS AND ALFRED ROSENBERG

*This paper was written in 1995,
but no attempt was made at publication.*

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So far as I am aware no commentator has ever attempted to explain why Lewis went to Morocco in 1931, rather than some other remoter destination, or why he became so interested in the Berbers. His editor C. J. Fox admits that “Precisely why he chose to go to Morocco is not wholly clear”, and suggests that it was a love of the desert that may have driven Lewis there.¹ Indeed it is generally assumed that he selected the Rio d’Oro because it was wild, but not too distant from Europe, and that his use of observations for a series of travel articles, a pair of books, of which Lewis published only one, and even for material towards a novel, was opportunistic, or at least not seriously meant, and that this work represents a by-blow knocked off in the course of a therapeutic lull in his schedule. For such readers *Filibusters* is a light text, disconnected from Lewis’ political interests, and providing a welcome relief from the heated infighting of the books that precede and follow it. But once the background to his interest in the region is understood it will appear not so much as a turning away from the Jewish question, Lewis’ major preoccupation of this time, but an examination of a different aspect of the same problem. Whereas *Hitler and The Doom of Youth* had attempted to intervene politically to meet the Jewish threat, *Filibusters* and its unpublished companion volume *Souks and Kasbahs* would treat the same contemporary issues only occasionally and under heavy veils as they arose during a voyage into a French colony in Africa. The emphases of the two books would be slightly different, though in fact covering much the same ground. Where *Filibusters* was to be tilted towards the present situation in North Africa, and make an appeal to a less informed reader, *Souks and Kasbahs* would approach the historical dimensions of the Jewish question, or, rather, what he now seemed to be posing as the *Semitic* question, and would dabble, however diffidently, in mystical speculations on the origin of the races and their antithetical natures. In both texts Lewis can be shown to be familiar with, and deeply interested in, the writings of Alfred Rosenberg, the National Socialist Party’s principal official ideologist and philosopher. This fascination is startling in a literary context, since it is hard to think of another writer of stature in English of whom anything like this can be said. Although I shall limit myself here to establishing the connection via the minor writings concerned with North Africa, its importance for Lewis’ other works, such as those landmarks of English language modernism *The Childermass* and *The Apes of God*, should not be underestimated.

Discussions of the Berber peoples of Morocco are still in doubt as to how to account for the element of blondism in this population, though Arab writers now tend to regard any suggestion that the Berbers were not of Arabian origin as a hang-over from French attempts to fragment

¹ C. J. Fox, “Lewis as a Travel Writer: The Forgotten *Filibusters in Barbary*”, in Jeffrey Meyers, ed., *Wyndham Lewis: A Reevaluation: New Essays* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), pp. 166–180 (p. 168).

their subject peoples in order to defuse Moroccan nationalism.² Fortunately, I do not have to adjudicate in this discussion, and need only show that this was considered a real issue in Lewis' time. Apart from the many French sources cited by Lewis himself, we could turn, for instance, to Sergi's once-respected *Mediterranean Race*, and there find this apologist for the theory that the European peoples were a Euro-African *species*, spending thirty inconclusive pages on this minor people.³ He reviews the suggestions of another authority, Topinard, who had defined the debate over the origin of the blond element amongst the Berbers as being a choice between five options:

1. Vandal intermixture resulting from the early fifth century invasion.
2. Roman mercenaries from Gaul.
3. An Eastern population.
4. Indigenous race, who expanded into the North at some archaic period.
5. An archaic Northern population who moved down into Africa.

After considering the various hypotheses and finding them untenable Sergi admits defeat; "Must we", he says "regard the presence of blonds in Africa as inexplicable?" The answer would seem to be yes, since his last ditch attempt, to suppose that the high altitude of the mountains might produce light skins and blond hair, doesn't convince the reader and seems to carry little weight with Sergi himself. The problem was still unresolved in the late 1930s when Carleton Stevens Coon published his massive *Races of Europe*, in which he remarks that "The most troublesome factor in the whole North African racial problem lies in the necessity of explaining the origin of the local Nordics, whose presence as a minority in the populations of Tunisia, Algeria, and northern Morocco, if not in the Canary Islands, cannot be denied."⁴ The issue, then, was a live one, and to some extent is still live. But it is by no means clear that Lewis' interest derived from conventional sources, though he seems to have been well-read in them.⁵ They see the problem in terms so soberly limited that the matter does not appear to have deep consequences. Other, non-professional anthropological writers were not so guarded, and it is one of these, Alfred Rosenberg, that I believe interested Lewis in the Berbers. Lewis had been reading Rosenberg for some time. In *Hitler* he quotes and refers to him, simply as the "editor of the *Völkische Beobachter*";⁶ and there is some reason to think that he was familiar with Rosenberg's work and thought as early as 1928, when in revising *Tarr* Lewis included what may be an oblique quotation from one of Rosenberg's writings. This latter point is highly controversial, and I shall digress to justify the assertion, before turning back to the African matter.

² See Samir Amin, *The Maghreb in the Modern World: Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco* (Penguin, 1970), pp. 91–2. Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib* (Cambridge, 1971).

³ G. Sergi, *The Mediterranean Race: A Study of the European Peoples* (London: Walter Scott, 1901), pp. 45ff.

⁴ Carleton Stevens Coon, *The Races of Europe* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), p. 488.

⁵ He shows knowledge for instance, of Stéphane Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris, 1928), and of L. Justinard, *Tribus berbères: Les Aït Ba Amran* (Paris, 1930).

⁶ *Hitler* (Chatto & Windus: London, 1931), p. 175.

In his 1928 revision of *Tarr*, Lewis made a number of small but significant changes. In one, first noticed by David Ayers, Lewis added a new Jewish character who works to prevent a peaceful resolution of the quarrel which leads to the duel between Kreisler and Soltyk.⁷ He also introduces an entirely new reference to a painting by Tarr, a picture of a “greek athlete, attacked with religion, disintegrated before the eyes of a watching harpie.”⁸ The idea of a dismembered Phineus is also mentioned in *The Childermass*, where Tormod Macroch is tormented by Harpies, the Bailiff’s adoring disciples, torn into pieces by the Bailiff’s police, and called Phineas.⁹ In his sometimes comic but very often learned and informative dissertation the Lewis scholar Marcel Feijo goes some way to explaining this matter:

The obscure referent of this other painting is the mythological tale of Phineus, the son of Agenor who reigned in Eastern Thrace and was found by the Argonauts in a highly unfortunate state. He had been blinded by a slighted Apollo (“by religion”) and left as prey to two Harpies because he revealed the secrets of the Gods too accurately, having abused the gift of prophecy he had been given by the Sun-god.¹⁰

Feijo uses this information within a regrettable Freudian scheme, but better sense may be made of it by reference to a passage from Rosenberg’s *Mythus*, published in 1930, which discusses Greek art and the fact that many pictorial representations show a “lean strong, aristocratic Greek” and a “short stunted, animalistic daemon (a type which unquestionably was associated with a race that was subjugated and enslaved by the Greeks)”. For example, “a Harpy has been drawn upon the early, lower-Italian crater of Phineus, a Harpy whose head and hand movements can be marvelled at *in natura* on the *Kurfürstendamm* today.”¹¹ Phineus, therefore, is a tormented artist, tormented both by the Jews, and by a religion, which, as I shall point out in the course of this chapter, is seen as a Jewish import. My argument here remains incomplete, since I am unable to show how Lewis could have known of Rosenberg’s remark in 1927/8, when writing both *Tarr* and *Childermass*, but I believe the coincidence is so improbable that it is reasonable to anticipate that careful research in Rosenberg’s bibliography will reveal a publication mentioning this idea sufficiently early for Lewis to have used it as his source in his 1928 books. It is of course conceivable that they share a common source that I have overlooked.

