

La Patisserie

Monday, October 3, 2016

After breakfast conversation with Marie about French *Basoche*, I set out on a Simone de Beauvoir pilgrimage to find the café on Rue du Bac where the project of an authentic re-translation of *The Second Sex* was launched with a toast of the semi-colon. Exiting the Metro, I used a slim silver compass my lover had given me to orient myself, knowing I still had a good walk ahead.

I observed a handsomely tailored woman of a certain age, in high heels, stepping down from a pastry shop. I approached her for directions and, with some language difficulty, she claimed to know a lot about the subject and suggested the meeting probably occurred at Cafe de Flore. I stood my ground assuring her that it was, indeed, Rue du Bac and playfully expressed faux surprise that she had missed that point in the translators' notes. Though visibly vexed, she considered the matter further, then announced that she knew the place and would take me there. She set out with a challenging stride.

Even with the brisk pace, my guide was able to extract bits of pastry for us to share. Having no pastry of my own to offer, I instead shared my extraordinary love story which I am certain she viewed as more than fair compensation for the sweet cake. She asked me to favor my lover with her kind thoughts.

We arrived at Le Buisson D'argent, not a great distance from the Seine, on Rue du Bac, where she seemed to confirm for herself, and of course for me, that this was a writer's cafe and very likely the venue. Her help with my quest suggested that I part with "*ce la bonne franquette*" which is perhaps more appropriate for an intimate relationship of longer duration and is never spoken by someone who is not French. However, *au revoir* seemed somehow inadequate. An attempted kiss may have been misread, and may have caused some discomfort. On the other hand, a kiss may have resulted in her circling this fine Paris morning on her calendar and pressing the little pastry sack into her copy of the Beauvoir translation.

I settled at a small round table in the sun and savored the moments, sipping kir. My musing was interrupted when a stately woman from Moscow negotiated herself, and her packages, into an adjacent seat while ordering a Coca-Cola with ice. We exchanged polite greeting and I lit her cigarette. She looked entreatingly at me and disclosed that she was interested in hearing an American's view of Donald Trump. I held her gaze and suggested that time was short and Paris was likely the only place she would be safe. I love this town.

Mark Goodall