

HAROLD PINTER'S ASHES TO ASHES –AN ARCHIVE OF JEWISH HOLOCAUST

***DR. VANDANA**

**Assistant Professor, UIILS, Punjab University Chandigarh.*

The outlook of the 20th century Europe was designed by the haunting memories of war and Jewish Holocaust. The engraved experiences and traumas of war became a narrative type in the European culture. War experiences challenged the human knowledge about memory and its ability to sustain itself. Whenever inheritance seemed to be a big failure it transforms into frustration and rage. For Pinter's characters, when a lost past is inherited as it is, without knowing, its need in the present and the future is deformed. The plot of life stories thus became a kind of regression rather than resistance. War memories and shared pasts were owned by people either by choice, ignorance or at times through forced inheritance. Pinter's characters are not listening to or speaking with each other. Their communication is not linear neither do they indulge in any one to one correspondence in the plays. The characters have created a symbolic commotion in the society rather than communication.

War memory is full of the past echoes. It resonates all the time throughout generations as Pinter has showcased in his plays. History speaks through the language of its particular people as one can see in Pinter's plays. He used absurd language as a tool to open up the locked doors of the history using the archives in the form of words, sounds, images and also silences. Memories are the texts of a particular historical event and produced by a keen engagement with that event. Without memory, experience has no meaning and the consciousness would be frozen in the present moment. In Pinter's works the documentation of the Holocaust has come out as collapse of truth and identity of the characters. "Who am I?" becomes the most important, painful and absurd question in the plays and both the characters and the playwright combat with it. In other words the process of identity formation is revised through a notion of history, which is not only unconventional but also assumes a non-linear, discontinuous, non-chronological and anti-authoritarian representation.

The turning points in the history of Europe were the periods of industrialization, Wars and Holocaust. The construction of cultural memory happened through the historical narratives which were written, published, recited in schools and performed at public places. The cultural memory formed through these upheavals is preserved in

the form of texts, narratives, rites and monuments. Connerton, the eminent social memory thinker wrote in *How Societies Remember* that:

War memories pervaded all the spheres of life, the festivals of the Reich being related to the feast of the Christian calendar... the seizure of power in January 1933 and the outbreak of war in 1939, the subjects of Third Reich were constantly reminded of the National Socialist Party... and the liturgical year began on 30th January with the anniversary of Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 (Connerton 41).

His Nobel Prize acceptance speech, *Art, Truth and Politics* is a masterpiece. Mel Gussow in 1993 asked Pinter whether he would ever write about Holocaust, Pinter replied: "I don't know. There's something in me that wants to do something about it. It's so difficult"(qtd . in Billington 385). Pinter finally broached that subject in 1996, when he wrote *Ashes to Ashes*.

While writing the opening lines of *Ashes to Ashes* Pinter reminisces about the Nazi atrocities. The play becomes more influential with its structural significance. Its structure reveals the distorted memory and temporal disturbance within the play. The structural and thematic arrangement in the play provides the audience with some way of articulating what one can already sense. The play *Ashes to Ashes* had emerged from Pinter's reading of Gitta Sereny's biography of Albert Speer (a German architect with Nazis during WWII), while on a holiday. Pinter had been struck by the image of Speer visiting the slave-labor factories, for which he himself was responsible. Pinter added that, reading the book had channelized a number of his own associations with the past. He had always been haunted by the image of the Nazis picking up babies on bayonet-spikes and throwing them out of the window.

Pinter based the love story in *Ashes to Ashes* on Sereny's Postscript, which recounts Speer's love affair, towards the end of his life. He was by then in his mid-seventies, and the woman he loved was half his age. She had contacted Speer after reading his memoirs and found that it helped her to understand her own past. Although Speer had described her as a young Englishwoman, she was in fact a German, who had settled in England and was married, with two children, to an Englishman. If one tries to relate it to the play, one can see that a part of Rebecca's character has been derived from the anonymous young woman mentioned in Speer's biography. However, the character of Rebecca recounts the stories as if she had experienced them herself. It seems as if she had accompanied her lover on his visits to the slave-labour camps and the factories. Rebecca's fascination towards her lover's sexual violence may be a way out for Pinter to showcase that unnamed young woman's

attraction to one of the central figures of the Third Reich. When Mireia Aragay asked Pinter about Nazism in *Ashes to Ashes* he answered:

No I don't think so at all. It is about the images of Nazi Germany; I don't think anyone can ever get out of their mind. Holocaust is probably the worst thing that ever happened because it was also calculated by the people who actually did it. Their view of it is very significant. They counted how many people they were murdering every day and they looked upon it, I take it, like a car delivery service. How many cars can you make in one day, how many people can you kill in one day? And there is the whole question of how many people knew what 'repressive, cynical and indifferent acts of murder, selling arms to brutal regimes... in *Ashes to Ashes* I'm not simply talking about Nazis. I'm talking about us, and our conception of our past and our history and what it does to us in the present (qtd. in Billington 386).

Ashes to Ashes is a one act play. The play is set in a time 'now' (the time now has a symbolic meaning in the play *Ashes to Ashes*. It means the past is changed into mere ashes now). Early evening but no light outside and lamplight inside the living room intensify the situation in a room in a country house. One can see how a very elegant country room's window opens towards the corridors of European history. The history was a crucial point in European culture for substantial changes and was preserved in cultural memory. Billington and others have pursued the lead offered, that links the figure of the lover (Rebecca's lover) with the Nazi leader Speer who was a close associate of Hitler.

Both Devlin and Rebecca in their forties seem to be passionate lovers in the play. At first glance one cannot judge their relationship. In fact in the end too-the mystery of their relation remains. Rebecca's name/identity suggests that she is Jewish, and this separates her inner world from her partner Devlin. Devlin which is an Irish name/identity is excluded from pure Jewish experiences. No doubt the difference between their attitudes is gendered. One can also perceive a cultural divide between Jew and Gentile. As the play grows, it becomes clear that they are husband and wife, although their relationship is not defined in the play. Initially Devlin seems to be Rebecca's husband or lover or a brute interrogator who might kill her at the end. He compels her to answer each question. She reveals the personal information throughout the play. Rebecca's opening lines may well be intended to taunt Devlin or to suggest to him that a previous relationship still affects her in some way. The explanation for Rebecca's excursions into the past might have come from possible influences of Speer's

biography on Pinter. In first attempt she narrates a tale of sexual abuse and fear of death. Devlin stands in a gesture of power and Rebecca sits. It shows that she is under his control. And she answers passively as if she has been hypnotized by Devlin. Whatever he interrogates in the play she clarifies:

Rebecca: Well...for example...he would stand over me and clench his fist. And then he had put his other hand on my neck and grip it and bring my head towards him. His fist...grazed my mouth. And he'd say, 'kiss my fist.'

Devlin: And did you?

Rebecca: Oh, yes. I kissed his fist. The knuckles. And then he'd open his hand and give me the palm of his hand...to kiss...which I kissed. (Pause).

And then I would speak (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 395).

The opening scene of the play is full of brutality. This claim of hers is, of course, structurally, thematically and visually reproduced and reinforced by Devlin's putting his hands around her throat (in precisely the same manner according to her account at the beginning of the play and, even more significantly, by the echo of her account at the end). Devlin might interpret Rebecca's account of her lover's hand around her throat as being a clue for him to repeat the action, but the audience knows otherwise. It looks like a tale of two-fold power structure. It is the enactment of domination on one hand but on other it is full of anxiety, insecurity and reckless curiosity. Rebecca's tales of the frozen moments, that she may not have experienced personally, bring one closer to those moments. And one would not be certain whether the atrocities had actually occurred in her life. The living room window functions as a film-screen, on which a silent movie is being projected, and Rebecca seems to enter the film she has been watching.

One can see an English country house where a jealous husband questions his wife about the past relationships. Despite their physical presence, Rebecca and Devlin inhabit totally disparate inner worlds. The act of interrogation is performed almost smoothly without any disturbances. Sometimes it appears to be a well knitted narrative of Holocaust. The State is constructing a fine narrative of the past for future through Devlin and Rebecca's character in the play. The audience perceives exactly what the power wants to circulate about the past in upcoming future. One can see the construction and the circulation of the War memories in *Ashes to Ashes*.