Having, thus, made it plausible, at least, to suppose that Lewis was reading Rosenberg in the mid-twenties, I shall now suggest that he was reading him, perhaps extensively and carefully, in 1930 and came across the following passages in the *Mythus*, or found the substance elsewhere in Rosenberg’s voluminous output:

⁷ David Ayers, *Wyndham Lewis and Western Man* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 139ff.

⁸ *Tarr* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), p. 300.

⁹ *The Childermass* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), p. 214.

¹⁰ Antonio Maria Maciel de Castro Feijo, “Mars Caecus: A Study of Wyndham Lewis (1909–1930)” (unpublished doctoral thesis, Brown University, 1986), p. 197.

¹¹ Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (München, 1930), quoted here from the readily available Robert Pois, ed. and trans., *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 128; but see also Vivian Bird, trans., Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Revisionist Press, 1982; 1993), p. 178.

Apparently it is no longer completely out of the question that where today the waves of the Atlantic roar and mighty icebergs wander, a flourishing continent once towered over the deluge; a continent on which a creative race nurtured a great, far-reaching culture and sent its children out into the world as sea-voyagers and warriors. However, even if this Atlantis hypothesis should be proved untenable, it will be necessary to accept the existence of Nordic, prehistoric culture-centre. That old, despised hypothesis which stated that once, from a Northern creative point – which we will call Atlantis, even if we do not literally believe in a sunken continent of Atlantis – swarms of warriors spread out, which might explain the continuously recurring Nordic longing to conquer distant lands: this hypothesis seems probable today. These streams of Atlantians sailed their own swan and dragon ships to the Mediterranean, to Africa, towards Kutscha in Central Asia and probably even to China; they also sailed to the southern portion of the North American continent. [... The Atlantian Nordics were the] last master race of the warrior Amorites, people whom Sayce knew as being fair skinned and blue eyed. They pressed towards North Africa as a stalwart hunting clan which gradually subjugated the entire area, while a portion of them migrated through Syria towards Babylon. The Berbers, who even today are in large measure fair-skinned and blue-eyed, do not trace their ancestry back to the later Vandal incursions, but rather to the primeval Atlantic-Nordic migrations.¹²

The Berbers then emerge as crucial evidence in the proposed ethnology, which in this particular form is probably original to Rosenberg, though Houston Stewart Chamberlain had speculated earlier that “The noble Moor of Spain is anything but a pure Arab of the desert, he is half a Berber (from the Aryan family) and his veins are so full of Gothic blood that even at the present day noble inhabitants of Morocco can trace their descent back to Teutonic ancestors.”¹³ It is in this line of descent that we must see Lewis’ venture into Africa, the immediate occasion being explicable both through the recent publication of the *Mythus*, and the press topicality of the races of Morocco, which were in the news in 1930, and in a very relevant way, the French government having issued a decree which exempted the Berber population from Islamic law, a measure which provoked vigorous Arab protests.

We can therefore say with some confidence that Lewis chose Morocco because he wanted to see how valuable Rosenberg’s suggestion might be, and what else he could learn from this archaic survival of primitive Nordic culture. Examination of the two books, *Kasbahs and Souks* and *Filibusters in Barbary*, will justify this claim in remarkable detail, and enable us to review the nature and content of Lewis’ attitude towards the Jews and indeed to all Semites.

Lewis completed two books based exclusively on his experiences in Morocco, but only one, *Filibusters in Barbary*, was published. The other, a less populist work more concerned with archi-

¹² Alfred Rosenberg: *Selected Writings*, pp. 38–40.

¹³ H. S. Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by John Lees (London: John Lane, 1911), vol. 1, p. 398.

ecture and ethnographic history than with travel notes, survives in the form of a bundle of typescript and manuscript in the Lewis collection of Cornell University, and a handful of periodical articles clearly drawn from missing chapters of this script. Parts have been published in C. J. Fox's edition of Lewis' North African writings, *Journey into Barbary*.¹⁴ The surviving material represents chapters 9 to 17 of the complete book, and it appears that the entire typescript was at least 178 pages long, this being the number on the last page of chapter 17. Lewis planned to illustrate it with drawings and photographs, some of which survive. His reasons for failing to get this book into print are unclear, especially so since there was little further work to do; though the typescript appears to be a first typing of his manuscript, it is fairly heavily revised.¹⁵ For present purposes it will be enough to offer the speculation that during the preparation of *Filibusters*, at the last moment in fact, Lewis took several chapters originally intended for *Souks and Kasbahs* and inserted them into the book in hand, and thus left himself with the task of bringing *Souks and Kasbahs* back up to full length. This was work he felt unwilling to undertake, preferring to publish elements of the book as journalism. And so the project lapsed.

The remains of this aborted work are exceptionally useful as a rapid way into the thesis of the North African writings, and despite Fox's selection they have remained almost completely unknown even to specialists in Lewis studies. Before reviewing the material it will be as well to map its extent:

Chapters 9–10: Missing from the Cornell collection, but found in a 1933 article published in the *Bookman*, "What are the Berbers?"¹⁶

Chapter 11: "Berbers as Dolmen-builders". Typescript chapter numbered from 102 to 108.

Chapter 12: "South and Sous". Typescript chapter numbered from 109 to 116. There is a manuscript fragment for part of this chapter.

Chapter 13: "Ksar or Tent". Manuscript, and typescript chapter numbered from 117 to 124.

Chapter 14: "When is a Nomad not a nomad? – The "dual soul" of Mogreb". Typescript chapter numbered from 125 to 143.

Chapter 15: Missing from the Cornell collection, but found in a 1933 article for the *Architectural Review*, "The Kasbahs of the Atlas".

Chapter 16: Latter half only found in the Cornell collection, numbered from 163 to 168. First pages incorporated into "The Kasbahs of the Atlas", mentioned above.

Chapter 17: "The *Souks* of the 'Pays de la Peur'". Typescript chapter numbered from 169 to 178.

One may begin by observing that these chapters fall into three groups of three. Nine to eleven are concerned with the origins of the Berbers, twelve to fourteen with their supposed nomad-

¹⁴ Wyndham Lewis, ed. by C. J. Fox, *Journey into Barbary* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow), pp. 188–229.

