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A Voice to Voiceless
A Study in David Hare's Verbatim Play
The Permanent Way

Prof. **Salih Mahdi Hameed**
(PhD)

Assist. Prof. **Hind Ahmed al-
Kurwy**

Abstract

The present study aims at investigating Verbatim Theatre as a Contemporary form of Western drama, focusing on David Hare's (1947) *Permanent Way* (2003). In this play, Hare mixes politics and art to criticize the Labour Government's performance concerning Privatization of Railtrack system in Britain in 1991. In sequence of this decision, a series of train crashes between the years 1997-2002.

Life in the last decade of the Twentieth century on through the Twenty-First century is typically described as the life of technology and media due to the immense influences on human thinking strategies, life styles, and fashion modes. Henceforth; the excessiveness and exploitation of technology in every field of life becomes an urgent necessity. Since drama is a reflection of life, it nonetheless echoes the changes of its time, and therefore becomes an inevitable demand for the employment of technology in dramatic productions. Verbatim theatre is one of theatrical trends that has ebbed recently depending upon technological progresses.

In his article entitled "Verbatim Theatre: Oral History and Documentary Techniques" published in 1987, literary critic Derek Paget (1946) has used the term Verbatim for the first time to refer to

a form of theatre firmly predicated upon the taping and subsequent transcriptions of interviews with 'ordinary people', done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things. This primary source is then transformed into a text which is acted, usually by performers who collected the material in the first place.¹

Paget's definition of Verbatim drama is majorly influenced by the opinion of "the pioneer of this method"², the dramatist and writer Rony Robinson (1940) who, according to Paget, has "set out the boundaries of Verbatim theatre"³; that is, "The collective method of doing Verbatim shows seems to remove the difference between performers, directors, sometimes designers if they've been in on it from the beginning."⁴ Along with Robinson, Paget mentions the

dramatist Peter Cheeseman (1932-2010) as the other godfather of Verbatim drama. Cheeseman believes that "the greatest reservoir of creativity inherent in the people [is] their linguistic abilities."⁵ These two dimensions are making Verbatim dramas so alluring; the collective methodology and the linguistic variation of people involved in the plays. Unlike any other form of drama, a Verbatim play concerns itself with factual events and real testimonies, collected from people part and parcel of investigated events, composed by a dramatist to expose different human agonies: "this writing is, to varying degrees, celebrated for its stylistic or linguistic innovation, uncompromised content, and capacity to pack a visceral punch in performance."⁶

Significantly, Verbatim theatre has not appeared from nothing. There are two dimensional influences on Verbatim. The first is the influence of Documentary theatre originated in the history of Western theatre since the sixties of 20th century. This theatre depends on collecting facts about certain incident then presenting the material live onstage. By the passage of time and during the 1990s, the role of Documentary theatre or docu-drama started to wane because this theatre turns to be inadequate in its procedures and mostly because of its inability to reveal the hidden facts or secrets in a professional manner. In other words, Documentary drama, in comparison with the current time, is a very traditional form. It is based on cause and effect methodology and contains fictitious events that the author has to create to fill in historical gaps. Thence, it becomes no more valid to answer public demands in its treatment of critical issues. The audience in the age of media needs clarity more than imaginary incidents, it needs facts more than fiction: "the context of recent history demanded a response: theatre's was to remove the mediating hand of creativity and lay the facts bare. Quantifying widespread human atrocity was deemed beyond the capabilities of dramatic fiction."⁷ Following the same procedures of 'documenting', Verbatim drama has initiated a pioneer role during the 1990s, but this time, unlike docu-drama, no fiction is involved whatsoever: "Verbatim theatre's great strength...it looks at the whole picture, a wide range of view-points, without needing to find a specific 'angle'."⁸ It is for this reason that Verbatim theatre manages to take the lead concerning the adequate documentation of real events. It "fills the hole left by the current inadequacy of TV. Documentary, perished under the tank tracks of reality TV."⁹

The other dimension of influence on Verbatim drama is a socio-political one. Verbatim drama has achieved much of its reputation due

to political, social, and military incidents revealed before the audience in details. Some political systems around the world attempt to hide sensitive information concerning certain issues assisted sometimes by media. Essentially, this is one of the reasons for the increasing interest in Verbatim drama since it "has been seen as a reflection of frustration with the political process...other critics see the Verbatim Theatre as a manifestation of dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the media."¹⁰ With these two opinions, whether a reflection of frustration or a manifestation of dissatisfaction, Verbatim drama has been able to create a new renaissance in the history of English drama because of its uncompromised frank treatment of sensitive social and political; national and international, issues, revealing what takes place in *kitchen of politics*, something which Documentary drama could not afford. This adds the feature of 'globalization' to Verbatim drama for in spite of its British identity, events from different worldly areas are tackled in this form of drama:

The reasons for the apparent 'explosion' of verbatim theatre in the west are complex and seem to be bound up with widespread suspicion of governments and their 'spin' merchants, a distrust of the media and a desire to uncover stories which may be being suppressed, and a western fetishization of representations of 'the real', perhaps most manifest in the obsession with so-called 'reality' television ...Verbatim theatre can make important socio-political interventions by projecting voices and opinions which otherwise go unheard into a public arena.¹¹

