

Chapter Twelve

WOMEN, MOSTLY

“M. Lazar, although you are a confidant of Commissioner Foucin, for whom I, like all Algiers, have transcendent respect, I must protest your visitor. The Al-Nigma must safeguard its reputation. The unescorted lady has been seated behind partitions in the Aladdin, but on your joining her, naturally, the screen will come down.”

Boshabo’s hand gestures resembled a traffic policeman’s: with palms thrust forward as he huffed Remy’s name, outspread and open-fingered while Foucin’s was uttered, tightened into fists when his employer was invoked, brandished frenetically at the point he specified the dining room, and finally in a dive collapsed to his liveried thighs.

The moment Remy, back from the embassy, had stepped from the revolving plate-glass door, he descried the receptionist scurrying from his desk. Of the forty strides which separated them, Boshabo covered thirty in advance of Remy’s ten.

With his well-rehearsed speech delivered, halting neither for a response nor an injunction to follow him, he veered round and, similar to a majestic argosy, bounded away, with Remy a pinnacle in his wake.

At the front desk, where the lobby’s red runner drained into a wall-to-wall tan rectangle, by hauling to the right, Boshabo navigated past the elongate counter, in the rear of which he stood painter-uncut and landlubberly for most of his twelve-hour shift.

A score onward, he ceased amain, the sudden arrest hurtling Remy into the fleecy aplustre of his uniform. Not disturbed, so it seemed, by this abaft assault, the receptionist eyed the anabasis one hundred paces ahead, where stood Rouis, his destination.

Remy’s gaze also focused on the brightly bedecked *mâitre d’hôtel* of the Aladdin, who was impatiently transferring his weight from one foot to the other.

When faced with an unknown caller, unlike a woman’s mind, a man’s rewinds chronology. No woman, Remy should have chided himself, would have adopted his premier choice: one of the four embassy secretaries who during the interview had forgotten a tidbit. Ingrained in a woman would be the reluctance of her sex to admit that a modifier, much less a substantive, had been carelessly omitted from her account.

“Perhaps Mme. Bourceli,” Remy’s mind forthwith supplanted the first, again “absent of any rational evaluation,” *l’esprit d’une femme* would protest. Before presenting this candidacy, it would have sensibly inquired why Mme. Bourceli would have sought out a man with whom she could not converse.

“Mlle. Belmazoir,” Remy sanguinely postulated. “She’s convinced Mohammed to let her bare all to me.”

“Hah!” a woman’s mind would have retorted, dismissing the premise that Houda had

discovered he was staying at the Al-Nigma and the “improbable possibilities” she had telephoned her imprisoned brother, gained his consent, and hired Remy’s second alternative to sit with her parent.

Unlike a woman’s, Remy’s mind—oblivious to the “Hah!” and tiring of this compilation—desisted from theorizing about “Who?”

Still in Boshabo’s safe tow, he had not taken three steps before resuming his examination of the colloquy with the secretaries, a confirmation that *l’esprit d’un homme* largely prefers to occupy itself with the certain past, not the unreliable future, mostly a woman’s predilection. After all, had not “the dams and damsels” he had encountered adamantly relegated the murder to an endnote?

“A [man’s] heart,” a woman’s mind would have judgmentally emended *philosophe* Unamuno, “sometimes ‘sees very clearly, but not very far.’ Did you learn nothing,” it would have importuned, “from those years with your mother, with Noura, with Marie? How can you not cognize that the one installed behind the screened-off table is Leila?”

2

Remy had approached the embassy’s white façade, glistening in sunlight, with a mind full of questions. None he had had to ask.

At the reception desk, he was met by Belsches, as taciturn as on Thursday, yet with a cheerier face and a springier footfall, both manifestations, Remy speculated, of his glee at handling a duty normally accorded to Medlin and of his resolution not to spoil this pleasure by the blundering excessive babbling of their inceptive tête-à-tête.

The PAO escorted him to a small conference room on the first floor. There four women terminated their Arabic chatter directly the door was opened.

Dressed “to command” in a brown-plaid, worsted-wool suit, a white French-cuff cotton shirt, and a bronze silk tie, Remy assumed the chair at the head of the oversized cherry-and-bubinga boat-shaped table, aware that none of the secretaries had ever considered doing so. Belsches by then had deposited himself farthest from the group.

Beyond the second sentence of his prologue, Remy had not progressed, when one gingerly vocalized, “Ahem.” His rapid glance toward the source of the interjection, the intruder evidently surmised, vouchsafed his permission for her to stand up. Attired in a flint-gray cashmere flannel executive suit with a matching fringed scarf, she first identified herself not by name but as Medlin’s secretary.

“We know. Supposing that I would have been there, M. Belsches broached me by phone late yesterday. I marshaled a list, and five calls on, the complementary three were determined. After colloquing, we mutually accede to the following:

“On Tuesday morning, February 21, M. Medlin, who was finishing up the dictation of a memo I was transcribing, entered the coffee room on the second floor. Present were M. Ballard and these colleagues of mine. M. Ballard congratulated M. Medlin on his being selected to accompany His Excellency Ambassador Leroy to Washington. M. Medlin acknowledged the compliment. The two converged upon and briefly consulted with each other. M. Ballard left first; M. Medlin, with me trailing, three minutes later.”

Remy did not anticipate the opening statement. Even so, at the Al-Nigma that morning he had decided that preparatory to delivering his initial query he would, with

five-second sway-entrenching glares at each, scan the feminine muster. After staring the requisite time at the reseated spokeswoman, he homed in on the one beside her.

Unexpectedly, she interpreted this regard as her cue. "I couldn't hear their susurrations, despite the fact we'd quit talking, Wardah and I." She looked at the woman sitting across from Medlin's secretary.

"To be sure, we did. From the onset we all refrained, an indication we discerned that although he was addressing Amal, in truth M. Medlin was orienting his words to M. Ballard. When we're in earshot of one American official communing with another, we must 'go silent,'" Wardah asserted.

"They were for me, a commendation of my work, as I recall." Amal's glower exceeded in forcefulness her verbal parry.

"That he would 'take you to Washington,'" the one next to Wardah giggled. The last to contribute, she switched the medium to Arabic. There was a sportive ridicule in the flier she turned on Amal, who drew back her shoulders before replying, also in their native tongue, "Zahra, M. Belsches's guest is not fluent in Arabic. Pray do not embarrass the embassy by constraining him to presume that you cannot express yourself in French."

"'Some are going to Washington; some are not,' monsieur, to the best of my recollection, is what M. Medlin declared." Her words, crisply enunciated in French, Zahra aimed at Remy, yet on Amal fixed her eyes, whose color, Remy swore, "has mutated, declining from a merry dark brown to a sullen pitch."

She continued in Arabic. "Sabrah, Wardah, is that not what he announced? Did either of you fancy his target was his amanuensis?"

In the short, hushed interval that ensued, Remy meditated on how much less "eye-witnessing" there had been in the descant *d'homme à homme*, whether with Foucin, Mohammed, Mohisen, Chabane, or Ghazi. "Oh, still our Arab women mostly use their volatile orbs. In that peculiarity, they have no more changed than the Casbah."

Too prolix this observation, he realized, since once again forfeited was the opportunity to avail himself of his list.

"I believe the 'cachinnation' settles it" was Zahra's sprightly commentary, prior to a reversion to French. She was wearing a wool trouser suit above a camel check-print satin blouse. "Monsieur, while sauntering by M. Ballard, M. Medlin tittered under his breath." She shifted back to Arabic. "Undeniably, Amal, that smirk wasn't for you."

The two not buttonholed nodded in unison, and all three beamed curious grins at their *porte-parole*, adjuring her to dispute this consecution.

"Monsieur, 'tis true my superior did laugh, a subdued, inoffensive chuckle, albeit note that he ambled by, went straight to the coffee table, and set about making himself a cup. It was M. Ballard, by striding toward him, who promoted a confrontation."

Amal had begun to twine the fringe of her scarf. "Yes, some may deem his offer of congratulations and his extended hand as signs of conciliation. However, M. Medlin's response showed he desired no private head-to-head. His embracive survey of the room implied that all of us were deserving of the felicitations."

The moment Amal ceased, Wardah contravened, "I didn't feel M. Medlin's words subsumed me. He contrasted his own toiling hours with the office time M. Ballard spent at the beach." She was twiddling a velvet button of her paisley-printed silk blouse.

“And with rash adolescents!” Zahra appended in Arabic, engendering all four simultaneously to bustle their right palms to their mouths.

“Leaving the beach via the grove,’ I can hear him particularize,” elaborated Sabrah.

“No, ‘alone stealing into the grove merely to exit with a stripling or two in tow,’” corrected Amal, pinching in her lips, as did the others.

“Poor Leila,” but this commiseration, mumbled by each, was well-nigh lost in the infectious chortles which trickled through feeble gulps.

“Ladies, please,” cautioned Belsches from the rear, introducing a third language. “Such prodigal levity.”

The PAO’s interposition, Remy inferred, staring into the back of Boshabo—at a clip they were progressing down the corridor to the Aladdin—had not been the reason for the dispelling of their mirth. It was an impetuous quip Sabrah had interrupted her squinched whickering to concoct, one which (even in a tongue intelligible only to themselves) they understood should not have been aired.

Ballard was dead, a person of the past. About him they could vent the gossip espoused by “sophisticated” *femmes arabes* of why so many unmarried male tourists sojourn in Algiers: By an inductive leap, “twinkle-toed *khawaagaat*” (“gay foreigners”) all Western bachelors became.

In counter to this prejudice, the realization—instantaneous, Remy detected in the future-gazing physiognomy of all four, including Sabrah’s—that a living man Medlin, who as DCM could condition their destinies, synonymous with their livelihoods, was being impugned turned them somber.

As they had been one in laughter, having reeled Amal back into the coalition, so they ended the meeting united in their seriousness. After establishing eye contact with the others, not unlike that which Remy had contemplated utilizing at the outset of the session, it was she as prolocutor who point-blank plunged into a description of the aftermath:

Drawing near Medlin, Ballard had whispered something in his ear, “probably about embassy business since all of us agree we overheard him employ the first name of His Excellency Ambassador Leroy.” With his words murmured, Ballard pivoted and quit the room. Medlin lingered for “my aforesaid ‘three minutes,’” neither drinking his coffee nor speaking to anyone.

“Excuse me,” Amal sought, “but I must confer with my associates.” In Arabic, she inquired, “Should I mention that my supervisor must have been upset? Succeeding M. Ballard’s retreat, remember how he, having apparently forgotten he’d set his cup on the table, kept jabbing his palm with the plastic knife, intent on breaking up the cubes earlier put in. I esteem the incident trivial; nevertheless, I’ll be guided by your counsel.”

All three having shaken their heads—“a betokening of ‘more than the less’?”—she closed by exalting the professionalism of her coworkers and asking if Remy had “any further questions” of them.

For him, this verification of the “plastic pricking” lent credence to it. However, with Boshabo and him five paces from Rouis, it was a separate aspersion he conjured up.

The dishwasher M. Samir insinuated it, and now Mlle. Sabrah has blurted out this imputation against Medlin, her jovial scoff at once curdling the mock-stifled visages of

her three companions and even her own: "The hypocrite! What wouldn't he give to be, arm-locked-in-arm, escorting a lassie-lad from the grove!"

3

"I have lost my brother," began Leila, lifting her veil as Rouis folded together the embossed and latticed teakwood panels of the partition.

Her simple pronouncement revived his mother's long-ago confession and that frantic time he had expended tearing from one police station to another, striving to locate his "lost" Noura. He yearned to divulge, "Mme. Ballard, the fault is mine, though in my defense I explicitly entreated M. Foucin not to reveal to either M. Chabane or you his or his agents' interrogation of the lawyer."

Cowering from the admission, instead he queried, "But how?" using English, the language she had chosen. Seated in the chair opposite hers, he placed his elbows on the table and by leaning forward hoped to convey unvarnished sympathy.

Devoid of either remorse or dejection, her tone contained rather a didactic vigor. "My husband, now my brother. Doubtless, it's to the advantage of anyone to court the favor and patronage of M. Foucin, that man of the past on whom the future of so many depends. Yet it was not he, but the 'seventy-five' dinar Algiers lawyer who telephoned our village yesterday morning to swear at Ahmed for tarnishing him in the eyes of one whose distrust is most dreaded.

"'Foucin's after me!' yammered my brother, dashing into my room. 'I must flee!' There was nothing to do except to assist him: pack a few clothes in a papier-mâché, hand him the money left from your dispensation, put him onboard the ten o'clock bus to Constantine, and later contrive an absence-absolving pretext for our father.

Her voice was without censure, "yet she apprehends 'twas I who steered the suspicion." This conviction drove Remy, who craved to declare his guile, to taunt himself, "Did not my manipulation of Chabane smack of the way the French exploited Noura? I siced Foucin on her brother to get him off my own back."

When he was secure that she would not continue, Remy, his "mania" to confess rewilted in a trice, hurried to proffer his consolation and assurance. "Mme. Ballard, your brother's in no danger. In all probability, Commissioner Foucin merely desires to review several routine matters."

"I told him so; still he wouldn't listen. So that is why"—her eyes rose, no accusation in her stare—"I've come to you. You, who will not let me put the murder behind me. My brother's return, I'm persuaded, hinges on the satisfactory completion of your mission to Algiers. This cause-and-effect bondage fetters the two of us."

She was grounding her confidence in him, a "giddy" Remy marveled, and "like most men since Adam when confronted by a woman who has opted for a male mortal over a nonsexual god," he cast down his eyes in unworthiness.

