

Chapter Five

A MASK OF EVERY MIRROR

“So you’ve come to call on the corpse.”

Belsches’s greeting, given its alliterative vivacity, which registered in his dusky eyes but not on his slack lips, conjured up in Remy’s mind the image of himself as a suitor of the dead Ballard. That he quickly dismissed.

Recalling his earlier telephone conversation with the public affairs officer, he realized that the salutation was simply a specimen of the unambiguous and the colloquial, the PAO’s diplomatic stock in trade. “Virgilian,” Remy grinned inwardly.

“M. Vellacott didn’t wish to. However, you’re not a lawyer and must be intent on things lawyers *nol-pros*.” Through a rearward peep—they were in the corridor leading away from the reception desk—he took in Remy’s acknowledging nod, the stimulus for a decurtate chuckle. “And a sight better English than the Monsieur. (My French is tolerable.) Don’t presume I’m being *irrespectueux*. It’s not Paul. The corpse.”

Belsches’s height was almost wholly in his legs, discerned Remy, hurrying to match his strides. Arguably to counteract their fractious propulsion, the American’s shoulders drooped, terminating in oversized hands with fingers kept incurvate. “He struggles against the body which birth thrust on him,” abstracted Remy, “a little more than the rest of us.”

By their left turn into a narrower hallway, a full pace, apparently undetected by Belsches, separated them. With a wag of his head, Remy glared at the heavy wrinkles about the back center vent of the PAO’s bronze sportcoat. “Embossed today, they merely layer those lighter creases from a previous wearing. Too much polyester, it blazons a dull shine.” Remy’s frown matured into censure: “Cheap clothes mirror the man.”

At an elevator, on whose panels were spray-painted the words—“these un-Virgilian”—Authorized Personnel Only, Belsches triply pushed the button. “Everyone liked Paul. The more the pity,” he halted to sigh, “that he was murdered.”

The lament ostensibly disposed him to lapse into a silence which persisted through the arrival of the car, the unlocking of its door, and their entrance.

“Most laymen aren’t aware we have morgue space in our embassies.” The remark was delivered with satisfaction, after the car had started its slow, two-story tremorous descent.

“A rider buried in a 1980 House Appropriations bill, an upshot of the killing of a marine security guard: Muslim mob attack, our Islamabad embassy. Died not *en vain*. His memorial, hyacinthine, dots the globe, burgeoning in frigidity.” While he was speaking, a steady gaze had sought to ascertain what of this Remy comprehended.

“To be sure, its visitant must have the guts of a marine.” Without a pause, he

continued, as if the subsequent naturally stemmed from the antecedent. “The consideration of Paul, himself a marine once. Accommodating to all. One day back from lunch, I found a wrapped box on my desk. Inside, the divinely comedic *Carnaval*.

“CD no less, with a note in Paul’s kind script. He’d heard I’d been frustrated in locating Schumann’s opus, his last before an asylum grave (‘distorted by whirling appearances, the whole world a Carnival,’ *Philosophe* Barthes styles it, and something about the purity of pain). ‘A present from a “tin ear,”’ he self-derided.”

The cab bounced, its destination gained. At the marine stationed outside the elevator, Belsches flashed a generous smile. The corporal led them down the abbreviated passage, devoid of offices, at the end of which was a locked metal door. They entered into a tiny, cold, and dazzlingly white room, permeated by the smarting odor of formaldehyde.

“No one wants to bury poor Paul’s corpse.” A shiver accompanied Belsches’s anti-dirge. Remy’s illation, “which you have striven to detrude, squirms upward”: Here was another who more than seemed to care for Ballard.

Nowhere in the 2269 portfolio was it stated or implied that he “call on” Ballard’s corpse. “Not to engender suspicion, I must,” he had decided during the Paris-to-Lyon train ride, his perusal of the folder completed. “An expedient filigree.”

The *appel téléphonique* Remy had made at 8:30 that morning and needed only three brief explanations of who he was: to the embassy operator, to a wing secretary, and to Belsches himself.

“Traipse on over,” the PAO had cut him short. “We’re under a quarter-hour from the Al-Nigma. Say, ten.” On the dot Belsches had produced himself at the reception desk, “American diplomats evidently not adhering to the Arab World’s twenty-minute protocol.”

Approaching the solitary chamber, the marine inserted a key into its upper-right embedded lock.

“Give me my husband!” shrieks Mlle. Leila Chabane, richly translating herself into Paul’s wife, and his foster-niece *quotidiennement* rings the State Department’s number, threatening a suit should her dear uncle’s remains (and assets) not be flown to the U.S.”

The drawer slid out without a tug. “Their “plots” are apparent, it takes no Solomon to perceive,’ Ambassador Leroy avers. We,” Belsches’s voice waxed emphatic, “shall not let ‘our own’ be surrendered proprietarily ‘and shall assert *nos droits* until one shows her rights to have firmer “grounds.”” So ruefully we’re one of those *no one’s* ready to bury Paul.”

Over the body lay a white medium-starched sheet, which the marine proceeded to fold back to the shoulders. The face was broad, but not just the small chin and right cheekbone or the tawny gray-streaked strand of hair combed over the brow caused it to slant inward. In addition, there was the sucked-in, gnarled left side with its glazed flakes of skin riding above a pink undertow.

“His eyes are a nutmeg brown,” annotated Belsches. “I can have Morris open the right, *si tu veux*. Its twin, more difficult.” Without averting his scrutiny, Remy slurred, “No.”

A milquetoast of a face, he chided, studying the smooth texture of the undamaged side. Yet it had buried itself in Belmazoir’s loins, and stirring his semen, its contorted mouth had suppressed a whine, held in reserve for the knell of sphincteral whisking.

Without being instructed, Morris turned the head to the left, disclosing the contracted neck wound, no larger than a cigarette burn.

“Some minted scars pimple his thighs and calves, a wartime wound.” Along with Belsches’s eyes, Remy’s traveled from the throat down the winding cloth. Aware that a prone body looks taller than one erect, Ballard’s height was, he deduced, shorter by perhaps three centimeters than his own.

Despite its laundered stiffness, the sheet had settled about the crotch, which the marine, halting the plicature, did not expose. “More?” the PAO asked.

One wound, Remy mulled, and, having shaken a no to Belsches, he followed up with a question to himself: *Had Belmazoir, who had clumsily rifled the wallet, with one parsimonious blow, like some professional assassin, discovered the carotid?*

2

“Is this how every country confronts its ‘native son,’ making a mask of every mirror? Why can’t all be as endearingly indirect as Marie in her games of pouting?”

The occasion for this mental ebullition was one sentence among the many Belsches had droned during their walk from the morgue and their ascent in the elevator car: “Never did I see Paul walk by a beggar without fishing from his pocket a twenty-five centime coin even before the hand had finished its outstretching.”

“Let be be the finale of seem.” The queer, no more than queer. HIV, HIV. She is darting about, the corn’s sharp blades slashing at her face. “Dooms of love.” He’s waiting for me—do not tell me he isn’t!—in a lightless attic in the Casbah.”

At the reception desk, where Belsches dropped off the elevator key, as Remy retrieved his Brigg umbrella, he passed judgments on his “preceding thoughts, which have become as disjointed as this PAO’s maundering.”

All at once, the four marine lobby guards launched a quick-pace movement toward two elevator shafts marked Private at the rear of the foyer. One opened, and out spilled a dozen people who, jostling for places, allineated themselves behind the double-columned marines. This spacing accorded Remy an unobstructed view of the man and woman who, a half-minute later, emerged from the adjacent lift.

Her arm was crooked into his left, and atop their clenched hands he had protectively maneuvered his right. She had tilted her head toward his shoulder, not quite touched by her bouffant hair. In back of her was a second man, who undesignedly drew attention to himself by bumping into her when two steps from the elevator cab the first man abruptly pulled up to address the marines.

“At ease!” Had the lobby not gone preemptively quiet, his robust bass voice, Remy appreciated, would have funereally muffled it. “Gertie,” and his belgard had relit on her, “our ‘boys’ marshal to see you off.”

With his eyes still riveted on the couple at the elevator, Belsches, who had straightened his slouch, murmured to Remy, “The Ambassador and Mrs. Leroy.” He did not bother to identify the third of the party until its leader, a further stride on, took a paper tentatively submitted by one of the women in the row and, having skimmed it, involved him through a sidling whisper.

“Elbert Medlin.” The PAO’s third divulgence was bitten at the edges. “The ambassador’s deputy chief of mission, DCM.”

From the inside pocket of a maroon jacket, Medlin withdrew and clicked a ballpoint. Disconnecting his left hand from his wife’s, Leroy clasped the pen and, having flourished it, emotively apostrophized his fingers, “From pleasure-for-pleasure’s sake to measure-for-measure’s sake,” inducing those about to laugh throughout the scribbling of his signature.

“Hold, enough!” and the ambassador threw up his arms, perceiving some other sheets about to be advanced. A twice-startled Remy marveled, “My, how Shakespearean allusions roll ‘trippingly on [his] tongue!’”

Beaming, the speaker implored, “I must speed Mrs. Leroy to the airport.” He resituated his arm in hers and squeezed her hand. “Although no fear of flying, she ‘trepidates’ at being late,” he gently spoofed.

Even the marines grinned, Remy noted, but it was Leroy’s double-breasted dark gray pinstriped silk suit, with its upward-pointing lapels and nipped waist, which to a greater degree impressed him than this conspicuous tidal sway over the assemblage, whose bodies, drawing near as he began, shrank back with his last word.

Moving forward, Leroy and his wife apparently had reconciled themselves to the necessity of seizing the opportunity for private causerie in the midst of public brummagem.

“She ‘hang[s] on him,’” Remy concluded, assessing the woman and her dress, a pistachio-green tweed suit, a mold-white organza blouse, and a cream lace scarf, “for I sense that a mildew settles over her eyes when he dislodges his gaze to nod a hello to a here-or-there embassy worker.”

On their approach, Leroy, having flicked a smile at Belsches in sweeping by, as an afterthought twisted and extended a hand, which, in turn, was grappled for. “To Mrs. Leroy, sir, a safe flight,” the PAO cheeped over the shoulders of those who surged past.

Remy, standing by, imagined that Leroy, through a mild heeling of his neck, momentarily fixed on him, determined he was extraneous (yet not inauspiciously so), and therefore carried on with his perimetric encompassing.

Belsches’s hand had no more grazed Leroy’s than had Remy’s and the ambassador’s eyes melded before the DCM, raising his left and with a stern leer flicking away the PAO’s at the wrist, nudged his superior onward. The shunted one made a start to join the procession, but changed his mind.

Uninvited yet without demurrals, Remy accompanied him to an elevator, marked neither For Authorized Personnel nor Private. *His cupped fingers indicate a man,* poeticized Remy, *whose “grasp” is resigned not to “exceed” its “reach”—he watched Belsches inhale a series of deep breaths and let them out—“or what’s ‘e ‘eavin’ for.”*

He did not speak until they were ascending. “I didn’t know, and a PAO should, that Mrs. Leroy was traveling today.”

With both seated in Belsches’s second-story office, the central one of three in a semicircular wing at the end of the hall, he finally spoke to Remy again, and as

previously it was about the Leroy's. "They're the nicest of people. Exhibit an interest in everyone. I'll be sorry to see them go."

"It was thoughtful of him, halting to greet you."

"Attempted to," Belsches emended. Perfunctorily he shifted his eyes from Remy to convey how undeserving he was of this signification.

"Elbert's grown so possessive recently, now that it's for sure the ambassador's tabbed him for Washington. Not just with me. Once among the select trio, around the middle of February, he even endeavored to curtail Paul's morning *cafés* with the ambassador." Stalked by a deferential intake of breath, his gaze flashed back to Remy. "Elbert's all right."

To emphasize how genuinely he concurred with his own valuation, he bent forward to rest his elbows on the desk. "Jackie's already there, Mrs. Leroy's social secretary, Jacqueline Nelson, *recherche d'une maison*. No, revise that to mansion-hunting, one befitting an Under Secretary of State being groomed by Baker for his own—"

Belsches checked himself. "Equally 'thoughtful,' Mrs. Leroy," and he stressed the adjective to signal he had borrowed it from Remy.

"The news having drifted down, she stopped by to apolo—Never catapulted into my mind that I'd be chosen!—to apologize. 'Claude could swing only three,' *non seulement* to me she desired to clarify."

As the door opened, he pushed aside some papers, making room on the desk for the tray of coffee he had asked Z'hor, the wing's secretary, to bring in.

"From the pool's pot," the initial sip enlightened Remy. Sneaking the offensive cup to the salver, he recollected Medlin's swatting brush-off of Belsches's proffered hand. "Much can be learned from this French-phrase-dropping bureaucrat whose fifties have crashed on him with a thud," he alerted himself.

Following a draught, the PAO wiped his lips with his tongue. "From their arrival nearly eleven months ago I presaged he wouldn't be with us long. 'Why am I bothering to unpack?' Miss Crippen smirked—unlike Jackie, no one employs her praenomen (if she has one). . . . I'm rambling." He shook his head and laughed, both gestures self-mocking.

"Not at all," Remy controverted. "After the morgue, conversation and coffee are just what I need." Clutching the cup, he guided it to his mouth as if partaking. "Mlle. Crippen?"

"The ambassador's private secretary. Been with him since Chile, '78. Of course, on the list from the first. She'll man her desk until the ambassador's ready, and he won't leave, I gather, before Paul's corpse is settled. Where was I? Oh, Mrs. Leroy's mid-January popping in with some glad words. No, yes."

His face, screwed up in concentration, suddenly brightened. "Her family's prominent, and could have engineered a swifter DC 'triumph,' but the ambassador was the delayer. No trepidation at being late." Belsches tittered nervously.