The multilayered discourse makes the experiences of the characters in the play more real than the mere narrative of the past. The verbal game is not played innocently in the play. The communication among the characters is full of political resonances behind the scene. Words are empty barrels but when one scrutinizes subtly would find them full of meaningful echoes. One of the most common pastimes among the people is recalling the past memories. Everyone believes that he or she remembers the same things in the same order. But Pinter never allowed his characters to do this and in fact parodied the slow incremental progress in narration. And it is conducted in such a way as to balance all inequalities through simple gossip. Whenever a character in his plays attempts to create a common past, another character knowingly disrupts the process that could be considered as manipulation. This is also applicable to the past memories that are disturbing and plainly false. The disruption is often effected by calling the time frame itself into question. Thus, Rebecca intentionally has described how her lover used to hold her round the throat; Devlin suddenly shifts the time frame:

Devlin: Do you feel you're being hypnotized?

Rebecca: When?

Devlin: Now?

Rebecca: No (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 397).

Pinter's approach to time has been strongly influenced by Henri Bergson and his theories of duration. Bergson suggested that, "the separation of memory into discrete units, which then appear discontinuous, is caused by certain lapses in our span of attention" (qtd. in Regal 4). By this process, says Bergson, one falsely tends to see certain individual events as representing stages in the development of our minds and therefore identify them as changes. Devlin's question about her being hypnotized is in the present time because he has used present tense. But Rebecca is not sure whether he is referring to the present or the past. Throughout, the play it becomes more profound that Devlin knows less than Rebecca about the past. He demands the authentic details of the past with exact time and place while her responses are made up of dream-like tales that clearly do not include him. The play has a kind of sexual brutality and submission to it through Rebecca. After this Devlin asks her instantly, "Rebecca: I think you are a fuckpig" (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 398). A similar disruption takes place a little further on when Devlin asks, absurdly, whether the man she is speaking of had any eyes. Rebecca's reply is, "What colour?" (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 400).

Rebecca's conscious shifts in time zones from past to present or present to past are intended to throw Devlin off balance. This technique is common enough in Pinter's memory plays - but is especially utilized in the play *Ashes to Ashes*. Rebecca's various past tales and memories are more than a battle for personal gain and

reveal the power structure in Europe. *Ashes to Ashes* is a haunting play with changing time zones. Pinter shows how the human mind is swinging in various time zones at the same time and can easily be handled according to the need of time.

The play also reveals the male desire to possess female's past as seen in *Old Times*, the relation between interrogator and victim as in *One For the Road* and cruelty and barbarism as in *Mountain Languages and Party Time*. In this play real and unreal merge effortlessly. *Ashes to Ashes* is a play of minimum physical actions but maximum mental and verbal performances or memory spillovers. Devlin puts a number of questions to Rebecca about her lover's height, breadth, depth and suddenly starts addressing her as darling:

Devlin: That's precisely the question I'm asking you...my darling.

Rebecca: How odd to be called darling. No one has ever called me darling. Apart from my lover (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 400).

The shattered narrative of the people has re-formed now and the dialogues between Devlin and Rebecca are perfectly designed by Pinter to show this act of narration through remembrance. Rebecca recalls:

Rebecca: I think it had something to do with a travel agency. I think he was some kind of courier. No. No, he wasn't. That was only a part-time job. I mean that was only part of the job in the agency. He was quite high up, you see. He had a lot of responsibilities (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 403).

Rebecca's abstract answers raise suspicion about her stance. She exhibits reluctance in providing straight and definite answers. Her past seems more authentic than her present when she describes how her ex-lover took her to the factory. Devlin investigates in detail and she reveals the depths during the course of the play. She even has the capability to transport Devlin to the past world and creates a cadence reciting:

Rebecca: They were all wearing caps... the workpeople... soft caps... and they took them off when he came in, leading me, when he led me down the alleys between the rows of workpeople (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 405).