The validity of the Verbatim theatre rests in the fact that it is based upon new techniques: the word-for-word interviews and tape recorded materials in performances.¹² Henceforth; the Verbatim play possesses a special feature represented by "[its] problematic performance methodology, especially in relation to its claims of authenticity."¹³ This means that, unlike traditional forms of drama, the Verbatim play depends on the opinions of interviewees to construct the play in order to achieve a high level of authenticity in presenting different issues:

Rather than showing their processes of creativity, the choices made and the reasons why, verbatim dramas, like other auto/biographical modes, more typically strategically deploy their closeness to the signifiers of "truth" and "authenticity." Particular devices are employed for rhetorical, persuasive effect, such as the use of the actual recorded interviews, or

the projection of video recordings or photographs of the interviewed subjects.¹⁴

The Verbatim dramatist tracks a certain incident closely, and attempts collecting data about this incident such as meeting people involved and recording their testimonies and eventually constructing a well-knit play that spotlights all that is unknown about incident investigated. With such elaboration, a Verbatim dramatist looks at theatre as political forum on which truth can speak alive to an audience, revealing dangerous secrets, and turning public opinion upside down: "as well as discovering stories untold, theatre turns on ongoing, messy event into a comprehensible overview, it brings the strands together, helping its audience evaluate events that may be too big, too close, too current"¹⁵ The audience is introduced to the world of hidden information that exposes the extreme failure of politics and politicians and the heap of complexities which represent the outcome of such failure:

Politics domestically (even internationally after the collapse of the USSR and the end of Cold War negative certainties) has mutated into a depthless, programme-less form that has over time increasingly privileged the figure of the *witness* as the last best hope of oppositional information. And increasingly this witness testifies to the failures of institutions charged with duties of care that seek to mask their failures through discourses of management that extend to information.¹⁶

The truthfulness of Verbatim theatre can be attributed to two techniques of collecting source material of any tackled event; the "aural" and the "textual". The aural means collecting aural testimonies and real conversations of people caught up the event presented. While the "textual" depends on written material, meaning e-mails, agendas, diaries, journals, or any other type of writing attached to the tackled event.:

As the Latin root of 'verbatim' suggests, the moment of utterance is privileged, and 'verbatim theatre', in its purest sense, is understood as a theatre whose practitioners, if called to account, could provide interviewed sources for its dialogue...according to the code of ethics, have sources for the story.¹⁷

The dialogue of a Verbatim play is based on "the performance of personal testimony, usually in the form monologues addressed directly to the audience, gives expressions to the unthinkable realities of 'everyday' life as experienced by those who have endured the

appalling consequences of recent ...actions"¹⁸ The Actors perform these 'actions'; they are not foreigner performers; they sometimes participate with the author in collecting the strands of events:

In the performance itself, the acting conventions differ radically in places from those of a traditional piece of naturalistic theatre. The classic proscenium arch convention of the "fourth wall" collapses in verbatim theatre, and the actors speak directly to the audience and acknowledge audience reactions.¹⁹

In communicating every sigh, laugh, moan, etc the actor is listening to the original speeches using earphones while being on stage. Thus, technology has an essential part in any Verbatim play.²⁰ The "[t]heatrical team and audience for the work are Seekers After Truth, who derive second order expression and experience through workshop and rehearsal (actors) and performance (actors and audience)."²¹ Quite amazingly "live actors speak out loud in front, and sometimes even directly to, an audience, and so ideas and feelings are expressed at the same instant to a community of onlookers."²² An extreme emotional intensity is therefore formed sincerely on stage since these experiences and emotions are the outcomes of real situations:

Quite simply, the form owes its present health and exciting potential to the flexibility and unobtrusiveness of the portable cassette recorder –ironically, a technological weapon against which are ranged other mass technological media such as broadcasting and the press, which tend to marginalise the concerns and emphases of popular oral history ... [Verbatim] plays are fed back into the communities (which have, in a real sense, created them), via performance in those communities. In Verbatim Theatre, the firmest of commitments is thus made by the company to the use of vernacular speech, recorded as the primary source material of their play.²³

A very good example of the aural-based Verbatim drama is David Hare's (1947-) play *The Permanent Way* (2003). Influenced by Ian Jack's book *The Crash that Stopped Britain* (2000), which examines the Hatfield Rail disaster that occurred in October 2000, Hare manages to present a Verbatim play that deals with a series of disastrous accidents that happened in London after the Privatization of Railway Tracks in 1991. These accidents have occurred between the years 1997-2002. A large number of casualties have been the outcome of such catastrophes, with the questions raised: who is to blame for such agonies; is it the government, is it the Railways companies? Who

is responsible for lives losses of British citizens? The material of the play is collected by Hare and a group of nine actors as he mentions in the Author's Note at the beginning of the play:

Early interviews were gathered with the help of nine actors...In the months of work, we had countless meetings with individuals and experts to whom I am indebted for their generosity with their time, their knowledge and their experience. Only a fraction of them are directly represented. There is also a lot of good writing about the railways, but I am especially grateful to Ian Jack for his 90 pages gem, *The Crash that Stopped Britain*.²⁴