"At his own time and on his own terms. No skirt-tailing," Paul quipped, notwithstanding the pun has all the hallmarks of the ambassador." He paused, a habit, Remy had discerned, he typically manifested on evoking a memory of the living Ballard. "*Génie total*, his handling of the PLO."

"And M. Ballard? He was on the Washington list?"

Belsches's answer was not altogether expected. "*Certainement*. He 'tagged along'—Paul verbatim—wherever the ambassador went, his 'umbra.' I would have missed him, the same as everyone else here.

"They'd been *le meilleur des amis* clear back to their early-sixties college days. And subsequently Vietnam: Paul saved his life. 'Première on the list of three,' Paul asserted, referring to Jackie, though I knew it wasn't true. The ambassador—and Mrs. Leroy too—would have enshrined him there."

He drained his cup, offered to fill Remy's, not noticing it was full, and on being declined, brimmed his own. "While he's a strong man, *dans le corps et l'esprit*, the night of the call . . ." A pinched countenance completed the sentence.

Four: Crippen, Jackie, and Ballard ("on the [January] list from the first") and Medlin, not there until "the middle of February). *But Leroy "could swing only three."* This more-than-the-maximum capacity, which pulled down one mirror's mask, delighted Remy.

"Someone had to be detailed to ID Paul." Belsches took a sip from the cup. "In spite of the late hour—11:32 (the corpse was found, doubtless you're aware, at 10:51)—he went himself, companioned, *sur son objection*, by Mrs. Leroy. Resilient too. Nevertheless, when she started to cry, in comforting her, soon he was struggling.

"Both stayed at the police morgue throughout the autopsy and at 7:30 the next morning rode in the back of the ambulance with the *cadavre* to the embassy, hanging over it until it was compartmentalized in ours at eight." The verb, which struck Remy as an odd choice, apparently did not discomfit Belsches, whose narrative proceeded unabated.

"Every *jour ouvrable*, in the ambassador's office, 7:30 to eight, no matter what was pressing, he and Paul huddled over morning coffee. On the dot they'd egress, their heads together, bonded by laughter."

At the anticipated sigh, a too forceful squirming by Remy minimally propelled the uncomfortable faux-leather office chair closer to the desk. "Yet M. Ballard had a relatively minor posting here?"

"One of our lot of economic officers. Yes, minor-paying, I suppose you could say."

Even though he could have permitted Belsches to jabber away, Remy felt adequate testimony had been culled, rendering the corollary self-evident: Medlin's name must have supplanted Ballard's on the Washington list.

All comity dispensed with, he boorishly attacked. "Thus M. Medlin was not—'from the first'—scheduled to go to Washington?"

"What?" Taken aback, the PAO blinked.

"You said—'from the first'—three were accompanying the Leroy's: The his-and-her secretaries," Remy deliberately phrased it crudely, "and . . . had M. Ballard committed some faux pas to prompt his name to be expunged from the list?"

The inceptive question had bewildered the PAO, but the implication of the second disconcerted him. A pained grimace engulfed his visage which repined, *Is this how you treat a stock-in-trade functionary, one who has plied you with coffee and conversation—both savory enough to make you forget a corpse? An unassuming man who has just been shuffled aside when all he aspired to was to shake a hand?*

“And on being delegated as the third accomplice, M. Medlin forthwith metamorphosed into the possessively overbearing, even toward the ambassador’s soon-to-be-deceased 7:30 regular (or decaffeinated).”

Remy grinned. “‘A prized post, Washington, a glad-handing place,’ M. Vellacott has informed me, ‘if the hand doesn’t have a dagger up its sleeve.’”

Belsches began to slide his swivel, high-back manager’s chair away from the desk. “A last temporal query,” Remy pursued. “You stated that Mme. Chabane, or to speak neutrally, Mme. Ballard, importunes the embassy, ‘Give me my husband[’s body]!’ From the putative groom’s lips or through the embassy grapevine, when did you become privy to their reputed marriage? Was it prior to or succeeding M. Ballard’s death?”

Not having envisioned a rejoinder to the second interrogative, Remy was positive he knew the answer to the third.

Gaining his feet, Belsches rounded the desk and snooved to the door. There his pursed lips squeezed out a reply, although his visitant, who had likewise risen, sensed the scorn was leveled not at him: “After.”

Three treads positioning Remy abreast the PAO, he strained to project that he was musing aloud. “‘After.’ So their affinal bond was veiled in secrecy. Had M. Medlin been cognizant of it, vanished would have been any dread that M. Ballard, on a whim or *a fortiori*, might again reverse his course and decide *not* to not ‘tag along,’ a prospect not so easily brushed aside as an outreached hand.”

While Belsches’s features stiffened, revealing his alarm that this inquisitor would enounce his insinuation, Remy grasped his black-canopied umbrella, stowed inside the lower hoop of the mahogany combination coatrack and stand.

Perversely, he had resolved to aim higher than the DCM. “Most wise of His Excellency—did not you denominate him a ‘sheer genius’?—to ‘*un-designate*’ one about to be dispatched.”

He ceased briefly, convinced that he himself would have to grip and twist the slender metal handle. “The client of M. Vellacott, ‘compartmentalized’ in chancery (not unlike the body of poor M. Ballard), is charged with that murder. Presciently wise. But such a compliment, as all specimens of adulation, should be delivered personally. His Excellency M. Leroy returns to his embassy desk today?”

A mechanical nod had been the sole concession accorded Remy.

4

Advocates of anthropocentricity should consider, “A louse would as lief champ on cat flesh as man’s.” No other critters—and as our fellow travelers, should not their druthers be valued?—lock in on *Homo sapiens*, being in the least prodigal order, and consequently—“more than the etc.”—the most inconsequential, as a palate-appeasing delicacy, worthy of forgoing all else.

What Bengal tiger, having picked at its “blue plate” (a Bihari woodcutter), ever sauntered away from its table Michelin-ing, “A right-fine, come-again, three-star, five-fork-and-spoon regale”? Predators, a smattering of humans excepted, and these have bequeathed this anthropocentric legacy, seldom have the luxury of connoisseurship.

The gray silk suit of the ambassador. Amid this Darwinian pemmican, Remy, back at the Al-Nigma from Bab el Oued, imagined himself springing forward, throttling Leroy with one hand while the other clawed at the coat in stripteased frenzy until the embroidered label of the designer could be feasted on.

Deux-deux-six-neuf had yielded a modicum of information about the Americans. In his interviews Vellacott had been “less probing than I’d have been in trying to locate a misfiled library book.” His query about whether Ballard had engaged in any recent embassy disagreements Leroy had bulwarked: “He was a personal friend of mine.”

Medlin, according to the transcript, had commenced by stating that the ambassador had placed him in charge of the embassy’s investigation. Written reports of its progress had been, and would continue to be, furnished to the national police, whose files, under Algerian law, were accessible to Belmazoïr’s defense.

“The Americans are understandably skirting the issue of M. Ballard’s homosexuality.” Vellacott’s note—a *supplementary token of his ignorance of the negative*, Remy perceived—had been scribbled at the bottom of the last photocopied page of Medlin’s account.

The French had not been so inclined to eschewal, for Remy recollected the 1982 memo of a DGSE operative in Manila about Ballard and an underage male prostitute.

“Yet,” Vellacott had penned, “if his homoeroticism is an axiom not subject to challenge, why was this homosexual marrying a woman? [At his initial reading, Remy had interposed the antithesis, “Why was this woman marrying a homosexual?”]

“And where would that espousal leave Belmazoïr, this hashish seller for the Palestinians?” the gloss proceeded. “Answers to these (*hélas!*), I and my staff could not secure, though broached delicately to her and forthrightly to him.”

Anthropocentrism, after Gibbon and supper, Remy weighed, donning his CK overcoat had its own hierarchical privileges.

Vellacott with French acquiescence had pointed to the Palestinians. The Algerians, to one of their disowned own. The Americans were not only one of the “*no one’s*” seeking Ballard’s burial, but they were also the “no one” all neglected—“skirt[ed],” he redacted for precision.

“I might as well stir the fires there.” Remy stepped through the door into the hallway. “It’s not as if I can rush to the Casbah, and into my father’s arms!”

He had been sent, two nights ago he had acceded, because his past indisputably branded him as an Algerian, an Arab, a traitor. In front of the elevator, he tarried to reflect that in this land of such distrust—where the man-to-man salutation, “Brother,” as oft as not carries the implication, “Brother enemy”—whether the three were, in essence, synonyms.

“Tomorrow’s agenda is established,” he told himself in the ride down: Berrouaghia and Belmazoïr in the morning followed by an afternoon Zaracova Beach excursion to test his hypothesis about the anonymous fingerprints.

On exiting the revolving door at 7:45 Remy did not expect to fend off any taxi drivers in the hotel’s semicircular sweep. They would have sped home to break the fast.

He was carrying his Brigg, which could double as a walking stick, for the overcast sky, not having budged since the afternoon, ensured that its almost full moon would show as a luminous patch behind swirling clouds.

Heading north toward the Casbah, once he was a block from the well-lit Al-Nigma, a phosphorescent arc about each corner sufficed. Only three cars slunk by, all with their dimmers on. The lull of Ramadan, between the post-*salaat* commencement of the first round of feasting and its 8:30 cessation, had by and large kept indoors the ravenous righteous.

Five minutes from the hotel—he was on Rue Abane Ramdane—not all was governed by subdued light. They took Remy by surprise, the flower-brave colors of the seven or so belles and beaux, staggered in ones or twos along the corrugated iron fence which rimmed the Palais de Justice, the “law courts.”

“They’re entrenched as near to the ‘high-horsed’ Al-Nigma as the police will allow.” *Sans doute*, Ballard had availed himself of this segment of Abane, “thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.” Not the ones in whom a glimpse would precipitate a huffing of bras, but those who would respond with a hopeful rub across a zipper, a “begging permission” to tailgate into the luminescent haze for an intimate scrutiny.

None of them spoke to him as he passed. A block on, remembering how thirty years ago the girls of Rue de la Lyre would hurl taunts about their masculinity to waylay callow French recruits, Remy inferred that a tangible benefit of the Revolution was “it’s obliged Algiers’ streetwalkers to be more reticent . . . though, as detriment, adding a second sex to their ranks.”

Naturally, colonial Algiers had its discreet pederasty, yet never had he observed a Muslim male openly promoting himself as a ware. “Is it any wonder this country’s agricultural harvest has tumbled? Nowadays its young men plough other fields.”

The sister of Belmazoir, albeit no prostitute, had become a “[p]oster-child of silence.’ Still you’re used to silent sisters,” Remy flouted himself.

The stipulated telephone kiosk, a kilometer or so from the Al-Nigma, came into view. DGSE had instructed him to take specific documents to Algiers. “They won’t be suspicious, but they are nosy,” a statement which Remy had twice discovered underestimated Foucin. “When they steal into your room, they’ll glean what we want them to.”

The four numbers had to be committed to memory. This first call, at any rate, would emanate from his liaison’s end—and most surely had been dialed last night.

Having padded too briskly, Remy found himself a tad early, so for three minutes he examined the Arabic and French graffiti etched into the stand’s metallic sides, pondering the while whether he could utter without giggling the *mot de passe*. At exactly eight, the phone rang.

“Allô.”

“Allô.”

“M. Xérès?”

“No, he’s out. This is M. Champagne. And you?”

“M. Bulles desires to speak with M. Xérès.”

The ensuing roily chuckle, not postreflective as Remy initially had surmised, was contrived as a prelude to what the man sniffed next. “Has the negative been unmasked already? Aha! Ha-ha! One *mon ami* is as good as another.”

Remy’s speculation was immediate: The “tenor of these words” was HIV’s; the voice, no.

5

“Just as well. Algerians—*You* are the proof!—are quite adept at lying,” his French embassy liaison interrupted before Remy had finished summarizing his interview with Belmazoir, but after he had disclosed why he had not adverted to the negative.

“‘Not nicked to death by a piece of celluloid!’” at a sequent point, just after Remy had quoted Foucin’s “theatrical” riposte to his innuendo about that acetate snippet, “M. Champagne” echoed with a snort. “Proclaimed by the commissioner, I’m certain, with a straight face. M. Mont—” the cachinnation desisted as he feigned a correction, “M. Bulles, can it be doubted that Ballard was ‘selling out’?”

“A take-home salary of \$1,428.41 a month. Belmazoir, auxiliary Belmazoirs, ‘one *mon ami* is as good as another’; a storefront fiancée, dowry paid in full; her apartment in Algiers; the two rooms on Toumi for romping; his own flat, and (beyond the pale of accountability) two thousand in cash he’d secreted there.”

He halted, adopting his preemptory laugh. “Not even the omega of the Seven, nonalphabetically seriated, is rewarded that well.”

Remy’s summary of the conference with Belsches was likewise condescendingly greeted. “Of course, ‘after,’ for everyone at the embassy we suspect, except the ambassador and his lady.

“Some had an inkling they were seeing each other, yet not that Ballard had gotten himself engaged to the solitary belle in all Algiers who wouldn’t jump at the chance to emigrate from this city. Not the beautiful Leila, but the bull-hung Belmazoirs, I think, tilted his volition to stay. What did she see in that queer? That’s the real mystery.”

Pretending exasperation, Remy bluffed, “You must recommend my recall. I serve no purpose here.”

“You reveal an innate selfishness. Such counsel would be most presumptuous, apt to damage the advancement I’ll secure from this folly. The more inept you are, the wiser Paris will view me.” A drawn-out pause accentuated his pronouncement. “So go about your business of proving me right. Update in two days, using the second of the four numbers.”

