

Upon which day **Pawn**, having slept properly for once, finds things sorted in his life, and embarks upon a day full of promise. Has contact with a voice from London past. Makes plans, and learns what happens when plans go awry.

Oh my, what can go right when something goes wrong! "No hay mal que bien no venga!" as X would have me put it. But, as usual, let's start at the beginning...

I slept well last night, and upon awakening undertook to sort out the issues developed with my computer when I decided to upgrade it yesterday. [A brief note to you Ubuntu users out there. If you are using an ATI Radeon chipset, you will want to disable the proprietary drivers before upgrading. The new driver is fubar, and you will end up booting to a blank screen with no recourse.] After getting little Flatso working properly again it was time to make some breakfast and set about the day. X came around about 9:30, wiping the sleep out of her eyes and complaining about something which I can no longer remember.

Today we had planned that X would go out in pursuit of some theatre tickets and other errands, occupy herself, whilst I tended to Flatso and some client issues (i.e. do some work). Well, due to the miracle of sleeping in, by the time X awoke I was done with all of my chores, and was ready to go. So, we stumbled out the door and took a bus down to Picadilly Circus to find the box office of the National Haymarket Theatre to see if we could score some seats for Waiting for Godot, starring Sir Ian McClellan and Patrick Stewart. Oops! No go, nothing left but restricted view seats on the fringes of Dress Circle.

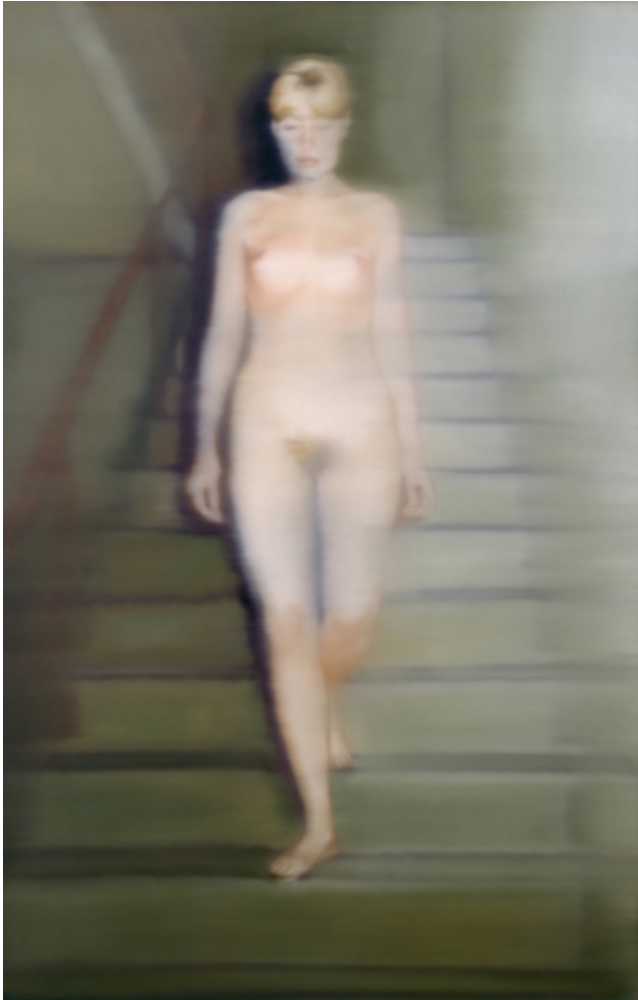
Next, then, was a saunter up to Soho to do some shopping at Fresh & Wild, the UK tradename for Whole Foods. Guess what; melatonin is not legal for sale in the UK! Okay, another strike on the day. We bought a bag lunch of Malaysian chicken, a risotto dish and a spinach and ricotta croissant. I also got a banana to polish it all off, while X thought an 85% cocoa chocolate bar was a better dessert option. Who am I to argue. We dined in Golden Square, and enjoyed watching the council worker tending to the flowers and other plantings, and watching and eavesdropping on the other diners in the area.



