

分析《歸於塵土》的抗爭模式

An Analysis of the Way of Struggle in *Ashes to Ashes*

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Harold Pinter is the 2005 Nobel Laureate for Literature. Power struggle is always at the center of Harold Pinter's concern. Harold Pinter's play *Ashes to Ashes* is about a combined way of deconstructionist struggle mainly through memories and dreamlike discourse about violence which may have happened to other people and exists in the heroine's unconsciousness and materialistic struggle by using the power of verbal and physical violence against totalitarianism due to the difference of race and gender. The analysis of power struggle patterns in this play tells us that it is hard for the weak to prevail over the strong through materialistic struggle, while the deconstructionist way of struggle alone may not be enough and therefore, an artful negotiation of these

two ways of struggle ought to be the most efficient. The deconstructionist struggle aims to deconstruct the power discursively, while the materialistic struggle aims to prevail physically. This is also supported by the related theoretical arguments. Such a combined way of struggle in this play is discovered to coincide with the development of literary theories such as cultural materialism and new historicism. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the struggle patterns in *Ashes to Ashes* from the perspective of the related literary theories.

Keywords: Harold Pinter, *Ashes to Ashes*, struggle patterns, cultural materialism, new historicism, deconstructionist, materialistic, anti-totalitarianism

1. Introduction

In Harold Pinter's play *Ashes to Ashes*, Devlin seems to be hypnotizing Rebecca who is dreaming discursively of the past scenarios of violence. According to the new historicism and especially cultural materialism, although history is discursively formed as Michel Foucault indicates, in each particular history of subjection there is subversion which can make historical changes. Therefore, it is necessary to apply the combination of deconstructionist and materialistic ways of struggle against any forms of oppression such as authoritarianism.

2. Literary Review

To some extent, Pinter's plays of the last stage are the revival of materialistic struggle of his first stage. However, instead of simple return, it is a combined way of struggle which can also be demonstrated by the related literary theories.

Theories of nomadology proposed by Deleuze and Guattari [1] and of homelessness in the book Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom [2] as well as the freedom from domination and the final liberation of the whole humanity in the future — universalism promoted in *Culture and Imperialism* by Edward Said [3] lead to decentring the authority, challenging the orthodox and defeating the totalitarianism. They aim to eliminate all kinds of injustices based on race, gender or class no matter who you are. Marxist theories of class struggle have also developed into the critical theories of anti-totalitarianism and deconstruction as well as the criticism on authority represented in particular by the Frankfurt school theorists such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse. Therefore, materialism and post-structuralism could be coexistent, complementary and cooperative instead of being fundamentally contradictory.

The necessity of materialistic struggle is due to the arrival of all the new forms of injustice such as the neocolonialism, world systems and globalization which often reproduce the general



effects of colonialism [4], although physical independence of the colonized countries was achieved long ago. Therefore, Fanonism is revived, while postcolonial theory based on Western deconstructionist theories of post-structuralism like Deleuze's dissolution of subject has the risk of losing its independence and the tendency of being incorporated into postmodernism. The postcolonial theory is criticized by some people for its lack of material effort and its indulgence only in the discursive field. "Several critics, and most notably Homi K. Bhabha, have emphasized the failure of colonial discourses to produce stable and fixed identities, and suggested that cross-overs of various sorts or hybridity and ambivalence more adequately describe the dynamics of the colonial encounter. But Jan Mohamed argues that ambivalence is itself a product of imperial duplicity and that underneath it all, a Manichean dichotomy between colonizer and colonized is what really structures colonial relations" [5]. After all, "we need to peg the psychic splits engendered by colonial rule to specific histories and locations" [6].

Arif Dirlik points out: "The hybridity to which postcolonial criticism refers is uniformly between the postcolonial and the First World, never, to my knowledge, between one postcolonial intellectual and another" [7]. What he suggests is that hybridity should be understood with reference to its surrounding material conditions. Otherwise, he even thinks language of postcolonialism is the language of First World post-structuralism [8], since it "starts off with a repudiation of the universalistic pretensions of Marxist language ends up not with its dispersion into local vernaculars but with a return to another First World language with universalistic epistemological pretensions" [9]. Since Fredric Jameson considers postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism [10], in the same logic, Dirlik makes a strong critique that "Postcoloniality

is the condition of the intelligentsia of global capitalism" [11]. Therefore, postcolonialist theory cannot deal with the negative impact of globalization on the Third World.