The click effectively abrogated any rebuttal—except to himself, “‘My father’s business’”—and left unmentioned Remy’s supposition about the fingerprints.

During his stroll back, he debated whether it was advantageous for “M. Champagne” to regard him as being “as amateurish as my code name ‘M. Bulles,’” concluding, “Perhaps as appropriate a mask for the French as my professional visor is for Foucin.”

At just after 8:20, when the square shape of the Palais de Justice vaguely emerged, he cut toward the sea and two minutes on crossed over Boulevard Zirout Youcef, by then filling up with vehicles. “*Ram-a-dan Al-lah*” their horns rhythmically blared.

Peering into the bay, he descried the bland shadow of the imposing pink and white Al-Nigma on the dark waters, much oilier than from the air.

“Another mask on another mirror,” for the sea had dissolved the hotel of its colors, except for the lights of a few rooms. “They shiver ‘like yellow fogged-in flowers,’” and he was curious whether any of the fence-supporting blossoms remained unplucked.

“Oh yes,” he confided in himself, “also not divulged was your brief ‘tête-à-tête’ with the sister.”

6

“You’re not obligated,” Remy had again concluded, following his return from the embassy to the near-meridian Al-Nigma. “It’s the brother who chooses to brush aside the endangerment of his sister,” he repeatedly muttered under his breath between lunchtime bites in his hotel suite.

And for an hour and a half he even slept on the dilemma, arising from “my first Algerian *sieste* in twenty-eight years” with his gainsaying conviction in collapse.

Consequently at 2:30 he found himself instructing a taxi driver to take him to No. 22, Rue Mizon, Bab el Oued, the Belmazoirs’ address.

This suburb of Algiers is located on a three-by-four-kilometer largely hilly swath above the Casbah. Its east is bound by the seafront, its north by Notre Dame d’Afrique Cathedral (a tourist attraction), and its west by El Kettar Cemetery.

However, its burgeoning population of one hundred thousand—tenfold its pre-Revolutionary calculation, Remy was cognizant—bristle at being denominated Algiersians, preferring Babelouedians.

Via the coastal route fronting the Al-Nigma, the two-and-one-half-kilometer trip to the Belmazoirs should have not exceeded twenty minutes. Unfortunately, his taxi man decided to utilize the slower and hence more profitable one-kilometer beeline, which took them through the Casbah.

Aware that “the circuitous is often faster,” Remy had not interposed to correct: “No sense in tipping off Foucin that I’m better acquainted with the city than I should be.”

The repercussion was that his taxi, creeping northward along Rue Arbadji Abderahmane, known to him as Rue Marengo, was soon caught up in the snarl of the “Middle Street’s” vehicles, pedestrians, and beasts of burdens.

A vengeful rain squall having completely stalled all movement, it was smack in the center of the Casbah that Remy’s “unsolicited confrontation with time” manifested itself.

On his left was the tightknit playground of his boyhood, which, through the cartridge-sized raindrops, he had opted not to scan. Instead he gazed seaward at a more distant past, the slate-colored Palais d’Hiver, the “winter palace” of the French governor of Algiers after the 1830 invasion, although built in the 1790s by Dar Hassan Pacha, the city’s dey.

“The density of time,” not trisecting it into past, present, and future, his father had noted some forty years ago in circumscribing the Casbah. The postulation had been tendered after Omar’s complaint of having exhausted places to take Noura. “Places? It has the density of time, our Casbah. Your sister cognizes that, but still she’ll go with you.”

At Remy’s muffled apothegm, “Only memory is dense,” the driver, glancing with sheepish tenseness over his shoulder, assured, “Bab el Oued: I point-blank to it.”

Nevertheless, even after they had maneuvered through the intersection of the Middle Street and its east-west artery Rue Soualah Mohammed, they progressed at a crawl for the quarter of a kilometer to the park Jardin Marengo, its sight provoking the red-eyed *chauffeur de taxi* to declaim poetically, “Our green melody!”

Another fourth brought them to the turn onto Rue Mohammed Tazairt, the lip of the section of Bab el Oued he sought. Five streets along, the deluge having spent itself,

Remy halted the driver, having elected to continue on foot.

His “I’ll deposit you in front of the door of 22 Mizon for an extra five—three—dinars,” Remy declined. He stepped from the taxi onto a glistening street, for except for some late-coalescing dribbles from roofs, most vestiges of the downpour had vanished.

“Three seventeen,” informed his Vacheron, yet not that “a ride of just over twenty minutes had consumed nearly fifty.”

Although he was versed in the precise location of the Belmazoir dwelling, it was Bab el Oued which appeared a stranger, so altered its *mise-en-scène*. “Littered, cramped, sagging: no legacy of the French,” he asseverated, while conceding that to allude to the pre-independence denizens of the *commune* as French was “a misnomer.”

They had been principally second-generation scions of emigrants from Spain, Italy, and Malta, encouraged in to swell the European presence: Bourgeois, contented, and strutting about in black shoes (hence, gratifyingly dubbed *pieds-noirs*). Each family was able to afford one Arab servant who would amble over from the adjacent Casbah.

“And thus more disposed to fight.” Unlike a lie, one must have an incentive to tell the truth; and in as much as Remy was in an emending mood, having substituted biased “memory” for his father’s unitary “time,” he recast the idea: “*Un mensonge*” was superseded by “*guerre*” and the infinitive phrase by “to live in peace.”

Bab el Oued had been the birthing ground of the *Organisation de l’armée secrète* (OAS)—“its henchmen Noura’s prospective killers”—six months prior to the counterinsurgency assuming that name. Its natal announcement, June 15, 1960, had not been the later prolifically displayed black-and-white banners, a parody of the FLN’s green-and-white, but the corpses of three unlucky Arabs, conscientiously reporting for menial duty.

Their castrated naked frames—“severely circumcised” was the euphemism embraced by the OAS—had been strung up on a meshed wire running from opposite-cornered lampposts at the Tazairt entrance which Remy had just used.

Far into the night, a stream of Peugeots had cruised under it, their horns sounding the rhythm of “*Al-gér-ie Fran-çaise*” (“Algeria [is forever] French”), and *pied-noir* children had scurried up the posts to twang the wire, setting the corpses into a whirling-dervish spin.

When word of this spectacle reached him, had it been any wonder that at his next assignation with his case officer he had planned to verify whether the script had been ghostwritten for his evacuation? Unnecessary, because Surveillant, behind a wry smile, led off with a promise, “M. Omar, you will not be left dangling.”

7

In the vicinity of the Belmazoirs’ address, he began scouting for a mosque. “The sister cannot be gotten to,” Vellacott’s report maintained, “although two of my staff—women, of course—were thrice sent.”

On mulling over this failure in Le Puy, Remy had determined, “In case I must call on her, no accompanying female chaperon. An *alim*,” the neighborhood’s religious leader. “What Muslim domicile, a member *à l’article de la mort* (‘at death’s door’), would dare rebuff a visitation by one of God’s own . . . even when certain he’s been bribed?”

The boy tending the shop, perhaps twelve, declared, "I'll take you to him, but he's ignorant of French." He bounced from his stool and ducked under the counter flap of the stall. With thanks, Remy placed a dinar in his outstretched palm.

As well as a forceful blow from a wooden plank, a lifetime of reading aloud the Holy Qur'an scrunches a man's face, so Remy was prepared for the cobwebbed visage that glowered through the cracked door of the one-room *madrasah* ("school") abutting the mosque.

With the bilingual lad as his conduit, he explained to the *alim* that he was an investigator employed by the Belgian lawyer of Mohammed Belmazoir, wished to speak with the "criminal's" mother and sister, yet was mindful of the custom which decreed the presence of a suitable chaperon during a foreigner's parley with a Muslim woman.

The ancient crinkled his nose, flabby as an eggplant, and demanded through carious teeth twenty dinars for his service. The preteen translated it as fifty. At the alteration the *alim*, who obviously knew some French numbers, unhinged a rictus.

"Too much, *'keteer,*" Remy protested to the lad. "Frequently I must confer with the prisoner's family. I'll search out *tanee,* 'another.'" Volte-facing, he started to walk away.

The *walad's* frightened rendition was checked by an angry gurgle from the holy man and an unbolting whop. As the child scampered past, he grabbed at Remy's sleeve, his left hand rubbing his reddened cheek. "He comes!" was his bawl.

Few of the cobblestones that the *pieds-noirs* had meticulously laid and maintained survived. The street had reverted to its gritty base and on both sides had been compressed by novelty or fruit-and-vegetable stands tacked to the walls of villas.

Third and in a few cases tenuously balanced fourth stories had been plopped on the lower floors of homes that the "black feet" had once upon a time been willing to fight and die for.

The *alim* stopped in front of a turquoise-colored metallic *porte d'entr e*, the filigree of which had undergone a recent gilding—a welcome sign to Remy that Algerians still took an inordinate pride in their doorways.

Without knocking, the *alim* pushed through, gaining them admission to a hallway. During its traversal, Remy discerned that what had been habitation to one middle-class *pied-noir* family now "serviced the brood" of four Algerian households. Each upper level, "a quaternary more," he speculated, as they strode by the wooden stairs.

In spite of his age, the pace of the *alim* was rapid. "He yearns to be restored to his Qur'an or for his ten-dinar balance."

A doorless egress ushered them into what thirty years ago had been a small patio and garden with a tool or animal shed against its back wall. The lean-to—"My heirs reside here!" he imagined old Belmazoir's remonstrance—had obviously been converted into a one-room windowless shack.

At its plank-and-batten door, vertical plywood boards held together by slats of wooden crates, the *alim* knocked.

"*Nam?*" from within queried a soft voice, "impregnated with dread."

The moment the door began to open, the *alim* launched into his flinty, dinar-motivated advocacy. At its conclusion, the *niquaab* ("veil") swerved, and her frame, with only one raven-cast shoulder visible, leaned in to close it. Instantly, its boards were met by the indignant dignitary's outshooting right hand.

As Remy stood there undergirded by the skull-capped holy man, he plumed himself on having at once realized that he had stumbled upon one of God's cormorants, a divine who, fearful of losing his gratuity, was capable of such an iron-willed tactic to secure him entry.

"My brother forbids me," from behind the veil she whispered in Arabic. Nonetheless, Remy perceived that her body had withdrawn its weight from the central batten. *I will procure access, he congratulated himself, more than Vellacott obtained!*"

"I bear a message from him," Remy's French rushed forth as if he had foreseen what her Arabic counter would be.

In the deliberate ascent of her head, the veil quivered, her eyes (he was sure) riveting her anxious frustration on him. "Mlle. Belmazoir, he enjoined me to advise you not to bring what he had requisitioned. I've provided for his special needs."

Remy paused. "I visit him again tomorrow, a day before your scheduled trip." An additional halt was designed to allow her to comprehend the import of that revelation. "If there's something of urgency to be conveyed, perhaps about your mother's health, most willingly I'll be your messenger."

Although her head did not move, the door tilted backward slightly, the gap widening his view of the interior by a mere half-span. A repressed cough disrupted his anticipation, originating not from behind the *niquaab*, but out of a more distant darkness. A croupy spasm followed.

"Mother, I come!" and in the twisting of the still-hidden body the door further opened: A soiled white sheet hung as a room divider, beyond which tortured suspiration hacked against the tenebrosity.

"Has your mama died yet?" was boomed from a window of the second story. Looking upward and over their shoulders, both Remy and the *alim* espied the veilless plump face and mushroom shoulders of a woman squeezed through the unshuttered frame. "Ghazi jabbars that the sura-spinner's popped in."

She squinted toward them. "And verily his reverend self has!" she exclaimed, her pitch mounting to a shriek. "Oh, while it's martyrdom for the deceased to depart in the Holy Month, what a bother to (and a curse on) those about!"

The words animated the *alim*, who in her direction slapped the air with his splayed hands. "No one has died, widow of Abdulkakem, may God have mercy on his soul!"

Her yawn lengthened into an inspired smile. "Then dispatch Houda up to scrub my flat. This all-night feasting and all-day fasting have given my nestlings 'the squirts.' They've turned my home into a chicken coop."

Drooping her ample torso over the ledge, the hoyden commenced to guffaw and with such heftiness—"as dense, unmasked laughter as e'er I've heard"—that the coughing within, even if the door had not begun to close, would have been smothered.

"Prayer-caller, is this 'the sweet smell of Ramadan' of which the Prophet—Peace be upon Him—boasted?"

Notes and Commentary: Chapter 5: “A Mask of Every Mirror”

April 11, 1989 (Tuesday)

p. 68: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE OF CHAPTER 5: The title emphasizes the theme of appearance vs. reality. A mirror should reveal a true image of the person standing in front of it, but instead a mask covering the face is exhibited.

The complaint is Remy’s at the beginning of section 2: “Is this how every country confronts its ‘native son,’ making a mask of every mirror” (70). He then quotes the poet Wallace Stevens’s exhortation, “Let be be the finale of seem,” a preference of reality (“be”) over appearance (“seem”).

Two other times in this chapter Remy refers to mirroring masks: “pulled down one mirror’s mask” (73) and “another mask on another mirror” (77).

Yet, ironically—and he seems to accept the irony—the great deceiver in this chapter is Remy himself, for the three people who deal with him are quite open: Belsches in his cooperative naiveté strives to please Remy. His *contact* “M. Champagne” makes no attempt to disguise his contempt for Remy; and Houda simply repeats what her brother has ordered her to say. Yet in his dealings with each of them, Remy is shown to be wily and conniving.

He realizes the value of masks when he thinks, “Perhaps as appropriate a mask [appearing amateurish as a sleuth] for the French as my professional mask [my visor of being a professional investigator] is for Foucin” (77).

