

# Chapter Nine

## NOTHING CONNECTS

Not “Once upon a time in a faraway realm,” but “During the second year of the revolution near Tizi Aimoula,” most extant versions of the episode begin. That they retained the particularizing of the year, 1956, and the specific locale, a gorge-hanging village in northern Algeria’s Grande Kabylie, was perhaps indicative of its fate.

True, within a week after the events, it did become the buzzing *causette* of Algiers—and surprisingly in both camps. The Arabic opening of the FLNers inserted a few qualifiers, “this our Glorious,” in front of the flourished, seemingly capitalized, “[R]evolution,” while the colonizing *pieds-noirs* substituted “insurrection,” vocalized (as the French tongue allows) with an initiating lower cap.

Two weeks later Ben Bella, then the principal “external” FLN *chef* in Egypt, felt compelled to entertain President Gamal Abdel Nasser with the Arab rendition, if only to countervail the *journal* notoriety the French one had commanded.

That it never achieved the status of a legend presumably resulted from both sides’ having embraced it. Frankly, it’s embarrassing to be repeating what your enemy is extolling, makes you susceptible to being branded a *traître*.

Nevertheless, on its first inspection, how could the *pieds-noirs* not pine to eulogize the defiant speech of the young corporal at the onset of his crucifixion, and what Muslim, especially its women, could not help but swell with pride at the indomitability, yea, the implacability, of the dames of Tizi Aimoula?

Unfortunately, both accounts had to link the two, and the teller of each, plainly sensible of the ambiguity of the narrative, was forced to live with the hope that his listeners would not perceive it. A sorry state for a chronicler.

For the colonists, it lost its popularity long before they lost the war. For the Algerians—except those in the Kabylie, whose minds like their hoes scratching the rocky ground sought out its infertile potential as an exemplum—it declined until its sole use was at an incidental and personal level, that of an anecdote, and what anecdote ever starts, “*Il était une fois*”?

In the twentieth month of the seven-plus-year Algerian War, at the tail end of a fickle twilight skirmish, one of the eleven conscripts of an ALN *faoudj* (“squad”) operating in the Great Kabylie Mountains and a raw French corporal stumbled on each other. It was an encounter not entirely by chance, for the goal of both was identical: to slip away from the confused fray.

Influenced by and mayhap acknowledging primogeniture, the Frenchman, whose name has come down as Jacques Poulailier, in faster anticipation than his adversary plumped to his knees, begging to be spared.

Thanking Allah for such well-earned serendipity, the Algerian, who tarried a full two hours beyond the firing of the last shot, with kicks and slaps coerced his prisoner toward the cave where his *faoudj* barracked following an engagement.

Having received a minim of flummery, perfunctorily delivered by his chief—like the wretched Poulailier, a corporal—the Arab happily retreated through the smoke to the cave’s sunken campfire with its promise of a smidgeon of food and a nip of warmth.

“‘Kabyle smile’ him” was the leader’s decree. A *boussaadi* (“mountain knife”) was whipped out and brought to M. Jacques’s throat. It had already made a nick before the ALN corporal, inspiration-seized, countermanded, “Halt! We’ll give him to those pestering shrews of Tizi Aimoula.”

“We thank you, yet this politeness should not be interpreted as a disclaimer of our predilection: We would have preferred, and do deserve we feel, a captain or at the least a lieutenant,” the spokeswoman of the manless village stiffly answered.

She and those massed behind her were inwardly giddy at the prospect: For the first time in over a year, their modest *jebel* (“mountain hamlet”) of twenty-eight piled-stone dwellings would house a man for a full night.

The ALN had dispatched those Tizi Aimoula males soft on the “Revolution”; the French, those hard-bent on insurrection; and the others, not knowing whether they were “*doux ou dur*,” had absconded with a firmly wavering conviction that they could escape the matter at hand, whose palm none desired to grasp.

Not at the *faoudj* leader, the *porte-parole* and all of her compeers stared, but with undisguised yearning at the delicately featured Jacques Poulailier.

Inevitably, sex obtrudes, you sigh, quite *au fait* in transmogrifying “Jack fell [*var. felt*] down and broke his crown” and Jill’s “tumbling after” into male and female orgasms. Not so here.

Both the ALN and the French with frequent regularity swung by to ravish the women of Tizi Aimoula (and enlist/abduct any lad verging on twelve). Their need, not sexual, was direr: They wanted a man to torture.

Before the Revolution/insurrection/war invaded their village, there were fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, and nephews for their tongues to bedevil. For the previous year, none.

Not having come to exercise their ears, the rapists, just as the corporal and his six adjunctive privates on that late afternoon when they deposited Poulailier, were in and out afore a tongue could fashion the inceptive vocable of a philippic, if you set aside the opening guarded mordancy of the prolocutress.

“Dawn prayers completed, I’ll drop by to assess how you’ve dealt with him,” enounced the leader, whose men had installed the trussed-up Poulailier in the village henhouse.

“Hurry, ladies,” the doyenne trolled. “Blessed Allah, in machination which we cannot comprehend, affords the long-suffering so little time.” There gushed a stream of injunctions to the other thirty-two.

This list varies from version to version, and some attribute the narrative’s degeneration to the lack of wit exhibited in the commands.

E.g., “Tinkle in a cup, then drink the piss. / To Poulailier fly and with a hiss / Spew it

upon this Mr. Miss” is one circulated by those who craved to malign the *femmes* of Tizi Aimoula as slacking judges of what torture entails.

“Get knife and needle; with the one / Slice a piece of his flesh, still be not done. / With the other, stitch it back on” gainsays that charge by showing how adroitly they adapted their household implements, domesticating torture.

More important business was to be attended to, the strategist’s final directive evinced: “While you younger ones impregnate his every wink with pain, we six matrons will retire to concoct a climax to his duration with us.”

After a sociable debate, they reached a common accord: One hour before sunrise M. Jacques was to be lashed to interlocking wooden beams, altered, raised seven minutes, lowered, altered again, upheaved a second time, and so on.

(The French spinners, explicit in their mythmaking, christened the decussation a “cross.” A better truth is that by hoisting Poulailleur the women contrived for the returning leader and his squad from afar to descry what their ingenuity had wrought.)

“Altered?” you ask. At each lowering, a part of his body was to be sequentially dispensed with: his ears, his eyes, his toes and fingers (conceived as one), his tongue, his testicles, his hair and the scalp it grew from (ditto), and ultimately his guts.

They were sporting, these dams of Tizi Aimoula, and soon commenced to wager their prized possessions on which modification would be the terminative one, engendering their captive to give up his ghost. Shawls and sheets, earrings and generational earthenware, chickens and Qur’ans (the list could go on and on) were thrown into the pot.

No one took the ears, the first designated to be severed, until a mid-aged hoyden tossed in a half pack of Gauloises, intoning, “Two reasons: A corporal, he won’t have the staying power of, say, a sergeant. And, *a fortiori*, I know I’d die flat-out had I no ears to hear the village gossip. Perhaps he will. May Allah favor my wager!”

(This “blasphemous benediction,” of course, was omitted from all Arab renditions, although none appear to have discovered a way around the betting.)

“And what of his passage from the henhouse to the stake?” one huffed. “Shall it be as pleasant as a morning of goat-milking, gracious ladies?” In the span of a sneeze, it was resolved: “Verily, we will smite him with woman’s only Allah-bestowed, indigenous instrument of torture—our best, most wicked tongues!”

This second listing, in every variant and therefore deemed essential by all narrators, is similarly wielded to denigrate or elevate the distaff side of Tizi Aimoula. For ’tis a truth of human nature: What one calls unimaginative another will dub inspired. The viraginous “I’ll tailor your prepuce into a festive hair bow” and “I’ll spice my soup with your toenails” met that divided fate.

After hours of devising and perfecting appropriate imprecations, agape were their mouths when one, erecting herself, pointed to the obvious. “Esteemed sublimities, how can our curses hurt him? He understands no Arabic, and we speak no French.”

A span of fervent mulling providentially yielded the solution: One denizen, at present assigned as a fomenter of the hencoop squeals, was . . . well . . . versed in some French, or so she had bragged these many years.

Summoned, she was instructed to devote the next three hours to translating into French their maledictions and drilling her charges in their memorization.

A naked, patch-skinned Jacques Poulailier, his hands bound and feet shackled, was ushered forth into the crepuscular prelude to dawn. The women of Tizi Aimoula let fly their tongues, as bright and searing they felt as the wooden torches they brandished aloft.

“The Frenchman is taunted in French!” self-congratulated each while the corporal, tethered by two ropes sutured into his nipples, was being dragged over the stony earth and prickly bushes to the top of a three-meter slope.

(A late *pied-noir* version asseverated—you can “Ha-ha!” or “Aha!” as you wish—that in the lugging, a crown of thorns collected in his brown hair.)

The seven matrons, for the teacher had been promoted to their rank, strapped his legs, chest, and neck to the perpendicular beam—the vertical one to be leverage in the hoisting. Off were whacked his ears, and to the accompaniment of their grunts and the ululations of the twenty-six (children excluded) huddled below the tiny hill, heavenward he was raised.

None of them had divined that he would speak, a sign of how little the torturer thinks about the one being tortured.

That what Poulailier said is the same in all renditions is no assurance that is what he said. You must remember, of all the auditors only one had mistressed French. And her crudeness in that tongue, manifested in her pupils’ malisons, which evidently as much offended M. Jacques as the preceding and anticipated torture, must be taken into account in her reportage.

Be that as it may, the words that issued from his throat, the parchedness of which had been relieved during the last eleven hours by a few droplets of urine, were, all versions concur, “‘Father, forgive them for what they do,’ . . . but not for their villainous French!”

## 2

With the three seated in a partitioned-off table of the Aladdin Room, Remy opened, “I know you both fast.”

“Not I!” exclaimed the brother. “I’m sure Allah wouldn’t begrudge me the chiefest repast I’ll e’er partake.”

Remy’s rejoinder, “I’m sorry; I don’t believe the Al-Nigma serves Muslims during the daylight hours of Ramadan,” was skirted by Chabane’s ebullition. “Tell them I’m a Christian, a Jew, a blue-man animist from the Sahara who’s removed his paint!” he squawked, suspicious that Remy merely strove to avoid the expense of a meal.

By the time *Maître d’hôtel* Rouis returned, an arrangement had been reached: The semblance would be advanced that the comestibles were being ordered for Remy.

Throughout the sparring Leila hunched noiselessly, just as she had in the taxi from the embassy, seemingly “regardless grown.” As her brother had shoved her into its backseat, Remy had felt a twinge of pity for her: “She’ll have to go home with this clump of sod.”

In the ride, Chabane had rushed to exploit the opportunity. “I and my sister are desperate,” he began. “From that den of liars” (his thumb was thrust over his shoulder) “we pocket only words . . . which do not spend. We’re without money even for the train back to Constantine. For myself, I could hitchhike, but . . .” And he gazed poignantly at his sibling.

Remy did not hesitate in his reply. “You must permit me to be of assistance.”

The *chauffeur de taxi*, a new one recommended by Boshabo, the Al-Nigma’s daytime receptionist, started his corrections with the second sentence, interrupting Chabane three times and ultimately repeating its entirety. The jumbled prepositional phrases of the next were stoutly realigned.

“*L’auto-stop*, not *l’autoroute*,” shouted the incensed driver, Kamal Nemmiche, who jeered in Arabic, “Monsieur, your French, spoken *comme une vache espagnole* (‘like a Spanish cow’), embarrasses your country. Not since the harridans of Tizi Aimoula! Please employ your native tongue, and I’ll translate!”

Chabane grumbled that he tendered his service aiming for an improved tip and closed with three imprecations: “*Zirda! Khubzist! Tiqaardji!* [‘Fox! Hustler! Petty thief!’]”

Forestalling a retort, Remy asserted in English, fully aware Nemmiche would not apprehend, “My friend, your courtesy excels, though I’m not inconvenienced.” At this, Leila raised her head, but did not heed her brother’s question, “What does he say?”

Save for a grating wiper blade, the taxi fell into quietude. Evoking the anecdote of the “torturers of Tizi Aimoula,” Remy imagined the driver to be similarly occupied. As for Leila, her ruminations were “buried in the embassy underground,” and Chabane, he fancied, was scheming how far Remy’s offer would sanction him to be fleeced.

After four blocks, the brother, not attempting complete sentences, reopened the confabulation. Thanking Remy, he solicited three times the fare for *deux places de première classe* on the train from Algiers to Constantine. The sum was at once accepted.

Nothing was uttered during the final minutes of the trip. Nevertheless, again through a peek in the mirror, Remy viewed a hardening smirk, the self-enchanted gloat of a knave who deems he has stumbled upon the best kind of fool, a generous one.

“You’re a friend of the American ambassador?” Chabane pursued validation the instant the headwaiter was out of earshot. Remy nodded a “possibly.” “Yet not an American.” With curled lips, he shivered an encouraging denial.

“So perfect is your tongue, are you with the French ‘legation’?” Remy molded a smile which acknowledged less the unmerited compliment than the commentator’s acumen.

“Paris is interested in the death of this Ballard!” Relaxing his frame, Remy suppressed a yawn. “Oh no, I know! The ambassador, his chum, is courting Gallic collaboration.” Given that *copain* (“pal”) had come out as *chapon* (“capon”), Remy’s visage ostended an initial puzzlement prior to discreetly jiggling his right index.

With his elbow, an elated Chabane poked his sister’s arm. “Monsieur, he’d committed himself, that ‘queer’ Ballard, to procuring a French visa for me, a ‘snap’ for him.”

At the Spanish epithet *maricón*, popularly used to tag “*homosexuels*” in North Africa, Leila’s head sprang up. She folded back the side of her veil, exposing an eye and its brow.

Quick to avert the stare, Chabane mewled, “My sister’s despondency is not commensurable with mine. Will you, monsieur, help me?”

As her hand redrew the covering, the whiteness of the sclera and the wedge-shaped blush of skin vanished, an eclipse not unlike that of a lizard, startled by the sunlight, retracting into the dark comfort of a black rock.

## 3

Pellets of stew-drenched semolina had become entangled in Chabane's full beard and mustache, both no less scraggly than a coconut's tassels, and jostled about as he masticated—simultaneously eating, talking, and grimacing.

“Why don't you eat?” he lectured his sister in Arabic. “You know how miserly Father breaks the fast.” He wiped his greasy fingers on the overhang of the tablecloth. “Admire you not how I ride this jackass!”

When neither remark collapsed her silence, he faced Remy. “Weekly Ballard feted her in alcazars rivaling the Al-Nigma. Not me, with whom he aloofly hemmed and hawed.”

The couscous—or Leila's apparent stupor after the re-masking of her eye—has emboldened him, Remy surmised, *to jabber whate'er he desires*. The deeper he grubbed in the sticky hard wheat and the further Leila crouched inward the more animated Chabane became.

“What my pathetic sister is suffering! Who will marry her now, at a decent price? Previously a valuable virgin. Now a Muslim widow. Ballard's greedy American niece, she covets it all! You Westerners are illiterate about our customs. The signing of the *katb el-kitb*, our 'marriage contract,' opens the chamber door, disrobes the anatomy, and confers any and all types of bodily possession—wedlock's true stigma.”

Chabane swung his head from Remy and spit a tiny piece of gristle onto the carpet. “That he chose not to—could not—bed my sister (granted that's a supposition since Father could not hound that truth from her) doesn't null the covenant. The public blazon of vows at the costly ceremony my father planned was solely that—a ritualistic release.”

His bearded chin sank abjectly to his chest. “My poor papa! Overwhelmed with grief, for the rumors of Ballard's deviancy have invaded our village. Pacing his field, with mustered stones he bombards anyone or anything accosting him.

“Humbly stress to this Leroy the magnitude of our plight—a more-than-worthless sister, derided by all since she was widowed by a faggot; a crazed father; and I, whose apple hopes of a French visa have turned wormy. Convince him that the matrimonial autographing yoked my sister and Ballard, not the projected 'I-do' canting, a sociable cheville.”

Remy, who had grown adept at rendering (“and elevating”) Chabane's “villainous French,” swiftly responded, “Which cannot be spent. Monsieur, I'm far too ignorant of Muslim customs to voice an opinion, but if the major repercussion is true, your sister's devaluation, I'm acutely sympathetic to your family's direful straits.”

“Doubt not my rendition of our mores for I can furnish licit verification. Two months ago, irked by this Ballard's renegeing on his promise, I approached an upstanding Algiers lawyer, who charged me seventy-five dinars for ten minutes of one-sided discourse.”

Chabane's eyes widened to emphasize the outlay. “Avouched he, ‘Should the groom have dropped dead ere the ink of his signature dried, she'd be his lawful wife.’ Why do the Americans refuse us her consort's desserts?”