The Permanent Way is divided into Three Parts and follows the rules of mini Classical tragedies concerning its division. Part One is the Prologue, Part Two is the dilemma of the play, and Part Three is the Epilogue. The Prologue is delivered by "Nine people, once passengers, now costumers." (**Prologue: p. 3**) The setting is a train travelling into London. Those 'people' speak about the condition of Britain criticizing the backward condition of the country as a whole:

Passenger 4: I mean, take London, what about London? The whole thing of London. Ought to be a beautiful city. Why not? But nothing works. The transport doesn't work, the garbage doesn't work, the streets are filthy, there isn't a road no hole in it, and the prices are twice anywhere else in the world. Everything's here. Everything you could ever want is here, but for one thing. It doesn't work. (**p. 4**)

A heap of criticism is headed to British government, or The Labour Government and this is the line *The Permanent Way* takes. Part Two makes over the play from generalization to specialization; meaning the focus is made on the problem of railways since its Privatization in 1991²⁵ This part is concerned with the four incidents that occurred in Britain, covering a period of time from 1991-2002. Each scene is devoted to an accident; The Southall disaster in 1997, Ladbroke Grove Crash in 1999, Hatfield Crash in 2000, and Potters Bar disaster in 2002. The characters speak of real experiences which represent the outcome of interviews made by David Hare and his team of actors with people involved in these accidents whether they are officials in charge, Railway Companies Representatives, Survivors, Labourers, Policemen, and those who Bereaved their loved ones. Depending on such long interviews, Hare encapsulates an aural Verbatim play with a critical and dangerous subject related to British life.

Quite perfectly, Verbatim theatre has a powerful emotional effect upon its audience; it can stir anger, sadness, frustration, and bitterness. In David Hare's *Permanent Way*, for instance, these devastating emotions and agonies are the direct outcome of the governmental failed performance that neglects the safety of the citizens at the expense of economic growth. The characters in the play are not given names just titles to generalize the dilemma the country passes by. Significantly, in the first week of the play's rehearsals, Hare's opinion about his play has been about railways privatization. This opinion has changed in the second week to another opinion when Hare suggests that *The Permanent Way* is about the malfunction of Blair's Government. A description which has been altered in the third week when Hare describes it as being "a play about honour and dishonour."

²⁶ Dramatically, the play is the combination of the three opinions at the same time; it is about railway privatization unmeasured sequences by the Blair Government which has revealed the extent honour is exploited so beastly in politics that it leads to sacrifice the lives of the innocent citizens; therefore, it turns to be a condition of dishonour. In adopting such view in a play, Hare wants to resolve the hidden mysteries beyond Railtrack disasters. He uses drama as a weapon against the political system of his country especially in what is known as the Post-Thatcherism period. This term is itself

debatable whether [it] means post-1990 (when Britain's first female prime minister stepped down from office) or post-1997 (when Labour leader Tony Blair unseated Thatcher's designated successor, John Major), the label itself proves evocative. It reflects the belated yet resurgent cultural experience of the 1990s, extending that feeling across the turn of the century by using Britain's most recognizable political figure to explain the events and sociological processes for which she metonymically stands.²⁷

Hare believes that theatre is important to monitor the politicians' practices and thence "people want from political theatre a clarity they are not getting from politicians".²⁸ Moreover, he sees in journalism another collapse for its failure in exposing political scams so that theatre must take the lead to compensate the lacking role of journalism: "very, very complicated things are happening that people struggle to understand, and journalism is failing us, because it is not adequately representing or interpreting these things...now the theatre rushes to fill that void"²⁹ Besides, David Hare is well known for his biting criticism not only in *The Permanent Way* but also in his other plays such as *Plenty* (1978), *Via Dolorosa* (1998), *Stuff Happens*

(2004), *Vertical Hour* (2006), and *Seagull* (2015). In all these plays, Hare tackles a series of political dramas that assimilate reality. In other words, he is after waking up the public to see what is veiled from them. All his plays are thus reflecting Hare's dissatisfaction with the condition of his country as well as the condition of British theatre which lacks a realistic treatment of serious issues of the country, moving only on the surface level:

Many London plays are working on a narrower and narrower psychological focus ... so many playwrights are denying themselves the simple pleasure of discovering that the extremely universe may be richer and more suggestive than the inside of their own heads.³⁰

In *The Permanent Way*, Hare presents a play about many themes including materialism, responsibility, corruption, and above all it is about national agony faced by British citizens in losing their loved ones and the calamities the survivors go through because of the ill performance of the government:

This drama, wholly shaped from interviews with the survivors and railway personal, begins with a dazzling projection of coloured slides on stage – nostalgic posters from the prewar era when trains were clearly part of a nation's pride rather than a measure of its decline.³¹

This notion is directly reflected in the play's Prologue which establishes the major dilemma; the condition of the country is getting worse but its people do not have any response:

Passenger 4: Why aren't they angry? Why aren't people angry? They were robbed. What belonged to them was taken from them by a bunch of bankers and incompetent politicians. What was theirs was given away. What was foredoomed to fail failed. And they aren't angry. Somewhere between the emotion and the belief the pedal has gone, the connection has gone. Nobody believes that by being angry, by expressing anger, anything changes, anything can change. (p. 9)

This angry tone of one of the passengers, who recall echo the Chorus of Classical tragedies, reminds the audience or reader of the John Osborne's character's cries and his Theatre of Anger. There is an extreme sense of general dissatisfaction with every field of life and Hare is spotting only one side to show how huge the catastrophe is:

Passenger 8: Everyone knows the present railway system is stupid. It's like trying to run a restaurant where the cooks and work for one company, the waiters for

another and the washers-up work for a third. With a system of fines imposed by supervising authority if the food's inedible or the plates are dirty. That's stupid, you'd say. That's a stupid way to run a restaurant. Anyone would say. Even a moron would say, 'That's a stupid system'. And that's the system they chose. (p.9)

The Prologue of the play functions as the key for the play's major themes and actions. Eventually and in Part Two, "Story", it becomes apparent that there is a double line for the play's progress: the line of the government in all its staff members of politicians, bankers, investors, railway chief members, and policemen and the line of pain and agony which includes bereaved family members, survivors, and witnesses on train crashes. In collecting testimonies of both sides, Hare and the actors of the play have made dozens of meetings with those people and listened to everyone's side of her\his story:

Two weeks of research were to consist predominantly of interviews with people whose experience of the railways covered a broad spectrum – from train operating company executives, investment bankers, politicians, and entrepreneurs (the 'Men in Suits') to those who had survived or lost family in the four crashes which followed privatisation (the 'little people').³²

Various view points are therefore discussed in an attempt to define the failure factor not only of one accident but of four ones: Southall disaster 1997, Ladbroke Grove crash 1999, Hatfield crash 2000, and Potters Bar disaster 2002. Of course, moving from a story to another is not an easy task for any playwright, but David Hare manages to move gradually from a story to the other allowing every story to perform its full role and taking its own full space by filtering the major details and personals of every story assisted by the actors of the play:

Hare's *The Permanent Way* provides an example of the continuities in Verbatim Theatre. In performance, the cast frequently expressed through movement the transformations in person, time and place that were necessary to the unfolding of their narrative of venality, incompetence and callousness that led to a spate of rail accidents in Britain in the 1990s.³³

In an article written by one of the female actors of *The Permanent Way*, Bella Merlin, she clarifies the relationship between

the actor, the story, and the performance in a Verbatim play like *The Permanent Way*:

Our roles as actor-researchers were not journalistic in the sense of finding out the information, and 'digging' for stories; we were, in Hare's phrase, 'hunter-gatherers'. From the very beginning, we were literally shaping the drama with our own bodies in a deeply psych-physical way. Without doubt, this sort of work carries with it a particular weight of responsibility ... One degree of responsibility arose out of 'condensation' of material or 'theatrical distillation', which was inevitable part of the feeding back of information. Most of the interviews for *The Permanent Way* were of an hour's duration, sometimes longer. Our improvisations were subsequently condensed to between twenty and thirty minutes. What Hare might draw from that condensation would probably constitute only a matter of minutes on stage.³⁴

Remarkably, in this form of drama "all actors 'create' their characters"³⁵ Structurally, Part Two 'Story' represents by itself a five act play in the sense of Classical Tragedies. The first act is devoted to 'Men in Suits' through which every one of them gives reasons for the state's failure in railway tracks. Their lines expose an undeniable criticism for the government that delivers its trust to unqualified member staff:

High-Powered Treasury Thinker: I can't imagine why you want to write a play about the railways. It's incredibly boring subject. I'm sure, as you say, there are a lot of people eager to talk, but are they actually the kind of people you want to talk to? People who want to talk about railways are by definition nerds. If there's a play in there I'm amazed. It's so long since I even thought about them. I have to struggle now to get my mind round what actually happened. In 1991, I was one of the people running the bit of the Treasury which was concerned with what were laughingly called the public enterprise...

A Senior Civil Servant comes on.

Senior Civil Servant: I was a civil servant at the Department of Transport from 1992 to 1997, so it was my job to help get the legislation through...

An Investment Banker comes on.

Investment Banker: Let's think, I went into investment banking quite early in the eighties, I'd been a financial journalist and I crossed over, and somehow...I don't

really know how it happened, somehow I became the privatisation expert in the City ... (p. 10)

According to this 'Thinker', talking about Railways is a boring subject, neglecting the fact that this 'boring' matter has been responsible for ending the lives of dozens of people for no guilt. Ironically, the Investment Banker does not know why he suddenly becomes the only expert of railways in the city despite the fact that he has been a mere journalist. Hare tries to clarify that this is the way the officials of the country are dealing with civil problems. Gradually, it becomes obvious that politicians are running everything and spoiling everything in the country:

High-Powered Treasury Thinker: By the time you get to the railways you're getting to the harder stuff. Thatcher's attitude had always been, 'They don't make money, let's wait till they make money and then let's privatise them'. It wasn't that she was hostile, more that – like most people – she didn't think of them as a particularly agreeable way to travel. Well, they're not. That's why only seven per cent of us use them. Nobody would choose to go on them unless they had to... So we had the idea of splitting tracks from the trains and then having competitive franchises for the actual operating companies. And then we came up with this notion called Railtrack. (pp. 11-12)

Disagreements among politicians have been responsible for what is forthcoming. The internal affairs of any country are run by the government and the parliament, but in the condition of England, Treasury is the key power; it has the financial fist upon the state. Therefore, it has the full responsibility for the plans of privatisation in its worst product:

Senior Civil Servant: The Treasury model for privatization was driven by this rather theoretical view of competition. I was in favour of twenty-five to thirty-year contract for train-operating companies, because that way you could attract some serious long-term investment. Instead the Treasury threw the train parts in the air, crossed its figures and offered seven-year contracts. (p. 13)

Because of "Treasury ideology and Treasury greed", railways privatisation represents the first strew that tears the whole railway tracks system apart:

High-Powered Treasury Thinker: ... so from the very beginning we were on the back foot and facing a lot of opposition. Having done it fast, we made two big mistakes. One: the franchises gave the train operators more interest in making money than in quality of service. Two: we didn't give Railtrack enough incentive to get the track working. (p. 13)

Then, tragedy has knocked the door. Unexpectedly, the use of railways increases in a relatively short time, something which no one of "Men in Suits" has seen it approaching:

Investment Banker: Railways like the economy. The assumption was they would continue to decline. Instead, came this period of steady economic growth, unparalleled since the 1950s. and there was a consequent 30 per cent growth in rail usage.

Senior Civil Servant: Self-evidently. Disastrous.

Investment Banker: Private companies took over, they'd added some marketing sprinkle, motorways were chocked to overflowing, so suddenly the thing took off. Result was, more trains. And a track, an infrastructure pushed to stress levels and beyond. (p. 15)

Privatisation has turned into a triggering weapon against people. The equipments have not been ready or sufficient for such growth: "[m]uch of New Labour's public and economic policy has been identified as a 'Third Way' route in social democracy, a shift by the traditional left towards a centre ground that seeks to balance 'rights' with 'responsibilities' and globalized market forces with state intervention."³⁶ This is attributed to uncaredful planning of New Labour politicians who look at economy as more important than quality and more important than human lives:

Very Experienced Rail Engineer: Everybody knew privatisation was being done wrong, but politicians were determined – Rifkind, McGregor, Mawhinney who was the thug who pushed it through. The idea was. 'OK, it may not be perfect, we see it's flawed but we're not going to rethink it, so let's just see what happens. Let's see what happened.

.....
We heard a lot about how the big sharks will eat the little sharks. (pp. 19-20)

The first outcome of this under act is the Southall Crash in which seven people have been killed and more than a hundred have

been injured. The story and details of this crash represent the second act of *The Permanent Way* tragedy and are delivered by three characters; British Transport Policeman, Bereaved Mother and Father:

British Transport Policeman: When Southall happened I was at HQ. 19th September 1997. First disaster I'd ever had anything to do with. No real experience of leadership at a thing like that. First reaction was to say, 'Investigating a train crash? No, we look for rapists, robbery.' Thought: 'This is just an accident, not a CID job, not a detective's job. I'll just take down a copy of the manual for dealing with these things...

There was a bloke there who was PA to the Coroner. I said, 'There are loved ones at home, wanting to know whether their family members are dead, and we are sitting on all these bodies here and that can't be right. The Coroner wants this to happen, I want it to happen, so now it's got to bloody well happen.' And then it did happen. (p. 25-6)

No qualified forces are trained enough to investigate or to deal with such accident. Even the relatives of the victims have not been treated or notified properly which adds much to their calamity as it is clarified by the Bereaved Mother and Father who lost their 29-year old son, Peter, in the crash. Peter was a "hotshot" lawyer, but he ends up dead and is referred to as Body No. 6 in counting dead people of the train crash. The Bereaved Mother speech reveals a huge agony in recollecting the memories of her great loss of a young son for no crime or guilt:

Bereaved Mother:... My son Peter was twenty-nine, he worked at Freshfields, the solicitors, you know. He was a hotshot lawyer, about to be made a partner. In the firm they couldn't believe how clever he was, coming from Essex. When I heard him on the phone, I used to think, he doesn't sound like my son, he sounds like a proper lawyer. Later, when I was running the Disaster Action Group, I would find myself saying things like, 'I put it to you.' It was like he was at my side. Peter was on my shoulders.