Further, she explained that they had total faith in him (her Lover). They respected his purity and conviction. They would follow him in future for authenticity. Devlin had become the benchmark for the truth of

the past. Rebecca's changing statements about her lover or past intensify the tension between the characters in the play. In the beginning she said that he was the head of a factory, then a worker for a travel agency and suddenly revealed that he was a guide. She says:

Rebecca: He was a guide. He used to go to the local railway station and walk down the platform and tear all the babies from the arms of their mothers (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 406).

Her difficulty in deciding the job seems puzzling. When forced by Devlin to provide the information of travel agency, she states that her lover was a guide, as though this would explain it all. Devlin then asks her, "was he tourist guide?" (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 407). This question she leaves unanswered. Pinter is showing here a kind of sexual repression that was an innate part of the Fascism from the very beginning. Fascism later achieved an extremity showcasing a brutal enactment of power and naked submission to it. Rebecca can also be perceived as a symbol of vulnerability including femininity and gendered memory. She represents innocent people who are the culprits in the very hands of State or patriarchy which is represented by Devlin. This play is not only depicting the Nazis' picture but also the distorted memories of the common folk. Rebecca explains the atrocities in the following words:

Rebecca: I wanted to go to the bathroom. But I simply could not find it. I looked everywhere. I'm sure they have one. But I never found out it was (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 406).

Like other plays of Pinter, this play too features a man and a woman who present conflicting views, experiences and memories. Pinter sets these characters against one another. His female characters are more poetic and lyrical in expression, especially Rebecca in *Ashes to Ashes*. Devlin has the authority to formulate time and Rebecca inhabits in that time.

Memory too is gendered to some extent because women have no language, narrative and no right to access memory. They are trained to remember what active powerful and patriarchic counterparts want them to remember. In any culture the adherence to stories, whether real or unreal is very fruitful for its future. Narrative has entered into scholarship through literature, school, a movement on the academic left which is affiliated with feminism and critical race theory (Hinchman & Hinchman 3). Women, children and old people including the marginalized all belong to the same group. They can easily be manipulated by the power structures. The

civilization's highest achievements seem as mere superstructures designed to maintain powerful groups' meaningful history. Rebecca seems accustomed to such an authority. Rebecca tries to change the subject of inquiry by talking about the echoing sounds of police siren. She hears the police siren but is upset when it fades away. She utters:

Rebecca: I'm just terribly upset...as the siren fades away in my ears I knew it was becoming louder and louder for somebody else...

Devlin: Don't worry there'll always be another one. There's one in its way to you now. Believe me. You'll hear it again soon. Any minute (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 408).

In some cases, it seems, time does not heal in fact, it cuts even deeper wounds. It is only while the police siren is sounding that Rebecca feels comfortable. She feels insecure without it and screams:

Rebecca: I hate it fading away. I hate it echoing away. I hate it leaving me. I hate losing it. I hate somebody else possessing it. I want it to be mine, all the time. It's such a beautiful sound. Don't you think? (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 408).

When danger is clearly announced, Rebecca has a share in the present moment. When the alarm fades or echoes away, she knows that foothold has gone. When Rebecca explains that to Devlin how a "perfectly innocent pen" rolled off the coffee table Devlin warns her that she can't say things like that the pen is innocent. He is reconstructing the reality through words and playing power game by controlling or twisting it.

Rebecca: This pen is perfectly innocent pen.

Devlin: you don't know how many other hands have written with it, what other people have been doing with it. You know nothing of its history. You know nothing of its parents' history (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 410)

Devlin's linguistic twists also become a part of power play rather than mere verbal game in the play. He distorts and recreates past according to his need in the present. But he himself feels insecure, in a quicksand situation while interrogating her. He lives in a world which is full of terror and exists without God. He claims:

Devlin: God is sinking into a quicksand...It will be like England playing Brazil at Wembley and not a soul in the stadium. Can you imagine? Playing both halves to a totally empty house... A world without a winner (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 412).

Another Pinter's character named Nicolas in *One for the Road* claims that maybe God was speaking through him. And he himself felt threatened and imagined a world without God. The characters of Pinter belong to a society without faith, God and goodness where there would only be victims and victimizers and both losers. Devlin too represents the power and at the same time feels powerless. He wants to possess Rebecca's body, soul, past, present and future but he himself feels a victim of the same power who dis-empowers Rebecca.