To advertise his frustration, he inhaled ponderously and, after cramming a handful into his mouth, suspired deliberately through the yellow grains.

“So the gossip about M. Ballard's sexual proclivity has overswarmed your village? M.

Chabane, you're an intelligent man. Did you not suspect this aberration?"

"He was odd, that I discerned from the first. I and my father exploited their monumental age differential to inflate the price of the dowry. Yet when affronted with such a lucrative fortuity, an American in-law, who wouldn't abide a measure of quirkiness?"

"From the first?" A wisp of incredulity floated across Remy's effulgent display of admiration. "With absolute certainty?"

"With more than that more," clarified Chabane. "My proof was . . . firsthand." He threw back his shoulders to punctuate his impending revelation. "He slept with me!"

Remy blew out a coughing snort. "What's this?"

"The night of the handfast," Chabane explained, neither *père* nor *fils* would have protested if "the groom had 'dossed down' as lord and master in Leila's chamber. But where did he request to bunk himself? Mine."

There donning a bedtime *djellaba*, Ballard settled onto a padded mat. "Not to sleep, I promptly realized, for he hankered to talk, some rhapsody about his fidelity to my sister, whose happiness was his life's end. Fearing his blather would disturb the house, I scooted my floor mattress so it abutted his.

"And I'll help you,' he vowed, dotting the *you* by plopping his left hand on my shoulder. To avoid offending, I reached across, took his right in mine, and guided them so ours rested above his heart. 'Dear brother,' I cajoled, 'I rely upon your words.'

"His snaking emendation: 'In truth, I'm not yet your brother, not till I complete my Islamic studies.' A stirring tinkled within. I comprehended what he was intimating: Since we were 'not yet' Muslim brothers, the *mamnuuh* ('forbidden') was licensed."

Chabane, leaning in, adopted a conspiratorial whisper. "I decided to test him. Bathing my gesture in angelic-binding purity, I slanted our interlocked hands downward past his navel, but naturally stopped them before they verged on his filthy privacy.

"At that point I subtly petitioned, 'In as much as you speak of Islamic customs, will you make some alteration here? It's not obligatory—circumcision.'"

Leila raised her head, so long slumped, thereby exposing a *niqaab*, "bedewed at the edge." (The sightless Milton's description of "Dalila's veil" burgeoned in Remy's mind.) *Poor girl, still she loves Ballard, but this night*—his obiter dictum resurfaced—*must go home with [this clod].*"

Oblivious of his sister's exertion, Chabane proceeded, "He halted our melded phalanges, which gravity (I suppose) had forced to renew their slide, twisted them—how cunningly weird!—and laughed. 'On my eighth earthly day, snipped in my bud.'

"In clarifying what he meant, he enlightened me of his early family, ceasing most irreverently, 'In body—at least in that part of my body—I'm a reverter already.'"

Chabane's thespian recoil was accompanied by lips "sanctimoniously curled" and nostrils quivering with "malodorous" disgust. "I'm not a comic book Turkish Joha, 'intelligent,' to quote you. Frozen with glee, nonetheless cautious not to arouse his suspicions, I let him babble on."

When confident that Ballard was asleep, he scurried to his father's chamber. "He roundly cuffed me for awaking him, but my frantic susurrations in his ear, 'We can up the dowry again. He's a Jew!' transformed his blows into caresses amoving my every part."

His hushed pitch was replaced by a medial, albeit sanguine, tone. “So as I averred, ‘from the first,’ I authenticated his iniquity—doubly depraved being a *yahoodee*.” With a stretch, he patted the dorsa of those hands which twenty minutes earlier Leila had tucked below her breast.

“M. Chabane, granted that his bedroom gaucheries are incriminatory, I’m positive you demanded foolproof substantiation of his deviancy, beyond his cast-aside religion?”

When Leila brushed away her sibling’s touch, her ulterior target, Remy curiously felt, was “my own manipulated blandishment.”

“Not till an enthusiastic transplant to Algiers (to press my case while chaperoning my sister) was I afforded the opportunity to secure the back-breaking straw. In truth, I was lonely. Intuitively I shunned Ballard, and one tires of a sister’s company.

“Compound that isolation with despair since not a shekel of effort was being expended to promote my matter. Then good luck paid a call on one not undeserving—me.” *De novo* he pulled up, a second signaling that a momentous divulgence was imminent.

“Of this even my sister is witless. My fourth week here I was hanging over a cup of coffee in a shop near Martyrs Square, gallantly bemoaning how Allah had deserted me. A man near my own virile age, twenty-two, sauntered in and, chancing to sit beside me, struck up a chat. From the outset, I pinpointed he was a Plo, a Palestinian Muslim brother?

“What are cafés for but to unbosom one’s dreams? I laid bare mine, to immigrate to France, and he—propitious friend, Heaven-sent—suggested that his people might be of some avail. His precondition: Everything about me and my family I must betray.

“Four coffees’ worth of prodding questions ensued, after which he, the soul of empathy, promised to check with his people. At our follow-up two days later, he told me they’d found out that our apartment was rented for us by an American embassy employee: ‘Your sister’s fiancé!’ Miffed, he clamored why I’d withheld these details.

“‘Out of shame,’ I confessed. ‘He’s two or three times her age.’

“‘The disgrace is more exalted,’ impugned he, ‘for our research uncovered he is wantonly involved with a young *prostituée*.’ Shining corroboration that I’m as equitable as a courtroom *cadi*: not the feminine *prostituée*, but *prostituée*.”

Chabane’s French, as to be expected, had invented a distinguishing syllable, thereby reversing the written inflections, Remy whimsically noted to himself.

“I had to counterfeit surprise . . . to guard my family’s honor. ‘He weekly “rents” a Mohammed Belmazoir, one of our flunkies. Sadly we must utilize his kind.’”

The Palestinian had recommended the lawyer whom Chabane sought out, “‘for just as America toys with our statehood, so this one may be toying with your sister,’ he advised. Despite my annoyance at the overpriced counsel, my trusty comrade persuaded me this morass wasn’t as forlorn as it appeared. Like Palestine I must bide my time.”

On their fourth meeting, Chabane traveled to their camp south of Algiers. “From its japing tattle I culled how universally trumpeted was the malignity of my sister’s choice. We were yet dawdling when this Ballard up and got himself murdered.”

He twisted his body toward Leila, murmuring in Arabic, “Dear sister, concurrent with this foreigner you learn a harvester’s shock about this devil. Did not you wonder (for the female of the species, our masculine Qur’an states, has more idle time to think than we

proactive males) why Father reopened the negotiations the next morning?

“Imagined you that I was spending my days in Algiers drinking tea with the wee stipend you doled out to me? An allowance, as if I were a child.” His mauley, reaching over, smothered her clutched hands. “Your brother’s no *bébé*, is clever, is he not?”

Slipping from his grasp, with her fingertips Leila clenched the seams of her veil and brought it upward. As it gained her lips, she addressed him in English. “It’s with me you wish to converse, is it not, M. Lazar?”

At the continued ascent of the full *niquaab*, “a shudder” ran through Remy, and “again the old awe” stole over him: Across the table was the most beautiful face he had seen since last he beheld Marie’s.

## 4

“Speak in French,” Chabane dictated in Arabic.

“No, brother of mine,” countered Leila, still peering at Remy. “You eat. ‘You know how miserly Father breaks the fast.’ Eat!”

*Having felled her sibling’s crest*, Remy inwardly bantered, *she rivets her black eyes on me—“eyes” that “penetrate until they find the heart.”*

“Which should be given more weight,” she began by conjecturing in English, “the lie built upon a truth or the truth built upon a lie?”

“A truth upon a truth is to be preferred,” Remy, not straightaway, equivocally reconstrued the options.

“M. Lazar, who are you?”

That the personal inquiry more greatly discomfited him than the philosophical one was confirmed by his initial haltering. “I am . . . Your brother . . . My identity he has perceptively divined. While he probed, you were withdrawn, perhaps failing to hear.”

“My brother’s perception?” Her curtailed jangling peal ambiguously taunted. “M. Thierry Devereaux? Mme. Genevieve Jospin? Mlle. Z’hor Saraoui?” She halted after each name to study Remy, who attempted to sustain a noncommittal visage. “Come, monsieur,” she pressed, “telling me who these are will better tell me who you are.”

“Mme. Ballard, I’m in the dark as to what you are intent on eliciting. You must be more direct with me.”

“And do you believe I am Mme. Ballard or simply hope by bestowing that title I will ‘lachrymosely melt’?” There was no lull. “Mme. Genevieve Jospin has been the secretary of the French ambassador—I’m sure you know *his* name—since his appointment last year.

“Mlle. Z’hor Saraoui, yes, an Arab, is the embassy’s computer typist *sans pareille*. Anew, I entreat, ‘Who are you?’ other than one who prefers a truth built upon a truth.”

Accepting what he had to undertake, Remy embarked upon an apology for having deceived her brother and then unveiled his situation, how he had been hired by the Belgian lawyer of Belmazoir to investigate—obsequiously he switched to French for the objective noun phrase—“*le meurtre lamentable de votre mari*.”

When his belabored condolences appeared to exacerbate her, he shifted to a name she had cited. “And who is this M. Thierry Devereaux, preeminent on your list, yet the one you left on hold?”

“A friend predating Paul, who has cordially offered his help with my petition. Should you be conducting any investigation out of the French embassy, you’d most certainly be privy of him.”

*Encore une fois* Remy expressed regrets for his dissimulation. “Mme. Ballard, I also desire to assist you, as well as garner your collaboration. Are not we bonded in seeking *l’assassin* of your husband?”

“All I crave is for Paul to be buried. What have I to do with his murderer?”

Though caught off-guard by the question, Remy, who had blotted from his mind the killers of Noura, could identify with it.

“Unfortunately for me,” he answered, “the one also has nothing ‘to do’ with the other. A diplomatic clock will chime the moment of your husband’s burial. My client’s client, M. Belmazoir, hearkens to the ticking of the executioner’s timepiece.”

Tenderly, “remorse for her former asperity having set in,” Leila regarded her brother. “He sleeps—Our English bored him!—a salmon-stuffed bear.”

Ignoring the diversion, Remy exploited a simile modified from Leroy’s. “Still, would you have him interred with a charge of perversion being flung like weeds upon his grave? Do you fulfill your wifely duties by only burying him?”

Turning, she glared at Remy as previously at her brother, whose casual use of *maricón* had induced an unwrapping double censure, and now the accusation twice strained her voice in protest: “A lie! A lie!”

“Upon which some have built a truth,” glossed Remy.

Before he had taken the tan handkerchief from the right flapped pocket of his Brioni pinstripe coat, he was confident she would speak—“more than the more”—to him.

## 5

At around seven that night, while Remy waited in his hotel room for Medlin, he debated whether he should introduce what Leila had imparted: A week preceding Ballard’s homicide, the two Americans had argued.

“Nothing connects my husband to that inclination,” the *mouchoir* having been rigidly spurned, she had affirmed with an abrupt steadiness.

Ballard was not a homosexual, her arguments and phrasing almost indistinguishable from those of Leroy, although she substituted “husband” for his “friend” and never mentioned Belmazoir by name.

She sloughed off her “brother’s ‘boudoir’ innuendo which so enthralled you” with a profession, “I knew about Paul’s Jewish origins: The next morning before the dickering recommenced, when he limned what had happened in Ahmed’s room, I fretted, ‘That’s going to cost us!’ Gesticulating a wild flinging about of bills, he chuckled, ‘I got you for a bargain yesterday. Let them mark you up a fraction today.’”

Her eyes gleamed at “her spouse’s familiar wit,” compelling Remy to delay his response. “Mme. Ballard, in truth, I discounted the volume of what your brother amplified, but—I grieve that I must be the painful bearer—M. Belmazoir swore he met with your husband

virtually every Monday night from June through February. He's adamant about the day. No other. *Seulement lundi*.

"From the start of your friendship with M. Ballard—and you may wish to reveal the approximate date—was he ever with you in the interim from, say, six to ten of his alleged Mondays with M. Belmazoïr?"

"Embassy hours are not the clichéd nine to five. Even I, a translator, had evening duty there." Her break was minimal. "By mid-August, we were seeing one another regularly."

"Yet you must . . . The pattern's blatant."

"As was the one that emerged after your Christmas, at which point he often was out a second night, Wednesday. Many sub-rosa impediments, I hypothesize, succeeded the Palestinian agreement of November."

"Did he ever indicate that he was spending these two days on such concerns?"

"Of course not, and I never pressed him."

"So nothing unusual, nothing unexpected, to intimate he was under any stress." Twice she wagged her head pervicaciously.

Remy averted his eyes to underscore the awkwardness he feigned to convey. "Afresh, I must moot a deleterious topic. M. Belmazoïr has described what transpired on those Mondays: their trysting places, the Rue Toumi apartment leased by your husband, the interior of his red Renault Quatrellé, the Rothmans he smoked, and even peculiar marks on his anatomy, *videlicet*, the scars on his legs."

Although no item perturbed her countenance, he still closed, "Doubtless he was well acquainted with your husband. Did he ever refer to an *amitié* with M. Belmazoïr?"

"This person, I was told last month by Mon— . . . by a friend, was in the employ of our country's Palestinian refugees, a circumstance likewise adverted to by my brother. Is it coincidental that Paul, during the interval of those critical pre- and post-negotiations, would seek involvement with an Algerian—Were there others?—enmeshed with the PLO?"

"So profound was his devotion to Ambassador Leroy, without it being stipulated, he would have instinctively endeavored to protect him, even though it entailed consorting with a few 'Messrs. Belmazoïrs.'"

"Some build a truth on lies to others. Others on lies to themselves, 'need[ing]' such 'in order to live,'" Remy sighed, accentuating his exasperation. "Conceivably M. Belmazoïr, notwithstanding he is 'the client of my client,' so occupies himself."

"Your allusion to Nietzsche ill disguises your implication. Be assured, M. Lazar, if this youth denominates my husband 'queer,' the structure of his truth has as its support and planking the German metaphysician's 'vanquish[ing]' lies."

Remy gazed at a looped snag in the burgundy tablecloth, appreciative that the dialogue required one of those "occasional flashes of silence," here half a minute.

"Madam, may I proceed?" Leila, her face defiant, assented mutely. "Do you know what FLIRs are?" Her puzzled look, mirroring his own with Medlin, generated a paraphrase of what he had acquired from the DCM.

"No, I never saw them around Paul's flat." She paused. "Still, doesn't his checking them out suggest he was engaged in a clandestine affair on Ambassador Leroy's behalf?"

What she had next contended less astonished Remy than the vehemence with which it

was delivered. “My husband was killed to thwart the ambition of his friend. Paul dedicated his life to sacrificing himself for Claude. His death continues that service!”

The phone rang. Three minutes later, Medlin, bearing a leather briefcase, was let in. From the photocopied documents that he had stacked on the coffee table, the deputy chief plunged into a review of the ones he felt most pertinent.

A quarter of an hour on, the folders were shoved aside to make room for the coffee service Remy had ordered. Another gibe was self-inflicted: “Could be dishwasher to me.”

Having laughed amiably, Remy followed with a hesitant query. “Monsieur, would you be opposed to expounding on that over-coffee contretemps between you and M. Ballard?”

The request provoked not even a mild astoundment. “Six days before his death, Tuesday, February 21.”

While Medlin elaborated, Remy collated his account with Leila’s. Asked whether Ballard had mentioned any friction at the embassy, especially during the span he was unofficially on the list to Washington and then officially off it, with nominal deliberation she had replied, “None.”

This response paralleled the one Medlin had given in Leroy’s office, but in her unsolicited explanation Leila referred to a change in Medlin’s attitude, a transformation which Remy recalled had been extemporaneously dropped by Belsches.

“In fact, Paul’s bowing out made matters easier at the embassy. There ceased the hints from others that he use his influence to get their name added to the Washington list, though in Elbert’s case, Paul quipped, it was a ‘besieging campaign.’”

After Medlin had been placed on it, however, “he’s metamorphosed into a peacock,” he laughed to me. “This morning he became so *miles-gloriosus* overweening, I pricked him with the goading raillery that, properly biased, today’s *on* can warp into tomorrow’s *off*.”

Imagining how Medlin would receive such drollery, Remy opted to temper his ardor for more specifics. “You were planning to settle in Algiers. A flower shop, I believe.”

Leila began by enumerating Leroy’s “staggering generosity,” which she asserted was most likely a muffled acknowledgment of Paul’s recent covert duty. As portions of it were allotted and spent, her eyes brightened and her mind conspicuously drifted away.

She brought herself back through an expression of bewilderment: “Only two thousand dollars was found in the apartment. There should have been three,” the second time that day, Remy told himself, this revelation had cropped up.