She has faith I can redeem the one I've doomed, he mused, though heedful that he was rearranging the past to disguise how little his forethought had traveled.

Posthaste he solicited, having glanced up to certify that she was ripe for the taking, "Then you have reconciled yourself to your husband's proclivities?"

"No," she politely smiled, not an aspect of her features manifesting that the question

perturbed, “if by that you propose I accept your caricature of him.”

He blatantly sighed, wanting her to notice.

“‘You’re not marrying *un cœur pur*, not as yours,’ Paul disclosed that Sunday morning in February, the one-month anniversary of our marriage. We were lolling on the sofa after a late breakfast, both reading, our arms brushing only when a page was turned. Refocusing on his Islamic book, he appended, ‘I wonder whether I can be forgiven.’”

Remy stirred uneasily, an additional private moment devoted to humanizing Ballard thrust upon him. Appearing to empathize with his predicament, Leila redirected her account through an appeal to Remy’s self-interest: “I’ve pored over those Mondays and Wednesdays. Previously, you asked if on any of them Paul behaved uncharacteristically. Summarily I answered no, but there was one Wednesday night, also in February.”

She paused, as if debating whether to persist. “He had stayed over Tuesday, a fitful slumber that betrayed his inner throes. I woke to find myself in the trembling clutch of an arm which, before we slept, was gently draped over my shoulder.

“My husband was suffering, and I could simply speculate over its provocation: His disdain at preserving the secrecy of our marriage while he wrestled with his Islamic studies, which seemingly did not clean-slate, but aggrandize, his imagined failings. The semiweekly covert assignments (I contend) Ambassador Leroy imposed on him or he on himself out of loyalty. The imminent physical severing of their twenty-eight year-old friendship.”

Her eyes projected a distant exasperation prior to falling upon Remy’s clasped hands—and *mayhap the gold ring of my left*.

A moment later, she resumed, “The next morning, over toast and coffee, dandling with me, he jauntily inquired, ‘Seeing anyone tonight?’ ‘M. Paramour cancelled,’ I sighed, playing along. ‘A slot freed up, may I fill in? Say, 9:30?’ ‘Thus I must plan for nine.’

“At the door, with the impish glint artificially detained in his eyes, he bantered, ‘More than myself, I’ll bring the one thousand.’ I chuckled, ‘More of your “punctuality!”’

“This final installment for our flower shop. I was scheduled to deliver it to my aunt in Sétif, taking the Thursday noon train. We were purchasing it through her. A foreigner can’t acquire a business here, and I’d have had to involve my father since Paul—‘On paper a Muslim,’ he maintained, ‘but it must be in my heart!’—could not yet step forth.

“My aunt already owned multiple properties in Algiers so obtaining an extra one wouldn’t be unusual. I’d assumed Paul would give me the one thousand at the station. Now he was to bring it by that night.”

Sucking in her cheeks, Leila halted briefly as if self-wearied by the overwrought prelude. “Not aware that Paul was dropping by, Ahmed went to bed at ten. After an hour I did the same, suspecting a sub-rosa matter had derailed the evening, yet when the doorbell rang at 12:30, I wasn’t asleep.

“His first words remonstrated I shouldn’t let him in. ‘You would be right to turn “the sinner” away,’ he slurred. In whiffs billowed his ‘sin,’ the consumption of alcohol, forbidden in Islam or at least in the doctrinaire texts Paul had been studying. Drawing him in, with my body as his crutch, I helped him to the sofa. ‘Sinned. The Sinner. Sinful’ was his refrain, until smothered by the couch.

“‘Sister, what’s going on?’ called Ahmed, his chamber door opening at the point my husband’s reproach had descended into a muffled cry.

“Paul reared his head to confess to another, ‘Ahmed, I . . . despicable,’ and anew he buried his visage in the velvet cushion.

“My brother snorted, ‘He drunk?’ Seizing the back of a nearby cogswell, he tugged it in front of his threshold. ‘To rest in peace, I’m barricading myself in.’

“*Encore en fois* I sat down next to Paul, my touch palpably intensifying his shame. ‘I fear your God will not . . . no,’ his voice quivered. I nuzzled my face against the part of his not concealed, and combating his resistance, kissed his left cheek, ear, and the corner of his eyelid—kissed where in time that grim plank would smash. Faintly he agonized, ‘Dear Leila, I fear you will not . . . when all is known.’”

Her meticulous frankness—*Embarrassing!*—was calculated: by exacerbating she sought to dispel his cliché of “her husband.” With this comprehended, Remy, feigning engrossment, jumped ahead to hone the structure of his probing.

“I curled up beside him, quiescent until he was asleep. Thereupon, while fetching the blanket from my bed, I heard my brother’s closeted exclamation, ‘Sister, I wouldn’t have you marry this besotted Jew, had he not all that spendable money.’

“‘Dear Brother,’ bending over the cogswell, I whispered into the jamb, too muted for him to catch, ‘were he not a *Juif*, I would love him still.’

“As I once more nestled down with him, he squeezed inward—even in his muddled sleep ever the *gentilhomme*—making room for his wife. At six, I roused him. Wheeling his body round, his eyes sprang open. ‘Leila!’ he grinned.

“‘Husband of mine, up and to thy work.’ A buss grazed his brow, yet to reinforce my admonition, from his arms reaching out to encircle me, I pulled away.

“‘Your only kiss until showered off is the residue of your “night out.” I’ll concede one a month after we have our *boutique*,’ I chaffed, on my feet and bound for the kitchen.

“‘Not so much as one,’ he pledged, rubbing his fingers across his temples and into his hair. Over breakfast, he launched into an apology, but I stopped him. What did he have to apologize for?

“At the entrance, following my cheek-peck, with a twist he pressed his lips to mine. ‘Oh, Leila, I pray that last night stigmatized a never-again-to-be-transgressed terminal bourn. You’re sullied by my frailty, the weak man, *un nul*,’ he writhed.

“‘Husband,’ I recited, ‘*dans la maladie et dans la santé*, your Western vows, no?’ The anxiety vanished from his face.

“No sooner shut than the door was reopened. ‘I don’t have it, the thousand. I’ll rush to my place to get it. Twenty minutes.’

“‘What’s this about money?’ With a mighty yawn Ahmed, clawing at his *djellaba*-covered belly, edged around the cogswell.

“‘Brother of mine,’ Paul saluted him before closing the door behind him a second time, ‘Your sister loves me, God help her!’”

She had started to lower the veil at her reference to the plank, but Remy was determined not to intercede with his offer till he was certain she had finished. In contrast to three days ago, with the handkerchief came a question, “Mme. Ballard, would that Wednesday be the fifteenth?”

4

As Leila raised the full *niquaab*, in vain Remy searched for a harder pink about her eyes and draining cheek lines. With the gray *mouchoir* still indifferently clenched, she reached across for a black-leather half-flap bag on the chair to her right, unlatched it, and withdrew two folded pieces of A4 notebook paper. She scanned the recto of the second. “Yes, the fifteenth,” no surprise in her articulation.

She handed both to Remy. *January* was written at the top of the initial sheet. Below it running lengthwise were the numbers 1 to 15; next to each, an abbreviation for the corresponding day and a telegraphic entry.

He perused the first: 1 Su. New Year’s. 1:30 a.m., after Leroy’s embassy party, Paul came by; we brunched in; attended Bardo exhibit, afternoon; supper, Le Dauphin.

“The verso of the February sheet ends with the twenty-seventh. I drafted them on the train since you’d evinced a curiosity about Paul’s activities during that two-month interval.”

Flipping this second page over, Remy skimmed downward to the fifteenth: “W. Paul late, 12:30 a.m. (technically Th.). Topsy. Stayed over.”

“May I retain this?”

“Of course.” She waited until he had inserted it into the left pocket of his coat. “Why is that date important?”

A frustrated grimace superseded Remy’s shrug. “I’m not sure, but it keeps popping up. Mme. Ballard, in our Thursday conversation you maintained that the two thousand dollars impounded as evidence from your husband’s flat should have been three.”

Leila nodded twice, the second time at the unseen pocket of his jacket. “It’s there. Of Ambassador and Mme. Leroy’s wedding present, given to Paul on January twenty-eight, two thousand was delivered to my father to complete the dowry. Over the next two weeks, three outlays of three thousand each were entrusted to my aunt to pass on to the owner of the shop.

“Paul gave me a thousand on the sixteenth, the crowning payment on it. There should have been a residuary three thousand to furnish it. We were strictly watching our money. Paul wouldn’t have let a thousand go astray.”

A disapproving shake of Remy’s head succeeded. “It was that amount, you stated earlier, he had intended to transfer to you on the night of the fifteenth, one of his reasons for dropping by, but he didn’t have it, had to retrieve it.”

Remy distinguished that his emotions, tinged with excitement, were ceasing to be staged. “On the sixteenth and the days following, the sister of M. Belmazoir—her name is Mlle. Houda—settled up all of her family’s arrears at their Bab el Oued pharmacies.

“For over six months, their mother’s required pain medication for cancer. The expenses from just the four pharmacies I checked on totaled nearly one hundred dollars, a good monthly salary here, I understand. Despite the fact her brother’s been in prison since the beginning of March and she discharges only the basest moil for her neighbors, Mlle. Belmazoir has used cash for all subsequent purchases from these apothecaries.”

A sigh of relief issued from her lips, spread outward, and their corners elevated, was transfigured into a discerning smile. “How typical of my Paul, providing M. Belmazoir

with the money, thus allowing his sister to fill their mother's prescriptions!"

Her face was motionless for a few seconds, yet Remy, gazing upon it, sensed the movement below, with its protest that beauty does not lie on the surface. She blinked once, the vitality provoking his nails to dig into his palms.

"*Sans doute*"—her voice was charmed innocence—"one of them will admit to this. It's not as though they'd stolen it."

"With M. Belmazoir, I've not broached this matter. However, he avouched that on the Mondays of February thirteenth and twentieth he did not meet your husband.

"I've apprised Mlle. Belmazoir of what I learned from the pharmacies. Still, on her brother's instructions, she won't confer with me. When pressed, she simply iterates what she protested on the morning of his arrest, 'It is not his fault,' seeming to accept that he—please forgive my bluntness—murdered your husband, though the blame isn't his."

A visible stupefaction engulfed Leila's features. "But this is her brother! Even though he's forbidden her to discuss the incident, could she mitigate his liability, she must. Otherwise, she violates the sibling bond, a *nathr*—I employ the stronger Arabic 'pledge to God'—holier than that between husband and wife, sealed as it was by our Maker, not fashioned by man. She must be made to speak!"

"So 'wondrous' her 'strength' she will not. Madam, I'm persuaded the events of the fifteenth connect: On that date your husband, overly punctual, most tardily arrives at your flat and without the promised thousand dollars. The next day, Mlle. Belmazoir, suddenly in no need for credit, embarks on a campaign to wipe out her family's debts. Later, in the inventory of your husband's apartment, a thousand can't be located."

Remy hesitated, the vacillation on how much he should divulge now his. "Mme. Ballard, receive this, to which I believe you're not privy, as a testimony of my commitment to cement a bond, albeit human, between us: In your husband's wallet the night he was slain, a photographic negative was found.

"Since no evidence points to his bringing it to the grove, I'm convinced that it was planted on him by his murderer. The possibility exists that this snip of thermoplastic film, a white-on-black image of a page from an embassy Sensitive but Unclassified document, is tied in not only with the missing thousand, but also with your husband's death."

Halfway into his exposition, Remy observed that Leila's eyes, which from its onset had met his, had drifted upward and appeared to be spellbound on something beyond him. At first, he fancied that through their deviance they were registering a justifiable objection: *On Thursday, you alleged my husband to be mostly queer. Today you compound that accusation with one of treason.*

When his commentary elicited no such retort, a disconcerted Remy began to turn, keen to determine what she so impertinently stared at. His maneuver was arrested by a familiar tongue. "Why M. Lazar, and with Mme. Ballard, a name which now the courts approve! A thousand pardons for my intrusion."

The crown of the chair next to Remy was grasped by the commissioner, his tan

uniform unconcealed by a *burnoose*. “May I join you?”

Before Remy’s stare traveled past Foucin to Boshabo and Rouis, who were bristling smugly at the Aladdin’s plate-glass doors, he witnessed the immediate tripartition of Leila’s reaction: the hand reaching for the veil that abruptly halted athwart her right temple; the face, inceptively screwed into bemusement, which forthwith expanded into a breath-suspending astonishment; and the nod, remote and mechanical.

Her permission noted, with a roguish grin Remy proclaimed in French, “The ‘status’ of any dining table which he graces, M. Foucin transforms into a banquet.”

“And I am as esteemed by your compliment, M. Lazar, as by the fortuity of chancing on the two in all Algiers with whom I aspire to colloque.” Seating himself, Foucin rested his interlocked fingers in the shadow cast by the small tower vase and its three roses.

“Mme. Ballard—the blessings of Ramadan on you and yours!—the good news at which I hinted: I’ve been notified the writ you drafted to our courts has been successful. Their verdict renders you the sole inheritor of your husband’s estate.”

No longer breathless, Leila closed her eyes and murmured, “*El-Hamdulillah!* [Praise be to God!]” Unsealing them, she peered at Foucin. “And upon you and your family Ramadan blessings!” Her voice was already tightening. “Now I may secure his body for burial?”

The question extinguished what remained of Foucin’s repartee mode—*and mine*, Remy tacked on.

