

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol.1.Issue.3.,2014

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ECHO AND ECHOING IN THE DIALECTICAL STRUCTURING  
OF HAROLD PINTER'S *ASHES TO ASHES*

MONA SHABBIR KHAN

Research Scholar, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Aligarh Muslim University



ABSTRACT

The present paper is a focus on Harold Pinter's unique experimentation with an innovative dialogic technique, where the dramatist attempts an amalgamation of the smallest domestic/ local situation with a context that exceeds the limits of a single human experience. In *Ashes to Ashes*, the artist employs the juxtaposition of two incompatible modes of his previous writings; those of the early ambiguous and unverifiable- Pinter and the later direct Pinter in a single gestalt of the 'Duck-Rabbit' kind of dialectical structuring. This makes it emerge as a metaplay which seeks dialogue with critical discourse. Primarily, my in this article is to study the echoing links that build up an internal communication system within the play, which on the surface level appears to be fragmentary and disjunctured in both its form and content. Studying the use of recurring key words or terms in *Ashes to Ashes* helps in unravelling its repressed content and throws some light of reason on the apparently baffling play.

**Keywords:** metaplay, dialectical, echo, holocaust, responsibility, disambiguation.

Article Received :29/10/2014

Article Revised:03/11/2014

Article Accepted:05/11/2014

©COPY RIGHT 'KY PUBLICATIONS'

Harold Pinter has been termed as an artist of mannerism by various critics. He was an author who never stopped experimenting with technique and stagecraft; one who was simultaneously deconstructing and reinventing himself within his oeuvre. In *Ashes to Ashes* the artist's virtuosity of his innovative dramaturgy lies in the execution of a simultaneous movement of two conflicting modes of dialogue (named by Yael Zarhy-Levo): the 'private- personal' and the 'public- political'. (P.222 Cambridge Companion) A confused patterning or mapping evolves by Pinter's juxtaposing of the dialogue between the two characters of the play: the indirectly imaginative, ambiguous, unverifiable lines of Rebecca who seems to live in the past, with the directly explicit, aware and down to earth lines of Devlin who exists in the present. This defies an effective understanding on the part of audience/ reader. Therefore, such an elliptical patterning and cryptic structuring calls for an active engagement on the part of the audience/reader, along with other critical discourse and intertextual references, to be able to affect an underlying reasoning. Some logic is thus revealed after scrutinizing several layers of meanings of the play. As Austin Quigley has pointed out:

Pinter's use of multi linear plots provide a structural basis for his depiction of irreducibly different characters with competing goals, needs, wishes, aspirations and expectations ... Pinter's interwoven narrative are consequently able to offer disconcerting models of the complex nature of social exchange in realms of varying scope and complexity. (p.22, The Cambridge Companion)

The interweaving of two separate patterns of discourse produces a unique set of dialogue that in spite of denying an amalgamation on the surface level, affects in its positioning, a strange kind of co-existence that proves complementary on another level. The dialogue is craftily linked together with certain key words phrases and sentences and also various voices echoing from Pinter's own previous plays, interviews lectures and prose writings, and intertextual references as well. This affects a holding together of the two apparently incompatible modes into a single gestalt. The artist's virtuosity lies blurring the boundaries between the two orders of representation in a manner that brilliantly displaces both time and space, for the purpose implicit within the play itself.

*Ashes to Ashes* is a metaplay which is representational and therefore allegorical to a certain extent. While Devlin the male character represents the present and the real/now, Rebecca (on the contrary) embodies the imaginary/metaphorical and the past/eternal. The opening scene resembles a psychiatrist's room with Rebecca sitting in dimmed light on a couch while Devlin stands with a drink in his hand as he interrogates her intensely. The subject of the conversation reveals the characters struggle to come to term with the past and to mend their dying relationship (a recurrent theme in Pinter's earlier plays *Collection*, *Old Times* and *The Lover*). Again, the intense interrogation recurs like a leitmotif from Pinter's earlier repertoire where the standing and sitting of Devlin and Rebecca respectively, reflects the dominant/subservient relationship theme that the two positions represent. Pinter's tryst with this theme recurs almost across his entire oeuvre and again the traces of this are evident in *Ashes to Ashes* from his earlier plays *The Birthday Party*, *The Hothouse* and *One for the Road*. Such thematic re-echoing foreshadows and emerges as a powerful tool in the play's progression, and simultaneous linear and vertical intensification.

