

Saturday brings more visits, this time with A, artist/friend whom **Pawn** met in 2009 at her stall in Sunday UpMarket up Brick Lane. There, A sells tee shirts, bags and such emblazoned with her whimsical figures and clever words. Since last we met, A has taken up photography in a quite serious way (something she blames on *moi*) and in correspondence leading up to this visit has asked/offered for **Pawn** to sit for a portrait. Fright!

Having packed a shirt or two with French cuffs of course means not having packed any cuff-links. Thus a trip back and forth across Lower Marsh street ensues. First to the pawnshop, who carries only gold, thus quite dear, then to menswear shop, which doesn't have the right thing, sadly, but does have a very nice gent behind the counter. Next to rock shop, which has mad great crystals in the window, and a few pairs of amber links, but too dear for "emergency" use (as pawn broker put it). Lastly to vintage shop, **Radio Days** which is just the ticket. Pick out a pair of lovely amethyst links, "I'll wear them home!" Tip of the hat to proprietor Lee for all his help.

Bus up to Stoke Newington and A's in-home studio. I haven't seen her since that May of 2009, other than a Skype chat now and then (detest Skype; all that technology to produce a result worse than a century of telephony). She welcomes me with a warm embrace, a lunch of quiche and salad, and hours of conversation. Finally we settled down into the reception lounge, refitted as a studio, with paper drops, massive flash towers and all.



I won't bore the reader with a full account of the sitting process, but to impart this. A note from A the other day read, "Would you like to sit for a [Photographic] portrait in the style of a painter of your choice? My recent shots are [here](#)."

"I'm quite flummoxed by your portrait offer. I've been pondering all night just which artist that would be, and all I can come up with is Francis Bacon. Is that even doable? Colour me perplexed! :( I wrote back the next day.

"Do not be flummoxed. It has to be fun and I am quite a beginner. I am happy to try Bacon - maybe we can use a mirror to make parts of your body disappear or look cut off. If this does not work, we could go for a Futurist or even Cubist artist with a similar technique or with Rear Curtain flash technique if I can master my new flash in time." was her response. Okay then, let's go.

An hour or so of sitting and flashing and such, and then another hour or so sitting at her kitchen table editing, leads us to this:



**Pawn** has never sat willingly for a portrait before, but must admit that this entire process was fun, and the result is a better portrait of myself than I have reason to expect. I'm not fond of how I look in photos, but this I like. Well done!

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Now it's off to Arcola Theatre and Philip Ridley's *Pitchfork Disney* in Studio 1.



*Nathan Stewart-Jarret as Cosmo Disney and Mariah Gale as Haley Stray*

It's hard to know where to begin with a tour de force like *Pitchfork Disney*. The performances were amazing. Chris New, as Presley Stray, one half of the nightmare~and~chocolate addled twins who make up the heart of this tense drama, is an absolute amazement. Starting long before the house lights go down, you'll find him sitting on stage, picking at imaginary lint, and fidgeting like a heroin addict. If you saw New in *Weekend* you know what a talented actor he is, but you'll be wholly unprepared for the depths of character he mines here.



*Nathan Stewart-Jarret as Cosmo Disney and Chris New as*

## *Presley Stray*

The other half of this demented, drugged and lost duo is Mariah Gale as Haley. Her tormented soul is all too real here, leading to her brother's constant need to protect her, against what all we're never sure. Both twins are prone to slip into discourse for long soliloquy on real or imagined trials and travails, trips to the shops for chocolate which end with packs of rabid dogs and religious upbraiding; apocalyptic dream worlds which are somehow more comforting than the reality, absent their parents, who are missing *why?* Into this tortured maelstrom comes Cosmo Disney, played by Nathan Stewart-Jarret with such graceful movement he rather dances the part. He slithers across the stage, seducing Presley, and us along with him, but with his eyes constantly on the slumbering Haley. Cosmo is an apparition, *isn't he*, from Presley's fevered mind, *right?* And Pitchfork Cavalier, Cosmo's driver all done up in full-body latex bondage wear, played almost as Frankenstein's Monster by Italian actor Steve Guadino, lurches about the final scenes, throwing abject fear before him like he is casting jacks in a children's game.

I can't even begin to describe the plot here, nor am I sure I even understand it all. "Curse Arcola for last night's dreams!" said X upon awakening this morning.

Nods must go to the entire production staff, from the phenomenal direction of Edward Dick to the pitch perfect sets and costumes of Bob Bailey and the exceptional lighting of Malcolm Rippeth. This production team has moulded a fantastic and thoroughly believable space for their actors to perform an out of this world evening.

This is the first show I've seen in this new Arcola space, and old artist's paint factory between Dalston Junction and Dalston Kingshead stations in Hackney. The Reeves Paint factory on Ashwin Street, dating back to 1766, seems to have taken over nicely from the Arcola Street location Arcola were forced to leave after a decade, back in 2010. So far, aside from the fact that every door in the place seemingly must slam, it does just fine.