“Madam, I am sorry. It’s chambered on American soil, the embassy chancery, outside our jurisdiction. The apartments M. Ballard had rented—for you and your brother and his own—their contents within, including the two thousand dollars confiscated from his, and his Renault, the courts have granted you full possession of, as his wife and beneficiary. For legal seizure of his corpse, you must petition through that embassy.”

After Foucin’s commencing sentence, Leila’s chin had sagged and her eyes again squeezed shut. To Remy it was obvious that she had not listened to the enumeration. Nevertheless, the instant he desisted, lifting her head and raising her palpebrae, she replied softly, “I thank you for your service, monsieur. You are most considerate.”

“My duty. I only wish my report was more assuasive.” Foucin paused to exhale a reinforcing sigh.

“A second task dispatches me here. Forgive me, but I must pursue it. Mme. Ballard, do you know where your brother is? I was informed that yesterday morning he boarded the Zouabi bus to Constantine and from there a train to Algiers. By design, did he precede your own trip late last night by road and rail?”

A “nibbling bite” had resurfaced in Foucin’s tone, sparking Remy’s curiosity about how Leila would respond.

“I saw myself off”—she did not deflect her gaze from the commissioner’s—“and none received me, save myself, at Algiers’ station.”

The vigor of her salvo apparently decided Foucin upon a temporary retreat. He twisted toward Remy. “No match for your high-speed train from Antwerp to Brussels, M. Lazar, ours from Constantine to Algiers moves by fits and starts, often waylaid by pricking spurs, in its tiresome, eight-hour undertaking. Yet it is judged more decorous for an unescorted lady than the faster bus. Was it so in Egypt, or did you avail yourself

of its rail service?”

Recognizing that he was merely an interlude, Remy pantomimed a curt, puppetlike bobbing of his jaw.

After a moment of contemplation, Foucin readdressed her. “Madam, just a few queries I have for him. I hadn’t planned to seek him out, for I regarded the answers to them of scant importance, until I was alerted he had bolted. To commandeer a byword of M. Lazar, the ‘periphery,’ in my mind, assumes relevance solely when it thrusts itself stage center.”

“By exiting the stage, my brother takes control of it?” was Leila’s nimble coruscation.

In awe of her resiliency—and he was certain his was mirrored by Foucin’s— a beaming Remy straightened from his slouch.

“It depends . . . on whether he took truth with him or left it behind ‘to shift for itself,’” the commissioner rejoined.

“In a discussion three days ago,” she glimpsed at Remy, “M. Lazar postulated that the scaffold of truth may be inlaid with some planks of lies.”

“And so truth—does not the infidelic argument of Karl Popper and his ilk logically conclude?—is invented by man, not revealed by God. Notwithstanding, a philosophical dialogue, I’m aggrieved to have missed.”

Foucin swung round to incorporate Remy *de novo*. “Analogously I was saddened by a breach which I’m sure escaped your notice: Yesterday we did not converse (and thus at second hand I learned of your pharmacies’ windfall).” He bit—“an orchestrated ‘regretfully’”—his lower lip. “Have you the selfsame unfamiliarity with M. Chabane the younger’s whereabouts?”

“For only twenty or so minutes have I been acquainted he resided not with M. Chabane the elder, outside Zouabi.”

Her black *nikaab* in place, Leila rose, prompting both men to stand. Initially she spoke to Remy. “Monsieur, I’m as intensely sorrowed as startled that M. Belmazoir’s sister proffers a dearth of cooperation in your endeavor to free her brother.”

She refixed her countenance on Foucin. “Monsieur, would you advise me where I should proceed, the courts’ decree to implement? It’s my purpose directly to take up residence in the apartment my husband leased for my brother and me.”

Foucin effected a slight bow. “Mme. Ballard, please permit me to escort you to the judiciary offices. A chaperoning police matron contingently waits in my car.”

“As always you are the pneuma of courtesy.” Leila was already skirting the table.

The two having fallen in behind her, Foucin tilted his brow toward Remy’s and quipped, “Like mine, yours has been a day of mostly women.” The wink followed.

Midway to the glass doors, Remy pulled up. Foucin’s question that he had parried had set him to deliberating which refuge Chabane had absconded to. “Mme. Ballard, may I advert to but one collateral subject?” Her volte-face was immediate. “In private, provided that will not offend, monsieur.”

Without acknowledgment, Foucin sidestepped Leila and trod toward the lingering *réceptionniste* and *maître d’hôtel*. Their separate half-paces completed, Remy posted his lips as close to her veiled right ear as he appreciated propriety would sanction. “Madam, your brother’s at the Palestinian camp, is he not?”

He nodded toward Foucin's back to emphasize that he had declined the opportunity to pass this opinion to him. "Still, do you entertain I solicit his patronage?"

"And here I envisioned your goal was to retrieve your kerchief, monsieur," giffgaffed Leila, opening her right palm to expose its grayness. In its transfer, had it not been for the screening cloth of the *mouchoir*, their fingers would have touched for the first time.

Delaying until this hand had been returned to her side, she amplified, "Patronage? Already you have forgotten? 'Tis I who sought out yours."

6

The five massive iron gates of the walled-in Jardin Marengo would have been shut by the time Remy arrived, a little before eight, if it had been any month except Ramadan. In honor of these holy days, the authorities tolerated their public's nocturnal use of the park, shaped like a 350-by-200-meter peacock, with its eyed plumage unfurled.

The month itself, or so the officials assured each other as they supervised the stringing of specially imported rosaries of prodigally illuminating bulbs, would patrol morality.

Nonetheless, in extra precaution against its devilish opposite, they had quintupled the daytime consignment of gendarmes. Accordingly, any beau and his belle, whose wayward eyes might have ogled a clump of bushes as haven, would, without fail, detect the two "globes" of a blue-clad representative of the law, and thus of righteousness, gawking back at them through a peephole gashed in the foliage.

Spotting Remy's ingress at the southwest "beak," Ghazi, clad in yesterday's jeans and shirt, hand-signaled him to follow before scampering off. At the first occasion, the youth veered from the main thoroughfare, with its intervalled, towering poles of sodium-vapor bulbs, onto a narrower and less irradiated paved lane.

Ten minutes later—they had entered the broad "feathery train" of Marengo—Ghazi seemingly found the dirt trail he sought: Only three of its strand of 2.5-volt bulbs had been spared from stoning. A fourth of the way down it, he slumped onto what Remy's approach divulged to be a bench, quite similar to that which Mohisen and he had sat upon.

"You must remunerate me well for the beating that awaits me at home," Ghazi puled as soon as Remy had settled beside him.

"How can I compensate for something, the value of which I'm in the semidark?" With squinting eyes, he went through the motion of a snooping surveillance.

"It pertains to this Houda and may open her door to you. Isn't that your want?"

The scarrow was sufficient for Ghazi to catch his nod. "Three hundred," he insisted. Paltering ensued, and after five minutes the original demand was halved.

Removing his billfold from the slanted welt side pocket of his Burberry, Remy withdrew two bills. The fifty-dinar note was deposited in Ghazi's outstretched palm, and having indicated for it to be retracted, he situated the one hundred in the gap between them. "In case I'm dissatisfied with your tidings, you'll have to be quicker in the snatch," he set the terms with a chuckle.

"On the Wednesday 'twixt your Christmas and New Year's," Ghazi began, "near sunset prayers this Houda came knocking sheepishly on our door." She asked Mme.

Bourceli to sit with her mother while she walked to the Casbah in search of a pharmacy which stocked some special tablets. “‘You must pay me,’ my mother huffed. If you have money for drugs, you have some to hire me. No working off this favor!”

Houda “neither bickered nor dickered,” Ghazi added, and “after her exit, I thought nothing of her intrusion except the gracious relief any man savors once unvarnished ugliness forbears stalking his doorway.”

The next three Wednesdays “this drudge called with duplicating requests.” When the door closed on the last, Mme. Bourceli blared at Ghazi, hunched over a comic book, “‘Fool, the praenomen I’d have tagged you with at birth had not your father vetoed’—from my first breath commenced her taunts!—‘do you not cognize the coincidence?’

“She sniffed at me, ‘On the very night her handsome brother’s sleeping with the Philistines, this Houda crops up, petitioning me to nursemaid her mother.’”

Since the pattern intrigued her, she ordered Ghazi, “Mark where the char ventures tonight.’ He hid himself behind a stall near their building. “Presently she materialized, who never sallied forth until my maternal biddy was established in the shack.”

Ghazi paused to snigger. “This mostly fool of a girl (or fool of a mostly girl) never divined what I witnessed the first night. In the eight times she babysat, forthwith this Houda was gone, my foxy dame scurried back to our flat. Anon you’ll comprehend that in such “crooked wisdom,” my mama I’ve mastered.”

The youth contracted his flexed grin. “It was an enervative bedogging, made substantially longer by not possessing where it would end.” Houda staved two kilometers to the bottom rim of the Casbah. “Hauling up at Palais d’Hiver, she slunk into the shadows of its fronting hedges, and when she burst forth, I goggled at her: She’d shed her milky *haik* and was bedecked in bright-green Western ‘taffeta.’”

Setting off again, “after two minutes, on a side street leading to Place de Chartres, she brazenly accosted a red sedan and hopped in.”

Ghazi’s voice captured both the awe and disdain he had felt. “‘That’s the whole of it?’ I gaped, ruminating upon the ‘unfairity’ of life. ‘Has Algiers come to such a state that a toilet-scrubber can score so easily at ‘easy virtue’ while I’d sprawled across the steps of Martyrs Square for a trio of muggy days without a peek from a tourist?’”

After the car pulled away, he darted home and told his mother, “Verily, it’s as the girl affirmed. When I stole away, she was thirteenth in line at the Ketchaoua pharmacy.”

His sniggling at the deceit suddenly halted, and his countenance winced. “For which disclosure, my mother delivered a smack that left my right eye stinging through Friday’s sermon. The ebbing of the pain must have turned white the black matter in my skull.”

Realizing how simple it was to trick his mother, the next Wednesday he was ready with another lie, one based upon a partial truth: Not mentioning Houda’s “prostituting tryst,” Ghazi declared he had forgotten to inform her about the girl’s “‘sleight-of-body tour de force: Having crept behind a shrub, she emerged with her *haik* divested. This hussy escapes our building hiding a shiny green dress.’”

Apparently remembering what had ensued, the youth cringed. “In a pounce my mother’s corpus, heftier than a brimming tub of beer, encompassed me with its stench and bulk. ‘And what else about you and the *alim* have you squirreled away?’ she shrieked, hitting me in crannies ne’er previously strayed.

“Abruptly her mauleys broke off in mid-pummel. ‘An emerald frock? Her haughty

genetrix used to prance around in such, lugged from France in their repatriating baggage, ere their fortunes “dived.” Tramp after her again, should she come,’ in a hoarse underbreath she ordained.

“Idem occurred.” The same “red Renault” picked Houda up, and Ghazi garnered a similar “volley of raps from my pile-driving parent.” The next Wednesday his tactic was replicated: “Why change the merchandise when the fool buys?” He confessed he had “failed to tattle” that after the pharmacy Houda strolled into a Casbah boutique.

“Too fast for Mama,” he gained safety behind the locked door of their toilet. “She cursed me until my ears groaned. ‘Son, a dolt like your father—for one conceives what one couples—shouldn’t I, your sole provider, have been apprised that she has dinars to lavish on chic frippery? That could be my money! Stalk her once more, if she appears.”

Ghazi acknowledged that during this third pursuit he had lost her since “I was brooding darkly, ‘How does this profit me other than for an hour or so I am circumcised free from the overweening prepuce that is my mama?’”

Over the next half-week, “my charcoal matter badgered me toward a more lucrative scheme: Blackmail her. ‘But how? I have no documentation to wag before her eyes that I was privy to her rendezvous, terminating in ungodly fornication.’ In three days my brain provided the salutary answer, ‘It’s staring you in the face,’ and quickly elaborated.”

At the subsequent meeting “near the well-lit Lycée Emir Abdelkader, the man jumped out of the Quatrelle practically as soon as she got in. My good eye, determinedly cocked on his visage, tailed him in and out of the tobacco kiosk. By the time he was stripping the cellophane from his Rothmans, I was positioned, in my fist a pencil and a torn piece from a brown bag, ready to copy down the license plate of his car as he pulled out.”

Synchronous with the 8:30 summons to Isha’, Ghazi dug a crumbled scrap of paper from his jeans. “Tit for tat?” His leer groveled from his palm to the royal-blue one-hundred-dinar note. “Spying this, this Houda will do whate’er you bid.”

The transaction executed, Remy glanced at the dirty scrip prior to folding and inserting it into the left pocket of his khaki cotton twills. As he moved to stand, Ghazi leaned in, grazing his brow against the tan gabardine shoulder of the Burberry.

“There was yet one other occasion,” he mewed, “the strangest of all. A steal at fifty, prepaid, if you please, for it rivals in truth all the preceding, I swear upon our *alim*’s semen-dripped Qur’an.”

7

“7LM2,” Remy read once more, as he pushed himself from the bench, aware his night held in store a far, retracing road, “for I must accord the washerwoman the mimicking vigorous ceremony I granted ‘this Ballard’ at Zaracova.”

Only after the vile hobbledohoy, clutching the fifty, had exited did he recall the evening that his “black matter” should have unearthed a greater truth about women than his subconscious’s emendation of Unamuno.

Snooks had climbed in through the window Marie had specifically kept open.

Deigning not a glimpse at Remy, instead he leapt onto the sofa and sneaked into her lap. “Baby Snooks, how you smell!” she exclaimed, but her right hand dropped the circular knitting needle and commenced to stroke the ridge of his scruffy fur.