Remy has had much practice in dissembling, having worn a mask for over thirty years (Dec. 8, 1958, when he became a traitor, to this date, April 11, 1989).

In fact, in the two later chapters of the novel where he will be examining his appearance in a mirror (6.87 and 20.333), he will be wearing a disguise, a contrast with Ballard’s sincerity when spying Leila in front of a mirror (1.4).

In chap. 5, “mirror” appears by itself only once, “Cheap clothes mirror the man” (68). “Mask” occurs twice more, both times in its negative variant: “Has the negative been unmasked?” (76) and “dense, unmasked laughter” (81).

The “mask” image has been and will be used throughout the novel since a mask is one means people employ to thwart connections with others: 1.6; 2.23 and 32; 3.48; 4.61; the title of chap. 5 and 5.70, 73, 76, 77, and 81; 6.84, 87, and 96; 7.105; 8.125 and 132; 9.140 and 147; 10.161 and 164; 11.177; 13.212; 14.230; 15.246; 16.257 and 271; 17.278 (with its crucial discussion of the public and private mask); 18.294 and 301; 19.323; and 20.339 and 345.

pp. 68-81: CHRONOLOGY OF CHAPTER 5: April 11, 1989 (Tuesday): Three principal events: His morning visit to the American embassy (10:00 – 11:15); his afternoon trip to Bab el-Oued to speak with Houda (2:30 – 3:43); and his telephone

conversation with his French embassy liaison at a booth near the Al Nigma (8:00 – 8:25 p.m.).

- pp. 68-70: SECTION 1: Time span: From 8:30 a.m. when Remy calls to set up a morning visit to the U.S. embassy to his arrival at 10:00, when he is met by the embassy's Public Affairs Officer Alan Belsches who takes him to the embassy's underground morgue where from 10:10 to 10:20, he views the corpse of Ballard. (All of Remy's visits, it must never be forgotten, are designed to create the opportunity for him to make one crucial visit.)
- p. 68: "call on": (1) to visit someone; (2) to court someone.
- p. 68: public affairs officer: The PAO is the spokesperson at any U.S. embassy. She or he handles media and public relations including cultural affairs and educational programs.
- p. 68: "stock in trade": "any resources, practices, or devices characteristically employed by a given person" (*Webster's New*). The expression will be repeated on p. 73.
- p. 68: "Virgilian": Remy associates the public face of diplomacy (Belsches's role as a public affairs officer), not diplomacy itself, with the straight-forward and the colloquial, traits that he immediately relates to the Roman poet Virgil. Some critics regard his *Aeneid* as mechanical, didactic, artificial, and prosaic, and Vergil to be a diplomatic, not an inspired, epicist. Belsches likewise thinks himself literary and witty, as Osric in *Hamlet* undoubtedly conceives himself, but Remy's quick assessment of him, "Cheap clothes mirror the man," emphasizes the PAO's pretentiousness.
- p. 68: "nol-pros": A legal term meaning "to abandon all or part of a suit."
Belsches's meaning: Vellacott decided against viewing the corpse.
- p. 68: decurtate: As an adjective, "curtailed; shortened" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 68: *irrespectueux*: French for "disrespectful."
- p. 68: "wag of his head": The hypocritical Remy self-identifies himself by using the image from Matt. 27:39 (KJV) where Christ is mocked: "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads."
- p. 68: "embossed today": "to raise in relief from a surface" (*Webster's Third*). Remy is distinguishing between the wrinkles in Belsches's inexpensive polyester coat made today and those creases from previous days.

- p. 68: “Cheap clothes mirror the man”: The first use of the “mirror” word from the title of the chapter.
Remy’s wording resembles that of the supercilious Polonius in *Hamlet*, “For the apparel oft proclaims the man” (1.3.72).
- p. 68: “these un-Virgilian”: The words above the elevator “Authorized Personnel Only” remind Remy of those confronting Virgil and Dante above the lintel of the door to hell, ending “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here” (*Inferno* 3.9).
The opening of the line had come to Remy’s mind on 2.16.
- p. 68: “a rider buried in a 1980 House Appropriations bill”: A rider is “a clause, usually dealing with some unrelated matter, added to a legislative bill when it is being considered for passage.”
- p. 68: House Appropriations: The Committee on Appropriations is a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives which determines the expenditures of the government.
- p. 68: “buried”: Belsches’s meaning is the legislative cliché, “to render negligible by depriving of proper prominence” (*Webster’s Third*) and is not knowingly influenced by the matter he is discussing, morgues.
- p. 68: “Islamabad embassy”: Based on fact: On Nov. 21, 1979, a Pakistani mob in its capital Islamabad attacked and burned parts of the U.S. Embassy, killing a marine Cpl. Steven Crowley.
Most of the embassy staff and workers found safety in a steel-reinforced communications room, known as “the vault,” on the top level of the three-story embassy.
After around six hours, the riot having subsided, they were able to make their way to the roof, from which they climbed to the ground and were taken to the British embassy.
A subsequent search uncovered the bodies of an American army warrant officer, two Pakistani workers, and two protestors.
The incident led to US congressional investigations which resulted in changes in the security and design of American embassies, although none of these related to a section of an embassy being set aside for a morgue. Hence this is my own invention.
- p. 68: *en vain*: French for “in vain.”
- p. 68: “hyacinthine”: a Greek mythological reference to the flower bearing the letters AI AI, a Greek cry of sorrow. The flower sprang from the blood of the beautiful youth Hyacinth who was accidentally slain by the god Apollo.
Belsches’s meaning: From Cpl. Crowley’s blood blossomed the embassy morgues, his memorial “burgeoning in frigidity.”

- p. 69: “the divinely comedic *Carnaval*”: *Carnaval* is French for “carnival.” Belsches describes the opus as Robert Schumann’s “last before an asylum grave (‘distorted by whirling appearances, the whole world a Carnival,’ *Philosophe* Barthes styles it, and something about the purity of pain).”
- p. 69: *Philosophe*: French for “philosopher.”
- p. 69: Roland Barthes: a twentieth-century French philosopher and semiotician. The quotation, which Belsches slightly misrepresents, is from his essay “Loving Schumann” in his book *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*. Trans. Richard Howard (1985), p. 296: “In this fragmented world [of *Carnaval*], distorted by whirling appearances (the whole world is a Carnival), a pure and somehow terribly motionless element occasionally breaks through: pain. . . . This pure pain without object, this essence of pain, is certainly a madman’s pain. . . . Such pain cannot be expressed musically; music can only express the pathos of pain (its social image), not its being; but music can fleetingly express, if not pain, at least purity.” The whirlwind image here foreshadows some spinning apparitions in a disoriented mind (18.310).
- p. 69: anti-dirge: a neologism meaning “the opposite of a funereal lament.” Belsches’s words, “No one wants to bury poor Paul’s corpse,” is not a lament for Ballard as corpse, but for his body not being allowed to become a corpse.
- p. 69: “Here was another who more than seemed to care for Ballard”: The first was Belmazoir, who, Remy adjudged, had been “genuinely fond of Ballard” (4.62).
- p. 69: “expedient filigree”: Remy believes that visiting the corpse will add a nice touch or delicate ornamentation (“filigree”) to his façade, which will ultimately help him achieve his desired end (“expedient”), visiting his father.
- p. 69: *appel téléphonique*: “telephone call” in French.
- p. 69: “We’re under a quarter hour from the Al-Nigma”: The American Embassy was and still is located in the El Biar district of Algiers, about two miles southwest of the center of Algiers, near which I located my fictional Al-Nigma. Its address in 1989, the time of my novel, was 4 Chemin Cheikh Bachir El-Ibrahimi, but after its large expansion in 2007, it became 5 Chemin Cheikh Bachir El-Ibrahimi.
- p. 69: “Arab World’s twenty-minute protocol”: Foucin had kept Remy waiting “no more than the requisite twenty minutes” (4.55).
- p. 69: “Mlle. Leila Chabane”: The first time Leila’s maiden name is given in full. Belsches does not believe that her “marriage” to Ballard was legal because he speaks of her as “Mademoiselle” and indicates that for a monetary reason (“richly translates herself into Paul’s wife”) she seeks possession of his corpse.

- p. 69: “foster-niece”: Ballard has no blood relations. On 1.10, it was established that he was orphaned at three and on 1.2 that he was born a Jew. On his parents’ death, according to notes I did not use in the novel, he was taken in as a member of a Christian foster family. A brother or sister of that family had a daughter, who was thus the foster-niece of Ballard referred to here. This familial disconnection figures in the background of three of the major male characters. Ballard lost his family when he was three. On 6.99, Foucin will reveal that he became an orphan in 1955 when he was eight, and on 7.114-16, he will describe what happened to his natal family. Not technically an orphan, Omar lost his family at twenty-one, when he deserted his father, mother, and sister in fleeing to France. In his new identity as Remy, the French gave him an orphanage background (3.35 and 4.52). This absence of familial connection had even been stressed in Omar’s torture at Les Tombeaux where the French lieutenant says that “into this world “each of us” comes as “an orphan” (3.45). Additionally, the person Remy is impersonating, Christian Lazar, will tell Foucin on 6.99 that he was orphaned at four.
- p. 69: *quotidiennement*: In French, “daily.”
- p. 69: “a Solomon”: In 1 Kings 3:16-28, King Solomon must judge between two women, each claiming to be the mother of a child. Belsches cites Leroy as making the observation, which is exactly quoted, as are others in the paragraph, given the puns on “plots,” “apparent” (a parent), “rights” (burial rites), and “firmer grounds.” Paronomasia was shown to be a verbal characteristic of Leroy in chap. 1.
- p. 69: proprietarily: “in a proprietary manner” (*Webster’s Third*). Leroy insists that the embassy will not let Ballard’s body be seized as a piece of property exclusively owned by either woman.
- p. 69: *nos droits*: “our rights” in French.
- p. 69: *si tu veux*: French for “if you wish.”
- p. 69: “the sucked-in, gnarled left side”: The plank struck the left side of Ballard’s face causing blood to run into his left eye, but its force was such that it swelled shut his right eye (1.13-14).
- p. 69: “Its twin, more difficult”: It would be more difficult for the marine to open the left eye of the corpse because of the wounds surrounding it left by the plank.
- p. 69: “a milquetoast of a face”: Remy makes this metaphoric by not using “a milquetoast’s face.”

- p. 69: “a whine . . . held in reserve for the knell of sphincteral whisking”: Remy rephrases Belmazoir’s description of his first night of sex with Ballard: “his lone sound was a whine, exuded when I ‘jizzed’ inside his ass” (4.64).
- p. 69: “knell: The sound of a bell rung slowly at a funeral. A male climax is often associated with dying.
Each sound of the bell would represent a spurt of ejaculated semen.
- p. 69: “sphincteral whisking”: Anal intercourse.
Anatomically, the sphincter is the muscle that surrounds the anus.
Meanings of the verb “whisk” include to “whip eggs, whites, cream” and “to move briskly.”

- p. 70: “scars . . . thighs and calves, a wartime wound”: The second time that Remy has heard about the scars, the first being from Mohammed (4.64). It is the third time for the reader since Leila referred to them (1.10).
- p. 70: plicature: the act of folding.
- p. 70: carotids: The two principal arteries, one on each side of the neck, which convey blood from the aorta to the head.
Here, for the first time, it is specifically established that Ballard’s death resulted from a stab wound that severed his right carotid. (On 4.57, Foucin’s reference is general: “the artery to his throat” was “severed.”)
Remy knew about the wound from Vellacott’s reports, and this awareness conditioned his describing Marie’s tapping at his throat: “she jabbed him at his carotid artery” (4.53).
Three later times the carotid will be noted: An earring Remy is wearing grazed against his “left carotid” (6.85); a metaphorical use of it (9.152); and another reference to Ballard’s wound (20.338).
- pp. 70-71: SECTION 2: Time span: At 10:25 a.m., Belsches and Remy leave the morgue and return to the lobby of the embassy. At 10:32, Leroy, his wife, Medlin, and other embassy personnel emerge from two central elevators; the ambassador is taking his wife to the airport, Remy learns, for she is flying to Washington D.C. that day. At 10:44 Remy follows Belsches to another elevator, bound for the PAO’s office.
- p. 70: “a mask of every mirror”: The title of the chapter is taken from Remy’s introspection here, as explained earlier.
Remy states that he is not irritated by simple indirection, such as the pouting masks, easily seen through, which Marie sometimes wears.
- p. 70: ebullition: a sudden emotional outburst.
- p. 70: “twenty-five centime coin”: The equivalent of 2.5 US pennies.
For the currency of Algerian (dinars and centimes), see the 1.5 note, “most of the centimes,” N1:15.
- p. 70: “Let be be the finale of seem”: Line 7 of Wallace Stevens’s poem “The Emperor of Ice Cream.”
Its significance is explained in the discussion of the title of this chapter, N5.1.
- p. 70: “[Let the] queer [be] no more than queer. HIV, HIV”: Remy means that the homosexual should not try to pass himself off as a heterosexual, and if a heterosexual such as HIV tries to maintain a pretense of homosexuality, it should be obvious.
Basically, Remy is stating that he does not care to see beyond the stereotype since only matters of family—Marie, his father, Noura, etc.—are real to him.

