

Playwright David Eldridge gave a keynote speech on October 6 to inaugurate a pre-sessional postgraduate conference and also the Playwriting and Dramaturgy series of platforms/seminars in the Exeter Drama Department. The following is his abstract.

After the incredible period of bloom in playwriting through the early nineties, In Yer-Face and pre-9/11 period in British Drama, is the single authored play under attack and is the theatre scene of rich individual voices forming in to camps?

The politicos say we need to write about Blair and Iraq, new work (as opposed to new writing) is finding a voice and a place in the mainstream, the auteur director is back in fashion, Shakespeare is becoming sexy again and even Mark Ravenhill is saying the pendulum has swung and there are far too many new plays.

In this climate the Monsterists are trying to create more elbow room for living playwrights while David Farr, Emma Rice and others suggest that a theatre where the director is the lead artist, and a writer only helps to make the show, is the way forward.

In this shifting culture I've been making my own varied contribution by creating a Monster play/show with a director's input (*Market Boy*, National Theatre), by jointly writing a play with Robert Holman & Simon Stephens and by sitting in my room and writing scripts the old fashioned way (*M.A.D & Incomplete* and *Random Acts of Kindness*, Bush Theatre & Royal Court Theatre).

Process and more collaboration at an earlier stage offer many riches for writers, but are they accepted at too high a cost to fine writing? Can writers overcome these problems? Are there too many new plays? And do playwrights have a responsibility to directly address the major public issues of the day, especially in our major public theatrical institutions?

For more information about the Monsterists, see for example:

<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/articles/110905.htm>

David Eldridge is a graduate of the Exeter Drama department and a playwright. His most recent production was *Market Boy* on the Olivier stage at the National Theatre in 2006.