*Ashes to Ashes* opens with a typical Pinter like situational mystery that brings the audience bang on into mid-conversation, where Rebecca is seen answering some apparently probing question put to her by Devlin earlier, regarding her past lover:

Well ... for example ... he would stand over me and clench his fist. And then he'd put his other hand on my neck and grip it and bring my head toward him. His fist ... grazed my mouth. And he'd say, 'Kiss my fist.' (p.395)

It is to be noted that word 'fist' echoes three times in the speech motivating some revelation about the key words 'fist' and 'kiss' that recur many times in tandem in the opening scene: "Kiss my fist", "I kissed his fist", "palm of his hand to kiss ... which I kissed" and "I murmured through his hand as I was kissing". Such an echoing of the words sets forward an image of a fist being kissed which works on various levels on the mind of the audience/ reader. On the surface and personal level the image works as a metonymy for authoritarian patriarchal male domination and the hegemonic acceptance of subjugation on the part of the female. The expressions also stand out as speech acts that set forth a picture of sadomasochist intentionality between Rebecca and her lover. On the global level, the image enlarges on a fractal scale and becomes a metaphorical representation of an ever echoing icon of political power domination over an extended space and time.

On the sub-text level, the image also points at Pinter's political activism against the Gulf War II in a literary guise. This is when it is viewed with reference to the artist/citizen's critical judgement of the US political authority as a rogue nation, that he feels, enforced almost brute acceptance of power domination upon the 'lesser' world (which included Britain and the allies) during the Gulf War, with the 'you're with us or against us' policy. In his Nobel Prize lecture, speaking against the US manipulation of power and their "full spectrum dominance" or "control of land, sea, air and space and all attendant resources", Pinter volunteered (ironically and satirically) to write speeches for President Bush which would correspond with the US president's view and beliefs regarding 'terrorism' represented by Osama/Saddam; and which would go something like this:

“God is good. God is great... My God is good. Bin Laden’s God is bad. He’s a bad God, Saddam’s God was bad, except he didn’t have one .He is a barbarian. I am the democratically elected leader of freedom loving democracy...I’m not a dictator. He is. I’m not a barbarian. He is ... they all are. I possess the moral authority. You see this fist? This is my moral authority.”(Pinter, Nobel Lecture, Arts Truth and Politics via. Internet)

Rebecca’s speech therefore echoes Pinter’s own cultural suspicion about the world politics. It points specially at the US cunningly strategic interpellation, and its exercise of “a sustained, systematic, remorseless and quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as ‘a force for universal good’” (p.221, Pinter, *Various Voices*) and freedom. This involves keeping the world ‘pure for democracy’ using its iron fist and brute force. Rebecca’s hegemonic belief and acceptance of her brute lover as an ‘adoring’ and ‘gentle’ person represents the world’s (especially Great Britain’s) somnambulistic fan following of the US nation’s power dominance. This is represented by the image ‘kissing of the fist’.

Technically, *Ashes to Ashes* is divided into distinctive parts by fragmentary sets of images (a reminder of the structure of T. S. Eliot’s ‘The Wasteland’). Pinter employs the montage technique in structuring the body of this single act play in a manner which allows the clarity of vision through repetition of words and phrases. This produces an echoing effect, thus transforming them into keys to the meaning of the play. In the very process of their recurrence, these keys form a metaphorical connection between the fragmented sets that, in their conjoining, add more meaning to the play in modified contexts.

