

Endless Return: “Deconstruction and Eternal Recurrence” — An Explorative Study of Samuel Beckett’s *Come and Go*

Prof. (Dr.) Chetan Trivedi¹, Namrata C. Zala²,
Asst. Prof. (Dr.) Rohal S. Raval³

¹Professor & Head (on Deputation), School of Liberal Arts, Kaushalya-The Skill University, Ahmedabad

²Research Scholar, Department of English, Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University Junagadh

³Assistant Professor, Department of English, Shree Govind Guru University (SSGU), Godhra

Abstract:

Although the term deconstruction existed in ordinary linguistic usage prior to the late twentieth century, it acquired its distinctive philosophical force only with Jacques Derrida’s intervention into Western metaphysics. Derrida’s concept of Deconstruction does not denote destruction or dismantling in a conventional sense; rather, it interrogates the metaphysical assumptions that govern language, meaning, and presence within the tradition of logocentric thought. Language, in this view, is not a closed system of fixed meanings but an open field in which signifiers continually defer and differ, producing meaning through what Derrida terms *différance*. Such an understanding of language resonates with Friedrich Nietzsche’s critique of truth as a mobile army of metaphors and his rejection of stable origins or final meanings. Nietzsche’s challenge to metaphysical permanence, particularly through his notion of “Eternal Recurrence”, reconceives time and meaning as cyclical, repetitive, and without transcendental grounding. Within this philosophical framework, textuality becomes a site of repetition, variation, and silence rather than linear progression or definitive closure, a perspective that provides a critical foundation for reading Samuel Beckett’s *Come and Go* as a dramatization of recurrence, difference, and the instability of meaning.

Keywords: Deconstruction, Deconstructive Eternal Recurrence, Endless, Eternal Recurrence.

1. Introduction:

“When did we three last meet?” [1]. VI’s question to RU, is echoing Derrida’s deconstructive notion of *différance*, parallelly — eternal recurrence denies the first or final meeting. Artistically, the opening line of the play, *Come and Go*, is inter-textualized from *Macbeth*, originally spoken by the first witch — inquiring not about past event(s) or meeting(s) but eternal inevitability of encounters. They always meet, have met, and will meet again purposefully. Comparatively, VI’s question is rhetorical, connotative as well as seems purposeless—rightly, increases philosophical tension of absurd drama. VI’s agonized tone situates a puzzle of time, fragile memory, and recurrence — A cyclical nature of human encounters, uncertainly baffles the audience as well as reader, and connotes meanings beyond literal/textual sense,

revealing binary “Last/First”, “Beginning/Ending”. “Derrida’s detailed reading of Saussure in *Of Grammatology* (1967) exemplifies deconstruction’s insistence on unravelling the logic and contradictions of the text itself” [2]. Each meeting simultaneously folds between first and last, destabilizes/decentralizes timeless pattern, identity, existence and meaning — embraces aporia, that existence itself is caught in invisible cycle without concrete origin or end — these absurdness/purposeless makes Beckett’s characters escapist, hopelessly eternal recurrence provides no such escape to anyone at any cost. “Now, to limit myself to existential philosophies, I see that all of them without exception suggest escape” [3]. Thus, Camus’ idea of philosophical tension of absurdity clash between human desire for clarity and the world’s silence. Ru replies VI, “Let us not speak. [Silence. Exit VI right. Silence.]” [1].

2. Deconstruction and Eternal Recurrence:

“The originator and namer of deconstruction is the French thinker Jaques Derrida, among whose precursors were Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Martin Heidegger (1889- 1976) — German philosophers who put to radical question fundamental philosophical concept such as “knowledge”, “truth,” and “identity”” [4]. Nietzsche exposes, the instability of metaphysical truth, knowledge which revolve around the western philosophy and identity of being which is human constructed — sustained by language, literature, culture and power structure. Foucault Writes, “Power is everywhere even in reading” [5]. Davis Macey’s statement brings together Nietzschean and Derridean ideas. “Yet the Nietzsche who contends that there are no facts, but only interpretations (1901) has become the patron saint of DECONSTRUCTION and contemporary HERMENEUTICS, as well as a philosophical influence on DELEUZE, FOUCAULT and DERRIDA, who praises him for his mistrust of metaphysics and values and his ability to deconstruct the history of philosophy by asking it rhetorical and philosophical questions (Derrida 1972)” [2].

“The deconstructive reader responses by probing the “depths” of the text, in search of that thread which, whether Hidden, suppressed, marginalized, or readily apparent” [6]. Derrida claims that the center(s)/origin(s)/ground(s) of the philosophy or history is “Under Eraser” [7]. Therefore, a non-dualistic responsibility of a deconstructive reader is to expose/reveal “how does text communicate with text itself, how is text weaving it’s self from within and how will text weave a spider’s net” (*Différance*), including, a deconstructive reader must be aware/adjust with the flexibility/decentralized nature of “text”. Spivak Writes, in *Translator’s Preface*, “A pedagogy that tells the pupil that there is nothing outside of the text, but that within it, in its interstices, in its white spaces and unspokennesses, the reserve of the origin reigns; it is not at all necessary to search elsewhere, for exactly here, to be sure not in the words, but in words as erasures, in their grill, “the meaning of being” speaks itself” [8].

3. Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence and Derrida’s Deconstruction in Beckett’s “Come and Go”

“The “decentering” of structure, of the transcendental signified, and of the sovereign subject- Derrida suggests, naming his sources of inspiration — can be found in the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics (especially, of the concepts of Being and truth)” [9]. Derrida’s deconstruction is profoundly indebted to the tendencies of Nietzschean philosophy — both these thinkers resist the platonic foundation which revolves around dualism or binary — the traditional way of western philosophy of making meaning. “Alfred North Whitehead claimed, in *Process and Reality*, “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes of Plato” [10]. In deconstruction, binary opposition refuse to develop any new center and destabilized these pairs and hierarchy (first term

privileges over subordinate) which collapses gradually through eternal repetition on the stage in *Come and Go*, such as presence/absence, speech/silence, light/dark, unity/isolation, together/separate, beginning/ending, etc.

Beckett's writings strictly hesitate to follow the footnotes of traditional theatre/dramaturgy/play. historically, "English theater that had been dominated for half a century by George Bernard Shaw" [11]. Beckett's canon reveal/explore philosophical, psychological, theoretical, literary critical, existential, experimental, pictorial, mechanical, structural as well as de-structural, interpretation with a touch of dark irony. "Deconstruction has two aspects such as literary and philosophical. The first one concerned on finding out the hidden meaning of the texts in terms of 'critical analysis of the text', while the second one focused on breaking or demolishing the hierarchy or dichotomy that privileges one idea over another, one concept over another, one philosophy over another and so on" [12]. Mentioned statement is unpacking the dual dimension of deconstruction, the first one is "literary," reveals the hidden meaning of the text, Derrida coined it "Textual Play" and the second one is "Philosophical" — directly targets to demolish the western metaphysical structure, standing upon two pillars, named phonocentric and logocentric. "Derrida (1927) explains that deconstructing a philosophical text means working through its concepts and logic in such a way as to discover and determine what it cannot describe, what its history has excluded in order to constitute it as what it is" [2]

4. Endless Return: *Come and Go*

"Die fröhliche Wissenschaft 1882 (The Gay Science or The Joyous Science) is an aphoristic work in which Nietzsche defends a light-hearted, life orientated approach to scholarship. It is also the work in which he first proposes his famous doctrine 'Eternal Recurrence', doctrine that time is cyclical, repeating itself over and over again" [13]. Derrida's arguments on time is one of the most intricate aspect of deconstruction— deeply tied to *différance* and trace. In the play, past traces future and fold between presence and absence, the uncertainty of time is the absence of the time, reintroduce Vi, Ru and Flo as strangers.

In Four Quartets 'Burnt Norton' (1936), T.S Eliot states: "Time presence and time past are both perhaps present in time future, And time future contained in time past" [14]. Eternal Recurrence known as Nietzschean prophecy. "Zarathustra, a philosopher or prophet fallen in love of eternity. After solitude and enlightenment Zarathustra greatly and joyously accepts infinite positiveness of eternal recurrence. The doctrine of the 'eternal recurrence'— that is, of the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of all things (EH "Books" BT:3)" [15]. Theory is a prophecy, predicting a concrete framework before comes to its own existence. Theory as prophecy of return: Eliot theorizes or frames the meditation on cyclical time and decay. — "In my beginning is my end" [14]. The poem foretells that every origin will collapse into repetition, this is not just reflection but prophecy.

Come and Go responds eternal recurrence; Beckett doesn't merely theorize "eternal return" but he dramatizes play in a very performative structure. The most sensible dissemination of the play, is gossip or whispering, which is completely impossible to decode for audience or reader. Wisper/gossip is visible on the stage but not audible, readable in the text but not understandable, VI recalling their past meeting with RU and FLO. They are instable in relationship with each other, haunting presence of absence and absence of presence. Respectively, The presence of one being, will be the absence of being's beingness. The triad /three voices/three women exchange ritual whispers, repeat gesture and posture, passes dialogue circularly. Interestingly, the beginning of the play is not the real beginning, similarly ending of the play

does not decide the end. Performatively, Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, posits that in the same sequence/pattern/structure every moment repeats endlessly and "Come and Go", can be repeated endlessly.

Repetitive patter of whispering is exclamative, even Beckett's writing is both, concealing and revealing, guised and disguised, pleasing as well as unpleasing. The significance of this puzzlement in "Come and Go" is that, it suggests that the precise form of a relationship is irrelevant and that the only important thing is whether there is communication or isolation. At a first glance, three women (age undermined), seem central characters, whose absurd silence marginalize or decentralize audience or redear. "FLO puts her finger to her lips.] Does she not realize?" [1]. "RU puts her finger to her lips" [1]. "VI puts her finger to her lips" [1]. This absurd behavior deconstructs silence, privileging over speech. "The three characters move slowly through their routine, there seems no reason for their moving, there is no outside compulsion and yet they continue, round and round, from the dark to the light, from the void to the bench; "Being together" is succeeded by "being separated" in an eternal pattern which cannot evolve, which serves no useful purpose, which simply exists and repeats" [16].

