

**Pawn** returned to old haunts today, in more ways than one. The day started with packing and moving out of the two bedroom flat shared with the now absent (and so sorely missed) X. Did I mention just *how much* she is missed? Boatloads, to be sure. Okay, now that bit of appeasement is out of the way... The move to Camden actually went pretty well. The new flat is not as nice as the old one, but has much better views.



A small gallery of photos is [here](#). After getting sorted in the new flat, I decided to head down to Borough Market for some shopping. This is a huge market at the South Bank end of London Bridge, tucked in under the rail lines. They have everything you can imagine, from all over Europe. There are fresh cheese and sausage from France; olives, olive oil, chiles and chorizo from Spain; Parmisian Romanno fresh from Italy (with an aroma which is most arresting) as well as salami and ham that are to die for; from Germany come white asparagus and all sort of wA¼rsts; from Portugal come more olives and cheeses; Greece is represented with feta, kefta and korma, not to mention all sort of sweets; Turkey is there with Turkish Delight in forty flavours.

Local growers and vendors bring the pride of England: eggs, cheese, meats, greens, veggies, tubers, seafood (including hand caught and cut scallops, cooked to order). The list go on and on. I heard more than once people complain that their noses were stuffed from allergies, depriving them of the feast of aroma for which this market is famous. I'll tell you, just to walk from the Italian cheeses to the Parma ham was an olfactory miracle of no small dimension. If only they made a camera which would capture odours!

I loaded up with landjeagger and French smoked salami, English cow milk brie, young Gouda, gem, asparagus, carrots, apples and pears, tin loaf bread, and some other stuff. I was quite loaded down by the time I stopped and went home to the new flat. After getting everything into the fridge (no small feat) I relaxed a bit, napped, made myself a light plate of cheese and sausage, and then headed back out to the Pleasance Theatre in North London for *Dying For It*.

*Dying For It* is based on Nikolai Erdman's wry comedy, *The Suicide*, written in Russian in 1928. *The Suicide* reflects the growing dissatisfaction with life in post-revolutionary Soviet Russia, and was in fact banned there until after Stalin's reign. Semyon, a young married, unemployed man is down in the dumps. Living in his mother in-law's hallway, and suffering under her blatant distaste, he decides that his best option is to end it all. As word of his plan gets around, people from all over see in this act a way for them to express their grievances against the state, the church, the proletariat, the bourgeois, the Communists, etc. Suddenly Semyon is famous and people are lining up and paying a fee, to Semyon's unscrupulous neighbour Alexander, just to pitch their cause to him in hopes that his suicide note, now as eagerly awaited as the next Tolstoy or Dostoevsky novel. Semyon entertains them all, and as he does he begins to feel a pride and sense of worth he has never felt before. His wife decides to leave him over this daft plan, while his mother in-law starts to see an upside (widow's fund and all).

I shan't tell how it ends, but I think you can get a sense of the absurd farce that this is. It made me think of the anti-fascist piece *Rhinoceros* by Ionesco.

This was an amateur production, with design duties handled by final year students in theatre arts. They performed well for a small budget show, though my one big note on back stage duties would be that future such shows should include at least one make up artist. A big problem with amateur shows like this develops when each actor does their own make up, and what shows up on stage is a muddle to say the least.

So, the show? Well, it was a mixed bag. Moira Buffini's adaptation was brilliant. The language was exceptional and her finessing of the vernacular was wonderful. She artfully made the plight of these post revolutionary Russians accessible to the British audience. Most skilful in

carrying this lovely work to the stage was [Daniel Kendrick](#) as Semyon. His was an easy and friendly reading, and his performance was completely naturalistic, not an easy thing given the absurdist nature of the script. The only drawback to his skilled performance was how some of the lesser talents on stage paled next to him.

Emma Pilson, as Maria, Semyon's long suffering wife, also turned in a stellar performance. Felicity McCormack tried her best to inhabit the role of Serafima, the mother in-law, but was defeated by her age and lack of appropriate make up. Matt Sutton (sorry, not sure on the name), an understudy, filled in for an injured Okorie Chukwu, in the role of Alexander. His performance drifted between brilliant and serviceable. I mention him in respect for the fact that he was stepping into a role for which he had less preparation than his cast mates. All in all a great night at the theatre, all for £9 a ticket.

I must also mention the brilliant photo exhibition in the lobby spaces at Pleasance. It is a collection of [Jamie Gramston's photos](#) from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2008. I was swept up in the manner Jamie found to bring us backstage and show us moments both intimate and public. His use of light and shadow was masterful for someone who did not control that lighting but had to work with what there was. I have made enquiries to acquire a few pieces in this series.



It is worthy of note that the series was made possible by the donation of a printer, inks and paper from Epson. Thanks to their generosity, proceeds from these sales will go towards the [Charlie Hartill Special Reserve](#) a fund supporting theatre education and performance. So, hats off to Jamie Gramston, Pleasance Theatre and Epson for this wonderful exhibit.