The above-mentioned concern is also shown by the application of Deleuze's theory of rhizome: Now, the Western domination is no longer vertically implemented by force as before, but horizontally permeates through economic and cultural industries as the expansion of rhizome. The danger of cultural domination is that it is more difficult to be perceived and prevented, since it operates overwhelmingly, exclusively and secretly. Therefore, the vigilance is reaffirmed to combat this kind of neocolonialism [12].

Nancy Hartsock even radically indicates that the Eurocentric post-structuralism of agonistics is the ruse of neocolonialism to decentre the common voice of the peripheries [13].

Should the modernity only be represented in either anti-capitalist or fragmentary nature? If postcolonialism were limited to the anti-capitalism, the affairs of the marginalized would be compressed into the capitalist narrative. Therefore, we should be entreprenant enough to get out of the reductive perception in either materialism or post-structuralism and make these two theories compatible to some extent. Actually, they could even be interdependent instead of being repulsive if their forces are equilibrated instead of being in imbalance. For example, post-structuralism helps to uncover the marginalized histories, but the fragmentation cannot automatically lead to multiplies of histories in case of the dissolution of the marginalized voices. Their relationship is thus relative instead of being absolute. It is not simply a yes or no question. A delicate communication between these two theories with a practical and realistic spirit is really necessary. We need a case-by-case solution which depends on the analysis of the actual material situations. We can



demonstrate this argument by another persuasive fact that although the Eurocentric Marxist theory is concerned neither with anti-colonialism nor with postcolonialist theory, anti-colonialism or decolonization actually borrows its principles while the peripheral, minor and multiple voices of postcolonialism actually decentre, modify and complement its major narrative of capitalist history. Therefore, the applications of materialism and post-structuralism could be practically complementary instead of being contradictory. Furthermore, reforming and complementing something is always in the interest of its improvement. Marxism has thus developed in to the Frankfurt school of new generation.

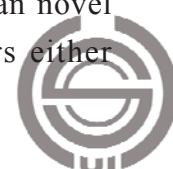
On the other hand, Postcolonial critics with their theories of hybridization could unconsciously become agents of the capital of globalization without vigilance against its negative impact on the economic development of the disadvantaged countries. Thus, postcolonial theory which focuses on cultural and discursive domains could also be complemented by materialism which pays attention to economic and material domains of global capitalist order within which postcoloniality is situated and shaped.

These problems also exist in contemporary feminist criticism. Selden, Widdowson and Brooker point out: “the competing merits -- and the debate between them – on the one hand of a broad-church pluralism in which diverse ‘theories’ proliferate, and which may well result in the promotion of the experiential over the theoretical; and on the other of a theoretically sophisticated praxis which runs the risk of incorporation by male theory in the academy, and thereby of losing touch both with the majority of women and with its political dynamic” [14]. And “Adopting Kristeva’s coupling of feminism with avant-garde writing, Woolf is not interested in a balance between masculine and feminine types but in a complete displacement of fixed

gender identities, and she dismantles essentialist notions of gender by dispersing fixed points of view in her modernist fictions. Woolf rejected only that type of feminism which was simply an inverted male chauvinism, and also showed great awareness of the distinctness of women’s writing” [15], whose artistry is also constrained by women’s unequal social and economic position which must be equalized to men’s position for its full development. As precursor, Virginia Woolf is a good example of dialectics. Edward Said who changes his positions between materialist and poststructuralist in his *Culture and Imperialism* also alternates strategically these two attitudes [16].

Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray affirm female distinctive language with fluidity, her bodies and poetic imagination to subvert male one and build new female identities and social institutions as shown in Irigaray’s *Speculum of the Other Woman* [17], which contests Freud’s theory of female sexuality as penis envy and emphasizes women’s eroticism, fluidity and touch resulting in multiple styles of otherness to counter the male discourse [18]. They strategically combine the post-structuralism of free play of meanings and the materialism of gender. That is why Butler points out that contemporary feminist debates over the meanings of gender cause a sense of trouble, as if the indeterminacy of gender might lead to the failure of feminism [19].

