

Chapter Eighteen

ANOTHER SISTER, ANOTHER BROTHER

“And will I lose yet another sister?”

Seven forty-five. Words for the dead droned from two loudspeakers secured with guy wires to the lentil above the broad entrance to No. 22, Rue Mizon, a cue of the splurging by Houda on her mother’s memory. Remy stopped the taxi, planning to walk the half block.

“Monsieur?” Nemmiche’s puckered nose asked, when offered three hundred, two below the usual amount. “Bab el Oued’s more,” he clarified, meaning not less than to the Al-Nigma. A monetary worry so cursorily put by had returned to dog him.

Outside the prison the sentries had set their non-negotiable baksheesh for allowing him to use the guard post telephone: ten dinars for each *appel*.

The first: He was bluntly told by Sergeant Ghouraf, “He’s with the Seventh’s father. That you know. Not even a call from the president would justify disturbing him.” He hung up, proffering no hint he would acquaint Foucin that he had dialed.

The second: Though certain there would be no answer, he held on through the twentieth ring. *So she hasn’t left her side*, thought Remy, *yet*. At length Houda would persuade her to go, for had not Mohammed insisted, “Somehow she’s found out everything: how the *douk-douk* penetrated, which way the blood flowed, the angle M. John’s neck overlaid the step. Her note will reek of verisimilitude”?

Would Leila—for “What woman doesn’t take better measure of another woman than any man?”—pierce the façade Houda would attempt to erect? “Quite considerate of M. Foucin to notify me that M. Lazar agreed to visit my brother. But if he had a message from Mohammed, he would have stopped by. It’s almost seven.”

She would pause to smile. “You must go. The time draws near for you like M. Foucin to converge on the Al-Nigma. Wasn’t his purport in bidding M. Belghiche also to convey the hour of his *entrevue* with M. Lazar that you should be at the hotel farewell? You’ll tender my wishes, as you deliver yours, for his safe journey.”

The whirring of the third number underscored to Remy his desperation. “He’s not in. May I relay a message, M. Lazar?”

“You are most kind. Please advise your husband, with whom I’ve scheduled a nine o’clock appointment at the Al-Nigma, if I’m not there, come to the residence of the Belmazoïr family. It’s a matter of importance.”

“Then I’ll be sure he receives it.”

Bounding into the “nipping” and “eager air,” Remy promised Nemmiche he would

augment his fee at the hotel. “Meet me there in an hour or so.”

“I seek what’s fair. To and back from the penitentiary and the tedious interval in between: Not let in till five, it was 6:20 before we left Berrouaghia for Algiers. For a week haven’t I been at your beck and call? You check out this evening, a tip from—*Malesh!*—and it’s obvious I’m not to be—”

“Monsieur,” Remy barged in, “excuse me, I’m pressed to get inside. Should I fly out tonight, I’ll leave five hundred more for you at the reception desk.”

Still displaying suspicion, Nemmiche pocketed the three bills extended. A moment later, more intent on his U-turn, to Remy’s “*Merci,*” he gruffed, “*De rien!* [‘Don’t mention it!’]” and picking up speed, felt the compulsion to shout through the window, with echoing resignation, “*Pour rien!* [‘For nothing!’]”

Across the façade of “22” were tacked four strands of sallow bulbs. Toward this mustard-gas drabness, Remy quickened his pace, for had not he been exhorted, “You must hurry”?

With his head meekly drooped, Mohammed was already poised two strides from the bisecting grille. To Remy the left cheek bandage appeared fresh.

During the ride out, setting aside an “uncomfortable” nap, and the “interminable” eighty-minute wait for the sentries to reassume their post after Asr, Remy had never tinkered with his exordium: some commiserative formulae on Mme. Belmazoir’s passing.

This “delicate protocol,” however, was foiled by Mohammed’s overreaching “My sister. You must go to my sister.”

“She’s well, I’m assured. After less than three hours I plane to Belgium. M. Vellacott’s directive. I’ve little time, yet shunt from my agenda to accommodate your request.” (He did not attach, *even though it was rudely couched.*) “My condolences on the death of your mother. I leave confident M. Vellacott will exculpate you, reaping a whirlwind from doubts I’ve stirred up, and soon you’ll be reunited with Mlle. Houda.”

He had persisted, undeterred by the several stabs Mohammed had made, by parting his lips, to break in. *Not a whiff that I’m privy to the monstrous fourberie wreaked on them. No, no! Confront rudeness with righteousness,* Remy consoled himself.

Mohammed’s response, surprisingly, was not rushed. “You must go to my sister and tell her I send these words, ‘God is the oft-forgiving.’ Please, you must hurry.” The succinct calmness indicated to Remy that the adjuration had been rehearsed.

“I’ve done what I could for you and your family. My flight’s been put in jeopardy by sidetracking to Berrouaghia. Any detour to Bab el Oued would doom me to miss it. I iterate that I’ll regale M. Vellacott with ample contrariedades to procure your release.”

“Release,” the anadiplosis spun darkly from Mohammed’s lips.

Having gazed at the incurvate palms, adangle before his crotch, he slowly—“painstakingly” was Remy’s self-emendation—uplifted them until it seemed they would berth at his face, which instead suddenly plummeted into them.

With his countenance now masked, he tipped inward, his knuckles verging on the gray, sixteen-gauge wire barrier. “I should have appealed to him, in spite of my vow. Accursed that solely on you . . .”

From the rear was bellowed in sarcastic French, “*Arrêtez, ‘captive!’*” the jussive

reinforced by a truncheon-to-flank smack, both compelling Remy, for the first time, to avert his attention from Mohammed.

The dedicated fierceness pinching the visage of the new *gardien* contained “not a drop of the previous milksop’s compliant kindness, but since the Plo knife attack had not all the warders’ comity distanced itself.”

“And can I ever be free?” His hands slumped to his thighs. “She had to live only till Mother died. I know her: She’s devised a scheme absolving me of guilt. You must go to her, say what I begged you to say, and sit with her until she repeats, ‘God is the oft-forgiving.’”

His tone grew progressively vehement. “Somehow she’s found out everything: how the *douk-douk* penetrated, which way the blood flowed, the angle M. John’s neck overlaid the step. Her note will reek of verisimilitude. For God’s sake, go to her! Stop her!”

With his right fist, Mohammed pounded the flattened steel mesh, transmitting shivers the length of the room. The guard stormed forward, his billy club hoisted.

He’s not beating my father now evoked Remy, stepping backward. Plopped on the bed, having usurped my place, he’s stroking his insentient legs. He’ll extort nothing. Even as he averred his crowning, “I have no son,” he knew me, and that recognition saves me, releases me. Foucin, accept defeat!

“I beseech you, an alms-for-the-beggar plea,” and to choreograph the supplication, Mohammed, whose tremorous fingers skidded down the grille, sank to his knees. Having fixed their grip, his hands transferred to the welded wire a hummingbird vibration, its thrum overwhelmed at once by a percussive blast: the nightstick striking.

With his six-pace retreat effected, Remy derisively challenged himself, *Extricated from one burning robe, am I to don another?* Thrice he tapped the hollow steel door.

The judas-hole having been slid open and slammed shut, he heard a key inserted. *Soon I’ll be out of this country!* This huzzah at the first click from the *trou de serrure* coincided with a precisely aimed second blow which grazed the *captif’s* protruding knuckles.

Pulled back, Mohammed’s hands again enshrouded his face. A muffled speech came forth, but the single word caught was the ultimate: “. . . devil.”

One insult too far, Remy hurled his body, arms flailing, away from the door, now ajar. “What? What do you call me?” he shrilled, instinctively obeying the two-measure requisite.

As Mohammed’s descending fingers, snicked at their joints by the sponton, pressed against his cheeks, they embossed pink tearlike streaks, though the squiggles on the left were minified by a jagged ring of blood which had burst through the white gauze.

Clutching his throat, he had thrust the heels of his hands under his chin. “Monsieur, I invoked a forlorn and ancient bond (‘If you have sister, please save mine!’) and apologized for hallooing you as ‘devil’?”

2

A devil, being all memory, has none, Remy reflected, while traversing the hall, its width constricted by the viand-crammed card tables and flower baskets. “I am none!”

“Monsieur!” was heralded from the stairwell. On looking up, Remy beheld Mme. Bourceli, her head bobbing above the side railing. “You’ve hustled over for the repast!” With the hand not clenching her paper plate, which sagged under a smorgasbord, she rapped Ghazi’s shoulder to signal him, a rung below her, to translate.

Before her son could, Remy slyly giggled, “Mlle. Belmazoir . . . is feeding . . . all Algiers . . . *apparemment*.” He utilized a faltering Arabic except for the adverb.

Bourceli’s lower jaw fell, though her astonishment was principally registered by a *kefta* (“meatball”), which slicked from her plate and tumbled over the banister. It landed with a thud at Remy’s feet, its minced lamb and onions scattering onto the recently laid carpet, one of the many rented by Houda for the memorial reception.

“*Voilà!* We can converse tongue to tongue!” Her boisterous laughter was tailed by a batted rictus.

Scampering to the ground floor, she braked an arm’s length from him. “Eat from my plate! So you didn’t need this misconstruing fool. How you Europeans deem you have God’s permission to squander money! Well, I’ll gladly take the trickle-down.”

With the toe of her left flat shoe, she was essaying to shove the remnants of the *kefta* into the spandrel beneath the stairs’ newel.

“Gorge on the divinity of the fête! Or for a better sport, squire me before our *alim*, one of the chanters she’s hired, and thus he must postpone his feasting. ‘Full belly or full purse?’ earlier I taunted, inciting his anile, lascivious digits to race the faster across the Holy Page.”

On her son’s cheek she administered—“out of habit”—a be-chary cuff, leaving behind some gooeey fingerprints of *ktayef*, a honey-coated baked-vermicelli pastry.

Remy proceeded to his explanation, that he bore a message from Houda’s brother. “Is it true they’ve shredded his beautiful face?” and she squinted pitifully at Ghazi. “Her I saw slip into the shack a half-hour ago, probably to weep, it finally dawning on her how much she’s flushed down the toilet with her extravagance.”

“Will madam chaperon me?” Remy asked, his voice imperceptibly trembling as he unclamped his palm to advertise the ten-dinar bill.

“I can eat more than that in fifteen minutes!” her boffola. “Ne’ertheless, since money has greater preservatives—food lasting at best a day, at worst longer—I will.”

Crisscrossing the yard and cascading from its inner walls, strands of white, green, and red lights had been strung. On the right were five readers, each having balanced his Qur’an on a squat, folded-out, wooden *rehal* (“stand”), over which, with knees tucked under, each man hovered. Their bodies swayed as they intoned, with left hands chopping the air while the right skimmed the surface of the text.

At the shed, Bourceli chirped, “Mlle. Hostess, your residence is with guest.” No reply. “The other decamped an hour ago,” she susurrated. “Had I one so enthralled—a stint this morning she skirred to and fro ’twixt His Excellency and my washergirl—I’d not have bundled her off. The gossip is she was the mistress of that American, slivered by this Houda’s once pretty brother. I guess she’s familiar with the fro-and-to,” she snickered.

With the salutation yet gone unanswered, “Too late,” Remy fretted.

A further three times Bourceli summoned, after the second, leveling at the reciters a harsh injunction, “Shush, for I must earn my fifty!” A brief calculating moment passed

before she remurmured, “Perhaps, she sleeps. Should I intrude?”

Remy nodded, grabbling for an additional ten. Through the cracked door, Bourceli squeezed, her backhand tap snuffing out the shaft of hazy candlelight.

Caught up in waiting, Remy fixated on the stubby white tassels and the terra cotta hem of the angulated bakshaish overlapping the raised sill. Blaring street music from radios and recorders, the natter of hallway people, and the droning of the elocutionists, he knew, *would have throttled any sounds from the shack—except a shriek.*

The door abruptly reopened, and Bourceli plodged forth, lugging the metallic chair. She plumped it just inside the threshold and installed herself, snapping a regal tilt of her head at the fruit crate in the middle of the room. Scrunching past her frame, Remy saw that the soiled white cotton divider had not been removed.

“She’s abed. From there—the sheet will be my chaperoning accomplice, priceless since it ‘claims no stake’—she agrees to chat with you.”

Not directly seating himself on the crate, Remy pronounced some consoling sentiments. An unquivering “You’re most gracious” arose from behind.

Split between relief, which he denigrated as presumptuous, and over-the-shoulder anxiety, he continued, “Mlle. Belmazoïr, I come from your brother. Genuinely honored I was by your confidence in delegating me to convey to him the sad tidings of your mother’s death, and regret I was out of the way, for although a somber charge, to be of service to you, that message I would have posthaste delivered.”

He halted in vain for an acknowledgment. “Your brother expressed solicitude for your well-being and bade me impart how he longs to be here to comfort ‘my dear sister.’” In the taxi he had decided to use as a lead-in a verse from another sura: “I’m to relay these words: ‘[Do not weaken and fall prey to grief.] God is the oft-forgiving.’”

A faint cry was supplanted by some gagged coughs. On the quarter of the nightstand not obscured by the hanging *drap*, he had espied the capped Saïda bottle. “Mme. Bourceli, please, a drink of water for Mlle. Belmazoïr?”

The protest, he had expected, would spring from the chair, not the bed: “No, none’s required. Unnecessary, yet truly obliging, your kind act.” Her instruction disregarding, he dug into his pocket for a ten.

A recompensed Bourceli grasped the Saïda, elevated the cloth, and with her frame shielding Houda, thrust the bottle toward her. “Drink before you strangle on your grief!”

Scanning the fully exposed tabletop, Remy located the Turkish coffee cup. In two strides he swooped it up, his heed simultaneously discerning the pen and marble tablet—“feasibly her suicide note’s pestle and mortar”—beyond the candlestick.

Back at the crate, he lifted the tiny, handleless cup to his nose, at once vailing it.

“She wants none.” Plucking down the divider, Bourceli clumped to her seat.

When Houda finally spoke, the porcelain *tasse* was suspended helplessly in front of his body’s fork. “He’s as much in my heart as I am on his mind.” The artificially projected voice, Remy was certain, strove to disguise its etiolation.

“Monsieur, you must hurry.” It had adopted a lilt. “You ‘jet out’ tonight, I hear. By now Mme. Bal— those companioning you to the airport approach the Al-Nigma. Thank you for the message: ‘God is the oft-forgiving.’ But, excuse me, I must return to my prayers.”

Stepping back to the nightstand where he replaced the cup, Remy bent forward. His

boding whisper fluttered the sheet, so near to it had he brought his lips: “*Tenr’iman.*”

“Monsieur,” Bourceli inveighed from her perch, “a hermit’s distance.”

“Who are you?” was the almost immediate question, well-nigh missed by Remy, who was already withdrawing.

“Madam, I fear Mlle. Belmazoir’s not well. As a precaution, may your son seek out a doctor?” Remy produced his wallet, having exhausted the bills in his pocket.

“Ten for sitting. Twenty for walking. Forty for walking fast,” Bourceli sniffed. Remy tendered the last, which she deftly tweezed.

At the doorway, she yelled, “Ghazi!” her outburst awing the declaimers into softer modulation. In a twinkling he appeared. “Light of your papa’s wick—Great Allah, shrink it (if possible) through all eternity!—fetch that fat quack Dahmani. And mayhap, if you fly, my ambace, I’ll ‘shake the superflux’ of twenty centimes thy way.”

3

Like my father’s, have her legs become worthless? The crate, with no permission sought, he picked up and situated adjacent to the sheet. Mme. Bourceli seemed not to notice since her lips were mouthing numbers, a visual register of her vaulting profit.

“Mademoiselle, why? There was no need. The proof that attests your brother wasn’t the murderer is at hand.” What he had resolved in the taxi ride back—“the circumcised and uncircumcised penis”—now warranted a nominal significance.

“But not proof positive, as my *tenr’iman* is. You’re from Algeria. A date palm exclusive to our Djanet oases, only a native, simply by smelling the residue of its bark, could identify and nominate it in its Tuareg dialect. With all that cognized, fellow *gazayri*, trueborn ‘Algerian,’ you must as well appreciate your forty’s squandered.”

“It kills you,” Remy, unable to utter the words, thought.

Ah-haah-hah-ahh-ah-umm.” Bourceli’s yawn was succeeded by her mumbling, “I’m ‘out of all compass.’ Relentlessly the victuals or the calculus bulldozes me into numbing drowsi—” A protracted snore broke off the word.

“Talk with me,” Houda resumed. “Afraid, I grow leaden, as if my soul were ‘double-weighted.’ Speak of my Mohammed, still wildly beautiful, I wager, despite the scars.”

“Who am I?” Remy parried her earlier query, and the anguish lurched toward one destination. “The meddler who has caused a sister to be lost. The blame is mine, for stirring what should have been let lie, for groping what should not have been touched.”

“No!” She gripped the corner of the sheet and wrenched it slightly back, forming an arc, through which her drained unveiled countenance peeped. “Monsieur, no!”

With the *drap* loosed, its obscuring presence intervened, and Remy tracked her silhouette as it toppled onto the bed. *The torso yet moves—like another’s!*

“Torment me not that through my deed I—alone responsible!—encumber and incriminate you, one most innocent. How could I live, monsieur, apperceiving my very being would drive my brother, in prison or out, ultimately to his death?

“I witnessed our father unbeknownst that way steering, pursued by the musty cackling of occult Erinyes, ‘Patricide! Patricide!’ assured he’d been the agent who doomed his own. Without verification, nonetheless with the belief.”

A kindled rasp interrupted, but did not abate, her passion. “Living, I’d be a

remembrancer of what we did that night at Rue Toumi. ‘I will not let him die!’ You’ll tell him, make him understand, he must live. My dying prayer.”

“And he sent me with the Qur’anic verse that *you* must.”

Constrained not to let the gathering spasm of coughs overhaul her, amid subdued distraught sobs, she effused: “He does not know all! And you . . . you do not know all! That night—that night on which we’ve splurged our breath cursing—begot this! . . . This richer issue: a bonding . . . redemptive!”

With the hacking tumult over, she rhetorically catechized, “And were not Adam and Eve as much brother and sister as husband and wife?” A shorter pause. “M. John.”

Remy deferred his response, deliberating over how least “to wound the dead man she still loves” and how best to conceal that, except in her fancy, he was sure, she had never “touched” him. Of those he could not deprive her.

“The vitiation of M. Ballard cannot be denied. I suspect, however, he wasn’t aware of the nuanced machinations, planned and by and large executed by a true villain. On that night—that night I wouldn’t let you let go—the bathroom held another, who slinked out to don the FLIRs for his entertainment. It was he who flicked on the switch exiting . . . and twelve days afterward wielded the slipjoint knife.”

“He was always kind, not unlike you, monsieur. I did that ‘for myself,’ I forewarned. How little do we deserve each other!” with staccato purity she exclaimed. “Yet, beyond all infidelity, love endures, condescending to bequeath hope, as the air vouchsafes us breath.”

Remy imagined her wearied eyes, doubly imprisoned behind veils, gliding past him, round Bourceli, and—all artificiality dissipated—into a perfectly silent courtyard, suffused by *that brilliance the heavens never cease to accord*.

“I hold M. John was grappling with his weakness, and this contemplation endorses the faith that my brother will persevere in his upward struggle.” The shadow of her left hand had ascended and was eddying gently when with frantic abruptness it snatched for the top wooden rail and clung, as her body was racked by an acute convulsion.

Watching the paroxysm subside, Remy, likewise shaken, realized that “without delay, her confidence must be emboldened. Her ‘dying voice’ must extol, ‘More than just begun is my Mohammed’s *Pěnie!*’” he prodded himself, in flights-of-angels’ song.

“Is he well served, being freed by virtue of the slander with which you would sully yourself? Is this the legacy you crave to pass on to him, a testimony of *your* strength, which unwittingly serves to negate for all time *his* own?”

Her demurrals manifested her inner debate: whether in these final moments she could set aside her life’s work, sheltering his “wild-garden beauty” for her own pleasure.

“Yes!” her exultation rose. “He becomes *my* gardener! I can forsake him no longer!” “The letter to M. Foucin!” frenetically she pleaded. “Under my pillow. I must destroy it!”

The silhouette of two hands jostled over her shoulders. “My fingers tremble . . . will not grasp! They fail me! My beguiling salvation will ensure his ruin!”

Tilting in, Remy eased his right forearm around the white sheet.

“What is this? What is this?” demanded Bourceli, aroused by Houda’s distraught French. Hoisting herself from the chair, she tramped to the bed. “So this is why you edged your crate abutting, your mauleys as busy-in-mischief as our *alim*’s.”

“No. Mlle. Belmazoir requires assistance.” He whispered to Houda, “Confess that you have to relieve your stomach.”

“My intestines gripe. Madam, I’m sorry” was stammered.

“Tainted! The meat you served was spoiled!” With a snorted groan, Bourceli flung up the divider to cast an “evil eye” on “her poisoner.” The fury of her toss hooked its seam over the clotheslines, thereby exposing the tableau.

Her head was sunk into a thin, maroon-slipped pillow, and her fingers, nerved not to evince her shivers, pinched an olive-drab blanket, already sodden and sticking to her frame in thickset patches.

A lacteous-white veil of lace shielded her face, and Remy, assimilating its three borders of frayed tatting, marveled, “She revealed it—for *me*! I must escape, before blinded, this rainbow-on-rainbow-in-fire radiance.”

In abashment and unworthiness, he deflected his belgard to the away nightstand, where a solitary tallow candle emitted a white-rose, helical flamelet.

“Preposterous!” He addressed Bourceli’s charge, and as a bolster asked a question with a “forgone” answer. “Have you spied a morsel tincture her lips? She’s devastated by her mother’s death.” Violent crouching from Houda reverberated.

“If you will not, then let me intercede.” He leaned over, braced Houda’s nape and clavicle, and with a lift rolled her frame until her head overhung the far side of the bed.

“I cannot chaperon such goings-on!” As Bourceli flailed her arms and stamped the floor, Remy’s hand slid under the pillow, located the papers, crumpled them into a wad, and stepped back. Conscious they had been secured, Houda quit the dry retching and, having blown out the far candle, drew her trunk back to the center of the mattress.

“Monsieur, I accounted you gentlemen of Europe . . . gentlemen. Adulterers and adulterators, all Adams are!” Bourceli’s gnathion pecked at him, while her large-boned fingers reached up to jerk free the snagged *drap*. “Oh, my guts commence to churn! I’m positive she’s toxified us all. I’ll flee this vault.”

With his stride equaling hers, Remy spoke firmly. “Retake your seat, madam. All’s well. The doctor will come presently.” He chanced upon a balled-up ten-dinar note in his pocket and to mollify her further moved the crate to its original spot.

In the ensuing quiescence, Remy, collapsed on the box, stared ahead at the “put-out-the-light” blackness, but his careening meditations were on a locker at *Les tombeaux*, an out-of-bounds, estranged-from-insurrection cornfield, a dark-oak bed where one parent had died, and a metallic one where his other “*fait cavalier seul*, ‘goes it alone.’”

Thumping footfalls rumbled from the courtyard, and a mock-incensed timbre spouted, “Whosoever disrupts my Ramadan feast must be steeled to empty his purse! Fee and fie and foh and fum!”

“Monsieur, my friend!” staunchly Houda called, her strength reserved for this vale. “Soon the poison will dishevel my rhetoric. I’ll be mute hereafter. Tell my brother, ‘No “particle of love” ever dies . . . dissolves into nothingness.’ His sister commands him to live, and to God and garden commends . . .”

A pace from the threshold, the doctor had launched an Arabic jibe at Bourceli, “Lady Corpulence, why do you spurn my spur: ‘Fast eleven; feast Ramadan. Not vice versa’?” provoking her retort, “Banty physician, ‘heel’ thyself!” The badinage had occasioned the doctor to miss Houda’s inceptive words.

Remy quickly ascertained the last had been caught since with sprightly vociferation and a flustered smile, the rotund hakim announced in French, “So my patient’s masked by more than a cotton sheet. On entering a sick chamber, never have I been greeted by such bizarre parlance. What does she mean,” inquired he of Remy, “. . . the wild-garden beauty of his soul, *s’il vous plaît*?”

4

“Ugh!” After having poked at the bottom of the cup with his forefinger, *Duktoor* Mokhtar Dahmani had dabbed its tip against his tongue.

“Not a spur-of-the-moment decision. Every spice shop in the Casbah sells it. All the same, there’s a day of boiling in vinegared water and two for the liquid to condense. Its translation from our Tuareg dialect is ‘it kills you,’ a reference not to the bark, rather to overgoring on the palm’s fat, very sweet dates.”

Remy had distinguished it purely by its cashew/licorice smell. In 1958 Commander Azzedine had dispensed an eyedropper-sized bottle to him prior to a school-break mission to the wild Atlas Mountains below *Wilaya IV*.

“Not for you. That’s the cyanide’s job! ‘Domesticating torture,’ the appended ALN edict touts. I’ll paraphrase: A *harki*—nothing’s too fiendish for those ‘scum Muslim Algerians fighting for the French’—has been bagged. Not pressed to dispatch him immediately, force-feed him this ‘patriotic potion.’” The bantering tone mismatched his jaded countenance. “Then settle back and revel as he more-than-the-more dies.”

With the cup reset on the bedside table, the *médecin* professed, “Nothing much I can do. She’s probably already bleeding in her rectum and other nether holes. Any garment stains descried?” Remy shook his head. “A shot of morphine: Can you afford it?”

The remuneration stipulated was unhesitantly approved, and he was extracting a syringe, vial, and alcohol swab from his case when the shuddering petition came.