Springing at that point, he inquired, “When did it occur, M. Ballard’s jesting transaction with M. Medlin?”

The question baffled her at first, yet soon she grinned, amused. “Elbert? The joke?”

“If you would, please try to recollect.”

“It was the week prior . . . *À dire vrai*, a trifle. They were in the second-floor coffee room at the embassy. In walking past, Elbert let slip a comment: Paul wasn’t going to Washington because he slacked off at work.

At Paul’s entreaty, Claude hadn’t divulged the reason, so Elbert didn’t know. ‘I shouldn’t have,’ he conceded. ‘Still your husband can be quite petty at times. You remember that! I strolled over and whispered into his ear, “We’re like this.”’

“He welded his right index and middle finger. “One word from me, and perhaps you won’t be ‘Washington ho!’” I didn’t fancy it would so upset him, but a glimpse back disclosed his lips twitching, and—most memorably—he was jabbing his left palm with the plastic knife he’d used to stir his coffee. I don’t envisage he’ll be riding me anymore.”

Medlin’s report was less detailed: “I said something I shouldn’t have: Some Algerian employees were gossiping that Paul had been seen at the beach during working hours. He retorted in kind, implying that Ambassador Leroy wouldn’t appreciate my repeating such rumors. The three observers of the encounter I’ll make available to you, if you wish.”

The knifing sequel, Remy now postulated, Medlin would not have been conscious of.

“These tangential minutiae must be ‘noded to,’ he devalued, and to indicate their insignificance, once again thanked Medlin for the reports he had lugged over and above all for his unraveling of the “green goggles mystery.”

With an emptying meditative quaff from his cup, Medlin gained his feet, not wishing to overstay the compliment, and with him Remy, already contemplating his impending trek to telephone his liaison.

From the open door, where their goodbyes were conveyed, Medlin had effected two sullen paces when abruptly he swung round. “It’s ironic, Mr. Lazar, Paul and I were never close, yet through his death we’ve become closely connected.”

## 6

Without circumlocution Remy submitted his thesis: “I posit that M. Ballard entered the grove without the film.”

A harsh, self-satisfied grunt was humphed at the other end of the line.

Remy’s expatiation, in which he stressed Foucin’s concord, culminated with a tag question, “You’ve heard of this—it happened yesterday—haven’t you?”

The absence of a brimming quip persuaded Remy that “M. Champagne” had fewer operatives than he supposed. Audibly, he summoned a bolstering witness. “The theory’s also espoused by Ambassador Leroy.” An abstract of the session with him ensued.

“So? The negative was placed on Ballard to hurt M. Claude Sebastian. What’s that to Paris?” Monitor asked, deduced, and couched a second query. “Put a burr up Belmazoir’s ass to find out whether there were other snippets. Your ‘be-all’ and ‘end-all.’”

Of both *entrevues* with Medlin and the one with Leila and her brother, Remy submitted a bare-bones summary. At his cessation, immediately was blurted out, “Green goggles!”

The chaperoning snigger glided into thrummed contumely. “The Palestinians dispatched Ballard. No, the murderer is Medlin. Cancel that: It’s Chabane. Next, will you be proposing that Leila killed her would-be husband?”

“Mme. Ballard, you mean,” Remy quickly corrected, for so he had referred to her throughout. “Mme. Ballard.”

“Whatever,” and Remy sensed his aggravation had shifted to blasé anger. “You’re not here to unmask a murderer. The implications of the strip: ‘the [negative]’s the thing.”

Not even here for that, a sly Remy inwardly parried, as his monitor’s “Ring me Sunday night” was supplanted by a click and the buzz of the dial tone. As he hooked the *combiné*,

the stern exhortations had tarried less with him than “my intermediary’s nonchalant adoption of *her* forename—and for the second time!”

As the pink-and-white Al-Nigma came into sight, there flashed before him his defective inference from the afternoon: Using the brother would reduce her to sobs.

“You’re not insinuating Elbert’s the . . .” Leila flung back her head, the absurdity of the notion preventing a vocalization of the word.

Remy stared at her long tawny neck; the delicate oval of her facial bones; her cheeks which, puffed from both the former tears and recent chuckling, had assumed the pink of the rose in Leroy’s vase; the dark liquid eyes whose hue the laughter appeared to soften, in the same way her earlier grief had blackened them; and the brow onto which her tossing motion had shaken some strands of raven hair.

Not merely a beautiful face, he reasoned, rather one openly betraying its discovery: Beauty, never still and unchanging, is not a thought, but an afterthought.

Once the veil had been lifted, her countenance had not rested: Like a sea, so distinct from the stodgy land, it was swept and tided by mind-borne moods that, even when one essayed to anticipate, consciously eluded, only to be found buried in reflection.

As lovely as her face was, Remy credited that his delight swelled through his gained knowledge: Hardly a particle of its beauty could be captured and barely a trace of that comprehended, leaving the massive overplus to be imagined.

“Beauty is not truth,” he concluded. “Beauty is faith.”

Joining in her mirth, he remonstrated, “No, no! He was dining with the Leroy’s. I guess I grow desperate the moment everything begins to disconnect.”

Beaming at Chabane, Leila gently settled a right hand on his black hair, crisscrossed with wayward licks. “He must be roused. Our Constantine train departs at 4:40.”

Remy extracted a five-hundred-dinar bill. “No. None, monsieur. I bought . . . we have round-trip tickets.” She set about smoothing down Chabane’s tousles. “You’d have to know Father to understand him. It was I, not Paul, who hindered the visa to France.”

“And was your brother aware of this?” Her face, pinched inward, turned sharply. “Mme. Ballard, on the morning of that day fatal to your husband, M. Chabane dropped by his embassy office. He was overheard blustering impetuous comminations.”

Controlling the tautening reflex, Leila shrugged, “As you say, you are ‘desperate.’” Insouciantly she twisted her neck.

“According to your brother himself, M. Belmazoir wasn’t the sole one dealing with the Palestinians. Their agent tracked M. Ahmed down and encouraged him to consult a lawyer, not after the murder, but *before*. My client’s client cries out that it financially benefited him to keep M. Ballard alive, yet who bellows for these profits since his death?”

“You are evil!” Against the table Leila pressed her splayed hands and pushed herself upright. She inclined her face, bringing it within an audacious double span of Remy’s. “In the Holy Month of Ramadan, my brother and I sit with a devil!”

Lifting his head, Remy surveyed her features. “Mme. Ballard, what I propound, I suspect, you yourself have endured many a sleepless night agonizing over.”

“M. Foucin,” Remy, back at his Al-Nigma suite, spoke into the telephone at ten, “please excuse me for bothering you at home.” After their hurried exchange of *devoirs*, Remy began an explanation for his late call.

“I’m going to the Casbah tomorrow afternoon, the morning being given over to a short penitentiary conference. M. Medlin, whose cooperation emulated that of His Excellency the Ambassador—and I thank you for arranging the interview—provided me with photocopies of three documents from his inquest. Though probably of no consequence, I desire to verify them. I’d be highly esteemed by your company.”

Supplied with a rationale for his “cherished venture” to the Casbah, Remy had determined that notifying Foucin of it would be the ideal method to waylay his suspicions.

Not halting for a response, he persisted, “Of course, if you’re busy. And as I say, it is a matter mechanical. Convenient, all the same, for I may have the opportunity to pick up some Algerian curios: my wife’s instructions, not delivered as a hint.”

Foucin’s chortle allowed Remy a bridge. “One item, less tangible could you perchance have checked out? Today I talked with Mlle. Chabane and her brother. In passing he remarked that he’d discussed the status of his sister’s marriage with an Algiers lawyer. The appointment antedated the murder, perhaps by two weeks.”

He lengthened his pause. “Furthermore, M. Chabane, I learned at the embassy, was involved in some sort of morning friction in M. Ballard’s office on that ill-fated February the twenty-seventh. The two events in all likelihood aren’t connected. Yet without approaching either brother or sister, is there a way to ascertain the lawyer’s name?”

“Another ‘Mohisen’?” The raucous laugh, observed Remy, had no sarcasm in it. “Yes, it should be . . . will be done. Be careful in the Casbah. It can be tricky maneuvering. You’ll need the French ‘five letters’ and the Arabic *hazze*: the ‘good luck’ of two tongues. Shall we colloque tomorrow night, God willing?”

“The pleasure, mine.” The receiver cradled, Remy felt obliged to justify to himself that not deliberately had he suppressed from Foucin his deduction, sparked by Leila: Ballard had entered the grove prepared for an encounter with only one, Belmazoir. After all, or so went his self-defense, “Foucin, not I, initiated the termination of our tête-a-tête.”

Reseated, she positioned the *niqaab* across her face, seeking either to enforce the barrier between herself and the “devil” ensconced opposite her or to “hide her tears.”

“And have resolved my brother is not my husband’s murderer. And will avouch he was with me that evening, fixed in my surety he isn’t capable of physically harming anyone.”

In Remy’s memory cowered the other sister, the one from whom could be squeezed little more than “It is not his fault.”

Through his rejoinder he strove to imitate that conviction he realized he had to challenge. “A ‘lie built upon a truth’: He was with you . . . in the flat your husband leased for the two of you.”

Leila had brought her head erect. “My chaperon. Paul, not my father, insisted on his attending me here. We enticed him to the door of your accusation.” She jostled the left

shoulder of Chabane, who slapped at the disturbance, his snoring briefly interrupted.

*She blames herself*, an overly sympathetic chord was struck by Remy, *for inculcating one loved as dearly as her slain husband*. The conjecture directly spurred him to ponder whether the second sister's imputation was likewise generally targeted.

"Just one more question." Still palm-concealed was the five-hundred-dinar note. "Was your husband punctual?"

Leila turned from her brother, ostensibly disconcerted by the query. "No," she replied after a moment, and then persisted in her effort to wake Chabane.

*So Ballard could have scheduled twin assassinations*. Remy hastily limned the scene. *With a span of around forty minutes before the predictably tardy Belmazoir, he arrived at 6:50 or so, intent on meeting another . . . and promptly rendezvoused with death*.

Aroused, Chabane stretched, cheered by the vision of his sister. Nevertheless, the instant his twisting disclosed her conversant, the gaiety flicked from his visage.

"Technically, not punctual. To my considerable frustration at the onset of our dating and to everyone else's admiration at the embassy, Paul always came at least twenty minutes early. Without fail!"

Like a recipient of a compliment not expected, Remy first registered surprise, next aversion, and finally gratitude. *So that third-of-an-hour duration would have been for Belmazoir*, he gloated.

Impulsively he unpocketed a second five hundred and, before Leila could intervene, thrust both into the hand of the half-asleep Chabane, who, intuiting the crisp vibration of money, had launched "a tentacular expedition."

## 8

"In no wise as beautiful as Marie's face," Remy, upbraiding himself for his brush with infidelity, constated. "The gifts I purchase in the Casbah tomorrow will so attest."

"Nothing connects," Leila had said, and he repeated her words prior to a midnight soliloquizing apologia: "Should someone have spied what I've accomplished in my five days here, he'd have scolded me for having "'idly . . . profane[d] the precious time.'" . . . Kindled a faggot of heatless, lightless fire,' not discerning the screen of smoke."

In bed, he conjured up the torch-lit gathering arced round the "cross" to which the French corporal, minus his ears, was tied. He heard the groans of the now seven matrons of Tizi Aimoula entrusted with the uplifting of the stake, the *yu-yu-yus* of the gaggle below the tiny hill, and the adorant malediction that M. Poulailier hurled down on his tormentors, in turn to harrow them, yet which, *sans doute*, tortured simply one, the newly inducted.

Stung by the insult leveled against her, the teacher of French heaved a mighty spurn at the midpoint of the beam. It toppled, carrying its burden into an adjacent camel thistle.

Here the Arabic renditions differ. Some report that one of the thick thorns of the bush—so named because only the leathery jaws of a camel dare attempt to chew on its branches—pierced the corporal's soft crown, immediately killing him.

Others contrive a swipe which authorized the women of Tizi Aimoula to complete the anatomy of their revenge:

At the moment M. Poulailier reached the near bottom, his two eyes opened upon a brace of thorns and were impaled. When his fingers clawed to extricate his orbs, immobilizing stickers waylaid them. His feet kicked upward to detach his hands, merely to confront the identical embracement.

Forthwith, to soothe these extremities, his tongue expelled a cry. It was forthwith snatched by a vigilant thorn. As he writhed to dislodge his lingua, an army of pricklers bayoneted his penis and testicles, a horrid spectacle sufficient to make hair stand on end and scalp explode. His penultimate jerk, followed by a terminal wrest, raked his intestines across a cluster of thorns. His bowels whooshed out.

The hoyden who had bet on the ears rushed forward. “Allah! Allah! Not since You rescued the blessed Ismail—Peace be upon Him—from his father’s jugular-bent knife have You so hallowed one! The longest of the long shots wins!” shrieked she.

All save her set to weeping, having been deprived not of the order, but of the span, of torturing they craved. They fabricated a bond: They would declare to the ALN leader that the ritual had proceeded according to plan.

Two hours on, having cast a glance at the multi-punctured M. Poulailier’s remains—nonetheless one which shuddered his soul—the corporal effusively lauded their imaginative utilization of the camel thistle. Inwardly he prayed, *May I never fall into the grasp of the she-devils of Tizi Aimoula!*

However, and ironically, while he was bedding one later that morning, in the *agapē* of orgasm—“Swisser Swatter! Swisser Swatter!”—she confessed the truth. The revelation rendered his penis limp. They had tortured not to further the andric goals of “the Glorious Revolution,” rather to satisfy an age-old woman’s mania to harass “a man, any man.”

He sighed, “I am Poulailier,” the sough large and fat as a pregnant beast.

Arching himself from the mat, he volte-faced, marched solemnly from the room, and mustered his wenching comrades. With abhorrence they marshaled the denizens of the *jebel* into a frayed circle about the deceased.

“You damfool termagants, always obsessed with abandoning yourselves (and your tongues) to masculine gibbeting, I shall not leave you this fellow ‘brother.’ Ill you deserve to feast your eyes upon his cadaver or have your tongue-snapping dreams fed by it.”

When he moved to hustle the corpse out of the village, the woebegone ladies so outrageously wailed that a patrolling platoon of legionnaires could not ignore the clamor.

In the ensuing skirmish, the French recovered the body of M. Poulailier, and through torture—actually postbattle rape, yet aren’t they synonymous?—and the babble it produces gleaned smatterings of the corporal’s heroic and dying defense of their tongue.

Is it any wonder that citizens of two continents strained to panegyryze him? After having lain in state at Algiers’ Monument aux Morts for a week, the honored “corse” was transported to Paris in a Dakota C-47B Skytrain sent by Premier Guy Mollett.

At Orly Airport, it was received by 69.22 percent of the municipality’s population, all moaning and beating their chest, for none treasure their language or its defenders more than the French. The metropolitan fathers reserved the Arc de Triomphe for two days of funereal viewing, but between Prime and Terce of the first day, they summarily elevated it to five, so extravagant the outpouring.

(Sartre, arrested for employing his turn in line to spit on the *cadavre*, was importuned by an aghast nation, “Why?” “Because my zipper stuck.” Only de Beauvoir snickered.)

At the request of M. Poulailler’s parents, laureates of a petition signed by every single *pied-noir* in Algiers, the corpse was recargoed there. For a month, a carotid artery of black-clad residents, their hearts pumping the chant, “*Al-gér-ie Fran-çaise*,” filed past. Naturally the remains were interred in a specially tunneled crypt beneath the Monument aux Morts.

The triumph of the Revolution and the exit of the self-exiled colonizers did not deprive it of this final resting place, for by then the narrative had become an anecdote, and who seeks a more-than-concrete revenge against the anecdotal?

The lot of the women of the Kabyle village was less errant. They are called upon—to wit, Remy’s taxi driver—whenever French is villainously spoken, their national reputation: “You butcher French like the dams of Tizi Aimoula!”

There is also the local fame, previously mentioned. The men of the Grande Kabylie, with minds like their hoes scratching the rocky ground, eked out of the anecdote its fertile exemplum potential:

As if in disputation of *Philosophe* Hume’s pronouncement, “[Events] seem conjoined, but never connected,” to this day, no husband of Tizi Aimoula, when accompanied by his wife, will walk on the near side of a camel thistle.