“Out siring a litter for me to feed.” Smiling at Remy, who had let the newspaper sink to his chest, apologetically she proceeded. “He’ll sit with you after two weeks, on the heels of a particularly toothsome feast he hankers to re-eat in his dreams.”

And a half month on, to the swing of his fat bottom, Snooks did glide in, survey the two-lap options, and choose Remy’s to curl up in. With the whirring snore straightaway mesmerizing, a downward peep revealed the whiskers twitching. Their agitation originated, he knew, from munching about his lips.

They—Foucin’s “mostly women”—were aptly chosen to carry the species’ precious seed: They see further than we males because they’re compelled to look to the future, Remy abashedly gloried.

Aloud he repeated the thought that had succeeded his first espial, “Close enough to the 79LN2.” This time he tucked the brown slip into the flapped pocket of his indigo denim shirt and, lowering his voice to a murmur, apostrophized her.

“Leila, I have the license plate in ‘the table of my memory,’” and he imagined that she was not piqued by his tutoyering use of her first name, “with such frequency it surfaced in the police reports of the night this Ballard was murdered.”

Then he evoked her own words, the casual innocence of her announcement during their initial conference at the Al-Nigma: Beginning “after your Christmas,” her “husband” was “often” on embassy assignment “a second night, Wednesday.”

As she marveled at his memory, he swooped in with his gravamen: “Can you yet with indignation, formerly targeted on knifing me to the bone, maintain he was not a monster?”

He paused for effect, “Dear Leila, who other than a *lusus naturae* would plot to sleep with brother on a Monday and sister two days later?”

Notes and Commentary: Chapter 12: “Mostly Women”

April 16, 1989 (Sunday)

p. 186: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE OF CHAPTER 12: Seven variants of the title appear in the chapter and are often contrastive: “mostly a woman’s predilection (187); “women mostly” (188); Foucin’s “mostly women” (196, but recalled by Remy on 200); “*mostly queer*” (194), Remy’s description of Ballard; and Ghazi’s “This mostly fool of a girl (or fool of a mostly girl)” (198).

The only other occurrences of this phrase in the text will be on 13.203, where Foucin will twice use the words differently arranged: “a day of ‘mostly women’” and “women, mostly.”

Chapter 12 is largely concerned with the argument of the narrator (feasibly Remy’s anti-self or his mind’s superego) that there are some fundamental philosophical and psychological differences between men and women concerning time.

Men concentrate on the past or as the narrator phrases it on the first page of the chapter, “unlike a woman’s, a man’s mind . . . rewinds chronology” (186). Contrastively women look toward the future. Thus on the last page of the chapter, where Remy finally acquiesces to his anti-self’s argument, he states that women are “compelled to look to the future” because they are the sex “aptly chosen to carry the species’ precious seeds” (200).

Sura 4 of the Qur’an is entitled “Women” and principally deals with the role of the Muslim woman. Its ideas were considered in drafting this chapter.

A final and most obvious point: Remy’s day will be concerned with women: the four embassy secretaries, Leila, and indirectly Houda, since Ghazi’s account concentrates on her (and his mother).

pp. 186-200: CHRONOLOGY OF CHAPTER 12: This chapter deals with two meetings which Remy had scheduled for this day, one just after noon with the embassy secretaries who were present when Ballard and Medlin had their confrontation (12:30 – 12:43) and the second that night at the park with Ghazi (8.00 – 8:40) An unexpected meeting occurs after Remy returns from the embassy interview since waiting for him at the Al-Nigma is Leila (1:12 – 1:44).

pp. 186-87: SECTION 1

p. 186: “M. Lazar, although you are a confidant of Commissioner Foucin”: The section

opens at 1:05 p.m. Remy has just returned from his interview with the secretaries at the U.S. embassy.

The hotel staff were aware that Foucin had visited Remy at his hotel room four nights ago, from Wed., April 12, 11:07 p.m., to Thur., April 13, 12:42 a.m.

p. 186: Boshabo: The daytime receptionist at the Al-Nigma (9.139).

p. 186: liveried: “wearing a livery” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 186: “well-rehearsed”: Rehearsing one’s verbal response to an anticipated situation is an unnatural way of connecting since it promotes an artificial delivery.

The device has been and will be used nine times in the novel: the Filipino (1.8); Chabane (1.12); Saul (2.19); Remy (4.56 and 17.291); Mohammed (4.60 and 18.294); Boshabo here; and Tinfingers (16.260, although “rehearsal” is not used, but “digression” and “distraction” imply the concept).

Events are also rehearsed, sometimes successfully, such as the torture of “Noura” (3.50), or unsuccessfully, as in Omar’s and Khaleel’s rehearsed torture (3.40) and Medlin’s preparatory trip to the Mirabout (11.178), or with mixed results, such as the FLN’s pre-summit meeting (7.114).

p. 186: “majestic argosy”: The extended naval and land expedition metaphor begins here, and includes “bounded,” “pinnacle,” “in his wake,” “drained,” “hauling to,” “navigated,” “painter-uncut,” “landlubberly,” “amain,” “aplustre,” “abaft,” “anabasis,” “destination,” and “safe tow” (187).

Subliminal phonetic puns are “ceased” (seas); “fleecy” (the golden fleece which drives the classic naval adventure *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes), and “bedecked” (the “deck” of a ship has the same etymological origin as “bedeck” meaning “to adorn”).

p. 186: “bounded”: A play upon “bound” meaning “go or head toward” and “leap,” as ocean waves on the “bounding main” do.

p. 186: pinnacle: A small sailboat or rowboat that can be towed by a larger ship.

p. 186: haul to: to change the course of a ship, specifically so as to sail closer to the wind.

p. 186: “painter-uncut”: In nautical jargon, a “painter” is a rope or other line attached to the bow of a boat and sometimes used for securing the boat to a pier.

A sailor’s personal “painter” is his/her lifeline; if it is cut, the sailor dies. Hence a nautical euphemism for dying at sea is “cutting one’s painter.”

Boshabo, pictured as a “boat,” is attached to his front desk, his “pier,” by his devotion to his job, his “uncut painter,” which in turn is his livelihood (or “lifeline”).

What torturous argument one must go through to justify the items in an extended metaphor!

- p. 186: landlubberly: An adjective form of “landlubber,” meaning “one who passes his life on land.”
Boshabo is miffed that Remy’s female visitor has forced him to leave his land base.
- p. 186: “amain”: “suddenly,” but with a pun upon “main,” a poetic term for the “ocean,” as in the “bounding main.”
On beaching, the metaphorical ship stops suddenly.
- p. 186: aplustre: “the curved ornamental stern of an ancient Greek or Roman ship” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 186: abaft: At or toward the stern or rear of a ship.
- p. 186: anabasis: A military advance; from the Greek meaning “moving from the coast into the mainland.”
Xenophon’s *Anabasis* is an account of the disastrous 401 – 400 BCE military expedition of a Persian prince, supported by Greek mercenaries, who wished to dethrone his brother.
On 13.280, a character will be reading from this book when Remy visits him at his residence.
- p. 186: Rouis: As indicated in the text, the headwaiter of the hotel’s Aladdin dining room. He was first mentioned on 9.138.
- p. 186: “rewinds chronology”: That is, a man begins with the event nearest to the present, proceeds to the second nearest, and so on.
In reference to women, the last ones Remy had seen were the secretaries at the embassy; before that he saw Mme. Bourceli and previous to her, Houda.
- p. 186: “*l’esprit d’une femme*”: In French “the mind of a woman.”

- p. 187: “improbable possibilities”: The phrase is from Aristotle’s *Poetics*, part 29 (trans. S. H. Butcher): “Accordingly, the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities. . . . But once the irrational [impossible] has been introduced and an air of likelihood [probability] imparted to it, we must accept it in spite of the absurdity [impossibility].”
- p. 187: “in safe tow”: a nautical expression meaning “the towing of a ship to a safe haven.”
- p. 187: “resuming his examination of the colloquy with the secretaries”: The word “resuming” does not point to his brief consideration that one of the secretaries might be waiting for him in the Aladdin. Rather, it indicates that during his ride back from the embassy to the hotel (12:50 to 1:05) he had reviewed this interview. He returns to this scrutiny during the last part of the Boshabo-led trek to the dining room (1:08 – 1:11).
- p. 187: “*l’esprit d’un homme*”: In French “the mind of a man.”
- p. 187: “with the certain past, not the unreliable future, mostly a woman’s predilection”: Throughout the novel, there is a portrayal of women as looking to the future and men as hanging onto the past. As noted in discussing the title of this chapter, on its last page (200), Remy will state that his principal philosophical discovery during this day of “mostly women” is that women were wisely assigned the nine-month job of bearing children, pregnancy requiring purview if the species is to survive. The contention that women look to the future not the past is challengeable. For a contrary view, see Gide’s short novel *Madeline*: “Creusa, Eurydice, Ariadne, always a woman carries, worries, fears to let go and to see the thread break that ties her to her past. She pulls Theseus back and makes Orpheus look back.”
- p. 187: “relegated the murder to an endnote”: On 9.144, Leila says, “All I crave is for Paul to be buried [the future]. What have I to do with the murderer [the past]?” On 11.173, Houda’s concern seems less with the murder or the murderer (the past) than with her desire to show that her brother “is not at fault,” the future. Bourceli does not mention the murder and uses this latest problem of Mohammed to attack the Belmazoir family, saying the son was “a bad one from a bad family” (11:175). And Remy has heard the embassy secretaries agree that “Ballard was dead, a person of the past” (to be reported out of chronological sequence on 189) and thus of no concern to them.
- p. 187: “A [man’s] heart,” a woman’s mind would have emended *philosophe* Unamuno, sometimes ‘sees very clearly, but not very far’”: The quotation by Miguel de Unamuno, the twentieth-century Spanish philosopher, is heavily “emended” by specifying gender and not including Unamuno qualification, but

these types of alterations fit in with the narrator's mind (that is, that aspect of Remy's mind which delights in launching assaults on his own prejudices). Unamuno's fully transcribed quote: "I said the heart sees very clearly but not very far, and I could have said just as well that it sees very far, although not very clearly."

My notes indicate that I took the quotation from Thomas Mermall's 1990 *PMLA* essay, "The Chiasmus: Unamuno's Master Trope."

p. 187: "the one installed behind the screened-off table": This section ends at 1:12.

pp. 187-90: SECTION 2

p. 187: "Remy had approached the embassy's white façade . . . met by Belsches": According to my chronology, Remy arrives at the embassy and is met by the PAO at 12.25.

p. 187: "as taciturn as on Thursday": At the Thurs., Apr. 13, meeting Belsches was "reserved in the [elevator] ride up" to Leroy's office (8.118).

p. 187: "inceptive tête-à-tête": Their meeting on Tues., Apr. 11, is described on 5.68-74.

p. 187: "Dressed 'to command'": The single quotes indicate how Remy described himself.
The words turn out to be ironic since he quickly loses control of the meeting.

p. 187: bubinga: A West African tree whose "hard heavy heartwood . . . is similar in appearance to rosewood." Hence it is called the "African rosewood" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 187: marshal: arrange in order.

p. 187: collogue: "to talk privately; confer" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 187: "mutually accede to the following": The secretaries' account may be compared with Ballard's factual account on 1.6-7 and Leila's account from his on 9.146-47.

- p. 188: muster: “an assembled group” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 188: susurrations: murmuring; whispering.
- p. 188: commune: to talk together intimately.
- p. 188: “go silent”: a telecommunication term meaning “to stop transmission.”
A “silent” or “dark” radio or TV station is not transmitting a signal at all. It differs from a station that is transmitting a “dead air” signal.
- p. 188: “not fluent in Arabic”: Remy frequently profits from the situational irony that those conversing around him believe he is not fluent in Arabic: the hiring of the *alim* and his speech to Houda (5.105-07); Foucin’s telephone conversation with the forensic chief (6.96); the interview of Samir through Zerhouni’s French translation (10.166-69); and the Bourceli interview (11.172-77).
- p. 188: “amanuensis”: A secretary, “now a somewhat jocular usage,” *Webster’s New* comments, as intended by Zahra.
- p. 188: “eye-witnessing”: A tepid pun on how Algerian women communicate as much with their eyes as with their tongues.
- p. 188: descant: discourse.
- p. 188: *d’homme à homme*: man-to-man.
- p. 188: orbs: A poetic synonym for “a person’s eyes.”
- p. 188: “no more changed than the Casbah”: This is the first overt expression of this idea about the Casbah, but it is implied in Remy’s remembrance of how his father states that the Casbah has “the density of time” (5.78) and his description of it as “the white heart of Algiers (10.153).
- p. 188: “cachinnation”: loud or excessive laughter.
For effect, Zahra uses exaggeration (hence the single quote), as if what she next describes as an under-the-breath “titter” by Medlin would have been received by Ballard and the women as boisterous mocking.
Amal also corrects her by characterizing Medlin’s laugh as “a subdued, inoffensive chuckle.”
- p. 188: “camel check-print”: Her camel-colored blouse has a “check” (or chessboard) design.
- p. 188: *porte-parole*: “spokeswoman” in French.
It was previously used on 9.136.

p. 188: consecution: Chain of reasoning.

p. 188: embracive: “disposed to embrace; inclusive” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 188: contravene: As an intransitive verb, it means “to make a contravention,” that is, “to oppose in argument; dispute” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 188: subsume: to include a smaller element within a larger group.
According to *Webster’s Third*, “subsume,” which was “originally a technical term in logic,” usually “calls more attention to the larger class.”