“Doctor, has she ‘nightshaded’ all of us, me in particular?” Bourceli’s dazed gawk was not inconsistent with that her son so often wore. *Time for thought*, inferred Remy, *had ushered in arrogant mortality*.

Dahmani’s “Not that I know” only intensified her dread. Rising, she clutched her stomach. “A ‘sickness grows upon me.’ Oh, how the toxin slurps my dainty fat cells!”

A wobbly half-turn directed her toward the courtyard. “An agnate of that galloping HIV gourmand our *alim* rails against, as precaution to retain our boys for . . .”

Her allegation, which coincided with the 8:34 Isha’ azan, straggled into a feeble sigh, a concession that her oppugnant had “lucked on” his victory by not having eaten.

When the doctor pushed aside the sheet, Remy’s eyes were dully browsing the unscreened half of the room: the chest of drawers, Mohammed’s corner sleeping mat, the teapoy, the tiny cupboard, the gas hotplate, and the chairless dinette.

“How well does it work? Tolerably,” the hakim grimaced philosophically. “No matter, these girls are used to suffering in silence. Like cats they’d rather die than cry out. She’ll approach death as just another sunrise tub of dirty linen.”

He invited Remy to join him at the banquet tables “before prayers start. I’m hungry,

and they must be shown the food's indeed not nocuous, the scandal Lady Corpulence's rushed to spread." He had brought himself level with Remy.

"A cauldron and all of Algiers' stock of *tenr'iman* bark she'd have had to commandeer to accomplish that Jonestown. The mystery to me: Given suicide's more palliative options—*Wallahee*, every other poison!—why would she feel the compulsion to inflict upon herself such agony?" He pursed his lips ahead of a *c'est-la-vie* shrug.

"Isha' I'll forgo for now, not obligatory when one's treating a patient. Shall we?" On Remy's wavering, the doctor glimpsed at the threshold's empty chair. "Well, you must step out—that is obligatory!—unless you can forthwith employ a fresh chaperon."

Bound for the hallway and its buffet of delicacies, Dahmani sped past the intoners, hunched up on their mats, biding patiently for the signal to inaugurate Isha'.

Vacillating whether his distance from Houda should surpass a sheet-to-doorsill span, Remy lingered briefly. When it dawned on him that the note could not be read while pockets of the elocutionists' line of fire targeted him, he slunk to the right side wall. There by its chaplets of incandescent bulbs, he embarked on a perusal of the three pages.

Since the minuscule details far outstripped what she had elicited from him, the documents she coaxed from Foucin apparently had been her primary source. On the second page, she described the (or a) *douk-douk*, which "I threw from Pointe El-Kherifali," the rocks skirting Zaracova. There the currents were swiftest and most predisposed to suck, Remy annotated, a "dagger of the mind" out to sea.

She had opened by glorying in the "sexual delight" she "extracted" from her liaison with "M. John" and "the spleen which ruptured" that night he "yawned his intention" to terminate it. Her importunity for one further tryst garnered a smirked "Maybe." He let a week elapse, encountered her in the Casbah, and scheduled the rendezvous in the grove "following my swim next Monday."

While Remy folded and tore to pieces the sheets, a peripheral afterthought emerged: Mohammed's name had never been mentioned—"as if she had no brother."

Near the front left corner of the yard, a fire lowed in a metal drum, fed by the plates and napkins of the reception. To combat a varying wind which whipped about its pew of smoke, Remy thrust his right fist deep into the barrel before surrendering the snippets.

A *coup d'œil* captured the "maw-crammed" doctor snailing toward the shack. "Will I ever get free of this country?" Remy wondered, contemplating his return trip to the prison.

"A booster. This, a bargain one-fifty," the gravidly ovate Dahmani heralded as for the second time he slipped around the cotton partition and faced Remy.

"The throes having twisted her body away from Mecca, I righted it. Didn't have to help her articulate the *Kalimah*, profession of our Faith: I'm skilled in reading the jitter of turnipy lips.

He paused, "No wailing doesn't signify she's not in hideous pain, despite the morphine. Blood's trickling from her mouth, nose, and eyes. Since our policeman's slow even when it's not Ramadan, I'll page him now. Naturally, I carry the mandatory papers in my case."

Sidestepping Remy, slouched on the crate, he shouted through the entryway, "Ghazi!" In half a minute, the youth loped up. "Summon Mansour," he instructed in a

hushed tone.

Scratching a stubbly cheek, he pivoted toward Remy. “This morning and now tonight, I’ve been mustered to this shed, though I have to admit these death rites are quite profitable: A Queen’s Ransom for her mother’s morphine the last three days, but given her extravagance on this memorial, I must withdraw from that bank my conceived good fortune. No matter, a mama lode’s at hand.”

Dahmani burbled a fleer. “Tut-tut, none of that till she’s dead. *Respice finem!*” He was walking to the divider. “The near-dead deserve as grave a respect as the dead.”

5

“Then she is.”

“‘As earth.’ *They* are dead.”

The *drap blanc* having been brushed aside for the third time, Dahmani had beckoned Remy to a corner furthest from the door. With the death notices whispered, he continued, “Yet of the minor chord, my friend, no one need hear. Of course, I could be wrong. I ‘labored’ simply by palpation. The discovery occurred during my second ingress. In orienting her body toward Mecca, I was nonplussed by some ‘O! Haro!’ calcitration.”

He had pressed his right index and medius against the vermilion border of his lower lip. “Everything there should have been stone-paralyzed: Above and below were mum, but about the omphalos, a wresting commotion. Once it sensed the poison invading its nutritive cord, what a fuss it was ‘kicking up’!

“The instant my fingers kneaded, she flashed awake. Her eyes released more a bloody stagnum than tears and an abject suppliance. Note that: Her brink-of-death glance, sealed by the cruor the poison sweated out, betokened that she pined to keep this . . . veiled.

“To iterate, I could be mistaken. An autopsy would disclose whether it was—a wild stab—two months on, still a clot of blood, according to our Qur’an, since unvisited by the angel that breathes life. Perhaps you’re better acquainted.”

He averted his eyes, emulating awkwardness. “My fee, you appreciate, must a tad exceed the three-fifty for the morphine and the two hundred for the house call.”

Certain that the figure uttered would engender remonstrance, he quickly added, “Mull it over. But let’s finish any dickering ahead of the advent of Patrolman Mansour. He’ll doubtless smell of liquor, I forewarn.

“None of us is perfect, and God—that’s a mercy—is the ‘oft-forgiving.’ Doubly auspicious the time of her death: in our Holy Month and during Isha’ prayers. So her felo-de-se, warranting hell in Islam, may merit extenuation, God willing. I’ll avail myself of the breach to gulp down some tea.”

“I have only ninety on me.” The precise reckoning, spoken as the doctor recrossed the threshold, Remy depended, would attest naught was being withheld. “I’m at the Al-Nigma. You’ll companion me there once arrangements for the corpse are set. The five thousand I accept.”

Dahmani feigned umbrage. “No! Your dispatch implies a lack of trust. Tomorrow morning, say, 8:30, I’ll meet you in the Aladdin. Your visage betrays your love for her.

You won't abscond, leaving me to jump into the grave with the ranting mew: 'I've restudied my log of her shuffling-off hour. She died not alone!' a Hamletic melodramatic scene."

The hakim interrupted himself to chuckle. "On second thought, ante fifty. That'll provide you with taxi fare and a twenty, ample enticement to convince Mansour he remembers how to spell his name.

"Would you believe I dashed out minus my billfold? And this the night I'm to pick up some sweets (not *tenr'iman* dates, ha-ha). And," he was buckling his case, "so you won't credit me a fool, your Vacheron Constantin, a security I haven't misread your face."

"*Nine nineteen: its face imparts,*" Remy observed. A gift from Marie the previous Christmas: "Am not I awful! I bought it by selling some of those artificial trinkets you'd lavished on me over the years. They fetched a dearer price than I anticipated. Is it possible the imitation's back in vogue?"

In the subsequent interval, from undoing the clasp of the watch to witnessing the doctor jam it into the left pocket of his *djellaba*, Remy found himself reflecting on Ballard's Patek Philippe and its bestower.

After the *ragil boles* had staggered out, Dahmani piloted Remy across the deserted courtyard—"the hirer's death severing any contractual obligations"—down the hall, and through the turquoise foredoor.

From there he scanned the group of about thirty people swarmed around Mansour, who, on spotting the doctor and him, halted his excited tattle and scampered away. Dahmani sniggered, "Our *hazze*, your 'five letters,' the American 'lots of luck,' with that massed huddle yonder. Farewell, till the Al-Nigma tomorrow," and he headed in the opposite direction of the crowd.

Remy advanced fifteen of the twenty separating paces. "Some of these ladies should see to the body of Mlle. Belmazoir," he proposed in stumbling Arabic.

"And you expect my wife to scrape the remains of this one who scrubbed our toilet!" flouted the indignant voice of a man, clutching a platter from the hallway spread.

"The granddaughter of the unholy of the Unholy Seven!"

The haggling has commenced—resumed—he conceded, when a third, a woman, roared, "The sister of a cutthroat and a buggered!"

Forbearing, Remy pressed on, "Of your religion this I know: You're adjured to prepare the corpse for burial."

"He's versed in our religion—"

"A reverter!" trumpeted a second female, reviling him by "wagging" her fingers.

"You'll be handsomely reimbursed!" Remy stressed, his projection sufficiently loud to encompass the fifth deep of the assemblage.

"I cannot decree my wife to tackle such a bone-wearying service unless up front's *l'argent, s'il vous plaît.*" He made no attempt to hide the two purloined wreaths.

"I'll compensate you presently," and Remy stressed the Arabic adverb. "My money's at the Al-Nigma."

"We're not buffoons. Those who are palaced at the Al-Nigma, the jiffy they recoil into their alcazar, shed their skein of promises to those who live in Bab el Oued." So

tongued the holy man as he pranced forward.

“Well argued, our dear *alim!*” The judgment boomed from the doorway. Strutting past Remy without a lateral squint, Bourceli stationed herself a little to the rear of the one she had lauded. “From my window, I peeked at him surrendering his watch to the ‘scalpeller.’ A ‘guarantee’ was the word my Ghazi winnowed. M. European, are we not professional enough to reap a similar hostage?”

“The tiepin purblinds me. I’ll have that!”

“The wallet Mansour maintained is of the choicest Italian leather.”

“I’d have his shoes, not for wearing, but to nail as ornaments to my wall.”

Remy brought his hands, with fingers splayed, parallel to his chest. With such force he pushed their tips together that they quivered, a gabled, hypomaniac welling up of all his wrath against the roughshod viciousness—*now idolized*—subverting much of his native city. “For every second unattended you leave that body, may Allah doom your souls to a commensurate ‘better than a thousand’ millennia in the fires of Hell!”

The single consequent jussive, not the damnation itself, he discerned an instant later, appalled the hearers. “Assuredly!” had billowed from over their shoulders, arising out of the darkness not illuminated by Houda’s strands of bulbs.

A path opened, and the man whose voice Remy had already identified strode down it, while declaiming: “O people! Listen and obey though a mangled Abyssinian slave . . . executes (the Ordinance of) the Book of Allah among you.”

6

Having seized upon his indication of a “body” left “unattended,” Leila and Mme. Foucin, *haik*-covered and half-veiled, overtook the commissioner and sped past Remy toward the building.

They had disappeared into it before Foucin, positioning himself beside Remy, continued. “And must we engage a stranger to preach our Friday sermon? This Belgian gentleman exhorts well. Your neighbor has died. Her corpse must be made acceptable to God, and the burial ritual should testify how this community treasured her. No more I’ll say: Let Mlle. Belmazoir, no scrimper on her mother’s funeral, be your model.”

Foucin hooked his arm in Remy’s, and together they snoozed toward the building. Prior to their ingress, the *alim*, spurred by the panicking assemblage, yelped with stuttering urgency. “Your Excellency, we were . . . merely joking . . . with the foreigner. We know our . . . communal obligation . . . to the Muslim corpse. I . . . we . . . my people are poor. How can we match the one thousand dinars she expended?”

Unloosening Remy’s elbow, Foucin likewise had to boom his voice.

“Not four thousand? Then I was lied to. ‘Poor’? Yes, I forgot: This is the neighborhood not overrun with *trabendistes* [‘black market profiteers’], where nary a centime of donations to your mosque—much less seventy thousand dinars—has snaked its way into a private account at our Banque Nationale, and where nowise does a widow mulct a pension from six scattered charities.

“Nay, this is the block whose denizens have souls which outsparkle the rims of their toilets. Four thousand dinars? You’ll glorify God, and deserve His Blessings, by expending a minimum of eight on this, your neighbor’s, funeral.”

In the hallway, his official duties fulfilled, Foucin's body went limp as he heaved, more to himself than Remy, "So I have lost her! Where is Mona? I need to pray with my wife!"

A flagging pace brought them to the rear threshold. On crossing it, they espied Mme. Foucin, filling the second of two buckets from the communal tap. (*Where is the other?* Remy inwardly keened. *With the one she feels she lost!*)

Still half-veiled, she sheered toward her husband, and in "their visual 'reunion,'" Remy decided, she learned not only that the essentials for *Ghusl*, "the washing of the corpse," were forthcoming "but also of the torment he's enduring."

With the pails in hand, she drew level with him, and embarked on an apologia so softly confided Remy could apprehend merely snatches: ". . . mosque for solace . . . husband. Go! . . . another requires my . . . God is . . ."

Wheeling round, "Monsieur," Foucin inclined his neck, "for fifteen minutes will you kindly abide?" The volte-face completed, he staved toward the back door.

Even after his disappearance, on it her gaze was focused. "Please excuse his abrupt congé," she addressed Remy. "Sororal bereavement furiously, fervidly haunts him. Thirty-four years ago, one terrible evening, his three sisters, the beloved Wafah, Zouina, Yamina, he was constrained 'to abandon'—his sumpsimus—and to this day grieves. God, as ever, will allay this commemorative gloom. You will see, monsieur."

This envoi having been pronounced with a jaunty élan, she reentered the shed.

"I'm left alone with the ritual," Remy observed. He knew that *les nécessités immédiates* Dahmani had discharged: closing the eyes, binding the jaw, and flexing the limbs to prevent stiffening. Thus they would have begun with the removal of Houda's robe and undergarments, both blood-speckled and sweat-soaked. The cruor, excessive, would have been dabbed or scraped off.

Over the private parts, forbidden from being exposed, with their eyes averted, a hand towel would have been spread. Next, one would have pressed the abdomen to expel gas or excretions, the latter (if any) wiped away by the second.

Covered with a sheet and at all times kept facing the Kaaba in Mecca, the body would have then been relocated to the shack's dining table. With the buckets of water fetched by Mme. Foucin, *Ghusl* proper would have commenced, a threefold circumnavigating ablution of the corpse.

Leila, he concluded, was probably the principal bather: After all, had not she seconded this service for "the mother of the corpse" seventeen hours ago?

Handed a saponaceous rag, she would have started with the head, crisply and repeatedly wiping the cloth across the hair, the face, and the neck, halting as needed to receive a new one from Mme. Foucin. Five minutes on, she would have advanced to the right side, initially its arm subjected to multiple parallel strokes upward.

With each sweep, "she . . . she has been rebuking herself for . . . having relinquished her post," Remy sighed once, yet again, but the third instance of his corrosive fretting was disrupted by a procession traversing the yard.

First in line was a grandiose replacement: a cherry refectory table, two women at each end. On its tile top were bars of soap, a stack of hand towels, and three dipping ladles. Next plodded a matronly quintet, each toting two buckets of water, one clear for rinsing and the other blazoning the presence of camphor and oil of eucalyptus, while its

suspended salt crystals, the third anti-decomposition ingredient, lazily resisted a granular descent.

The final two—one was Bourceli—lugged a galvanized oval washtub. Situated at the bottom of the table, its front legs slightly elevated, it would receive the overflow sluicing from the corpse. Inside, to each of the queued-up *porteuses*, “a voice as redoubtable as her husband’s” extended fulsome thanks, adding regretfully that the narrowness of the chamber would not accommodate any colleagues.

In the transfer of the body to the wider berth, Remy had lost track and pondered, “What part of the anatomy is she to? Right side, left, probably at the head again.” Six minutes on, another interruption: the arrival of a carpenter’s bench, not borne inside but situated adjacent to the entrance to the shed.

Atop it were five oversized bath towels, a plethora of perfume bottles, and hygienic items. Its centerpiece, however, was the chest housing the *kafan* (“shroud”).

Encore une fois Mme. Foucin was the one to emerge and, while bundling some of the articles, express gratitude to the carriers.

Before repairing to the shack, she rolled back the sleeve of her navy-blue *haik* and, staring at her wrist, apprised Remy, “9:56. Monsieur, a scant one minute to catch your plane.” She shook her head slowly, conveying amazement at his sacrifice. “Thank you.”

To the retiring form, the lips of an embarrassed Remy had just muted, “*De rien! . . . Pour rien!*” when his musing was distracted by a hubbub at the rear doorway.

7

“Death is reality!” a resurfaced Foucin, with a bottle in his grip, was proclaiming to those assembled in the hallway, not simply to the woman, its deliverer.

“No diluted *eau de toilette* posturing in nothing but label as *parfums* from Ville de Grasse. ‘Death is reality!’ I re-aver.” And several men bolted forward to whisk away the offending atomizer.

At the workbench Foucin vetted every crystal bottle, each label checked to validate that none was contaminated by a drop of forbidden alcohol, and thrice bent over to inspect the encased *kafan*, as if “scouring for a wayward thread.”

With these exercises finished, he posted himself at the end of the “siege” opposite Remy, close enough to converse. “You’re puzzling over how the two women and I joined forces,” Foucin conjectured. Four blocks from the Al-Nigma’s driveway, he had radioed Ghouraf with three directives: Tell no one where he was going, “though M. Lazar already knows.” Send a police car to the Al-Nigma to speed him to the prison.

Lastly, he should call on Mlle. Belmazoir and deliver this message: “M. Lazar” was on his way to meet her brother. On his return, he would stop by at around six with any message from Mohammed. “However, he flies to Brussels tonight, so his schedule’s tight. At nine I’ll drive him from the Al-Nigma to the airport.”

After seeing him off, Foucin would drop by to ascertain whether she or Mme. Ballard “requires my services.”

So I was only partly right, Remy mused. *Houda had twisted Ghouraf’s words, not Belghiche’s, to trick Leila into leaving.*

“Mona was in the Al-Nigma lobby colloquing with Mme. Ballard when I rushed in, fifteen minutes tardy, but with sufficient time to chauffeur you to Boumediène.” Failing to reach him through Ghouraf, she had gone to the hotel, learned about in Remy’s call.

“There, the anxiety of each attracted the other’s notice. (Their mystique’s divining!) By and by they were in league and, despairing of me, had purposed to taxi to Bab el Oued on their own.”

As if conjured up by her praenomen, Mme. Foucin appeared. She culled bottles of perfumes, tipped ear swabs, clippers, a toothbrush, and cotton balls and gauze. Dipped in water, the final two would be stuffed up the nostrils or guardedly pressed against the private parts, front and rear. All signaled that the ultimate stage, the scented washing, was beginning. It would conclude with the braided hair being draped across the chest.

Has Leila, like the doctor, by palpation discovered Houda’s secret? Remy wondered, for this would be her third spiraled cleansing of the corpse. *If so, none will ever know, by command of the Prophet. Nothing of it would she breathe, even to Mme. Foucin.*

Prior to retracing her steps and vanishing behind the divider, his wife cast a sidling peep at Foucin. With her out of his sight, the commissioner asked, “She forged a letter of confession, absolving her brother?”

Satisfied there was no reason to dispute it had existed, Remy nodded.

“Which you have destroyed.”

Here he both signed and spoke *oui*.

As if exhausted of topics, they remained silent until 10:20, when Leila stepped forth. She commenced with Ramadan greetings to those aggregated in the courtyard.

After their reciprocation, she collected the filigreed cedar of Lebanon chest with the three-metered *kafan*. Beneath it were four additional pieces: the two-meter body sheet, the one-and-a-half-meter body wrap, and the head and chest swaths, both one meter long.

All five would ring Houda’s *cadavre*, a further two than for a male’s, never decked out in the cephalic and pectoral cloths: “A testament that as in life a woman’s libidinous nature yet was assumed.”

Prior to her exit, Leila swung around, bowed deferentially to Foucin, spoke his name, and thereafter murmured to Remy, with her chin once more downcast, “M. Lazar.”

Her appearance strengthened him to implement his onslaught: “Compelling sanctions clamor for M. Mohammed to solemnize his sister’s funeral. No pretext of scanty time can you offer since not for eight hours can the funeral procession set out.”

Having stamped three paces from the bench, Foucin erupted a guttural “‘No!’ Her wish, who knew him best!”

“Then you would have him walk off a cliff in a year or so.”

Despite Foucin’s intimidatory grimace Remy did not blench. “Her last request of me, for she had approved her peccavi would not be the expedient, was to relate that she ‘commands him to live.’ I believe that the true fetters captivating M. Mohammed can be broken solely by praying over her body, bearing it through the concealed disdain of the throng your harangue ensures, placing it in the ground, and over it anew praying.

“Champion these rites, if you yearn to save this boy, who once upon a time clambered into your lap and . . . prattled about Blumarn.”

Foucin closed the distance between them, so the words whispered into Remy’s right

ear were sharp with roiled determination. “Yes, and would do it—all of it—over again. My life is the Seven! Your presumption has a devil’s imperiousness. Not into your lap he crawled! Dare you invoke what I vented in trust! I can gore my own heart!” His fist pounded his chest. “You have no right!”

“None, but an obligation transcending him,” asserted Remy, neither surveying Foucin nor drawing back. “Let him go, the child you’ve overlooked for so many years!” His voice dropped. “And in his salvation find your own release.”

8

As he twisted the handle and swung the *portière* open, Remy’s bandaged knuckles spurted pain. His attention, however, was fastened on Mohammed who, flanked by Foucin and trailed by Ghouraf and the prison sub-warden, was being steered into the apartment building with “handcuffs about *his* bandages.”

Outside the penitentiary, the youth had been adamant: “I’ll ride with him,” his head bobbed insultingly toward Foucin, positioned a stride to his left, “but not him.” *And has his blood mixed with yours?* a noiseless Remy had riposted, exiting the *siège arrière* and tramping to the Citroën.

At 22 Rue Mizon, so eager was Foucin to unite “the quick [brother] and the dead [sister],” before Remy and his two sergeants gained the front, the four were at the back door, having been minimally slowed by the Ramadan greetings of those who lined the hallway.

The corridor had been further narrowed by tables with steamy platters of lamb or chicken couscous, chilled fruit bowls, and salvers heaped high with native appetizers and desserts. Moreover, its walls, the stairwell balusters, and the landing rails were lined with “troops” of eased *“flores gloriosus”* wreaths, an ostentatious regiment rendering as “tattered prodigals” the ones Houda’s dinars had impressed.

In the courtyard to the right were Qur’anic reciters in two rows of four, facing Mecca and hence the shed. Some corridor men had trailed Foucin and his group to its entrance, Remy saw, and there they huddled.

Like them, he did enter; nonetheless, by a tiptoeing boost, he could descry Houda’s shrouded corpse on the bed. Into the pillow next to her head, a collapsed Mohammed had buried his visage.

“I would see her face”: an appeal bleakly uttered.

“Commissioner Foucin,” his wife denominated him, “granted that they cannot be removed, may M. Belmazoir’s handcuffs be repositioned to his front, allowing him to embrace his sister?”

As this adjustment began, the two caregivers approached the bed. Since the head swath must be unwound in privacy, Leila plucked the cloth free from the clothesline. Afresh the room became the one Remy best knew—divided, with the women arear.

After they had reemerged and a desolate Mohammed had at once secluded himself behind the sheet, Remy, wearied of his racking perch, maundered away. Chancing on a wicker chair against the right wall, he plopped down, with the stern self-injunction not to nod off.

“Of course, I would,” he huffed, having been “forthwith awakened”—or so it seemed

to him, though in actuality “I slept roughly three hours”—by the 4:13 summons to Fajr, the onset of Friday’s *sawm*.

Before pushing himself up and trudging instinctively to the shack, he witnessed the evacuation of the yard. The elocutionists, leaving in place their Qur’ans, and those congregated, carting off floral bunches and plates chock-full of viands, drifted away, all mumbling for the Great One’s benefit, “. . . to the mosque.”

The “servants of the law,” to be sure, remained, and an eavesdropping Remy even picked up Foucin’s undertoned tutoyering into the cotton barrier, “M. Mohammed, will you join us for *salaat il-fajr*? We’ve arranged a suitable corner here.”

At liberty to roam unimpeded, “with wand’ring steps and slow,” Remy sauntered round the courtyard, stretching his legs, but in time wended his “solitary way” to the now flameless barrel.

Inclining over it, he half expected to find Houda’s confession intact and unsinged. Rebuffed there, his imagination worked on the delicate, puffy ashes, in short order engendering a vortex of spirits.

As hectically as one lashed through his mind, another flitted into view, incantatory yet incapable of canting, and when the last had materialized, the superfection started *de novo*, the revenants by and large identical, except for a few latecomers who had sneaked in.

The truth is “I can’t swear to this, given the amended configuration”: for at that moment, borne aloft and facedown, he was being shuffled hand over hand, forced to peep at his conveyors through a chain of billowing fingers which skirred him along, this incessant macabre swirl soon accompanied by the declaimers, back from their prayers.

