Last evening took ***pawn*** to The Bunker theatre, Southwark St., for a mini-festival of new, short, works, October-fest Pint Sized. This annual event solicits submissions from playwrights, puts them before a jury, and ultimately a handful of pieces — five this year — to be presented, in whole or in part, on stage.
Preceding the jurying process are a series of workshops and mentoring for the writers, to try to bring people along, grant them confidence, and overcome obstacles. It's a great idea, and it works surprisingly well. This year over 1500 new works were submitted, and winnowed down to five for the week-long series of showcase performances.
Quoting from Bunker's website:
The winning plays are:

Bullring Techno Makeout Jamz by **Nathan Queeley-Dennis**
directed by **Robert Awosusi**
Nathaniel is getting ready for a date and takes us through the various local barbers where he can get the best haircut for his special night. A funny and heart-warming one-man show about Black British life in Birmingham.

How To Kill Your Mother by **Georgia Green**
directed by **Emma Baggott**
A subversive and irreverent dark comedy about a daughter helping her mother get through her terminal leukemia – and all the methods one takes to cope.

work.txt by **Nathan Ellis**
directed by **Andy McNamee**
An immersive, experimental piece where the audience tells the story. Through projections and captions, the audience explores the gig economy and how the concept of 'work' is changing.

All Aboard! At Termination Station by **Lilly Burton**
dramaturgy by **Tatty Hennessy**
A raucous and powerful one-woman piece exploring the effects of abortion. Using audience interaction, music and surrealism, Lilly tells the story of how she deals with this episode in her life.

This Kind of Air by **Vera Ion**
directed by **Nastazja Somers**
Anna is suffering from anxiety. Which isn't helped by the arrival of her mother, with a human dog on a leash. A funny and powerful account of family relations and immigrant life in the UK.
Excerpted from https://www.bunkertheatre.com/whats-on/pint-sized-october-fest-2/about 26 October 2019 @11:04AM BST
Bullring Techno Makeout Jamz is a monologue about the primacy of a man's relationship with his barber, with a healthy dose of self-deprecating humour about dating and family relationships thrown in. This sweet piece is friendly & jocular, and Simeon Blake-Hall was as sweet-hearted as the script. A lovely bon-mot to start off the evening.
How To Kill Your Mother is a tight two-hander dealing with a woman facing lukemia, Miriam, touchingly played by Caroline Wildi, and the daughter trying to help her, Layla, played with equal tenderness by Talia Pick. The conceit here is that mother has asked daughter to help her end her life, and this provides the vehicle by which mother & daughter can have frank, and not so frank, discussions on the topic they both desperately wish would just go away.
Wildi's portrayal of a mother gradually losing her grip on her faculties is quite moving, as is

Pick's case of a daughter gradually losing her mother. While at times skating near predicable, the script keeps us engaged and keeps our hearts in our throats. Only an excerpt, ***pawn*** wonders where else the larger piece could go?

work.txt is almost impossible to discuss in the same column as the other pieces, and was far-and-away ***pawn's*** favourite in this package. Nathan Ellis, with dramturgy by Andy McNamee, has given us a script, projected upon an upstage screen. The piece begins with a prompt printed on the screen, "A member of the audience reads the following aloud:" There being no immediate reaction from the assembled audience, ***Pawn*** himself read aloud the words on the screen. My seatmate seemed somewhat shocked to hear her neighbour doing this, but this first creen was soon followed by many more, calling on us all (The audience…) or certain groups, (Those making more than £30,000 per year) or perhaps a person with a special quality (Member of audience with a loud voice).

The piece "explores the gig economy, financial instability and automation" according to an early draft detailed at The Yard's webite, here. The early draft was presented at The Yard during their Live Draft programme, earlier this month. A trailer, which gives the viewer a sense of how this works, is available on that site.

https://www.fortunespawn.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/trailer-work.mp4

While at times verging on tedious, in whole this piece was a rousing success, drawing the audience in, inspiring waves of laughter and flurries of giggles. One hopes that this is just the beginning of such inspired original new works from Ellis.

All Aboard! At Termination Station is a true one-woman-show, well crafted and bravely performed by Lilly Burton. The topic is abortion, and it's dealt with soberly and not, dipping into dance, spoken word, song and outrage, in roughly equal measure. This is a deeply personal show, and as such gets uncomfortable at times. One suspects that the performer's family was in attendance, seated in a row of chairs along stage right, which only contributed to the sense of unease one felt at times.

Lastly, ***This Kind of Air*** wrapped up the evening with ruminations on citizenship and belonging, on family ties and bizarre undertakings. Dramatically, this is probably the tightest piece of the programme, but it felt somehow hollow to ***Pawn***, not really landing its pathos.

All in all, this was a great night of theatre and held my attention for all of its 2:15 running time. Gaps between the pieces were filled by house musicians — Royce Cronin, Laura Evelyn, and Joe Hardy — who's contributions kept the audience engaged throughout the scene changes needed to support such a diverse group of performances. Oh, and speaking of diverse, this was a diverse evening, from the cast balance of gender, age & (somewhat) race, as well as the writers themselves.

With so many of London's small theatres so aggressively promoting writing workshops, and the next crop of young writers, one can only imagine a great future full of diverse voices on London's stages. In addition to Bunker, and the afore-mentioned Yard, add Pleasance (both Islington and Edinburg), New Diorama, The Hope… the list goes on.