The binary opposition is also demonstrated between homosexuality and heterosexuality. The recent lesbian feminist theory is a new kind of feminism antagonistic to the sexism of male-dominated gay liberation movements and regards heterosexuality in particular as an institution to maintain patriarchy and its oppression on women. It is a new feminist form to emphasize women’s identification and community again. Toni Morrison’s *Sula* could be a lesbian novel whose autonomous women are lovers either



consciously or unconsciously [20]. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* puts all the issues of feminism, postcolonialism and lesbianism together to promote black women's autonomy and sisterhood for overcoming all kinds of oppression [21]. "Lesbian criticism has led to the textualization of lesbian identity, whereby lesbianism is seen as a position from which to speak otherwise" [22]. It is a kind of counter-discourse with political aim of subversion.

After all, we cannot make a clear division between the above-mentioned two struggling patterns in feminism. According to Newton, some feminists have claimed that they have explored other ways to deal with history and subjectivity, instead of only applying poststructuralist theory [23]. For feminists, the sweeping divide between materialism and postmodernism is extremely problematic. Actually, Loomba thinks the importance of gender is either completely left out or minimized although the lines are drawn between post-modernism and materialism. Feminist politics of materialistic struggles in the Third World has had to negotiate a complex relationship with feminist movements and writings in the West. Their affinities and disagreements make it impossible to follow the neat division between good poststructuralists and bad materialists or the reverse [24].

To make the subaltern voices heard in the present world order, the intellectuals in the Third World had better form their own institutions according to their actual local circumstances and historical contexts instead of being only dependent on Eurocentric academies of the First World. The advancement in this direction seems to be more and more productive. In *The Empire Writes Back*, we can find a variety of literary theories from the postcolonial countries whose literary works come to replace the texts from the First World. This replacement signifies the return of Fanonism in the academic and intellectual

domain in addition to only in the socioeconomic domain, which ought to be the whole connotation of Fanonist spirit of replacement. Ran Greenstein also indicates that recently "the insurrection of subjugated voices in the fields of feminism, black, gay, and postcolonial studies has been led by members of marginalized groups." And "The creation of new scholarly fields was implicated in fierce struggles over control of academic boundaries" [25]. Although these non-eurocentric theories may have not been globally recognized, the efforts in this direction are still encouraging. The theme that the subaltern and minority people have the right to be heard in their own voices is unambiguously expressed in Pinter's *Mountain Language*. Pinter blends the absurdism of poststructuralist theories and postmodernist techniques with the realism of sociopolitical cruelty faced by common individuals. It is universally relevant that any ban of minority languages or restriction on freedom of speech as a totalitarian way to silence the subaltern, minority or dissident voices anywhere in order to assimilate and homogenize people by the old or new forms of colonization should be resisted, although the play is said to be inspired by the Turkish oppression on Kurd through banning the Kurdish language to break their spirits and it was created during the period of British conservative ruling out voices from dissident parties. The intellectuals have certainly an important role to play for their subaltern people. Therefore, in *One for the Road*, the cruel persecution from authoritarianism could signify what Fanon calls the comprador system which means that many newly independent postcolonial countries just copy the colonizer's system of hierarchy and exploitation -- a kind of dictatorship which Fanon asks the intellectuals of these countries to change through social reform for the benefit of people. Therefore, the importance of intellectual voices in the Third World is manifested better in their real



representation of subaltern people's local interests than in their Eurocentric academic arguments. The distance between these intellectuals and local people is thus extinguished. In his interview with Nicholas Hern, Pinter points out while people in New York say they know what his play *One for the Road* is all about, he does not think so at all. Furthermore, he believes that they are even unwilling to know it. What Pinter would like to explain here is how some democracies tolerate, support and even direct the violation of human rights by and like the totalitarian regimes in the name of God [26]. In the play, this is illustrated by the typical English expressions of *dramatis personae*. Therefore, Pinter cannot but deal with it as a political emergency. Walter Benjamin also changes his previous "l'art pour l'art" attitude into the disenchantment of art and emphasizes the socio-political functions of art. On the international map, the New World Order implicates a potential antagonism which could allude to present increasing tensional relationship between the First and Third Worlds. The latter is resisting a new world order claimed by the former that it makes the world safer. However, the latter thinks it subjugates the world specially the Third World under the former's control. This is illustrated in the play by the reference to the Gulf war. Harold Pinter himself later made direct criticism on the Iraq war.