**Notes and Commentary: Chapter 9: “Nothing Connects”****April 13, 1989 (Thursday afternoon and night)**

- p. 135: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE OF CHAPTER 9: This is the second of the ND, NC, ED, and EC quartet, which is a structuring principle of the novel. See the essay at the end of the notes of chap. 3, “Philosophy, Religion, and the Murder Mystery Genre,” N3:41-44, for an overview of the four titles.
- In the NC title of chap. 9, the exact wording “Nothing Connects” occurs two times: Leila says on p. 144, “Nothing connects my husband to that inclination [homosexuality],” although she has just heard her brother’s recountal of Ballard’s advances toward him and of the American’s connections with the male hustler Belmazoir (140-43).
- On p. 150, Remy will cite her words, “Nothing connects,” prefatory to his defense of his plan to connect with his father.
- A variant of this statement is used on p. 152 in the quotation from Hume, “[Events] seem conjoined, but never connected.”
- On p. 148, Remy will use a correlate of the phrase when he admits that “everything begins to disconnect.”
- And finally, Medlin uses the key word in a positive phrase when he notes that in life Ballard and he were no more than acquaintances, but since the latter’s death the two men have “become closely connected” (147).
- The events of the chapter and the disjointed structuring employed also reinforce the idea that “nothing connects.” The narrative of the women of Tizi Aimoula, which opens and closes the chapter both come as a surprise and appear as digressions, yet a lengthy diversion since they occupy almost a third of the chapter.
- In the vivid details of the torture of the French corporal there is a connection with that of “Noura” in chap. 3, although here the torturers are Algerian women and the tortured is a French soldier,
- The account of Remy’s conversation with Leila is three times interrupted or disconnected by other narrative strands: Medlin’s seven o’clock visit to the Al-Nigma (144 and 146), Remy’s 9:15 telephone conversation with his French embassy connection (147-48), and his ten o’clock call to Foucin (149).
- Yet as counterbalance, Remy makes or reinforces several important connections concerning the murder. Two new suspects are developed, Chabane and Medlin. Also Remy’s French embassy liaison seems to have a more than passing acquaintance with Leila.
- At the end of the chapter, Remy is certain that Ballard had not planned to rendezvous (made a connection) with anyone else except Belmazoir in the grove.

pp. 135 – 152: CHRONOLOGY OF CHAPTER 9: April 13 (Thursday afternoon) from 2:42, when Remy, Chabane, and Leila leave the American Embassy to their being seated at the Al-Nigma's Aladdin Room (3:00) and their subsequent conversation, which ended at 4:10.

Later that night, on schedule Medlin comes to the Al-Nigma to bring Remy some copies of documents on the case (7:00 – 7:30). Afterwards Remy leaves the Al-Nigma to make a reporting-in call to his embassy contact (9:17 – 9:30), and finally he telephones Foucin to inform him that he will be visiting the Casbah the next day (10:00 – 10:06).

Sections 1 and 8 consist of a flashback to a July 1956 incident where the women of an Algerian village torture a French corporal and the aftermath of that event.

pp. 135 – 38: SECTION 1

p. 135: Tizi Aimoula: A concocted village formed from the names of the village Tirhzert Aimoula and its province (*wilaya*) Tizi Ouzon, both located in the Kabylie. English words guided my selection: The word “tizzy” means a state of frenzied excitement, a description of the male-tormenting mania of the women. The English word “moola” is slang for money and was chosen in homage to the gambling incident.

p. 135: Grand Kabylie: Often termed the Great Kabylie or Kabylia, it is a region located at the edge of the Mediterranean seas in northeast Algeria.

It consists of three mountain ranges which are part of the Tell Atlas, a mountain chain over 1,500 km. in length running from Morocco through Algeria to Tunisia. The Grand Kabylie is 200 km. by 100 km. and begins 50 km. east of Algiers. Its largest city is Tizi Ouzou, which had a population of c. 144,000 in 2004.

p. 135: *causette*: In French “gossip” or “chatter.”

p. 135: “The Arabic opening . . . flourished, seemingly capitalized”: Arabic does not have a system of capitalization; all of its letters are lower-cased.

p. 135: *pieds-noirs*: The European settlers in Algeria. See the 3.40 note.

p. 135: “Ben Bella . . . the principal ‘external’: Ahmed Ben Bella was one of the founders of the FLN, which had revolutionary leaders stationed both inside Algeria to lead the military fight and outside it, principally in Cairo, to promote regional and international support for it. The latter were called “the externals.”

See the three notes on Ben Bella on 2.17, 3.49, and 6.88. The second note deals with his friendship with Nasser, the president of Egypt during the Algerian War. Ben Bella will be captured by the French in October 1956, about three months

after the fictional anecdote described here.

p. 135: *chef*: “leader of a group” in French.

p. 135: *journal*: French for “newspaper.”

p. 135: “the status of a legend”: A legend is a narrative or tradition handed down from the past.

It has more historical truth and less supernatural than a myth.

A legend indicates the lore of a people and thus serves as a partial expression of the racial or national spirit.

p. 135: *traître*: “traitor” in French.

p. 135: “whose minds like their hoes scratching the rocky ground sought out its infertile potential as an exemplum”: This clause will be paraphrased at the end of this chapter (152).

p. 135: *exemplum*: a moralized tale or anecdote. The moral of this *exemplum*/narrative will also be given on the last page of this chapter (152).

p. 135: *anecdote*: A short narrative detailing particulars of an interesting episode or event, most often factual.

p. 135: “*Il était une fois*”: “Once upon a time” in French.

p. 135: “In the twentieth month of the seven-plus-year Algerian War”:

Since the Algerian insurrection began on Nov. 1, 1954, the month of this incident would be July 1956.

p. 135: *faoudj*: Arabic for “squad,” the smallest unit of the army (ALN) of the FLN during the revolution. It consisted of eleven privates under the command of a corporal.

In *Savage War* (145) Horne lists the three other military units: *ferqua* (platoon which consisted of three *faoudj*) and was under the command of a lieutenant, usually assisted by a sergeant; *katiba* (company of three *ferqua*), under the command of a captain; and *failek* (battalion of three *katiba*), and commanded by a colonel.

Colonel was the highest rank in the ALN during the revolution. Each province (*wilaya*) had one colonel, who was its military chief.

p. 135: *primogeniture*: This legal term means “the exclusive right of the oldest son to inherit his father’s estate.”

It is used metaphorically here: The French soldier acknowledges that he, an outsider, unlike the native-born Algerian soldier, lacks the legal claim to this spot of ground.

[Click to return to page 135 of text.](#)

The term, I personally feel, embodied the justification of the Algerian revolution.

p. 135: Poulaillet: In French it has one basic meaning, “henhouse.”

In such a shed the character Poulaillet will be imprisoned through much of this narrative. In addition, the “delicately featured Jacques Poulaillet” (136) is viewed by the women as effeminate, that is, a hen.

Another reason I chose the term is its theatrical meaning in England, where *le poulaillet* (in the singular) is used to refer to the gallery of a theater, a section familiarly termed “the gods” because it is so high up. This meaning reinforces the symbolism of Poulaillet’s “crucifixion.”

A final point: I found no listings on the internet of Poulaillet as a French surname.

- p. 136: flummery: meaningless flattery.
- p. 136: “Kabyle smile” and “*boussaadi*”: Slitting a person’s throat with a “mountain knife.” The resultant wound would resemble a smile carved in the throat. For both terms, see the 2.24 notes.
- p. 136: “Jacques’s throat . . . a nick”: The image of a knife to the throat was previously used in Ballard’s slaying on 1.14 and in Omar’s using a *boussaadi* to cut the throat of a French soldier in 2.24. The image will occur later on 15.243 and 20.340. For the instances and symbolism of the “nick,” once again see the 2.24 note, N2:35-36.
- p. 136: manless: “destitute of men” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 136: *jebel*: Arabic for “hamlet,” a very small village.
- p. 136: “twenty-eight piled-stone dwellings”: The number twenty-eight occurs in fourteen of the twenty-one chapters a total of twenty-one times. Foremost it is the number of years which have passed since Omar was flown to France and became Remy (2.16, 22, and 29); 3.40; 4.52; 5.78; 6.93; 7.101; 10.156; 19.320 and 330; and 20.340 and 345. It is the number of years that Leroy and Ballard have been friends (8.127; 12.191; and 20.338). On 8.130 and 14.223, Feb. 28 is referred to as the day after Ballard’s death. Additionally, it is the number of months which elapses between Ali la Pointe’s death and the building of the underground tunnel (6.89). On 21.364, Remy protests that he is raised “twenty-eight paces” before he should have been. And here, it is the number of houses in Tizi Aimoula.
- p. 136: *doux ou dur*: “soft or hard” in French.
- p. 136: *porte-parole*: French for “spokeswoman.”
- p. 136: “*au fait*”: French for “expert; proficient.”
- p. 136: “Jack fell [*var.* felt] down and broke his crown”: The text of the first stanza of the eighteenth-century nursery rhyme: “Jack and Jill went up the hill / To fetch a pail of water. / Jack fell down and broke his crown, / And Jill came tumbling after.”  
*Var.* is a scholarly abbreviation meaning a “variant reading of a text,” one which is a possible, but not “generally accepted,” alternative (*Webster’s Third*). The variant here, “felt” for “fell,” gives a sexual meaning to “down”: the soft hair growing around a female’s pudendum. That is, Jack touched Jill’s vulva, an action which gave him an organism: “broke his crown.”

Like the breaking water of a pregnant woman, Jack's semen bursts through the urethra of his glans penis, the base of which is called a "corona" (or crown).

An alternate interpretation is that his reservoir of semen was shattered into crown-shaped spurts of semen.

Jill's "tumbling after": Female ejaculation comes in rhythmic contractions, gushes or explosions, suggestive of "tumbling" gyrations.

The *Urban Dictionary* mentions that as a noun, "tumble" or "tumbling" can denote fornication, as in "Fancy a tumble?"

- p. 136: "they wanted a man to torture . . . their tongues to bedevil": The suffering women of Shakespeare's tragedies who try to relieve the pain of their male partner, discussed by Remy and Leroy on 8.122, in this chapter becomes the comic torturing women who feel that their gender was given a tongue to torment men.
- p. 136: "that late afternoon": According to my chronology, at around 5 p.m. the ALN squad brought Poulailier to the village.
- p. 136: vocable: a word regarded as a unit of sounds or letters than as a unit of meaning.
- p. 136: philippic: a verbal attack.
- p. 136: prolocutress: Most dictionaries list "prolocutor" as meaning "spokesman." In a few online thesauruses and other sources, "prolocutress" is used to mean "spokeswoman."  
A characteristic of the "grand style" of the prose mock heroic genre, such as Swift's *Battle of the Books*, is "elevated, formal, and esoteric vocabulary."
- p. 136: "Dawn prayers completed": Fajr (dawn prayers) were performed from 5:00 to 5:15 that day.  
Thus the ALN squad planned to arrive at the village at around 6:15, the time which will be indicated by "two hours on" on p. 151.
- p. 136: doyenne: the senior member of a group of women.
- p. 136: troll: "to speak rapidly" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 136: "the other thirty-two": Thus the number of women in the village is thirty-three, again that sacred number in Islam (1.5 and its note, N1:14, and 6.92 and its note, N6:32-33).  
The female population may also be computed from the number mentioned on p. 138, where the "six uplifters' grunts" were accompanied by "the ululations of the twenty-seven (children excluded)."

- p. 137: “this Mr. Miss”: An indication that the women believe Corporal Poulailler to be effeminate.
- p. 137: *femmes*: “women” in French.
- p. 137: “domesticating torture”: They demonstrated how household implements, such as a knife, needle, and sewing thread, can be used as effective instruments of torture.
- p. 137: impregnate . . . climax”: Obtruding sexual images.
- p. 137: “altered, raised seven minutes, lowered, altered again, upheaved a second time, and so on”: Since the women planned to cut off seven parts of his body, the maximum time the ritual could have lasted would be c. 70 minutes, allowing ten minutes for each cycle.
- p. 137: spinner: “the teller of a yarn; one that spins a tale” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 137: “christened [it] a ‘cross’”: Obtruding religious symbolism.
- p. 137: decussation: “an intersection, especially in the form of an X” (*Webster’s Third*, which gives as its example for the adjective form “a decussate cross”).
- p. 137: sporting: Interested in or having to do with games characterized by gambling or betting.
- p. 137: dam: Archaic and disparaging term for a woman (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 137: hoyden: A “woman of loud, boisterous, or carefree behavior” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 137: “pack of Gauloises”: Remy’s brand of cigarette.  
See 6.98 and its note, N6:48, and 7.117. Could his preference have influenced his selection of the brand smoked by the Tizi Aimoula hoyden?  
Gauloises are made of dark Turkish tobacco which produces its strong aroma. In real life, the ALN leader Col. Houari Boumediène smoked them, as did such notables as Picasso, Sartre, and Camus.  
About ten per cent of Algerian women smoke cigarettes. See the 7.111 note.
- p. 137: flat-out: As an adverb, it means “directly; immediately.”
- p. 137: “had I no ears”: The ears were the first parts of the French captive which the women planned to cut off.
- p. 137: *a fortiori*: The Latin “*a fortiori*” means “for a stronger reason.”  
To have illiterates use vocabulary beyond their means, including Latinate phrases, Remy (through whose mind this episode is unwinding) finds amusing. I

imagined him picking this habit up from some of Shakespeare's peasants and commoners.

- p. 137: "blasphemous benediction": Her invocation that Allah bless her wager is blasphemous since gambling is forbidden in Islam. All forms of public gambling, such as casinos and lotteries, are forbidden in Algeria. However, informal private wagers, particularly on soccer matches, is common, another example of the contrast between the public and the private face of Islam and Islamic countries. Additionally, the prejudice of Arab Algerians against Berber Algerians has always been so great (2.24 and its note, N2.35, and 6.99) that the former would think nothing of the latter engaging in all sort of non-Islamic practices.
- p. 137: "instrument of torture . . . our best, most wicked tongues": Tall tales generally have a reversal involving poetic justice. What the women perceive as their "best" will turn out to be their "worst," and as a consequence the torturers will themselves be tortured.
- p. 137: viraginous: The adjective of "virago," a loud overbearing woman, is listed in *Webster's Third*.
- p. 137: prepuce: foreskin.
- p. 137: agape: wide open. I mention this only because it will contrast with the near-homograph Greek word *agapē* used in the conclusion to this tale on p. 151.
- p. 137: "Esteemed sublimities": One of the women addresses the other six as praiseworthy, majestic, and noble "sublimities," implying but not stating that they were comparable to goddesses. Such elevated language, expected in the mock heroic, appears throughout this segment: "matrons," "sociable debate," "decussation," *a fortiori*, "gracious ladies," "verily," "smite," "distaff," "viraginous," "prepuce," "denizen," "maledictions," "crepuscular," "brandish," etc. (137-38).
- p. 137: "was . . . well . . . versed in some French": A play upon "well-versed" and the interjection "well," a pause to indicate uncertainty.

- p. 138: “patch-skinned”: As one of the verses directed the tormenters (137), pieces of his skin had been sliced off and then sewn back on throughout the night.
- p. 138: crepuscular: of or like twilight; dim.
- p. 138: “prelude to dawn”: At around 4 a.m., the women planned to commence the “crucifixion” of Poulailier.  
If it took the maximum time (seventy minutes), it would have ended at around 5:10.
- p. 138: “‘Ha-ha!’ or ‘Aha!’ as you wish”: Algerian Muslims would derisively laugh at the Christ symbolism here, but the European settlers (*pieds-noirs*) with wonder would greet the revelation.  
Thus, as in the first use of the paired interjections (“Ha-ha!” “Aha!”) on 5.76, N5:23, by Remy’s French Embassy liaison, here they promote irony and paradox by simultaneously “denigrat[ing]” and “elevate[ing]” the action (137).
- p. 138: ululation: A high-pitched sound made by the rapid movement of the tongue and the uvula.  
In North African countries, it is used by women to express celebration, especially at weddings.
- p. 138: “heavenward he was raised”: Another of the crucifixion images, as is “divined” and the “parchedness” of Poulailier’s throat.
- p. 138: “mistressed French”: One meaning of the verb “mistress” in *Webster’s Third* is “to achieve mastery of (an art)—used of a woman.”  
In *Webster’s* definition I must add that I would prefer “command” in place of the masculine “mastery.”
- p. 138: malisons: Archaic word meaning “curses.”
- p. 138: “the last eleven hours”: That is Poulailier was tortured from just after 5 p.m. to just after 4 a.m. the next day.
- p. 138: “‘Father, forgive them for what they do,’ . . . but not for their villainous French”:  
The final use of the crucifixion symbolism.  
The ellipsis marks serve a double purpose; they indicate Poulailier’s gasping pauses in his speech and the omission of a semicolon and a clause from Luke 23:34: “‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”  
In the Biblical verse, the gambling occurs after Jesus’ speech while in my novel it occurs before.