In the interrogatory exchange between Rebecca and Devlin, Rebecca is made to re-echo her words again and again, egged on by Devlin’s own repetitions used with their own internal rhythm that almost induces a kind of hypnosis:

DEVLIN: What did you say? You said what? What did you say?

REBECCA: I said, ‘Put your hands around my throat ...

DEVLIN: And did he? Did he put his hand around your throat?

REBECCA: O Yes.... He adored me you see.

DEVLIN: He adored you?

*Pause*

What do you mean he adored you? What do you mean?

.....  
REBECCA: My body went back, slowly but truly.

DEVLIN: So your legs were opening?

REBECCA: Yes.

*Pause*

DEVLIN: Your legs were opening?

REBECCA: Yes.

The frequent repetitions used by Devlin almost like a metalanguage, echo Rebecca’s own words as he presses for more details about her cruel kind lover. The sheer intensity of the interrogation process accumulates and builds up like hypnotic trance, which leads to an otherwise calm and choosy- with- words Rebecca into an outburst, making her eject an abuse:

DEVLIN: Do you feel you’re being hypnotised?

.....  
REBECCA: Who by?

DEVLIN: By me?

.....  
What do you think?

REBECCA: I think you’re a fuckpig. (P.395-398, Plays4)

The layers of interpretations and meaning, suggested by association, with the images evoked through Rebecca’s memory/imaginings set into echoing a series of similar images through various places at various times in the past. This brings to the mind of audience/reader the recurring capability of unresolved issues of the past, chiefly regarding personal relationships, and also those pertaining to wartime crimes and atrocities throughout the history of mankind.

Few of the most potent images in the play refer to the Nazi Holocaust, even though they subtly extend to another place and time (both from the past and into the future). This is a typical old-Pinter quality of deliberate befuddling for the sake of unverifiability.<sup>1</sup> The very act negates specificity, letting the image invite various hermeneutic representations. The deliberate displacement produces another ever echoing effect of the horrors reverberating in the collective memory of mankind owing to lack of recognition, guilt and therefore, of taking responsibility.

Devlin's fervid inquisition is countered by Rebecca's evasive teasing which makes him call her 'darling' in order to ingratiate himself to her for her attention. To this Rebecca reacts unfavourably with "How can you call me darling? I am not your darling ... it's the last thing I want to be. I am nobody's darling." (p.401) Devlin picks up her last line "I'm nobody's darling" and comically translates it into an old song title "I'm nobody's baby now". Here the word 'baby' is subtly introduced in the text to be picked up later and echoed with added significance.

The interrogation process reveals that Rebecca's lover was a 'tourist guide' who worked for a travel agency. He took her to some kind of 'factory' once, which proved to be a damp place that lacked toilet facility. The workers doffed their caps in respect of her lover as they walked together between the rows, she said. On being asked why they respected him Rebecca replies:

Because he ran a really tight ship, he said. They had total faith in him. They respected his ... purity, his ... conviction. They would follow him over a cliff into the sea, if he asked them he said. And sing in chorus as long as they led him. (p.405, Pinter *Plays 4*)

The image presented here, evokes a series of similar images of similar scenes of 'faith'. The words 'purity', 'conviction' respect 'faith' are echoed from Pinter's own previous works: In *The New World Order* one of the torturers Lionel tells his companion Des how he feels 'pure' after his act of torturing, to which Des replies, "you're right to feel pure. You know why? ... Because you're keeping the world clean for democracy." (p.277, Pinter, *Plays 4*) Again, In *One for the Road* Nicholas the torturer announces: "I run the place, God Speaks through me. I am referring to the Old Testament God, by the way, although I'm long from being Jewish. **Everyone respects me here.** Including you, I take it? That's the correct stance." (p., 225, Pinter, *Plays 4*, emphasis mine)