- p. 189: *bustle*: to move something energetically and with the apparent purpose of calling attention to the action.
- p. 189: “‘leaving the beach via the grove’ . . . ‘alone stealing into the grove merely to exit with a stripling or two in tow’”: According to Ballard (1.7), Medlin said, “‘Sneaking away to frolic in the surf with lads’” and added, “Stealing alone into [Zaracova’s] grove, yet emerging with a beachcomber or two in tow.”
- p. 189: “pinching in her lips”: In order to keep herself from laughing out loud.
- p. 189: “‘Poor Leila!’”: The four secretaries are mimicking their reaction on the day they witnessed the confrontation between Medlin and Ballard.
Most of the employees at the U.S. embassy were aware that Ballard and Leila “were seeing each other, yet not [that they were] engaged,” Remy learned from his French embassy liaison (5.77).
- p. 189: “a third language”: English.
- p. 189: “staring into the back of Boshabo”: Remy is recalling this scene from the interview while he is following the receptionist as the two draw near to the Aladdin.
The time is not specified, but it is around 1:10 since Remy began to reminisce about the embassy interview at 1:08.
See the p. 187 note above, “resuming,” N12:4.
- p. 189: *whicker*: to utter a partly stifled laugh.
- p. 189: *femmes arabes*: Arab women.
- p. 189: “inductive leap’: In the minds of these urbane Algerian women, “by an inductive leap, ‘twinkle-toed *khawaagaat*’ (‘gay foreigners’) all Western bachelors became.”
An “inductive leap” is an underserved generalization from data. Remy assigns it here to the secretaries.
On 8.124, Leroy used the term to counter Remy’s assertion that he was maintaining Ballard’s innocence through refusing to look at any proof that his friend was guilty.
See the 8.123 note on “consilient,” N8:15, and the 8.124 note on “inductive leap,” N8:17.
- p. 189: “‘twinkle-toed’”: A dancing term which describes a man who is light on his feet; it is typically not applied to women dancers.
The online *Urban Dictionary* defines “twinkle toes” as an effeminate homosexual male.
- p. 189: *khawaagaat*: Defined in the text, it is the plural of *khawaaga*, one of the

Arabic words for “foreigner.”

See 4.62-63 and its note, N4:32.

- p. 189: prolocutor: spokesperson. On 9.136 (N9:6), the word “prolocutress” (meaning a “female prolocutor”) was used, even though it was found in no dictionaries. A Google search uncovered it in a few word lists and websites listing synonyms. The satire there justified the esoteric “prolocutress,” but the context here, I feel, does not.
- p. 189: “my aforesaid ‘three minutes’”: See Amal’s opening statement on p. 187.
- p. 189: “a betokening of ‘more than the less’”: A slightly variant use by Remy of his favorite quotation from James’s *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1: “The more than the more is more than the less.” See the 4.66 note, N4:40-41 for a list of the occurrences of James’s quote in the novel.
- p. 189: “if Remy had ‘any further questions’”: Amal is not being facetious here. A comment by her on 13.204 indicates that she had just come to the realization that Remy had not asked any questions at the meeting, as he himself noted on p. 187: “with a mind full of questions. None he had had to ask.” Their conference, a mere thirteen minutes, ends at 12:43.
- p. 189: “the verification of the ‘plastic pricking’”: Leila told Remy that in narrating his confrontation with Medlin, Ballard had said that after it he had seen the DCM “jabbing his left palm with the plastic knife he’d used to stir his coffee” (9.147).
- p. 189: “with Boshabo and him five paces from Rouis”: Remy switches back to the time, 1:11, when he and Boshabo are only a few seconds from the entrance to the Aladdin.

p. 190: “lassie-lad”: a young homosexual. It seems to be a neologism of mine since I do not find it listed in my Google search.

Sabrah’s outburst attests to the embassy gossip about Medlin’s supposed homosexuality, suggested by the dishwasher Samir on 10.168.

pp. 190-92: SECTION 3

p. 190: “I have lost my brother”: Leila’s opening speech to Remy occurs at 1:15, directly after Rouis escorts Remy to the table, takes down the partition revealing Leila, and leaves (1:12 – 1:14).

p. 190: “revived his mother’s long-ago confession and that frantic time he had expended tearing from one police station to another, striving to locate his ‘lost’ Noura”: The wording recalls his mother’s lament, “I have lost our Gift from God,” spoken to Omar (now Omar) on Dec. 6, 1958, the late afternoon the day after Noura’s kidnapping (3.38).

Immediately Omar had rushed to secure the services of a French lawyer, who told him the next day to see if she had been dropped off by her kidnapers at any of the police stations.

On Dec. 7, Remy learned nothing from the first three and after visiting one on Dec. 8, he himself was abducted (3.39).

p. 190: “the fault is mine”: Echoing Houda’s “It is not his fault” or a variant (7.112 and 113; 9.149; and 11.173), as well as Leroy’s “It’s my fault” or a variant (11.177 and 179).

p. 190: “in my defense”: On making the request for Foucin to check on the lawyer whom Chabane had seen, Remy emphasized for him or his agent not to approach either Chabane or his sister on the matter (9.149).

p. 190: “it is the advantage of anyone to court the favor and patronage of M. Foucin”: Without specifying, Leila believes that Remy had reported what Ahmed had told him about seeking out a lawyer in Algiers (9.140) to Foucin, thereby providing evidence that Ahmed had as much a motive for the murder as the one he is representing, Belmazoir.

As Remy himself states two paragraphs down, Leila “apprehends ’twas I who steered the suspicion” upon her brother.

p. 190: “the ‘upstanding’ seventy-five-dinar lawyer”: So described by Ahmed Chabane on 9.140: The “upstanding Algiers lawyer” “charged me seventy-five dinars for ten minutes of . . . discourse.”

According to my chronology, on Friday, Apr. 14, Foucin’s agents tracked down the Algiers lawyer Chabane had sought out. At 10:05 that night, Foucin tells Remy the lawyer’s name (Ouenough), telephone number, and address (10.166).

The next morning Ouenough telephoned the Zouabi café number which Ahmed had given him. Its tender sent for Ahmed, who was cursed out by Ouenough for involving him in a matter which the Great One was investigating.

Ahmed tells Leila that he must go into hiding. He takes a ten a.m. bus to Constantine. His medial destination will be revealed on p. 195 and his final one on p. 196.

p. 190: papier-mâché: Short for a papier-mâché suitcase, a sturdy but inexpensive piece of luggage made from mixing paper pulp (the compound word literally translates as “chewed paper”), plaster, and glue or other adhesive.

p. 190: “from your dispensation”: On 9.150, Remy had given Chabane 1,000 dinars.

p. 190: “my manipulation of Chabane smack of the way the French exploited Noura”: Remy recognizes that just as the French used Noura to turn him into a traitor, so he utilized Chabane to direct Foucin’s attention from himself, although Leila would think from Vellacott’s client Belmazoir.

p. 190: in a trice: instantly.

p. 190: “So that is why . . . I’ve come to you. You will not let me put the murder behind me. My brother’s return”: On 9.144, she had told Remy she was only concerned with the burial of her husband.

Now she has a second anxiety, the recovery of her lost brother. It is that matter, not the murder, which has made her seek out Remy, even though she recognizes that the two events are now bonded.

p. 190: “the satisfactory completion of your mission to Algiers. This cause-and-effect bondage fetters the two of us”: On 9.144, Remy had used the word “bond” in asking her, “Are we not bonded in seeking *l’assassin* of your husband?” Here she pointedly revives that word.

Leila, however, incorrectly believes that Remy’s mission to Algiers is to gather evidence which will cast doubt on the guilt of Belmazoir. Later in the novel (14.238 and 15.246) Remy will attempt to use her mistaken belief to achieve his real reason for coming to Algiers, to see his father.

A final point: Leila’s first statement of this “bondage” between them is seen in the highly negative light of fettered prisoners.

p. 190: “like most men since Adam . . . opted for a male mortal over a nonsexual god”: In *PL* 9.877-85, Eve says to Adam, “And growing up to godhead; which for thee / Chiefly I sought, without thee can despise . . . / And I then too late renounce / Deity for thee.”

In Milton, Adam’s reply is a more famous example of the reverse, a male opting for a female over a nonsexual god. Adam tells Eve, “However I with thee [not God] have fixed my lot” (9.952).

- p. 190: “*faith I can redeem the one I’ve doomed*”: Another instance of the redemption theme.
See the 3.41 note, N3:19-20, which discusses the theme of redemption in the first three chapters of the novel.
An essay on this theme as part of the sin/repentance/redemption pattern will appear at the end of the notes for chap. 18, N18:72-74.
- p. 190: “rearranging the past to disguise how little his forethought had traveled”: In his past conniving, Remy knows that it had never entered his mind that he would plan to “redeem” Leila’s brother.
Furthermore, he had never considered that Leila would be the unknown lady in the Aladdin Room or that she would come there in order to join forces with him.
- p. 190: “ripe for the taking”: The expression, which appears to have developed as business, not agricultural, argot, implies vulnerability and weakness, which make something easy to appropriate. An example given on the internet, “Those cheap houses are ripe for the taking.”
Remy’s use of the phrase here emphasizes his hypocrisy and artificiality. In this scene his conscience has debated whether he should confess to Leila what he is certain she already suspects, that some comment of Remy, based on what Ahmed had babbled at the Aladdin, had led to Foucin seeking her brother.
He is in dread of her open censure until she says that she comes not to rebuke him but to seek his help.
Now, he believes he has her at a disadvantage and inwardly brags that she is “ripe for the taking,” that is, he can use her for his own ends. He quickly changes the conversation away from himself to Ballard’s fallibility.
- p. 190: “her husband’s proclivities”: On 9.144-45, Remy and Leila first discuss what he termed “charges of perversion.”

- p. 191: *un cœur pur*: In French “a pure heart.”
Ballard says, “You’re not marrying” instead of “You’ve not married to” because he does not believe they are truly married until it is announced publicly as Islam demands.
Leila, however, shows none of this hesitancy.
- p. 191: “the one-month anniversary of our marriage”: According to my chronology, Ballard signed the marriage contract on Jan. 7, and this Sunday-morning incidence took place on Feb. 5, an interval of thirty days.
- p. 191: “humanizing Ballard”: Remy had earlier been uncomfortable with anyone who liked or admired Ballard or aspects of him: Mohammed (4.63-65), Belsches (5.69-70), Mohisen (7.107-08), Leroy (8.123-24, *passim*), Mrs. Leroy (8.124), and Leila (8.133, 9.144, *passim*).
However, having seen Leila’s beauty and impressive character, Remy wishes to dehumanize Ballard in the same way he did impulsively when he thought of Ballard’s corruption of Mohisen (6.95).
Remy’s sinister characterization (or what Leila has called on this page, “caricature”) of Ballard will intensify as the novel progresses.
- p. 191: “Summarily, I answered no”: See 9.145: Remy said to Leila, “‘So nothing unusual, unexpected, to intimate he was under any stress.’ Twice she wagged her head pervicaciously.”
- p. 191: “one Wednesday night, also in February”: The last sentence of this section (192) will place this date as February 15.
- p. 191: “as if debating whether to persist”: She pauses, knowing that what she will reveal is a very private moment between Ballard and herself.
- p. 191: “clean-slate”: The use of this idiom as a verb phrase is a neologism.
- p. 191: mayhap: Archaic form of “perhaps.”
- p. 191: “*the gold ring of my left*”: It is Remy, reminding himself that he is married, who for sure views the gold wedding band.
That he feels he must is another attestation of his growing attraction to Leila.
- p. 191: dandle: As an intransitive verb, it means “trifle, toy, play” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 191: M. Paramour: A paramour (from Old French *par amour* “with love”) is the illicit sexual partner of a married man or woman.”
In Modern French, its equivalent is *amant*.
- p. 191: “prepunctuality”: As mentioned in the 1.4 note, N1.12, it is listed in the online *Urban Dictionary*, but without a definition. A Google search turned up a few

nonacademic instances. Thus I treat it as a nonstandardized word—hence the quotation marks—meaning “the act of being more than punctual.”

Here Leila means that in delivering the \$1,000 that night instead of the scheduled next day, Ballard was once again exhibiting his propensity to do something ahead of schedule.

- p. 191: Sétif: A large city in northeastern Algeria, around 190 miles east of Algiers and about sixty miles west of Constantine, the major eastern city.
- p. 191: “On paper a Muslim . . . but it must be in my heart!”: The paper refers to the written marriage contract.
“In my heart” concerns his need to accept Islam, not mechanically, but through and through.
- p. 191: “My aunt already owned multiple properties in Algiers”: This Sétif aunt, never named, will be mentioned again on 19.319.
- p. 191: sub-rosa: “secret,” here with “embassy-related” understood.
Leila used the term on 9.145 at her first meeting with Remy.
- p. 191: “derail”: As a transitive verb, “to throw off course (as a plan or project)” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 191: “‘turn the “sinner” away,’ he slurred. In whiffs billowed his ‘sin’”: Leila thinks that the sin to which Ballard is referring is the consumption of alcohol, forbidden according to certain Islamic scholars.
See the 3.48 note, N3:33-34, for the theoretical and practical attitude toward drinking in Muslim societies.
Ironically, but fittingly, Leila will never learn Ballard’s true sin that night.