3. Deep Textual Analysis on a Combined Way of Struggle

In Harold Pinter's play *Ashes to Ashes*, the man in Rebecca's dream was like her dictatorial and violent lover who symbolized the authoritarianism. Rebecca was compelled to

follow his instruction blindly:

REBECCA

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 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. [27]

However, Rebecca still thinks that the man adored her and Devlin is a fuckpig who asks so many illegitimate questions. Devlin is likely to be a psychiatrist and he is trying to make Rebecca define more clearly anything about the appearance, disposition, spirit or standing of the man who traumatized her. Devlin has absolutely no idea of the man whom Rebecca cannot describe at all. This may be because that man is just dreamed out by Rebecca. Therefore, he is only a symbol and does not really exist. When Devlin calls Rebecca my darling, we could suppose that he is her lover. Devlin is thus eager to know the man whom Rebecca fell for and becomes jealous, when he knows that the man calls Rebecca darling: "I don't believe he ever called you darling" [28]. However, the hypnotized Rebecca does not want to be anyone's lover: "Well I don't want to be your darling. It's the last thing I want to be. I'm nobody's darling" [29]. We wonder who or what has truly frustrated her so much.

Rebecca would not like to tell Devlin what the man looked like:

REBECCA

I can't tell you what he looked like.

DEVLIN

Have you forgotten?

REBECCA



No. I haven't forgotten. But that's not the point. Anyway, he went away years ago. [30]

Rebecca says it is his job that took the man away. Devlin asks her what kind of job it was and Rebecca does not know clearly. Therefore, the man was likely to work as a secret agent whose work content could not be disclosed to anyone including the most intimate:

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. [31]

The man guided people to death in a kind of factory where workpeople nevertheless took off their soft caps to show such great respect to him when he entered:

REBECCA

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 and into the sea, if he asked them, he said. And sing in a chorus, as long as he led them. They were in fact very musical, he said. [32]

From her discursive memory and dream of the man, we can constitute a contour of the man. He may have run in a disciplined manner an organization where he exercised a strict control over his crew and was more likely to be a military commander in a navy where the discipline of obeisance was strictly required. The word "purity" could mean that he sought after racial purity by exercising ethnic cleansing. That is why he led people over the cliff and into the sea. That was the scene of the massacre of Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War. Here "conviction" refers to his political convictions which were very radical. That people had total faith in him demonstrates he was a big cheater. As he has

been presumed to be a secret agent, now we can be surer that he also signifies a member of Gestapo. When Rebecca indicates that the place was exceedingly damp and people there weren't dressed for the weather and she never found the bathroom, we understand that it refers to the prison or concentration camp. That he worked as a guide for a travel agency means: "He used to go to the local railway station and walk down the platform and tear all the babies from the arms of their screaming mothers" [33]. Actually, he was just filling his role of Gestapo and committing antihuman crime. He used the violence to separate forcefully the babies from their mothers who were at that time too feeble to win in this materialistic struggle. However, these victims would contribute to and participate in the struggle against the fascist totalitarianism and finally win the war materialistically. Such historical malefices can be forgiven but cannot be forgotten. This play thus awakens people's consciousness that we should prevent such tragedy from happening again by deconstructing any forms of totalitarianism ideologically and meanwhile be ready to struggle against and prevail over them materialistically if they unfortunately happen again.

That police siren Rebecca heard a couple of minutes before and which upsets her terribly allegorizes the common mental trauma the historical malefices have impressed in people's memory when they really happened or in their unconsciousness when they did not actually happened. They are often revealed in people's dream, no matter whether these atrocities really happened to them or not. Therefore, the man in Rebecca's dream may never have really existed in her life and is just the symbol of evil.

Rebecca is incredibly upset because she says: "You see ... as the siren faded away in my ears I knew it was becoming louder and louder for somebody else" [34]. It means that the discursively formed history including the



tragic history of maleficences can actually repeat itself. These tragedies victimize different people in different times and places for different reasons without early warning. This worry keeps disturbing everybody like Rebecca just as she points out: “Always. For ever” [35].