## pp. 138-39: SECTION 2

p. 138: ebullition: a sudden emotional outburst.

p. 138: “a blue-man animist”: A reference to the small Touarég tribe of Saharan Algeria. Tourrégés are Berber nomads.

They stand out from other inhabitants of Algeria because the men, not the women, wear veils, usually of indigo blue. They also prefer turbans and robes of the same blue color.

Hence, they are sometimes called the “blue people” either because of their dress or because the indigo pigment in their garments sometimes stains their skin a dark blue color.

In religion, they practice a curious mixture of animism (the belief that all natural phenomena have souls) and Islam.

Chabane’s presentation about them is somewhat confused: He suggests that they paint their bodies blue and neglects their nominal allegiance to Islam.

Chabane, like Ballard and Remy, disowns his religion as he sees fit.

p. 138: comestibles: food.

p. 138: “regardless grown”: From Dickinson’s “After great pain”: “The Feet, mechanical, go round— / Of Ground, or Air, or Ought— / A Wooden way / Regardless grown” (5-8).

p. 138: “In the ride, Chabane”: The action flashes back to the taxi ride from the embassy to the Al-Nigma (2:42 – 2:56). [Not depicted is Leila’s brief conference with Medlin (2:26 – 2:38) or their walk to Remy’s waiting taxi.]

p. 138: “I and my sister”: In Arabic, the first-person speaker always lists herself/himself before another person referred to.

Despite the efforts of their second-language teachers, most Arabs transfer this rule to the second language, saying as Chabane does here, “I and my sister,” instead of “My sister and I.”

p. 138: “den of liars”: The American Embassy.

p. 138: Constantine: The largest city in east Algeria.

See 1.4 and its notes on Zouabi and SNTF train.

These clarify that to travel from Zouabi, outside of which was located the Chabane farm, to Algiers, a person had to first take a bus to Constantine and then a train to the capital.

- p. 139: *chauffeur de taxi*: French for “taxi driver.”
- p. 139: Boshabo: As the text mentions, the daytime receptionist at the Al-Nigma.
- p. 139: “the jumbled prepositional phrases”: “without money . . . for the train back to Constantine.”
- p. 139: “*L’auto-stop*, not *l’autoroute*”: “*faire de l’auto-stop*” is the French verb form of “to hitchhike.”  
The noun “*l’autoroute*” means “highway.”  
Chabane would have said something like, “Je pourrais faire de l’autoroute”: “I could highway.”
- p. 139: Kamel Nemmiche: For much of the rest of the novel, Nemmiche will be the on-call taxi driver for Remy.
- p. 139: “*comme une vache espagnole*”: The French simile is used to indicate that a foreigner speaks French barbarously, making mistakes in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.  
The expression was first recorded in 1640 and most certainly existed in an Ur-version, “You speak French like a Spanish Basque.”  
Basques spoke both Spanish and French at that time, but reputedly mastered neither.  
The French word “Basque” in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was *vasque* (based on the Spanish *vasco*), which is similar to the French word for cow (*vache*). Hence the transformation.  
Thus in the original version, no cows were insulted or otherwise harmed in the making of this idiom.
- p. 139: “the harridans of Tizi Aimoula”: It is this comment by the taxi driver which causes Remy to conjure up the anecdote of the women of Tizi Aimoula, the subject matter of the first (and the last) section of this disconnected chapter.
- p. 139: “*Zirda! Khubzist! Tiqaardji!*”: As the text translates, the Arabic words for “Fox! Hustler! Petty Thief!”
- p. 139: “asserted in English, fully aware Nemmiche would not apprehend”: Remy uses English to determine what reaction that language, which he had heard her speak to Medlin at the embassy, produces in Leila, who had been silent.
- p. 139: confabulation: conversation.
- p. 139: *deux places de première classe*: In French, “two first-class seats.”
- p. 139: “the instant the headwaiter was out of earshot”: The time would be around 3:05 p.m.

[Click to return to page 139 of text.](#)

- p. 139: ““legation””: In quotation marks to indicate its misuse. The French maintained an embassy, not a legation, in Algiers.
- p. 139: capon (French *chapon*): a castrated rooster.
- p. 139: ostended: “to show clearly, exhibit, or manifest” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 139: ““discreetly jiggling his right index””: Remy indicates that Chabane has lit on his function as a French official helping the Americans. His jiggling finger indicates that this matter must not be spoken out loud.  
Foucin used the same gesture, and for the same reason, at the Andaloos (7.106).
- p. 139: “snap””: Slang for “an easy task or job.”
- p. 139: *maricón*: In Spanish the word is used for an effeminate male.
- p. 139: *homosexuel*: The French word for a “homosexual.”
- p. 139: sclera: The white of the eye.

## pp. 140-43: SECTION 3

- p. 140: “Pellets of stew-drenched semolina”: Although the novel does not specify the time, the meal arrives at 3:18, about fifteen minutes after the maitre d’ had left (3:05).  
With gusto Ahmed begins to eat, breaking off at 3:21 to ask Leila why she does not join him.
- p. 140: “this jackass”: Chabane boasts how he has conned Remy into paying three times the cost of the return train tickets and the price of the meal.
- p. 140: alcazar: a palace, its derivation being the Arabic word meaning “castle.”
- p. 140: “crouched inward”: Cf. the Filipina who had “more deeply slumped” (1.8) hearing her brother’s similar vaunting “jabber.”
- p. 140: “the *katb el-kitb*, our ‘marriage contract’”: See 1.11 and its note N1.31-32, as well as 1.2, “I was,” N1:6-7, and 1.4, “marriage,” N1:12-13, for more details on the Muslim marriage contract.  
A synonym of the marriage contract is *aqd-nikah*, which literally translates from the Arabic as the “contract” which allows “coitus; sexual intercourse.”
- p. 140: “spit a piece of gristle”: The image was designed as a metaphor for how women are typically treated in Muslim societies.
- p. 140: anatomy: “the human body” (*Webster’s Third*).  
Two other times this word will be used in the chapter. Remy will speak of “peculiar marks on [Ballard’s] anatomy” (145), where the meaning is again “the human body.”  
However, on p. 150, the women of the village, the narrator informs us, are not deprived of “the anatomy of their revenge,” where “anatomy” means “dissection” of the parts of a body.
- p. 140: “wedlock’s true stigma”: Chabane means that the true sign of marriage occurs when the female hymen is broken by the male penis.  
Thus “stigma” is used here in its archaic sense of “a distinguishing mark burned or cut into a flesh, as of a slave or criminal,” terms not far from how Islam views women.
- p. 140: “hound that truth from her”: Again the word choice reinforces the point of how many Muslim men, I found, regard Muslim women.
- p. 140: null: It may be used as a transitive verb meaning “annul or nullify” (*Webster’s Third*).

[Click to return to page 140 of text.](#)

- p. 140: “a ritualistic release”: The wording is reminiscent of the advice the young Omar received from his father, “Seek release in the ritual” (7.101), another sign that Remy is processing and emending Chabane’s speech.
- p. 140: “mustered stones”: Rocks assembled as troops to fight off anyone who approaches him.
- p. 140: “whose apple hopes of a French visa have turned wormy”: In 6.85, Remy employed the same image in musing about how Belmazoir had lost his “apple dreams” when he felt Ballard had terminated their relationship.
- p. 140: autographing: writing one’s signature.
- p. 140: “the projected publicizing ‘I-do’ canting”: At a public wedding party, the groom will speak in cant (“insincere or almost meaningless talk used merely from convention or habit”) about his devotion to marriage and the bride since he has already gained what he sought, his bride’s body.  
Note: No “I do” is spoken at a Muslim marriage ceremony or wedding party. Chabane employs the clause to stress the difference between Muslim and Western nuptials; in the former, the written is all, he argues, while the spoken is ceremonial cant.
- p. 140: cheville: “a redundant word or phrase used to fill out a sentence” (*Webster’s Third*). Used metaphorically
- p. 140: “rendering”: “translating,” but in Remy’s case not literally, for he admits that he sublimated Chabane’s “villainous French,” the phrasing which Remy had Poulailleur employ on p. 138.
- p. 140: “Which cannot be spent”: Remy is addressing Chabane’s contention that the groom speaks redundant words of cant at the wedding party, which have as much value as those which Chabane said were given to his sister at the American embassy: “From that den of liars [ the embassy] we pocket only words . . . which do not spend” (138).
- p. 140: “direful straits”: A minor rewording of the expression “dire straits,” a state of extreme distress.  
On 19.322, another revision of the cliché will be used, “straits so dire.”
- p. 140: licit: in strict conformity with the law, but here Chabane (Remy) uses it also to mean that his verification came from a lawyer.
- p. 140: “Two months ago”: According to my chronology, on Feb. 14 at the urging of a Palestinian friend, Chabane approached a lawyer in Algiers to determine the marital status of his sister.

That meeting occurred thirteen days before the murder of Ballard and fifty-nine days before this interview with Remy in the Aladdin Room.

p. 140: “her consort’s desserts”: her wifely inheritance.

p. 140: overswarm: “to swarm over; overrun” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 141: “With more than that more”: A variant of James’s “more than the more” from *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, chap. 13.  
See 4.66 and its note N4.40-41, which lists all the instances in which James’s expression occurs in the novel.
- p. 141: “firsthand”: The choice of words is foreshadowing since the resultant description involves the progress of two clasped hands.
- p. 141: snirt: An unsuccessfully suppressed snort of laughter (chiefly Scottish, according to *Webster’s Third*, the only source in which I found it to be used).
- p. 141: handfast: a marriage contract, typically confirmed by a handclasp.
- p. 141: “neither *père* nor *fil*”: French for “father” and for “son.”
- p. 141: “dossed down”: to sleep or bed down in any convenient place.  
The expression is listed by *Webster’s Third* as chiefly British and by *Webster’s New* as British slang.
- p. 141: *djellaba*: This loose-fitting, long-sleeve robe, worn in public by many Arab men, is sometimes used as a nightgown.  
See the 1.14 note.
- p. 141: dotting the *you*: A pun on the expression, “dotting one’s *i*s.”  
“Dotting the *I*” means that a person cares about himself/herself while “dotting the *you*” (graphically illogical), Chabane seems to infer, was Ballard’s way of emphasizing the he would keep his promise to help Ahmed obtain the visa.
- p. 141: “stirring tinkled . . . filthy privacy . . . gravity . . . arouse . . . amoving my every part”: With its slang meaning of “urinate,” “tinkle” is the first word subliminally indicating that Chabane is fixated on Ballard’s penis.  
It is he who moves his cushion bed next to Ballard’s, speaks of the latter’s “filthy privacy,” and introduces the idea of “circumcision.”  
He, not “gravity,” slides their clasped hands toward Ballard’s genitalia and misinterprets Ballard’s twisting them to stop the movement downward, implying it was a buggering signal.  
He uses the word “arouse” as if to mask what he has felt, but after rushing to his father’s bedroom, he says that his parent’s “caresses amov[ed] my every part.”
- p. 141: *mamnuh*: Other terms in Arabic meaning “forbidden, prohibited, or taboo” are *haraam* or *muharram*.  
The latter pair refers to anything that is prohibited by faith, such as fornication, idolatry, usury, or the consumption of pork or alcohol.  
In fact, some Muslim scholars do not consider homosexuality *haraam* because it

is not among the lists of acts so classified in the Qur'an.

The major passage of the Qur'an which deals with homosexuality is the Lot story (7:80-84). These verses stress that the "people of Lut [Arabic for Lot]," meaning the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah, were destroyed by Allah for their homosexual practices.

The Arabic words for homosexuality (*liwa*) and for a person who performs such acts (*luti*) are derived from the Lut story.

In the collections of the Hadiths (the sayings and acts of Mohammed) the Prophet states that the punishment for both the active and the passive homosexual partner is death, but adds that there must be four witnesses to the act.

Capital punishment is used by only a few modern-day Muslim countries, the most prominent being Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Many reputable Islamic scholars have challenged the validity of these Hadiths relating to homosexuality, so most Muslim countries set lesser penalties, such as fines, jail time, and/or corporal punishment.

In Algeria, at the time of this novel and today, the punishment for homosexuality is a fine and up to two years in prison. Few are prosecuted.

Here Chabane adopts an argument quite prevalent in Muslim countries: Heterosexual Muslim males would never consider engaging in homosexual acts with another adult Muslim male, but they do not believe it is forbidden or sinful to do so with a non-Muslim, such as Ballard.

Pederasty, however, is quite common in Muslim society with the older Muslim male always the active, not the passive, participant. The Muslim boy is not only expected to forget the bugging experience, but also to repeat it when he reaches young adulthood through a young available boy.

This sexual hypocrisy was earlier mentioned on 1.6-7 and in its notes, N1:16-17.

p. 141: *niqaab*: "facial veil" in Arabic.

p. 141: "'bedewed at the edge.' (The sightless Milton's description of 'Dalila's veil' burgeoned in Remy's mind.): In Milton's *Samson Agonistes* the Chorus informs Samson about Dalila's (Milton's spelling) tears, "Wetting the borders of her silken veil" (l. 730).

Hearing her brother distort what happened that evening when Ballard and she were married causes Leila to cry. However, her facial veil hangs so loosely that her tears will not be caught until they reach its lower hem.

p. 141: "still she loves Ballard": Similar wording will be used on 15.252 in reference to another woman: "She loves him still!"

p. 141: *obiter dictum*: incidental remark.

p. 141: "*this night [Leila] must go home with [this clod]:*" Remy paraphrases his comment made to himself during the taxi ride from the embassy: "She'll have to go home with this clump of sod" (138).

[Click to return to page 141 of text.](#)

- p. 141: melded phalanges: fingers clasped together.
- p. 141: “which gravity . . . had forced to renew their slide”: The inexorability of this natural force will be noted again on 14.236.
- p. 141: “eighth earthly day”: In Judaism, circumcision is usually performed by a mohel on the eighth day after the birth of a son in a ceremony called a “brith milah,” which means “Covenant of circumcision” in Hebrew.  
See 1.2 where Ballard notes to himself that for the first three years of his life he was a Jew.
- p. 141: “snipped in the bud”: The same wordplay was used by Saul, “Some don’t fancy the ‘snipped-in-the-bud’” (2.20 and its note, N2.24), which puns on the expression “nipped in the bud” to refer to a life destroyed early.
- p. 141: reverter: Islam teaches that everyone is Muslim at birth.  
Thus when someone who was reared in another religion accepts Islam, this person is considered to revert to his or her original condition.  
For this reason, there are no converts to Islam, only reverters.
- p. 141: Turkish Joha: A comic folkloric character in first oral, then written, and lately comic-book Arabic literature and TV cartoons.  
Anecdotes about him first appeared near the onset of the Ottoman Empire (c. 1300 CE), and his garb over the years has stayed that which was typical of that period: a turban, a robe, and pointed shoes.  
Variant spellings of his name include Goha and Hodja (the Turkish spelling), although no matter how his name is spelled he is identified as Turkish.  
Joha (with the accent on the second syllable) is often portrayed as a simpleton.  
In some of the anecdotes about him he is a teenager, but in others he has a wife and son. He is often accompanied by a donkey.  
In one foolish-errand tale, incorporated in an earlier version of this novel, a teenage Turkish Joha, weary of lugging a sack of meal home, opens it and flings the bag’s contents into the air, crying, “Wind, wind, take this flour home to my mama!”  
In another, an adult Turkish Joha is taking six donkeys to a market to sell them. Atop one, he becomes upset when he counts only five. He dismounts and is satisfied since he counts six, but when he remounts, he is convinced that one has run off for his tally once again yields five. And so on.
- p. 141: “‘intelligent,’ to quote you”: At the top of this page, Remy had said, “you’re an intelligent man” to Chabane.
- p. 141: susurrations: a whisper.
- p. 141: amove: An obsolete term meaning “to stir up emotionally” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 142: “doubly depraved being a *yahoodee*”: The Arabic word for a “Jew.”  
On 1.2, Ballard refers to his Jewishness, “carelessly divulged to her brother,” which “had added five hundred dollars to the dowry.”  
Chabane says that Ballard was “doubly depraved” since he was both a homosexual and a Jew.
- p. 142: *dorsa*: the backs of a person’s hands.
- p. 142: “those hands which twenty minutes earlier Leila had tucked below her breast”: At 3:08, Leila pulled back her veil to expose one eye, but she quickly redrew it across her face (139).  
Here it is revealed that she tucked her hands below her breast.  
It is 3:30 when Chabane reaches over and pats her hand.
- p. 142: *shekel*: The basic monetary unit of Israel, chosen for metaphorical use to stress Ballard’s Jewish background.
- p. 142: *de novo*: once more.
- p. 142: “my fourth week here”: According to my chronology, on Jan. 8, Ballard, Leila, and Ahmed Chabane drove back to Algiers where Ballard had rented an apartment for the brother and sister.  
On Feb. 7 (Chabane’s fourth week in Algiers), a Palestinian approached and spoke to Chabane, promising to help him to get his visa to France on the condition that he told them everything about his family.  
Chabane had a “follow-up” meeting with the PLO member on Feb. 9, when he is informed about Ballard’s relationship with Belmazoir, a homosexual hustler.  
The PLO had already discovered this relationship because on Jan. 25, Belmazoir had mentioned that he had an American friend.  
PLO agents followed Belmazoir on his next Monday meeting with Ballard, Jan. 30. Using the number of his license plate, the next day they knew that Belmazoir’s “M. John” was Paul Ballard, an economic officer at the American embassy.  
By Feb. 2, they know about Ballard’s engagement to Leila. At that time the PLO decided to work through her brother Ahmed, a determination which led to the meeting with Chabane on Feb. 7.  
Besides this and the Feb. 9 meeting, two others are mentioned, one on Feb. 14, when at the suggestion of his Palestinian friend Chabane visits a lawyer to find out the status of Ballard’s and Leila’s marriage, and Feb. 17, when he makes a trip to the PLO camp south of Algiers.
- p. 142: Martyrs Square: This is the first mention in the novel of the most popular tourist site in Algiers, in French *Place des Martyrs* and in Arabic *Sahat ech-*

*Chouhada.*

This large public square located just below the Casbah and a fourth of a mile from the bay is the site of a massive concrete monument in the shape of three inverted palm fronds.