He was spun (the circuit, he vertiginously surmised, was helical) and spun and spun, from the barrel to the wicker chair to the doorsill of the shed, enthralled by shimmering glimpses of Noura, his mother, and Houda; an isolated Marie; and his father, Leila, and . . . Foucin, until they, “my digital hoisters,” vanished, and he plummeted, crashing with a thump, yet posthaste righted himself, using the arm of the chair—to which, the evidence supported, he had returned and spent the hour and forty minutes “curled up in”—and though dazed, “my conscious soul must have sleepwalked my subconscious body” to the shack’s entrance, for against its left jamb he was leaning when roused by the drooping-into-silence of the chanters, a calm which enabled him to hear Mme. Foucin’s voice, “a gentle ‘toll[ing] back’” from his “‘forlorn’ reverie.”

“Six oh five: It is time,” whispered she into the fold.

The sheet asudden was flung aside. With his manacled hands Mohammed cupped his enshrouded sister, whose re-swathed head rested on his left shoulder. Lumbering forward, he neither eyed nor greeted anyone.

At the threshold Foucin intercepted him. “Monsieur, out of your grief spawn not a riot. What’s been done was—and what’s to be done is—prescribed.”

Mohammed tilted inward, pausing his ear above her lips, *presupposing* (Remy’s illation) *she will susurrate through the cerecloth some crowning guidance*.

His frame—and consequently hers—shook. “None of them shall touch her.”

“Your dutiful neighbors, monsieur, have secured a box of unrivaled cedar.” Foucin angled a glance across the courtyard at the polished casket, being held flank-high by four. “They would tender it for your examination. Do not insult them. Couch her in it.

They will assist you in its transfer to the cemetery. It's as God ordains."

"They did not love her!" Mohammed rubbed his unbandaged cheek against the enveloping head wrap. "It is *not* as God ordains!"

"The French shitass notified me my son is dead, as if I cared,' he asseverated with finality, though certainly not divining to get off that easily," for so had Foucin, five minutes into the ride to the penitentiary, launched his report of the interrogation.

And Remy had to rein in the beating of his heart: Not "the delusionist who brands himself my son is dead," rather "my son is dead."

Foucin had devoted over five hours to Mohisen-like back-and-forth questioning, "but never once caught him, a magpie chatterer, slipping up." In fact, "such a cooperative soul ole Naaman was that several times when I was about to leave, he'd recall another detail of 'Captain Jacques's intrusion.'

"This noun he promptly corrected to 'invasion since in his aggression against my loft he mirrored his country's 37,000 troops which, to strip us of our freedom, on 14 June 1830 at Sidi Fredj beach stormed our beloved Algeria.'"

They had stopped for Asr and Maghrib. Before each, "the sly one volubly lauded" Foucin's unstinted help with his ablution and "in maneuvering his paralyzed body" through the prayers' *raka'at*. They had even broken the fast together.

"Oh, he'd have convinced me an 'open sesame' was being divulged and would have consigned me to an oblivion, pursuing the nightingale of his impeccable lie—had not it been for Widow Daidje."

In the hour span after Maghrib, from her he had educed the most, including "the confirmation of 'a very palpable hit': On the eighth go-round, with his Qur'anic intoning as a backdrop, she remembered, 'One of his sideburns listed.' An immaculate aide, M. Jacques I know would never tolerate such a straggle."

The lull was minimal. "Oh yes, congratulations on your miraculous, one-day mastery of the Arabic tongue!"

With a glint in his eye, Foucin had turned slightly, for during the drive out Remy sat in the front seat. "I put to you: 'What an ignominious business . . .'"

To his astonishment, there ensued a ten-minute monologue on, "of all things, Hamlet," a digression causing Remy to scoff, that is, until Foucin gleaned the "rub" by addressing him as "Baby's 'contact.'"

9

From six paces back, the guard, the same one from 5:30, glared beyond Mohammed's shoulders at the approaching Remy. He was obviously grumpy—*Is a sadist ever not?*—that once again his Ramadan grind was being disturbed by this European *khawaaga* and native *shazz*, the first connoting, the second denoting *queer*.

"Why are you here?" Mohammed demanded. "You should be with my sister."

"Your sister . . . 's dead."

His body tensed, the constriction paling his countenance, and for a moment he swayed before slumping to his knees. Taloned fingers darted forth, piercing the diamond-shaped gaps, and clung to the flattened mesh.

“*Awgh!*” A quivering mass, he began to strike the grille with his brow. “You, you . . . when I . . . you will . . . you fueled this . . . no escape for . . . you . . . me . . . Lazar . . . hide even in hell . . . I will hu—” The blow smashed against Mohammed’s shoulder blade.

“Not stomaching this crap anymore,” snapped the warder. A second struck the dorsum of Mohammed’s right hand, bursting an earlier scab and gashing the knuckles of its *annulaire* and *petit doigt*.

“*Awgh,*” he cried, yet both grips tightened. The guard’s “S’nuvabitch” harbingered three rapid whacks from the truncheon: *à gauche, à droite, à gauche*.

The blades of the cornstalks were slashing Noura’s face, and the vile claws of Foucin were jellifying his father’s blind eyes. Through the georgette gauze eternally pleaded his mother, “Forgive! Forgive!”

Throwing himself forward, Remy clasped—right seizing left; left, right—Mohammed’s bleeding hands. With the arm of the *gardien* poised, he was aware that *nothing can alter the motion and velocity squared of the assault*.

The stroke splattered the blood of both, and Remy, through his own *awgh*, issued as from a white hole, recognized that theirs had melded, not unlike the way he had fantasized that the residual particles of Ballard’s blood had seeped through the azure fountain spewing the word *LOVE*.

Synonymous with Mohammed’s second cry had been a muffled roar from the far side of the hollow steel door, while Remy’s was preluded by a frantic jangling of a key in the lock, anon followed by the thud of metal ricocheting off cement.

“Halt, manic! I beg!” The laconics of the man, who had conceded he was “too conscience-stricken for yet another measure-for-measure confrontation,” flashed, rainbow-on-rainbow-in-fire, across Remy’s shoulders, lighting on their still-bound hands.

Foucin himself had bandaged his and Mohammed’s, albeit apart since on spotting Remy there, the latter refused to enter the infirmary. “A jesting wound, but, M. Le Contact”—the cognomen still unsettled Remy—“your body’s being ill-treated by Algiers.”

Having finished wrapping the crimson knuckles, Foucin, evidently startled, inspected his own left hand. Quite uncharacteristically he let out a curse, “Damn!” before thrusting its annulary close to Remy’s face. “A speck of your blood! And, wouldn’t you just know it, it pinpointed the ring-finger scratch I got today, climbing down ole Naaman’s ladder.”

Notes and Commentary: Chapter 18: “Another Sister, Another Brother”**April 20, 1989 (Thursday afternoon and night) and April 21 (Friday early morning)**

p. 293: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE OF CHAPTER 18: On 14.227, Remy begins to make a facile connection between the vicious manipulation of Houda and Mohammed by the American Ballard and the victimization of Noura and himself by the French.

He voices a melodramatic, egotistical, and hence insincere, sympathy for the brother and sister and “a resolution not to let the artifice destroy their lives, ‘as Noura’s was and mine’—he retreated slightly—‘albeit not devastated, maligned.’”

On 15.253-54, on discovering the horror of what was wrought upon Houda and Mohammed, his identification of their plight with his and Noura’s becomes more sincere: On Houda’s revelation he spits forth seven *awghs* as he had on learning how the French had maneuvered him through using Noura (3.50).

Yet, after completing his mission to Algiers (the reunion with his father), his main concern before his flight seems to be to set up a farewell meeting with Leila. Brother and sister seem to be forgotten.

In fact, his superego (17.292) cautions him against becoming embroiled in any consideration of them. When he does agree to visit Mohammed in the interval prior to his flight, he does so because it is not that inconveniencing and will no doubt leave a lasting impression on Leila (17.288).

Thus it is puzzling when chap. 18 begins with Remy worrying, “Am I to lose yet another sister?” (293)—an overt sororal connection of Houda with Remy’s own sister.

The change comes about largely through Mohammed’s fortuitous plea, “If you have sister, please save mine” (295). Beyond the personal or even the familial, a human connection is invoked. To use an everyday example, it is this connection which drives a person to rush into a burning building to save a stranger.

Before Mohammed’s imploration, Remy had concluded that having “extricated” himself “from one burning robe” (through visiting his father), he would be a fool to “don another” in an attempt to save Houda through a second side trip which would delay his leaving this country where he is wanted for treason (295).

Later in the chapter, he will also attempt to save the brother (299 and 308-09) since that is the awful price of developing a love of humanity: One act of love naturally leads to another.

As Houda avers, “Yet, beyond all infidelity, love endures, condescending to bequeath hope . . . as the air vouchsafes us breath” (395), in which the Pauline requisites, so often used in the novel, “faith, hope, and charity (love),” are

incorporated. (However, as a Karl Popper realist, I could not have her state all three in the positive!)

“Brother” is used fourteen times in the chapter: 293; 296 (twice); 297 (twice); 298 (twice); 299 (twice); 300; 302; 307; 308; and 309.

“Sister” occurs seventeen times: 293; 294 (three times); 295; 297; 298; 299; 300; 304; 306 (to Foucin’s sisters); 308; 309 (twice); 310; and 311 (twice).

The novel’s brother-sister theme extends beyond the major three: Remy and Noura, Houda and Mohammed, and Leila and Ahmed. Ballard speaks of “another brother and sister,” the Filipino and Filipina teenagers of 1.7-8, and Mme Foucin notes her husband’s “sororal bereavement” that “ferverently haunts him” (300).

In addition to being associated with Houda and Mohammed (293 and 312), “another” as either adjective or pronoun is used ten other times at crucial thematic points in the chapter to refer to “women” (293), Remy’s desire to disconnect (295), a sura from the Qur’an (297), Remy’s father (298 and 311), the murderer (299), an attitude toward death (301), Mme. Foucin’s dedication to a higher duty (306), an interruption (307), and earthly connections in a dream (310).

pp. 293 – 312: CHRONOLOGY OF CHAPTER 18: Contrastive places (the prison and the Belmazoirs’ shack) determine the times of this chapter.

Remy is at the prison from 3:40 - 6:20 p.m. on Thursday.

From there he returns to the Belmazoirs’ shed (7:45 – 10:26 p.m.).

A second trip to the prison ensues; he is there from 11:27 p.m. Thursday – 12:15 a.m. Friday.

He returns to the Belmazoirs arriving at 1:15 a.m., Friday, and is there until the close of the chapter, 6:08 a.m.

The intervals not mentioned are usually consumed with the driving time between the two main settings.

AT THE END OF THE NOTES TO THIS CHAPTER, N18:72-74, THERE IS A SHORT ESSAY ON THE THEMES OF SIN, REPENTENCE, AND REDEMPTION IN THE NOVEL.

pp. 293-95: SECTION 1

p. 293: “And will I lose yet another sister? Seven forty-five.”: Just as puzzling as the first sentence which states that a “sister” is in danger, so is the time given in the second: At 7:45 Remy’s taxi was near the Belmazoir residence at No. 22, Rue Mizon.

On 18.287, Foucin had said that Remy would be back from the prison by six. Maghrib prayers (7:27 – 7:42) had just finished.

- p. 293: “Words for the dead”: A *dua* in Islam is a private petitioning prayer which can be prayed at anytime. If a Muslim prays a *dua* for the dead (or several *hadeiya*, the plural of *dua*) shortly after both the death and the funeral, it helps the deceased to overcome the horror of the grave—darkness, loneliness, and its narrow confines (in addition to the rigorous questioning by the angels Munkar and Nakir).
Though a corpse cannot hear (Qur’an 30:52 and 35:22) and consequently does not know about the prayer, Prophet Mohammed states (Hadiths of Muslim 13.4005 and Al-Bukhari 76.584) that Allah can and—God willing!—will make this first night in the grave go easier.
- p. 293: “two loudspeakers . . . splurging by Houda on her mother’s memory”: Houda would have prepaid for the rented speakers.
Using the large amount which she had saved from the \$1,000 which Ballard had dropped on the floor of the Toumi flat, she overspends on both her mother’s funeral and this memorial feast.
- p. 293: “offered three hundred, two below the usual amount”: These figures explain why Remy was so giddied by the amount that he found in his billfold (17.288). The five hundred dinars were exactly what he must pay Nemmiche for the ride to and from the prison.
Therefore he did not need to go back inside the hotel to cash some traveler’s checks at the reception desk.
- p. 293: “monetary worry so cursorily put by had returned to dog him”: His elation at the 500 in his billfold blinded him to any thought that some financial emergency might arise.
The first unanticipated outlay, just outside the prison, is described in the next paragraph. Remy is also aware that he will have to pay Mme. Bourceli to act as chaperon once he reaches Rue Mizon.
By the way, the 500 will be meticulously accounted for as the chapter progresses.
- p. 293: “Outside the prison”: There is a brief flashback to Remy at the sentry station in front of the prison (6:00 – 6:20).
He pays the guards in order to make three telephone calls, to Ghouraf (6:05 – 6:09) who is belligerent and curt; Leila’s apartment, but there is no answer since she is still at the Belmazoir shack (6:10 – 6:13), and to Mme. Foucin, who says she will tell her husband that if Remy is not at the Al-Nigma at the appointed nine he should go to the Belmazoirs (6:14 – 6:18).
- p. 293: *baksheesh*: A tip or gratuity; the euphemism used by the guards for Remy’s use of the sentry box’s telephone.
- p. 293: *appel*: In French, a “telephone call”. Its full form, *appel téléphonique*, is seldom used.
Remy spends thirty of his five hundred dinars. He has 470 left.

- p. 293: “That you know”: On p. 307, Foucin will tell Remy that four blocks from the Al-Nigma driveway he radioed Ghouraf. Among the explanations he gave his sergeant was that Remy knew he was bound for old Naaman’s attic to interview him.
- p. 293: “‘Somehow she’s found out everything . . . Her note’”: The first revelation of a part of Remy’s prison conversation with Mohammed. Mohammed is certain that his sister has left a note in which she shows her awareness of the minutest details of the Ballard murder scene. This speech will be revealed in context on p. 295, but even in isolation here the implication is that Houda has drafted a suicide note.
- p. 293: *douk-douk*: The type of knife used to kill Ballard. See the 4.57 note, N4:17-18, for a description of it.
- p. 293: “the façade Houda would attempt to erect”: Remy now realizes that Houda, believing that her brother had killed Ballard and would be convicted, had planned her suicide shortly after her brother was arrested. Through her suicide note she would detail how she had murdered the American, thus allowing Mohammed to be freed. On this night, she must convince Leila to leave since she believes she is the one person who through her womanly intuition might see through her scheme and prevent her from killing herself. The scenario that Remy imagines, which involves the Bendari’s barkeep Belghiche delivering a message from Foucin, turns out to be close to the strategy which Houda will use, as p. 307 will reveal. Both versions have Houda convincing Leila to leave her for a while through the lie that Foucin indirectly invited Leila to the Al-Nigma to see Remy off.
- p. 293: “‘You must go’”: Ironically the command is similar to what Remy’s father told him, “‘No, . . . leave! . . . You go!’” (17.292).
- p. 293: *entrevue*: “meeting” (in French).
- p. 293: whirring: An action making “the sound of whirring” as in “had been whirring the dial of the telephone” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 293: “advise your husband, with whom I’ve scheduled a nine o’clock appointment at the Al-Nigma . . . come to the residence of the Belmazoir family”: These details which Remy left with Mme. Foucin will figure in a later decision by her.
- p. 293: “Bounding into the ‘nipping’ and ‘eager air’”: Remy’s flashback ends, and the action returns to Nemmiche’s taxi, 7:47 p.m. The internal quote is another parallel structure tying Remy with Ballard, who mentally on 1.2 used the shortened phrase “nipping . . . air” to describe the weather at Zaracova Beach.

Here Remy utilizes both of Horatio's adjectives from *Hamlet* 1.4.2: "It is a nipping and an eager air," he tells Hamlet.

- p. 294: “I seek what’s fair”: The bargaining with the taxi driver which looks backward to the baksheesh which Remy had to pay the prison guards foreshadows a later more vicious scene of dickering in this chapter (304-05).
- p. 294: “To and back from the penitentiary and the tedious interval in between . . . Not let in till five . . . 6:20 before we left for Algiers”: Nemmiche’s statement partially clears up one mystery: why Remy did not arrive back in Algiers at the planned 6:00 p.m. (17.287).
 According to my chronology, from 2:28 – 3:40, they drove to Berrouaghia. However, as Remy will clarify five paragraphs down, there were no guards at the prison’s sentry post to let Remy in.
 They had left early to prepare for Asr prayers, the call for which came at 4:10, with the prayers themselves lasting from 4:30 – 4:45.
 They straggled back to their post, letting Remy in at five.
 From 5:00 – 5:25 Remy is processed through the two inner check points, during which he notes that as with the sentries these guards are quite surly toward him (to be reported on p. 295).
 Foucin, whose principal concern was on interrogating old Naaman, had not called the prison since he was sending a police car to drive Remy to the prison. Its driver would have explained the importance of Remy seeing Mohammed immediately.
 From 5:25 – 5:35: Remy meets with Mohammed.
 5:35 – 6:00: Remy goes through the dilatory checkout procedures from the prison. He approaches the sentries and “bribes” them to let him use their telephone to make three calls. These are followed by his payment to the sentries (6:00 – 6:20).
 6:20 – 7:45: The trip from the prison to Bab el Oued, which as Nemmiche pointed out (293) took longer because it was farther than the Al Nigma.
- p. 294: “for a week”: Actually eight days: Remy hired Nemmiche to be his on-standby driver on Thursday, Apr. 13. Today’s date is Thursday, Apr. 20.
- p. 294: “*Malesh!*” The Arabic expression for “It doesn’t matter!”
 Here Nemmiche means that it does not matter from whom he got the information.
- p. 294: “obvious I’m not to be”: Nemmiche’s uncompleted sentence is “the one you’ve chosen to drive you to the airport.”
 In the Middle East, I found from nerve- racking experiences that being chosen to drive a foreigner to the airport is a most lucrative commission.
 Wily taxi drivers, who do not care about customer goodwill since they will never see the fare again, have a plethora of schemes for augmenting the agreed-upon price: Having “car trouble” on the way; being stopped by a policeman with whom the driver is in cahoots; taking the passenger to the wrong terminal, say, domestic when foreign is required, and so forth.
 Of course, all these problems can be fixed by the passenger, already a wreck out

of fear of missing his plane, forking over more money.
What pleasant “heart attacks” writing novels brings home!

- p. 294: “pocketed the three hundred”: With the 30 dinars for the sentries and now 300 for Nemmiche, of his 500 Remy has left only 170.
The progress of the “five hundred” will be followed in the notes to this chapter to attest to my mathematical precision, although like the French lieutenant on 3.48 I do not profess to be “a master of calculus.”
- p. 294: “*De rien!* [‘Don’t mention it!'] and “*Pour rien!* [‘For nothing!']:
“*Pour rien!*” also carries the implication of “dirt cheap,” more grumbling by Nemmiche that Remy has gotten a good bargain.
Both French expressions will appear later in the chapter, there used by Remy himself (307).
- p. 294: “four strands of sallow bulbs”: Although these outside strands of bulbs, like those Remy will find inside across the courtyard, were purchased (or rented) by Houda as part of the memorial for her mother, during Ramadan, it is traditional for strings of lights to be hung around residences and even within rooms.
Given the greed of the Rue Mizon denizens, it is not unexpected that no one has expended money for outside Ramadan lighting.
- p. 294: “mustard-gas drabness”: yellow-brown.
An overt foreshadowing.
- p. 294: “You must hurry”: Remembering this exhortation by Mohammed, in the half block walk to the entrance of 22 Rue Mizon, Remy recalls his interview with Mohammed (5:25 – 5:35 p.m.)
- p. 294: “During the ride out”: From 2:28 to 3:40 p.m.
- p. 294: “an ‘uncomfortable’ nap”: As the 17.289 note, “you spent,” N17:47, indicates, from 2:28 to 2:38 p.m. Remy dreams about what had happened in his confrontation with his father, presented as an interior dramatic duologue (17.289-92).
Here Remy indicates that he did not sleep through the entire seventy-two-minute trip since he spent part of it rehearsing what he would say to Mohammed.
That part in which he napped, he termed “uncomfortable.”
It will not be until his return trip from the prison to Algiers (referred to briefly on p. 298, it will be described more completely on 19.317-18) that Remy recalls the two discoveries which he dreamed about on 17.292.
- p. 294: “the ‘interminable’ eighty-minute wait for the sentries”: Explained above in the p. 294 note, “To and back,” N18:6.

- p. 294: **exordium**: A term in rhetoric delineating the introduction of a discourse. Its use indicates that Remy views his visit as a formality principally designed to impress Leila.
- p. 294: “After less than three hours I plane to Belgium”: A necessary lie by Remy who keeps up the pretense that he is in Vellacott’s employ. The time now is 5:26 p.m. Thus he must be referring to the 8:12 p.m. plane, which is bound for Paris, not Belgium. The plane to Brussels, which Foucin had booked for him, will not leave until 9:57 p.m., four and one-half hours later.
- p. 294: **fourberie**: “trickery; deception” (*Webster’s Third*). Remy is thinking about Ballard’s tricking brother into sleeping with his sister.
- p. 294: ““God is the oft-forgiving””: The Arabic expression for “oft-forgiving” to describe Allah occurs seventy-one times in the Qur’an. Mohammed could be quoting almost any of these, but the one closest to his mindset at this time is 39:53: “Say, O my servants who have transgressed against their souls. Despair not of the mercy of Allah, for Allah forgives all sins; for he is the oft-forgiving, the most merciful.”
- p. 294: “my flight in jeopardy”: As noted above, Remy is referring to the 8:12 to Paris. If he concludes his prison meeting quickly, say, at 5:30, and it takes him twenty minutes to check out from the prison, he would leave for Algiers at 5:50. The time of the drive to the Al-Nigma is seventy minutes, so he would arrive there at 7:10. Packing and checking out quickly, while having the receptionist make his reservation, would mean that he could make the 8:12 plane.
- p. 294: “‘release.’ ‘Release’”: Mohammed’s echoing of this word just used by Remy takes on a symbolic importance which would not have been lost on Remy. On 2.33, in the imaginary dialogue with the TV interviewer, when told to sign a “letter of release,” on hearing (or saying) this last word, Remy’s symbolic response also employs anadiplosis: “*Release*, Remy agonized.” On 3.38, HIV describes the scene where Remy’s father sought to pull his hand from his wife’s as she begged him to forgive Omar. On 7.101, when Omar (Remy) was seven, his father advised him about how to overcome the disconcerting movements of the prayer by telling him, “Seek release in the ritual.” On 17.282, there is a second account, here by old Naaman, of how he sought “to gain release” from his dying wife’s hand as she pleaded for him to forgive their son Omar. On 18.295, Remy will say that his father’s recognition of him “releases me.” “Release” is also used by other characters during crucial scenes in the novel: Medlin notes that the decoded Defense Department report, the source of the segment of microfilm found on Ballard, had “an REL (release) tag (8.126). Chabane dismisses a public marriage ceremony as “a ritualistic release”

(9.140).

Foucin speaks of “release time” to indicate that he is close to finishing his narrative about the three-year-old Mohammed (14.238).

Houda is described as “released” by Mohammed after the Toumi rape (15.256). Leila asks for Mohammed to “be released” for his mother’s funeral (17.286). Remy will tell Foucin that through a decision by him the commissioner himself will “find your own release” (18.309).

And on 19.322 and 330 (twice) the word *release* will occur in symbolic contexts.

p. 294: anadiplosis: A word used at the end of a sentence is repeated at the beginning of the next sentence.

p. 294: “berth”: A nautical metaphor.

As an intransitive verb, it means “to stop at a berth” as in the example “the ship glided in and effortlessly berthed” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 294: “With his countenance masked”: This action echoes a shamed Omar’s covering his face on 3.36: “Omar’s right hand swung upward, endeavoring to shield . . . the paralyzed emptiness which had overwhelmed his features.”

p. 294: “appealed to him, in spite of my vow”: Mohammed mumbles that he should have appealed to Foucin despite his vow to Houda never to seek his aid.

See 14.221, where Houda tells Foucin that her family “will not be in need of your service again.”

On 17.287, Houda did give Foucin permission to telephone Mohammed about their mother’s death, sending word to him through Leila, “Then, as in the past our family’s ancilla [in helping to retrieve her father’s body], would you?”

However, in the call to Mohammed, Foucin implies that he has not seen or spoken with Houda: “I’m assured she bears up well” (287).

p. 294: “*Arrêtez, ‘captive!’*”: “Stop, prisoner!” The guard sarcastically uses the French feminine form of “prisoner,” an insult to Mohammed’s sexuality.

p. 294: jussive: A word or words expressing a command.