¹⁵ Page 110 of Chapter xii, in the Cornell Collection, has a space left in the typed text, presumably for an illegible word, since the word *crenellated* has been supplied. Manuscripts from the Dept of Rare Books, Cornell University Library are published here by kind permission.

¹⁶ "What are the Berbers?", *Bookman*, 85 (Dec. 1933), pp. 183–6.

ism, and fifteen to seventeen with their architecture. The sequence is deliberate. In this section of the book we see Lewis discussing the racial origins of the Berbers first from a physiological and geographical standpoint, then using psychological and behavioural phenomena, and finally examining relevant cultural data. His conclusions are distributed in fragmentary form throughout the section.

“What Are the Berbers?” Lewis asks in his title, following this up with two supplementary questions, the subheadings of the two sections of this article, and presumably the chapter headings from *Souks and Kasbahs*: “Are the Berbers ‘Little Black Celts?’”; “Are the Berbers Atlantians?” This transparent policy can be found also in those sections of a nearly contemporary work, *Doom of Youth*, where Lewis holds back from statements, preferring to leave the reader with questions. So even before looking over the piece a reader familiar with Lewis knows that the answers to these two questions are positive. Perhaps the only mystery about this matter is that Lewis felt it to be a sufficient screen for his advocacy.

Having informed us that there is much indecision amongst scholars as to the origin of the Berbers, that “they have been said to come from such opposite regions as Persia, the Baltic, and the Bermudas – from India and from where they are at the present moment”,¹⁷ Lewis then promises that to this confusion he will bring a tool of judgement not often used by the historian, the eye, the painter being “in a sense the perfect naturalist”. And to the eye-man “it is perfectly clear that the Berber people – the Riffs, Hahas, or Chleuhs – do not belong to the Semitic race, like their Arab overlords”.¹⁸ After such audacity Lewis feels in need of an authority, and so turns to Budgett Meakin, who had suggested that the Berbers were closely related to the peoples of the “Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, to say nothing of Biscay and Finisterre, and the builders of those rude stone monuments which exist as well in Barbary as in Britain.”¹⁹ Lewis confirms this with his own observation that these people with “deeply-set eyes” look “out upon the world with that burning and abstracted stare which is peculiar to this type in Wales or in Ireland”, and even observes that like the Celt they “worship loyalty”, though in fact being “such bad friends”.²⁰ The Celt we may remember is one of that group of people termed by Chamberlain “Teutonic”, a group which he defines as “the different North-European races, which appear in history as Celts, Teutons (Germanen) and Slavs, and from whom – mostly by indeterminable mingling – the peoples of modern Europe are descended.”²¹

Turning now to linguistic evidence, Lewis suggests, via a number of authorities, Gsell being his heaviest, that Berber is not a Semitic language, but is related to ancient Libyan. The significance of this reference is simply that it supports the contention that the Berber people predates the Arab invasion, and indeed Lewis is quick to point out that “The *final and complete* conquest

17 “What are the Berbers?”, *Bookman*, 85 (Dec. 1933), p. 183.

18 *Ibid.*, 183.

19 Budgett Meakin, *The Moors*, quoted in “What are the Berbers?”, pp. 183–4.

20 “What are the Berbers?”, p. 184.

21 Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 257.

of the Berber races by the Arab is of recent date”²² And as it happens the Touareg still think of the Arab as a foreigner. Interestingly enough this distance is not found between the visitor and the Berbers. Quoting Gautier, Lewis remarks of the Touareg,

They impress one as in some way brothers – “we feel that their mentality is near to ours”. And that is what so many European observers have felt, in all parts of Moghreb, with the Berber – in contrast to what he would feel regarding the Arab, who is an “alien” of the first water.²³

One may summarise this first section then. The Berbers do not look like Semites. They resemble the dark Celts of north-western Europe, and indeed in some ways their behaviour is similar. Their language is not Semitic. They regard the Arab as an outsider, and a European senses, perhaps supernaturally, a kinship with these mysterious people. Some explanation must be found, and Lewis offers to discuss only one, the Bermudan option. We are told that there is a puzzling affinity between the desert flora of Mexico and Morocco, that “cave burial, of the same type as practised by the early Berbers, was perpetuated by the Gauchos up till the fifteenth century”, and of “a hundred other puzzling facts” which “crowd upon one’s attention, in support of these fanciful Platonists”, the “Atlantis fans”²⁴ Lewis himself claims that he has not added to his “other high-spirited heresies a belief in Plato’s continent”, but suggests that “the most obstinate Atlantis fan is not so far as all that from the matter-of-fact assumptions of the latest science.” I would draw attention to the fact that Lewis’ caution here parallels Rosenberg’s very precisely. There is the same embarrassment about referring to Atlantis at all, the same anxiety to show that one need not “believe” in Atlantis, as such, to think that there is something in this story; modern science lends credit to certain elements in it, so may there not be some general truth which will be incorporated, “however modified”, as Lewis says, into geology? In the context of Lewis’ own article this truth could be simply a home for the ancestors of the Berbers, but of course it would also be an ancestral home for the Celts, and perhaps thus Rosenberg’s “Nordic culture centre”. We know from the oblique references to Atlantis in *The Childermass*, and from correspondence – Winifred Henderson wrote to Lewis in January 1928 saying that “I should like you to think about doing a provocative article [for *Antiquity*] on ‘Atlantis’ if & when you have time.”²⁵ – that Lewis had been interested in the subject at least as early as 1927, and so perhaps had been thinking over Rosenberg’s suggestions since that date. Weak, but interesting corroboration can be found for this suggestion in an interview with Mrs. Lewis in 1963, during which she recalled that “In Germany in the late twenties we were in a café and a great many young men were hurrying around. Answering my enquiry “Oh they belong to a group run by a

²² “What are the Berbers?”, p. 184.

²³ “What are the Berbers?”, p. 185.

²⁴ “What are the Berbers?”, p. 185.

²⁵ See for example Winifred Henderson to Lewis, 9 Jan. 1928 (manuscript in the Lewis Collection at Cornell University Library) “Herewith the copy of ‘Antiquity’ I promised you with the article by Colingwood on Spengler. Also I should like you to think about doing a provocative article on ‘Atlantis’ if & when you have time. I know the ‘Antiquity’ people and how pleased they would be to have it and pay for it.”

little guy who has taken over all Hindenburg's ideas". A later visit to Berlin we found the Brown Shirts in force."²⁶ The reference would appear to be to Lewis' September 1928 visit to Munich, but the description of Hitler as a follower of Hindenburg's thought is incomprehensible, even though the Nazis had backed his presidential campaign in April 1925. Presumably, Mrs. Lewis or her interviewer were in error. We can surmise that Hindenburg is not what Lewis said, and that the mentor he had in mind was more probably, since Robert Cecil, in his *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology*, reports that in the early twenties Hitler was known as "the mouthpiece of Rosenberg", the author of *Mythus*.²⁷

However much he may have been attracted to the Atlantian hypothesis, Lewis was quite aware that the public he wished to persuade was more likely to respond with incredulity if pushed too hard with it, and he himself had an open mind on the matter. In chapter 11, then, he withdrew from the Atlantis position altogether, and using Gsell, whose hostility to Atlantian speculations he had dwelt on in the closing paragraphs of the previous chapter, he turned back to the optical evidence and the dolmens which had been the subject of the first section of Chapter 9.