The police siren is the tool of any forms of authoritarian ruling which makes Rebecca feel extremely insecure. When she says: “I hate somebody else possessing it. I want it to be mine, all the time. It’s such a beautiful sound” [36], it is just an irony although she can be kind enough to worry that other people possess it. Devlin kids her by saying: “Don’t worry, there’ll always be another one. There’s one on its way to you now. Believe me. You’ll hear it again soon. Any minute” [37]. What Devlin has said actually testifies Rebecca’s thought and confirms her worry. The police as executants are responsible for the enforcement of the ruler’s will. They are busy putting people under their surveillance. Devlin also satirizes the mission of the police by the following description:

Sure. They’re very busy people, the police. There’s so much for them to do. They’ve got so much to take care of, to keep their eye on. They keep getting signals, mostly in code. There isn’t one minute of the day when they’re not charging around one corner or another in the world, in their police cars, ringing their sirens. So you can take comfort from that, at least. Can’t you? You’ll never be lonely again. You’ll never be without a police siren. I promise you. [38]

The police actually control people for the ruler in the name of taking care of their security. Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* [39] tells us people are constantly put under surveillance in every corner of the world and if they do not obey the ubiquitous discipline everywhere such as in

school or workplace etc., they will be put in prison as criminals or in hospital as lunatics for punishment. While the police, court of justice, prison and army are just the repressive state apparatuses to enforce the law, there are many more authorities like the state apparatuses around us to enforce their discipline in a society of police because nowadays the former despotism has been dispersively concretized in every unit of the society. According to Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* [40] and *The Birth of the Clinic*, [41] it is always the person in power who constitutes the system of knowledge to define his so-called truth and stipulates his discipline to execute his will. Just as Theodore W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer [42] in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* point out, it is an irony that people are actually getting less and less freedom in a so-called democratic and liberal society. If you pay attention to the camera around every corner of the street, you can immediately understand what they mean.

Maybe because Devlin is Rebecca’s lover and cares about her fidelity to him, Devlin would especially like to know whether Rebecca met the man before she knew Devlin or after that. Rebecca nevertheless talks about other things which are more important to her. Rebecca is so sensitive that she even has pity on a pen rolling off the table and calls it a perfectly innocent pen. However, Devlin doubts about its innocence just as the state apparatus in a society of police suspects every normal citizen’s innocence:

Because you don’t know where it had been. You don’t know how many other hands have held it, 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. [43]

The function of the background check on people made by the secret service in every highly civilized country reflects the same situation. The



privacy of someone's past or history including that of his/her family members and parents can be thus openly violated in a society where the personal privacy is declared to be strictly protected by law.

Rebecca's thought is the presumption of innocence which is based on the principle of human rights protection, while Devlin adopts the presumption of guilt which is built on despotic ideology. Therefore, he cannot tolerate different voice and speaks to Rebecca in an authoritative tone: "You can't sit there and say things like that" [44]. Devlin insists Rebecca be not entitled to say that the pen was innocent because he ridiculously thinks it was guilty. We can see that although Rebecca is hypnotized by Devlin, she can still struggle materialistically with Devlin by arguing with him.

When Devlin makes Rebecca feel that he is slipping in a quicksand, she thinks he is sinking into a quicksand like God. They have different opinions about God. In Devlin's view, nothing works without God and we should have an absolute piety towards God and Rebecca thus has no right to say things like that. Here, God actually signifies all the authorities acting in the name of God or regarding themselves as God such as the dictators and peremptory persons. They regard their thinking as the only truth and cannot tolerate any dissenting view. Since only God knows the truth, they thus actually consider themselves as God. Like people brainwashed by the ideological state apparatus such as education, religion, family, law and media, Devlin thinks such "God" is indispensable. Otherwise, it is like a game without judge or a world without benchmark.

Therefore, Devlin starts to question Rebecca severely:

Now let me say this. A little while ago you made ...shall we say ... you made a somewhat oblique reference to your bloke ... your lover? ... and babies and mothers, et

cetera. And platforms. I inferred from this that you were talking about some kind of atrocity. Now let me ask you this. What authority do you think you yourself possess which would give you the right to discuss such an atrocity? [45]

In Devlin's mind, there always exists an authority to authorize every remark and people thus have no freedom of speech. Actually, you do not even need to have personal experience before you make any comment. That is why Rebecca digs at him by answering: "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" [46]. However, as we have already mentioned, although all these things only happened to other people in the history and its bad consequences have been impressed in Rebecca's unconsciousness as mental trauma. Therefore, her worry tells her that she cannot escape the same suffering if such history is doomed to repeat itself. Rebecca comments on such an atrocity just to warn people against its happening again.