Opened in 1982, the monument commemorates those killed in the Algerian war for independence.

It will be described in detail on 14.233 and 21.356.

- p. 142: a Plo: As explained in the note on 1.12, the acronym PLO, meaning a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization, is sometimes shorted to a one-syllable word, "Plo" (plural "Plos").
- p. 142: "Heaven-sent": This expression was used in line 18 of the song "Orgy" (2.20).
- p. 142: "two or three times her age": As is established on 1.4 and in its note, "In his proposal," N1:13, Ballard is twenty-two years older than Leila. She is twenty-four in 1989, while he is forty-six.
- p. 142: "courtroom *cadi*": A Muslim judge. The term was previously discussed in the 6.91 note, N6:29.
- p. 142: "*prostituée*": In French, a female prostitute. The masculine form is "*prostitute*." Both have the same pronunciation in French, a lack of distinction of which Chabane is unaware, as the text clarifies.
- p. 142: "my family's honor": An aspect of the familial theme of the novel, this term first appeared on 3.41 where Omar spoke of reviving his "family's honor." It will be used twice more, on 13.208 (by Foucin) and 209 (by Remy).
- p. 142: "rent": "to hire a prostitute" (slang).
- p. 142: "The Palestinians had recommended the lawyer whom Chabane sought out": See 1.12 for Chabane's account to Ballard of his seeking the advice of a lawyer and p. 140 where he first mentioned to Remy this visit to the lawyer.
- p. 142: "America toys with our statehood": This allegation by Chabane's PLO friend suggests that he (and perhaps others at the Palestinian camp south of Algiers) were displeased with the PLO two-state declaration of Nov. 15, 1988, which proclaimed Palestine a state and basically recognized Israel's right to exist, the latter a long-sought U.S. diplomatic goal.
- p. 142: "morass": A jeering pun on Chabane as an ass or fool, although the pronunciation of "morass" must be slurred and elided.
- p. 142: "harvester's shock": A play on two meanings of "shock": a sudden agitation of the mind or emotions; a pile of grain sheaves.

Chabane suggests that his sister reaps something disturbing about Ballard and harvests a richness about Chabane himself, that he is no child or baby (the *bébé* of the next page).

p. 142: “We were yet dawdling when this Ballard up and got himself murdered”: This statement would seem to indicate that neither Chabane nor the PLO had anything to do with Ballard’s murder.

However, it may have been added by Chabane, fearful that he had revealed too much information which might be used to incriminate him and his Palestinian friends.

pp. 142-43: “for the female of the species, our masculine Qur’an states, has more idle time to think than we proactive males”: The Qur’an makes no such distinction, but to many scholars the Qur’an does seem oriented toward a “masculine” perspective, and women are often basically restricted to the home.

There, some Muslim men argue, they are not bound to a rigid work schedule and thus have more leisure time to think, that is, scheme or daydream.

p. 143: mauley: “hand, fist” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 143: “a shudder . . . again the old awe”: From Plato’s *Phaedrus* where Socrates tells Phaedrus that the moment one beholds “a god-like face or form, which is the expression of divine beauty[,] . . . at first a shudder runs through him, and again the old awe steals over him” (par. 120, which begins, “But of beauty, I repeat again”).

pp. 143-144: SECTION 4

p. 143: “You know how miserly”: Leila quotes her brother’s remark in the second paragraph on p. 140.

p. 143: “*felled her sibling’s crest*”: A commonplace wordplay on the second morpheme of “crestfallen,” where “fall,” meaning “to hang down,” becomes “fell,” “to cause to fall” or “to knock down.”

The low quality of the pun, which Remy does not utter, indicates how nervous he is around Leila.

p. 143: “‘eyes’ that ‘penetrate until they find the heart’”: A description of Beatrice from Dante’s *Vita Nuova*, chap. 19, ll. 42-45:

“Her eyes . . . strike the eyes of anyone they meet, / And penetrate until they find the heart.”

Remy omits that Dante described Beatrice’s eyes as full of love.

p. 143: “the lie built upon a truth or the truth built upon a lie”: Leila is speaking directly to the lies with which Remy has beguiled her brother, which, she suspects, are built on some partial facts (“truth”).

She sets out to expose these lies in order to reach what truth he possesses.

In their scenes together during the remainder of the novel, the two will debate the nature of truth and lying, the real and the artificial.

p. 143: “M. Lazar, who are you?”: This question will be posed to Remy in two later chapters, 16.261 and 18.298, the latter forcing Remy to ask himself, “Who am I?” (18.298).

For Remy, the answers of his true identity will not come until the last two chapters, 20:341 and 21:364.

Aristotle states that the best tragedy has at its climax *anagnorisis* (“recognition” in Greek) and *peripeteia* (“reversal”).

The typical murder mystery has “reversal,” that is, the least suspected person is shown to have committed the crime.

I have found, however, that murder mysteries minimize the importance of “recognition,” that the person who solves the mystery is changed by the

experience.

As I pointed out in the essay, “Philosophy, Religion, and the Murder Mystery Genre,” at the end of the notes on chap. 3, N3.41-44, the basic structure of *Oedipus the King* and *Hamlet* is that of the typical murder mystery: someone is killed (the king of Thebes preceding Oedipus or Hamlet’s father) and someone is resolved to expose the murderer (Oedipus or Hamlet).

In *Oedipus*, the irony at the point of reversal is that he, who is seeking the murderer, is the murderer. In *Hamlet*, none in the court except Hamlet suspect that King Claudius is the murderer of old Hamlet.

At the moment of reversal or surprise, Aristotle contended there should be a recognition by the tragic protagonist. Oedipus realizes that his pride has driven him to search out (or evade, as I have argued) the truth, insulting the gods in the process.

Hamlet realizes that through himself he cannot expose the murderer; there must be a “divinity” which will allow him to sanction his revenge.

At or toward the end of any complex tragedy, the tragic character must recognize who he or she is.

In my novel, *anagnorisis* will come to Remy because he or others continually challenge him to question who he is.

- p. 143: “my identity [your brother] has perceptively divined”: That Remy was affiliated with the French embassy (139).
- p. 143: “‘lachrymosely melt’”: Dissolve into tears. The single quotation marks indicate Leila’s sarcasm.
- p. 143: “French ambassador—I’m sure you know *his* name”: Jean Audibert was appointed as the French ambassador to Algeria in 1988 and served until 1992. My fictional character bearing this name has no relationship to the real Audibert.
- p. 143: *sans pareille*: French for “matchless.”
- p. 143: “*le meurtre lamentable de votre mari*”: In French, “the lamentable murder of your husband.”
- p. 143: “M. Thierry Devereaux”: Not mentioned by name since 1.4. See its note, N1.13.

- p. 144: “his help”: Leila refers to Devereaux as a “friend predating Paul” and as a French embassy official who has offered his assistance in helping her to gain the corpse of Ballard for interment.
- p. 144: *encore une fois*: once again.
- p. 144: “Are not we bonded . . . ?”: The theme of the making and breaking of bonds was previously examined in the notes to 2.18, N2:15; 2.29, N2:50-51; 2.33, N2:62; 3.37, N3:6; 3.46, N3:30; 4.52, N4:3-4; and 7.109, N7:20.  
In the 15.253 note, N15:49-50, a listing of the major instances of the bonding theme will be given.
- p. 144: *l’assassin*: In French the word refers to any type of murderer, not just one who commits a political assassination.  
Thus at this point Remy is not suggesting, as he did with Leroy, that Ballard was the victim of a political vendetta.
- p. 144: “the one has also nothing ‘to do’ with the other”: Leila has just said that she is concerned only with burying her husband, caring only about him not the murderer: “What have I to do with his murderers?”  
Remy appropriates her infinitive, “to do,” in his reply by asserting that Ballard’s burial, a diplomatic matter, is seemingly divorced from the murder charge against Belmazoir, a judicial matter.
- p. 144: “her former asperity”: On p. 143, Leila had spoken harshly to her brother.
- p. 144: “salmon-stuffed bear”: Verification of Ballard’s idea on 1:13 where Leila is said to think of her brother in ursine terms.
- p. 144: “a simile modified from Leroy’s . . . ‘with a charge of perversion being flung like weeds upon his grave’”: Remy suggests that Leila’s passivity regarding her husband’s murder means that instead of flowers she will allow weeds (malicious gossip) to be placed upon his grave.  
The word choice also implies that Leila has so draped herself in sorrow (the “widow’s weeds” or black mourning clothes) that she cares not that her husband’s reputation has been dishonored.  
On 8.124, using a quotation from *Hamlet* (5.1.231), Leroy had questioned whether “shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on” Ballard’s grave. See its note, N8:19.
- p. 144: *maricón*: In Spanish the word is used for an effeminate male.  
See the note on p. 139 above, N9:12.

- p. 144: “an unwrapping double censure”: Leila exposed two parts of her face, her eye and brow, on p. 139.
- p. 144: Brioni: Since the 1950s, it has been the most prestigious Italian designer of men’s hand-made suits.  
At the time of the novel, the typical price for a Brioni suit was \$3,000. Its celebrity clientele included Clark Gable, Cary Grant, and Robert Kennedy.
- p. 144: “more than the more”: The quotation is from James’s *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, chap. 13, earlier used on 4.66 and 67; 5.73 and 74; and 6.94. A variant of it, “With more than that more,” occurred on p. 141 and is discussed in its note, N9:15-16. Additionally see the note to 4.66, N4:40-41, which lists all of the occurrences of James’s expression in the novel.

pp. 144-47: SECTION 5:

- p. 144: “At around seven . . . for Medlin”: On 8.132, Medlin had arranged to bring some photocopies of papers relevant to the Ballard investigation to Remy’s al-Nigma room at seven.  
While Remy is waiting for him, his mind flashes back to the next part of his conversation with Leila (3:46 – 4:02).
- p. 144: “A week preceding Ballard’s homicide, [he and Medlin] had argued”: What stands out is that Medlin had been quick to impart to Remy Ballard’s meeting with Chabane on Feb. 27, the day of the murder (8.125), but he had failed to mention his own disagreement with Ballard the week before the murder on Feb. 21.  
Remy learns about this argument during his conversation that afternoon with Leila.
- p. 144: “nothing connects”: Leila’s wording reinforces the title of this chapter and will balance Medlin’s comment at the end of this section, “closely connected” (147).
- p. 144: *mouchoir*: French for “handkerchief.”
- p. 144: “indistinguishable from those of Leroy”: On 8.124, Leroy rebutted Remy’s charge that Ballard was homosexual: “And it is only one person [Belmazoir] . . . who stigmatizes my friend as a ‘queer.’”  
Leila also probably offered a second argument similar to Leroy’s, that no other male prostitutes had confessed to any relationship with her husband.  
She presumably knows this point from the “friend” (145) she cites on the next page who had told her of Belmazoir’s Palestinian connection.  
Since Leila apparently was not cognizant of the negative—and hence the suspicion of treason—she would not have adopted any arguments regarding it.

- p. 144: “boudoir”: The single quotes indicate Leila’s derision of her brother’s narrative (141) since the word refers to a woman’s bedroom.
- p. 144: “From June through February”: On 4.62, Belmazoir indicated to Remy that he met Ballard at “the end of May” and that their relationship lasted “nine months.” According to my chronology, they met at Palais des Nations Beach on May 24, 1988, and went that night to the Toumi apartment. No sex occurred that night or at their next June 7 meeting, Mohammed told Remy (4.63). This schedule coincides with Ballard’s account on 1.5, who indicated that he “snared [Belmazoir] quickly” after his May 15, 1988, assignment to Algiers.

- p. 145: *Seulement lundi*: French for “only Monday.”
- p. 145: “By mid-August”: Leila indicates that she was dating Ballard exclusively by the middle of August 1988.  
This month tallies with an incidental comment Belmazoir made to Remy: Ballard’s “French had progressed, but didn’t blossom till August or September, as if by then he’d acquired a second tutor.”  
Belmazoir considered himself Ballard’s first tutor in French. Leila would have been his second.
- p. 145: “the one that emerged after your Christmas, at which point he often was out a second night, Wednesday”: A puzzling new detail.  
In chap. 1, Wednesday occurred twice in Ballard’s thoughts: On p. 6, he mentions a “horrible Wednesday” concerning Belmazoir and his sister and on p. 12, Belmazoir speaks of traveling to the Palestinian camp on a “Wednesday.” That he visited it every Wednesday to pick up the drugs he was to deliver or sell for the PLOs was confirmed on 7.112.  
Leila connects his absences on both nights to work he was doing before and after the November Palestinian negotiations.
- p. 145: *sub-rosa*: The Latin phrase *sub rosa* (“under the rose”) is hyphenated in English when used as an adjective.  
It means “secret or confidential” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 145: *pervicaciously*: obstinately.
- p. 145: *trysting place*: The place of a meeting held by appointment. (This definition carries no connotation of another meaning of “tryst,” “a secret meeting of lovers.”)
- p. 145: “Rue Toumi apartment”: Rue Toumi is the street in a seedy section of Algiers on which is located the apartment building where Ballard had rented two flats, one of which he used for his rendezvous with Belmazoir.  
See 1.6 and its note, N1:16, and 4.63 and its note, N4:34.
- p. 145: *videlicet*: Latin for “namely.”
- p. 145: *amitié*: In French “friendship.”
- p. 145: “by Mon—”: Leila decides not to give the person’s name, simply labeling the person as a “friend.”  
She implies that as part of Ballard’s covert Palestinian assignment he associated with Belmazoir, who was in the employ of the PLO.

- p. 145: “‘need[ing]’ such ‘in order to live’”: From Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power* (trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, 1968 ed., p. 451): “We have need of lies in order to conquer this reality, this ‘truth,’ that is, in order to live.”
- p. 145: “Your allusion to Nietzsche ill disguises your implication:” Leila makes two points: She knows that the allusion is to Nietzsche, and she realizes that Remy principally meant the quote to be directed at her (that she cannot confront the truth about her husband), although through his sentence after the quote, Remy had suggested that it is Belmazoir who is so engaged.
- p. 145: “the structure of his truth has as its support and planking the German metaphysician’s ‘vanquishing’ lies”: Leila uses another work by Nietzsche, his brief 1873 essay, “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense” to rebut Remy, incorporating the “planking” metaphor and the concept of how a framework of lies seemingly can “vanquish” truth. In the second and third paragraphs of part 2 of the essay, Nietzsche writes that “truth-making” as opposed to “truth-seeking” is a creative drive which “is not truly vanquished and scarcely subdued by the fact that a regular and rigid world is constructed as its prison from its own empirical products, the concepts. . . . The immense framework and planking of concepts to which the needy man clings his whole life long in order to preserve himself is nothing but a scaffolding and toy for the most audacious feats of the liberated man.”
- p. 145: “occasional flashes of silence”: This quote about T. B. Macaulay, the towering 19<sup>th</sup>-century English historian, is by Sydney Smith, an essayist and acquaintance of Macaulay: Macaulay’s “enemies might perhaps have said before . . . that he talked rather too much; but now he has occasional flashes of silence, that made his conversation perfectly delightful” [Smith, *Lady Holland’s Memoirs* (1855), vol. 1, chap. 11, p. 363]. Leila’s unexpected and powerful invocation of Nietzsche’s conception of truth and lies drives Remy to gaze at an imperfection in the tablecloth and slip into a “flash of silence.”
- p. 145: “mirroring his own with Medlin”: See 8.132.

