

In which **Pawn** finds new inspiration, is exposed to much art, and spends some time alone, wandering in Soho.

We are still working on our biting and insightful commentary on "England People Very Nice," but wanted to get an update up anyway.

Yesterday brought some work for **Pawn** so whilst he hunkered down to that, X went off to wander London on her own, a shopping list in hand. When she returned, around noon, we were off almost immediately to Leicester Square. We queued at the TKTS booth and got ourselves a pair of cheap seats to "Spring Awakening" evening show, 2<sup>nd</sup> row seats for Â½ price! Not bad. Then a quick bite at a noodle house - Â£5.50 for more than we could eat - share one box next time!

Notice that Coraline in 3D opens on 8 May, both of us missed it in Milwaukee, so maybe we can see it here.

Now off to "Madame de Sade" over at the Whyndam's Theatre. Dame Judy Dench is stellar, so graceful, so poised, and surrounded by some of the brightest talent on the British stage today. This play, translated (by Donald Keene) from Yukio Mishima's original Japanese script is a tour de force for female actors, offering no shortage of powerful soliloquies and heated dialogue. Rosamund Pike is due special attention for her spectacular performance as Rne, Madame de Sade.

Also worthy of mention is Francis Barber's delicious turn as Contesse de Saint-Ford, a "dissolute woman" who is as fascinated and titillated by the acts of the infamous Marquis as the other, more polite, women are appalled. She delights, however, in making these proper women realise how drawn they, too, are to these appalling acts. In one delightful scene, early in the show, she delivers an extended gazette of the Marquis' acts to the quite pious Baronesse de Simiane, who is continually flustered by the quandary of whether to cover her ears or cross herself at this bawdy account.

Fiona Button, lastly, provides a more than capable Anna, Rene's younger sister. Her interplay with both Rene and the Contesse is a delight. **Pawn** had the pleasure of seeing Ms Button in last year's "Ring Around the Moon" in which she gave pleasingly light performance.

The staging; lights, set, soundscape, were all well above grade. The soundscape, by Adam Cork, was a driving force at many points, tho suffered from a damaged speaker on house right (shame, that). Neil Austin's lighting dovetailed expertly with Lorna Heavey's luscious video projections. All in all one of the finest days at the theatre one could imagine.

X went back to the flat whilst I struck off towards Oxford Circus to search out the Photographers' Gallery in its new home on Ramillies Street. I enjoyed their old location off Piccadilly Circus during my visit last year, and was looking forward to seeing the new facility. It took quite a while to find them, Ramillies Street is only one block long, darting north off of Great Marlborough Street above the Carnaby Street pedestrian arcade. The side street, Ramillies Place, dead ends into a *stairway* up to Oxford street. This is subtle stuff.

Finally found the gallery and while I did enjoy [The Photographic Object](#), the current exhibition, I was really eager to check out the print sales galleries. One of the great features of the gallery is that if you see something you like there is a very good chance you can buy a copy here. I was almost immediately struck with a fine image I saw high up on the main display wall. Titled simply "Cradle (detail)" by Dryden Goodwin, it shows a woman's face with fine lines and curves etched into it:



The entire image is quite large, at 63" tall by 43" wide, and shows the woman in a street setting:



I have a chat with Katrina, of the gallery staff, and find that while they have only the detail print for sale (and will ship stateside) Goodwin is represented by the Stephen Friedman gallery by Piccadilly Circus. Put a visit there on the list.

Back out on the street I amble down through Cambridge Circus and on to The Strand. I'm to meet X at the Theatre Novello for the 7:30 show of *Spring Awakening* and get to Adwych over an hour early. Luckily, Christopher, an American café and Martini bar is right there, offering real Martinis for £8(!) amazing not only for a reasonable price, but for the dearth of real Martinis in London. This gives me a chance to examine the Dryden Goodwin book I picked up at PG bookshop, and to catch up on my messages.

The show, *Spring Awakening* is an American import, having wowed on Broadway in 2006 and transitioned to the West End via a short stop in Hammersmith. Our reaction at interval was, "High School Musical meets Caligula" but it became much more serious in the second act. All in all quite impressive. The sets and lighting were spectacular, the choreography inspired, the actors energetic and engaging. The story, based on a 19<sup>th</sup> century book by Frank Wedekind, is about teenage angst and sexual discovery. It delivers both in ample shares. I would certainly recommend this for a rollicking night out at the theatre.

Another stop in at Christopher's and then back home. Plenty of correspondence to catch up on.

Ta!