We loved our son to bits. Very proud of him. Normal parents. On the night we were waiting to hear, we were standing in the dark, September – so the nights were getting dark already...And I kept just saying, 'Well if he's gone, it's written,' and I felt as

if this was coming from somewhere – and my husband said to me, and it was in the dark...He said, 'Maureen,' and he was crying, and he said, 'If Pete has gone you have to forgive me.' And I said, 'what do you mean?' And he said, 'I'm not going to stay here, I'm going to go.' He was going to kill himself. (*There is a silence*)

Bereaved Father: It's so. (p. 28)

The words of Bereaved Mother reflect a great pain majorly because it is an actual pain: it has really happened. The accident is not something fictitious or imaginary. Nothing in this mother's speech is modified or changed; these are the real words of a real Bereaved Mother as Hare comments on the agony this mother has passed by and the torture of waiting for any news related to her son: "For the First Bereaved Mother, we had a tape recording and when I looked at the transcript...You didn't have to change a single word, it's just the most extraordinary evocation of a moment [parents waiting for news of their son, who died in a 1997 rail crash]."³⁷ Along with 'waiting' motif, the word 'dark' is repeated many times to reveal how great the pain of those people is and how horrible the night they have spent then. As a Verbatim piece of art, there is such a sincere reflection of emotions of two parents who keep on living in continuous agony. Nothing and nobody can compensate or relief these agonies:

Bereaved Mother: We went up to the mortuary. Peter was on a trolley. His nose had come off and they'd just put it back on. And they'd combed his hair into fringe, he'd never had a fringe in his life, and he had this fringe. I didn't actually feel that I'd actually left my son there – because it wasn't him. His spirit has gone. (p. 28-9)

Despite the fact that these words are communicated verbally, yet they have a pictorial implication; a son is entirely stranger to his mother because he is deformed. The mother's tormenting words create a grieving effect. She is keeping every behaviour and description of her son by heart; now she is unable to recognize him. The accident demolishes not only her son's body but his spirit as well. Adopting such technique makes the viewer live in full union with the event described. The question in this mother's mind here is who is the Man in charge to take the full responsibility of this agony?. She explains painfully the reason behind the crash just because the protection system of the train is not working properly:

Bereaved Mother: The train had gone down to Swansea, and in the front engine the protection

system was working properly. But in the engine at the back, it wasn't working at all. It had been reported many times...the driver on the way down...many times he reported it... What you should do then – it's regular practice – you turn it round...

.....
That way the engine with the working safety system is at the front. But they didn't, you see, because they would lose ten minutes.

Bereaved Father: And under the privatised system, if you're ten minutes late, you have to pay a fine.

.....
Great Western didn't want to pay the fine. (p. 29-30)

This is the theater of fact which is competent to make change through its viewer's or reader's response. Above all, this is the clarity David Hare is talking about: "people want from political theatre a clarity they not getting from politicians"³⁸ which is the major path to achieve full theatrical authenticity: "Watching a Verbatim play can feel like being washed over by a great tide of voices, feelings and opinions knowing that the writer has ... created the banks within which to contain it."³⁹ No space is given to speculations. Economy has destroyed the lives of those people in the very hideous manner. It is not only the train that crashes, but also the bodies, minds, and hearts of innocent citizens and their family members as well. Added to such agony are the attempts of politicians to silence the sounds of the bereaved family members as it happens in the meeting between the Bereaved Mother and Deputy Prime Minister (for the period between 1997-2007) John Prescott (1938-):

John Prescott: 'I understand that you've been calling me names.'

Bereaved Mother: And I said: 'Yes, I called you a bastard in *The Sun*.' I said, 'You've got two sons haven't you, Mr. Prescott?'

John Prescott: 'Yes I have two sons.'

Bereaved Mother: And I said, 'How would you feel, someone like yourself, if I was a Minister, and I stood in front of a carriage which one of your son's bodies was lying in and obviously you thought, 'Yeah, this man's going to put it right?' And lo and behold you see nothing being done. You see a prosecution being thrown out. And I said, 'Wouldn't you be calling me a bastard?' ...

John Prescott: 'You're a dangerous woman.'

Bereaved Mother: 'I know why. Because I'm not paid. And I won't go away.'

.....
 I can't get a new son. They gave us compensation . Seven and a half grand. (pp. 33-4)

Ironically, after the first crash, John Prescott as a Prime Minister has promised that this will never be repeated: "This must never happen again." (p. 32) Contrary to this promise, another crash has taken place two years later. The same painful agony the Bereaved Mother passes by is repeated with another mother; the Second Bereaved Mother, who has lost her 24-year son in the second train crash Ladbroke Grove crash and this event represents the third act in the play. The same agony of the second act is dramatized now and another mother speaks of her own tragedy along with a Survivor Group Founder and A Young Man in Denim who has survived from the crash. This time thirty-one people are dead and 533 are injured and John Prescott's only response is "This must not happen again"; the same words used after the first crash. The Young Man in Denim speaks about what has happened:

Young Man in Denim: I caught the train that morning from Reading...there was an almighty bang...and I was desperately holding on to a bar...I could see Carriage H on fire. I managed to get out and I called the police from my mobile phone...I said, 'There's been a crash,' but when they asked where, I didn't know. All I could see of carriage H was a great wall of fire and smoke about twenty feet away. Anyway, three or four hundred of us walked across the lines, we all escaped....Then we all just stood there at the side of the track. It was the first time I'd seen a dead body...I remember a man with his suit jacket over his head...One man was moaning about a gash in his leg, and I could see there were people dead, so I just told him to shut up and stop complaining. Yeah. ... I don't feel I was all there...I didn't understand the scale of the disaster...three months later I realised I was having night sweats. And my neck went into spasm... I gave up my job in London and got a job nearer home because I couldn't get back on train. (pp. 38-40)