- p. 295: *gardien*: A shortened form of *gardien de prison* or “prison warder.”
- p. 295: “not a drop of the previous milksop’s compliant kindness”: A play upon Lady Macbeth’s indictment of Macbeth, “Yet do I fear thy nature; / It is too full o’ the milk of human kindness” (1.5.16-17).
The milksop is the paunchy prison guard on 4.66-67; 6.86; and 10.161-62.
This guard is not present when Remy visits the prison and finds that Mohammed is in its infirmary on 15.240-45.
- p. 295: milksop: A person who is seen as timid, unassertive, or tractable.
The prison guard is not associated with the effeminate or unmanly connotations of “milksop.”
- p. 295: Plo: A one-syllable pronunciation, rhyming with “no,” of the three-syllable abbreviation PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization).
See the 1.12 note, N1:33-34.
In Remy’s visit to the prison yesterday, he perceived that the guards were surly to him (15.240) and later learns from Mohammed that they were cowed by the Palestinians (243).
- p. 295: “She had to live only until Mother died . . . Her note will reek of verisimilitude”: Mohammed believes that his sister had devised a plan so that he can be freed. She could not implement it immediately since she had to take care of their mother.
With Mme. Belmazoir’s death she can write a note absolving her brother. From the information she gained from reading the reports which Foucin brought to her building (15.246-47) and the questions which she suddenly put to Remy about Ballard’s murder (15.252), she would have gained such convincing details about the murder scene that her suicide note would be believed.
A “theatrical, artificial” vow of hers on 11.173 reveals that she wished to deceive everyone of what she planned: “He’s [Mohammed’s] not persuaded I will not let him die,” as if attempting this early to implicate herself in the murder of Ballard.
- p. 295: billy club: A truncheon, especially one carried by a police officer; usually shortened as “billy.”
- p. 295: “*He’s not beating my father now*”: Remy transforms “browbeating” into “beating.”
Mohammed’s concern for his sister causes Remy to think about his father who, he imagines, at this very moment is being interrogated by Foucin.
Contrarily in thinking about his father—and how he is being saved and released by the lies about himself which his father is foisting off on Foucin—Remy puts from his mind the plight of the Belmazoirs.
- p. 295: “an alms-for-the-beggar plea”: This metaphor evokes Omar’s thought at the end of 3:51: “an alms-for-the-beggar thought, to the suffering of that poor girl who

had been Noura's 'understudy.'"

p. 295: "*Extricated from one burning robe*": In Greek mythology, two "burning" robes appear, that is, poisoned garments which when donned make the victim believe his or her body is on fire.

Heracles (Hercules) in Sophocles' *The Women of Trachis* is sent a robe by his wife Deianeira. She has been convinced by a centaur that once he puts it on, it will renew Heracles' love for her. However, the centaur lied, and when the Greek hero drapes his body in it, he is filled with intense burning and is unable to remove the garment.

In Eurypides' *Medea*, the title character's husband Jason is planning to desert her and marry a younger and more prestigious woman, Princess Glauce, the daughter of King Creon.

The vengeful Medea sends a beautiful robe to Glauce, who puts it on, not knowing that it has been poisoned.

As with Heracles, her body is immediately consumed with fire. When Creon seeks to pull the robe off her, he too becomes entangled in it.

Each one tears at the robe to gain freedom from the burning, but each grasp merely results in pieces of melting skin being plucked from their bones. Both die horribly.

Neither mythological victim can escape.

Remy concludes that having escaped one metaphorical "burning robe" (the anguish that his treason has caused his father), he would be a fool to don another (the suffering of the Belmazoires).

p. 295: judas-hole: "A peephole usually constituted by an aperture resembling a window with a sliding panel and used chiefly for inspection (as in the door of . . . a prison cell)" (*Webster's Third*).

Sometimes the term is shortened as "judas" (as in "judaslike slot" on 3.50) or written as "judas window").

In all three variants capitalization may be used since this peephole is named after Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Jesus.

p. 295: *trou de serrure*: French for "keyhole."

p. 295: *captif*: In French, "a male prisoner."

Remy corrects the sexual slur which the guard had used eight paragraphs earlier in describing Mohammed.

p. 295: "two-measure requisite": See 4.60: "at his red line two paces from the grating."

p. 295: *sponton*: "a policeman's club; a truncheon" (*Webster's Third*).

Also spelled "spontoon" or "espontoon."

p. 295: *minify*: A transitive verb meaning "to make small or smaller; lessen" (*Webster's Third*).

- p. 295: “a jagged ring of blood”: A variant of the “ragged circle” metaphor.
See the 2.33 note, N2:62-63, which discusses the significance of this image in reinforcing the “connection” theme of the novel.
- p. 295: “If you have sister, please save mine!”: Mohammed means that if Remy has a sister, he knows how great the bond between brother and sister is. Aware of this, he will feel inclined to help him save his sister.
Mohammed is incognizant of the fact that this was the only plea he could invoke which would incite Remy to help him.
- p. 295: halloo: to shout or call out in order to attract the attention of someone.
- p. 295: “for hallooming you as ‘devil’”: To Foucin, Mohammed said, “I must see the devil! Summarily fetch the ‘client of my client’” (17.287).
Not mentioned, but Remy would have given some signal that he would visit and check on Houda.
He left the visitor’s room at 5:35. At this point he is aware that a detour to Babel Oued will mean that he cannot make the 8:12 flight to Paris.

pp. 295-98: SECTION 2

- p. 295: “A devil, being all memory, has none . . . ‘I am none’”: This section begins at 7:53 p.m. with Remy inside the Rue Mizon apartment building.
Section 1 ended with “devil,” and section 2 begins with “a devil,” a near anadiplosis or the repetition of a word which ends a sentence at the beginning of the next sentence.
See the p. 294 note, “release,” N18:8, for a true example of anadiplosis.
This reflection by Remy is occasioned by Mohammed’s use of the word “devil,” but Remy has been called one throughout the novel. See the 9.148 note, N9:34, which lists all the thirty-three instances where Remy is referred to as a devil or the French *diable*, Satan, or a demon.
Here his answer to the diabolic aspersion takes a philosophical turn. He argues that the world of memory is the past, and he seems to recognize that like most men he has a proclivity to dwell there.
However, in his confrontation with his father, Remy gains a “still point” where past, present, and future became one.
Furthermore, in chap. 18, through attempting to save Houda, he strives to repeat or expand this epiphanic experience. Thus “I am none” means both “I am no devil” and “I am now more than just memory.”
In the religious scheme of my novel, Satan and his devils represent the viewpoints that “nothing connects” or “everything disconnects.”
Unable to merge the three segments of time, they seek to reduce everything to the past, or so I interpret Milton’s Satan whose existence is solely a regret of his defeat in and loss of Heaven.
Dante’s Satan, I also believe, is purposefully chained in the realm of the past, just

as are all the other sinners of the *Inferno*.

However, despite this weighty discussion, it must be conceded that in Remy's comment there is a certain playfulness.

- p. 296: *smorgasbord*: a variety of dishes served buffet style.
In his mind Remy sees Bourceli's plate as a buffet table.
- p. 296: *apparemment*: French for "apparently."
- p. 296: "utilized a faltering Arabic": Since Foucin knows he is a DGSE agent, there is no need for Remy to maintain the sham since the commissioner would assume that French intelligence would not send an agent to Algeria unless he spoke Arabic.
On p. 311, Foucin will facetiously complement Remy on his "miraculous, one-day mastery of the Arabic tongue."
- p. 296: *kefta*: The pronunciation and English transcription in Algerian Arabic.
In standard Arabic, it is pronounced as *kufta* and in certain other dialects as *kafta*.
All mean "meatball," as given in the text, which also lists its two principal ingredients: lamb and onions.
- p. 296: *slick*: As an intransitive verb, it means "to glide smoothly or slip" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 296: "*Voilà!*": The French interjection meaning "Behold! There it is!"
- p. 296: "battened rictus": Literally, "a fattened grin."
- p. 296: *brake*: As a transitive verb, "to stop as if by means of a brake."
- p. 296: "this misconstruing fool": Ghazi.
- p. 296: "the trickle-down": See the 17.287 note, N17:43.
Remy hoped that some of the near three thousand dinars which he showered over Daidje's mat, by means of supply-side economic theory, would trickle down to his father.
Dictionaries list "trickle-down" as an adjective, but it occurs frequently as a noun in journal and newspaper articles, sometimes spelled as "trickle down."
- p. 296: *spandrel*: "the triangular space beneath the string of a stair"; "spandrel frame" is "a triangular framing (as under a stair)" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 296: *newel*: The post at the top or bottom of a flight of stairs, supporting the handrail.
- p. 296: *anile*: "of or like an old woman."
Another of Mme. Bourceli's references to the *alim*'s suspect sexual proclivities.
- p. 296: *ktayef*: A variant spelling is *katayef*. This gooey pastry, partially described in

the text, is sometimes defined as a “stuffed pancake.”

- p. 296: “be-chary cuff”: Mme. Bourceli’s slap is designed to emphasize to Ghazi to steer clear of the *alim*, advice which will become ironic on p. 305.
- p. 296: “a half-hour ago”: Since the time now is 7:57, at the 7:27 blast of the cannon ending the fast, Houda would have retreated to her shed. This gives the appearance that she would perform Al-Maghreb prayers by herself there in the room where her mother had died. Bourceli provides another interpretation.
- p. 296: “his voice imperceptibly trembling”: Remy is fearful that another reason caused Houda to withdraw.
- p. 296: “ten-dinar recompense”: Remy had 170 dinars when he entered the building. The ten he prepays Bourceli to chaperon reduces that to 160. Why Remy had not offered Nemmiche a hundred more is answered: He knows that he will need some to hire Bourceli and perhaps for a doctor if Mohammed’s projection proves to be accurate.
- p. 296: boffola: Slang for a “belly laugh” or “a deep hearty laugh” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 296: “at worst longer”: Remy must disguise how trying is Bourceli’s joviality, which even sinks to the level of a reference to constipation.
- p. 296: “On the right were five readers, each having balanced his Qur’an”: In some Muslim societies, families of the deceased hold gatherings for three days after the funeral. They provide banquets of food for the callers, use floral decorations, and hire religious scholars to recite the Qur’an or utter prayers for the dead. The only one of these which is provided for in the Hadiths is that the family may receive condolence calls from relatives, friends, and neighbors between the Maghrib and Isha’ prayers for not more than three days after the funeral (Hadiths of Al-Bukhari 7.254 and Muslim 2.3552). There is no mention in the Hadiths that the family of the deceased should provide meals for the gathering of visitors. Doing so, the Prophet Mohammed said, puts a burden on the food supplies of the dead person’s family. Instead, it was the practice of the Prophet’s family to send food to the deceased’s family for three days. (Al-Bukhari 7.553; Muslim 4.5491; and ibn Majah 2.1610). No Hadiths mention the sending of flowers to the family, a funereal practice which developed in imitation of non-Muslims. Nor do they mention the hiring of Qur’anic reciters at the gatherings. This said, very soon after the Prophet’s death Muslims began to turn the funeral and its aftermath into a ceremony of pomp and show, prompting the criticism of

this practice in the Hadiths of Ibn Majah 1.1610. Ibn Majah wrote in the third century A.H./ninth century C.E.

In practice today, many Muslim families stage elaborate funeral services, after which for three days they hold condolence receptions involving banquets of food, floral decorations, and hired Qur'anic readers.

Such expensive funerals are expected not just of wealthy Muslim families, but also of those of the middle class.

See Meehan, "Funerals Burden Omani Families," *The Muslim Observer* (online), Jan. 2010.

- p. 296: *rehal*: It is described in the text where it is called a Qur'an "stand." Another definition is a "book rest."
It is also transcribed in English as *rihal* or *rahil*.
- p. 296: "your residence is with guest": Similar to the phrasing used by Widow Daidje in 17.289: "*Sayyid* Naaman, our residence is with guest."
- p. 296: "The other decamped an hour ago": Since it is eight, Leila left at seven, according to Bourceli.
- p. 296: *skirr*: As an intransitive verb, "to move swiftly."
- p. 296: "to and fro between His Excellency and my washergirl": Foucin described the negotiations with Houda, with Leila as the go-between, on 17.286-87.
- p. 296: "not have bundled her off": The nosy Bourceli had obviously overheard Houda encouraging Leila to leave.
Remy's speculation on p. 293 is borne out.
- p. 296: "the fro-and-to": Bourceli reverses the usual order, "to-and-fro," a compound noun meaning a "movement back and forth."
She had just used the adverbial pair.
In addition, as employed by her the expression connotes sexual copulation.
- p. 296: "earn my fifty": An exaggerated, but face-saving, lie.

- p. 297: **grabble**: An intransitive verb meaning “to feel about with the hands; grope.”
- p. 297: “an additional ten”: Remy’s money is now reduced to 150.
- p. 297: **angulated bakshaish**: “a semiantique or antique Persian carpet with usually angular designs” (*Webster’s Third*).
This one rented by Houda is an imitation, not a genuine, bakshaish.
Bakshaish is a town in northwestern Iran, east of Tabriz. Its rugs and carpets are noted for their improvisational and geometric proportions and its soft red and blue tones.
- p. 297: **sill**: doorsill; threshold.
- p. 297: **natter**: “a conversation, usually of a trivial nature” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 297: “*any sounds from the shack—except a shriek*”: Remy suspects that Houda has killed herself as Ballard did, with a knife to the throat.
Often a self-inflicted stabbing wound will cause a suicide to cry out, despite an effort not to.
- p. 297: **plodge**: Dialectical intransitive verb meaning to “walk heavily” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 297: “metallic chair . . . fruit crate”: The shed’s two pieces of furniture for sitting. They were mentioned by Leila on 15.248 and by Remy on 15.250.
- p. 297: “Scrunching past her frame”: Remy enters the shed at 8:04 p.m.
- p. 297: “priceless”: A monetary pun by Bourceli: The sheet is “of inestimable value” to her since it costs her nothing, that is, it is “without a price.”
- p. 297: “claims no stake”: Bourceli reverses the expression “stake a claim,” meaning “to assert title to something by or as if by placing stakes” (*Webster’s Third*).
In another sense, relevant to Bourceli’s image, “stake” means “a share or interest in property or a business venture.”
- p. 297: **unquivering**: “not quivering” (*Webster’s Third*).
Having convinced Leila to leave, Houda instinctively sets out to persuade Remy that she is all right.
- p. 297: “delegating me to convey to him the sad tidings of your mother’s death”: See 17.286 where Houda “nominated [Remy]” to telephone her brother.
On that same page Remy had expressed to himself his puzzlement over why “Houda appeared to wish the death to be kept from her brother as long as possible.” Now he knows the reason: She feared her brother would divine what she planned to do and, although in prison, take steps to intervene.

- p. 297: “[Do not weaken and fall prey to grief.] God is the oft-forgiving”: The bracketed sentence is from the Qur’an 3.139. I used a variant translation. The following gives the entire verse in what is generally regarded as the accepted translation: “Do not lose heart, nor fall into despair, for you will gain the upper hand if you are indeed true in faith.” See the p. 294 note, for the second part quoted, which is from a different book of the Qur’an (39:53), “God is the oft-forgiving.”
- p. 297: *drap*: French for “bedsheet.”
- p. 297: Saïda bottle: The most popular type of bottled water in Algeria. See the 3.41 note for Saïda, the “city of waters” in Algeria.
- p. 297: “Unnecessary, yet truly obliging, your kind act”: A coincidental use of the idea Remy had thought on 11.182, which became the title of chap. 11. See the 11.170 note to this title, N11:1, and to the 11.182 note, N11:33, for a list of the five chapters where variants of “kindness” and “necessary” are connected.
- p. 297: “into his pocket for a ten”: Now Remy has 140 dinars left.
- p. 297: handleless: “having no handle” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 297: “pestle and mortar”: A metaphor for the pen and paper which Houda used in writing her suicide note. The pharmaceutical instruments, however, can be used to grind a poison, which Remy suspects Houda has taken.
- p. 297: vail: A transitive verb meaning “to lower, let sink or fall down.” It is listed as archaic in some dictionaries, but *Webster’s Third’s* examples are from the 20th-century writers Aldous Huxley (“veiled her handkerchief”) and Louis Golding (“vailing their crest”).
- p. 297: *tasse*: cup (French).
- p. 297: etiolation: “the loss or lessening of natural vigor” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 297: “By now, Mme. Bal— those companioning you to the airport approach the Al-Nigma”: The time is 8:13. By suggesting that Mme. Ballard would be one of those (the other, Foucin) on the way to the Al-Nigma, Houda tries to entice Remy to leave. Additionally, she breaks off speaking Leila’s surname to convince Remy that inappropriately she blurted out her name.

- p. 298: *Tenr'iman*: My only source for this term is Stevens and Stevens, *Algeria and the Sahara*: Writing about one of the 160 varieties of date palms in Djanet, they note that one is "called *tenr'iman*; these dates are big, fat and very sweet and you [could be tempted to eat] so many that they killed you. *Tenr'iman* in Tuareg means 'it kills you.'" On p. 301, a character in my novel will largely use this wording in describing the *tenr'iman* palm. An oasis city in southeast Algeria, Djanet is inhabited by the Kel Ajjer Tuareg people, a Berber tribe. The idea that the bark of the *tenr'iman* can be turned into a powerful poison is entirely my own invention.
- p. 298: "Who are you?": Questions about Remy's identity have previously been voiced by many characters in the novel (Foucin, Ahmed Chabane, Leila, Bourceli, Leroy, Houda, and Tinfingers). In the last two chapters Remy will begin to question himself about who he truly is. This *anagnorisis* (self-discovery which Aristotle maintained must occur at the end of a tragedy) occurs over the span of the novel's last two chapters.
- p. 298: "Forty for walking fast.' . . . Remy tendered the last": His dinars are reduced to 100.
- p. 298: tweeze: to pluck with or as with tweezers.
- p. 298: "Light of your papa's wick": Another of Bourceli's sexual references.
- p. 298: "shrink it (if possible)": Mme. Bourceli had dwelled upon Ghazi's short penis in 11:175. Here she charges her husband with the same shrinkage, obviously offensive to her.
- p. 298: ambace: "the lowest throw at dice; something worthless or unlucky" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 298: "shake the superflux": From *Lear*: "Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel, / That thou mayst shake the superflux to them" (3.4.34-35). "Superflux" means "excess or superfluity or something not needed." In essence, Shakespeare is saying that if the rich saw how the poor live they would at least throw them some bones from their banquet. The lines are really Shakespeare's condemnation, before the phrases were coined, of the "trickle-down theory" or "supply-side economics" mentioned in the p. 296 note above, N19.14. An editorial: As in Shakespeare's time, so today, the rich don't give a damn for the poor, except when they can the more-than-the-more exploit them.
- p. 298: "twenty centimes": Bourceli receives around US\$4 from Remy and promises

her give her son the equivalent of twenty cents.
This section ends at 8:16 p.m.

pp. 298-301: SECTION 3

- p. 298: “*Like my father’s . . . legs*”: Remy is connecting Houda’s suffering with his father’s. Thus she is becoming family-like to him.
Contrast this affiliation with Remy’s earlier attempt to disconnect himself from Mohammed Belmazoir’s suffering by thinking of his father (p. 295 note above, N18:10).
The action continues directly from the previous section, so the time is 8:17.
- p. 298: “visual register”: Her face is regarded as a cash register, with her lips its keys.
- p. 298: “vaulting profit”: She has made seventy dinars.
- p. 298: “What he had resolved in the taxi ride back—‘the circumcised and uncircumcised penis’”: Remy tells Houda there was no need to take the poison. In the taxi ride back from the prison, he had remembered the part of his internal dramatic duologue where he connected his father’s comment about Jews being uncircumcised with Mohammed’s and Houda’s statement that the penis of Ballard, circumcised according to Ahmed Chabane and Leila, had a foreskin (17.292).
- p. 298: “a nominal significance”: Remy asserts that this discovery about Ballard’s penis, which if confirmed allowed him to reveal the murderer, seemed inconsequential in the presence of the sacrifice and suffering of Houda.
- p. 298: proof positive: “conclusive proof” (*Webster’s Third*).
Remy’s statement is cautious because he says that the proof that Mohammed is not the murderer is “at hand.”
Houda answers that she has provided “proof positive” that will free her brother, her suicide note, although she does not specify this end.
- p. 298: Djanet: A Saharan oasis city in the southeastern Algeria inhabited by the Tuareg people, a Berber tribe.
See the above note on *tenr’iman*, N18:19.
- p. 298: “*gazayri*”: Houda translates the Arabic as “trueborn ‘Algerian,’ that is a man born in Algeria.
A female Algerian is *gaza’iri*.
- p. 298: “your forty’s squandered”: Houda overheard the monetary options offered by Bourceli, whose command to Ghazi, “fly,” indicates that Remy had given her the

largest amount, forty.

- p. 298: “It kills you”: In the Tuareg dialect the meaning of *tenr’iman*.
Again, see the note above on *tenr’iman*, N18:19.
- p. 298: “out of all compass”: In 1 *Henry IV* 3.3.20, Falstaff says to Bardolph, “And now I live out of all order, out of all compass,” meaning that his life is disorderly, without reasonable limits, but Bardolph’s reply puns on “compass” as referring to Falstaff’s girth.
Bourceli’s use of the image indicates that her physical gorging or her mental mathematical efforts have left her thoughts disordered.
On 11.171, Remy used a description of Falstaff, “huge hill of flesh” (*1 Henry IV* 2.4.241), in limning Mme. Bourceli.
- p. 298: “the calculus”: By the word, Bourceli means the calculation of her evening’s profit.
However, there is an obvious verbal connection with the use of the word in the title of chap. 3, “The Calculus of Relations,” another linking of Remy/Omar’s history with that of the Belmazoirs.
- p. 298: “bulldozes”: The literal meaning is “to move someone or something as if by means of a bulldozer.”
Informally it means to “bully or intimidate.”
There is a situational pun on “doze.”
- p. 298: “numbing dowski—”: An inversion of the opening line of Keats’s “Nightingale”:
“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense.”
In describing Mohammed’s voice on 15.241, Remy also varied Keats’s words: “drowsed with numbness.”
- p. 298: “Talk with me. . . . Afraid, I grow leaden . . . my soul were ‘double-weighted’”:
Houda expresses her fear of dying.
Her words are so couched as to imply that she is concealing something, and though she presumably wants to take this mystery with her to the grave (as p. 303 will suggest), she treasures this secret so greatly that she drops hints about it.
“Leaden” indicates that the poison has made her “dull, sluggish, or heavy in feeling,” but does it have a secondary meaning about something weighing down her body?
“Double-weighted” is a term used in reference to the metronome (or double-weighted pendulum). It is double-weighted because it has not only an outward adjustable weight on the end of its inverted rod, but it also has on the other side of the pendulum pivot, a second, fixed weight, which is hidden in the metronome cover.
In addition, “double weighing” is “a method of weighing in which the object is balanced first on one pan and then the other in order to eliminate any possible

error from equality in the balance.” Here one object is twice weighed.

Is Houda concerned about how her body and soul will be weighed by God? Or is she hinting that the one object being weighed is not as it appears?

Whatever mysteries reside in her wording (and I tried to multiply these), the solution (unless you as reader have not already discover it) will come rather quickly, on p. 303.

- p. 298: “still wildly beautiful, I wager, despite his scars”: The first of several references which Houda will make to the song, “A Garden Beauty’s in His Face,” which she sang to Mohammed when he was a child (15.241).
- p. 298: “‘Who am I?’ . . . her earlier query”: At the top of this page, as soon as Remy said *tenr’iman* Houda asked, “Who are you?”
See its note, N18:19.
- p. 298: “stirring what should have been let lie, for groping what should not have been touched”: The wording is based on the verses from chap. 6 of *Chinggis Khan: The Golden History of the Mongols* (Folio Society, 1993), p. 73: “Should you have stirred those things / that you chose to stir? / Should you have touched those things / that you chose to touch?”
- p. 298: “‘No!’”: Houda stresses to Remy that he is blameless.
Her suicide had been planned long before he came to Algeria.
To emphasize the sincerity of this avowal, she draws herself up, makes a peephole in the sheet, and shows her unveiled face.
- p. 298: *drap*: The hanging bedsheet.
- p. 298: “her silhouette”: There is a candle on a table on the far side of the bed behind the sheet.
Thus when Houda raises up and afterwards lowers her body, Remy can follow its movement.
- p. 298: “unveiled countenance peeped”: The peephole image reoccurs.
See the 3.42 note, N3:21-22, for a listing of the image in the novel.
- p. 298: “*The torso yet moves—like another’s!*”: The second time he has compared Houda’s body to his father’s.
- p. 298: *apperceive*: The psychological term where a new idea or impression is assimilated and interpreted by the help of past experience.
Houda’s argument is that having seen how her father reacted to the suspicion of his having caused the death of his father, she believes that Mohammed will be so tormented at daily seeing her, with whom he has unknowingly slept, he will be driven also to kill himself.

- p. 298: “in prison or out”: Houda expresses her belief that even if found guilty of killing Ballard, her brother will not face capital punishment. Instead he will spend a time in prison and then be released.
She appears to be more apprehensive of what Mohammed will do to himself than what the state will do to him.
This revelation places a new interpretation of what she had told Remy on 11.173: “He’s not persuaded I will not let him die!” part of which she will quote two paragraphs down.
- p. 298: Erinyes: The Greek Furies (Erinyes), who were goddesses of retribution. They avenged crimes against the natural order, particularly crimes of a child against a parent.
Houda has in mind their chasing Orestes from the stage at the end of Aeschylus’ *The Libation Bearers*, ll. 1048-1064.
Orestes had murdered his mother Clytemnestra, herself the murderess of her husband Agamemnon.