- p. 146: “thwart the ambition of his friend”: Leila independently has come to the same conclusion which both Remy and the ambassador have: That the intended victim of the murder of Ballard was Leroy (8:124 and 128). She believes that Palestinians ordered his death, and that Belmazoir, since he was undeniably at the scene of the murder, was their willing or coerced instrument. Remy’s purpose here as elsewhere is simply to roil the waters. He does not care who the murderer is: The more suspects he can produce, he hopes, will direct the attention of Foucin away from him, thus making it easier for him to slip in to visit his father. Since he fears only Foucin, a major goal of Remy’s is to get the commissioner out of Algiers, perhaps on a daylong trip to the PLO camp.
- p. 146: “His death continues that service”: Leila’s final supposition is that the murder has evidently not caused Leroy’s appointment as the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs to be withdrawn because the focus on her husband’s murder has been a personal scandal—his assumed homosexuality—not a political one—the PLO’s role. In that sense, even in death Ballard continues to serve Leroy.
- p. 146: “Three minutes later, Medlin . . . was let in”: The action flashes forward to seven when Medlin enters Remy’s suite bringing a briefcase full of documents. According to my chronology, at 7:22 Remy brings up what he had learned from Leila earlier that day (3:57 – 4:02): Medlin’s “over-coffee contretemps” with Ballard in the embassy coffee room on Feb. 21.
- p. 146: dishwasher: Medlin jokes about the loss of his senses of smell and taste. For his anosmia, see 8.132-33.
- p. 146: contretemps: an inopportune happening causing confusion or embarrassment.
- p. 146: astoundment: “amazement, astonishment” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 146: “unofficially on . . . officially off”: On Jan. 13, Leroy told Ballard of his Washington appointment and the latter agreed to accompany him, though to himself he knew he would not. On Jan. 16, embassy gossip placed Crippin and Jackie (the Leroy’s private secretaries) and Ballard on the Washington list. On Jan. 23, Ballard tells Leroy that he and Leila have signed a marriage contract and they plan to stay in Algiers. On Feb. 13, the official list of Crippin, Jackie, and now Medlin is publically announced.
- p. 146: “This response paralleled the one Medlin had given in Leroy’s office”: After

Leroy first answered that he knew of no embassy friction involving Ballard, Medlin added, "I interviewed everyone here: not a trace of dissension between Paul and another" (8.127).

p. 146: "Leila referred to a change in Medlin's attitude, a transformation [also mentioned] by Belsches": Remy remembers that Medlin had also said when "rumor placed Paul on the list, and when it detached him, his deportment never fluctuated" (8:127).

Belsches, however, had commented that once Leroy "tabbed [Medlin] for Washington," the DCM, grown possessive of Leroy's attention, "even endeavored to curtail" Ballard's morning coffee with the ambassador (5.72).

p. 146: peacock: A vain, strutting person.

p. 146: *miles-gloriosus*: Latin for a "boastful soldier," a stock character in Roman and Renaissance comedy.

p. 146: warp: As an intransitive verb, one meaning is "to become biased: alter a choice, opinion, or liking under influence" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 146: "Leroy's 'staggering generosity'": The \$15,000 check which Leroy gave Ballard as a wedding present on Jan. 28 (8.124).

p. 146: "'Only two thousand dollars . . . should have been three,' the second time that day this revelation had cropped up": Leila notes that on the day after his death only \$2,000 was found in Ballard's apartment while there should have been \$3,000, a point Leroy had also made in the garden that morning, noting the money was "a thousand off" (8:124).

p. 146: "Elbert? The joke?": Leila is not calling Medlin "a joke," but is referring to Ballard's "goading raillery," mentioned five paragraphs above.

p. 146: *À dire vrai*: A French expression meaning "in truth."

- p. 147: “One word from me, and perhaps you won’t be ‘Washington ho!’”: Leila’s account of what Ballard told her about this confrontation may be compared with Ballard’s own narrative given on 1.6-7.
- p. 147: “he was jabbing his left palm with the plastic knife”: See 1.7.
- p. 147: “nod to”: an idiom meaning “to acknowledge briefly or slightly.”
- p. 147: “we’ve become closely connected”: At 7:30, after Remy and Medlin had said their goodbyes, the latter asserts that while he and Ballard were never friends, since his death they have become more “closely connected.” Thus Leila’s “nothing connects” which is near the opening of this section is balanced by Medlin’s statement closing it.

pp. 147-48: SECTION 6

- p. 147: “Without circumlocution Remy”: At 9:17 p.m. from a phone booth south of the Al-Nigma, Remy makes his second call to his French embassy liaison. The call lasts thirteen minutes.
- p. 147: “humphed”: “Humph,” usually an interjection, may be used as a transitive verb (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 147: “Your ‘be-all’ and ‘end-all’”: This phrase was first used in *Macbeth* 1.7.4-5, where Macbeth considers “that but this [the assassination of Duncan] / Might be the be-all, and the end-all.” It has come to mean the “essential element” or “dominant factor” of something, as in the representative sentence (quite apropos) in *Webster’s Third*: “The be-all and the end-all of the detective story is to conceal the identity of the criminal.” By using the phrase, his liaison means that Remy’s focus should be on Belmazoir, finding out whether through him Ballard had sold some other negatives. This is all that is required of him (his “be-all”) and all that he must do to complete his mission (his “end-all”). Why this change by his monitor from their first meeting where he had approved Remy’s suggestion to proceed slowly on confronting Belmazoir with the negative? After Remy told “M. Champagne” during their Tues., Apr. 11 phone call that he had not brought up the negative to Belmazoir, his liaison responded, “Just as well” (5.77). Now his contact is unnerved that in four days in Algiers this “amateur”—“The more inept you are, the wiser I’ll ultimately be viewed by Paris” (77)—has made

a discovery which he, who had headed the embassy investigation of the matter presumably since March, had failed to uncover.

Remy notes that the more he spoke the more his liaison's demeanor shifted from "aggravation" to "blasé anger" (147). He orders Remy to concentrate on Belmazoir simply because he feels he will have the same failure with the youth that Vellacott and his team had encountered.

p. 147: *entrevues*: French for "meetings."

p. 147: "chaperoning snigger": accompanying snicker.

p. 147: "The Palestinians . . . Medlin . . . Chabane . . . Leila": "M. Champagne" neatly lists the suspects whom Remy's investigation has turned up.

p. 147: "The [negative]'s the thing": Based on Hamlet's "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.605-06).  
The coincidental irony of this quote will become apparent much later.

p. 147: *combiné*: In French "the receiver of a telephone."

- p. 148: “my intermediary’s nonchalant adoption of *her* forename—and for the second time”: During their Tues., Apr. 11 phone call, his liaison referred to her as “the beautiful Leila” (5.77).
- p. 148: “defective inference”: Remy had supposed that telling Leila her brother was a more likely suspect than Belmazoir in the murder of Ballard would make her cry. It had not; hence his scheme was “defective.”
- p. 148: “You’re not insinuating Elbert’s”: The action flashes back to the third part of his conversation with Leila (4:02 – 4:06) at the Al-Nigma, taking up directly after Leila’s recounted statement by Ballard, “I don’t envisage he’ll [Medlin will] be riding me anymore” (147).
- p. 148: “the former tears”: Leila had cried, probably from thinking about the night of the wedding contract that her brother was wantonly describing (141).
- p. 148: “Hardly a particle of its [her face’s] beauty could be captured”: This is the third of five references to “particle.”  
As mentioned in the note to 4.54, N4.11, the idea to use this word sprang from *War and Peace*, bk. 13, chap. 16: “to die means that I, a particle of love, shall return to the general and eternal source [God].”
- p. 148: “Beauty is not truth . . . Beauty is faith”: An obvious emendation of the controversial penultimate line of Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty.”  
Remy magnifies Leila’s outward beauty by minimizing one’s ability to comprehend it. Simply put, Leila’s beauty is like faith, for just as the latter does not require physical proof so beauty principally resides in the non-material world of one’s imagination.
- p. 148: “massive overplus”: There is an antithetical pun on “massive,” but not on “overplus,” which is identified with “the mysterious *plus*” of the novel’s title.
- p. 148: “I guess I grow desperate the moment everything begins to disconnect”: Overtly, Medlin cannot be connected to the murder except through an act of desperation, Remy admits.  
However, this quick dismissal is being used by Remy as a ploy since he is about to make a major connection. Additionally, I planned his speech to be a censure of himself for allowing his thoughts about Leila’s beauty to distract him from the matter.
- p. 148: “train to Constantine departs at 4:40”: The time now is 4:02.  
As noted in the commentary on 1.4, the train trip from Algiers to Constantine

took around seven and one-hour hours.

Thus Leila and Ahmed will arrive after midnight. They would then have to take the one-hour bus to Zouabi, the village near their father's farm.

p. 148: "wayward licks": A "lick" is a "strand of hair, usually fixed neatly into place" (*Webster's Third*).

A "cowlick" is a tuft of hair on the head that cannot easily be combed flat.

p. 148: comminations: threats.

p. 148: "splayed hands": spread apart or opened outward.

An example from *Webster's Third*: "splaying large, meaty hands over the table."

p. 148: "a devil": Another character calls Remy a devil. In 2.17, Algeria's president Ben Bella terms the seven traitors (Remy included) as devils.

In 4.58, Foucin also dubs them such. In 6.90, Remy calls himself a devil, and in 7.111, indirectly Mohisen deems him a demon and Satan. Here Leila deems him a "devil," a term which Remy himself will echo on p. 149.

In later chapters, a character or a group, including most of the main characters of the novel, will use "devil" or its French "*diable*," "Satan," and "demon" in referring to him: 13.209 (Remy's father as imagined by Remy); 14.220 (Foucin); 14:223 (Remy imagining Foucin referring to him); 14.227 (residents of the Casbah); 14.232 (Foucin); 15.247 (Houda); 17.276 (Remy referring to himself) and 287 (Mohammed; Remy speaking of how often he has been called a devil); 18.295 (Mohammed twice apologizing for calling Remy a devil and Remy denying he is a devil) and 308 (Foucin); 19.322 (Casbahians) and 330 (Prime Minister of Algeria); 19:330 (Leila saying Remy must put the demon imagery behind him); 20.340 (Leroy), 347 (a French Embassy aide), 350 (Remy describing himself as a *diable*), and 351 (a Casbah youth); and 21.353, 354, 355, 356, 358 (Casbahians) and 367 (Remy imagining how the President of Algeria would designate him).

Thus a total of eleven individual characters refer to Remy in terms of a devil: Ben Bella, Foucin, Mohisen, Leila, Remy's father (imagined), Houda, Mohammed, Prime Minister of Algeria, Leroy, a French Embassy aide, and the President of Algeria (imagined).

In addition, some residents of the Casbah, including some named, term him a devil. And finally there are the times when Remy speaks of himself using the word or a variant.

In total there are thirty-three instances where Remy is associated with a devil.

## pp. 149-50: SECTION 7

p. 149: “back at his Al-Nigma suite . . . at ten”: His telephone call with his liaison having been finished at 9:30, Remy walked back to his hotel, arriving at 9:50 (not mentioned).

At ten he telephones Foucin. By that time he knew that Foucin would have completed his Isha' midevening prayers (8:48 – 9:03) and his Ramadan repast. They talk about six minutes.

p. 149: *devoirs*: acts of courtesy or respect used in greeting.

p. 149: “photocopies of three documents”: Since Medlin left at 7:30, Remy would have had from then until around nine, when he left to telephone his embassy liaison, to peruse the documents relating to the account of the maitre d'/waiter at the Casbah restaurant.

These would have interested Remy since they provided him an excuse to visit the Casbah and reconnoiter his father's neighborhood.

p. 149: “The two events in all likelihood aren't connected”: The word “connected,” as Remy designed, would spur Foucin's attention since he would recall how Remy used it in their discussion after the Mohisen interview: “Remy began with the obvious—that it must be assumed everything connects [but instead phrased it as] ‘nothing disconnects’” (7.101).

His immediate desire is to stir Foucin's attention toward Chabane, thus giving him an opportunity to visit his father.

p. 149: “Another ‘Mohisen’”: Foucin asks playfully whether Remy has come across something analogous to the discovery that the unidentified fingerprints were Mohisen's.

p. 149: “Casbah . . . can be tricky maneuvering”: A similar phrasing was employed by Ballard in speaking to Belmazoïr (he assumed) as he climbed the disco steps where he will meet his murderer: “It's tricky maneuvering through the thick darkness” (1.13).

Here Foucin uses it on commenting on the Casbah. On 10.159 Belmazoïr himself will make the same observation.

p. 149: “the French ‘five letters’”: Surprisingly a counter-euphemism for the five-letter word *merde* (“shit”). B. M. Dupriez in *A Dictionary of Literary Devices* (1991), pp. 178-79, writes that it is “a kind of antiphrasis which uses a pejorative term to avert the supposed ill luck attached to a meliorative term.

A good example in French is ‘*Les cinq lettres!*’ (i.e., ‘*merde*’) in place of ‘Good luck,’ which is believed to be unlucky. Contrast among English-speaking actors

the wishing of ill luck in order to pre-empt disaster: ‘Break a leg!’”

The expression “*Les cinq lettres*” seems to have arisen among French ballet-dancers conveying their hope to another not to fall during the performance, but believing the normal French for “good luck” (“*bonne chance*”) would jinx the fellow dancer.

The counter-euphemism I found to be employed quite often by French-speaking Mediterranean Africans.

- p. 149: *hazze*: Arabic for “good luck,” as the text explains. It will be used twice more in the novel, 17.283 and 18.304.
- p. 149: “Reseated, she positioned the *niquaab*”: The action flashes back to the last part of Remy’s conversation with Leila (4:06 – 4:10). It resumes at the point where Remy had just responded to her calling him a “devil” (148, last paragraph).
- p. 149: *niquaab*: As mentioned twice earlier, a “*niquaab*” is an Arab woman’s facial veil, in Leila’s case here a full, not a half, *niquaab*.
- p. 149: “And have resolved my brother is not my husband’s murderer”: Her answer reveals that Leila had been considering whether Chabane might have murdered Ballard and had concluded he was not capable of such an act.
- p. 149: “the other sister”: Leila’s position contrasts with that of Houda, “the other sister,” whose avowal that the fault was not her brother’s, seemed to imply that she believed he had murdered Ballard.  
However, both answers, Remy perceives, reinforce the sisters’ love and loyalty to their brothers.
- p. 149: “A ‘lie built upon a truth’”: Remy quotes Leila’s phrasing from p. 143. Leila’s “lie” (that her brother was with her) arises from a “truth” (that she is convinced her brother could never physically harm anyone).  
It is Remy’s recognition of this logic which softens Leila, making her see him less than a “devil,” and nudges her toward continuing their conversation.
- p. 149: “My chaperon. Paul, not my father, insisted on his attending me [in Algiers]”:  
On 1.4, Ballard said that Chabane was to “chaperon” Leila and him to Zouabi for the negotiation of the marriage contract.  
On p. 142, Chabane told Remy that he accompanied them back to Algiers “to press my case [his French visa] while chaperoning my sister.

p. 150: inculpate: incriminate.

p. 150: imputation: attributing a fault to another.

p. 150: “generally targeted”: Remy realizes that a general love, innate to a brother and sister, has propelled Leila to admit as truth what she knows to be a lie, she and her brother were not together at the time Ballard was murdered. Her encompassing love for her brother will make her tell a particular lie.

Remy next wonders whether the pronoun “it” in Houda’s refrain, “It is not his fault,” refers not to a particular event, the murdering of Ballard, but to a broader situation, one which resulted in the murder.

p. 150: “*With a span of around forty minutes before the predictably tardy Belmazoir, he arrived at 6:50 or so, intent on meeting another . . . and promptly rendezvoused with death*”: The police interviews revealed Ballard left the changing room at 6:39 (6.86, 87, and 88).

If Ballard proceeded directly, it is about a ten-minute walk to the disco (6:49) (6.87 and 93).

Mohammed was scheduled to arrive at 7:15 (6.86 and 87 and 8.130), but as he admitted to Remy, Ballard would know that he habitually came at least fifteen minutes late (7:30) (6.86 and 87).

Thus there would have been a forty-minute interval (6:49 – 7:30) for the early-arriving Ballard to meet another, who must be considered a murder suspect.

p. 150: “Paul always came at least twenty minutes early”: Ballard’s musings in chapter one confirm this “punctuality”: On 1.4, he says to himself, “That he’ll straggle in has never behooved that I shouldn’t sprightly arrive.”