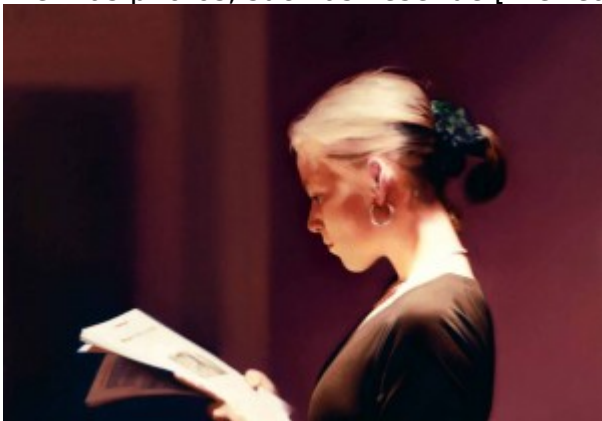
After lunch it was down to the National Portrait Gallery, one of my personal faves here. The big show right now is Gerhard Richter. I say; Ooh La La! Richter's technique consists of starting with a photograph, and then painting from that. But, the big thing with Richter is that for many years he wouldn't simply recreate the photo, he would drag the image left to right, create a constant horizontal element in every image, so that you grew to expect to find a certain side-to-side displasia in his work.



Pawn is particularly taken with Ema, "Nude on a staircase":



But, he could also produce works so perfect that you would be hard pressed not to simply see them as photos, such as *Lesende* [the reader]:



Or his iconic portrait of Gilbert and George:

✘ Richter's work is otherworldly in that what he sees, and by dint of that, what we are asked to see, is not something which exists. No, his portraits are a very personal experience, and very

iconographic. In the entry to the wing of the portrait gallery housing this exhibit we walk past a stairway, above which, in the wedge shaped space defined as that space above the stairs and up to the ceiling, we see 48 photographic portraits by Richter of various statesmen. This installation is in direct contradiction to what we find in the exhibit, in that these are straight photography, whereas the exhibit focuses on his oil on canvas interpretations of his photographs. It is as though the National Portrait Gallery is trying to remind us that no matter what the media, it all begins with portraiture. In this, they are right, and right, again, to remind us thus.

After a jaunt thru the gift store we launch ourselves towards the theatre for this afternoon's performance of Madame de Sade, starring Lady Judie Dench. Oops! That is tomorrow afternoon, not today! Suddenly we have our entire afternoon open. Suddenly we are accidental tourists. We walk down to the London Eye and book ourselves a River Cruise (see photos: http://www.fortunespawn.com/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=4906) and a "flight" on the London Eye. Well, we are just tourists for the next two hours, a very different experience for me, but a thoroughly enjoyable one. Please look at the photos before you condemn me for this indulgence.

After the Eye we descend into Southwark to find some din-din. X spots a Spanish Tapas restaurant, Meson don Felipe, and we go for it. OMG! What a great dinner! We order a bottle of Reserva Riojas and settle in for prawns in oil and garlic (two orders), artichoke hearts salad, pork meatballs in tomato sauce, bread with tomato and garlic puree, mushroom caps stuffed with chorizo... Ooh la la! We have struck gold here! To top it all off, the waitress, with whom X tried to negotiate some raw eyes (a linguistic disaster), had the most beautifully sculpted arms. To watch her serve was to watch a classical sculpture dance!

A long walk back to the southern embankment left us plenty of time to prepare for the show. Along the way we stopped in at the Young Vic and booked a couple of seats for Pictures at an Exhibition on Friday night, this is not straight classics but a cutting edge dance performance. I can't wait. Meanwhile, I noticed a package of Party Ring biscuits (cookies) behind the counter. I don't even know from whence it came, but a tribal, an essential spirit rose in me and made me say, "I haven't had a party ring in many years. We used to eat those when I was a kid." "Would you like one?" asked the oh too helpful clerk. "Oh yes I would" I replied. Oh, it was exactly as I remembered it, though I don't actually remember where or when that memory was born.

All I can say is that I was caught in the vise of a childhood memory virging on an adult memory.

Tonight's show? I don't even know. I won't go into that now, however. X and I have discussed it, and we wish you to indulge us by letting us enough time to properly report our feelings about this complex show during a virtual online conversation tomorrow morning (our time). Ta!