Pinter wrote about the atrocities and human suffering. The newspapers had reported these atrocities every day. The characters embody the essence of the title *Ashes to Ashes*. But "ashes" in this play has a narrower denotation: it signifies the ashes of the Jews cremated in the death camps. All that remains of these people are memories, and Rebecca's memories evoke her own Holocaust memories.

Rebecca yields to her lover's brutal handling, to his use of force, becoming a willing victim. The gap between the two characters is also attributable to the gendered characterization of the War memories. One belongs to the sensitive woman and other to her insensitive partner. Pinter is interested in the internal, rather than the external, reality. The two different realities are juxtaposed in Rebecca's recollection of what she saw one day through the garden window in Dorset. Through a monologue, she describes how she stood by the window, on a sunny summer day in Dorset. She watched a crowd of people who seemed very cold and wore coats. They were walking towards the sea and into the water. For picking up the main motif of the play Pinter mentions twice the guides that ushered the people across the beach through Rebecca's character. Pinter creates a frame in which the window of the English house, looking southward, towards the sea and the continent, opens onto a nightmare vision of Holocaust. The people walk into the sea carrying all their bags like the children of Israel into the Red Sea, except that no miracle occurs and they are drowned. Thus, one neither needs to know how these characters arrived nor where they might be going after the action is over. Rebecca is using her memory in a battle of wits with Devlin. One must know how even if he does not, why she is doing so. Like Devlin, one will almost certainly wonder about the authority that gives him the right to inquire. He questions Rebecca:

Devlin: What authority do you think you yourself possess which would give you the right to discuss such an atrocity?

Rebecca: I have no such authority. Nothing has ever happened to me. Nothing has ever happened to any of my friends. I have never suffered. Nor have my friends.

Devlin: Good...it's not just your head in his hands...it's your life...your spiritual...welfare. (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 413).

Throughout the play she was forced to remember what she might have never seen or what had happened before she was even born? In the above disclaimer, she seems to distance herself from any direct contact with Holocaust experiences she herself describes. Despite the facts that she could not have possibly experienced the atrocities herself, Rebecca's disturbing memories are none the less authentic. Clearly, what she has read and heard from survivors' reports has become part of her own consciousness.

The play answers the questions related to the revocation of the War memories in a culture. It also showcases the process of their construction and adaptation through Rebecca's character. There is always a little doubt if she is authentically reliving a memory or whether it is her own or not. The void between Rebecca's recollection of the Nazi atrocities and the everyday calm of her English surroundings creates an ambiguity. Rebecca remembers the atrocities, is now in her forties in 1996 as the play is set in the time 'Now'. So, in fact, she must have been too young to have witnessed them or might not have been born at that time. She can also represent the modern generation that is not allowed to forget the cultural memory. She has to relive the pain and is forced to remember the anguish of the victims. Her memories resonate in audience's own consciousness, evoking the memory of Holocaust.

Pinter's well-known interest in the role of memory in consciousness intersects the contemporary preoccupation with the question of recording survivors' testimonials (Scolnicov 1). Rebecca's insistence on being alone in the house emphasizes the loneliness of her experience (being a Jew), her sense of being a stranger. She perceives things differently from the mainstream. Being a Jew himself, Pinter knows how the inner perception of the *Shoah* (Calamity in Hebrew) or Holocaust distinguishes Jews from the society that surrounds him. Rebecca and Devlin may share an English house, but Devlin has no share in Rebecca's inner world. In Pinter's plays, this inner world is of greater significance than the external reality. It is made up of Rebecca's memories.

As a sensitive person, Rebecca identifies with the suffering, in contrast to Devlin, who shows insensitivity to it. Being a representative of women, marginal and Jews she refuses Devlin's presence in such experiences. He

was not part of her personal memory at that turning point in the European history. That is why she specifically excludes him from her account of her Dorset experience, by insisting that he was not there:

Rebecca: Oh no, you weren't there. I don't think anyone else was there. No, I was all by myself. I was alone...And I saw all these people walk into the sea. The tide covered them slowly. Their bags bobbed about in the waves (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 416).