- p. 192: “despicable”: The word ties Ballard to old Belmazoir, who had termed the seven traitors, “We are the despicable . . . *l'immonde*” (2.33).
It was echoed by Remy on seeing Belmazoir’s grandson Mohammed (4.61).
A final time it will be employed when Remy hypocritically uses it to describe himself (21.357).
- p. 192: cogswell: “an upholstered easy chair” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 192: *encore en fois*: “once more” in French.
- p. 192: “I fear your God will not . . . no! . . . Dear Leila, I fear you will not . . . when all is known”: Ballard feels that he has done something for which neither God nor Leila can forgive him.
Leila still thinks that he is speaking of his alcoholic binge.
As mentioned four notes above, the time “when all is known” will never come for Leila.
- p. 192: “kissed where in time that grim plank would smash”: See 1.13-14.
- p. 192: “by exacerbating to dispel his cliché”: Remy admits to himself that his appraisal of Ballard is a “cliché,” what Leila had called “your caricature” (191).
- p. 192: “to hone the structure of his probing”: Not expecting Leila’s calling on him at the Aladdin, Remy has had to devise his line of questioning as she spoke.
As pp. 193-94 will reveal, it revolves around February 15, which Leila is now describing, but it will not use any of the “embarrassing” details which she has revealed up to this point.
- p. 192: *Juif*: French for “Jew” (male); *Juive* (woman).
- p. 192: *gentilhomme*: “gentleman” in French.
- p. 192: buss: kiss, labeled in some dictionaries as “archaic.”
- p. 192: *boutique*: In French “shop.” Here, it refers to their flower shop.
- p. 192: chaff: to tease in a good-natured way.
- p. 192: “terminal bourn”: final boundary.
- p. 192: *un nul*: Ballard uses the French figurative meaning of a person with a weak character.
Remy used it in that sense in describing himself on 2.22; however, he employed its denotative meaning of “nonentity” in characterizing himself as “*un nul*” on 7.110.

- p. 192: “*dans la maladie et dans la santé*”: French for “in sickness and in health,” phrases from some marriage vows in the West.
The phrase in English is based upon the Latin marriage vows of the Roman Catholic Church and was first used in the 1549 Anglican *Book of Common Prayers*: “To have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health.”
- p. 192: “I don’t have it, the thousand. I’ll rush to my place to get it”: On the previous page, Leila said that Ballard had told her that he would bring over this final thousand dollars for the building which they planned to turn into a florist.
- p. 192: *djellaba*: a native robe worn as an outer garment. See the 1.14 note, which describes it as having a hood and long sleeves.
It also doubles as a sleeping garment and was so used by Ballard when he slept over at the Chabanes’ farm (9.141).
- p. 192: “She had started to lower the veil at her reference to the plank”: Thirteen paragraphs above, Leila had said that she had “kissed” the left side of Ballard’s face “where in time that grim plank would smash” (192).
- p. 192: “Wednesday be the fifteenth”: That is, February 15.
According to my chronology, Remy asks this question at 1:24.

pp. 193-94: SECTION 4

- p. 193: “As Leila raised the full *niquaab*”: The action continues from the preceding section (1:24).
- p. 193: full *niquaab*: A veil covering all of her face, as distinguished from the half veil which conceals only its lower part.
- p. 193: *mouchoir*: handkerchief. The one offered on 9.144 is brown.
- p. 193: recto: The front side of a leaf (of a manuscript, notebook, etc.).
- p. 193: Bardo Museum: A museum of prehistory and ethnography located in modern Algiers south of the university. It has excellent collections of fossils, Neolithic pottery, and rock carvings and paintings brought from the Tassili region of the Sahara.
- p. 193: Le Dauphin: An expensive seafood restaurant on Rue d’Angkor, north of Algiers, still in operation (2013).
- p. 193: verso: the back of a leaf of paper.
- p. 193: “W. Paul late, 12:30 a.m. (technically Th.). Tipsy. Stayed over”: What happened this night was described by Leila on pp. 191-92.
- p. 193: supersede: supplant.
- p. 193: “on the train”: Although not specified, Leila, who had seen her brother Ahmed off at 10 a.m. that morning (Fri., Apr. 15; see the p. 190 note above, N12:10-11), decided that she would take the next train (the one she refers to here) to Algiers. Using the same schedule listed on 1.4, she would “take the midnight coach from Zouabi to Constantine, board the 1:10 a.m. SNTF train from there to Algiers [and arrive at] 8:30,” Sat., Apr. 16.
On p. 196, there is the assumption that she knows where Ahmed was planning to go after he arrived in Algiers. Since she does not try immediately to contact Remy, who was at his hotel until around noon, her purpose in making the trip is not to seek him out, but to try to find her brother and convince him not to make the final leg of his journey.
Unsuccessful there, she decides to seek out Remy, arriving at the Al-Nigma at around 12:30 p.m. By then, he is beginning his conference with the embassy secretaries. Leila is seated in a partitioned table of the Aladdin Room.
- p. 193: “the two thousand dollars . . . should have been three thousand”: See 9.146: “Only two thousand dollars was found in the apartment. There should have been three.”

p. 193: “Of Ambassador and Mme. Leroy’s wedding present, given to Paul on January twenty-eighth”: Leila gives an account of how they had budgeted and spent this gift of \$15,000:

Jan 30: \$2,000 – finishing the dowry payment to her father.

Jan. 31: \$3,000 – first installment for flower shop to her aunt in Sétif.

Feb. 4: \$3,000 – second installment for flower shop to her aunt in Sétif.

Feb. 11: \$3,000 – third installment for flower shop to her aunt in Sétif.

Feb. 16: \$1,000 – last installment for flower shop to her aunt in Sétif.

That left them with \$3,000 to send on supplies and equipment for the shop.

p. 193: staged: “deliberately planned and arranged for effect or deception; contrived” (*Webster’s Third*).

Another sign that Remy is becoming deeply affected by Leila’s affairs.

p. 193: “totaled nearly one hundred dollars”: The figure given on 11.171 is “close to nine hundred dinars,” but its note, N11:6, is more specific: DA886.75.

Nine hundred dinars would be around US\$90 at the official exchange rate in 1989, the time of the novel.

p. 193: “a good monthly salary here”: In 1988, the official minimum monthly salary in all sectors was 1,100 dinars (around \$100), but given that urban unemployment was 30%, the strong competition for job openings placed employers in a strong bargaining position.

For comparison—and to show how the dinar has been devalued over twenty years—in 2009, the average monthly salary in urban Algerian was 15,000 dinars (\$211).

p. 193: moil: drudgery; hard work.

- p. 194: “the movement below, with its protest that beauty does not lie on the surface”: This echoes Remy’s conclusion on 9.148, where he declared that “the massive overplus [of beauty is not seen, but has] to be imagined. Thus, “Beauty is not truth . . . [it] is faith.”
Just as crucial is his wording taken out of context, “beauty does not lie,” that is, cannot be false or artificial.
- p. 194: “his nails to dig into his palms”: A further manifestation of both Remy’s growing physical and mental attraction to Leila and his desire to punish himself, a married man, for this inclination.
- p. 194: “*sans doute*”: French for “without doubt.”
- p. 194: “charmed innocence”: A feeble play on the idiom “innocent charm.”
- p. 194: “he did not meet your husband”: On 10.161, Mohammed said that Belmazoir “stiffed” him (did not show up for their meeting) on both Feb. 13 and 20.
- p. 194: *nathr*: Leila defines it in the text as a “pledge to God.”
For a more complete discussion of it, see 3.37 (and its note, N3:6), where Remy makes a pledge to God to take care of his deaf-and-mute sister forever. This vow involving Noura is recalled on 6.88.
On 7.116, Foucin makes a pledge to God, spurred on by his father as Omar was by his, to lead the Algiers’ FLN representative (the unknown traitor old Belmazoir) to safety.
Here Leila implies that inbred is the *nathr* for siblings to protect each other, asserting that in creating brothers and sisters God sealed that bond, one which is greater than the vows of marriage since people determine whom they will wed. (In Islam, at least technically, the woman has the unchallenged right to refuse to agree to the marriage contract.)
- p. 194: “So ‘wondrous’ her ‘strength’”: In the penultimate paragraph of chap. 3 of *Scarlet Letter*, Dimmesdale exclaims, “Wondrous strength and generosity of a woman’s heart! She will not speak!”
- p. 194: “the events of the fifteenth connect”: To dazzle Leila, Remy seems to be concentrating on how events in the murder connect, not on what strategies he will use to reunite with his father.
- p. 194: “the vacillation on how much he should divulge now his”: On p. 191, it was Leila who “paused, as if debating whether to persist.”
- p. 194: “to cement a bond, albeit human”: Remy wishes to distinguish his proposed bond from the *nathr* to God about which Leila had spoken.
- p. 194: deviance: a turning aside or away (from *Webster’s Third*).

- p. 194: “*mostly queer*”: A continuation of the use of “mostly” from the title of the chapter.
The word “queer” influenced the choice of the word “deviance” in the preceding sentence.
- p. 194: ““Why M. Lazar, and with Mme. Ballard . . . ! A thousand pardons for my intrusion””: See the 7.108 note, N7:19, which lists the five other instances of this formulaic greeting employed by Foucin.
Foucin interrupts the two at 1:34.
- p. 194: “Mme. Ballard, a name which now the courts approve”: As the opening of the next section evinces, Leila’s reaction to Foucin’s revelation is immediate; Remy’s less so since he will jocosely comment on Foucin’s gracing their table.

pp. 194-97: SECTION 5

- p. 194: “The crown of the chair”: The action continues from the previous section.

- p. 195: *burnoose*: A cloak with an open front worn by some Algerian men over a *djellaba*, *gandoura*, or Western clothes.
Foucin puts one on before he and Remy leave his office for their trip to the Andaloos (7.104).
- p. 195: Boshabo: Evidently he had telephoned Foucin's office about the meeting between Remy and Leila.
Foucin's "spies" are omnipresent; for instance, on 13.204, Foucin will inform Remy that as soon as his interview with the embassy secretaries ended, one telephoned him with an account of it.
- p. 195: tripartition: "the act of dividing or the state of being divided into three parts" (*Webster's Third*).
Leila saw Foucin's approach before Remy. She is "spellbound" (194), trying to read into Foucin's countenance whether he has apprehended her brother. To hide her reaction to this anticipated news, she begins to lower her veil.
However, Foucin's announcement that the Algerian courts have approved her being called Mme. Ballard (194), not Mlle. Chabane, first perplexes and then astonishes her.
Her third response indicates how quickly she gains control of herself since the nod—"remote and mechanical" because she is thinking about the future burial arrangements for her "husband"—indicates that she has no objection to Foucin's joining them.
- p. 195: "the 'status'": Remy refers to the term he used in describing Foucin's renown on 7.106, 111, and 113.
- p. 195: *collogue*: to confer or converse privately.
- p. 195: *small tower vase*: A slender vase, the bottom of which resembles the base of the Eiffel Tower. The smallest model is usually eight-inches high.
- p. 195: "three roses": One rose seemingly for each of the table's occupants.
Both the number and the flower appear frequently and symbolically in the novel.
- p. 195: *El-Hamdulilah!*: Leila adds the translation for Remy's benefit: "Praise be to God!"
- p. 195: "secure his body for burial": Leila's first words in the novel are "Give me my husband's body!" These are immediately followed by her torment that he is "lying in the cold chamber," the embassy morgue, unburied (8.133).
Belsches very early scoffingly identifies her with that command, "Give me my husband!" (5.69), which Remy repeats with a slight variation on 5.71.
On 8.122, in making symmetrical his mythological allusion, Leroy likewise scorns Leila's motive for demanding the corpse.
Muslims, however, believe that a body should be buried as soon as possible, preferably before the next prayer if the death occurred during daytime or after

sunrise if it happened at night.

This desire, that her husband be buried according to the rules of his chosen faith, now seems to be Leila's reason for her insistence on the return of his body.

- p. 195: "Foucin's repartee mode—*and mine*": Their private retorts, whose nuances Leila would not comprehend, include Foucin's formulaic greeting, "Why M. Lazar," Remy's weaving "status" into his riposte, and Foucin's calling this teasing an "esteemed . . . compliment."
- p. 195: chancery: "the office of a foreign embassy; chancellery," meaning "the office and official residence of a diplomatic minister at a foreign seat of government" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 195: "two thousand dollars": The two thousand dollars was found by the police in a chiffonier in Ballard's apartment according to Remy (8.123). Ballard had kept the money given them by the Leroy's hidden in his apartment, instead of in a bank, since most of it was to be used to purchase the flower shop surreptitiously through Leila's aunt. The two thousand dollars, which should have been three, is mentioned on 5.77 by Remy's French embassy liaison; on 8.124 by Leroy; and on 9.146 by Leila. She and Remy had discussed it earlier in this chapter, p. 193.
- p. 195: palpebrae: "eyelids" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 195: assuasive: soothing; allaying.
- p. 195: "yesterday morning he boarded . . . your own trip last night": See the pp. 190 and 193 notes above, N12:8-9 and 14, for the chronology of the "road and rail" trips of first Ahmed and afterwards Leila.
- p. 195: "a 'nibbling bite'": A wordplay of "bite" meaning "a biting quality" in a person's voice and "a small bite" by a fish at a bait. With his news delivered and his condolences expressed, Foucin tries to bait or lure Leila, in an apparently emotionally weakened state, into revealing the whereabouts of her brother.
- p. 195: "'none received me, save myself": She had not been met by her brother or anyone else at the train station.
- p. 195: "from Antwerp to Brussels": The travel time from Antwerp to Brussels by train in the late 1980s was just over an hour. Antwerp is located forty-five km. north of Brussels. Foucin first uses the city in Belgium (Antwerp) where "M. Lazar" lived and next the city (Brussels) in which his employer "M. Vellacott" had his offices.
- p. 195: "pricking spurs": A "spur track" is "a short track connected with the main track

or a railroad.”

These branches are “pricking” for most passengers because stops at their stations greatly increase the travel time.