Devlin further menaces Rebecca intimately by making her feel that her head are in his hands. That means her life is under his control and she should thus completely follow his instruction and abandon her struggle and argument against him: "When your eyes are closed and he does that, he has your entire trust, doesn't he? It's not just your head which is in his hands, is it, it's your life, it's your spiritual ... welfare" [47].

Devlin analogize this action with that of the man who tried to murder her by having his hand on her throat. Being menaced and terrified, Rebecca does not dare to admit that the man tried to murder her although he tried to suffocate and strangle her: "No, no. He felt compassion for me. He adored me" [48]. Rebecca may confuse Devlin with the man.

Devlin thus gets angry and shouts at



Rebecca: “What do you want me to understand? Were you unfaithful to me? Why didn’t you confide in me? Why didn’t you confess? You would have felt so much better. Honestly. You could have treated me like a priest” [49]. Rebecca does not trust Devlin who claims to be her lover and makes him feel frustrated. When Rebecca is in her dream, she actually does not have Devlin at her heart and thinks of another lover. That means no matter how high Devlin’s self-esteem is, he has no importance at all in Rebecca’s mind. Using this deconstructive way of struggle, Rebecca as a physically disadvantaged female is thus able to prevail over Devlin as a physically advantaged male, psychologically, mentally, intellectually or ideologically. Therefore, Devlin has to disappointedly confess to Rebecca: “You could have put me on my mettle. I’ve always wanted to be put on my mettle. It used to be one of my lifetime ambitions. Now I’ve missed my big chance” [50].

Devlin further confesses how woman is important to his intellectual domain. Although he points out: “When you lead a life of scholarship you can’t be bothered with the humorous realities” [51], he still cannot conceal his weakness that he depends on woman and cannot live without woman: “Only once in a blue moon do you wobble the chambermaid’s bottom, on the assumption there is one – chambermaid not bottom – but of course none of this applies when you have a wife. When you have a wife you let thought, ideas and reflection take their course” [52]. If he has a wife, she should be the drive of his work: “It’s the man who ducks his head and moves on through no matter what wind or weather who gets there in the end. A man with guts and application” [53]. Devlin is actually begging for Rebecca’s adoration.

However, Rebecca still does not care about him or his menace and continues to talk about her dreaming of another atrocity according to her

unverifiable memory because she was alone when she witnessed the massacre. The scenario was the same as the content of the man’s work as guide: “There were ... guides ... ushering them, guiding them along. They walked through the woods and I could see them in the distance walking across the cliff and down to the sea” [54]. This time, Rebecca witnessed the whole process: “And I saw all these people walk into the sea. The tide covered them slowly. Their bags bobbed about in the waves” [55]. According to her description, she seems to have really witnessed such an atrocity like ethnic cleansing in her dream. This is what she keeps concerned about no matter whether she saw it or not.

In Rebecca’s dream, somebody told her the other day that there’s mental elephantiasis which simply means one victimizes oneself. Rebecca explains it vividly through the phenomenon that one drowns in one’s own gravy which expands from an ounce of gravy one spills to a vast sea of gravy. It signifies that the victimizer is doomed to become the victimized due to his/her own cause sooner or later. The villains in the history always brought destruction upon themselves. Those persons who do not take measures to prevent them from committing the malefices actually become their accomplices and the resulting bad consequences thus also victimize these persons at last.

The word “sweetheart” triggers again Rebecca’s another unverifiable memory of antihuman atrocity committed by the man in her dream. The scene seemed to be that after a massacre and the snowfield was veined by blood:

I walked out into the frozen city. Even the mud was frozen. And the snow was a funny colour. It wasn’t white. Well, it was white but there were other colours in it. It was as if there were veins running through it. And it wasn’t smooth, as snow is, as snow should be. It was bumpy. [56]



At the railway station, Rebecca saw the man committing the atrocity:

And my best friend, the man I had given my heart to, the man I knew was the man for me the moment we met, my dear, my most precious companion, I watched him walk down the platform and tear all the babies from the arms of their screaming mothers. [57]

From the tense of the above sentences, we can know that the man has no longer been her sweetheart ever since that. Furthermore, such historical atrocities are always what Rebecca cares about and she can never forget them. However, Devlin does not care about them at all. Therefore, Devlin is one of the above-mentioned persons who drown in their own gravy.