- p. 70: “She is darting about, the corn’s sharp blades”: A reference to Noura in the cornfield below the monastery, described by his first contact on 3.40 and imagined by Remy at Trimalchio’s on 2.22.
Remy typically portrays her as living and waiting for him to rescue her.
- p. 70: “Dooms of love”’: A quote from another twentieth-century American poet, E. E. Cummings. His untitled elegy on his father begins, “my father moved through dooms of love / through sames of am through haves of give” (1-2).
- p. 70: “lightless attic”: The attic where his father lives has a small window which allows for the entry of some light and ventilation.
As will be described on 10.155, through this window, by means of a dumbwaiter, food and drink are drawn up and bedpans and trash baskets lowered. The room also has candlelight.
Thus by “lightless” Remy is referring to his father’s blindness, Milton’s “light denied” (7) from his sonnet, “When I Consider How My Light Is Spent.”
Just as Remy believes Noura is waiting for him to come to rescue her, so he maintains that his father anticipates his arrival.
- p. 70: Brigg umbrella: Brigg is the brand name of the most prestigious umbrella made in England. At the time of this novel, the medium price of one was around \$500.
- p. 70: quick-pace: The neologism combines “fast-paced,” the military “quick march,” and the expression “at a quick pace.”
- p. 70: allineate: A transitive verb meaning “align” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 70: “funereally muffled it”: Like the respectful silence manifested at a funeral.
- p. 70: “belgard”: “a loving look” (*Webster’s Third*, which lists it as “obsolete”).
For its other occurrences in the novel, see the 3.50 note.
- p. 70: “our ‘boys’”: The four marines.
- p. 70: “marshal”: Though it is typically a transitive verb, *Webster’s Third* gives examples of its intransitive use, “to take one’s place in a formal or ceremonial order.”

- p. 71: “From pleasure-for-pleasure’s sake to measure-for-measure’s sake”: Leroy’s use of the two rhyming terms is designed to contrast duty to his embassy (measure) with devotion to his wife (pleasure).
 “Pleasure for pleasure’s sake” is the title of the third essay in *Ethical Studies* (1876) by the British idealistic philosopher F. H. Bradley. The phrase expresses the hedonistic view that pleasure, usually based in the sensuous, is the aim of life. In his use of the phrase, Leroy, following Bradley, does not accept that limited view since he shows that he can straddle both worlds: the pleasure he obviously gains from being with his wife and the obligations of his appointment as ambassador.
 The latter is expressed in the measure-for-measure phrase, based ultimately on Matt. 7:2 (Geneva Bible): “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”
 It is used by Shakespeare both as the title of his play and as a moralizing line in the drama (5.1.19).
 For a fuller explanation, see the 1.3 note, N1:11, where the phrase first appears. Although the word “measure” will occur frequently in the novel, the expression in full or abbreviated form will occur in five other chapters: 13.206; 14.230; 15.246 and 256; 17.291; and 21.362.
- p. 71: “Hold, enough!” Leroy quotes Macbeth: “And damned be him that first cries, ‘Hold, enough!’” (5.8.34)
- p. 71: “A twice-startled Remy marveled, ‘My, how Shakespearean allusions roll trippingly on [his] tongue!’”: Remy is “twice-startled” because Leroy has used back-to-back quotations from Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* and *Macbeth*. In noting this characteristic, Remy himself consciously uses a third, Hamlet’s advice to the players, “Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue” (3.2.1-2).
- p. 71: “trepidates”: An archaic verb form of “trepidation” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 71: “tidal sway . . . whose bodies, drawing near . . . shrank back”: An echo of the description of two men in Trimalchio’s, “tiding their faces toward, merely to suck back from, the mouth of [the] pilgarlic” (2.19).
- p. 71: “private causerie in the midst of public brummagem”: causerie: a chat; conversation.
 brummagem: cheap and gaudy gems. It is used metaphorically to represent the gaudy formalities of ambassadorial duties.
 The contrast of “public” display and “private” reality, which will be developed on 17.278 and 282, is an aspect of the real vs. the artificial theme of the novel.
 For a discussion of that theme, see the 2.28 note, N2:45-46.

- p. 71: “She ‘hang[s] on him””: In 1.2.143-145, Hamlet says his mother (Gertrude) “would hang on him [Hamlet’s father] / As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on.”
- p. 71: “mild heeling of his neck”: The basically nautical term, meaning “leaning or tilting of a ship to one side,” is here used metaphorically to describe the slight turning movement of Leroy’s neck.
- p. 71: “His cupped fingers indicate a man . . . whose ‘grasp’ is resigned not to ‘exceed’ its ‘reach’”—and he watched Belsches inhale a series of deep breaths and let them out—“or what’s ‘e ‘eavin’ for”: The famous quote outrageously garbled here is from Browning’s “Andrea del Sarto”: “Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, / Or what’s a heaven for” (97-98).
- pp. 71-74: SECTION 3: Time span: From 10:44 to 11:15 a.m. This section deals with Remy’s conversation with Belsches in the PAO’s office. There, Remy’s strategy is to let Belsches ramble on, hoping that he will reveal some embassy happenings previously undisclosed.

- p. 72: “around the middle of February”: In my chronology, Feb. 16. To put this date in relation to events revealed in chap. 1, it was on Jan. 13 that Leroy announced his promotion to Washington and Ballard immediately told him that he would accompany him, while inwardly knowing he would not (1-2).
On Jan. 23 (referred to in chap. 1 as “five weeks ago”), at Leila’s prodding, Ballard told Leroy he would be staying in Algiers (6 and 10).
On Feb. 13, Medlin pleaded with Ballard to persuade Leroy to add him to the Washington list (6).
On Feb. 16, Leroy signified that Medlin would be the third person accompanying him to the D.C. posting.
On Feb. 21, in the embassy coffee room, Medlin bragged about being added to the list, and Ballard replied by whispering a threat that he could get the DCM removed from it (6-7).
Ballard’s murder occurred on Feb. 27.
- p. 72: *cafés*: coffees.
- p. 72: “*recherche d’une maison*”: French for “in search of a house”; “house-hunting.”
- p. 72: “groomed by Baker for his own—”: James Baker, George H. Bush’s Secretary of State.
See the 1.1 note, N1:4. This is the first reference to the embassy gossip that through his nomination as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Leroy was being prepared by Baker to assume “his own—” position.
Although not specified in the novel, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs is the highest rank attainable in the U. S. foreign service.
Belches assumes that Remy, an investigator, would know about Leroy’s recent appointment, but not be aware of the full implication of it. Thus he adds (or almost adds) that Leroy was being groomed to become Secretary of State.
To be associated with a potential Secretary of State would enlighten Remy as to why any official at the embassy would want to be on the list.
- p. 72: ““Claude could swing only three””: Mrs. Leroy tells Belsches that Leroy could persuade the State Department to let him have three from the Algiers embassy accompany him to Washington.
- p. 72: *non seulement*: “not only” in French.
- p. 72: “Much can be learned from this French-phrase-dropping bureaucrat”: Remy tells himself that from Belsches’s prattle he can learn much more about the events occurring at the embassy around the time of Ballard’s murder than from Vellacott’s reports.
- p. 72: draught: British for “the portion or quantity that is drunk . . . in a single swallow” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 72: “nearly eleven months ago”: The Leroy and Ballard arrived in Algiers on May 15, 1988, according to my chronology.
- p. 72: “Been with him since Chile, ’78. Of course, on the list from the first”: Leroy served as ambassador to Chile from 1978 to 1981. See the 1.7 note, “postings,” N1:20, for a list of his ambassadorial postings.
Belsches says that Ms. Crippen was the first put on the list of three. It is implied that Mrs. Leroy’s social secretary Jackie was also on the list since she has been sent to Washington to look for the residence of the Leroy. That she was so engaged is confirmed on p. 73.
- p. 72: “he won’t leave, I gather, until Paul’s corpse is settled”: Belsches’s clipped expression means “until the legal dispute over Ballard’s corpse is resolved.”
Another meaning of “settled” is also applicable to the body being fought over: “to discontinue moving and come to rest in one place.”
- p. 72: “glad words”: Belsches’s phrasing will be echoed by Remy on p. 74 in his reference to Washington as “a glad-handing place.”
- p. 72: “DC ‘triumph’”: The reference is metaphorical, comparing Leroy return to Washington, DC to the ancient Roman procession celebrating the return of a victorious general.
- p. 72: “skirt-tailing”: The pun is attributed to Ballard, but Belsches says it is a quibble more characteristic of Leroy himself.
It plays upon the expression “on someone’s coattails” (Leroy’s diplomatic rise was not dependent on the success or prominence of his wife’s family), “shirtail” (the part of a shirt extending below waist), and the slang “skirt” in referring to a woman.
- p. 72: “*Génie total*”: “Complete genius” in French.
- p. 72: “his handling of the PLO”: See the 1.1 note, “Palestinian,” N1:5, for a more detailed account of the actual events referred to here.
On Nov. 15, 1988, after much maneuvering and behind-the-scene negotiations in Algiers (to which the U.S. embassy might have been a party), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) issued a two-state declaration: establishing Palestine as a country and implicitly recognizing Israel’s right to exist.
- pp. 72-73: “‘And M. Ballard? He was on the Washington list?’ Belsches’s answer was not altogether expected.” Remy had expected Belsches to mention Ballard’s decision to stay in Algiers and even something about the Algerian woman he was to marry (matters he had learned about from the 2269 file).
As p. 75 will reveal, a report from Vellacott in the file indicated that Ballard was planning to marry Leila.

Instead Belsches says that both Leroy and his wife would have placed Ballard first on the list, given their long friendship.

- p. 73: *certainement*: French for “certainly.”
- p. 73: “‘tagged along’ . . . his ‘umbra’”: On 1.1, in his thoughts Ballard referred to himself as “Leroy’s tag-along.”
According to Belches, Ballard used that term in speaking to the PAO and even added a synonym, “umbra,” meaning “one who tags along with another” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 73: *le meilleur des amis*: “the best of friends” in French.
- p. 73: “‘their early-sixties college days. And subsequently Vietnam’”: For their college days, see 1.2 and its note, N1:6; for Vietnam, see 1.10 and its notes, N1:26-27.
- p. 73: “‘Première’”: “First” in French.
- p. 73: *dans le corps et l’esprit*: “in body and spirit” in French.
- p. 73: “the more-than-the-maximum capacity”: Remy realizes something which the rambling Belsches does not: His catalogue had mentioned “four [Medlin, Crippen, Jackie, and Ballard], but Leroy ‘could swing only three’” (72).
As on the next page, Remy plays upon James’s “the more than the more is more than the less” (*The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, chap. 13).
Remy is as “delighted” by this inconsistency at the American embassy as he was by those expounded in Foucin’s office since by developing them he can perhaps gain an opportunity to sneak in his visit with his father, his true mission to Algiers.
- p. 73: “pulled down one mirror’s mask”: Employing the metaphor which dominates this chapter and its title, Remy realizes that the “mask” which the Americans revealed in their “mirror” to the world (that they were investigating the murder, but were not subject to being investigated themselves) could be ripped off (“pulled down”) by this inconsistency and its implication: Why had Medlin replaced Ballard on the list?
- p. 73: *sur son objection*: “over his objection.”
- p. 73: *cadavre*: “corpse.” The word would bring Remy’s mind back to Belsches’s greeting to him on his arrival at the embassy (68).
- p. 73: “compartmentalized”: The verb “compartmentalize” means “to separate [items] into compartments or categories” (*Webster’s Third*).
Remy views this as “an odd choice” grammatically since Belsches misuses the verb to mean to put into “a small chamber, receptacle, or container” (one of the *Third’s* definitions of the noun “compartment”).
Despite that initial reaction, on p. 74 Remy will use the word in Belsches’s sense.
- p. 73: *jour ouvrable*: “workday” in French.

- p. 73: “bonded by laughter”: Leroy was another, Remy would recognize, whose friendship with Ballard was grounded in camaraderie’s laughter.
See 4.65 where Belmazoir, speaking of his relationship with Ballard, defined “a friend” as “someone you can laugh with.”
- p. 73: “economic officers”: An economic officer is a member of the U.S. foreign service whose responsibility is to gather economic information and prepare analysis of economic developments about the host country to which he or she is assigned.
In Algeria, this person is part of the Political and Economic section or cone, although in some countries an economic officer might be a member of a separate Economic section or assigned to the embassy’s Commercial cone.
In my novel, Ballard reports to the senior economic officer of the Political and Economic cone, who will be mentioned on 8.130.
- p. 73: “the corollary self-evident”: A “corollary” is a proposition that follows from another that has been proved.
- p. 73: “‘Thus M. Medline was not—‘from the first’—scheduled to go to Washington?’”: In Belsches’s rambling narrative, he used the expression “from the first” to delineate Miss Crippen (72) and Jackie (73), whom Remy crudely refers to as the “his-and-her secretaries” (73), as well as Ballard (73).
However, he had spoken of Medlin’s appointment as seemingly late: “Once among the select, around the middle of February” (72).
- p. 73: “Had Ballard committed some faux pas . . . expunged from the list?”: Since Belsches did not reply to his first question, Remy scarcely expects a response to this second query regarding some possible misconduct by his friend Ballard, presumably Ballard’s questionable relationships with Leila and Belmazoir, both of which could be embarrassing to the embassy.
- p. 73: “*both savory enough to make you forget a corpse*”: On the previous page, Remy had told Belsches, “After the morgue, conversation and coffee are just what I need.”