On 1.10, over halfway to the disco, he notes, Ballard notes, “6:45: high-principled early.” And on the next page, seated on the disco bench, he says, “Probably ten or so till seven or alternately forty minutes to Mohammed . . . at least.”

p. 150: “first registered surprise, next aversion, and finally gratitude”: Remy was surprised by Leila’s explanation which quickly contradicted his conclusion from her opening “no.”

Next, his face registers dislike for the answer since it proves his theory wrong: Ballard had not planned a second meeting with someone else. If someone else met Ballard, it would have been “unplanned,” one of Leroy’s deductions on 8.120. However, Remy finally realizes that this news is propitious.

It is another “Mohisen” moment (Foucin’s wording on p. 149) for Remy since he has discovered an aspect of the murder which no one else had. Of the two alternatives offered by Leroy on p. 120, one (that the meeting with another party was “preplanned”) seemingly can be eliminated.

Remy’s questioning of Leila indicates that the rendezvous with someone else

most likely would have been unexpected.

Again, this deduction should not be interpreted as Remy's "caring" about the murder. The revelation simply produces a new ripple in the water which he hopes he can take advantage of in securing his meeting with his father.

p. 150: "*So that third-of-an-hour duration would have been for Belmazoir*": Actually, the duration would have been slightly greater: From 6:49 to 7:15 is not twenty minutes, but twenty-six minutes.

In Remy's concealed excitement at the revelation, he apparently does not take into account Leila's qualifier, "at least twenty minutes early."

p. 150: "a tentacular expedition": Remy's comically describes Chabane's right arm, hand, and fingers as it reaches toward (as if on an expedition) the crinkling sound given off by the two bills.

One definition of "tentacle" is "something that acts like a tentacle in grasping or feeling out" (*Webster's Third*).

pp. 150-52: SECTION 8

p. 150: "brush with infidelity": On p. 143, a startled Remy said that Leila's was the most beautiful face he had seen since Marie's.

Here he censors himself for this "brush with infidelity and emends the statement so that he places his wife's face first.

p. 150: constate: "to assert positively" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 150: "'Nothing connects,' Leila had said": See p. 144. Remy uses these words to indicate that for any onlooker it would seem everything he had done had no connection with his principal reason for coming to Algiers, his visit to his father.

p. 150: "a midnight soliloquizing apologia": Remy finished his telephone conversation with Foucin at 10:06.

Not mentioned in the novel is that he studied the documents which Medlin had brought over earlier that night from ten until he got ready for bed near midnight. The two speeches about Marie and Leila and his critique of what progress he had made were spoken from the hotel window pointing toward the Casbah and his father's attic.

p. 150: apologia: Remy's defense of what he has accomplished in his first five days back in Algiers.

p. 150: "having 'idly . . . profan[ed] the precious time": From *2 Henry IV* 2.4.360-61: On hearing of the insurrection against his father, Hal says, "By heaven, Poins, I feel me much to blame, / So idly to profane the precious time."

[Click to return to page 150 of text.](#)

The speaker who uses the quote from *2 Henry IV* is Remy's superego, faulting him (his ego) for making such minimal progress in achieving his goal in coming to Algiers, to see his father.

p. 150: "Kindled a faggot of heatless, lightless fire,' not discerning the screen of smoke": This image of Remy's superego merges the frozen, heatless world of Dante's Satan (*Inferno*, cantos 32-34) and the lightless world of Milton's ("No light, but rather darkness visible" from *Paradise Lost* 1:63).

"Heatless" represents what his superego adjudges as Remy's lack of ardor in pursuing his goal, and "lightless" characterizes how little he has forwarded his plan to reach his father, who is trapped in a "sonless" (sunless) Casbah loft (1.17).

But Remy notes that his superego has forgotten the third element associated with fire: smoke. Remy's ego counters that he is in the process of creating a series of smoke screens in order to conceal his purpose or mislead those who stand in the way of his achieving his true aim.

This basic absence of light and heat, but the fulsome presence of smoke, was foreshadowed by the description of the fire of the cave at the beginning of this chapter: "retreated through the smoke to the cave's sunken campfire" (136).

The light and smoke images cause Remy to evoke the ending of the Tizi Aimoula narrative.

p. 150: "in bed": Around 12:05 a.m.

p. 150: arced: As an intransitive verb, to "describe a curving course resembling the form of an arc" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 150: "the French corporal, minus his ears": See p. 138: "Off were whacked his ears."

p. 150: "yu-yu-yus": The ululation employed as a celebratory cry by North African women.

In *Savage War*, Horne transcribes the Algerian ululation as "you-you-you" (431 and 529), but I found the sound rendered in English newspapers in North African and Middle Eastern countries as "yu-yu-yu."

p. 150: adorant: "marked by, motivated by, or manifesting adoration [words given to God alone]" (*Webster's Third*).

Poulailleur's final words are addressed to God: "Father, forgive them" (138).

p. 150: harrow: torment; vex.

p. 150: *sans doute*: "without doubt" in French.

p. 150: spurn: "a blow delivered with the feet; kick" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 150: "camel thistle": This English term was used by a Moroccan friend of mine to

[Click to return to page 150 of text.](#)

identify a thorn bush I had asked about. I kept it in the novel even after my research could not find the term.

His “camel thistle” may have referred to the spear thistle (also called the bull thistle or roadside thistle) which occurs naturally in northern Africa, including the mountainous Kabyle of northeastern Algeria, the site of my narrative of the women of Tizi Aimoula.

This plant can grow as tall as eight feet and as wide as six feet, although the one in my novel was envisioned as smaller, more of a bush size.

Its leaves have sharp spines, and its flower heads have long needle-like bracts at the base—the thorns of my novel. These pricklers ward off most livestock save camels and goats.

However, my friend may have been identifying a thorn bush of the acacia family. In fact, in the Sahara there is even a species of it called the camel-thorn bush, according to Anthony Wilkin in *Among the Berbers of Algeria*, pp. 15, 19, 26, and 35, but this author does not use “camel” in describing the acacia thorn bushes of the Kabyle.

Instead Wilkin refers to the area’s acacia thorn bushes or simply thorn bushes as present in courtyards, along pathways, and across the sides of cliffs in the Kabyle (214-16).

- p. 150: swipe: “a strong sweeping blow or stroke (as with a bat or club or paw of an animal)” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 150: “the anatomy of revenge”: The women planned to use the dissection of different parts of Poulailleur’s “anatomy” in their ritual.  
Instead, the camel thistle bush becomes their anatomist.

- p. 151: “his fingers clawed to extricate his orbs”: Every action which Poulaille uses to ease the pain in one part of his body entangles the instrument sent to be the rescuer.  
In essence, in seeking to connect, he succeeds only in disconnecting another part of his body until finally at the seventh action, everything disconnects with “a terminal twist.”
- p. 151: “orbs”: A poetic term for eyes or eyeballs.
- p. 151: lingua: tongue.
- p. 151: Ismail: The Arabic name for the son of Abraham (in Arabic Ibrahim), Ishmael in Hebrew. In Arabic Ismail means “God will hear.”  
Although it is not specified in the Qur’an, Islamic scholars hold that it was Ismail not Ishaq (Isaac in Hebrew), who was the son that Ibrahim dreamed he was to sacrifice.  
Just as the father is about to bring the knife to Ismail’s throat, an angel intervenes and gives him a ram to sacrifice in place of his son.  
For Muslims, Ishaq (Isaac) is regarded as the patriarch of the Israelites, while his half-brother Ismail (Ishmael) is the patriarch of the Arab people.  
The Qur’an speaks of both as being prophets to be revered.
- p. 151: “his father’s jugular-bent knife”: Another reference to a knife being brought to the throat of a victim, the image flowing from the murder of Ballard in chap. one.
- p. 151: “hallow”: honor greatly; bless.
- p. 151: “The longest of the long shots wins!”: The hoyden was the only one of the women who bet that Poulaille would die after his ears were lopped off.
- p. 151: “fabricated a bond”: Grammatically, “fabricate” here means “make or construct by assembling parts.”  
That is, the women assembled the parts of a story of how Poulaille died and made a bond that this would be what they would tell the ALN corporal. Connotatively, the word suggests the second meaning, “to make up a story or a lie.”
- p. 151: “Two hours on”: Since Poulaille died at about 4:15 a.m., it would be around 6:15 when the corporal and his men returned to the village.
- p. 151: “shuddered his soul”: Typically an intransitive verb, “shudder” does have a transitive meaning, “to cause to shudder; shake” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 151: “*May I never fall into the grasp of the she-devils of Tizi Aimoula!*”: In the next sentence, there is no contradiction because the woman is in *his* grasp, at least until her confession.
- p. 151: The “*agapē* of orgasm”: The Greek word meaning “greeting with love” is used. Its English equivalent, “agape,” with its Christian definitions of “love feast,” “God’s love for humanity,” and “spontaneous, altruistic love,” is also ironically implied.  
The English version (“agape”) is a homograph of a second meaning of “agape” (“with mouth wide open in wonder”), which was used on p. 137.  
The latter is also suggested here in *agapē*, with the mouth as a facsimile of the female pudendum.
- p. 151: “Swisser Swatter! Swisser Swatter!”: The “love greeting” exclaimed by the woman of Tizi Aimoula is not speaking-in-tongue gibberish.  
It is taken from the ecstatic cry of one of Queen Elizabeth’s maids of honor during sex with Walter Raleigh.  
The anecdote is reported in the chapter titled “Sir Walter Raleigh,” in John Aubrey’s *Brief Lives* (p. 266 in Barber’s 1982 ed.).  
The near entirety of the episode is needed to understand the quote which Remy inserted into the Tizi Aimoula narrative: One time Raleigh got this maiden “up against a tree in a wood. . . . [S]eeming at first boarding to be something fearful of her honour, and modest, she cried, ‘Sweet Sir Walter, what do you me ask? Will you undo me? Nay, sweet Sir Walter! Sweet Sir Walter! Sir Walter!’ At last, as the danger and the pleasure at the same time grew higher, she cried in the ecstasy, ‘Swisser Swatter! Swisser Swatter!’”
- p. 151: “revelation rendered his penis limp . . . woman’s mania to harass ‘a man, any man’”: In essence, the revelation stripped the corporal of his manhood, for though the woman he was raping had achieved her “orgasm” he does not finish his.  
The castration of Cpl. Poulailier wrought by the women psychically unmans the Algerian corporal.  
This third use of the limp penis image (2.15 and 25) introduces it as part of the male vs. female theme of the novel. It harks back to HIV’s assertion on 2.25: It’s “woman, never satisfied, who drives man queer.”  
See the 2.15 note, N2.3-4, for a list of the seven uses of the “limp penis” image in the novel.
- p. 151: andric: “of or belonging to a male person” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 151: “the Glorious Revolution”: See p. 135.
- p. 151: “harass”: An unsavory pun on “her ass,” the corporal’s assertion of how women through their sexual allure control and torment men.

p. 151: sough: sigh.

p. 151: volte-face: as an intransitive verb, “to perform a volte-face: face about” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 151: *jebel*: Arabic for “a hamlet or very small village.”

p. 151: “frayed circle”: “A frayed” is an obvious pun on “afraid.” Originally I wrote “a ragged circle,” but in revision I released that produced five instances of the image. I wanted only four in order to magnify the *ND, NC, ED, EC* pattern. The other three “ragged circle” images occur in 2.33, 3.48, 17.282, and 21.353. See the 2.33 note, N2.62-63. However, the variant in this chapter does not disassociate itself from the imagery: Here the women gather about a corpse, just as Remy through the peephole sees the corpse of “Noura” in chap. 3. Furthermore, in chap. 17, Remy has a “ragged circle” of blood vomited on the sleeve of his coat; and finally, like the multi-wounded Poulailier’s corpse, another character will be “four-times wounded” in chap. 21.”

p. 151: damfool: “extremely foolish or stupid” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 151: gibbeting: hanging on a gibbet (gallows).

p. 151: “through torture—actually postbattle rape, yet aren’t they synonymous?”: The use of sexual assault as a torturing instrument, Remy naturally connects with what happened to “Noura” and probably to his sister in the cornfield below the nunnery.

p. 151: “and the babble [which torture] produces”: The use of “babble” foreshadows its occurrence in another torture scene (14.220).

p. 151: “citizens of two continents”: Europe and Africa, that is, the *colons* of Algeria and patriots of mainland France.

p. 151: Monument aux Morts: The gaudy cenotaph in the center of colonial Algiers, which commemorated the French soldiers who died in World War I. In 3.39, Remy is arrested in front of it. See the note to that page for more details on the monument. Here, as revealed on p. 152, it was the final resting place of Poulailier. After independence, the government razed the monument and vindictively had the spot cemented over. Hence, the comment on p. 152 that the victorious Algerians sought no “more-than-a-concrete revenge against the [Poulailier] anecdote.”

p. 151: “corse”: Archaic form of “corpse,” so used to stress the mythic respect accorded

[Click to return to page 151 of text.](#)

to the fallen hero.

- p. 151: **Dakota C-47B Skytrain:** A military transport aircraft that was developed from the Douglas DC-3 airliner.  
In 1944 the French leased around twenty C-47B's from the U.S. and afterward purchased them for use in the Indochina and Algerian wars.  
They were gradually phased out in the 1960s.
- p. 151: **Premier Guy Mollett:** Mollett was the prime minister of France from Feb. 1, 1956 to June 13, 1957. My novel's episode dealing with the women of Tizi Aimoula occurred during July 1956.
- p. 151: **"69.22 percent":** Remy puns on the number of the locker 2269 at Paris's Orly Airport which contained the DGSE documents about his Algiers assignment.  
The number was first mentioned by HIV on 2.29.
- p. 151: **Arc de Triomphe:** This famous memorial at the western end of the Champs-Élysées commemorates those who died in the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars.  
It also houses the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier from World War I.  
The ashes of Napoleon passed under it on their journey from St. Helena to his Paris burial site.  
And, like the novel's Poulaillet, the body of Victor Hugo was exposed under the Arc, but just for one night, not the five days' viewing for our hero.
- p. 151: **"between Prime and Terce":** Between 6 a.m. and 9. a.m. In Roman Catholic ecclesiasticism, Prime is (or was) the second of the seven canonical hours. It is the first hour of daylight, beginning at around 6 a.m.  
Terce is the third canonical hour, or the mid-morning prayer, three hours after sunrise, hence around 9 a.m.

- p. 152: “Sartre . . . spit on the *cadavre* . . . de Beauvoir snickered”: Jean-Paul Sartre, the French existentialist philosopher, and Simone de Beauvoir, his friend and seminal feminist writer, both opposed the Algerian war.
- p. 152: *cadavre*: French for “cadaver.”
- p. 152: “my zipper stuck”: “Sartre” was planning to “water” the corpse.
- p. 152: laureate: a person on whom honor or distinction is conferred. Poulailier’s parents are the laureates referred to here.
- p. 152: *pied-noir*: European colonists in Algeria. For more information about them, see the 3.40 note.
- p. 152: “recargod”: Not listed in standard dictionaries, but “recargo” is used in reputable works and postings cited on the internet to mean “to ship back.”
- p. 152: “carotid artery”: Remy’s mind goes back to the point where the *douk-douk* pierced Ballard’s throat.
- p. 152: “*Al-gér-ie Fran-çaise*”: “Algeria [is forever] French.” See the novel’s first reverence to this exclamation on 5.79.
- p. 152: by then: by 1962, when Algeria became an independent country.
- p. 152: “the narrative had become an anecdote”: A short narrative, often based on fact. The Poulailier narrative “declined until its sole use was [as] an anecdote” (135).
- p. 152: “a more-than-concrete revenge against the anecdotal”: As mentioned in the p. 151 note above, N9:43, the Monument aux Morts under which Poulailier was buried was razed after the Algerian War and its site was covered with cement.
- p. 152: “less errant”: Unlike Poulailier’s corpse which was moved from one continent to another and then returned to the first, the women of Tizi Aimoula roved or strayed little.  
With the end of the war, the men of the village returned.
- p. 152: “previously mentioned”: See p. 135: The Kabyle men “sought out its infertile potential as an exemplum.”
- p. 152: exemplum: a moralized tale or anecdote, as defined in the p. 135 note above, N9:3.
- p. 152: *philosophe*: French for “philosopher.”

[Click to return to page 152 of text.](#)

p. 152: “[Events] seem conjoined, but never connected”: The quotation is from the eighteenth-century Scottish empirical philosopher David Hume, the first paragraph of “Of the Idea of Necessary Connection: Part II,” in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: “All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another, but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*.”

The quotation used in the novel omitted Hume’s italics.

Hume’s quotation, of course, partially influenced the titles of the four N/D, N/C, E/D, and E/C chapters of the novel (along with those of William James, Whitman, and Eliot).