If Gsell is hostile to the Atlantis-fans, he is indulgent – as far as his extreme prudence will allow him to be, even favourable – to the belief that sees in the Berber (who is after all, until he gets sun-burnt in the Bled, as white-skinned as us) a member of the European family.²⁸

This device, of allowing the reader to express his scepticism through Gsell in one chapter, thus establishing this authority as a voice of reason, only to present him in the next as solidly behind your own position is carefully thought out, but far from persuasive, perhaps because Lewis never mastered his own desire to advertise an act of skill. In fact we are able to round on Lewis without much difficulty, and when he offers evidence that the dolmens are the work of "little dolichocephalus brunettes", in the Moghreb and elsewhere, and that "the Etruscan was according to at least one authority a *big dolicephalic blond*, and this big horn-headed, golden-haired Paleface was the own blood-brother of the same-looking men in Moghreb, or the Guacho of the Canaries", and that "Both belong to the 'Sea-people,'" we see that we are being led back blindfold to Atlantis.²⁹ Lest the reader suppose that this a carelessly made remark, and of no great importance for its author, reference might be made to the degree that this line of thought penetrated Lewis' visual art. As late as 1938 we find Lewis painting a "Landscape with Northmen",³⁰ and more pertinently still for my case here the ink and watercolour sketch "Four Figures in a

²⁶ Bernard Lafourcade, "Chère Mrs Lewis", *Enemy News*, 12 (Spring 1980), pp. 14–15.

²⁷ Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology* (London: Batsford, 1972), p. 45.

²⁸ MSS in Cornell University Library, Chapter xi, p. 102.

²⁹ Chapter xi, pp. 103–4.

³⁰ "Landscape with Northmen", Oil on canvas, 1936–7. Catalogued as P66 in Walter Michel, *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 341, plate 112.

Landscape”, shows four blond, horned, sea-people, their ship, with its single, square, Norse sail, in the background, arriving on a rocky and mountainous coastline.³¹

Lewis’ intention in these three chapters, then, is to persuade the reader of the non-Semitic origin of the Berbers, and also to suggest that the Berber is of the same blood as the European, but we get no more than a hint as to why he should think these facts of such importance:

When I come to give, in the ensuing pages, a short outline of Berber history I shall have occasion to return to this question, which is, of course of great importance, for there is a bug in all men that represents their heredity, and which makes them behave in such and such a manner and no other (up to a point, and making due allowance for the heightenings and modifications brought into play by what we call “genius”³²

The characteristic which Lewis chooses to make the starting point of his examination of the Berber race-mind is that of nomadism, “instincts upon which everything else must turn – 1. the instinct to move about, or 2. on the other hand, the instinct to stop in one place.”³³ Anticipating difficulties here, Lewis turns aside to discuss the nature of instinct:

But are these instincts at all? Are they not rather just habits of life, dependent upon circumstances – climate, soil, neighbours etc? If a people is at the pastoral stage, it is apt to be “nomadic”. If at the agricultural, then it is “sedentary”.

Against this Lewis proposes the evidence of Rome, a nation, a race, with a strong predilection for legal matters, and with an exceptional fondness for war, Lewis remarking that “Some nations never want to go back to war. Some nations can never get away from it”, and clearly thinking not only of the Romans, but also of the Berbers, and also of the Northern Europeans (who are, as writers on the Aryans repeatedly suggest, “warriors from their birth, fighting for fighting’s sake” and peoples for whom “war was [...] a joy and a delight”³⁴). Clearly Lewis is endorsing some degree of fixity in racial characteristics, but one should not imagine that he is oblivious to the problems in this position. It is comic, a jest too deep for laughter almost, that the author of *Time and Western Man* should have to resort to some form of evolutionism to explain his belief in the variable characters of human groups, but this is precisely what Lewis obliges himself to do:

Admitting that *in the end* any given nation might grow like any other given nation, if similarly placed for long enough, *the time it would take it* to affect the transformation is important. For all practical purposes, and for such periods as we are accustomed to handle, those of historical time namely (and to float over into a cosmic abstraction we will in all cases leave to others) we may employ the term “Instinct”, I think, to indicate

³¹ Wyndham Lewis, “Four Figures in a Landscape”, 1938, watercolour, brush and black ink, 14 1/2 x 10 1/2 in the C. J. Fox Collection.

³² Chapter xi, p. 107.

³³ Chapter xii, p. 110.

³⁴ Lord Redesdale, “Introduction”, to H. S. Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1, p. xl.

some capital twist or bent, inseparable from this community or that (recognised as *its* sign and mark) so long as it is at all politically intact.³⁵

So these characters are not fixed, as viewed from the geological time-scale, though from a human point of view they may be regarded as such. There can be no stronger indication of the importance of race theory to Lewis than the fact that he was prepared to make a treaty with the Flux in order to support it.

Having settled this matter to his satisfaction Lewis now turns to the major question: “Is the Berber [...] the perfect born wanderer (the Bedouin at heart that his story shows us the Arab to be) or is he not?”³⁶ The reader already inducted in Lewis’ rather obvious, technique can guess without difficulty that the answer being prepared for is *No*. At this point the chapter appears to digress, Lewis spending several pages on Moroccan history, but the course of his argument is unchanged. We are told that “it seems that all the energy of the Berber races became concrete and effective only in the extreme south [...] whose populations were least influenced by the alien arab culture”, and that this is somehow analogous to the English case, for “What would England have been without the genius and energy of the Normans?”³⁷

The south, the Sous, is of interest to Lewis because it represents the least Arabised portion of the country, and it is a place where Basset, one of Lewis’ authorities, holds that the observer can get a “fairly good idea of what a political society of sedentary Berbers, left to themselves, could have been[...].”³⁸ But these are a sedentary people with a yearning for conquest, and thus it is not a paradox, as it might appear to a sceptic such as myself, that the Moorish conquest of Spain was principally a Berber feat with “The Arab [...] always at the Berber’s heels, Coran in hand, to steal from him anything he won, and stamp it all over with the catch-words of Islam.”³⁹ Precisely why Lewis is so interested in the manner in which the Moroccan world has been animated by Berber energy, but dominated by Arab culture, is not made clear, but that he is so is evident. And it is not merely a sense of pathos, but a fascination with the technique employed:

[...] always the Berber energy has been undermined and brought to nothing by the confusing presence of the Arabs, and their imposed religion. [...] By bringing *Allah* upon the scene, in short, they always are able to get the better of the Berber, who had not taken the precaution to provide himself with a first-class God of his own.⁴⁰

We are now close to our destination. Chapter 13, “Ksar or Tent”, springs upon us what was perhaps already sufficiently evident. Lewis believes that the Berbers are no more nomadic brigands than the Europeans, or, if you prefer, that the Empire building which the Europeans pride themselves upon and regard as a civilising force is a form of creative banditry, for “what is all

35 Chapter xii, p. 111.

36 Chapter xii, p. 111.

37 Chapter xii, p. 113.

38 Henri Basset, *Essai sur le Litterature des Berbères*, quoted in Chapter xii, p. 114.

39 Chapter xii, p. 115.

40 Chapter xii, p. 115.

white colonisation [...] but brigandage!”⁴¹ And perhaps this similarity is the result of a shared instinct, an instinct for piracy, conquest and war:

The Normans were pirates to start with. They were the Corsairs of their day: they were dreaded just as much as was the Berber afloat of a later age. Where the dark animal prows of their shore-hugging warships or war-canoes were observed off any coast, the “sedentary” bourgeois crossed himself, and followed the course of the sea-vulture with an anguished attention. [...] The french officers who have magnificently captured Morocco for the French Republic, are many of them descendants – purer than any left in England – of those Normans who drove on and lead forward the sleepy English to the great Britannic achievement, the archetype of all colonial brigandage – namely the painting of the world-map a pillar-box red.⁴²

We have met these animal heads before, of course, in Rosenberg, but perhaps their recurrence does not require special explanation. Further connections, however, can be found between Lewis’ reference to the French officer class and Rosenberg’s discussion of the decline of French civic life, where he observes that the French aristocracy and military were Nordics and that “At the end of the nineteenth century, onlookers at naval balls made the astonishing discovery that all the officers were blond.”⁴³ And elsewhere in his Moroccan writings, in *Filibusters* in fact, Lewis refers often to the French military with admiration: for example, when he tells us that “The most authentic Frenchmen in Morocco are the Soldiers, and they are by far the nicest Europeans there. But those are officers: the rank and file of the Foreign Legion are three-quarters German.”⁴⁴ We have here, then, a set of parallels with Rosenberg’s recently published views that suggests that Lewis had read this book and had been sufficiently impressed to let many of its approaches guide his own movements. Indeed, these similarities are not references, rather they are a tribute to the degree to which Lewis had absorbed Rosenberg’s thought.

More puzzling are those quotation marks around “sedentary”. Is Lewis saying that somehow that the business-minded bourgeois is not really a sedentary, that he is rootless in some way that the empire building brigand is not? This is precisely what he is saying, for Lewis held that the medieval social structure was the result of these parasitic conquerors and from that source has flowed much of the European cultural achievement:

In the Dark Ages France was a desert of sorts. Walled cities occurred at regular intervals. Near the city in most cases would be a “frowning” castle. In the castle lived a “robber” – that is some adventurer, or hereditary bandit, and his armed band, who kept other bandits at a respectful distance [...] He was technically a transhumant, for

41 Chapter xiii, p. 118.

42 Chapter xiii, p. 118.

43 *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Writings*, p. 79. See also *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, p. 57.

44 *Filibusters in Barbary* (Nash and Grayson: London, 1932), p. 28.

he would rove about the country, always however returning to his *Agadir* – his moated Kasbah.⁴⁵

The Berbers are proto-aristocrats, in the European sense, then, and what is more they are “respectable” and civilising:

[...] the respectability of these desert banditi becomes still more marked when they become semi-sedentary, as is apparently fairly often the case. When they *sit down*, or half-sit-down, to their parasitic role, then their law-abiding, regular and unimpeachably respectably respectable character *saute aux yeux*.⁴⁶

And in this respect it is, Lewis suggests, altogether similar to White imperialism. “The ‘empire-builder’ is now generally conceded to be a colossal brigand, merely, – a parasitic policeman upon the grand scale”⁴⁷ but there is, with all these similarities, a subtle difference. The Berber lives in peace with his subject towns, whereas the Europeans, even today, have endless difficulties with their conquered territories. Perhaps the difference is in religion, Lewis speculates; if the Europeans “had not possessed such an unsuitable religion as the Christian (unsuitable for a cut-throat and armed parasite, that is understood) [...] then the White Man, armed to the teeth, would be living to this day in perfect harmony with all those defenceless masses of mankind, that he describes as ‘natives’; and the world, as a consequence, “would be a far more peaceful place than it is at present”. So after the paradox of the nomadic brigand who is actually a civilising influence we are now asked to suppose that the Christian religion, which many Europeans would see as their principal civilising gift, is in fact nothing of the kind, but a cause of discord in the conquered lands. And we might perhaps go further, and say that not only has Christianity disturbed the culturally creative relationship between white brigand and subject race, but it has also disturbed that between the aristocrat and his subjects at home, for Christianity is proto-democracy.

This point is susceptible of further development. Lewis has already observed that the Berber had not provided himself with a God, and therefore was vulnerable to Islamic indoctrination, and hence more liable to have his pocket picked by the shrewd and religious Arabs who followed him into the lands taken by his sword. Is the situation of the European really very different? Here is a pagan wanderer tyrannised over by a religion not of his own making, made in fact in the same foundry of faiths as Islam. Is perhaps the Arab of the European, his parasite, the Jew? It is possible, as Lewis would archly say, it is possible that that is the conclusion to which you might come. I have already mentioned the Phineus material which appears in the *Tarr* of 1928, the *Childermass*, and also in Rosenberg, and perhaps it is now a little clearer why the revenge of Apollo should be rendered simply as “tormented by religion” in Lewis’ thumbnail sketch, a detail not in Rosenberg’s discussion of this legend. There seems to be

45 Chapter xiii, p. 120.

46 Chapter xiii, p. 122.

47 Chapter xiii, p. 123.

good ground for feeling that as early as 1928 Lewis already held many of the views expressed in *Kasbahs and Souks*. But if this so, then it seems reasonable to ask where he obtained them, and how this doubt concerning Christianity, also found in *Snooty Baronet*, can be made to square with his evidently admiring attitude towards the Roman Catholic church, as seen in *Time and Western Man*. The answers, which are to be found in Lewis' respect for the institution of the Church rather than its religion, lie beyond my scope here, but examination of Lewis' 1931 views in their strongest, clearest, form appear in Chapter 14 of *Kasbahs* may go some way to prepare for them. Here Lewis recapitulates his points, opposing Arab and Berber, but with the benefit of my analysis it is now clear that he may reasonably be taken as describing the European situation through analogy with the case of a closely related group, troubled by similar masters, who also use religion as their means of weakening resistance:

Once the Berbers had accepted Islam, and agreed to genuflect six times a day in the direction of the Red Sea, who [sic.] the Arabs were “the Chosen People”, and they never allowed the Berbers to forget it! (Oh how all-important, politically, to have a God of your own gentlemen! – and not to have one of foreign make, imposed on you, lock stock and barrel, along with all the compelling theurgic machinery that goes with such an importation! [...])⁴⁸

And the damage wreaked on the Berber nation is disunity, “their great *national* upheavals have always been in the name of religion rather than of race. [...] It was never in order to be a ‘powerful redoubtable nation’ that they took up arms: only to see which was the more outstanding mohommadan: *not* the better Berber.”⁴⁹ We should never forget that being a good Berber is here to be read as a discreet way of writing “good European”; Lewis wishes to say that the European too is a great force which has never realised its potential, and has been divided by an imported religion, a religion issuing from that other “chosen people”, and with another theurgic machinery, quite as elaborate as that of Islam.