- p. 74: “the third accomplice, M. Medlin”: From an attack on Ballard Remy rushes to an assault on the DCM.
Remy notes that even after Medlin had replaced Ballard on the list, he still seemed to view Ballard as a threat.
This line of inquiry conveys to Belsches that Remy had used their amiable conversation to gather evidence that someone at the embassy might have a motive to murder Ballard.
- p. 74: “7:30 regular (or decaffeinated)”: Remy’s punning is wicked here since he seems to deride the friendship of Leroy and Ballard. These two men met on a “regular” basis.
Coffee, of course, comes in two forms, “regular,” which retains the caffeine naturally contained in coffee beans, and “decaf,” which has had most of the caffeine removed through solvents.
- p. 74: “glad-handing place”: The informal American expression “glad-hand” as a verb means “to offer an effusively cordial welcome to someone.”
- p. 74: “dagger up his sleeve”: The expression “up one’s sleeve” means “hidden or secret but ready at hand.” The object hidden up one’s sleeve is frequently a card, such as an ace, or for a criminal, a knife.
Remy’s reference to the instrument used to kill Ballard is less than subtle and is designed to further disconcert Belsches.
- p. 74: “a last temporal query”: A question concerning time. Remy’s first two queries had also been concerned with time.
- p. 74: “importunes the embassy, ‘Give me my husband[’s body]!’”: On p. 69, Belsches had reported that Mlle. Leila Chabane was shrieking this demand, “Give me my husband!”
- p. 74: snoove: an intransitive verb meaning “to walk smoothly and steadily” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 74: affinal: “based on or involving marriage” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 74: *A fortiori*: Latin phrase meaning “for a stronger (reason).”
- p. 74: “brushed aside as an outreached hand”: See p. 71, Medlin “flick[ed] away the PAO’s [hand] at the wrist.”
On p. 73, Remy interpreted Belsches’s face as that of one “who has just been shuffled aside when all he aspired to was to shake a hand.”
- p. 74: “his insinuation”: Remy suggests that Medlin could have had a reason for murdering Ballard.

- p. 74: “sheer genius”: Remy’s translation of Belsches’s “*génie total*” from p. 72.
- p. 74: “*un-designate*”: A neologism meaning “not to appoint someone to an office or for a duty.”
It is a back-formation of the adjective “undesigned.”
- p. 74: “dispatched”: to kill; to put an end to.
- p. 74: “‘compartmentalized’ in chancery (not unlike the body of the poor M. Ballard)”: The phrase “in chancery” means “in an awkward or helpless situation,” which Remy argues in general applies to the wrongly accused Belmazoir. “Chancery” by itself carries two relevant meanings here: First, it refers to a court of justice and/or equity, and Belmazoir is embroiled in a judicial system which seems convinced that he is the murderer of Ballard. Secondly in British English, “chancery” means, “the political department of an embassy.” Remy suggests that Belmazoir’s situation is tinged with both politics and diplomacy.
- pp. 74-76: SECTION 4: Time span: Remy return to the Al-Nigma from the embassy at 11:40. Part of the afternoon is devoted to speculating on how he can use the American angle in order to set up a smoke screen which would allow him to visit his father. The main part (3:17 – 3:50), which is mentioned but not described in this section of the afternoon, is occupied by a trip to Bab el-Oued City to visit with Houda Belmazoir. At 8 p.m., at a phone booth a kilometer from his hotel, he takes a prearranged call from his French Embassy liaison.
- p. 74: “anthropocentricity”: A theory or outlook that humankind is the central focus of the universe.
- p. 74: “would as lief”: would as gladly or willingly.
- p. 74: “fellow traveler”: sympathizer; espouser of a cause, without being formally a member.
What Remy means is that each creature sympathizes with the life force from which all “critters” sprang, but not with any other creature’s formal right to exist. The expression “fellow traveler” will appear much later in the novel, 20.342.
- p. 74: “least prodigal order”: The human species (*Homo sapiens*) belongs to the Primate order, the least prolific of the six orders of the Mammalia class. The five larger orders of mammals (I list exemplary specimens, not formal scientific names) are rodents (most populous), next bats, then shrews and moles, next carnivores such as dogs and cats, and penultimately hoofed mammals and whales.

- p. 74: “more than the etc.”: Remy playfully uses a variant of James’s “the more than the more is more than the less” from *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, chap. 13, to bolster his contention that humankind, which has the fewest species in the class of Mammalia, is “the most inconsequential” as a source of food.
- p. 74: “blue plate”: “blue-plate special,” an inexpensive restaurant meal, originally served on a blue plate.
- p. 74: Bihari: a person from Bihar, a state in eastern India, where Bengal tigers still roam in the wild.
- p. 74: “Michelin-ing”: A coined verbal based on the *Michelin Guide*, a publication which awards restaurants with stars (three indicating exceptional cuisine) and forks and spoons (five sets designating a luxurious restaurant).

- p. 75: “gray silk suit of the ambassador”: On p. 71, Remy had described the suit which Leroy was wearing as a “double-breasted dark gray pinstriped silk suit.”
The reason Remy had used the predatory animal imagery is explained: He had wanted to rip open the coat of the suit to discover the name of the designer.
Remy had confessed his own obsession (“a French appropriation”) with dressing in the finest designer garments (2.28). See its note, ‘a French,’ N2:47, for a brief discussion of the symbolism of the clothes imagery used in this novel.
- p. 75: “pemmican”: “information or thought condensed into little compass” (*Webster’s Third*).
“This Darwinian pemmican” refers to how the tiger-woodcutter tableau exemplifies principles of Darwinism.
- p. 75: “back at the Al-Nigma from Bab el Oued”: The time is 4:30 p.m.
This is the first indication that Remy had taken an afternoon trip to the Bab el Oued suburb of Algiers.
For Bab el Oued, see the 1.3 note, N1:11.
- p. 75: *Deux-deux-six-neuf*: French for 2269, the name Remy applied to the folders which DGSE had left for him in locker 2269 at Orly airport.
See the 4.53 note, N4:8.
- p. 75: “the memo of a DGSE operative in Manila about Ballard and an underage male prostitute”: See 1.7-8 for Ballard’s account of this 1982 incident.
In April 1982, the name of the French intelligence service was changed from SDECE to DGSE.
- p. 75: “if [Ballard’s] homoeroticism is . . . not subject to challenge, why was this homosexual marrying a woman [Leila]?” and “Why was this woman marrying a homosexual?”: Vellacott succinctly puts the question which has been most puzzling since Ballard’s display of affection for Leila and a reference to their “marriage contract” (1.4) were followed by his request “to see Mohammed’s penis” (1.6).
- p. 75: “Why was this woman marrying a homosexual?”: Remy’s antithetical query ironically parallels one which Ballard himself, in a less derogatory form, had wondered about, “Why did she choose me?” (1.4).
- p. 75: “*hélas!*”: French for “alas!”
- p. 75: “Anthropocentrism”: An alternate form of “anthropocentricity.”
Remy argues that such a view applies not only to the *homo sapiens* species, but to each nation, which asserts its “hierarchical privileges” through a belief that its well-being is the focus of the universe.
The French believed that the Palestinians were involved with the murder or had gained from Ballard items which would embarrass France.

It was in the interest of the Algerians for the murder to be a personal act, not a political statement.

The American embassy seemed content to let the investigation of Ballard's murder proceed at a leisurely pace, perhaps fearful (Remy intuitively) that the ambassador's friend Ballard had done something which would embarrass Leroy or upset the Palestinian accord.

- p. 75: Gibbon: Remy had brought a two-volume edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* to Algiers.
See 4.66-67 and their notes on Gibbon, N4:41-43.
- p. 75: CK overcoat: The American fashion designer Calvin Klein.
See 4.66, where the overcoat is first mentioned, and its note.
- p. 75: “*no one's*” and “no one”: The first item which is italicized quotes Belsches from p. 69: “So ruefully we're one of those *no one's* ready to bury Paul.” The second is from the same page, but quoted earlier on it: “No one wants to bury poor Paul's corpse.”
- p. 75: “skirt[ed],’ he redacted”: Skirt: to avoid (something controversial, difficult, etc.).
Remy first said that everyone had “neglected” the Americans. He changed the verb after remembering Vellacott's earlier wording, “The Americans are skirting the issue of M. Ballard's homosexuality.”
- p. 75: “stir the fires there”: A continuation of the light-darkness imagery from 4.54.
Since no one else had involved the Americans, Remy decides he will, but not because he cares about the murder. By playing the role of the conscientious private investigator, he believes he can maneuver a safe opportunity to visit with his father.
- p. 75: “Brother enemy”: Familial or, through the extended family, tribal, trust is legendary in Arab countries, but beyond that, even today, most Arabs view a non-familial or non-tribal person with distrust and as a person possessing all the traits of an “enemy.”
Remy will use this expression two other times, 7.112 and 21.360, in each instance referring to Foucin.
- pp. 75-76: “7:45 . . . sped home to break the fast . . . only three cars . . . the lull of Ramadan . . . post-*salaat* commencement of the first round of feasting . . . ravenous righteous”:
In Ramadan, mosque prayer calls, sometimes accompanied by a cannon's blast, as in my novel, indicate the end of the fast. The calls do not come twenty minutes before prayers as in other months.
In my novel on this date the calls and the cannon blast occur at 7:18.
Many Muslims will choose to be at the mosque near prayer time, where in its courtyard they will consume a small snack, usually one or two dates and some water, perform the sunset prayers (*salaat*), and either partake of a communal spread in the mosque courtyard or hurry home to consume a full meal.

Others will do the entire ritual of snack-prayer-feast in their homes. In either case the streets are largely empty during this time of the first meal, as they are when Remy steps forth from the Al-Nigma at 7:45.

Hence this period is often referred to as “the lull of Ramadan.”

After the long day of fasting, the “righteous” are understandably “ravenous.” Thus during the rest of the night, many partake of a second, third, or even fourth meal up to the Prophet Mohammed-recommended *Sahoor*, a meal eaten an hour or so before sunrise, at which point the sixteen-hour fasting will once more commence.

- p. 76: Rue Abane Ramdane: A major north-south artery connecting central Algiers to the Casbah.
My Al-Nigma Hotel is located near it.
- p. 76: “flower-brave colors”: “brave” here means “making a fine show or display; bright; colorful; splendid” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 76: “seven or so belles and beaux”: Another grouping of seven, here of male and female prostitutes.
- p. 76: Palais de Justice, the “law courts”: The Palace of Justice is the courthouse of Algiers. A stately neoclassical building, it was erected by the French in 1900. It is located at 10 Rue Abane Ramdane.
- p. 76: “‘high-horsed’ Al-Nigma”: Remy echoes an image from his interview with Belmazoir, who was quoting Ballard’s comment on a streetwalker, “Shout to her to dismount her high horse” (4.65).
- p. 76: *sans doute*: “without doubt” of “doubtless” in French.
- p. 76: “thick inlaid with patens of bright gold”: The image is from *Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.58-59, where Lorenzo says to Jessica: “Look how the floor of heaven / Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.”
Patens: thin, circular plates of metal.
In quoting the line, Remy does not mean that they prostitutes are dressed in gold-hued garments. Instead he suggests that like Lorenzo’s night sky, which is filled with brilliant dots of stars, the dark street is sprinkled with brightly attired prostitutes.
- p. 76: “a huffing of bras”: a swelling or inflating by the intake of air in order to make the size of the breasts more noticeable.
- p. 76: Rue de la Lyre: Mentioned on 3.39 and in its note as the “red light” district of Algiers during colonial rule.
- p. 76: “second sex”: male prostitutes.

- p. 76: “Naturally, colonial Algiers had its discreet pederasty”: The irony is in the first word, “naturally.”
- p. 76: “[Algeria’s] agricultural harvest has tumbled”: Remy’s strained witticism is based in fact.
Under French governance, Algeria was agriculturally self-sufficient. Since independence, it has been unable to meet the food needs of its people.
At the time of the novel (1989), it was importing around forty percent of its food.
- p. 76: “plough other fields”: A banal sodomitic pun.
- p. 76: “[p]oster-child of silence”: In this reference to the silence of Houda, Mohammed’s sister, Remy emends the second line of Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”: “Thou foster-child of silence and slow time.”
A poster child is a child afflicted with some disease or deformity who appears on a poster for a charitable group as a means of helping it raise money to combat the affliction.
Keats’s phrase will be used two other times in this novel: On 15.239 to refer to the mute Noura, and on 17.291 to characterize Remy.
- p. 76 : “silent sisters”: After speaking of Houda, Remy adds his own sister Noura.
This sequence is typical of Remy’s stream-of-consciousness pattern of association or connection: from the reticence of the prostitutes staked out before the Palais de Justice to the silence of the sister of Belmazoir who has been ordered by her brother not to speak about the murder to the congenital defect of Remy/Omar’s own deaf-mute sister.
- p. 76: “telephone kiosk”: I have taken liberty here to provide Algiers with many more telephone kiosks than it had in 1989. It was necessary to have Remy in phone contact with his French Embassy liaison, but how?
At that time, most phone calls were made from government-policed telephone buildings scattered about the city.
A customer would give the number he wished (women did not use these public exchanges) to an attendant (operator), prepay him, and then be assigned to a not so private booth.
There he would wait in line until it was his turn to use the booth, at which point the attendant would ring him that his party was ready.
The situation hardly yielded itself to the private communications which Remy will need throughout the novel.
Cell phones could have been the answer, but Algiers had none, so to speak, at that time.
I experimented with having Remy go to certain deserted houses where the security division of the French embassy had set up clandestine lines before his arrival (so called “safe houses”), but since Remy was followed by Foucin’s agents, this ruse would be immediately detected, and frankly this technique required elaborate exposition for each phone call.

I scrapped it and simply provided Algiers with a prolific number of telephone booths from which Remy could be dialed over secure, untraceable lines from the French Embassy.