- p. 299: remembrancer: “a person who brings things to the mind of another” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 299: “He does not know all!”: Again her wording suggests that she has knowledge of something that neither Mohammed nor Remy are cognizant.
- p. 299: “that night on which we’ve splurged our breath cursing”: On 15.250, Houda asked, “Is that night so fraught with meaning?”
- p. 299: “splurge”: As a transitive verb, it means “to spend extravagantly.”
- p. 299: “begot this! . . . This richer issue”: Houda’s next speech seems to indicate that this “richer issue” relates to the bond between brother and sister.
- p. 299: “a bonding . . . redemptive”: It appears that Houda is affirming that her suicide is a testimony of her desire to gain her brother redemption. She is willing to give her life so that he may survive.
The pattern of sin, repentance, and redemption throughout in the novel is discussed in the short essay at the end of the notes to this chapter, N18:72-74.
- p. 299: catechize: to teach by the method of questions and answers.
- p. 299: “Adam and Eve . . . brother and sister”: This statement of a most forbidden concept in Islam is made by Houda to intensify her damnation (and thereby shield her brother).
Her words call up the Algerian legend of the Baths of the Damned (*Hammam El Maskhoutin* in Arabic). These “baths” located near Guelma in northeastern Algeria are actually twelve springs whose overflow of their crater has created sand blocks.
These are said to represent a husband and wife and their attendants who were turned to stone when the couple entered the springs because they were also brother and sister (Stevens and Stevens, *Algeria and the Sahara*, 146-47).
- p. 299: “she had never ‘touched’ him”: Remy returns to one of his conclusions drawn in the taxi ride from the prison.
It is a correlate of his theory about Ballard’s penis, which since he was a Jew should have been circumcised, but which both Houda and Mohammed had described as uncircumcised.
On 15:331, Houda delineated the night of Feb. 8: In the Toumi apartment, Ballard led her to the bed and lay beside her for a moment before retreating to the toilet.
When he made his way through the dark room back to the bed, he drew her hand to his penis and guided it as it masturbated his “piece of flesh,” the act of “touching” which Remy refers to here.
Remy does not state his conclusion to Houda, but to himself he believes that the man whose penis she fondled was not Ballard. Dissatisfied, this man left the bed

and hurried to the bathroom, from which after a moment Ballard emerged, apologizing to Houda for his conduct.

- p. 299: *vitiation*: moral weakness; imperfect or impure nature.
Ballard had pointed out this aspect of himself when he told Houda, “You’re not marrying *un cœur pur*, not as yours” (12.191).
- p. 299: “On that night—that night I wouldn’t let go—the bathroom held another”: Remy switches to the Feb. 15 “triangular rendezvous” at the Toumi (15.250), conceding that he relentlessly speculated about what went on that night (253).
That night Houda had expected Ballard for their second attempt at sex; however, unknown to her accompanying Ballard was a besotted Mohammed, who was expecting intercourse with a prostitute.
Remy explains to Houda there was a fourth person present who slipped out of the bathroom to use the FLIRs to watch the “rape” and flipped on the lights as he exited the apartment.
Remy believes that he murdered Ballard at Zaracova twelve days later on Feb. 27.
On 19:317-18, there will be a more complete presentation of Remy’s taxi ride back from the prison, where he had told Mohammed about the death of his mother.
His recall of previous events leads him to the conclusions about the fourth person in the room and who Ballard’s murderer is.
- p. 299: “slipjoint knife”: The *douk-douk* is a slipjoint knife since it has no locking mechanism.
Instead a strong back spring biases it toward the opening and closing positions.
See the 4.57 note, N4:17-18.
- p. 299: “I did that ‘for myself’”: See 15.250, where Houda says that she entered into the affair with Ballard “for myself” and reaffirms that on the next page: “Yes, for myself!” (251).
- p. 299: “beyond all infidelity, love endures . . . to bequeath hope”: The three theological virtues in Christianity—faith, hope, and charity (love)—Houda, reared in a Catholic country, but much longer a reverter to Islam, mentions here with the utmost reverence and sincerity (a contrast with how Remy had comically referred to them on 11:170).
The positive “faith,” however, Houda renders negatively as “infidelity.”
In this speech, I portrayed her as similar to Jesus upon the cross, taking all sin and blame upon herself and forgiving all who had sinned against her.
- p. 299: “her wearied eyes . . . gliding past . . . into a perfectly silent courtyard”: The phrase “perfectly silent” is taken from the last line of Whitman’s “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”: “Look’d up in perfect silence at the stars.”
This expanding view of someone looking beyond the immediate experience was used on 7.106, where Foucin surveys his status in the status quo of Algeria: “There with his dark eyes . . . goading the Berber.”

- p. 299: “doubly veiled”: The veil over her face and the sheet divider.
- p. 299: “her confidence”: A continuing play upon “faith.”
While Houda had used the negative “infidelity,” Remy uses the positive “confidence,” its derivation meaning “with faith or trust.”
- p. 299: “her ‘dying voice’ . . . in flights-of-angels’ song”: Hamlet’s death scene, 5.2, provides these two phrases, one in quotes and the other paraphrased: Hamlet says that Fortinbras “has my dying voice” (358) and Horatio prays over the dead Hamlet, “And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!” (362)
- p. 299: *Pěniel*: The Hebrew word *Pěniel* is the place on the Jabbok river in Jordan where Jacob wrestled with a stranger and received a blessing (Gen 32:30). Without the breve it is used in the English term “peniel mission,” an evangelical group which concentrates on street ministry.
Here in his thoughts Remy imagines Houda employing it to refer to the struggle which confronts Mohammed, who will no longer have her as his protective sister.
- p. 299: “a testimony of *your* strength”: He tells Houda that her dying strength will ensure that Mohammed will always remain weak.
Seemingly a cruel speech to a person on her deathbed, yet it is not received as such by Houda.
- p. 299: “‘wild-garden beauty’ . . . ‘he becomes *my* gardener”): Words taken from lines 2, 4, and 8 of the song Houda sang to the child Mohammed (15.241).
- p. 299: “The letter to M. Foucin”: The supposition of Mohammed (295), with which Remy concurred, is borne out here, the first time that Houda refers to her suicide note, although she had insinuated she had devised a “proof positive” to free her brother on p. 298.
- p. 299: mauley: “hand” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 300: “Bourceli flung up the divider”: The time is 8:26.
- p. 300: “evil eye”: Muslims accept that the evil eye exists and that certain persons can hurt another merely by looking at that individual.
See the 14.232 note, N14:45, for a longer discussion.
Bourceli believes that she possesses that power.
- p. 300: tableau: A striking, dramatic scene.
- p. 300: “maroon-slipped . . . an olive-drab . . . lacteous-white”: “Maroon” is a “yellow or brownish red.”
“Olive-drab” is a “greenish-brown.”
“Lacteous” is an archaic term meaning “milky white.”
The colors are politically significant since they are hues of those of the Algerian flag, which consists of two equal green and white vertical bars, in the center of which are a red star and crescent.
All of these bright colors in the flag are skewed or diluted, indicative of the declined morality of Algiers, a point to which Remy will return on p. 305.
- p. 300: “three borders of frayed tatting”: The half-*nikaab* worn by Algerian women is often triangular.
Thus it has three tatted sides.
- p. 300: “She revealed it—for me!”: On p. 298, “her drained unveiled countenance peeped.”
- p. 300: “rainbow-on-rainbow-in fire radiance”: From *Paradiso* 33.118-20: “One circle seemed reflected by the second, / as rainbow is by rainbow, and the third / seemed fire breathed equally by those two circles.”
To Dante, God appears as three equally large circles, occupying the same space, representing the Trinity: Father (the first rainbow), the Son (the reflected rainbow), and the Holy Ghost (the Father/Son’s fiery breath).
Houda’s decision to undergo horrible suffering, both as punishment for her sins in selfishly rendezvousing with Ballard and as a way to save her brother, whom she feels her action doomed, overwhelms Remy and provokes this mental comparison of her actions with God’s in saving humankind.
The sight becomes a visual representation of what Houda herself will verbalize nine paragraphs down: “No ‘particle of love’ ever dies . . . dissolves into nothingness,” the sentiment Dante feels when just preceding his encompassing the three circles he proclaims that the unity of creation is bound by love.
This image signals a triple bonding of Remy with the sister and through her with the brother.
It provides a contrast with the second use of the rainbow-on-rainbow-in-fire image that will be used on p. 312, where it signals the bonding of three others.
- p. 300: belgard: “a loving look” (*Webster’s Third*, which lists the word as “obsolete”).

- p. 300: “a white-rose, helical flamelet”: The second reference to Dante which Remy evokes precedes the one from Canto 33.
 In *Paradiso* 31. 1-2, the Empyrean is presented as a great white rose: “So now, appearing to me in the form / of a white rose was Heaven’s sacred host.”
 In medieval poetry, the rose was typically a symbol of earthly love, but Dante in these lines has it represent Divine Love.
 Thus in turning from the person who symbolizes Divine Love, Remy creates a transubstantiating image of this love, as if to say he cannot “escape” (300) it.
- p. 300: helical: of, or having the form of, a helix.
 The DNA molecule, the basic structure of life, is formed of two intertwined helices.
 The image will reappear on p. 310.
- p. 300: “Preposterous! . . . foregone”: This is the final use of this exclamation in the novel. The sentence opens with “preposterous” and closes with the contrastive temporal word “foregone.”
 In each of the three situations in which “preposterous” is used, the word suggests that a statement by someone is absurd because it places the first last (or the present first and the past last) and the last first (or the past last and the present first).
 The initial use occurs on 2.30 where it is Remy’s immediate response to HIV’s statement that he is to return to Algeria.
 See its note, N2:54-55, which explains how the etymological concept of “preposterous” is used as a narrative technique in my novel.
 The second appears on 17.277, when Devereaux challenges Remy’s statement that he was personally, not diplomatically, involved in the Ballard matter.
 See its note, N17:10.
- p. 300: “Remy’s hand slid under . . . located the papers”: The time is 8:25.
- p. 300: gnathion: “the midpoint of the lower border of the human mandible” or jawbone (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 300: *drap*: In French, “bedsheet.”
- p. 300: toxify: to “poison” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 300: “a balled-up ten-dinar note”: Remy’s cash flow is reduced to 90 dinars.
- p. 300: “at the ‘put-out-the-light’ blackness”: Remy had been able to follow the silhouettes of her movement through the light given off by “a solitary tallow candle” on the nightstand on the far side of the bed.
 As Houda raised her head after her simulated retching, she paused to blow out this candle, thus leaving the far side of the sheet in darkness.
 Her symbolic action brings to Remy’s mind the speech by Othello, “Put out the

light, and then put out the light" (5.2.7).

- p. 300: *Les Tombeaux*: "The Tombs," a building in a suburb of Algiers where Omar was taken to watch "Noura" be tortured.
See 3.41 and its note N3:19.
- p. 300: "estranged-from-insurrection cornfield": The scene where Noura, as imagined by Remy, is running through the cornfield below the nunnery.
It is based on the description of the second lieutenant who, after stressing how safe the nunnery was, said that some nuns hid among the cornstalks during an attack on the place (3.40).
- p. 300: "dark-oak bed": The first description of his parents' bed in which his mother died.
- p. 300: *fiat cavalier seul*: In the text, Remy's mind translates the French into English, "goes it alone."
This seems to be a contradiction to Remy's statement on 17.287 where he basically resigned his father "to the Qur'an-suffused, sheet-divided loft," that is placed his fate in God's hands.
However, Remy's idea progresses, which does not mean it contradicts. The suffering of Houda has such a profound impact on him that he wants to be beside his father in his last days, believing only he can provide him the care and love a dying parent deserves and needs.
The religious or vicarious viewpoints therefore become less satisfactory to Remy in the face of Houda's suffering. That he cannot "lay by" (287) this duty to his father will consequently resurface on 21.363, near the end of the novel.
- p. 300: "Fie and fie and foh and fum!": For these nonsense alliterative words, I took some of them from an early version of the English fairy tale, "Jack and the Beanstalk": "Fee-fi-fo-fum, / I smell the blood of an Englishman" and from Shakespeare's adaptation of the refrain in *Lear* 3.4.182-83: "Fie, foh, and fum! / I smell the blood of a British man."
There is a pun on a doctor's "fee," which his first sentence states is the motivating factor for him to leave his Ramadan feast to tend to a patient.
- p. 300: vale: As an English noun, it means "a salutation of leave-taking—often used interjectionally" (*Webster's Third*).
Latin for "farewell," it was used on 17.283 as a Latin interjection when Remy mentally quoted the opening of Catullus's poem "*Ave atque vale*" ("Hail and farewell!").
- p. 300: "particle of love": This fourth use of the "particle" image is the closest to the influencing source: In *War and Peace*, bk. 13, chap. 16, Tolstoy's dying hero Prince Andrey Bolkonsky says, "Love is God, and to die means that I, a particle of love, shall return to the general and eternal source."

For a list of the five uses of “particle,” see the 4.54 note, N4:11.

- p. 300: “dissolves into nothingness”: Houda appropriates “dissolve” from *The Tempest* 4.1.153-56: “. . . the great globe itself, / Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, / And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, / Leave not a rack behind.” “Nothingness” was suggested by Theseus’s “airy nothing” in *Midsummer’s* (5.1.16).
By the way, “nothingness” is nowhere found in Shakespeare.
The speech is Houda’s dying affirmation that the idea “nothing connects” is ridiculous.
Her speech, like Bolkonsky’s, avers that “everything connects.”
- p. 300: “to God and garden commends”: More wording from the song which Houda sang to the child Mohammed, particularly from the last two lines: “And I’m pleased / As the garden, as God” (15.241).
That she reverses the order of “God” and “garden,” I intended, as a ranking of her priorities, where the pleasures of this earth (the garden) take precedence over possible supernatural promises (God).
She asserts that a dying person concentrates of the here, not the hereafter, an idea from Dickinson’s poem, “I Heard a Fly.”
- p. 300: “spurn my spur”: Puns in the midst of a major dying scene? Shakespeare had no problems with such, to wit, Cleopatra’s death scene.
The doctor means “reject or treat with disdain my urging” that Bourceli is so overweight she should fast eleven months and feasts in only one, the fasting month of Ramadan.
- p. 300: “Banty physician, ‘heel’ thyself”: Mme. Bourceli seizes on “spur,” a sharp metal device attached as a weapon to the leg of a gamecock in a cockfight.
“Banty” refers to a “banty rooster,” which is small, but aggressive. Through phonological distortion it plays on “bandy,” meaning “to give and take in an argument.”
One definition of “heel” is “to equip a gamecock with metal spurs,” thereby providing the ultimate pun on “Physician, heal thyself.”
The inane word sparring between the doctor and Bourceli is designed to elevate Houda’s profoundly simple words.

p. 301: hakim: A Muslim physician.

p. 301: parlance: “speech”; “a manner or mode of speaking, such as diction, idiom, phraseology” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 301: “the wild-garden beauty of his soul, *s’il vous plaît?*”: The final use in this section of words from Houda’s song (15.241), in which Houda stresses that the physical earthly wildness and beauty of Mohammed are mirrored in his soul.

pp. 301-03: SECTION 4

p. 301: “Ugh!”: This section begins about a minute after section 3, at 8:32.

p. 301: *duktoor*: Arabic for “doctor.”

p. 301: vinegared: As a transitive verb, “vinegar” means “to apply vinegar to” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 301: “translation from our Tuareg dialect is ‘it kills you’”: See the p. 298 note above, N18:19.

p. 301: Commander Azzedine: There is a brief flashback to January 1958, when Azzedine was the leader of *Wilaya IV*, the FLN military district about twenty-five miles south of Algiers.
He presided over Omar’s initiation into the FLN on Oct. 15, 1957 (2.23-24).
See the 2.21-22 and 3.38 notes on Azzedine, where it is noted that today (2013) he is still alive and campaigning for democracy in Algeria.

p. 301: Atlas Mountains: The Mediterranean coastal plains of Algeria are separated from the Sahara Desert by two mountain ranges, the Tell Atlas and the Saharan Atlas.
The Tell Atlas begins about seventy-five miles south of Algiers.
The Atlas Mountains are principally inhabited by Berbers. The name “Atlas” is derived from the word for “mountain” in some Berber dialects, either *adras* or *adrar*.

p. 301: “cyanide’s job”: Following cyanide ingestion, death follows in a few minutes. Thus it contrasts with the fictional *tenr’iman* of my novel which produces a slow, agonizing death.
Houda ingested it a little after 7 p.m., having convincing Leila to leave.
She dies at 9:03.

p. 301: “‘Domesticating torture,’ the appended ALN edict touts”: This phrase links the ALN edict with the Tizi Aimoula narrative.

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Its women had “adroitly . . . adapted their household implements, domesticating torture” (9.137).

“Domesticating” is used because my invented *tenr’iman* bark, harmless in minute quantities, is sold as a spice for foods, as the doctor notes.

- p. 301: ALN: Army of the National Liberation, the military wing of the FLN.
- p. 301: *harki*: As the text states, a *harki* (an alternate spelling capitalizes the word) was a Muslim Algerian who served as an auxiliary in the French army during the Algerian War.
 Estimates of their number range from 150,000 to 200,000, far more than the maximum number of 50,000 Muslim Algerian combatants in the ALN.
 The FLN regarded all *harkis* as traitors; however, in the Évian Accords (1962) which ended the war, its representatives agreed not to take reprisals against any *harkis*.
 Justifiably suspicious, 90,000 *harkis* counting their family members were able to flee to France as refugees before Algerian independence.
 According to Horne in *A Savage War of Peace*, the 150,000 not so lucky, down to their children, were shot, lynched, castrated, cut to pieces with their flesh fed to dogs, burned alive, forced to clear minefields, or made to dig their own grave and swallow their French military decorations before being buried alive.
- p. 301: “more-than-the-more dies”: Another use of the phrase from James’s *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, chap. 13: “The more than the more is more than the less.”
- p. 301: *médecin*: French for “doctor.”
- p. 301: nether holes: The openings of the private (or lower) parts: anal, urethral, and vaginal.
- p. 301: “‘nightshaded’”: A neologism since the noun “nightshade” is being used as a transitive verb.
 It means “poisoned” since as a noun it refers to any plants of the family *Solanaceae*, several of which are poisonous, such as belladonna and henbane.
- p. 301: “*arrogant mortality*”: Bourceli is coming to terms with “the condition of being mortal and eventually having to die.”
 Death is “arrogant” since it trumps Bourceli’s own excessive pride and conceit.
- p. 301: “A ‘sickness grows upon me’”: From *Lear* 5.3.108 where the poisoned Regan cries, “My sickness grows upon me.”
 Bourceli’s pain over her imagined death contrasts with the suffering which Houda is agonizingly enduring before a death all too real.

- p. 301: agnate: A relative through male descent or on the father's side.
Bourceli views AIDS as a male disease.
- p. 301: “galloping HIV gourmand”: A reference to the TV culinary show *The Galloping Gourmet* (1969-1971), hosted by the British chef Graham Kerr.
Bourceli's “gourmand” suggests a person who indulges in food and drink to excess (or in her image a retrovirus which gobbles up this person's white blood cells).
- p. 301: “to retain our boys for . . .”: She probably finished her thought with “for his own deviant appetite” or some such.
- p. 301: “the 8:34 Isha' azan”: The call to “night prayers” begins at 8:34.
The performance of the Isha' prayers lasts from 8:54 – 9:09.
- p. 301: oppugnant: “opponent; antagonist” (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 301: “luck on”: “happen or come upon something desirable through good fortune . . . usually used with *out, on, or into*” (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 301: “When the doctor pushed aside”: This subsection begins at 8:40.
From 8:35 to 8:40, Dahmani goes behind the sheet, performs a casual examination of Houda, and gives her an injection of morphine.
- p. 301: teapoy: A small table for holding a tea service.
- p. 301: chairless: Listed only on *Wiktionary*, which defined it as “without a chair or chairs.”
Its earliest cited use was in 2006, which would make mine, which dates from the first version of this chapter of my novel in 1991, an anachronism.
- p. 301: “Like cats they'd rather die than cry out”: For the second time a feline image is employed in describing Houda.
As she climbed down the sea cliff, one man said, “She has more than a cat's grapnel” (15.241).
- p. 301: “sunrise tub of dirty linen”: Houda was a washerwoman.

- p. 302: Jonestown: The cult community established by Jim Jones in Guyana. On Nov. 18, 1978, around nine hundred of its members died of cyanide poisoning in a mass suicide.
- p. 302: *Wallahee!*: “By God!” meaning “I swear by God!”
- p. 302: “feel the compulsion to inflict upon herself such agony”: Dahmani’s amazement at Houda’s “compulsion” to punish herself is mirrored by Ghazi’s perplexity that she had chosen to walk by Foucin’s office on the night of Feb. 15: “why that compulsion [of Houda,] putting my heartbeat in M. Le Grand’s earshot” (13.201).
- p. 302: *c’est-la-vie*: “That’s life!” “Such is life!” The French expression occurs in two other crucial scenes of the novel: 1.3 and 16.268.
- p. 302: “past the intoners . . . biding patiently for the signal to inaugurate Isha”: The Qur’anic elocutionists did not have to leave their positions to perform ablution since they had done this cleansing before they began recitation and thus would not have touched anything since then except the Qur’an.
- p. 302: “line of fire”: The flight path of a projectile fired from a gun. The expression is used three other times in the novel, all metaphorically: 3.37; 11.183; and 21.352.
- p. 302: chaplet: “something resembling a string of beads” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 302: “elicited from him . . . coaxed from Foucin”: During Remy’s interview of Houda on Apr. 19, before describing the events of Feb. 15, Houda surprised Remy by asking him a series of questions about how Ballard died (15.252). That morning, she had telephoned Foucin to ask if she could examine some of the documents in her brother’s file. Foucin took the file to her shack where he went over them with her from around 11:45 to 1:45, with a break for noontime prayers (reported on 15.246 by Ghouraf and 247 by Leila).
- p. 302: Pointe El-Kherifali: This jutting ridge overlooking Zaracova Beach is based on the real-world Pointe El-Kettani, which is the highest point overlooking Bab el Oued’s Rmila Beach, one of its three factual beaches north of Algiers which became my fictional Zaracova. See the 1.1 note, N1:2-3. “El-Kherifali” I chose for a silly reason: It sounds like “carefully.”
- p. 302: “dagger of the mind”: From *Macbeth* 2.1.38-40: “Or art thou but / A dagger of the mind, a false creation, / Proceeding from the heat-oppresèd brain?”
- p. 302: “my swim next Monday”: Feb. 27, the date of the murder. To “reek of verisimilitude” (295), Houda’s note must account for how she knew where and

when to meet Ballard.

- p. 302: low: A Scottish or northern English dialectic intransitive verb meaning “flame or blaze.”
- p. 302: “its pew of smoke”: In the Scottish dialect, “a thin stream of air or smoke” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 302: *coup d’œil*: a rapid glance.
- p. 302: “maw-crammed”: From Browning’s “Rabbi Ben Ezra”: “Irks cares the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?” (24)
- p. 302: “Will I ever get free of this country?”: The idea has been couched in similar words in the last two chapters: The quotation from *Hamlet* 3.3.68-69 in Remy’s adversarial dream (17.292): “O limèd soul, that struggling to be free, / Art more engaged!” Mohammed’s “And can I ever be free?” (295) and Remy’s almost immediate thought, “*Extricated from one burning robe, am I to don another?*” which is paired with “*Soon I’ll be out of this country!*” (295)
As early as when the plane which flew him to Algeria is preparing its descent, Remy is already thinking about getting out of “his birthplace” and “promptly speed[ing] home to Marie” (4.52).
- p. 302: “his return trip to the prison”: Remy has already decided that he must be the one to take the news to Mohammed about the death of his sister.
This subsection ends at 8:57.
- p. 302: booster: Short for “booster shot or injection.”
This subsection begins at 9:02 with the doctor coming from behind the sheet having given the second injection of morphine.
- p. 302: gravidly: Several of its definitions apply to the doctor’s weight: “in a distended manner”; “heavily”; and even “ominously.”
There is also a homophonic, but not an etymological, pun upon the adjective and noun “grave.”
- p. 302: Mecca: The face of a dying Muslim must be pointed toward Mecca, Saudi Arabia.
- p. 302: *Kalimah*: As indicated in the text, the profession of Faith which all Muslims are encouraged to repeat when death is near.
The *Kalimah* is not found in the Qur’an. It is compiled from various Hadiths and has six variant forms, any of which is acceptable.
The *Kalimah Shahadah* is the simplest and shortest, so it is often used when a person is near death. Its English translation is as follows: “There is no God save Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet.”

For a discussion of *Shahadah*, see the 3.47 note, “There is,” N3:31-32.

p. 302: “turnipy lips”: Lips lacking vitality; bloodless.

The above-the-ground top of a turnip is often red, but the hidden outer part and the interior flesh are entirely white.

Thus there is the appearance of the color of blood, but the reality is white, the absence of blood.

Also “bloodless” in reference to a turnip is part of the adage, “You can’t squeeze blood from a turnip.”

p. 302: “our policeman’s slow . . . mandatory papers . . .”: The “mandatory papers” which Dahmani refers to are the death certificate and burial order.

The policeman Mansour must be summoned because a representative of the local governmental authorities, such as the neighborhood gendarme, must sign the order releasing the body for burial.

The death certificate will list the time, the place, and the probable cause of death. On the next page will be given why Dahmani did not write on it that Houda was a suicide.