Rebecca's lines inhabit a number of attributes that can be cited as echoing various events of the past emerging from institutionalized faith, both religious and of interpellation by the State Discursive Practices, and bureaucratically controlled and documented atrocious- events- laundering, specially by the Nazi regime that aimed at ethnic cleansing by extermination of the Jews for the sake of eugenic 'purity' of the Aryan race. On one occasion in *Ashes to Ashes* we hear Rebecca's complain about a pen rolling off the desk when she was writing a 'laundry list', which, by cross reference, reveals her guilty of participation in Nazi atrocities. On yet another latent or sub text level, Rebecca's lines also reveal the later-Pinter's satiric political activism where he seems to be castigating USA's posturing of working for the 'universal good' and 'keeping the world clean for democracy'. This is strengthened further by rest of the world's passive acceptance of the falsehood and its active participation in the act of following, which includes Britain, as Pinter says: "It [the US] also has its own bleating little lamb tagging behind it on a lead, the pathetic and supine Great Britain." (Nobel Lecture).

Rebecca's speech also introduces a statement: "They would follow him over a cliff into the sea." This serves to link the structure, with another image that she produces later, as she talks about a scene that she eye witnessed from a window outside her house in Dorset where " [She] saw a whole crowd of people walking through the woods, on their way to the sea". The guides ushered them on and made them "walk across the cliff and down to the sea" as "the tide covered them [all] slowly". (p.416). A frame of reference is provided by the echoing intertextuality. As Penelope Prentice has pointed out, "like lemmings, the Pied Piper's children or those led to gas chambers [Rebecca] signals a topic swing back to atrocity." (p.376, *The Pinter Ethics*). The intertextual reference of the image also goes back to references from The Old Testament and The Torah where during The Exodus Moses led his people (the Egyptian slaves) across the Red Sea towards Israel for salvation. Another frame of reference is literary intertextuality that the scene presents with Eliot's wasteland image of "hooded hordes swarming over endless plains" (p.77) after the massive annihilation of life and property

wrought by the World War II and the image of Christ Ghost walking besides men leading them towards the chapel and water. The image of walking-in-faith is also re-echoed intertextually from Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* where the Pir (holy) woman Ayesha leads the people of the entire village of Titlipur to follow her across the Arabian Sea to Mecca, and drowns them in the process. The images of exodus also occur in various holocaust movies which show the Jews being lined up by the Nazi guides and loaded as herds on trains to Auschwitz or Buchenwald as a part of the act of genocide.

The exodus image in *Ashes to Ashes* also re-echoes the recent events of the Kurds, the Palestinians and the Yazidi people being driven away from their land and homes and confronting Israeli and Turkish war crimes in the Middle East. Again, the TV reporter image of ISIS guides leading the near naked Shite Muslim across the desert of Iraq to be executed en masse. Thus Rebecca's tales embody a reality that continues to echo in the present times and may also be a part of future if they are not confronted or remain unresolved.

Pinter's anti-war activism rings loud and satirical in the images of the past projected by Rebecca's flights of imagination. Devlin, on the contrary, struggles to keep her grounded in the present and the closer 'now', exposing his apathetic indifference to the calamities that go on around the world, with his enjoiners to her loud musings: "You can't sit here and say things like that." (p.411) or "... talk about something more personal, about something within your more immediate experience". (p. 413) Then again, "When was that? When did you live in Dorset? I've never lived in Dorset." (p.416) ; or at times, turning the topic completely off from Rebecca's mid-relating (about some atrocity), to more general and mundane family matters:

REBECCA: ... I watched him walk down the platform and tear all the babies from the arms of their screaming mothers.