The whole scene of the disaster is just like a battlefield and not a part of a civilized city like London. The government is supposed to offer protection for all its citizens not to sacrifice lives because of financial aspects. This young man has passed through a horrible

experience that urges him even to pick another job for the destructive psychological effect of what has gone through. A more devastating experience is seen by the second Bereaved Mother:

Second bereaved Mother: my eldest son Sam was twenty-four, a mobile phone designer, he was based on Slough, he was going down from London to clear his desk before holiday. He went every day, with Thames Train. We heard there'd been a crash, so we rang his mobile. He always answered his mobile, so when we got the answering machine, that's when we started to worry. (p. 44)

After a long time of waiting, this mother discovers that her son is dead and what is more horrible is that no identification of him is possible because he body is totally burnt up: "Some of the bodies couldn't be identified, so they took a hair from Sam's hairbrush. That was a bad moment, because we knew the body must be destroyed, my son was totally literally destroyed." (p. 45) These words of the Bereaved Mother are totally devastating; she is searching for the least identification of her son even if this means using a tiny part of him; the hair left on his hairbrush. Such aching image is not that ordinary one. This is not a fiction but *life*. What adds more to Bereaved Mother agony is an article written by one of the survivors of the crash. This article is:

describing the potent smell at the disaster site as being like that of a 'human barbecue'. Since her son had been 'totally literally destroyed' in the fire, the description carried overwhelmingly distressing implication. The mother had subsequently rung the survivor in question requesting that this detail should not be included in the article, only to find in bold print in the next day's newspaper the words 'I woke to the smell of human barbecue'".⁴⁰

Such action represents a great disrespect for the human dignity and this woman's great pain is increased in seeing that her son has turned into no more than a barbecue. Actually, the speeches of the two mothers, Bereaved Mother and Second Bereaved Mother, remind the viewer or reader with J.M. Synge's (1871-1909) Maurya in his one act play *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and her continuous agony of losing her sons one after the other. Losing one son or losing more than one are the same in their outcome of agony because "after twenty-four years of bringing your son up, you don't stop loving him. You don't stop just because he dies." (**Epilogue, 70**) There is an echo of Maurya who keeps on clinging to her sons even though they pass away.

Dramatically, all these mothers' pain is immense but in *The Permanent Way*, 'Men in Suits' are speaking of bereaved mothers sons' 'worth', something which is perfectly inhuman:

Second Bereaved Mother: ... Three and a half years later we're going to meetings to establish what they call VOL – Value of Life. Each child, they say, has a different value, maybe ten thousand pounds, maybe twenty. The other day, to establish the value of Sam's life – the value of Sam – they asked me, 'How much did he spend on Christmas presents?' How does it make a parent feel to be told that because his son is a road sweeper his life is worth less than a brain surgeon? (p. 53-54)

The train has crashed those mothers' hearts in addition to politicians and people in charge. Their sons are looked upon as lost objects and not as humans who should be respected. Evidently, no one tries to stop these disasters for there are two other crashes have happened after then, Hatfield and Potters Bar though in the play they are not highlighted as the first two crashes. The space given to the latter two crashes is limited may be because David Hare does not want to repeat the same details. It is only with Potters Bar accident, a Bereaved Widow who has survived the crash is given the chance to speak of what she has passed by. Unfortunately, this woman has not experienced death but she has also lost her husband in Potters crash. This accident stirs only bad memories in her mind to an extent she has been afraid to meet the Squadron Leader, the one who has rescued her:

Bereaved Widow: I was scared to meet [Squadron Leader] because of the memories it might stir. I knew about him because he contacted the hospital in Barnet to see how was I doing. He told me that Austen died instantly, so there is some mercy you know... We had a press conference. I worried that I'd be ill, that I wouldn't be able to cope, but when I got there I surprised myself with my own anger. I remember seeing a lovely old woman...she's lost her granddaughter. There's lovely Nigerian lady left her four kids under fourteen. We went to see Railtrack one afternoon. They're incredibly skilled with what they call victims...What did we hope for? There are three things we want. A handsome sum for everyone injured and bereaved, a proper apology, and vertical integration. (p. 65)

Those people have simple demands which, in comparison with their losses are nothing. Because of the system's corruption, these demands are rejected:

Bereaved Widow: I never believed in corruption before. I'm not talking about greased palms, or bribes. I'm talking about the idea of corruption, it's being in everyone's interest - the politicians, Railtrack, Jarvis – to do nothing ... The problem with the system is that everyone is able to pass the buck and nobody feels any responsibility... What makes me angriest is the waiting. The waiting makes me angry. You want someone to say sorry, and that way release you from what happened. But until they say sorry you can't put it behind you. (pp. 65-66)

Agony is the prevailing feeling inside each one of these Bereaved mothers and widow. They are living daily with it with no chance of getting rid of such agony because their calamity is massive. Like Mauraya, they cannot live or find peace anymore. The function of a Verbatim play like Hare's *Permanent Way* is to give a voice to voiceless, so that the voice of the oppressed is to be heard and their rights to be restored. Such magnificent mixture between art and reality is bestowing Verbatim drama its significant role in Contemporary Drama.