- p. 303: mustered to this shed: Dahmani uses a military metaphor to indicate that he has been “summoned” to the Belmazoirs’ shack to provide medical “service.”
- p. 303: “A Queen’s Ransom”: A trite pun on a “king’s ransom,” a very large sum of money.
- p. 303: “a mama lode’s at hand”: A second trite pun by the doctor upon “mother lode” or “the main lode, or vein of ore, in a particular region or district.”
The next section will reveal how distasteful this pun is as well as the play on “lode/load.”
- p. 303: “my conceived good fortune”: For Remy the expression has the overt meaning of one’s assumed good luck.
For the doctor, it has a hidden one.
- p. 303: Tut-tut: A jocular interjection used to express impatience, annoyance, or mild rebuke.
Through it, the doctor may be self-critiquing his outrageous punning.
- p. 303: “*Respice finem!*”: A Latin phrasing meaning, “Look to the end!” or “Regard the final moment!” The phrase stresses the brevity of life and the approach of death.
It is used comically by Shakespeare in *Comedy of Errors* 4.4.41.
More forebodingly it appears in chap. 2 of Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, where the tailor has a medallion inscribed “*Respice finem!*” on his watch-chain.
- p. 303: “He was walking to the divider”: For the third time the doctor will go behind the sheet to check on Houda. The time is 9:05.
- p. 303: “as grave a respect”: A second weak pun on “grave” in this section (and made weaker by its being borrowed from Mercutio in *Romeo* 3.1.97) and some playful verbal twisting on the idea of paying final respects to the deceased.

pp. 303-05: SECTION 5

- p. 303: “Then she is”: This section opens at 9:08.
The doctor found Houda dead when he stepped behind the sheet at 9:05, meaning that her death occurred between 9:02 (his exit from the second visit) and 9:05.
She died during Isha’ prayers (8:54 – 9:09), a time which the doctor will declare is significant.
The doctor does not immediately inform Remy of her death since he must attend to the immediate necessities accorded to a Muslim corpse: closing the eyes, binding the lower jaw, and flexing the arms and legs to prevent stiffening.

On p. 306 Remy will refer to the doctor performing these actions.

Since the area behind the sheet is now dark, he would know these necessities were being performed by the sound of the movements of the doctor.

For that reason, he does not ask the doctor whether Houda is dead, but states it as a conclusion, although even that illation is not phrased negatively, "Then she [no longer] is."

p. 303: "'As earth'": From *Lear*, where the king enters bearing Cordelia's body and comments, "She's dead as earth" (5.3.265).

p. 303: "*They* are dead": The doctor's revelation that Houda died pregnant and in poisoning herself doomed her child had been intimated earlier.

Houda had spoken of her body as being "leaden"; "my soul . . . 'double-weighted'; "Patricide!" a mirror of the "infanticide" that she is painfully aware she is committing (298); "remembrancer," a partial reference to the child; "I will not let him die!" which refers to Mohammed, but also is applicable to their unborn child, whom she wants to live through her veiled words; "know all"; "begot this! . . . a richer issue: a bonding" (mother and child as well as sister and brother); "husband and wife"; and "No 'particle of love' every dies," her consolation over the murder of their child (299).

During the second treatment, Dahmani had found out Houda was pregnant and immediately drops some hints about this, believing Remy is the father.

He sees the child only in reference to what money he can make out of it: "A Queen's Ransom"; "my conceived good fortune"; and "a mama's lode's at hand" (303).

p. 303: *drap blanc*: "white sheet" (French)

p. 303: "minor chord": In music theory, a chord is "a combination of three or more tones sounded together in harmony."

A minor chord has a minor third with a major third on top, thus contrasting with a major chord which contains a major third above the root instead of a minor third.

Both the major and the minor chord have as their third component a perfect fifth because a major third plus a minor third equals a fifth. A minor chord, some critics contend, sounds darker than a major chord.

The minor and major chords are the building blocks of tonal music.

Dahmani's musical reference envisions Houda as the major chord and the fetus as the minor chord in the formation (and destruction) of life.

The perfect fifth would be the supernatural connection, which she calls the "breath" which "the air vouchsafes us" (395).

However, more overt and simpler is Dahmani's wordplay on "minor chord" and the "umbilical cord," called in the next paragraph the "nutritive cord."

p. 303: "I 'labored' simply by palpation": The pun on "labor," as if the doctor were undergoing and suffering the pains of childbirth, as his other quibbles, are

designed to torment Remy, whom he believes to be the father.
Dahmani hopes to utilize this guilt to magnify his blackmail.

p. 303: palpation: Examination by touching, as for medical diagnosis.

p. 303: “Haro!”: “Variant of *harrow*,” an interjection “used to express alarm or distress” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 303: calcitration: An archaic noun meaning “kicking” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 303: medius: “the middle finger” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 303: vermilion border: “the sharp vermilion demarcation between the red of the lips and the adjacent normal skin” (*Wikipedia*).

p. 303: omphalos: the navel.

p. 303: nutritive cord: the umbilical cord.

The umbilical vein supplies the fetus with oxygenated nutrient-rich blood. Through its two umbilical arteries the fetal heart pumps deoxygenated, nutrient-depleted blood back to the placenta.

p. 303: “what a fuss it was ‘kicking up’”: A fetus begins to move during the seventh or eighth week. It normally does not begin to kick until sometime between the sixteenth and twenty-second week.

Houda was impregnated by Mohammed on Feb. 15, and her death comes on April 20, a total of 66 days (or nine weeks and three days).

However, since the fetus sensed it was being poisoned, as Dahmani asserts, its violent protesting movements could resemble “kicking.”

p. 303: stagnum: “a pool of water without an outlet” (*Webster’s Third*).

Remy had applied the term metaphorically to his father: “his eyes opened, unbinding the dammed stagnum of tears” (17.291).

Thus Dahmani’s employment of the term to describe the liquid flowing from Houda’s opening eyes as “more a bloody stagnum than salt tears” connects her suffering, in Remy’s mind, with his father’s.

After the second visit to check on Houda, the doctor had told Remy that “blood is trickling from her mouth, nose, and eyes” (302).

The last discovery would have been made when Houda opened her eyes to plead that the doctor not reveal her pregnancy. (He immediately does disclose it since there is money to be made out of this serendipity.)

p. 303: suppliance: supplication.

p. 303: cruor: In its derivational sense, “blood which flows from a wound”; following this etymology, *Webster’s Third* defines “cruor” as “the clotted portion of

coagulated blood” and lists it as “obsolete.”

Webster's New World College Dictionary does not find it so, defining it as “coagulated blood,” and *Collin's* lists it as a medical term meaning “a blood clot.” Dahmani uses it in the derivational sense of “blood flowing from Houda’s eyes.”

p. 303: “she pined to keep this . . . veiled”: A reuniting of the mother-child and sister-brother relationship.

In order to save her brother, Houda must kill both the fetus in her womb and herself, both of whom, she believed, given the nature of this particular Muslim neighborhood—so given to irreligion that it disregarded the Islamic belief that the sins of a father cannot pass onto the children—would be better off dead.

p. 303: “two months on, still a clot of blood, according to our Qur’an, since unvisited by the angel that breathes life”:

In the Qur’an 23:12-14, Allah states, “We created man from an extract of clay. Then We made him as a drop in a place of settlement, firmly fixed [in the womb]. Then We made the drop into an *alaqah* [suspended thing or blood clot], then We made the *alaqah* into a *mudghah* [literally, a chewed substance, that is, the clot begins to take shape].”

Prophet Mohammed elaborated on this passage, as reported by Al-Bukhari in 4.54.430 of his Hadiths: “(The matter of the creation of) a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then Allah sends an angel who is ordered to write four things . . . then the soul is breathed into him.”

Since sixty-six days have elapsed since conception, Houda’s fetus is in the period of the second forty days, so it is a clot of blood.

Not for fifty-four more days (that is a total of 120) would it be visited by an angel, which would breathe soul or life into it.

Thus most Islamic scholars agree that abortion is *haram* (“forbidden”) after four months (120 days). Scholars differ on whether abortion or *azal* (methods to hinder conception) may be considered before that time.

Some hold it is acceptable because life (soul or spirit) has not been breathed into it by Allah’s angel. Others believe that induced abortion is a sin after conception, that is when it is matter (the first 40 days), a clot of blood (days 41-80), or a piece of flesh (81-120).

However, these scholars tend to rank the severity of the sin; hence, it is less sinful to abort in the first forty days than in the last period (81-120).

The novel’s Dahmani seems to be in the first group because in listing Houda’s sin he mentions only suicide, not the abortion of the fetus.

p. 303: “Perhaps you’re better acquainted”: Dahmani verbalizes his suspicion that Remy is the father of the unborn child and thus would know when he impregnated Houda.

p. 303: “the three-fifty for the morphine and the two hundred for the house call”:

Remy will remember the total of this debt (minus the fifty that he will give Dahmani on p. 304) in the next chapter, 19.315.

- p. 303: “the figure uttered”: The amount the doctor demands to falsify the death certificate will be given two paragraphs down.
(Mystery writers seldom fail to jump for even the briefest span of time to build suspense!)
- p. 303: “the ‘oft-forgiving’”: Dahmani coincidentally calls up the phrase which first Mohammed (294 and 295), then Remy (297), and next Houda (297) had used. See the p. 294 note above, N18:8, which discusses this adjectival phrase in the Qur’an.
- p. 303: “the time of her death: in our Holy Month and during Isha’ prayers”: The idea that there is some benefit arising from a Ramadan death appears to have come from Imam Al-Bayhaqi, a fifth century A.H. Hadith scholar. He states that lifted from the faithful Muslim who dies during Ramadan is the torment of the grave. Other scholars hold that since during Ramadan the gates of Hell are closed, the person in the grave cannot be exposed to the punishment awaiting him or her there and hence must be bound for Heaven. Similar ideas are attached to dying during a prayer time, such as Isha’. Most scholars give a more general answer: Since Ramadan is a blessed month and the time for the five obligatory prayers is so special in Islam, both bring a dying person closer to the Divine Mercy of Allah. In a similar vein, death on Friday or at Medina, Saudi Arabia, is mentioned in specific Hadiths as respectively either lessening one’s torment in the grave or inciting the Prophet Mohammed to intercede with Allah on behalf of the dead.
- p. 303: *felo-de-see*: suicide; “the act of deliberate self-destruction”; the term literally translates from Latin as “an evildoer of oneself” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 303: “warranting hell in Islam”: Islam views suicide as one of the greatest sins and as “forbidden” (“*haraam*”). The Qur’an 4.29 states: “And do not kill yourselves for Allah has been Most Merciful to you [in granting you life].” This said, there is disagreement about whether this verse necessarily means the suicide is doomed to hell. In the Hadiths of Al-Bukhari 2.466 and 7.670, Prophet Mohammed states that a person who commits suicide by throttling, stabbing, throwing himself from a mountain, drinking poison, or using an iron weapon will be doomed to repeat the method of suicide “in the (Hell) Fire forever.” However, Bukhari’s statements are found in no other Hadiths. Others such as Muslim 978 report the only instance which has come down where the Prophet dealt with a suicide. That Hadith states that Mohammed was distressed by the news. While he

himself refused to perform the *Janazah* prayers for the deceased, he ordered his companions to do so.

According to Muslim's account, they prayed for the suicide and requested God's forgiveness of him. This example, some critics argue, shows that the Prophet did not exclude the possibility of the suicide's being forgiven by God.

Citing this incident, most scholars today, while condemning suicide, hold that it does not necessarily put a person beyond the pale of Islam.

They assert that Allah judges each person individually and can take into account a mental disorder such as depression which can drive a person to suicide.

It is this view which Dr. Dahmani takes: Houda's act "warrants hell in Islam," but if God so wills (and given the notions about the holy times of her death) her act "may merit extenuation."

His monetary strategy is apparent: Having presented his exorbitant demand, he wishes to give Remy some hope that Houda, who he assumes is Remy's paramour, will not suffer beyond this life.

The large payment he sought, and Remy paid, will ensure that he will not write on the "mandatory papers" (302) that the death was by suicide.

- p. 303: "I'll avail myself of the breach": Dahmani leaves at 9:12 and returns at 9:17. Since Houda is dead, a fact which the doctor will inform those outside, he does not insist that Remy must have a chaperon.
- p. 303: "only ninety on me": After Remy gave Bourceli a "balled-up ten" on p. 300, he had only ninety dinars left.
- p. 303: "the five thousand I accept": About \$500, a more-than-a-King's ransom, twenty-five times Dahmani's "house call" of 200 dinars.
- p. 303: "dispatch": "prompt settlement . . . of an item of business" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 303: Aladdin Room: The dining room of the Al-Nigma.

- p. 304: “jump into the grave with the ranting mew . . . ‘shuffling-off’ . . . Hamletic melodramatic scene”: The doctor uses several images from *Hamlet*, particularly from the scene of Ophelia’s burial, which has as its lead-in a discussion between Laertes and the Priest over her scrimped burial rites since she was suspected of being a suicide (5.1.226-34).
When Hamlet overhears that it is Ophelia who has died, he leaps into her grave, according to standard Shakespearean stage direction given between lines 250 and 251.
Hamlet speaks of his melodramatic action when he asks Laertes whether he will “outface me with leaping in her grave” (281). He says that he can “rant as well as thou” (287), and “the cat will mew” (295).
Earlier in his “To be or not to be” soliloquy, he described the afterlife as that period after which a person has “shuffled off this moral coil” (3.1.68).
- p. 304: Hamletic: As I mentioned in the 13.205 note, I found no adjective form of “Hamlet” in standard dictionaries.
However, two adjective forms, “Hamletic” and “Hamletian,” are used in either books or articles on the internet.
The latter seems to be indigenous to Indian English, particularly newspaper articles in the Asian subcontinent.
The former appeared in just a few Western books.
Considering only euphony, I prefer the Indian English version, but decided to toe the Western line.
- p. 304: “ante fifty . . . taxi fare [of twenty] and a twenty for [the policeman Mansour]”: Thus when Remy leaves the shack, he will have only twenty dinars on him, the price of a taxi ride to the Al-Nigma.
- p. 304: Vacheron Constantin: Remy’s prestigious Swiss watch.
See the 4.60 note N4:27, the first reference to it in the novel.
- p. 304: “misread your face”: The idea of Duncan’s speech to Macbeth, “There’s no art / To find the mind’s construction in the face” (1.5.11-12).
- p. 304: “*Nine nineteen*”: The time when Dahmani asks for the watch.
- p. 304: “those artificial trinkets . . . the imitation’s back in vogue”: Another instance of the real vs. the artificial theme of the novel.
For a list of instances of it throughout the novel, the 11.183 note, N11:36-37.
- p. 304: *djellaba*: The robe worn by Arab men who dressed traditionally.
See the 1.14 note, N1:37.
- p. 304: “Ballard’s Patek Philippe and its bestower”: See 1.7 and its notes, N1:19-20.

- p. 304: *ragil boles*: Arabic for “policeman”: *ragil* (“man”) *boles* (“police”).
Not described: Patrolman Mansour arrived at 9:21, signed the document, collects his twenty-dinar *pourboire*, and leaves at 9:23.
- p. 304: “the deserted courtyard”: Informed of their employer’s death, the Qur’an reciters in the courtyard and the other neighbors exit the courtyard and the hallway.
As indicated below, they strip the hallway of the flowers, food, and any rented dishes or utensils.
- p. 304: foredoor: “the front door of a house,” now considered dialectal (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 304: “our *hazze*, your ‘five letters,’ the American ‘lots of luck’”: The word *hazze* is Arabic for “good luck.”
The French “five letters” of “*merde*,” meaning “shit,” is a counter-euphemism meaning “good luck,” like the theatrical expression in English, “Break a leg!”
In using “your” the doctor assumes Remy is French.
For *hazze* and the French “five letters” (*les cinq lettres*), see the two 9.149 notes, N9:35-36.
- p. 304: “massed huddle”: A banal play on the noun phrase “huddled masses” (11) from the sonnet by Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” which is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty.
- p. 304: “The haggling has commenced—resumed”: Remy recalls briefly his monetary dealings with the prison guards, Nemmiche the taxi driver, Bourceli, the doctor, and Mansour, in all of which natural kindness was disdained and cooperation depended upon acquiescing to extortionist *pourboires*.
- p. 304: “a cutthroat and a bugged”: The neighborhood assumes that Mohammed killed Ballard by cutting his throat, while the death was actually by a puncture wound to the carotid artery.
That Mohammed was a male prostitute was known by the neighborhood, as Bourceli stressed (11.175-76) and Belghiche admitted (12.213).
Mohammed himself confirmed the buggery or sodomy charge, saying “I’m the pretty boy, bugged by one or two every night” (4.60), and on 6.84, “Nothing I hadn’t had done to me before,” although he had protested, “I’ve served of my own free will [performed anal sex], but never willingly been served [received it]” (4.67).
- p. 304: “of your religion this I know: You’re adjured to prepare the corpse for burial”: Preparing the body for burial is a *fard al-kifaya*: “sufficiency” (*al-kifaya*) and “obligation” (*fard*).
All of the community is required to ensure that a body is properly washed and buried, but as long as someone in the community (usually the family) performs

the duty, the rest of the community is exempted.

However, if no one sees to the proper funeral rites, everyone in the community incurs a great sin.

p. 304: “a reverter”: According to Islam everyone is born a Muslim.

If a person is reared in a different religion and comes back (reverts) to Islam, this person is logically a reverter, not a convert.

p. 304: “reviling him by ‘wagging’ her fingers”: The wording is drawn from Matt. 27:39 (KJV): “And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.”

For the earlier uses of this biblical passage, see the 5.68 note, N5:2, and the 11.172 note, N11:7.

p. 304: “*l’argent, s’il vous plaît*”: The speaker switches from Arabic to French, “the money, if you please.”

p. 304: “the Arabic adverb”: The Arabic adverb for “presently, soon, or right away” is *haalan*.

p. 304: “are palaced”: “palace” may be used only as a transitive verb; it means “to place or house in or as if in a palace” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 304: alcazar: A palace or fortress of the Moors in Spain.

It is derived from the Arabic word *al-qasr*, meaning “castle.”

p. 304: “shed their skein of promises”: A pun on “shedding skin.”

A “skein of promises” would be a string or coil of promises.

- p. 305: “tongue”: As an archaic transitive verb, “utter, speak” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 305: “strutting past Remy without a lateral squint”: She is a “traitor” to Remy (just as Hal was in his public snubbing of Falstaff in *2 Henry IV* 5.5.47, “I know thee not, old man”).
See the p. 298 note above, N18:21, for the two other times in the novel in which Bourceli is compared with Falstaff.
- p. 305: “scalpeller”: A synecdochic coinage by Bourceli meaning a “doctor,” since a surgeon uses a scalpel during operations.
Not found in any dictionary, I came across one 2011 use of it on the internet involving a metaphorical wielder of the instrument.
- p. 305: “purblind”: A transitive verb meaning “to make purblind,” that is, wholly or partly blind (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 305: “his shoes, not for wearing, but to nail as ornaments to my wall”: On 10.166, Foucin inquired of Remy, “Is the pair of *balra*, the [native] pointed shoes, for wearing . . . or will your wife tack them to the wall?” (212).
Here the tables are turned since one of the Algerians, aware that native shoes were often bought by tourists not to wear but to use as decorations, says that he will do the same with Remy’s shoes.
- p. 305: splay: spread apart or open outward.
- p. 305: hypomanic: of or relating to or characteristic of “a mild mania” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 305: “doom each of your souls to ‘better than a thousand’ centuries of torment in Hell!”: The phrase “better than a thousand,” Remy knew, would resonate with the crowd.
The date of this chapter is Ramadan 15 since in the Holy Month the Islamic day starts after sunset, not after midnight, as in the other months.
After twelve days will occur one of the most significant nights in Islam: On the 27th of Ramadan, called *Lailatul Qadr*, “the Night of Greatness,” the Qur’an was first revealed to Prophet Mohammed.
In the Qur’an 97.1 and 3, Allah states, “Behold, We revealed this (Qur’an) on the Night of Greatness [sometimes translated as Destiny or Power]. / The Night of Greatness is better than a thousand months [eighty-three years and four months].”
(The title of the next to last chapter of my novel, set in the morning and afternoon before *Lailatul Qadr*, is called “Better Than a Thousand Months.” The novel closes just as the nighttime prayer call heralding the Night of Greatness is chanted.)
According to the Hadiths of Al-Bukhari and Muslim, Prophet Mohammed said that a person who worships throughout this night will “have all his previous sins

forgiven.” That is, the prayer and good acts performed on this night are superior in value to those done over a continuous period of a thousand months.

Thus the Night of Greatness offers the promise of great blessing to each Muslim.

Here Remy reverses the use of the words “better than a thousand,” thereby producing not a blessing, but damnation.

He tells the assemblage that for every second they delay their Islamic duty of preparing Houda’s corpse for burial that they will suffer “a commensurate ‘better than a thousand’ millennia in the fires of Hell.”

p. 305: jussive: A word expressing a command.

The word here is Foucin’s “Assuredly!” It is spoken at 9:31.

p. 305: “O people! Listen and obey though a mangled Abyssinian slave . . . executes (the ordinance of) the Book of Allah among you”: From “The Farewell Sermon of Prophet Mohammed” delivered at the end of his last pilgrimage to Mecca in 10 A.H. (632 C.E.).

The ellipsis marks indicate that Foucin has left out a few words from the admonition, which in full states: “O people! Listen and obey though a mangled Abyssinian slave is your ruler, provided that he executes (the Ordinance of) the Book of Allah among you.”

Because different versions of the sermon are given in the Hadiths, this sentence is not in all versions or their translations.

Passages of the sermon are presented in the Hadiths of Al Bukhari 1623, 1626, and 6361; Muslim 98; al-Tirmidhi 1628, 2046, and 2085; and Hanbal’s *Musnad* 19774, the last being the longest version.

Scholars stitch together portions from each of the Hadiths, omitting or adding as they wish. Thus there is no definitive version of “The Farewell Sermon.”

I stress this point because almost 75 per cent of the texts of the sermon which I surveyed on the internet did not contain the passage about the “mangled Abyssinian slave.” However, it is present in all of the longest versions, principally in the version of Hanbal.

Numerous critics maintain that the sermon was delivered on one day, 9 Dhu al Hijjah (or the month of the Haj), the twelfth month of the Muslim calendar. However, some state that it was given over a three-day period. The second- and third-day sermons, while repeating most of the major points from the first-day sermon, added some new points.

For instance, it was not until the last sermon on 11 Dhu al Hijjah that the famous passage about racial and religious equality was added. The “Abyssinian slave” passage is from this first day only, according to these textual scholars.

All Hadiths agree that since Mohammed’s voice could not be heard by the large gathering (reportedly 140,000), he would speak a sentence of so and several men with strong voices would shout his words to the flock.

The sermon of the ninth was delivered in the ‘Uranah Valley of Mount Arafat and the second and possibly the third on a hill named Jabal Al-Rahmah nearby.

Mohammed died 72 days after 9 Dhu al Hijjah on 12 Rabi al-Awwal 11 A.H. (the third Islamic month) or June 8, 632 C.E.

See the 7.116 note, N7:41, where another passage from the Farewell Sermon is quoted by Foucin.

pp. 305-07: SECTION 6

- p. 305: “Having seized upon”: The action continues from the previous section. The time is 9:32.
- p. 305: *haik*: An outer robe worn by Algerian women which usually drapes from the shoulders to the feet.
- p. 305: *snoove*: An intransitive verb meaning “to walk smoothly and steadily.”
- p. 305: “Not four thousand? Then I was lied to”: While the alim had said that Houda spent an implied exorbitant 1,000 dinars (about \$100) on the funeral of her mother, Foucin answers that he had heard that she had expended 4,000.
- p. 305: *trabendistes*: Algerian slang for those who work in the black market in every major city, making illegal currency exchanges or selling shoes and clothes that are not available in Algeria and have been smuggled from abroad, usually through bribing customs police.
The word is a corruption of the Spanish word *trabajo*, which means “work” (Hedges, *New York Times*, 1991).
Shoppers and merchants blame the flourishing black market for much of the country’s ills, particularly inflation.
- p. 305: “a private account at our National Bank”: A not-so-veiled attack upon the *alim*. The government-owned *Banque Nationale d’Algéri* (BNA) is the largest bank in Algeria.
Its central office is located at 8 Che Guevara Boulevard.
- p. 305: “snake”: As a transitive verb, it means “to wind (one’s way, one’s body in crawling) so as to suggest a snake or snakelike movement” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 305: “widow mulct a pension from six scattered charities”: Directed against the Widow Bourceli.
Based on Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, Act 2, where Higgins says, “But my needs are as great as the most deserving widow’s that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband.”
- p. 305: “outsparkle”: “to exceed in sparkling” (*Free Dictionary*, which lists only periodical uses, but cites *Webster’s Unabridged* 1913).

- p. 306: “I need to pray with my wife!”: For the five required daily prayers, it is preferable for a man to do those in the mosque with other men.
It is also preferred for women to pray at home; however, in many mosques a partitioned section is reserved for women who desire congregational prayer with other women.
A husband and wife may pray together a special (non-obligatory) prayer at home or in any appropriate non-public area.
In his Hadiths Abu Dawood cites an example provided by the Prophet who said that if a husband awakens during the night and desires to pray with his wife, they may perform a two-*Raka'ah* (two-cycle) prayer together.
If they do so, Mohammed continues, their names will be written among those who remembered Allah the most.
During their two-person prayer, the wife must position herself behind her husband.
- p. 306: keen: to wail or bewail; to lament or cry in grief.
- p. 306: “*she feels she lost*”: In his mind, Remy echoes what Foucin has just spoken, “So I have lost her!”
That his concern is principally for the suffering of the living (Leila) not for the dead (Houda) may be viewed as a change in Remy’s orientation, to a feminine concern for the living (future) not a male obsession with the dead (the past).
Mohammed had exhibited the same change since his first words on hearing of his mother’s death are about his living sister (17.287).
- p. 306: “sheer”: “to turn aside sharply from a course; swerve.”
- p. 306: *Ghusl*: The Arabic term for the full ablution, a ritual complete washing of all parts of the body.
A Muslim is required to perform it before or after certain acts, such as after having sexual intercourse, giving birth, reverting to Islam, or before Friday noonday prayers.
The corpse of a Muslim is also accorded the full ablution, as well as the partial ablution, called *wudu*, which entails cleaning the mouth, nostrils, ears, nails, etc.
In the washing of the corpse, the *wudu* is one of the final stages. It is discharged just before the application of perfume to the body and its being wrapping in the shroud.
In Arabic, the term for the “female corpse-washer” is *ghasila* (pl. *ghasilaat*), which developed from the word for the woman whose profession is washing clothes, *ghassal* (pl. *ghassalat*).
- p. 306: apologia: Here Mme. Foucin’s defense for declining to accompany her husband is that “another [Leila] requires my” assistance in a necessary religious duty, preparing Houda’s body for burial.
- p. 306: “Go!”: See the command Remy’s father gave to him: Go! . . . You go!” (17.292).