"May we not speak of the old days? [Silence.]" [1]. The center of "Beckettian silence" [17] is philosophical. There are three philosophical answers, which are respectively — "yes", "no" and "silence"—Silence occurs sixteen times, contains a number of themes and theories to evaluate "deconstructive eternal recurrence". Repetitious dialogues and actions and, 'Exits and entrances slow, without sound of feet" [1]. Soundless feet walk upon the path of silence. "Apart from colour differentiation three figures as alike as possible" [1]. It collapses the binary origin and acknowledges that perfect likeness is as impossible as a fixed meaning. Jennifer Rebecca Bailey who played a role of Flo in the San Quentin Drama Company production, she saw the play as embodying both "sameness and difference" [17].

VI requests, "Shall we hold hands in the old way?" [17]. "vi's right band with Ru's right band. Vi's left band with FLO's left hand, FLO's right hand with Ru's left band, VI's arms being above RU's left arm and FLO's right arm. The three pairs of clasped bands rest on the three laps. Silence.]" (195). FLO ends the play purposefully; "I can feel the rings" (195). "The ring of six hands, of course a traditional symbol of unity and eternal recurrence" [16]. The same patterns are followed three times over — action and dialogue reinforce the timeless human existential sufferings and revels unmentioned dreadful secret of life of Flo, Vi and Ru. Respectively, One-character supplements another and other to another. RU: "Let us not speak" [1]. Neil Sinhababu writes, "Those whose lives are bad overall might curse the demon upon learning that their total existence will be infinitely bad. Those whose lives are good overall might call the demon a god, being blessed with infinite value like that of heaven" [15]. Ivan Soll (1973) argues that "the prospect of the infinite repetition of the pleasure or pain of one's present life entailed by the doctrine of eternal recurrence should actually be a matter of complete indifference" [15].

FLO indicating RU, "Just sit together as we used to, in the playground at Miss Wade's" [1]. Eternal recurrence of life from birth to death between everlasting pattern of communication with known and unknown people to whom one meets and departs occasionally. Interestingly, in *Waiting for Godot*, characters repeatedly encounter each other, a boy or messenger delivers the same message to Didi and Gogo, Pozzo and Lucky come and go, twice, Vladimir/Didi and Estragon/Gogo wait eternally for Godot—An endless waiting is central theme of *Waiting For Godot*. FLO prays that, "God grant not", RU begs, "God forbid", and VI prays or requests "please God not" [1]. Perhaps, the purpose of praying is intensively different.

“Holding hands . . . that way. / Dreaming of . . . love” [1]. Logically, the prevailing use of ellipsis indicates deconstructive eternal recurrence approach. “The ring of six hands, of course a traditional symbol of unity and eternal recurrence” [16]. In *Proust* (Epistemological manifesto, (1957)), Beckett frames, “We cannot know and we cannot be known” [18]. Proust’s consciousness reveals an aporetic thinking, aporia signals a moment where, logical reasoning reaches a deadlock—where language, logic, action, concept(s) and situation(s) cannot fully resolve a contradiction or tension. It’s not just confusion or puzzle but a structural impossibility within thought itself. Neil Sinhababu writes: “These heavenly or hellish consequences answer Soll, Higgins, and Ridley’s questions. Whether one has an afterlife of infinite happiness or suffering matters a great deal, even if one learns nothing new about how one’s earthly life will go” [15].

“The woman of the present, however, is before us, now older, reuniting with her sisters, speaking and moving in the eternal present tense of the theatre, or what Robbe-Grillet calls Beckett’s “theatre of presence” (111-25)” [17]. In *Proust*, Beckett frames “identification of immediate with past experience, the recurrence of past action or reaction in the present,” “a participation between the ideal and the real, imagination and direct apprehension, symbol and substance” [18]. “Hypothetically, one may envisage an endless regression of dialectical interpretations and reading without any stable, essential meaning. In short, a text may possess so many different meanings that it cannot have a meaning” [19].

5. Conclusion:

At the end of, *Twilight of the Idols* — Nietzsche philosophizes himself as a teacher of eternal recurrence. Theoretically, Derrida walks upon the footprints of Nietzschean philosophy as a disciple while Beckett is a keen observer as well as a practitioner, structurally dramatizes eternal recurrence. In *Come and Go*, *Flo*, *Vi*, and *Ru*, are actually reliving (thrice in play) past countless times. Beckettian characters seem escapists, they wish to escape from meaningless existence of life, hopelessly, eternal recurrence provides no such escape to anyone at any cost. Even God can’t change the unchangeable past of nature and time.

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