Devlin is not a part of her account as he represents the State. He is the victimizer who cannot understand the plight of the victim. Through Rebecca's dialogue one can see how State power manipulates the past traumatic memories of the individuals. State has the power to make or mar individual and personal memories in this way. One may see how State apparatus had failed during World War II and Holocaust. Rebecca's description of a crowd of people drowned into a sea is a direct reference to the atrocities of Holocaust. The reference of the crowd that is drowning in a sea echoes the sense of oppression in her lover's factory or in English society. She herself is a victim of this oppressed society and a figment of mental elephantiasis in her own words and she blames Devlin saying:

Rebecca: The mental elephantiasis means that when you spill an ounce of gravy becomes a vast sea of gravy... You brought it on yourself. You are not the victim of it, you are the cause of it. It was you who handed over the bundle (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 417)

One can see Rebecca's deliberate entry into someone else's memory. Certain events occur in human history that are indelibly sketched into the minds of not only those who have witnessed them but all who have heard about them. They become inseparable part of one's consciousness in a real and actual sense. Rebecca, in remembering someone else's past, illustrates that certain atrocities haunt all our minds and that she needs no authority to be the mouthpiece of the present moment. Part of the pain she is clearly suffering from, results from not being able to reconcile to her former lover's attentions. In this sense, whether or not she personally experienced the horror of having her baby torn from her arms is less significant than the fact that some women have actually gone through this terrible experience. She becomes the representative of such mothers and her remembrance the event makes the snatching occur again. Rebecca lives in a half-real world between dream and reality. Like other memory plays it also revolves around past echoes, dreams, memories and illusions-a kind of mental life or inner life which

Pinter could capture exactly as it occurred there. Both the characters oscillate between real and unreal worlds- Devlin shifts her to a harsh reality of real life for more control over Rebecca and the situation too. Devlin says:

Devlin: Now look, let's start again. We live here. You don't live in Dorset... or anywhere else. You live here with me. This is our house. You have a nice sister. She lives close to you. She has two lovely kids. You are their aunt. You like that...

Rebecca: I don't think we can start again. We started...a long time ago. We started. We can't start again. We can't end again (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 424).

When Rebecca claims that she and Devlin can end "again and again and again," (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 425) she may be referring not only to their relationship but to something much more profound. It is she who starts singing after a long interrogation throughout the play. Music or song is an important cultural activity and full of the act of remembrances. Music nourishes the people and has a perfect narrative order. Human beings when born listen to lullabies and want to lie in cadenced graves. Stephen Crites reveals that music can be a survival sign for the people. It defines the manners of the people and relates them to the world around. Crites claims that:

The narrative, like music, is a cultural form reflecting our existence as temporal creatures. Experience...is already an incipient story made coherent by memory. While, we live forward we understand backwards. Memory, through which we perceive events in a simple before-and-after sequence, gives rise to recollection involving the artful, though by no means arbitrary, transformation, of mere chronological sequence into full-blown narratives (Hinchman and Hinchman 3).

The tune Rebecca and Devlin sing during the course of the play resonates with its title and supports the issue of the play that every time a death is remembered it brings a new ending.

In the end Rebecca finds herself in a room of a tall building where she sees an old man and a little boy who are dragging suitcases. In Rebecca's vision of the people heading for the water, Pinter has captured the haunting image of the ordered walking into the sea, as well as the intense cold. In her second vision through a window, towards the end of the play, Rebecca goes a step further in her identification with the victims of Holocaust. She sees an old man and a little boy walking down the street, dragging big suitcases, on an icy, star-lit night. Then she notices a woman following them, carrying a baby in her arms. The woman kissed the baby, who

was a girl, then listened to its heartbeat and its breathing. Suddenly watching the woman through the window of her English home, Rebecca has entered the scene, assuming the role of the mother, completely turning herself into a Holocaust victim.