In view of this parallel, what Lewis says of the Arab can only be of great interest to us in our tracking of his attitude towards Judaism. Yet there is a point which must be raised here lest it cause difficulties later. I do not wish to be understood as suggesting that Lewis is using the Berber-Arab relationship as a coded message. It is not enough simply to replace the terms Berber with *European*, and Arab with *Jew*, since North African history is not merely an excuse for Lewis; it is a component element in a larger phenomenon. Arab stands to Berber as Jew stands to European, but both can be described under the broader heading of Aryan, or Nordic, or whatever term you prefer (and Lewis is very evasive about his use of terms to describe this group), and the Semites. In earlier works Lewis seems always to be speaking of the Jews when he refers to the enemies of that western culture he values, but we would be justified in thinking that by mid-1931 he had become more literally an Anti-Semite, and though still believing that

⁴⁸ Chapter xiv, p. 127.

⁴⁹ Chapter xiv, pp. 128–9.

the most potent enemies of the west were in fact Jews, held that the Semitic world as a whole, Arabs included, was antithetical in its very constitution to the European type. It was an opinion that Lewis held to the end of his life, and forms, I believe, the substantial content of a work often said, in my view mistakenly, to be his major repentance, *The Human Age*.

Thus when Lewis quotes Gautier quoting Ibn Kaldoun to say that “If the Arabs want stones to prop up their saucepans, they pull to pieces a house to obtain them ... Under their domination ruin invades everything ... the established order is upset and civilisation goes back”,⁵⁰ he is not merely referring in code to the Jews. The ploy here is not substitution, but omission. The Jews are not replaced by the Arabs, they are silently included in the Semitic category. The quicker reader would realise that Lewis was implying that other Semites were also tearing down a dwelling in order to enrich themselves, however short-sightedly. And exactly the same point may be made about Lewis’ reference to the principal weapon of Arab power being the “debtor’s prison”, and the Arab being a “destructive fiscal despot”.⁵¹ The references to debt send us back to the sections on war debt in *Hitler*, and the despotic power of high finance is the concealed power behind the conspiracies outlined in *The Doom of Youth*. But whereas, in those writings, Lewis was concentrating on the immediate and local agents of this conflict, the Jews, in his 1931 texts Lewis sees them as being related to a larger conflict between human types. On the one hand, the Semite, the wanderer, whom Lewis describes, again via Gautier, as “incapable of creation”: “What he requires is something *already made* – an organisation created by somebody else. This animal does not manufacture his own shell, he takes up his quarters in the shell of some other animal.”⁵² On the other, the less astute, less financial, but more sedentary and creative northerner, “the good, stupid Indo-Teutonic peoples”, as Chamberlain called them.⁵³ The relation between them is a deadly one:

A destructive, non-creative, strictly useless creature, living essentially in a lifeless void – that, it is generally agreed, describes the Arab. But although native to, and perfectly suited, to this sort of physical *Neant* or Nothingness (and of course reflecting that in his extremely barren, featureless, intellect) the Arab is not above forcing his way into the shell that the other sorts of animals here and there have created, and (as long as the vitality of the entity in question lasts) sucking it drop by drop – ducat by ducat, douro by douro – and living like a gentleman upon its superior sedentariness. If he is vomited forth, he does not care. He goes back to the desert, to the *Neant*, where after all is his God, imanating a dull fatality. And from there he will look round for another nut to crack.⁵⁴

50 Chapter xiv, p. 131.

51 Chapter xiv, p. 132.

52 Chapter xiv, p. 133.

53 Chamberlain, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 217.

54 Chapter xiv, p. 140.

This passage, never before published (unsurprisingly Fox omits it from his selection), requires almost no comment. The revulsion here has few equals in Lewis' writing, and in those cases he is discussing individual Jews. On the other hand, his treatment of the Berbers is a lament rich with sentimental pathos. To see Lewis in tears is a rare treat:

Your Berber possesses that *personal* standpoint that endears. [...] All the violent separatism of the average European, the "clannishness", distinguish the Berber soul: all the pagan instincts are his at bottom – he is not really even a religionist. Why, when he wishes to have a religious war, he cannot even think up a point of dogma to have it about! He has to fall back upon the personal appearance, or the personal sanctity of such and such a person, or similar childishness. Indeed, he far out does the European, so it would seem, in all the most European of lovable shortcomings. He is warlike without purpose, impulsively personal without a critical faculty, godless except for superstitious considerations. [...] But I need not pursue the catalogue of these analogies, it is sufficient to say that the Berber inclines far more, in the matter of the more intimate springs of conduct, to the Occidental than to the Oriental. He is a fierce, rough, painstaking, home-loving, obedient, romantic, orderly, pathetic, chivalrous, easily-duped, Barbarian – if it is to be a Barbarian to be like this – attached to the things of the physical world, repelled by the abstract.⁵⁵

It may be as well to recall that the plotters in the *Doom of Youth* were described as "people in control of vast capital interest (or people working in their shadow) who [...] in their essential processes, pass over from the *particular* to the *general*"⁵⁶ and thus to connect them with the desert dwelling creatures of the *néant*, whose abstract and religious mind is sterile and incapable of creation, and who therefore exist parasitically on the creativity of others. We might also recall Lewis' interest, in *Doom of Youth*, in one journalist's comment that the German people "does not think in terms of capital and credits, but in terms of land and labour and goods"⁵⁷ and it is a short step to identify these Aryans with the Berbers, and Jewish high finance with the Semitic desert dwellers, for is not money an abstract representation of production, of creativity?

And with the contrast between the abstract and the concrete we reach at last the ostensible subject of Lewis' book, Berber architecture. The Kasbahs, substantial mud castles, are for him proof of a love of the physical, an indication that the Berber is no nomad, and a confirmation that they are descended from a civilisation both high and ancient, perhaps Egyptian, perhaps Minoan, perhaps, though he does not say this, Atlantean. They are, as he claims, a key to "all there is to be known of the essential Berbery, or Barbary"⁵⁸ and of course by this he means something of the "instinctive" character of its people, a character both pagan and earth-born. The Kasbahs are "truly *cyclopean* in appearance", and are "Often of very great architectural resource,

⁵⁵ Chapter xiv, pp. 141–2.