- p. 306: “for fifteen minutes”: The time is 9:41.
Foucin will return at 9:57, so he will be away for sixteen minutes.
There is no regimented time for such specific prayers.
- p. 306: *stave*: As an intransitive verb, “to walk or move rapidly; hurry; rush” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 306: “*congé*”: “permission to leave.”
- p. 306: “Thirty-four years ago . . . his three sisters . . . ‘to abandon’”: See 7.116 (and its note, N7:38) where Foucin mentions his three sisters in describing the attack on the villa of his birth family, the Lakhtours.
He describes in detail the death of his three brothers.
However, in scanning the carnage of the room he did not discover what happened to his three sisters, Wafah, Zouina, and Yamina, whom Foucin was in a measure compelled by his father’s words to “abandon.”
This failure to discern their fate connects with Remy’s uncertainty about what happened to his sister Noura.
For the assumption that Foucin is naming his daughters in memory of his sisters, see 14.222 and its note, N14:14.
- p. 306: *sumpsimus*: A strictly correction expression substituted for an old popular error.
His wife means that as a way of tormenting himself Foucin applies the word “abandon” to what he did to his sisters.
“Leave” would seem to be a more factually correct description of the event, but in his mind Foucin reverses the two, thereby insisting that he deserted them.
Thus “abandon” is the strictly correct term in delineating his action.
- p. 306: *envoi*: something said in farewell or conclusion.
- pp. 306-08: “the ritual”: This description of the ritual involved in the preparation of a Muslim corpse for burial was designed to balance the description of a Muslim’s prayers on 7.101-03.
As there, I will often define technical Arabic terms in parentheses, and each step will not be described fully.
The ritual usually takes a little over an hour to complete, from the first immediate necessities (closing the eyes, tying the jaw, flexing the limbs, etc.) to the three times washing of and other assiduities to the body prior to the last step of wrapping the corpse in the *kafan* or shroud: forty-to-fifty minutes devoted to the body and twenty minutes for its enshrouding.
In my novel, because of interruptions such as the removal of the corpse to a second table, the ritual lasts eighty minutes (from 9:32 to 10:52). Since the doctor had performed the immediate necessities, Leila and Mona begin by removing the stained clothes of Houda and wiping away any impurities.
Having helped Houda wash her mother’s body early that morning, Leila would

know where certain supplies, such as cloths, sheets, soap, and buckets, were.

The washing of the corpse begins at 9:43 with Mona taking in the two buckets of water.

At 9:48, at the arrival of the neighbors with more elaborate *Ghusl* necessities, the two women are interrupted briefly. At 10:09, Mona comes out to gather the perfumes and the smaller *wudu* items (toothbrush, ear swabs, nail clippers, etc.).

At 10:19, Leila collects the *kafan*. This last stage of the ceremony she and Mona will complete from around 10:22 – 10:42.

Neither Foucin nor Remy is present for its completion because at 10:26, following the latter's request, they leave the 22 Rue Mizon courtyard for a drive.

p. 306: *Les nécessités immédiates*: “the immediate necessities.”

See the above p. 303 note, “Then she is,” N18:37-38.

p. 306: *cruor*: See the p. 303 note above, N18:39-40.

Here its meaning is “coagulated blood.”

p. 306: “private parts”: For Muslims, this area extends from the navel to the knees, so usually a cloth the size of a hand towel is needed to cover this span.

p. 306: “the Kaaba in Mecca”: This is the second reference in the text to the Kaaba, the most sacred site in Islam.

The first occurred on 7.101. Its note, N7:4, describes this Mecca, Saudi Arabian, shrine as a cuboid-shaped structure of granite with a marble base, which is kept covered by a black silk and gold curtain.

All Muslims around the world face the Kaaba during prayers, no matter where they are.

The face of a dying Muslim must be pointed toward it. Also the corpse must be kept in its direction at all times during the *Ghusl* ritual.

Finally the body is buried facing it.

p. 306: “seventeen hours ago”: The *Ghusl* and *wudu* bathing and shrouding the corpse of Mme. Belmazoir were performed by Houda and Leila from 4:50 to 5:55 a.m. that morning (not specified in the text, but mentioned in the 17.285 note, “in detailing,” N17:36).

Since the time of Remy's musing is 9:42 – 9:47, the span is roughly seventeen hours.

p. 306: *saponaceous*: soapy.

p. 306: “disrupted by a procession [of eleven women]”: They come at 9:47.

p. 306: *refectory table*: A long, narrow, rectangular table.

pp. 306-07: “camphor . . . oil of eucalyptus . . . salt crystals”: As indicated in the text, these are anti-decomposing ingredients added to the bath water.

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- p. 307: “Bourceli—lugged a galvanized oval washtub”: In her last appearance in the novel, she is—fittingly—bearing a container which she so often slightly associated with Houda.
And for once she is the silent one.
- p. 307: *sluice*: to flow in or as in a sluice, which is a “channel, especially for excess water.”
- p. 307: *porteuse*: In French “portress” or a female “porter.”
- p. 307: “what part of the anatomy”: I found two versions of the order of the washing of the body.
In one version, the corpse is rolled onto its left side. The head area (hair, neck and face) is washed, followed by the upper and then lower right side.
Then the body is turned onto its right side, and the left side, upper and afterward lower, is washed.
In another version, the corpse is turned four times; that is, after the washing of the head area, the upper right is washed, then the upper left, followed by the lower right, and finally by the lower left.
The second version (head, right upper, left upper, right lower, and finally left lower) is the one most frequently cited.
Remy’s comment on the order is vague: “Right side, left . . . the head again.”
- p. 307: “Six minutes on”: The time is 9:54.
- p. 307: *carpenter’s bench*: A woodworking bench, oblong, rigid, heavy, and often with a raised border.
- p. 307: *kafan*: As defined in the text, “shroud.”
Its five parts will be listed and described on p. 308.
- p. 307: *encore une fois*: “once more; once again” in French.
- p. 307: *haik*: A woman’s outer robe.
- p. 307: “9:56 . . . a scant one minute to catch your plane”: The time when Remy’s plane to Brussels is scheduled to leave is 9:57 (17.284).
- p. 307: “*De rien! . . . Pour rien!*”: “Don’t mention it! . . . For nothing!”
The phrases echo those of the disgruntled Nemmiche on p. 294.
Here both are used humbly by Remy, the latter denoting, “I have done nothing to deserve such thanks!”

pp. 307-09: SECTION 7

p. 307: “a resurfaced Foucin”: Foucin returns at 9:57.

p. 307: *eau de toilette*: toilet water.

p. 307: *parfums*”: perfumes.

p. 307: Ville de Grasse: The town of Grasse, located near the French Riviera, is considered the world’s perfume capital, an industry which has flourished there since the end of the 18th century.

p. 307: “a drop of forbidden alcohol”: Islamic scholars are divided about the use of perfumes containing alcohol.

In the Qur’an, Allah says, “Alcohol, games of chance, idols, and divining arrows are only a filth of Satan’s handwork” (5.90).

In the Hadiths the Prophet specifies that intoxicant wines are those made from grapes, dates, and barley (Muslim 1985).

Thus some ulema hold that alcohol made from other plants and synthetically produced alcohol are permitted for either oral intake or skin application.

However, other scholars point out that the labels on cough syrups or bottles of perfume typically do not specify the source of its alcoholic content.

Thus this group holds that it is best to avoid any such bottles which list alcohol as one of its ingredients. This latter view is held by Foucin.

p. 307: “siege”: “a hewer’s workbench” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 307: “Four blocks from the Al-Nigma . . . radioed Ghouraf . . . M. Lazar already knows”: The call to Ghouraf was made at around 2:30 p.m.

From Foucin’s explanation Remy learns how his assistant knew that he was aware where Foucin was headed at that point: “That you know” (293).

p. 307: “stop by around six”: On 17.287, Foucin estimated that he and Remy would be back from the prison “by six, in time [for Remy] to deliver the prisoner’s message, pack, and even take our ‘breakfast.’”

p. 307: “*only partly right . . . Ghouraf’s words, not Belghiche’s*”: On p. 293, Remy had speculated that Foucin may have telephoned Belghiche, the manager of Bendari’s Café, to inform Houda that Lazar was on his way to visit Mohammed at the prison and might bring her a message from her brother at around six.

Additionally, Lazar had been recalled to Belgium and Foucin was to meet him at the Al Nigma at nine to drive him to the airport.

Remy now learns that Sgt. Ghouraf had been Foucin’s messenger. He theorizes that in recounting Ghouraf’s details, Houda probably changed some in order to convince Leila to go to the hotel to bid Lazar farewell.

She was fearful that Leila might thwart her suicide attempt.

- p. 308: “fifteen minutes tardy, but with sufficient time to chauffeur you to Boumediène”: Foucin was scheduled to come at nine or send another (17.288). The airport, located in Dar el Beida, a suburb of Algiers, is nineteen kilometers (twelve miles) from the Al-Nigma.
- p. 308: “in Remy’s call”: Remy had telephoned Mme. Foucin from the prison’s sentry room at 6:15 p.m. He had told her that he was scheduled to meet Foucin at the hotel at nine (293).
To sum up, Leila knew to be at the Al-Nigma at around nine through Houda and Mme. Foucin through Remy’s call.
In my chronology, not having reached her husband, Mme. Foucin took an 8:15 taxi to the Al-Nigma where she was seated in a portioned section of the lobby reserved for unescorted women (8:45).
She saw another anxious woman, Leila, there, and in conversing both discover they are on the same mission.
They were planning to take a taxi to Babe el Oued when Foucin arrived.
Not mentioned in the novel: Mona tells Foucin that Remy is at the Belmazoirs. They walk to his car, and with Foucin speeding the three drive there (9:15 – 9:30).
He must have parked close to the crowd which had gathered for on exiting the Peugeot he and the two women hear part of Remy’s censure of the people of the neighborhood.
Foucin replies to it as the two women rush into the building to see to the body of Houda (9:30 – 9:31).
- p. 308: mystique: A complex of somewhat mystical attitudes and feelings surrounding some person.
Foucin has stressed the “mystique” of the feminine gender at several points in the novel: his wife’s forethought (13.203); Houda’s strength (14.221 and 15.242); and Leila’s compassion (17.286).
The use of “mystique” as applied to women was influenced by Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), although Foucin’s conclusion about women is the opposite of Friedan’s, whose views are that this male-imposed clichéd mystique has been used to keep women entrapped.
- p. 308: divining: Foucin means “intuitive,” but there is a pun on “divine” in its meaning “given or inspired by God.”
- p. 308: praenomen: First or personal name.
Foucin had begun the paragraph before the preceding one with his wife’s name, “Mona.”
- p. 308: “swabs, clippers, a toothbrush”: As part of the *wudu* or partial ablution accorded the corpse, swabs are used to clean the ears and the nostrils of the corpse, with nail clippers (and files) employed in its manicure and pedicure.
The toothbrush traditionally used is a *miswaak*, the rose-water-soaked, tree-stem

toothbrush, reportedly recommended by Prophet Mohammed in the Hadiths.

- p. 308: “her third spiraled cleansing”: The second reference to the fact that the entire corpse is washed three times.
On p. 306, it was described as “a threefold circumnavigating ablution of the corpse.”
- p. 308: “*discovered Houda’s secret . . . none will ever know*”: In the Hadiths of Al-Bayhaqi and Muslim, the Prophet said that the person who “washes a Muslim” corpse must “conceal what he sees (bad smell, appearance, and so forth).”
Thus it would be a great sin for the bather of a corpse to reveal any physical secrets about it.
- p. 308: *oui*: In French “yes.”
- p. 308: “until 10:20”: Leila comes out to get the *kafan*.
- p. 308: “*kafan . . . and the four additional pieces*”: As noted above in the pp. 606-08 note, “the ritual, N18:50-51, it takes around twenty minutes to shroud the corpse. It would have occupied Leila and Mona from 10:22 to 10:42.
- p. 308: *cadavre*: In French “corpse.”
- p. 308: cephalic: of the head.
- p. 308: pectoral: of the chest or breast.
- p. 308: “a woman’s libidinous nature yet was assumed”: The conclusion that Remy draws about the two extra cloths of the woman’s *kafan* is controversial.
More likely the two extra cloths giving an extra covering to the chest or breast area and the head area (face and hair) simply were designed to protect a woman’s modesty.
Additionally since these areas of the anatomy were always kept covered by a woman during her life, they must be so protected in death, or so the argument goes.
- p. 308: “scanty time”: When Leila asked Foucin if Mohammed could be brought from the prison to attend his mother’s funeral, the commissioner insisted that there was insufficient time to transport him from Berrouaghia to Bab el Oued before pre-Dhuhr interment (17.286).
- p. 308: “since not for eight hours”: The time is 10:22. A funeral for a Muslim who dies during the night is usually held before the next daytime prayers, which would be Dhuhr at 12:46 p.m.
However, since the next day is Friday, the funeral could begin shortly after sunrise (6:05) to give the mourners time to get ready to attend the Friday

noontime sermon.

Thus Remy's rounded-off "eight hours" actually would be around seven hours and forty-five minutes.

p. 308: "a guttural 'No!' Her wish": Foucin told Remy in the hotel room that Houda had informed Leila that through his arrest "my brother . . . forfeited his right to attend the funeral" (17.286).

Its note, N17:39, explains the Algerian Penal Code regulation to which Houda is referring.

The single-quoted "No" is from Houda's subsequent statement about not informing him even that his mother has died: "No, traumatized by a vicious slashing, he shouldn't be told just yet" (17.286).

p. 308: "walk off a cliff": A reference to the nature of the suicide of Houda's and Mohammed's father (14.220 and 232; 15.241-42).

p. 308: intimidatory: "designed to intimidate" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 308: blench: "to shrink back, as in fear; flinch; quail."

p. 308: peccavi: A confession of guilt, as Houda made through the suicide note. It is the Latin expression for "I have sinned."

p. 308: "commands him to live": "His sister commands him to live" (306).

p. 308: "the throng your harangue ensures": Foucin's speeches to the Rue Mizon neighbors (305).

p. 308: "who once upon a time clambered into your lap and . . . prattled about Blumarn": For the scene where the child Mohammed climbed into a disguised Foucin's lap, see 14.219 and 237.

Remy feels that for Mohammed to be saved he must go through the purgation of burying his sister.

- p. 309: “a devil’s imperiousness”: Once again Remy is compared to a devil.
See the 9.148 note, N9:34, which lists the instances in the novel where Remy is referred to in devilish terms, and the p. 295 note above, “A devil,” N18:12-13.
- p. 309: “Not into your lap he crawled”: The statement exhibits two types of irony:
(1) Situational irony since the words carry a meaning unperceived by the speaker (here Foucin) but understood by the character (Remy, who knows that Mohammed did climb into his own lap).
(2) Dramatic irony since the words carry a meaning unperceived by the speaker (again Foucin) but understood by the reader in its double implication (en re Foucin and Remy).
- p. 309: “the child you’ve overlooked for so many years”: Remy brings up his belief that Foucin has always been more greatly concerned about Houda than about Mohammed.
See 13.208 and 14.236 and 238. On the last Remy concludes that Foucin’s “weakness” was his “love” for Houda, despite the fact that he had protested (236) he loves both siblings equally.
- p. 309: “obligation . . . in his salvation find your own release”: Remy asserts that he makes this request out of a human “obligation” to Foucin, whose redemption (“salvation”) is dependent upon Mohammed’s being given the chance to gain his. The section ends (at 10:25) with the word “release,” used earlier by Mohammed on p. 294 and by Remy on p. 295.
See the p. 294 note above, N18.8-9, for the idea of “release” in the novel.
- pp. 309-11: SECTION 8
- p. 309: “As he twisted the handle”: The plot bypasses what happened during Foucin and Remy’s drive to the prison, what happened there, and the ride back to Bab el Oued.
[Not depicted: Using the blue light, Foucin makes the return drive in around an hour (12:15 – 1:15).]
Instead this section opens almost three hours after the end of section 7, at 1:15 a.m., technically Friday, April 21.
Remy, whose knuckles are for some unspecified reason bandaged, just as are Mohammed’s, is getting out of a car in front of No. 22 Rue Mizon. With him are two sergeants.
- p. 309: *portière*: In French, “the door of an automobile.”
- p. 309: sub-warden: The deputy of the warden of a prison.
I did not find it listed in standard print or online dictionaries.
However, a Google search produced two variant spellings of it, “sub warden” and

“subwarden.”

p. 309: “Outside the penitentiary”: Remy has a flashback to a scene outside the prison where Mohammed refuses to get into Foucin’s Peugeot since Remy is seated there.
He apparently holds him responsible for the death of his sister (12:10 – 12:15 a.m.)

p. 309: “blood mixed with yours”: Again a puzzle is presented as to how Remy’s and Mohammed’s blood have become intermingled.
See the 4.52 note, “orphanage,” N4:3, for the earlier use of this image, part of the bonding or connection theme of the novel.

p. 309: *siège arrière*: In French the “back seat of a car.”

p. 309: Citroën: A French-made automobile.
See the 15.255 note.

p. 309: “the quick [brother] and the dead [sister]”: An echo of Mohammed’s description of the raising of the corpse of his and Houda’s father from the sea rocks: “In tandem they ascended, the single dead [their father] and the two quick [Houda and Foucin]” (15.242).

p. 309: “lined with ‘troops’ of eased *‘flores gloriosus’* wreaths, an ostentatious regiment rendering as ‘tattered prodigals’ the ones Houda’s dinars had impressed”: Remy describes the floral decorations put up during his and Foucin’s ride to and from the prison.
He employs an extended military metaphor (“lined,” “troops,” a pun on “*miles gloriosus*,” “regiment,” Falstaff’s “tattered prodigals,” and “impressed”), which at such a serious moment may seem to some as inappropriate.

p. 309: eased: “mounted on an easel” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 309: *flores gloriosus*: Latin for “glorious flowers.”

It is a pun on the Latin phrase “*miles gloriosus*,” a “glorious soldier,” but which has come to mean a “military blowhard or braggart,” such as Falstaff.

The plural forms of *flos* (“flower” in Latin) are constructed from the genitive singular stem *floris*.

Thus the plural nominative, vocative, and accusative forms are *flores*, the form I used.

The genitive plural is *florum*, while the dative and the ablative is *floribus*.

Strict Latinists may insist that the plural genitive form, *florum*, is needed here since “of eased *‘flores gloriosus’* wreaths” is a genitive construction.

“Pigheaded pig Latin” is my only defense.

p. 309: “tattered prodigals”: Falstaff speaks of the ragged band he has impressed to

fight at Shrewsbury: “And such have I . . . that you would think that I had a hundred and fifty tattered prodigals lately come from swine keeping, from eating draff [hogwash] and husks” (4.2.31-35).

Falstaff compares his soldiers to the Biblical prodigal son, who was reduced to rags for clothes and who was so hungry he desired the slop which pigs were eating (Luke 15:15-16).

p. 309: “the [flowers] Houda’s dinars had impressed”: On p. 295, Remy noted the “flower baskets” in memory of her mother which lined the hall of the apartment building.

p. 309: impress: “to force (a person) into public service, especially into a navy.” Here it is used metaphorically.

p. 309: “I would see her face”: The time is 1:21 a.m.

Those who come to see the dead person for the last time are allowed to have the face uncovered so he or she may kiss it, according to the Hadiths of Abu Dawud 2.3157 and of Ibn Majah 2.1456.

p. 309: “the two caregivers”: Leila and Mme. Foucin.

p. 309: “divided, with the women arear”: For the first seventeen chapters the dying Mme. Belmazoir is behind the sheet and her daughter Houda is seen emerging from or returning through this divider (5.81; 11.173; 14.226-27; and 15:250-54).

In chap. 18, Houda is behind the sheet, in her dying throes or as a corpse.

After her shrouding, Leila and Mme. Foucin moved her body to the bed and drew the sheet. It was lifted when Mohammed entered in order to allow him to see his sister’s body.

To unwrap the head swath, the two women retreated behind the sheet, as the text explains.

p. 309: arear: An adverb meaning “in or to the rear” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 309: “his racking perch”: Since he is on his tiptoes, Remy’s body is stretched as if he were on a rack.

p. 309: “wicker chair against the right wall”: That is, the right wall as he exited the shack, not the ride side of the courtyard where the reciters are positioned.

- p. 310: “I slept roughly three hours”: On Thursday, Apr. 20, Devereaux left Remy’s hotel room at 3:13 a.m. (17.279) in order to facilitate the plan for him to meet with his father the next morning. Remy exited the hotel “at eight,” according to the receptionist (17.286).
How much sleep Remy had during this span is never mentioned in the novel. According to my chronology, Remy went back to bed shortly after Devereaux left (3:20) and got up at 7 a.m. to shower, eat, and dress.
Since he is about to embark on the day which would most probably determine whether or not he would meet with his father—his “moment of truth” (17.280)—it is conceivable that he spent part of this span in bed not sleeping, but rehearsing what he would say once he was in the attic.
If he did fall off to sleep right away, he still slept for under four hours. He had then gone eighteen and one-half hours without sleep (7 a.m. Thursday to c. 1:26 a.m. Friday).
The latter time is established because Remy notes that he dozed off for “roughly three hours,” being awakened by the call to Fajr at 4:13.
- p. 310: Fajr: The dawn prayers are performed from 4:33 – 4:48; thus the call to them would begin at 4:13.
- p. 310: *sawm*: the fast. Suhoor, the pre-dawn meal preceding the daytime fast, is typically eaten from twenty minutes to an hour before Fajr prayers begins, that is, during the span from 3:15 – 4:15, since Prophet Mohammed recommended that one take a bite of food just after the call to Fajr before leaving for the mosque to perform the prayers.
Using the entire azan interval for eating would not allow one to prepare oneself properly for the prayers.
See the 15.239 and 17.285 notes on “Suhoor,” N15:6 and N17:38.
- p. 310: “the Great One’s benefit”: Foucin’s epithet.
Remy realizes that the neighbors’ words “to the mosque” are designed to ingratiate themselves to Foucin.
Their actions of pilfering some “floral bunches and plates chock-full of viands” indicate that they are first bound for their apartments with their spoils.
The hired Qur’an chanters even use this occasion to leave, although everyone knows that they must return or run the risk of angering Foucin.
- p. 310: *tutoyer*: to speak to familiarly.
- p. 310: *salaat il-fajr*: Arabic for the Fajr or dawn prayers.
- p. 310: “a suitable corner”: Foucin realizes that Mohammed would not wish to leave the room where the body of his sister is, so he, the sergeants, and the sub-warden have cleared a corner of the shack for the performance of Fajr prayers.
Because Leila and Mona as attendants to the corpse must rewrapped the head, they may delay their prayers.

Although the Qur'an recommends that the five daily prayers be performed in a mosque, any clean place in a house, office, bus/train/airport station or terminal, a stadium, or any open air area may be used.

- p. 310: “‘with wand’ring steps and slow’ . . . ‘solitary way’”: From the last lines of *Paradise Lost* 12:648-49: “They hand in hand with wand’ring steps and slow, / Through Eden took their solitary way.”
- p. 310: “the now flameless barrel”: At 4:20, Remy stops in front of the barrel. Looking at the ashes in it, Remy begins to envision people from his past, who stream by him.
- p. 310: “Houda’s confession intact and unsigned”: On p. 302, he had torn up the suicide note and thrust it into the courtyard’s metal drum.
- p. 310: “imagination worked on the delicate, puffy ashes”: This is the fifth reference to “imagination” (4.67, 6.87, 14.227, and 17.282). It is the vital force of the mind which some Romantic philosophers contrast with “memory,” the static and deadening mental process. The transforming power of the imagination is stressed on p. 310 for it infuses the ashes of the past with life. The use of memory and imagination in the novel was analyzed in the 17.282 note, “not simply,” N17:26-27.
- p. 310: “incantatory yet incapable of canting”: Remy means that he is able to evoke these spirits through some “chanting” formula of his imagination, yet they cannot speak to him, even in the whining voice or the affected singsong tone of “cant.”
- p. 310: superfection: It is not used here in its typical sense of “fertilization.” Rather it means “the process or product of the production or accretion of one thing upon another, especially in an uninterrupted superabundant cumulative development” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 310: *de novo*: The Latin phrase means “once more; anew; again.”
- p. 310: revenant: A person who returns, as after a long absence; a ghost.
- p. 310: “the declaimers, back from the prayers”: Since Fajr prayers ended at 4:48 a.m., the time now must be about five.
- p. 310: “He was spun”: Next Remy has a vision of being lifting aloft faced down and of being shuffled hand over hand by the conveyers, those spirits from his past. To capture this seamless conveyance, I used one long sentence of 139 words, the one, three, and nine all symbolic in Islam. Lines 1 and 2 and 5 and 6, each have thirty words, representing the thirty years of

Omar/Remy's treason (Dec. 8, 1958, to Apr. 21, 1989).

Lines 3 and 4 and 7 and 8, each have twenty-eight words, indicative of the years of his exile (Apr. 13, 1961, to Apr. 21, 1989).