Rebecca tells Devlin that she saw her sister Kim and her kids and had tea with them. Devlin is very surprised that Kim's kids can either crawl or talk. It means Rebecca and her sister have not seen each other for a long time, but Devlin is so close to Rebecca that he is very familiar with her sister's family. Devlin is much more intimate with Rebecca than her sister Kim is. It seems that they can really be a couple or lovers.

Kim's problem is how to deal with her husband who has an affair and wants to come home. Rebecca explains to Devlin: "Well, he wants to come back ... you know ... he keeps phoning and asking her to take him back. He says he can't bear it, he says he's given the other one up, he says he's living quite alone, he's given the other one up" [58].

Kim's husband is so lonely that he begging for coming back to his wife. Who knows who has given up whom? If it is that woman who has kicked Kim's husband out, it means he actually may not repent. The worst thing is that he actually has not given the other one up. Normally, he can only know the good of his wife and really apologize to her for his action until he thinks

the woman he has an affair with is bad and thus takes the initiative in breaking their extramarital relationship. In the above statement of Kim's husband, we do not find any regret or apology. That's why Devlin digs at Kim's husband by asking if he misses his wife when Rebecca says he misses his kids. We know that Kim's husband has not acknowledged his mistake and will commit it again when Rebecca reports his words: "He says it was never serious, you know, it was only sex" [59]. Therefore, Rebecca recounts Kim's words: "She'll never have him back. Never. She says she'll never share a bed with him again. Never. Ever" [60].

In this materialistic struggle between different genders, we can see how Kim transforms a disadvantaged situation for her at first into an advantaged one. If she sticks to her principle, her husband will finally acknowledge his mistake and promise not to commit it any more. It is only under this circumstance that Kim will probably forgive her husband. This time, Kim uses the children and sex as weapons to prevail over her husband.

Rebecca dreams of going to see a very funny movie after tea. However, she did not laugh as other members of the audience did because she saw a man sitting in front of her and being absolutely still throughout the whole film: "He never moved, he was rigid, like a body with rigor mortis, he never laughed once, he just sat like a corpse. I moved far away from him, I moved as far away from him as I possibly could" [61]. That man may have been the phantom of the man who visualized Rebecca's great fear of the atrocities committed by the man. He was cruel, but dead both at the heart of Rebecca and in reality. The victimizer finally victimized himself. It also corresponds to the above-mentioned phenomenon that some persons drown in their own gravy.

In order to bring Rebecca's emotion from that of terror to that of happiness, Devlin makes



the following statement:

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 very nice sister. She lives close to you. She has two lovely kids. You're their aunt. You like that.

Pause.

You have a wonderful garden. You love your garden. You created it all by yourself. You have truly green fingers. You also have beautiful fingers. [62]

Through these compliments, Devlin intends to make Rebecca start again. However, Rebecca would definitely not like to start the nightmare again and insists on ending it instead: "I don't think we can start again. We started ... a long time ago. We started. We can't start again. We can end again" [63]. Devlin responds: "But we've never ended" [64]. That means the tragic history will pessimistically continue. However, Rebecca still thinks the tragedies can be ended again and again: "Oh, we have. Again and again and again. And we can end again. And again and again. And again" [65]. Anyway, even Rebecca thinks that the tragedies keep happening one after another and there's no way to stop them forever. Therefore, the tragedies cannot be ended once at the moment. However, Devlin does not understand this by replying: "Aren't you misusing the word 'end'? End means end. You can't end 'again'. You can only end once" [66]. Rebecca thus again philosophically, intellectually, mentally, psychologically and ideologically prevails over Devlin who is likely to be a psychiatrist.

Rebecca reaffirms her opinion by saying: "No. You can end once and then you can end again" [67]. She means that for instance, the eternal life keeps going through one life cycle after another and thus sings a song about 'ashes to ashes' to demonstrate it. Devlin pretends to understand her meaning by singing with her.

As the good wishes expressed at the burial ceremony, the revival always follows the death and correspondingly the reconstruction is also after the disaster. That is why Rebecca has never lost her hope for a better future after each tragedy and expresses her feeling by singing the song. Although according to new historicism and cultural materialism, history is discontinuous, repetitive, contradictory and discursively formed instead of the linear progress, the materialistic struggles and subversion of each particular history of subjugation actually lead to the hopeful reconstruction. Due to such vicissitudes of history and the world situation, Rebecca possesses the alternate feelings of disappointment and hopefulness. However, we wonder if Devlin can have the same feelings because he only cares about his personal problems and asks Rebecca:

Why have you never told me about this lover of yours before this? I have the right to be very angry indeed. Do you realise that? I have the right to be very angry indeed. Do you understand that? [68]

Devlin just questions Rebecca about her faithfulness to him, but does not understand the man may just be Rebecca's hallucination and phantom of evil instead of really existing. Furthermore, her stories are all based on her unverifiable memory and dream.