- p. 195: “eight-hour undertaking”: On 1.4, the travel time by train from Constantine to Algiers is from 1:10 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., seven hours and twenty minutes. Foucin also refers to the “faster bus,” which according to my research took six hours.

- p. 196: “an interlude”: Any performance between the acts of a play. This is the first of a series of theatrical or dramatic terms used on this page, such as “pantomimed” and “puppetlike” in the main clause of this sentence.
- p. 196: “bolted”: A foreshadowing of the “bolting” of another character in chap. 13.
- p. 196: “To commandeer a byword of M. Lazar, the ‘periphery’”: Remy first uses the term when he tells Foucin “Beyond the pretension of periphery” (7.106). Foucin takes up the word later in Remy’s hotel room: “In Greek tragedies, peripheries were disallowed” (7.106). At a later point in their conversation at the Al-Nigma, Foucin uses “peripheral” in mentioning the negative (7.111). Finally, Remy repeats his “pretention of periphery” speech on 7.113. Besides these, the word or a variant of it was used in earlier chapters: Ballard on 1.3 and 12; Omar, 3.47; Remy, 11.177 and 185; and Leroy, 11.185. In later chapters, the word will also occur: Foucin uses it on 13.203 and 16.268; Remy, on 16.264, 18.302, 20.342, and 21.359. Leila uses it once, 19.313, as do Remy’s French Embassy liaison, 19.324, and a bystander, 21.355.
- p. 196: “stage-center” . . . “By exiting the stage”: The theatrical metaphor continues. Principally it involves the performance term “rehearsal”: See the p. 186 note above, N12:2. There are also two discussions of tragedies, 7.106 and 8.120-22.
- p. 196: coruscation: a sudden brilliant display, as of wit.
- p. 196: “to shift for itself”: Foucin wonders whether by vanishing Chabane sought to hide some truth relevant to his investigation or simply concluded that the truth without his input could manage or get along (“shift”) by itself. Foucin’s quotation is partly taken from paragraph 68 (beginning “Fourth, the magistrates ought not to forbid”) of Locke’s *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, an argument against government censorship: “For truth is most likely to be found when it is allowed to shift for itself.” Foucin’s use of “shift” incorporates two intransitive meanings: “to manage or to get along” (Locke’s use) and “to use tricky, evasive, or expedient methods.”
- p. 196: “the scaffold of truth may be inlaid with some planks of lies”: Leila says that in a discussion three days ago that “M. Lazar” had stated that the truth about something may contain some lies and that lies may be the basis of truth. Here she “lies” because 9.143-44 shows that it is Leila, not Remy, who first proposed the alternatives that a “lie” may be “built upon a truth” and a “truth” may be “built upon a lie.” However, it is Remy’s rebuttal to Leila’s exclamation, “A lie! A lie!” which allows him to assert that the foundation of either may be the other: “Upon which some have built a truth” (144).

The word “built” suggests to Leila the scaffold-planking metaphor which is not present in their discussion in chap. 9.

- p. 196: “And so truth—does not the infidelic argument of Karl Popper and his ilk logically conclude?—is invented by man, not revealed by God.” See the 6.95 note, “you’ve,” N6:39, which discusses the theory of provisional truth developed by the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper and first presented in his book *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (published in German in 1935; first English edition, 1959). (The title of his book, of course, is ironic; it should be “The Illogic of Scientific Discovery” or “The Logic of Scientific Invention.”)

Popper’s theory holds that empirical truth is never satisfactory. As I mentioned in the commentary on p. 95, I principally used an anachronistic source for Popper’s ideas in my novel: the 1991 essay by Mario Vargas Llosa, “The Truth of Karl Popper.”

There Vargas Llosa summed up the concept of provisional truth as follows: “Truth” is not located in the empirical world, but “in the human mind, in imagination and reason . . . Truth, for Karl Popper, is not discovered, but invented” [p. 160, in the reprinted version in Vargas Llosa’s *Wellsprings* (2008)]. The anachronism occurs since the action of my novel is 1989, two years before the publication of Vargas Llosa’s essay. However, Popper’s ideas of invented truth were much discussed from the 1960s on. That I used Vargas Llosa does not mean that Foucin needed to.

Of course, the commissioner, a devout Muslim, believes all truth is discovered (revealed) in the Holy Qur’an.

The logical and heretical conclusion of this intermingling of truth and lying is that truth becomes a human invention, not God’s revelation. Foucin’s assumption is that God’s truth could never traffic with lies.

- p. 196: “infidelic”: A variant of the adjective “infidel,” meaning “relating to or characteristic of unbelief or unbelievers” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 196: “a philosophic dialogue, I’m aggrieved to have missed”: Foucin evinces his open-mindedness.

He is not one of those Muslims who believe that ideas not specifically mentioned in the Qur’an and the Hadiths must not be considered. These fundamentalists held that personal interpretation of the holy works should be forbidden. Only trained scholars may make such explication.

For a discussion of the view that the doors of individual interpretation of Islam were closed after the fourth century AH, see 3.38 and its note, “opening,” N3:9.

- p. 196: *de novo*: once more.

- p. 196: “a breach which I’m sure escaped your notice: Yesterday we did not converse”: Remy had noticed this aberration. On 11.181, at around 9 p.m. yesterday (Saturday), he had told himself, “Not even Foucin had rung up.”

- p. 196: “at second hand I learned of your pharmacies’ windfall”: One of Foucin’s agents undoubtedly had questioned the four pharmacists whom Remy had interviewed.
Either they or Foucin from their accounts uncovered Remy’s discovery (“windfall”), that on Feb. 16th Houda had suddenly come into enough money to allow her to wipe out their family’s prescription bills.
- p. 196: “For only twenty or so minutes”: According to my chronology, at 1:15 Leila told Remy that she had lost her brother. By 1:18 she had explained to him how Ahmed had left Zouabi on the Constantine bus.
At 1:40 Remy said he had learned of Chabane’s flight twenty or so minutes ago.
- p. 196: “a chaperoning police matron”: Although the post-independence constitution guaranteed women equal rights, by the 1980s only several hundred women serviced in the police or military.
Female police officers were usually assigned inside office work or they directed traffic or , as here, accompanied a male officer in a matter involving a woman.
Since Foucin had been told by the hotel receptionist that Leila was there and since he had also been informed about the court ruling, he had brought a police matron in case Leila would need or want his assistance.
- p. 196: *pneuma*: the soul or spirit, used metaphorically.
- p. 196: “a day of mostly women”: On 13.203, Foucin will reveal how his has been a day mostly taken up by women.
As for Remy, his afternoon was given over first to the four embassy secretaries and then to Leila.
He knows (as does another) that his night will be given over to an interview with Ghazi about another crucial woman of the novel, Houda.
- p. 196: *réceptionniste*: In French “receptionist.” Here, Boshabo.
- p. 196: “your brother’s at the Palestinian camp”: The basis of Remy’s deduction is that the only friends in Algiers whom Chabane spoke about were Palestinian (9.142, where he also mentioned traveling to their camp south of Algiers).

p. 197: “his patronage”: On p. 190, Leila had referred to those who “court the favor and patronage of M. Foucin.”

By implication Remy harks back to Foucin’s question: Did he know where Leila’s brother was? (196) By not mentioning that he may have gone to the Palestinian camp, Remy asserts that his silence attests to his loyalty to Leila.

p. 197: giffgaff: “to bandy words; banter” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 197: *mouchoir*: “handkerchief” in French.

p. 197: “their fingers would have touched for the first time”: That Remy would concentrate on this failure to connect is yet another sign of his growing attachment to Leila.

p. 197: “I sought out yours”: See p. 190 where Leila told Remy, “I’ve come to you”; that is, she sought out his patronage. She continued, “This cause-and-effect bondage fetters the two of us.”

The time is 1:44, so Remy’s and Leila’s meeting including Foucin’s interposition lasts for thirty-two minutes.

pp. 197-99: SECTION 6

p. 197: “The five massive iron gates of the walled-in Jardin Marengo”: I have magnified the size of the wall surrounding Marengo Park, but the park’s shape is as described in this first paragraph.

p. 197: “The month itself . . . would patrol morality”: Another instance of the hypocrisy of Muslim officials.

While insisting that the month would ensure that no one visiting the nighttime park would engage in any immoral acts, they have taken two precautions: extra lighting and five times the number of patrolling gendarmes.

p. 197: “globes”: “eyeballs” (*Webster’s Third*). In quotes to indicate that it is “poetic.”

p. 197: “peephole”: A motif of the novel, which appears ten times in seven chapters, both numbers symbolic.

For this list, see the 3.42 note, N3:21-22.

p. 197: “beak”: This continues the peacock metaphor.

p. 197: *intervalled*: An adjective meaning “placed at intervals” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 197: sodium-vapor bulbs: At the time of the novel high-pressure sodium-vapor street lamps, which are safer and more economical than mercury vapor lamps,

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were typically used to illuminate streets and other public areas, such as parks. These still are often employed although recent research has shown that a metal-halide lighting system (compounds of metals with bromine or iodine) is brighter and safer.

p. 197: “Ten minutes later”: At 8:13.

p. 197: “feathery train”: A further use of the peacock metaphor.

p. 197: “bench . . . not dissimilar to that Mohisen”: See 7:107-10.

p. 197: “in the semidark”: A play upon “in the dark,” with its double meaning of physically “unable to see” and mentally “uninformed or ignorant.”
“Semidark” is defined by the online *Freedictionary* as “partially devoid of light.”

p. 197: “this Houda”: Throughout his long narrative, which begins at 8:19 and finishes at 8:32, Ghazi will use the demonstrative pronoun in place of Mademoiselle or Ø to indicate his contempt for or revulsion of her, for the same reason he and his mother had referred to “this Houda” on 11.176.
On p. 199, Remy will imitate this employment of the adjectival in disdainfully referring to “this’ Ballard.”

p. 197: “open her door to you”: A carnal implication.
Just as Ghazi will confess his sexual interest in Houda (despite her ugliness) in 13.205, he assumes that Remy must also be so inclined.

p. 197: scarrow: “a shadowy or faint light” (Scottish) (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 197: palter: to quibble, as in bargaining.

p. 197: Burberry: London men’s fashion house, noted for its trench coat/raincoat.

p. 197: “this Wednesday ’twixt your Christmas and New Year’s”: Dec. 28, 1988, according to my chronology.

p. 197: ’twixt: This Old Poetic term means “between.”

- p. 198: “The next three Wednesdays . . . the last”: Jan. 4, 11, and 18, 1989. The “last” refers to Jan. 18.
- p. 198: praenomen: Given name, as opposed to family name.
- p. 198: ““from my first breath commenced her taunts””: This complaint in dashes is designed by Ghazi to stress that from his birth his mother has dedicated her life to making his miserable.
Thus in his mind the “praenomen” episode emphasizes his long suffering, not his foolishness.
- p. 198: “On the very night her handsome brother’s sleeping with the Philistines”:
Remy would know Mohammed’s Wednesday routine from Vellacott’s reports: While he was working for the PLO as its drug dealer, he would leave each Wednesday before noon (14.225) for their camp, sleeping over there and return to Algiers the next morning with the hashish for his customers.
The novel never establishes the means he used to arrive at and return from the camp, but there is a major highway which runs south to the side road which leads to the PLO cantonment.
It has bus service, and since it is the popular truck Route 1 to and from the Sahara, hitchhiking would be easy. (This highway is the same which Remy takes to the cutoff to Berrouaghia Prison.)
Bourceli’s wording, “sleeping with the Philistines,” deliberately implies that Mohammed was homosexually servicing them.
- p. 198: nursemaid: As a transitive verb, “to watch over and take care of in a solicitous manner” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 198: “This mostly fool of a girl (or fool of a mostly girl)”: Ghazi’s description of Houda reinforces a keyword from the title of the chapter.
“Mostly girl” harks back to his mother’s description of him: Houda is “as misnomered a female . . . as you, my son . . . are a male” (11.175).
- p. 198: “eight times she babysat”: Dec. 28, 1988; Jan. 4, 1989; Jan. 11; Jan. 18 (the first night Ghazi trailed them); Jan. 25; Feb. 1; Feb. 8; and Feb. 15 (the last four will be mentioned later in the chapter).
- p. 198: “my foxy dame”: Similar to the term Leroy had used in describing his wife: “Mme. Foxy” (11.178).
- p. 198: “crooked wisdom”:
Ghazi praises this aspect of his mother.
The phrase is from *Leviathan*, chap. 8 (“On the Virtues Commonly Called Intellectual”), where Hobbes writes: “To prudence, if you add the use of unjust and dishonest means, such as usually are prompted to men by fear or want, you have crooked wisdom which is called craft, which is a sign of pusillanimity.”
All of these characteristics listed by Hobbes are present in both Ghazi and his

mother: unjust, dishonest, fearful, wanting, crafty, and pusillanimous.