- p. 76: “nosy”: The French 2269 file had cautioned Remy that the Algerian authorities are nosy, incidentally the same accusation which the Algerian commissioner Foucin levels against the French: “Why the French, other than that they have long Gallic noses which bridge the Mediterranean?” (4.58)
- p. 76: “a statement which Remy had twice discovered underestimated Foucin”: Foucin had obviously given orders to the airport customs official to photocopy all the documents in Remy’s blue folder (4.53 and 66).
And the commissioner had also run a background check on Remy because he discusses his Egyptian assignment for Vellacott (4.55).
- p. 76: “and most surely had been dialed last night”: See 4.66 and its note. Remy had been given the choice to be at the telephone booth on either his second or third night in Algiers.
- p. 76: *mot de passe*: French for “password.
- p. 76: “M. Xérès . . . M. Champagne . . . M. Bulles”: On 4.66 M. Xérès was mentioned as the French embassy liaison whom Remy was to contact.
The code names all relate to alcohol: *xérès* is French for “sherry”; *bulles*, for “bubbles” (of “champagne”).
It is that wine that undoubtedly led the French intelligence service to use these code words since during the Algerian war the title of the French campaign to stop the 1957 strike in Algiers was Operation Champagne.
This campaign will be described on 6.88-90.
The choice of that alias for Remy’s contact in Algiers indicates that DGSE was in a sense still fighting the Algerian war.
- p. 76: “Has the negative been unmasked already?”: Once more an echo of a key word in the title of this chapter. Remy’s liaison naturally begins with a reference to the “negative,” the sole reason DGSE sent him to Algiers.
- p. 76: “Aha! Ha-ha!”: The interjection “Aha!” here is an ironical expression of both triumph and surprise; the “Ha-ha!” interjection, a derisive laugh at Remy, whom he regards with contempt as the next section 6 will disclose.
This “Aha! Ha-ha!” interjection sequence will be used two other times in the novel: 9.138 and 19.328, the latter by the same speaker as here.
- p. 76: “One *mon ami* is as good as another”: Two interpretations may be placed on this enigmatic comment by his liaison. First, the DGSE folder had instructed Remy to ask twice for M. Xérès. M. Champagne is answering that second request by saying

that he will be as good a friend (the connotation of the French *mon ami*) as the requested Xérès.

The second seems to read Remy's mind—he had thought his Algiers liaison would be HIV—by stating that he will be as good a contact as his one in France.

On the next page, “M. Champagne” repeats the sentence, but applies it to Ballard's selection of homosexual partners: interchangeable, one was as good as another.

- p. 77: SECTION 5: Time span: SUMMARY: From 8 to 8:10, Remy talks with his French embassy liaison, summarizing briefly his conversations with Foucin, Belmazoir, and Belsches. From 8:10 – 8:30, he walks back to the Al-Nigma.
- p. 77: “Algerians—You are the proof!—are quite adept at lying.’ . . . had not adverted to the negative: Out of sequence Remy begins with Belmazoir to indicate why he had not brought up the negative to him.
His monitor cuts him off with the sarcastic comment that no matter which strategy he uses, Algerians, as Remy well knows, typically resort to lying.
- p. 77: “Not nicked to death by a piece of celluloid”: For Foucin’s comment, see 4.57.
- p. 77: “M. Mont— . . . M. Bulles”: He continues to mock Remy, here even using the first syllable of his French surname, Montpellier.
- p. 77: “selling out”: His monitor contends that Ballard was selling out his country by peddling embassy secrets.
The idiom and the correction of his use of Remy’s French alias are blatant reminders that Remy as Omar had also sold out his native land.
The expression also recalls the French word “*brader*,” which in the early 1960s had a political meaning, France’s “selling out” or “abandoning” the Europeans community in Algeria (2.16 and its note).
This phrasing by his liaison is yet another example of how well DGSE had primed him about Remy’s past. However, the agency had told him nothing about his liaison.
- p. 77: “1,428.41”: Thus Ballard’s annual take-home salary would be \$17,140.92. His pre-deduction annual salary for 1989 would be around \$25,000, in line with that of a U.S. economic officer with almost twenty-three years of service.
- p. 77: “auxiliary Belmazoirs, ‘one *mon ami* is as good as another’”: Used on the previous page, here “*mon ami*” refers to one of the many other homosexual partners whom Ballard had to pay.
- p. 77: “a storefront fiancée”: Remy’s liaison regards Leila as a display-window or window-dressing fiancée being used by Ballard to camouflage his homosexual affairs.
- p. 77: Toumi: Rue Toumi, where Ballard had rented the two apartments on the third floor, one of which he used for his sexual rendezvous with Belmazoir.
- p. 77: “beyond the pale of accountability”: outside the boundary (“pale”) of reasonable explanation, with a pun on financial accounts.
That is, even with all of his expenditures, Ballard had somehow been able to save \$2,000.

- p. 77: “the omega of the Seven, nonalphabetically seriated”: The final letter of the Greek alphabet is “omega,” but Remy’s liaison states that he is using it to refer numerically to the last of the seven traitors, who consequently received the shares of the dead six.
- p. 77: “Of course, ‘after,’ for everyone . . . except the ambassador and his lady”: In summarizing his meeting with Belsches, Remy must have finished by stating that the staff at the American Embassy was ignorant of the reason Ballard was not going to Washington until *after* his death.
Dismissing Remy’s deduction as obvious, his contact then corrects him saying that Leroy and his wife knew of their engagement.
His tone conveys that in attempting to implicate someone at the American embassy in the murder, Remy was revealing himself to be an amateur sleuth.
- p. 77: “the solitary belle”: The wording suggests that Remy’s liaison knew much about Leila, particularly that she did not desire to leave Algeria even when given the opportunity to live in America.
This inclination would confirm that she was jesting when she told Ballard she had chosen him because he had “a most attractive passport—and our children will concur with their mother on that” (1.4).
Her attitude would also contrast her with that of Belmazoir, who “dream[ed] of traveling to America” (4.63).
- p. 77: “the beautiful Leila”: His next reference to her as “beautiful” suggests that “M. Champagne” was appreciative of her beauty. Following the description, there is even a hint of jealousy in his wondering what she saw in “that queer” Ballard.
- p. 77: “What did she see in that queer? That’s the real mystery”: Vellacott had questioned why Ballard, a homosexual, was planning to marry a woman (75). The answer to this seemed obvious to Remy’s liaison, who stated that such a window-dressing marriage would provide a cover for Ballard’s homosexual affairs.
On his initial reading of Vellacott’s question, Remy had asked the obverse of this query: “Why was this woman marrying a homosexual?” (75).
Logically this question more interested Remy because the person who could answer it, Leila, was alive and thus could be maneuvered into revealing her intentions. Remy is aware that the answer may be no more than that suggested by Belsches: In her actions after Ballard’s death, Leila has displayed a monetary motive (69).
Here Remy’s liaison, who seems to know Leila well, does not mention that obvious assumption.
Instead he says the real mystery in this matter is not who killed Ballard, but “what did she see in that queer?”
Another avenue is thus opened for Remy to investigate, certain that the more threads a web has the better the chance he can maneuver an occasion to visit his father without endangering himself.

- p. 77: “an innate selfishness”: The accusation affirms that though thirty-one years separate two French representatives, they are still the same.
Compare this response by his French embassy liaison with that of the French lieutenant at *Les Tombeaux* in Dec. 1958, who told Omar, “the unselfish gesture is out of mode today.”
- p. 77: “this folly . . . the wiser Paris will view me”: Both are indications that his liaison, likely feeling the case should have remained in his hands, had opposed sending an amateur to Algiers to investigate Ballard’s murder.
Remy also knows that if any problems arise he probably cannot rely on his French Embassy liaison for assistance.
- p. 77: “‘So go about your business’ . . . except to himself, ‘My father’s business’”: This is the first of three instances echoing the passage from Luke 2:49 in which Jesus says, “I must be about my Father’s business.”
Here “M. Champagne” asserts that DGSE’s “business,” that Remy can uncover Belmazoir’s knowledge about any negatives which Ballard had sold, runs counter to his own “business,” that Remy will reveal himself to be such an incompetent amateur that he will be recalled and “Champagne” will again conduct the investigation.
However, Remy posits that he will use these expectations of him by both DGSE and his French Embassy liaison to implement his true purpose in coming to Algiers, rendezvousing with his father (“My “father’s business”).
The Biblical image is also used in *Lear* 4.4.23-24, where Cordelia says, “O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about.”
- p. 77: “Perhaps as appropriate a mask for the French as my professional visor is for Foucin”: Remy realizes that different masks for different people might be helpful in his enterprise.
His French liaison regards him as a rank amateur while Foucin had referred to him as a “First World professional” (4.56).
- p. 77: Boulevard Zirout Youcef: The coastal highway which the Al-Nigma Hotel fronts.
Remy chooses to take it, not Rue Abane Ramdane, so that he will not have to again walk by the prostitutes in front of the Palais of Justice, although he thinks about them, wondering whether “any of the fence-supporting blossoms remained unplucked.”
- p. 77: “*Ram-a-dan Al-lah*, their horns rhythmically blared”: A compressed form of “[The month of] Ramadan [is a Gift from] Allah.”
This rhythm will contrast with that of the horns of the *colons* (the European settlers in Algeria) which will be given on 5.79: “*Al-gér-ie Fran-çaise*” (“Algeria [is forever] French).”

- p. 77: “Another mask on another mirror”: The sea is viewed as a mirror which so distorts the hotel that what is seen is less a factual reflection of the edifice than a mask hiding it.
- p. 77: “The dark waters . . . the lights of a few rooms”: These images recall the Biblical passage, “The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1.5).
See 4.54 and its notes, N4:10-12, for a discussion of the light-darkness imagery of this novel.
- p.77: “like yellow fogged-in flowers”’: My notes are not clear on this quotation. It is possibly garbled from Rimbaud’s “The Drunken Boat”: “The sea . . . / lifted its shadow-flowers with their yellow sucking disks toward me” (62-63) and “[I] free, smoking, risen from violet fogs” (73).
Yet my original notes clearly state that the passage is adopted from a line, “Like yellow fogged-in flowers in a late-autumn field,” the last of which has no relationship to Rimbaud’s poem.
I have left in the internal quotes to indicate that the simile was borrowed.

- pp. 78-79: SECTION 6: Time span: The section flashes back to Remy's afternoon visit to Bab el Oued. At 2:30 p.m. Remy took a taxi to Bab el Oued, hoping to speak to Belmazoir's sister, Houda. The driver used the Casbah route to this suburb, getting them stuck in a traffic jam. At 3:17, when they had entered the section of Bab el Oued which Remy sought, he told the driver to stop. While walking to the Belmazoirs' residence, he thinks about a distant revolutionary war incident that occurred in Bab el Oued (3:24).
- p. 78: near-meridian: Near-noon. Remy returned to the Al-Nigma at 11.35.
- p. 78: "endangerment of his sister": Belmazoir told Remy on Monday that the purpose of his sister's visit on Thursday is to smuggle in some hashish for him (4.65).
- p. 78: "my first Algerian *sieste* in twenty-eight years": French for "siesta." The colloquial Algerian Arabic word for this nap is *gayla*.
The siesta in Algiers typically begins after the call to noon (Dhuhr) prayers (12:30 on this date, April 11, 1989) or following the prayers (1:05).
The dozers usually rouse themselves a little before the call to afternoon (Asr) prayers, which on this day came at 4:08. So they nap for around three hours.
For those who did not perform daily prayers (the majority at this time), the siesta was from noon to 3 p.m.
Since Remy has only a ninety-minute nap (12:30 – 2:00), technically he takes only half a siesta.
Omar (Remy) was flown out of Algiers on April 13, 1961, almost twenty-eight years ago.
- p. 78: "his gainsaying conviction in collapse": Before his nap Remy was resolute that he would not visit Houda Belmazoir.
This conviction—his opposition to the visit—had dissolved when he awoke.
- p. 78: "No. 22, Rue Mizon, Bab el Oued, the Belmazoirs' address": A residential street in Bab el Oued City.
I located it about a half kilometer north of the northern border of the Casbah and thus of Foucin's office.
- p. 78: Notre Dame d'Afrique Cathedral: A Catholic basilica which was opened for services in 1872. It is situated on a 125-meter cliff overlooking the Bay of Algiers, approximately one mile (1.6 km.) north of Bab el Oued and 2.5 kilometers north of downtown Algiers.
Although open for services, because of the few Catholics or other Christians in Algeria, Notre Dame d'Afrique Cathedral has largely become a tourist attraction. More information on it will be provided in the 6.82 note, N6:2.
- p. 78: El Kettar Cemetery: The Belmazoir's resident is about one kilometer northeast of Kettar Cemetery. It was previously mentioned in the 4.63 note on Toumi Street.

- p. 78: Babelouedians: A person who resides in the Bab el Oued district, particularly in its Bab el Oued City.
- p. 78: “coastal route . . . two-and-one-half-kilometer trip . . . should have not exceeded twenty minutes . . . more profitable one-kilometer beeline through the Casbah”: In 1989 the coastal highway from the fictional Al-Nigma was one long stretch with four boulevard names: Zirout Youcef, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, Anatole France, and Amara Mohammed Rachid.
Where the last intersected with Boulevard Abderahmane Taleb, approximately the two-kilometer mark, a right turn and a 300 m. drive leads to Rue Mohammed Tazairt, the beginning of Bab el Oued City.
The more direct or beeline route to the Belmazoirs’ residence is through the Casbah. Believing Remy to be a tourist, the taxi driver, who is paid by the minutes of the ride not the kilometers traveled, takes this more profitable route.
- p. 78: Rue Arbadji Abderahmane . . . Rue Marengo . . . Middle Street”: The three names for the same north-south street that bisects the Casbah. Its northern border is the Jardin Marengo (Marengo Park) mentioned on 4.63 and in its note.
Rue Marengo and its post-colonial name Arbadji Abderahmane are referred to on 3.37 and in its note.
- p. 78: “pedestrians, vehicles, and beasts of burden”: This central or middle street of the Casbah accommodates all three.
- p. 78: “smack in the center of the Casbah . . . unsolicited confrontation with time . . . the 1830 invasion . . . 1790s . . . forty years ago . . . [and on the next page] six months prior”: Four periods of time relating to the past are mentioned: The 1790s when Algeria was free; 1830 when the French using a slight diplomatic pretense invaded, conquered and began colonizing Algeria; 1949 when Omar’s father teaches him that time is timeless; and February 1961 when Omar learns about the lynching of three Muslims in Bab el Oued and asks his French case officer whether there was any plan for his evacuation to France.
- p. 78: Palais d’Hiver: The French name of the building translates as “Winter Palace.”
- p. 78: “built by Dar Hassan Pacha, the city’s dey”: Dar Hassan Pacha was the ruler or dey of Algiers from 1791 to 1798. In 1791, his minister of finance actually built this palace on the edge of the Casbah for his family, but because its construction occurred during the dey’s administration, the building was named after him.
When Algiers fell to the French in 1832, the three-story house was turned into the French governor’s winter residence.
Over the years it was renovated to give it a European-style façade with rows of large windows and balconies. It adjoins the Ketchaoua Mosque, which under French rule was turned into a cathedral.
After Algerian liberation, it served as a ceremonial residence until the 1990s, around which time the Ministry of Religious Affairs was moved there.