That is why Rebecca despises him and ignores his question by telling him another dreamed story about traffic or abandonment of female infants which can be considered as infanticide. Such crimes are committed due to gender discrimination and prostitution. Rebecca recalls: "The old man and the little boy were walking down the street. They were holding each other's free hand" [69]. It seems that the grandfather adores his grandson very much. The woman following them carrying a female baby in her arms could be the old man's daughter-in-law who seemed to be forsaken due to her daughter



whom the grandfather decided to abandon. It was probably because the female baby could not carry on the ancestral line. Rebecca continues:

Did I tell you the street was icy? It was icy. So she had to tread very carefully. Over the bumps. The stars were out. She followed the man and the boy until they turned the corner and were gone.

Pause.

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

Pause.

She kissed her.

Pause.

She listened to the baby's heartbeat. The baby's heart was beating. [70]

It probably was the last time that the woman looked at her baby because she was compelled to abandon her baby for survival.

Then, Rebecca probably adopted the baby and points out: "The baby was breathing. Pause. I held her to me. She was breathing. Her heart was beating" [71].

The scenario of the man taking the babies away by force at the railway station makes people think of the trafficker of child. Rebecca dreams of herself being the victim of the atrocity. It signifies that the tragedy can happen to Rebecca if she does not struggle materialistically against such violence, brutality and injustice. When the man stretched out his hand for the bundle hiding her baby, Rebecca gave him the bundle without any resistance. Therefore, that's the last time she held the bundle. Here, the bundle corresponds to the above-mentioned bundle which is concerned with mental elephantiasis: "It's terrible. But it's all your own fault. You brought it upon yourself. You are not the victim of it, you are the cause of it. Because it was you who spilt the gravy in the first place, it was you who handed over the bundle" [72]. Later, when an acquaintance asked Rebecca about her baby, she replied: "I don't have a baby. I

don't know of any baby" [73]. Rebecca is actually in deep self-condemnation.

Therefore, after Rebecca has prevailed over Devlin in a deconstructionist way of struggle by using her discursive dream or memory about the man as her lover to make Devlin jealous and deconstruct his self-esteem, she now decides in the first instance to struggle materialistically against Devlin's male chauvinism, violence and menace by categorically refusing to obey his order. Elizabeth Sakellaridou indicates: "The paradox in the world of Pinter's characters is that his men on the whole, no matter how mature, sophisticated and articulate they grow, refuse to abandon their male chauvinism" [74]. However, Rebecca followed exactly the same order given by the man at the beginning of the play. She has completely changed her attitude in front of her lovers because, otherwise, the tragedies can be repeated continually. It is thus necessary to combine the deconstructionist and materialistic ways of struggle to prevail completely or achieve social changes.

4. Conclusions

Ashes to Ashes could be interpreted as warning us against the fact that we can forgive the old maleficence, but cannot forget its lesson. Otherwise, the history could repeat itself just as the old colonialism is being developed into neocolonialism. The dreamlike discourse just corresponds to the new historicism and especially cultural materialism that history is discursively formed and can be repetitive, discontinuous and contradictory. That is why Rebecca cannot escape the doom seemingly belonging to predecessors. However, there is always subversion in each particular history of subjection. Therefore, the materialistic struggle is called for. Pinter's plays in this stage are involved directly in both



discursive and material spheres of struggle and indicate the coming of a period filled with both deconstructionist and materialistic struggles for the achievement of social justice in every corner of the world. Here, this play combines political ambition of anti-totalitarianism with dreamlike affairs, uncertainty, unconsciousness and unverifiable memory as a conclusion of Pinter's previous theatrical characters and a combination of practical empiricism and theoretical postmodernism. Some of the persecutions and perturbations experienced by Rebecca in her dream may exist only in her unconsciousness instead of having really happened to her. It allegorizes the generic mental trauma impressed on everybody by the past centuries' atrocities. This coordination of discursive and material spheres of Pinter's plays at his last stage coincides with the latest development of historical view and the related literary theories.

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