*Silence*

DEVLIN: Did you see Kim and the kids? ... your sister Kim and the kids. (p.419, Pinter, *Plays4*)

Yet, despite the temporal shifts of the conversation for a few minutes which does brings her to the present, we see Rebecca slipping back into her horrific dream world ; as does Devlin at times although consciously so :

DEVLIN: I'm letting you off the hook. Have you noticed? I'm letting you slip. Or perhaps it's me who is slipping. It's dangerous. Do you notice? I'm in a quicksand. (p.412, Pinter *Plays4*)

Yet, despite Devlin's interruptions and Rebecca's own digressions which lead her from one image to another; her reverie regarding her lover is taken up again and again, and the word 'baby' is introduced and reintroduced in a horrific and recurring image of a man 'tearing babies from the arms of their screaming mothers'. The image immediately summons to the mind, a picture of the atrocity that we have viewed again and again in the historical Holocaust movies (in 'Sophie's Choice' and 'The Pianist' to name a few). Rebecca's words set in motion the key image that recurs over the rest of the play echoing loud and clear towards the end of the play.

Pinter's choice of the Image of atrocity may have been deliberate, since it contains a universal quality of an over the time echoing from mythical (Hindu/ Hebrew/ biblical/Islamic) and also the historical past. The Hebrew Bible (Torah), The Old Testament and the Quran mention in the story of birth of Moses and in lieu, Pharaoh's decree to snatch all the newborns from their Hebrew mothers and be put to death. This was ordered upon the circulating prophecy among the Egyptian soothsayers about the birth of the deliverer of Hebrew slaves in the kingdom of Pharaoh. The Image also finds an echo in the mythical Hindu scripture Bhagvat Gita, where Devki's (lord Krishna's biological mother) newborns were snatched away from her to be put to death by her brother Kansa who feared his death at one of their hands. The historical significance emerges from the scene of child snatching during the Holocaust. Pinter's use of the Image, gives it a timeless factor of continuity from the past ages over the ages to come.<sup>2</sup>

After introducing the image of atrocity, Rebecca steers clear off the topic with a non-sequitur about being upset regarding the fading sound of a police siren. She explains to Devlin as to why it had upset her: "... you see ... as the siren faded away in my ears I knew it was becoming louder and louder for somebody else". The fact made her feel "terribly insecure" because she said "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." (p.408) Police sirens remind one of State vigilance and also refer obliquely to screeching sirens (the harbingers of terror) at the time of bombings during a war. (The image of sirens and bombing during the World War II haunted Pinter throughout his life). Rebecca's reference to the sirens as 'always echoing' and being heard

somewhere by someone point to the perpetual phenomenon that war has become in the present day. The violent war, latent under the ever continuing Cold war, threatens to raise its head again and again even as intergovernmental organisation of UN and other bodies try putting an end to it again and again. This is done by using expedient methods that deny a lasting solution. As Rebecca tells Devlin:

REBECCA: I don't think we can start again. We started... a long time ago.... We can't start *again*. We can end again.

DEVLIN: But we've never ended.

REBECCA: Oh we have. Again and again and again. We can end again. And again and again. And again. (p.425, Pinter, *Plays 4*)

The dialogue here is dialectical, where the characters talk at cross purpose with each other; Devlin on the 'personal/private' level where he is referring to make a new beginning in their dying relationship, while Rebecca remains on her 'public/political' theme. Rebecca's insecurity results from the sense of responsibility that she feels as a citizen of the world. She wants to "possess" the siren so that it might stop echoing further for our future generations to inherit. Fading away from her, it might become louder for someone else in time to come she says. The police siren, which by association signifies war and power domination, has always echoed from past into the present and if we fail to take responsibility and find some permanent solution for it, it may continue to echo into the future as well.

