

M. Robert Bre
15 February 80

Dear Robert,

Here we are, back in harness again. By the time you start to translate The Key to Rebecca (which I'm just finishing) perhaps my French will be so good that I will be able to give you idiomatic French equivalents of some of these odd English phrases. However:

Gawd, stone the crows, has no real meaning. Gawd is God and to stone the crows would be to throw stones at birds, but Dickstein is just expressing surprise. In French I would say Tiens! but of course that's not very colourful.

p9 The Martyr's Memorial is a monument.

p20 To second-guess is to guess what the other person is guessing. Suppose I am chasing you. I know that you want to go west - but I also know that you are trying to avoid me, so I think: 'Bre knows I expect him to go west, so he will probably go east just to avoid me. So I'll go east and catch him.' I would then be second-guessing you.

p56 No, not la fierte. L'ennui would be better.

p22 I've forgotten what baladi women are. Probably some kind of peasant.

p22 Shari is Arabic for road.

p24 Fanta is a fizzy orange drink. The word is a brand name, like Seven-Up or Coca-Cola.

p28 Yes, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

p34 The Bible. Psalm 23, verse 4: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy ~~rod~~ and thy staff they comfort me.

p53 Pita is the flat bread which they always give you in the Middle East. It is unleavened, that is to say, no yeast is used in making it, so it does not 'rise' like ordinary bread.

p57 Langage-maison sounds right for 'jargon', although what Borg means here is more like langage-chiffre.

p60 Of course, there are no pie shops in France. There aren't many in London any more. They were shops that sold meat pies and very little else. Nothing so grand as a charcuterie.

I'll do what you suggest, and make a note of anything in your translation of Eye of the Needle which strikes me as being wrong; although I'm sure most of the time we will find that it is my French, not your English, which is at fault.

Yours,