The twenty-three words of lines 9 and 10 were needed simply to reach the 139 total.

p. 310: vertiginously: dizzily.

p. 310: helical: spiral.

See the p. 300 note above, N18:28.

p. 310: "glimpses of Noura, his mother, and Houda; an isolated Marie; and his father, Leila, and . . . Foucin": The first part of Remy's dream sequence dealt with all of the experiences of his life, that personal reservoir which Carl Jung called the "personal unconscious."

The second part shows Remy's psyche autonomously organizing these experiences into Jung's archetypes or the "collective unconscious."

At this point, he narrows his experiences down to seven people in three circles located at specific points in the courtyard.

The first, at the barrel, are Noura, his mother, and Houda, the listing being the chronological order in which they died.

A solitary Marie, symbolic of his French family, is affiliated with the wicker chair, in which he twice falls off to sleep and awakens.

The second trio, glimpsed during his spinning by the shack's door sill, consists of his father, Leila and Foucin, all alive and all inhabitants of Algeria.

The ellipsis marks before Foucin indicate that Remy himself is surprised that it is the commissioner, not Mohammed, whom he fixates on in going by the shack's entrance.

p. 310: "spent the hour and forty minutes": Remy had left the barrel and returned to his wicker chair where he napped a second time for just under a hundred minutes (c. 4:22 – 6:03) through Fajr prayers (4:33 – 4:45) and the return of the Qur'anic readers and the musicians.

p. 310: "my conscious soul must have sleepwalked my subconscious body": The inversion is indicative of Remy's distorted mind since "soul" is usually affiliated with the "subconscious" and "body" with the "conscious."

p. 310: sleepwalk: The dictionaries in print or online list this as only an intransitive verb.

However, in a Google search I found a few instances of articles where it was used with a direct object: "He sleepwalked his way through the golf match."

p. 310: "drooping-into-silence of the chanters": Ironically what awakens Remy is not noise, but silence, for the Qur'anic readers stopped their chanting when the casket was brought to the back entrance of the apartment building (6:03).

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- p. 310: “a gentle ‘toll[ing] back’ from his ‘forlorn’ reverie”: From Keats’s “Nightingale”:
“Forlorn! The very word is like a bell / To toll me back from thee [the nightingale’s song] to my sole self!” (71-72).
An earlier use of some words from these lines occurred on 15.239, N15:3-5.
- p. 310: “Six oh five”: The time of sunrise on this day. Following Fajr prayers in the shed, Mohammed would have again gone behind the sheet (4:49 – 6:05).
The expression “oh” is an interjection to indicate pain, and it may be used as a noun to represent zero in telling time.
- p. 310: “he neither eyed nor greeted anyone”: Mohammed seems intent on carrying his sister’s body to the cemetery with no assistance.
- p. 310: eye: As a transitive verb, “to fix the eyes on; turn the eyes toward; . . . stare at” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 310: “‘What’s been done was—and what’s to be done is—prescribed’”: Foucin’s argument: Only Allah has the right to make a judgment on how the neighbors have treated the Belmazoirs.
- p. 310: illation: conclusion.
- p. 310: “‘a box of unrivaled cedar. . . It’s as God ordains!’”: Muslim corpses are not buried in caskets.
Instead coffins are sometimes used to transport the body to the mosque for the funeral prayers and then on to the cemetery, where the enshrouded body is removed and buried.
The coffin is then returned to the shop from which it was merely rented for the ceremony.
Foucin says his neighbors have a casket ready for her body and that such communal participation in the burial is prescribed by God.
In “insult[ing] them,” Mohammed is insulting Allah.

- p. 311: “They did not love her! . . . It is *not* as God ordains!”: Mohammed declares that his neighbors’ disdain for his sister is something which God by His nature could never sanction.
That is, the hatred which the neighbors exhibited toward his sister because she was the granddaughter of a traitor is not as God ordained.
This absence of human love, he suggests, has caused a disconnection between humanity and God, a delineation of love not far-distanced from that of St. Paul’s concept of “charity” (1 Cor. 13:13).
The time when Mohammed delivers his indictment is 6:08. Whether he relents or remains adamant about his sister’s funeral will be given on 19.313.
- p. 311: “unbandage”: As a transitive verb, “to remove the bandage from” (*Webster’s Third*).
Here it is used as a past participle.
- p. 311: ““The French shitass notified me my son is dead””: There is an abrupt flashback to Foucin’s and Remy’s speeding drive to the prison to retrieve Mohammed (10:27 – 11:27 p.m.), the action decided upon at the end of section 7 (309).
At 10:32, Foucin begins to give Remy an account of his interrogation of Naaman. The old man told Foucin that a representative of the French Embassy Jacques de Larosière had visited to inform him that his son Omar was dead.
He added that he did not care to have any news about his son.
- p. 311: “over five hours”: Foucin said he did not believe old Naaman, and for over five hours (2:45 – 7:50) time and again he had him go through his account of what happened in the room, hoping to find some contradiction.
However, Foucin added, he never caught him slipping up.
- p. 311: “Mohisen-like back-and-forth questioning”: For Foucin’s interrogation of the beach attendant Mohisen, see 7.109-10.
- p. 311: ““invasion . . . 37,000 troops . . . Sidi Fredj beach””: The details here are historically accurate, although certain sources list the number of troops as 34,000.
Naaman uses the Algerian name of the beach town, which the French called Sidi Ferruch throughout its colonial rule.
Sidi Fredj is located about 25 km. (16 miles) west of Algiers. Today it is a coastal resort town in the Zeralda district of Algiers province.
Through the diversionary tactic of stringing out his story, the wordy Naaman is trying to give his son (Omar/Remy) extra time to distance himself from the attic and thus escape capture.
“Jacques” had left the attic at 10:31 a.m., just over four hours before Foucin arrived (2:45 p.m.)
- p. 311: Asr and Maghrib: Foucin says that the interrogation stopped twice: for Asr call (4:10) and prayers (4:30 – 4:45) and the fast-breaking Maghrib prayers (7:27 –

7:42).

During these, Foucin assisted Naaman with both the ablution and the prayer movements.

After the brief post-Maghrib meal (7:42 – 7:50), Foucin finally had to admit to himself that the old man was successfully spinning him a web of lies about information which supposedly “Jacques” had revealed.

- p. 311: ablution: The washing with clear water of parts of the body in preparation for formal prayers: the face, the arms to the elbows, the head, and the feet to the ankles.

As mentioned above under “*Ghusl*” (p. 306 note, N18:49), this is called *wudu* or partial ablution to distinguish it from *Ghusl* or full ablution (a washing of the entire body), which is reserved for certain occasions, such as before attending the Friday noonday sermon, after sexual intercourse, or the bathing of the corpse prior to the funeral.

See the 7.101 note, N7:4.

- p. 311: *raka'at*: The plural of *raka'ah*, the Arabic word for the prescribed movements and words followed by Muslims during prayers.

These include the standing position involving *qibla* (facing Mecca) and *qiyam* (raising hands to shoulders and folding them across the chest); bowing low (*ruku*); prostration (*sujud*); and sitting with feet tucked under the body (*jalsah*).

The cycles of a Muslim's prayers are described on 7.101-03.

- p. 311: “an ‘open sesame’”: A magical phrase in the adventures of Ali Baba, a fictional character in Arabian literature.

He appears in *One Thousand and One Nights* in the tale “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.”

The cave of the thieves that Ali stumbles upon opens when the Arabic words “*iftaH ya simsim*” (usually translated in English as “Open Sesame!”) are spoken.

Old Naaman's “open sesame” information is never revealed, but it undoubtedly involved details of his son's death and how Foucin could find the body, the “verifying flesh” of 17.289.

- p. 311: “In an hour span after Maghrib”: Foucin retreats to the front section of the attic (7:50 p.m.) and questions Widow Daidje for just over an hour, till 9:00.

He then drove to the Al-Nigma, arriving “fifteen minutes tardy” (308).

- p. 311: “a very palpable hit”: Foucin had used this quote from *Hamlet* on 17.288: “A hit, a very palpable hit” (5.2.281).

- p. 311: “his Qur'anic intoning as a backdrop”: Old Naaman's intoning is not designed to obstruct Foucin's interrogation of Mme. Daidje, but to supplicate Allah that she not reveal any detail which will allow Foucin to deduce that de Larosière is his son.

- p. 311: “sideburns listed”: The counterfeit sideburns had slightly tilted to one side. On the eighth go-round, Daidje mentioned that de Larosière’s sideburns slipped, the implication being that Foucin realized it was not the French aide who visited Naaman, but someone disguised as him. On 17.278, Remy told Devereaux that as part of his disguise he would need “some counterfeit facial hair,” and on p. 280, Devereaux gave “a further coifing squash to the [sham] sideburns.” At 10:39, Foucin finishes his account to Remy of the interrogation of Naaman and Daidje.
- p. 311: “one-day mastery of the Arabic tongue”: Foucin had heard Remy’s rather grammatically complex Arabic anathema spoken to the crowd on p. 305 since he responded to it with “Assuredly!” That Remy was able to follow Foucin’s address in Arabic to this same group is seen when he speaks to Foucin about Mohammed bearing Houda’s body “through the concealed disdain of the throng your harangue ensures” (308).
- p. 311: “I put to you: ‘What an ignominious business . . .’”: This abbreviated internal quote is from Prosser Frye’s book *Romance and Tragedy* (1961), p. 285. I quoted it in my article “Tragic Closure and ‘Tragic Calm,’ *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 51, March 1990, p. 20, to explain why Frye found the conclusion of *Hamlet* unsatisfactory. The rest of Frye’s quote and further analysis from my essay will be given on 19.316.
- p. 311: “ten-minute monologue”: Foucin begins his analysis of the ending of *Hamlet* at 10:39 and finishes at 10:49.
- p. 311: rub: Most famously used by Hamlet in his “To be or not to be” soliloquy: “Ay, there’s the rub” (3.1.66), where it means “an obstacle” or more specifically “an unevenness of the surface of the ground in lawn bowling,” that is an argument which prevents Hamlet from proceeding with suicide. For Remy, “rub” is an obstacle preventing him from scoffing at Foucin’s digression. However, its subsidiary meanings, “an obstruction or difficulty that hinders, stops, or alters the course of an argument, chain of thought” and “something that mars or upsets a usually serene state of affairs” (*Webster’s Third*), are also applicable: The revelation by Foucin, which makes the speech non-digressive, Remy realizes, places him in a more dangerous situation since it brings Foucin closer to identifying him as the “seventh devil.”
- p. 311: “Baby’s ‘contact’”: Foucin’s conclusion is puzzling. Its first part, however, is not: “Baby” is the epithet which Foucin used on 6.99 and 14.220, 235, and 236 in referring to Omar Naaman, the youngest of the seven traitors. Foucin has already established that “Lazar” (Remy) is a DGSE operative

(16.270). In the driveway of the Al-Nigma at 2:25 Foucin had said that Remy was aware that someone from the French Embassy had visited old Naaman that morning (17.288).

From his interview with Widow Daidje, Foucin knows that this visitor was passing himself off as de Larosière.

He undoubtedly remembers the difficulty in locating Remy earlier (10:38 – 10:55 a.m.) when Houda designated him to deliver the message to Mohammed (17.286-87).

He now concludes that Remy was the visitor to old Naaman.

How he moves from there to the speculation that Remy is Omar Naaman's "contact" will not be presented until 19.316, but for now Remy can revel in the irony, which Foucin cannot, that he finds himself being addressed as if he were HIV (not HIV-2).

pp. 311-12: SECTION 9

p. 311: "From six paces back": The first and the last section of this chapter relate the two complementary meetings between Mohammed and Remy in the visitor's room of the prison.

This section opens with Mohammed in front of the grille (11:35 p.m.). He has been brought there by the same mean-spirited guard from around six hours earlier, the 5:25 – 5:35 meeting.

[Not depicted in full in the text: Remy and Foucin in the latter's Peugeot and Ghouraf and two other sergeants in a Citroën (309) make the trip from Bab el Oued to the prison (10:27 – 11:27) (p. 311, N18:64).

There Remy and Foucin are rushed to the visitor's room, and a call is made for Mohammed to be brought there (11:27 – 11:35).

Since it was Remy whom Mohammed had sent for earlier, he goes in to inform the youth of the death of his sister while Foucin waits outside the door to the room. On the next page, however, a different reason is given as the reason Foucin does not enter with Remy.]

p. 311: *khawaaga*: One of the Arabic words designating a "foreigner."

Applied to a Westerner male, as Remy states on 4.62, its connotation is "a gay foreigner."

p. 311: *shazz*: The Arabic word for "deviant or abnormal." The more Classical Arabic word for a male homosexual is *luti*, based on the Qur'anic story of Lut, the Biblical Lot.

In the Qur'an 7:80-82, Lut censures the men of Sodom and Gomorrah for coming "to males in lust besides females."

Since homosexuality was first mentioned in the Qur'an as being practiced by the "people of Lut," a homosexual is called a *luti*.

Some present-day Arab homosexuals have sought more positive terms in Arabic

to describe a homosexual, for instance, *misli* (gay man) and *junusi* (homosexual male), both suggested by the modern-day translator Bassam in his GLBT glossary to his translation of an issue of the journal *Bint el Nas*.

- p. 312: *Awgh*: A coined interjection usually conveying unbearable physical or mental pain.
See the pages and their notes on its earlier uses: 3.43 (N3:23); 3.50 (N3:37); 11.176 (N11:17); 15.253 (N15:45); 15.254 (N15:51); 15.256 (N15:58); 17.282 (N17:24); 17.287 (N17.41); and 17.291 (N17:55).
On p. 312, it occurs three times, first by Mohammed, next by Remy, and again by Mohammed, an *awgh* for an *awgh* for an *awgh*.
- p. 312: “fueled this”: Mohammed’s accusation that Remy’s snooping around caused Houda’s death is similar to Remy’s own immediate conclusion: “The blame is mine,” he tells Houda, “for stirring what should have been let lie, for groping what should not have been touched” (298).
- p. 312: “hide even in hell . . . I will hu—”: Another association of Remy with the devil. See the 9.148 note, N9:34, and the p. 295 note above, N18:12-13.
The truncated sentence is “hunt you down.”
- p. 312: “The blow smashed against Mohammed’s shoulder blade A second struck . . . Mohammed’s right hand . . . an earlier scab . . . three rapid whacks . . . The stroke splattered the blood of both”: Given the symbolism of seven so excessively used in the novel, why did I use only six here?
Because during the first visit (295), after the guard had given a warning strike against grille, he delivered “a precisely aimed second blow which grazed the *captif’s* protruding knuckles” (295); this stroke is hinted at here with the reference to the “earlier scab.”
Thus, to quote Wordsworth, “We are seven.”
- p. 312: *dorsum*: the back of a hand.
- p. 312: “the *annulaire* and *petit doigt*”: In French the “ring finger” and the “smallest finger.”
- p. 312: “*Awgh*”: Its second use in this section.
- p. 312: “à gauche, à droite, à gauche”: French for “on the left hand, the right hand, the left hand.”
- p. 312: “the blades of the cornstalks”: As the guard strikes Mohammed’s hands, there flashes through Remy’s mind three images, the first of Noura.
- p. 312: “the vile claws of Foucin . . . jellying his father’s blind eyes”: From *Lear* 3.7.86 where Cornwall says as he puts out Gloucester’s second eye: “Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!”
The second image is of his father.
- p. 312: *georgette gauze*: A sheer, lightweight, crinkly crepe fabric named for the early

20th-century French designer Georgette de la Plante and used in dresses, scarves, and in this case a Muslim veil.

The fabric was first made of silk and rayon, but in modern times it is usually made of polyester.

- p. 312: “pleaded his mother, ‘Forgive! Forgive!’”: The third image is of his mother. The suffering of each member of his Algerian family is associated with Mohammed’s. In three chapters the scene of the plea of Omar’s mother is described: 3.38; 17.282 and 291; and here.
- p. 312: *gardien*: In French “prison guard.”
- p. 312: “*nothing can alter the motion and velocity squared of the assault*”: The wording which Remy used before Tinfingers’ second blow on 16.263: “Nothing can alter its motion and velocity squared, so why not call out?” This connection of the striking of his back by Tinfingers with the assault on his and Mohammed’s clasped hands incorporates Einstein’s formula $E = mc^2$.
- p. 312: “splattered the blood of both . . . his melded with Mohammed’s and Mohammed’s with his”: This explains the mystery of Remy’s thought on p. 309, where he asked, “And has Foucin’s blood mixed with yours?”
- p. 312: “his own *awgh*”: The third and final use in this section.
- p. 312: “the residual particles of Ballard’s blood had seeped through the azure fountain spewing the word *LOVE*”: This is the fourth and final use of the “particle” image, which was appropriated from *War and Peace*, book 13, chap. 16: “I, a particle of love, shall return to the general and eternal source.” Their pattern is apparent: “Nothing Connects” is symbolized by the particle of “darkness” on 4.54. “Nothing Disconnects,” by the particle of “beauty” on 9.148. “Everything Connects,” by the particle of “love” on 18.300. “Everything Disconnects,” by the particles of “blood” from the murder of Ballard. Also, Remy sees a connection between the merging of his and Mohammed’s blood here with his body’s possible absorption of particles of Ballard’s blood. While sitting on the top cement step of the disco, where Ballard’s bloody body was found, Remy noted, “If there was truth in molecular physics, possibly some infinitesimal trace of Ballard’s blood had penetrated the fabric and bounced against his flanks” (6.94). Nine pages earlier (6.85), in describing his beach attire, Remy observes that “the posterior [of his Bermuda shorts had] a giant azure fountain emanating from his gluteal cleft and spewing forth pink minnows to spell the vaulting English word *LOVE*.” Finally, at the end of this section there will be a third exchange of blood.

- p. 312: “the thud of metal ricocheting off cement”: The metal door against the cement wall.
- p. 312: manic: as a noun, “a manic individual.”
Foucin means that the guard is exhibiting “excessive or unreasonable enthusiasm” or “a violent desire, passion or partiality” for something (*Webster’s Third*).
He is not implying that the warder is a clinical maniac or a lunatic.
At 11:38, Foucin delivers this plea to the guard.
- p. 312: laconic: “a concise sentence” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 312: “he was ‘too conscience-stricken to be present when ‘he is told’”: Remy discloses that Foucin had told him at some unspecified point during the drive to the prison why he would keep himself stationed outside the door to the visitor’s room: Guilt at having caused yet another member of the Belmazoir family to be destroyed.
Ironically, while Foucin blames himself, Mohammed will fault Remy.
This hostility toward him will be revealed in the next paragraph as it was in the scene outside the prison described out of sequence on p. 309, where Mohammed refused to ride in the same car as Remy.
- p. 312: “rainbow-on-rainbow-in-fire”: As explained in the p. 300 note above, N18:27, the rainbows/fire imagery is taken from the *Paradiso* 33.118-20: “One circle seemed reflected by the second, / as rainbow is by rainbow, and the third / seemed fire breathed equally by those two circles.”
Here the three “circles” bonded are Foucin, Remy, and Mohammed. As in the earlier one, involving Houda, Mohammed, and Ballard, great pain and suffering are necessary for love and selflessness to manifest themselves.
- p. 312: “Foucin himself had bandaged”: Remy and Mohammed are taken to the prison infirmary (11:39 – 11:45), where Foucin wraps Remy’s knuckles first since Mohammed refuses to enter the same room where Remy is.
- p. 312: “a jesting wound”: Foucin uses an image from *Romeo* that Remy had thought about on 15.239 (N15:5): Romeo comments to himself about Mercutio’s ridicule, “He jests at scars that never felt a wound” (2.2.1).
- p. 312: “‘M. Le Contact’ . . . unsettled . . . ‘body’s being ill-treated by Algiers’”: For the second time in a bantering manner Foucin contends that Remy, not just any DGSE agent, is the French “contact” of the final of the Seven Great Traitors, the person whom he most seeks.
Neither he nor Remy seem overly concerned by this disclosure. That Foucin is growing tantalizing close to ferreting out his true identity merely “unsettled Remy,” an understatement of the expected “panicked him.”
As noted, in his mind he concentrates on the irony of Foucin’s declaration, being

identified with HIV.

Foucin's jovial façade results from his belief that the discovery of Remy as Omar Naaman's French case officer necessarily brings him a step closer to locating and eliminating Omar, despite the acknowledged professionalism of this antagonist.

His comment that "your body's being ill-treated by Algiers" is a not so veiled reference to the bodily torture that awaits Omar and affirms his belief that he will successfully track him down now that he knows his "contact."

p. 312: "the ring-finger scratch I got today, climbing down ole Naaman's ladder": Thus some of Remy's blood flowed into the Foucin's scratch, which is on his ring-finger.

[Not depicted: Immediately afterward Foucin bandaged Mohammed's knuckle wounds, more extensive than Remy's (11:50 – 11:55).

With a prison sub-warden accompanying, Foucin led Remy and a handcuffed Mohammed to the waiting cars (11:56 p.m. – 12:10 a.m.).

What happened there is described on p. 309.

They left the prison at 12:15 and arrived at 22 Rue Mizon at 1:15.]

An Overview of the Novel's Pattern of Sin, Repentance, and Redemption

The pattern of sin, repentance, and redemption employed by Dante in *DC* and Milton in *PL* (discussed in the 3.41 note, "a second," N3:19-20) is followed in my novel. *DC* describes a journey from sin (*Inferno*) to repentance (*Purgatorio*) to redemption (*Paradiso*). *PL* follows a similar pattern from sin (Adam's) to repentance (his and Eve's ensuing sorrow) to a promised redemption through Christ.

In my novel, Omar's sin (breaking the bonding *nathr* to God concerning Noura and his consequent treason and desertion of his family) leads to his desire for repentance (gained at the end of chap. 17 through his confrontation with his father). The remaining chapters will reveal whether Remy gains redemption.

The theme of redemption is important throughout the novel. Its idea is implicit at certain points of chaps. 1 and 2. However, the term is not used until 3.41 (N3:19-20), where Omar says to himself, "So God has bestowed on me a second chance to redeem myself and revive my family's honor. Noura can be avenged."

The triple pledge is ironic here since by the end of the chapter not only has Omar not redeemed himself, but he has also committed himself to treason. This decision will result in the further destruction of the family unit: Ultimately his mother and father are branded as a family which brought forth a great traitor and Noura probably is killed.

Foucin also is concerned with redemption. On 4.58 (N4:21), he tells Remy that in desiring to help the young Mohammed Belmazoir perhaps the French "seek recompense and redemption" for failing to save his grandfather. However, he himself also is in need of redemption. On 6.99 (N6:50), he tells Remy that he must redeem the privilege of

being Matoub Lakhtour.

Redemption is a concern of another major character. On 8.123 (N8:14), Remy tells Leroy that he (the ambassador) seeks redemption for his friend Ballard: “clutch at the straw of his redemption too impulsively.” This contention is countered by Leroy who says that Ballard’s “redemption is unneeded” (8.124), given that there is so little proof his friend was a “traitor” (N8:18).

On 12.190 (N12:12), Remy tells himself that Leila “*has faith I can redeem the one I’ve doomed.*” Twice it is used in chap. 14. On 14.232 (N14:44), Foucin said he sought “redemption in self-torture,” and on 14.234 (N14:49-50), Remy silently pays a tribute to Foucin as “this man who had dedicated his life to redeeming his country’s honor.”

In the next chapter, Remy muses that in his early years in Le Puy (1961 – 1963) he sought his “redemption in revenge” (15.239, N15:4), which he parallels with Foucin’s assertion on 6.99.

In chapter 16, minor characters used the term. The Saharan *alim* hastened “to redeem himself” (16.259) in the eyes of his flock concerning the efficacy of the Palestinians’ torture of the French soldier (N16:9). And on 16.273 (N16:49), one of the Saharan Palestinians says that there is “No time not to be redeemed.”

This is the first of two occurrences where the two key words (“redeeming time”) in Hal’s much-quoted politic use of redemption occur. In *1 Henry IV* 1.2.211 the prince spoke of “Redeeming time when men think least I will.”

However, Hal’s line does implicitly sum up Remy’s purpose in returning to Algiers: With his motive masked even to his French sponsors and using an alias and a disguised past to fool the Algerians who seek his death, Remy plans to offer repentance for his treason to his father, the one he has most injured. Thereby he hopes to gain redemption, that is, “redeeming” or making amends for the time he was a traitor and the time he deserted his family.

It should be noted, though, Hal stresses that he “never promised” to “pay the debt” of his reckless youth (1.2.203). Yet this is what Remy most desires.

Subsequently, on 17.290 (N17:51), there occurs the second use of the yoking of the two key words from Hal’s speech: Anti-Remy chides Remy with “having overlooked the time designed for your redemption.”

On 18.299 (N18:24), the dying Houda speaks of how her attempting to save her brother’s life through her suicide will produce “This richer issue: a bonding . . . redemptive!”

In later chapters the theme will reappear. On 19.321 (N19:31-32), one character will tell of having “redeemed” some carpenter’s tools “from garbage bins” and will present them as a gift to another character in need of them.

Three times in chap. 21, the last chapter, variants of the word will be used. The protagonist will deem his situation “not irredeemable” (352, N21:3) and later will facetiously seek “a last chance to redeem myself.” (357, N21:16). The wording here echoes that first overt use of the redemption theme on 3.41: “a second chance to redeem myself.”

And in the last use of redemption, on 21.367 (N21:50-51), Remy thinks that some will “be condemned to everlasting redemption,” Dogberry’s mangled verdict in *Much Ado* 4.2.58.