Rebecca's guilt, which signifies collective human responsibility, is tangentially in contrast with Devlin's own indifference that points to a lack of general awareness in the present and represents current human apathy to war and war crimes being perpetrated 'elsewhere' than where we reside. Rebecca explains her state of mind using an extended metaphor:

[T]here is a condition known as mental elephantiasis.... This mental elephantiasis means that when you spill an ounce of gravy, for example, it immediately expands and becomes a vast sea of gravy ... which surrounds you on all sides and you suffocate in a voluminous sea of gravy. It's terrible. It's your own fault. You brought it upon yourself. You are not the *victim* of it, you're the *cause* of it. Because it was you who spilt the gravy in the first place, it was you who handed over the bundle. (p.417, Pinter, *Plays 4*)

Rebecca's explanation of how we are responsible for the mess that we are in is Pinter's outcry to the world invoking awareness regarding the cause and effect of our action and also inaction. Just as Eliot propagated religion as the key to Peace in his 'The Wasteland'; global awareness and taking responsibility and thereby collective action against War and State Repression, is Pinter's solution for world Peace.

Rebecca's conjoining the act of gravy spilling and handing over the bundle containing the baby or new life, to the Nazi guide, suggests participation on our part in the atrocity of killing or destroying the innocent life. This is Pinter's subtle economic manner of stirring general guilt for participation and passive involvement via our acquiescence to brute authority and our silent acceptance by ignoring its crimes.

Rebecca's last line "... it was you who handed over the bundle", takes the analogy of baby snatching as war/atrocity further into the play, which foreshadows its echoing in the final scene. The echoing merges with Rebecca's voice to such an intense level that it concretises the Echo as a palpable third character of the play: the Collective Human Memory/Race.

Rebecca's research into the past for discovering historical fault lines and missed potential opportunities that may have been used to evade war/crimes, is symbolized on the surface level by Devlin's delving into her private past.( It is notable that Devlin is an anagram for 'delve in'(deeply)). Rebecca's reflection of fractured and apparently disjointed random memories makes her awaken to her moral and ethical responsibility (and with the Echo, ours as well).

As Rebecca begins to echo the atrocity of baby snatching at the railway station, Devlin begins a concrete enactment of the erotic/sadistic scene described at the beginning of the play by Rebecca about herself with her brute lover. But Rebecca's unresponsiveness to Devlin's miming of the lover's moves symbolises her, as now- fully- awakened to the negativity of this kind of involvement in(the atrocity of sadomasochist nature / relationship), which stands in contrast to her hegemonic hypnotic involvement earlier. The intensity of her awakening and her rise to empathy with the sufferer of atrocity is such, that in summoning

the image of the atrocity of baby snatching again, up close (so much so that she can even hear the baby's heartbeat) along with added visuals to the context; after a few lines the 'she' (mother of the baby) transmogrifies into 'I', even as the Echo rises and starts involving the collective human consciousness along with her uttered acceptance of guilt and taking responsibility:

REBECCA: ....I was standing at the top of a very tall building in the middle of town. The sky was full of stars.... Then I looked down. I saw an old man and a little boy walking down the street. They were both dragging suitcases...suddenly I saw a woman following them carrying a baby in her arms.

*Pause*

.....She followed the man and the boy and they turned the corner and were gone.

*Pause*

She stood still. She kissed her baby. The baby was a girl.

*Pause*

She listened to the baby's heartbeat. The baby's heart was beating.

.....  
REBECCA *sits very still*

The baby was breathing.

*Pause*

I held her to me. She was breathing. Her heart was beating

.....  
*She speaks. There is an echo..*

REBECCA: They took us to the trains

ECHO: the trains

REBECCA: They were taking the babies away

ECHO: babies away

*Pause*

REBECCA: I took my baby and wrapped it in my shawl

ECHO: my shawl

REBECCA: I made it into a bundle

ECHO: a bundle

.....  
REBECCA: I went through with my baby

ECHO: my baby

REBECCA: But the baby cried out

ECHO: cried out

REBECCA: The man called me back

ECHO: called me back.