⁵⁶ *The Doom of Youth* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), p. 32.

⁵⁷ S. M'Clatchie, *Forum* (Apr. 1931), quoted in *Doom of Youth*, p. 34.

⁵⁸ "The Kasbahs of the Atlas", *Architectural Review*, 73 (6 Jan. 1933), p. 4.

most elaborately grouped, towers behind towers”⁵⁹ These products of a giant, and a barbaric mind, have a relationship with the land in which they stand which marks them out:

The walls of the Kasbah are made of the surrounding earth. When the Kasbah is a red Kasbah, the valley in which it stands is a red valley. With its tower of mud-concrete it is a puissant organisation, and it owes its organisation so much to the earth in which it is set that it has the air almost of some colossal vegetation, sprouting in this element of rock and mud. [...] The Kasbah is as much a work of nature as a hive or ant-city, in one sense then. Only a people like the Berber, who know nothing of anything but nature, always in the company of the sun, the rocks, the desert could have produced them [...] they are so fine, in the first place precisely because of this great air of having been done unconsciously – as the animal, or as the human genius functions.⁶⁰

Against this creation, “*barbaric*” in a Shakespearean sense as Lewis says,⁶¹ he puts the “structureless confections of the hispano-mauresque”, typified by the Alhambra, though not, Lewis adds, by the lion fountain at the same building; that was a “rebel gesture on the part of one of the last Moorish Kings of Granada, restless under the barren rigours of the coranic compulsions, which stamped out organic form, and put a *Verbot* upon life altogether, and for which, of course, the body of a lion in stone would be a trespass.”⁶² In view of Lewis’ move towards portraiture and latterly, in 1938, towards super-naturalism, a movement evident also in his post-war art criticism, these early stirrings of theoretical dislike for the abstract are most instructive, and remind us that his aesthetic writings and pictorial art are in no way to be excepted from a subtle relationship, as opposed to the cruder illustrational interest shown in the watercolour reproduced above, to his obsession with the conflict between human types. But Lewis is not principally interested here in questions of representation, since after all the Kasbahs are, when decorated, decorated only with geometric features. Lewis detects a difference of animating spirit in these two building manners. One is under coranic compulsion, stilted, nervously scribbled over with ornament, while the other is free, and even hubristic:

The Berber egotism, careless of the jealous eye of God, indeed an utter stranger to such an “oriental” notion, lifts himself higher into the air, in his imposing towers, than any other “savage” we have ever heard of, in a manner that would bring a cold sweat for instance to the superstitious punic back.⁶³

And thus we arrive again at religion, the imposed religion of the Semites. The Berbers are pagans, still engaged, though now almost overcome, in a death struggle with the Arab, and his religion:

⁵⁹ “The Kasbahs of the Atlas”, p. 4.

⁶⁰ “The Kasbahs of the Atlas”, p. 5.

⁶¹ “The Kasbahs of the Atlas”, p. 6.

⁶² “The Kasbahs of the Atlas”, p. 5.

⁶³ Chapter xvii, p. 170.

Really to understand the Kasbah, and to define the attitude in which we should approach this strange outburst of monumental art, it is desirable to probe a little further into the problem of individualist society *versus* religionist society.⁶⁴

This probing is carried out in a direction which is at first surprising, through a discussion of what Lewis thinks is a similar relationship between Rome and Carthage, detecting an “excessive ‘repulsion’ felt, as we say, ‘under the skin’ of Berber for Arab” and remarking on “how much that resembles the Roman attitude to Carthage.” Using Gautier as his source, Lewis refers to the Carthaginian habit of prostration in worship, a posture which shocked the Greeks and Romans, and their lack of mental breadth:

Nothing upon this earth was ever of any interest to them, outside of purely utilitarian ends; the pursuit of riches – pleasures, or love of power, upon the one hand, upon the other the religious preoccupations: above all, the religious terrors. Science, even that bearing on industrial technique – art, literature, history – every implying intellectual curiosity – left them profoundly indifferent.⁶⁵

The abstract, and intrusive god, in the service of the acquisition of those abstract entities, power and wealth, repelled the Roman, and resulted, as Lewis says, in the “final sowing of salt.” It is the enmity of Northerner for Semite, of the free pagan for the religionist who in his turn loathes all the simple values of the pagan:

And there is certainly a type of fanatical *religionist* – whose religion does not in the least interfere with his tireless and highly successful pursuit of gain – quite the contrary (witness the Mzabite,⁶⁶ or if you like the Quaker) – a person for whom pure science and pure art, and all their intellectual derivations – for whom in fact the “objective mind” of science, or of art, is distasteful and alien: who, when it is in his power to do so, discourages and destroys those things as a matter of course.⁶⁷

This connects with the Berber because he is “anything [...] but in a position of abject submission to a High God”; and still worships through “the saint-cult of the *Koubba*, rather than the more abstract devotions indicated by the Mosque”; and in his Kasbahs he has “put at the disposal of Man, and brought into the service of his personal egotism, all the resources of a monumental aesthetic.”⁶⁸ He is capable both of objectivity, and of humour, and these “are the two great european virtues [...] at the basis of pure science and of pure art”.

We are now in a position to turn to *Filibusters in Barbary* and ask “What Are Berbers for Lewis?” I have suggested that the North African writings, which I have approached almost entirely through unpublished material, are better understood as generally anti-Semitic, in the

⁶⁴ Chapter xvi, p. 164.

⁶⁵ Chapter xvi, p. 166.

⁶⁶ The Mzabite or Mozabite are a Berber people, but this makes no sense in context and is presumably a mistranscription of Moabite.

⁶⁷ Chapter xvi, p. 166.

⁶⁸ Chapter xvi, p. 167.

precise rather than the colloquial sense of the term, though with a special animus towards the Jews. We can now provide a concise summary of this viewpoint. Lewis sees the Berbers as pagan Nordics, perhaps from Atlantis, whose history shows them in long-term conflict with Semitic parasites, first with Carthage, and then with the Arabs. They direct our attention to the conflict, evident to Lewis in European history, between creative, piratical Europeans, and the sterile, commercial, Semites, who appear in his writings as Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and as modern Jews. In *Filibusters* Lewis is largely concerned with this latter question, and he casts his argument in a way that demands comparison with the earlier remarks on the Arab exploitation of Berber conquests. We are presented with the ancient opposition in the persons of the French military, particularly Marshal Lyautey, who had recently acquired Morocco for France, and the purportedly Jewish-dominated French civil service who represent the interests of global high finance. I do not propose to examine *Filibusters* in great detail. Most of the points that can be made have already been put before the reader in connection with the rather clearer text of *Kasbahs and Souks*. But this central opposition deserves attention, since it draws us firmly back into the European present with which Lewis was, as his study of *Hitler* shows, deeply engaged.