Recently the ministry was relocated, and the palace was closed for renovations, which were still going on at the time I write this note (2013).

- p. 78: “density of time”: The spatial density of the Casbah (its large population packed into a small area) is contrasted with the temporal density of this ancient district of the city, which seems like an impenetrable object not readily subject to change over time.
Omar’s father’s interpretation of reality, which is based solely on the Qur’an, is unified; his religion allows him to see human time in terms of eternity. His father tells Omar that Noura, whom the family called their “Gift from God” (3.38), understands that time cannot be trisected into past, present, and future, but she will accompany her brother who seemingly believes in that separation.
- p. 78: “some forty years ago”: Omar was nine then and Noura five. In my chronology, this incident occurred in 1949,
- p. 78: “Only memory is dense”: Remy emends his father, “substitut[ing],” as he notes on p. 79, “biased ‘memory’ for his father’s unitary ‘time.’”
Here Remy locates this “density” (the compactness and richness of the chain of being, penetrable for Muslims like Omar’s father only through their faith in Allah and His Prophet) in “memory” or the past.
At Trimalchio’s only begrudgingly did Remy make the connection of the past with the present, the future, and eternity (2.18 and its note, N2:16-17).
- p. 78: Rue Soualah Mohammed: An east-west artery of the Casbah with which the north-south Middle Street intersects.
It runs parallel with Boulevard Abderazak Hadad, on which Foucin has his office, and is the second Casbah street south of this boulevard.
- p. 78: “the park Jardin Marengo”: The large public park located adjacent to the northeastern border of the Casbah. See the 4.63 note.
- p. 78: “I point-blank to it”: “Point-blank” as an adverb means “in a direct line” and “without hesitation.”
Here the taxi driver uses it as a neologistic verb meaning “I am going point-blank to it [Bab el Oued].”
- p. 78: “red-eyed *chauffeur de taxi*” (taxi driver) and “green melody”: The color images here are appropriated from Stevens’s “Peter Quince,” which contains references to “red-eyed elders” (12) and a “green evening” (10), “green water” (16), “green going” (55),” as well as “melody” (23).
See the 2.17 note where it is mentioned that red and green are two colors of the Algerian flag. (The other is white.)
The symbolic use of these colors in my novel was also influenced by Dante’s *Purgatorio* and Petronius’s *Satyricon*, as discussed in the 2.17 note, N2:10.

p. 78: Rue Mohammed Tazairt: A main entrance to Bab el Oued district and Bab el Oued City, as mentioned in the p. 78 note above.

- p. 79: Vacheron: Remy's expensive watch, a Vacheron Constantin. See 4.60 and its note, N4:27, for details about the watch.
- p. 79: "just over twenty minutes . . . nearly fifty": Some insignificant symbolism in the numbers, which juggle times in Remy's life.
According to the chronology of the novel, Omar turned twenty-one on April 2, 1961, and was flown out of the country eleven days later. So he was "just over twenty."
Remy returns to Algiers on April 9, 1989, so he has just celebrated his forty-ninth birthday; thus he is "nearly fifty."
- p. 79: *commune*: neighborhood or municipality.
Algiers is divided into thirteen districts and fifty-seven *communes*. As mentioned, Bab el Oued is both a district and a municipality.
Administratively, the Casbah, a commune, is part of the Bab el Oued district.
- p. 79: *pieds-noirs*: Emigrants to Algeria from Christian Mediterranean countries acquired the name of "black-footed" colonists, possibly because of the black shoes which they typically wore.
See 3.40 and its note, N3:15-16, for the background on why *pied* (French for "foot") and *noir* ("black") were combined to become a synecdoche for the colonists.
- p. 79: "More disposed to fight": Remy's contention is that the middle class (*bourgeoisie* or as here the *pieds-noirs*), having land or shops, something tangible to defend, are more disposed to fight than the upper or lower class.
The wealthy and the working classes possess only intangibles (a superfluity of wealth or a deficiency of it, both of which produce an inability to understand wealth as more than a concept).
- p. 79: "*une mensonge*" and "*guerre*": "a lie" and "war." Remy's reasoning is, "Unlike a lie, one must have an incentive to tell the truth." He concludes that a person does not need an incentive to tell a lie; lying seems to be the natural impulse for a human being.
He then uses this grammatical structure to speak of war and peace: Unlike war, one must have an incentive to live in peace. Warfare appears to be the natural state of humanity, trumped only by superior and tangible motives which would justify peace.
- p. 79: OAS: The idea of a militia of European colons to oppose de Gaulle's movement toward independence for Algeria rose in the *pied-noir* suburb of Bab el Oued in 1960. Out of this resistance came the OAS, made up of colonists and disgruntled French Algerian army officers and politicians.
The OAS was officially formed in Madrid in Jan. 1961, shortly after the Jan. 8 referendum in which voters in both mainland France and Algeria approved the plan of de Gaulle's government to begin peace negotiations with the FLN to grant Algeria self-determination.

In my chronology, the lynching incident occurred on June 15, 1960, before the official formation of the OAS and before the design of its black-and-white flag. For a discussion of this French Algerian paramilitary organization group, see 3.40 and its note.

The clandestine OAS proved to be short-lived (January 1961 – April 1962) and failed to prevent Algerian independence.

As 3.40 indicates, the OAS was responsible for the attack on the nunnery during which Noura was presumably killed.

- p. 79: “*Al-gér-ie Fran-çaise*”: This chant of the *pieds-noirs*, popular from 1958 to 1962, became the 3-pause-2 rhythmic honking of car horns used in this June 15, 1960, incident.

The chant would be mimicked by two which were used by the Muslim Algerians during their street demonstrations from December 1960 to 1962: “*Algérie Algérienne!*” and “*Algérie Musulmane!*” (“Algerian Algeria” and “Muslim Algeria.”)

On p. 77, some Algerians drivers had celebrated Ramadan by employing the 3-pause-2 honking, there meaning “*Ram-a-dan Al-lah.*”

- p. 79: “whirling-dervish spin”: The second and final reference to the dance of a Muslim sect which practices whirling and chanting as religious acts.

On 3.39, Omar’s mother used the “dervish dance” image in describing to Omar how the children broke into a spinning dance on the day Noura and six other teenage girls were seized by the French paratroopers.

- p. 79: *Surveillant*: The word means “supervisor” in French.

In speaking of his (Omar’s) case officer in Algeria, Remy typically uses *surveillant*, often defined as “handler” (2.21, 3.50, and 4.60) or “boss” (2.26).

It is capitalized and not italicized when it directly refers to his case officer: “his *surveillant*,” but as here, “*Surveillant* . . . led off with a promise.”

- p. 79: “left dangling”: The image of a dangling person fits in with the connection-disconnection theme of the novel, with one image often contrasting with another. On 1.14, Ballard’s head “dangl[ed] over the top step,” a foreshadowing of the pendency of Remy in the last chapter, 21.356 and 363.

On 6:89, an FLN leader is similarly described as dangling.

On 10:158, Remy’s father will likewise be dangling “in midair,” a situation also to be mirrored by those of Belmazoir’s sister (14:238) as well as the siblings’ father (15:242).

- pp. 79-81: SECTION 7: Time span: From 3:24, when Remy begins to search for the neighborhood religious leader to chaperon his planned meeting with Houda, to 3:43, when Houda closes the door to the shed as a neighbor calls out a highhanded request.

Note: The remainder of this scene will be related the next day when Remy describes to Belmazoir his visit to Bab el Oued (6.82-83).

p. 79: *alim*: “A Muslim learned in religious matters” (*Webster’s Third*).

Its plural is “ulema” (not italicized in English as the less commonly used *alim* is) a collective noun which refers to a council of such scholars.

p. 79: “à l’article de la mort”: As translated in the text, French for “at death’s door.”

- p. 80: “a forceful blow from a wooden plank”: Remy compares the smashed face of Ballard with the scrunched face of the *alim*.
- p. 80: *madrasah*: Again as translated in the text, Arabic for “a Muslim school.” Often called a Qur’anic school, it is a privately run elementary school. Its curriculum focuses on memorization and recitation of the Qur’an. In many communities, as here, it is attached to the neighborhood mosque.
- p. 80: “criminal’s mother and sister”: Belmazoir’s family. Remy does not hesitate to use the language expected by someone with whom he wishes to ingratiate himself.
- p. 80: “The *alim* crinkled his nose, flabby as an eggplant”: From “The Ebony Horse” in Burton’s translation of *The Arabian Nights’ Entertainment*: He was an old man with a “flabby nose like a *brinjall* or eggplant.” (6th paragraph of the story). This comparison of a nose with an eggplant, I am certain, has an older origin than Burton.
- p. 80: “*kateer*”: Arabic for “too much.”
- p. 80: “*tanee*”: As the text indicates, Arabic for “another,” here meaning “a second person.”
- p. 80: *walad*: Arabic for “boy” although it may be used in referring to a male into his teens. It was employ by Ballard in speaking of the beach attendant Mohisen (1.8 and its note).
- p. 80: rictus: A fixed, gaping grin.
- p. 80: “black feet”: Literal translation of *pieds-noirs*. See the 5.79 note.
- p. 80: *porte d’entrée*: In French “front door of a building.”
- p. 80: “a recent gilding”: The process of applying a golden coating to the ornamental design (“filigree”) of the door.
- p. 80: quaternary: “a group of four” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 80: “thirty years ago”: 1959 or during French colonial rule.
- p. 80: “plank-and-batten door”: Defined in the text as “vertical plywood boards held together by slats from wooden crates.” The planks extend the full height of the door and when placed side by side fill the door’s width. Battens are smaller slats that extend horizontally across the door and hold the planks together.

- p. 80: “*Nam?*”: Arabic “Yes?” (the usually response to a knock at the door or to a telephone call).
- p. 80: “impregnated”: filled; saturated; imbued, but later in the novel (18.303) this choice will prove to be an unpremeditated foreshadowing by Remy.
- p. 80: *niqaab*: As defined in the text, “veil,” it is revealed to be a full *niqaab*, one which covers the entire face.
As expected, Houda is veiled when she opens the door. In fact, only one time in the novel (18. 298) will Remy see her face uncovered.

- p. 81: “he plumed himself on”: “to pride, congratulate, or take credit to (oneself)” as in “plumed himself on his accomplishment” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 81: cormorant: a greedy person.
- p. 81: “not to bring what he had requisitioned . . . his special needs . . . a day before your scheduled trip”: Remy includes this information to convey a signal that her brother had confided in him.
- p. 81: “a soiled white sheet hung as a room divider”: Mohammed spoke of a “bedsheet dividing the room” of their shack (4.65).
- p. 81: tenebrosity: “darkness” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 81: “Has your mama died yet?”: The first speech of Mme. Bourceli (her name is not given until 6.83), a minor, basically comic character modeled on both Chaucer’s Wife of Bath and Shakespeare’s Falstaff.
“Bourceli” is an actual Algerian cognomen. I chose it because of its similarity to the English words, “bore” and “silly,” both of which are aspects of her character, and “porcine” since she is piglike in appearance and nature.
- p. 81: Ghazi: Bourceli’s teenage son, who will prove to be equally as obnoxious as his mother.
- p. 81: “sura-spinner”: “Sura” refers to the chapters of the Qur’an; “spin” is Bourceli’s contemptuous reference less to the *alim*’s protracted teaching of the Qur’an and more to his spider-like nature.
Her last speech in the novel (18.305) will contrast in several ways with this first.
- p. 81: “martyrdom for the deceased to depart in the Holy Month”: Some Muslim scholars—the fifth-century AH/tenth-century CE Sunni scholar al-Bayhaqi is an early example—hold that if a pious Muslim dies in Ramadan, the person will be saved from the punishment of the grave.
Most scholars hold this as a superstition.
A longer discussion of this topic will occur in the 18.303 note, where it is more crucial to the plot.
- p. 81: “splayed hands”: His hands, with their fingers extended and palms up, are turned outward.
- p. 81: “Her yawn”: It is part of her character that Mme. Bourceli will yawn at the point when someone calls a blessing upon her dead husband.
Her curses on him will become a “running gag” on 11:174-76.
- p. 81: “the squirts”: diarrhea.

- p. 81: “hoyden”: “a woman of loud, boisterous, or carefree behavior” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 81: “dense, unmasked laughter”: A final reference to the title of the chapter, which closes with a character seemingly devoid of hypocrisy, whose public face seems to match her private face.
- p. 81: “the sweet smell of Ramadan”: These words by the Prophet Mohammed will be explained on 6.83.