.....  
REBECCA: He stretched his hand for the bundle

ECHO: for the bundle

REBECCA: And I gave him the bundle

ECHO: the bundle

REBECCA: And that was the last time I held the bundle

ECHO: the bundle

*Silence. (pp.426- 431, Pinter, Plays 4)*

Yet, even as we see her awakening in the final scene, towards the crescendo, we again witness a bathetic fall on her part where she slips back into the oblivion once again after a Silence. Continuing in the same line again with an 'And', she denies ever having had a baby:

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  
 ECHO: I knew  
 REBECCA: And she said what happened to your baby  
 ECHO: your baby  
 REBECCA: And I said what 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  
*Pause*  
 I don't know of any baby  
*Long silence*  
*Blackout* (pp.431- 433, Pinter, *Plays 4*)

Traces of a pointer to this overturn are visible earlier too within the play which foreshadow this final scene. When Devlin asks her, "What authority do you think you yourself possess which would give you the right to discuss such an atrocity?" Rebecca answers at once: "I have no such authority. Nothing has ever happened to me. Nothing has ever happened to my friends. I have never suffered. Nor have my friends." (p.413, Pinter, *Plays 4*)

These sudden denials or counter playing of anamnesis versus amnesia in the same breath is Pinter's excoriation of the schizophrenic nature of mankind and short human memory. It is also his satire against unseeing eyes of the rest of the world at the numerous atrocities perpetrated all around us at some point and place, from which we deliberately turn away our face and shut our eyes and ears. On yet another level, very clearly, it is also a castigation of the US's involvement in almost all the historical atrocities in its own nation as well as most of the rest of the world, to some degree or the other. In *Various Voices* Pinter pointing at random at some of the worst fallouts and crimes in the history after World War II asks a question:

"And has the US to one degree or another inspired, engendered, subsidized and sustained all these states of affairs? / The answer is yes. It has and it does. But you wouldn't know it./ It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even *while* it was happening it wasn't happening. It doesn't matter. It was of no interest... *nobody talks about them.* (p. 233, Pinter, *Various Voices*)

With the final self contradictory U turn in Rebecca's utterance, Pinter consciously subverts the existing model of awakening in the present to a somnambulistic fall back into the oblivion once more. Rebecca's (and the Echo's/our) denial of 'ever having had a baby', is Pinter's pointer at the inherent danger in mankind, of slipping back into forgetfulness again or and of wilful ignorance and silence either out of apathy or out of fear of punishment (read US sanctions here). And as long as that happens, the danger of the monstrous war and war crimes would raise its head again and again, putting us to the never ending struggle of ending again.

#### Notes

- 1 The economy displayed by Pinter in befuddling time/space is apparent in the very first line in the stage direction, where after listing the characters' age as being "*in their forties*" he points out to the "*Time*" as "*Now*". This negates the possibility of Rebecca having ever experienced the holocaust herself; since her age reveals her as having been born a decade after the event.
- 2 In an interview with Maria Aragay, upon being asked what prompted him to write *Ashes to Ashes*; Pinter mused "... I was about fifteen when the war ended; I could and hear and add two and two, so these images of horror and man's inhumanity to man were very strong in my mind as a young man. They've been with me all my life, really. You can't avoid them, because they're around you simply all the time. That is the point about *Ashes to Ashes*. I think Rebecca inhabits that."



**REFERENCES**

- Eliot, T. S., *Collected Poems 1909 - 1962* Faber & Faber Limited, UK. 1992
- Pinter, Harold *Harold Pinter Plays 4* Faber & Faber Limited , UK. 2011
- ....., *Various Voices: Prose, Poetry, Politics 1948 – 1998*, Faber & Faber Limited UK, 1999
- ....., Nobel Lecture, Art Truth and Politics,  
[www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2005/pinter-lecture-e.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2005/pinter-lecture-e.html)
- Prentice, Penelope *The Pinter Ethics*, Garland Publishing Inc. New York, 2000
- Quigley, Austin ‘ Pinter Politics Postmodernism’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter* , ed. Peter Raby , Cambridge University Press, UK, 2001
- Zarhy-Levo, Yael ‘ Pinter and the Critics’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter* ed. Peter Raby, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2001
-