Rebecca's dazzling surrealist Holocaust visions through the window demonstrate that, for her, the accounts of the atrocities have become profound memories. These cultural memories cannot be put aside and laid to rest. In *Ashes to Ashes*, Pinter shows that, for us too, they have become profound memories, and that we too can never lay them to rest: "I'm talking about us and our conception of our past and our history, and what it does to us in the present" (Pinter qtd. in Billington 385). Rebecca sings 'Ashes to ashes', and Devlin carries on the song singing, "And dust to dust" (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 425). She recalls in the last part of the play the exact cultural representation of Nazi soldiers selecting women and children at the railway stations to transport them in concentration camps. She begins narrating the tale in third person:

Rebecca: Anyway, I was about to close the curtains but then I suddenly saw a woman following them, carrying a baby in her arms... She stood still. She kissed her baby. The baby was a girl...the baby was breathing (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 427).

Pinter through his play brought genocide to British shores through doubtful memories of Rebecca and raised many questions about the authenticity of those memories. She has become that woman in dream who has experienced the past. One is not sure about the characters and their situations. May be she herself was that woman and also Rebecca's lover was Devlin himself who wanted to change the brutal acts of past for his personal benefits. In the end Rebecca imaginatively meets the victim woman at station:

Rebecca: They took us to the trains
 Echo: The trains
 [...]
 Rebecca: They were taking the babies away
 Echo: The babies away
 Rebecca: I took my baby and wrapped it in my shawl
 Echo: My shawl
 Rebecca: And I made it into a bundle
 Echo: A bundle

Rebecca: And I held it under my left arm
Echo: My left arm
Pause.
Rebecca: And I went through with my baby
Echo: My baby
Pause.
Rebecca: But the baby cried out
Echo: Cried out
Rebecca: And the man called me back.
Echo: Called me back
Rebecca: And he said what do you have there?
Echo: Have there?
Rebecca: He stretched out his hand for the bundle
Echo: For the bundle
Rebecca: And I gave him the bundle
Echo: The bundle
Rebecca: And that's the last time I held the bundle
Echo: The bundle
Silence.
Rebecca: And we got on the train
Echo: The train
Rebecca: And we arrived at this place
Echo: This place
Rebecca: And I met a woman I knew... (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 430).

Although Holocaust and the Nazis are never mentioned in the play, the images evoked - the railway platform, the babies snatched from their crying mothers' arms, the winter scenes and the strange factory - all imagery point towards that way. Holocaust imagery has become an important part of their day to day live and appears in conversations. The War trauma has lingered in the survivor's minds. Bodnar's vision about the war traumas strengthens the theme of the play and Rebecca's role in the play emphasizes the situation of being a victim and a victimizer. She twists the situation and at the same time feels manipulated by Devlin too. Bodnar said that:

The traumas of war were not buried but displaced in cinema and cinematic techniques in other arts like literature-overlapping of memory and imagery collaborations. It was direct psychopathology in cultural productions. The word “trauma” has defined the whole culture at that time (qtd. in Winter 192).

The concluding monologue of Rebecca in the play ties together different strands of Holocaust memories: the train, the mother, the bundle and the snatching of the babies. In her final words, Rebecca identifies herself completely with the image of the mother whose baby has been snatched from her hands and murdered. At one point she even undergoes the heart-wrenching denial of ever having had a baby. Having imaginatively stepped into Holocaust memory, Rebecca completely refuses to cooperate with Devlin. Martin S. Regal sees *Ashes to Ashes* as a lyrical play rather than dramatic work as it makes extreme demands on audience’s concentration. The play hardly presents itself as a piece of reality. Rebecca becomes more lyrical and rhythmical in the last part. She muses:

Rebecca: And she said what happened to your baby.

Echo: your baby

Rebecca: where is your baby?

Echo: your baby

Rebecca: and I said your baby

Echo: what baby

Rebecca: I don’t have a baby

Echo: a baby

Rebecca: I don’t know of any baby

Echo: of any baby

Rebecca: I don’t know of any baby...of any baby...

Long silence. Blackout (Pinter *Ashes to Ashes* 432).

The symbolic state or territory which is represented by Rebecca in the play has now become childless and has no future. Pinter has successfully designed a personal dialogue with political resonances throughout the play. The play reveals the act of memory formation and its adaptation in present time through Rebecca and Devlin’s characters. Devlin constructs the memory through Rebecca and she adapts it culturally.

A culture that exhibits no memory means it had no history and having no history signifies that it never existed. It is thus customary in any culture to memorize. Through memorization one is able to recognize his identity.