Notes :

¹ Derek Paget, "Verbatim Theatre: Oral History and Documentary Techniques", *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 3, issue 12, (Nov. 1987), pp. 317-336), 317.

² Ibid.

³ Tom Cantrell, *Acting in Documentary Theatre*, (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013), 2-3.

⁴ Paget, "Verbatim Theatre: Oral History and Documentary Techniques", 318.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Chris Megson, "Verbatim Practices in Contemporary Theatre: Symposium Report", *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol. 16 (4), (2006), pp. 529- 532, 529.

⁷ David Lane, *Contemporary British Drama to Literature: Edinburgh Critical Guides*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 60.

⁸ Jon Bradfield, "Real Life on Stage", www.outofjoint.co.uk, (accessed on 18-1-2017).

⁹ Lane, 62.

¹⁰ Alison Jeffers, "Refugee Perspectives: the Practice and Ethics of Verbatim Theatre and Refugee Stories", *Platform*, vol.1, no.1, (Autumn, 2006), pp.1-17), 1.

¹¹ Mary Luckhurst, "Verbatim Theatre, Media Relations and Ethics", in *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama*, eds. Nadine

Holdsworth and Mary Luckhurst, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2008, pp.200-222), 200-201.

¹² Graham Saunders, "Introduction", in *Cool Britannia: British Political Drama in the 1990s*, eds. Rebecca D'Monte & Graham Saunders, (London: Palgrave, 2008, 1-18), 8.

¹³ Jeffers, 2.

¹⁴ Heddon, 120.

¹⁵ Bradfield.

¹⁶ Derek Paget, "New Documentarism on Stage: Documentary Theatre in New Times", *ZAA*, no.56. issue.2 (2008), pp. 129-141, 138-9.

¹⁷ Luckhurst, 201.

¹⁸ Megson, "Verbatim Practices in Contemporary Theatre: Symposium Report", 531.

¹⁹ Jeffers, 3.

²⁰ Chris Megson, "The Theatres Act (1968), Documentary Theatre and the Actor's 'Overwhelming Reality'", *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, vol. 31, no. 2, (Jan. 2014), pp. 137-151, 141.

²¹ Paget, "New Documentarism on Stage: Documentary Theatre in New Times", 140.

²² Michael Patterson, *Strategies of Political Theatre: Post-war British Playwrights*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

²³ Paget, "Verbatim Theatre: Oral History and Documentary Techniques", 317.

²⁴ David Hare, *The Permanent Way*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2003), *Author's Note*, no p. All references to the play are taken from this edition. Henceforth; all subsequent references will be parenthetically cited within the text.

²⁵ John Deeney, "David Hare and Political Playwriting: Between the Third Way and the Permanent Way", in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama (1880–2005)*, ed. Mary Luckhurst, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006, pp.429-440), 431.

²⁶ Paget, "New Documentarism on Stage: Documentary Theatre in New Times", 139.

²⁷ Sarah Freeman, "Review of: *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing 1995-2005* by Amelia Howe Kritzer", *Theatre Journal*, vol. 62, no. 2, (May 2010), pp. 306-308, 306 - 7.

²⁸ Lane, 64.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Paget, "New Documentaries on Stage: Documentary Theatre in New Times", 132.

³¹ Peter Ansoorge, " 'Stopping for Lunch ': the Political Theatre of David Hare", in *The Cambridge companion to David Hare*, ed. Richard Boon, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 92-106), 102.

³² Bella Merlin, "Acting Hare: *The Permanent Way*", in *The Cambridge companion to David Hare*, ed. Richard Boon, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 123-137), 124.

³³ Derek Paget, "The 'Broken Tradition' of Documentary Theatre and its Continued Powers of Endurance", *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*, eds. Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 224-238), 232.

³⁴Merlin, 125.

³⁵Luckhurst, 214.

³⁶Deeney, 436.

³⁷Hare, cited in Paget, "New Documentarism on Stage: Documentary Theatre in New Times ", 132.

³⁸Lane, 64.

³⁹Jeffers, p. 6.

⁴⁰Merlin, p. 126.

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"صوت لمن لاصوت له":

دراسة في مسرحية التلقين (الطريق الدائم) لـ (ديفيد هير)

الخلاصة

يهدف هذا البحث الى تقصي مسرح إنكليزي معاصر هو (مسرح التلقين) ، وتمّ من خلاله التركيز على مسرحية (الطريق الدائم) للكاتب الإنكليزي (ديفيد هير) . إذ عمل هير في هذه المسرحية على دمج السياسة بالفن لينتقد أداء حكومة حزب المحافظين فيما يخص خصخصة نظام السكك الحديد في بريطانيا في العام ١٩٩١ . وقد ترتب على هذا القرار عدد كثير من حوادث القطارات ، التي راح ضحيتها العديد من المدنيين بين الأعوام ١٩٩٧ و ٢٠٠٢ .