- p. 198: “my mama I’ve mastered”: Literally, “to become master of” or “to conquer,” with the implication of “to gain a thorough or perfect grasp or understanding” of something.
In Ghazi’s case, to excel his mother’s mastery of cunning.
- p. 198: bedog: A synonym of the transitive verb “dog,” meaning “to follow insidiously or indefatigably” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 198: stave: As an intransitive verb, “to walk or move rapidly” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 198: Palais d’Hiver: Located at the eastern base of the Casbah, next to Ketchaoua Mosque and across from Martyrs Square, this Moorish building was the “winter palace” of the French governor-general of Algeria from 1839 to 1962.
At the time of the novel, it was being renovated in order to house the Ministry of Religious Affairs.
Recently the ministry was moved, and the palace was again closed for renovations, which were still going on at the time I write this note (2013).
For more details, see the two 5.78 notes, N5:30-31.
- p. 198: “milky *haik*”: The outer robe worn by Algerian women over native or Western clothes.
It is typically white, although women in mourning often switch to black.
See 8.133, its first mention in the novel.
- p. 198: “bright-green, Western ‘taffeta’”: A crisp, plain-woven fabric, it has a smooth lustrous surface of silk or linen. Thus it is shiny in appearance, but with a dull underlay.
In *1 Henry IV*, 1.2.9-10, Hal personifies the sun as “a fair hot wench in flame-colored taffeta.” In Elizabethan England, taffeta was commonly worn by prostitutes.
I do not recall why I changed Hal’s prostitute’s red to Houda’s green; perhaps to avoid the obvious color of prostitutes’ garb or to work in the red-green-white colors of the Algerian flag: “red sedan,” “bright-green,” and “milky white.”
- p. 198: Place de Chartres: A square located several blocks southwest of Martyrs Square. It has a covered market and the streets leading into it have automobile traffic. Today (2013) it is called El Amar Kama.
- p. 198: “That’s the whole of it?”: Ghazi assumes that all one had to do to be a prostitute is to walk up to a car, say a few words to the driver, and hop in.
If the Ghazi of this chapter seems more naïve than the Ghazi of chap. 11, the change is in character.
The one in the previous chapter must suppress his character, speaking only in

short bursts of conniving facts, but here, given free reins to chatter, he does so—quite naturally it seems to me—in the irrepressible manner of his mother. He relishes going from a supporting player to a star, whose egomania is such that he truly feels (again like his mother) that his every digression or long-winded explanation will ensure he will earn the one-hundred dinar note which Remy has placed between them.

- p. 198: “‘unfairity’ of life”: “Unfairity” is a coined word based on a coined word (I assume) by G. B. Shaw. In Act 2 of *Pygmalion*, Doolittle argues, “Is it fairity to take advantage of a man like this?”
I concocted the negative form of “fairity,” which, despite Shaw’s reputation, still is not listed in any print or online dictionary.
- p. 198: “easy virtue”: A dated term to describe a prostitute or a woman of loose morals or sexual promiscuity.
- p. 198: “I sprawled across the steps of Martyrs Square . . . without a peek from a tourist”: According to Bourceli, the *alim* passed on the gossip (here confirmed by Ghazi) that “with a shirt unbuttoned to your navel you were witnessed decorating the perron of Martyrs Square” (11.174).
She returns to the episode on p. 175.
- p. 198: verily: [Archaic] truly.
- p. 198: Ketchaoua: The principal mosque of the Casbah.
There is a pharmacy close to it.
- p. 198: sniggle: A dialectical form of “snicker” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 198: “through Friday’s sermon”: For two days, the blow landing on this Wednesday night.
- p. 198: “turned white the black matter in my skull”: Given the nastiness of Ghazi’s mind, this confusion with “gray matter” is apropos.
His meaning is that as the pain from his mother’s blow subsided, he gained the illumination or truth (thanks to his temporarily blanched brain cells) that he could trick his mother through lying.
Yet again lies are shown to be the basis of truth, or alternately truth arises out of lies.
- p. 198: “the next Wednesday”: Jan. 25.
- p. 198: “sleight-of-body tour de force”: A pun on “sleight of hand,” as if Houda has magically transformed herself through a “feat of strength.”
- p. 198: “my mother’s corpus”: Ghazi (or the elevating Remy’s) choice of this term

indicates how oppressively Ghazi views his mother as “dead weight.”

p. 198: “the *alim* have you squirreled away”: Another attestation of Bourceli’s obsession with the *alim*, her principal nemesis.

p. 198: mauley: “hand or fist” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 199: genetrix: “mother” (*Webster’s Third*).
Here she refers to Mme. Belmazoir, but in her previous use of the word (11.176), it designated herself.
- p. 199: “ere their fortunes ‘dived’”: That this is a cruel pun will not be apparent until 13.276, with more details provided on 14.232 and 15.241-42
- p. 199: ere: An archaic poetic form meaning “before.”
- p. 199: Idem: A pronoun meaning “the same as mentioned,” from the Latin *idem* (“the same”).
- p. 199: “pile-driving parent”: The adjective harks back to the wording of “Orgy”: “No pile driver / Can drill inside ya” (2.26).
- p. 199: “The next Wednesday”: Feb. 1 in the morning.
- p. 199: “Why change the merchandise when the fool buys?”: On 19.318, recalling this line of Ghazi’s, Remy will employ the adage.
- p. 199: “this third pursuit”: The night of Feb. 1.
- p. 199: “circumcised free from the overweening prepuce that is my mama”: Ghazi’s extended metaphor provides a use of a variant of “circumcision,” which occurs in each chapter of the novel.
Ghazi compares his mother to the foreskin which smothers a male’s glans penis. “Overweening” plays upon “wean” (to give up suckling, Ghazi’s “circumcised free”) and two slang meanings of “weenie” (a weak person; the penis).
- p. 199: “my charcoal matter”: His brain’s “black” cells.
- p. 199: “Blackmail her”: On 13.205, it will be revealed what Ghazi hoped to gain by blackmailing Houda.
- p. 199: “quickly elaborated”: That is, Ghazi presents his own brain as explaining how he can collect evidence that he “was privy to [Houda’s] rendezvous.”
- p. 199: “At the subsequent meeting”: Feb 8.
- p. 199: Lycée Emir Abdelkader: The largest high school in Algiers, its campus abuts the southeastern side of Jardin Marengo.
On 14.232, Foucin and Remy will drive by it.
- p. 199: “My good eye, determinedly cocked on his visage”: That an eye may be “cocked” is attested by the example from *Webster’s Third*: “an eye incessantly cocked on the main chance.”

- p. 199: Isha' prayers: On this night, the summons to *salaat il-isha'* or mid-evening prayers lasted from 8:30 to 8:50.
- p. 199: tit for tat: this for that.
- p. 199: "this Houda will do whate'er you bid": The lewd Ghazi thinks that Remy is likewise trying to gain some evidence that will blackmail Houda into engaging in sex with him.
- p. 199: "one other occasion . . . the strangest of all": Feb. 15.
- p. 199: "*alim's* semen-dripped Qur'an": One of the vilest images of the novel, the *alim* masturbating over his Qur'an.
Section 6 ends at 8:32.

pp. 199-200: SECTION 7

- p. 199: "'7LM2,' Remy read once more, as he pushed himself from the bench": This brief section (8:40 – 8:45) begins after Remy has heard the account of the last time Ghazi followed Houda, Feb. 15, and after the youth has left. Ghazi's narrative, lasting from 8:32 – 8:40, about the Wednesday evening of Feb. 15 is not revealed until 13.201-02 when Remy recalls it during his mimicking walk of the route Ghazi had described.
- p. 199: "'7LM2'": As the next page will disclose, despite Ghazi's concentration he had incorrectly transcribed the license plate, 79LN2. Even before Remy received the scrap of paper from Ghazi, he knew the identity of the driver of the car from the description of the man's car and the cigarette brand he smoked: "she brazenly accosted a red sedan" (198); "the same 'red Renault'" (199); "jumped out of the Quatrelle" (199); and "the cellophane from his Rothmans" (199). Earlier in the novel six characters indicated Ballard's car either by color (red), make (Renault), and model (Quatrelle sedan): Ballard himself (1.4 and 7); Mohammed (4.63 and 65); the Zaracova parking attendant Abukadir (6.91); Remy (6.94 and 9.145) and Foucin (7.103 and 111 and 12.195). That Ballard smoked Rothmans is mentioned by Ballard himself (1.3, 4, and 11), by Remy (9.145), and by Foucin (7.107 and 111).
- p. 199: "'for I must accord the washerwoman the mimicking vigorous ceremony": After Ghazi left, Remy decides to walk the route which his narrative indicated Houda, unaware that she was being followed, had taken.
- p. 199: "'this' Ballard at Zaracova": Having learned something horrible about Ballard from Ghazi's account of Feb. 15, Remy adopts the contemptuous demonstrative

adjective which the teenager and his mother had used in speaking of Houda.

On p. 200, he again refers to the American as “this Ballard.”

See 6.86-87 for Remy’s decision to become a “moveable imitation” of Ballard during the American’s Feb. 27 visit to Zaracova, yet as Remy states on 6.94, “nothing imitates exactly,” since his path to the disco was the opposite of Ballard’s and his exit from it imitated the American’s entry.

- p. 199: “Only after the vile hobbledehoy had exited, clutching the fifty”: As indicated, Ghazi left the bench at 8:40 with the fifty dinars demanded at the end of sect. 6 in his hand.
- p. 199: “vile”: “Vile” is used seven times in the novel. On 1.4, Ballard shudders at the thought that the “vile deception” which had been perpetrated on Houda would be experienced by Leila.
On 11.176, Mme. Bourceli calls Ghazi “my vile darling.”
Here, 12.199, Ghazi is again described as “vile,” and Foucin will similarly refer to him as so on 13.208.
Remy will use the epithet in speaking of Foucin (18.312), Mohammed in addressing Remy, although the situation is a ruse (20.347), and Remy ironically employs it in censuring himself (21.357).
- p. 199: hobbledehoy: An awkward young man.
See 11.172, for its first use in describing Ghazi. The Filipino was so characterized by Ballard on 1.8 as will be another youth on 21.355.
- p. 199: “a greater truth about women than his subconscious’s emendation of Unamuno”: On p. 187, through a paraphrasing of the Italian philosopher, Remy concluded that while men often see very clearly, they do not see “very far.”
Here Remy tells himself that he had missed a more profound truth from Unamuno’s statement, its applicability to time as well as place.
- pp. 199-200: “Snooks . . . ‘Out siring a litter for me to feed’”: Snooks is Remy and Marie’s fourteen-year-old cat.
See 4.53 and its note, N4:6, which lists the five other chapters in which the cat appears.
Remy tells himself that he should have made the philosophical discovery during a recent unspecified evening in Le Puy, that is, long before he had gotten entangled in Ballard’s murder.
That evening, Snooks had come in after a night of “siring a litter” (200)—he had the smell of sexual activity, Marie noted—and instinctively jumped into her lap. However, as Marie predicated, two weeks later, the cat, having eaten a satisfying meal, waddled in, leapt into Remy’s lap, and was soon asleep, in its purring “dreams” re-eating this meal.
The implication is that having continued his species, the cat gravitates to the feminine, but having satisfied its stomach, he is drawn to the male’s lap, where he can better dream of the past meal.

- p. 200: “‘women’ [were] ‘*aptly chosen to carry the species’ precious seeds . . . because they’re compelled to look to the future*”: This is the temporal truth, Remy realizes from his activities that day.
This truth of sect. 7, Remy realizes, a part of his subconscious had missed in the first section of this chapter where its contrast of male affinity to the past and female association with the future does not touch on the survival of the human species (187).
- p. 200: “Foucin’s ‘mostly women’”: The phrase was used by him on p. 196.
- p. 200: “his first espial . . . 79LN2 . . . the license plate [of Ballard’s car] . . . flapped pocket of his . . . shirt”: At 8:31, Remy had quickly looked at the scribbled license plate before inserting it into a pant pocket (199).
From the police reports he knows that even in its garbled form, it refers to the license plate of Ballard’s car.
At 8:43, he retrieves it for a second examination, not for reconfirmation, but to provide a segue to his apostrophe to Leila.
He places the note in a different pocket, the chest pocket of his shirt and thus closer to his heart.
His thoughts begin to focus on how cruelly the revelation of this night will be received by Leila.
- p. 200: “‘in the table of my memory’”: From *Hamlet* 1.3.98-100: “Remember thee? / Yea, from the table [slate] of my memory / I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records.”
One must wonder if it is the license number that is forever etched in Remy’s memory or a concern for Leila.
Once again Remy’s obsession with her is shown to cause him to deviate from his purpose in coming to Algiers.
He is manifesting the fault that he as Omar displayed in becoming embroiled in the revolutionary fervor, one which caused him to lose his sister Noura.
His “father reminded him (and the Casbah accepted) that his [Omar’s] mission was not to free Algeria . . . but to ensure Noura was not made a captive of this world.” However, after Ali la Pointe’s heroic death “Omar swerved from his pledge [his *nathr* to God to protect Noura]” and joined the FLN (6.88).
The ardor of Omar for the revolution seems to be resurrecting itself in Remy’s presumably unconscious signs of a passion for Leila.
- p. 200: tutoyer: To speak to someone familiarly; the word is formed from the French familiar pronoun *tu* (“you” or “thou”).
- p. 200: “he evoked her own words Beginning ‘after your Christmas,’ her ‘husband’ was ‘often’ on embassy assignment ‘a second night, Wednesday’”: See 9.145 for Leila’s statement, in which she indicates she was “*hypothesi[zing]*” that he was on a secret assignment.
Remy imagines how she will react when he proves that instead Ballard was with Houda on these Wednesdays.

- p. 200: *gravamen*: In its legal sense of “the essential part of a complaint, grievance, or accusation”
- p. 200: “knifing me to the bone”: Remy fancifully but seriously argues that he has been the one knifed by Leila’s indignation. He is also playing upon the expression “cut to the bone,” meaning that previously she had whittled away the “flesh” of his argument as extraneous, leaving only the bone—her idealistic view of Ballard.
- p. 200: *lusus naturae*: The Latin translates as “a sport of nature” and means a “freak of nature” or Remy’s designation in the previous sentence “a monster.” This section ends at 8:45.