In 1934 a libel suit so disturbed the publishers of *Filibusters* that they withdrew the book without much defence. Lewis wrote to protest on the 10th of February, remarking that the volume addressed “questions of great moment”, and as an example drew attention to the figure of a colonial official’s wife, a fellow passenger on the boat to Africa, described at vitriolic length in Chapter Three: “it must surely have occurred to you that it was something more than irresponsible fun.”⁶⁹ There then followed a substantial quotation from the book, which I reproduce to give flavour to this analysis:

this obese groceress wallowing in the profitable squalors of the Third Republic became symbolic, perched up in that way upon the *passerelle* of the Algerian packet. It was a Statue of Liberty. A century and a half after the tumbrels and the guillotine, here stood this bogus butter-and-egg marchioness – this enthroned charlady – being borne in triumph towards a land won for the Third Republic by the great Lyautey – a Christmas Present for a régime which could find no better way to thank him for his gift than to dismiss him at last, with an insulting recall.⁷⁰

Lewis added: “In general the Moroccan scene as described in *Filibusters in Barbary* reveals the existence of a conflict between the colonising, the Roman, impulses of the French Nation – of which impulses Lyautey is the archetype – and the irresponsible, commercial and capitalistic, interests.” Except for the letter’s passing reference to Stavisky, the corrupt Jewish financier the collapse of whose trading house had been much in the news during this time, there is no indication that the opposition Lewis had in mind is between Semite and Nordic. Yet there can be no doubt that this is the case. The clue is small but unmistakable: on page 15 of *Filibusters*

⁶⁹ Original letter in Cornell University Library. Quoted from C. J. Fox, “Editor’s Introduction”, in Wyndham Lewis, *Journey into Barbary*, ed. by C. J. Fox (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1983), p. xv.

⁷⁰ *Filibusters in Barbary*, p. 15.

in *Barbary* we are told that this colonial couple could be seen “in the gloaming, afterwards, upstairs on deck, [...] nestling her fringed head upon ‘coco’s’ shoulder, while they both stared over the side of the ship in the direction of what once was Carthage, thinking of their humble beginnings.”⁷¹ They gaze at the ruins of the last Semitic empire of the Mediterranean, destroyed by the Romans in an act which Rosenberg held to be one of the most significant in race history, since it spared “even the later cultures of Central and Western Europe [...] from the breath of this Phoenician pestilence”. Rosenberg continued: “World history might well have taken a different course had the destruction of Carthage been accompanied by the completely successful destruction of other Near-Eastern, Semitic-Jewish centres. [...] however; the Near-Eastern parasite no longer dwelt in Jerusalem itself, but had already extended its strongest tentacles from Egypt and ‘Hellas’ to Rome [...]”⁷²

And so Lewis presents the wife of the Semitic administrator of the French state, disguised in a “gown – which was roman, which was senatorial”⁷³ as a token of the Semitic menace which has infiltrated France and now follows its noble Romans and manipulates its soldiers in order to make Barbary, as Lewis was to say in a newspaper article in 1933, “safe for international capital”.⁷⁴

Lyautey, is a throwback: true to the military mind he had inherited, he built his castle in Spain (or Empire in Morocco, the same thing) in the grand roman style of his ancestors. An anachronism. Then the political riff-raff and job-snatchers (pals of Oustric and patrons of the Bonnet Rouge) who been watching his altruistic proceedings from the distance, biding their time, more powerful than he, spat in his eye and kicked him out of his castle and turned it into a bank.⁷⁵

These ideas are not, however, Lewis’ own, and constitute strong evidence for detailed knowledge of Rosenberg’s *Mythus*. We find Rosenberg, for example, remarking that French history from the St Bartholomew massacre onwards was a series of disasters for the Nordic French, and after the Revolution, in which the Jacobins dragged “to the scaffold anybody who was lean and blond”⁷⁶ and that since this time the “Mediterranean-Alpine Man mixed type”, “Shopkeepers, lawyers and speculators” had dominated social life:

Democracy – i.e. not the rule of character, but that of money – had begun [...] Jewish bankers also pushed themselves into the foreground, followed by Jewish journalists and Marxists [...] Those in France who still thought nobly drew back from the dirty

⁷¹ *Filibusters in Barbary*, p. 16.

⁷² *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Writings*, p. 57.

⁷³ *Filibusters in Barbary*, p. 12.

⁷⁴ “Poor Brave Little Barbary”, *Daily Herald*, 10 Oct. 1933, p. 10.

⁷⁵ *Filibusters in Barbary*, p. 75.

⁷⁶ *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Writings*, p. 79.

business of politics, lived in provincial castles in conservative isolation, and sent their sons into the army to serve only the fatherland.⁷⁷

Such a clustering of similar themes appears improbable without close knowledge, and at the very least argues deep agreement. At the worst, the line I myself would take on this, it suggests that Lewis was prepared at this time to take elements of Rosenberg's material and merely recast it as his own. There were certainly substantial differences between them over religious issues, Lewis being much more tolerant of the Catholic Church, which he saw as redeemed by residual paganism, whereas Rosenberg despised it as a Jewish, or as he often says a *Syrian*, infection. But this cannot erase such supine replication of Rosenberg's positions. A grasp of his thought should give any reader a firm hold on Lewis' own slippery discursions, and with the key outlined above in my discussion of *Souks and Kasbahs* the interested reader should have little difficulty in decoding the details of *Filibusters*, should they choose to do so, laying bare the contrast between the Jewish financiers exploiting Morocco, and the Franco-Roman Generals who conquered the land. As it happens there are many minor references to the Jews throughout the text, and these are always cool or hostile. A specimen may be in order. Speaking of an American film-team encountered in Morocco Lewis writes that:

[...] all the personnel of this Film-world might come from a certain district – say in Galicia or in Checko-Slovakia. One could imagine then as a diminutive, pthisic, gutter-people, who had started in gutter-theatricals, prospered, spread over the world (as the – – – – have done) caricaturing any eccentricity, or imitating any particularly brutal behaviour on the part of the full-grown, “normal”, master-people by whom they were surrounded.⁷⁸

The unmysterious dash stands in, of course, for the word “Jews”; and is one of many such glancing references, which though not always critical, and sometimes they are as meaningless as a reference to Feuchtwanger's *Jew Süß* in the course of a discussion of the correct orthography for rendering the Berber word *Sous*,⁷⁹ contrive to keep the image of the Jew forever before the reader. The focus is on the Jews, as opposed to the Semites picked out in *Souks and Kasbahs*, because it is the Jews, of all the Semites, whom Lewis identifies as the gravest current threat. The Berbers for Lewis, then, are a way locating the immediate political conspiracy described in *The Doom of Youth* in a racio-historical setting, and of confirming the accuracy of his beliefs about this conspiracy by reference to the activities of the French Republic in its north African territories.

⁷⁷ Alfred Rosenberg: *Selected Writings*, p. 79.

⁷⁸ *Filibusters in Barbary*, p. 97.

⁷⁹ *Filibusters in Barbary*, p. 45.