

The Sense of Time in T.S Eliot's *The Family Reunion*

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Abstract

The importance of time held a huge amount of writers in the modern world as it occupies a large room in English literature. T. S. Eliot was among those writers who had been occupied by the concept of time and reflected it in his writings. This paper aims at showing the impact of time on the characters in Eliot's play, *The Family Reunion* (1939). It tries to make the reader realize the scope of the effect of seasons, history, memory, and time's main factors (past, present, future) on the author's thoughts. The paper, too, proves that Eliot's bitter experience is lucidly shown in his characters throughout a close reading of his biography. Eventually, it finds out the state of human beings between the first and the second World Wars, the state of meaninglessness and absurdity of the cyclical movement without any change of life in the course of events of the play.

1. Introduction

J. Hillis Miller, in his essay "Time in Literature", says that via the study of time in literature, one may mean the quest of the way literary works show in one way or another the human experiment of lived time (87). Kant and others have observed that time is the most characteristic mode of our experience. It is more general than space, because it applies to inner world of impressions, emotions and ideas for which no spatial order can be given. Time is important to human beings as it is strongly connected to the concept of the self (Meyerhoff 1). Herbert Spencer once defined time as: "That which man is always trying to kill, but which ends in killing him." It seems one of life's more curious ironies that time is not always welcomed as a gift (qtd. in Levine 37).

The modern mind is deeply conscious of time as a universal condition of life and as an ineradicable factor in our knowledge of man and society. Wyndham Lewis pointed out that time had become an over-all and predominant theme in recent literature (Meyerhoff 3). He says that time has come to play an increasingly dominant and overwhelming part in the lives of human beings in our age (86).

There are two ways of thinking about time: time in experience which means that time in private, personal and psychological that leads one to think of time as directly and immediately experienced. The problem of this kind of time has its most interesting implications in conjunction with the problem of man. "Time is the medium of narration as it is the medium of life" (Meyerhoff 27). Time in nature, on the other hand, means that it is public, objective or defined in terms of "the objective structure of the time relation" in nature. This is the concept of time in physics. It is also our public time, which we use with the aid of watches, calendars...etc, in order to synchronize our private

experiences of time for the purpose of social action and communication (5).

Heidegger holds the view that time is the essential element of subsistence. (qtd. in Meyerhoff 27). In this view Heidegger considers time as it is practiced by the person him/herself, not as it is recorded by the historian. Time is connected with importance for humans because human life is subjected to time. (Meyerhoff 27).

2. The Sense of Time in T.S Eliot's *The Family Reunion*

The play begins with the gathering of a family to celebrate the sixtieth birthday party of Amy, Dowager Lady Monchensey. The family lives at Wishwood in the north of England. Amy dominated Wishwood for forty years since her marriage to late Lord Monchensey. It was a loveless marriage which brought sorrow and evil to Wishwood. The couple suffered from unhappiness for three years. During this period her concerns shifted from her husband to Wishwood. In summer Amy became pregnant with Harry. Agatha, who is Amy's youngest sister and of twenty-one years old, came to Wishwood to spend her holiday as she was at college. When she arrived in Wishwood she and her brother-in-law immediately fell in love with each other. So Amy's husband was thinking of the way by which to murder his wife but Agatha prevented this murder. Harry was born and after some years his brothers Arthur and John were born too. In the seven years that followed, Amy's husband left her and traveled abroad and died while Harry was still a boy.

Amy now focused on the future of Wishwood and she must find Harry an appropriate wife. She chose a remote cousin and a young girl, Mary. When Mary came to spend her vacation at Wishwood, she fell in love with Harry who didn't love her at all. During these years, Harry decided to marry and picked on a wife who separated him from his family and they traveled abroad. The marriage is similar to his father's one that of no love. Harry also thought of murdering his wife but the difference is that this murder happened. From that moment Harry began to feel himself haunted by evil and supernatural unseen ghosts named the Eumenides. Having thought to find safety, Harry made up his mind to go back home but was shocked by finding the Eumenides before him.

Time is one of the main aspects which is broadly considered by Eliot in his plays. Philosophers from Plato down to our times, see that time can be divided into two divisions: Those who support the objective reality of time. Supporters of this orientation, and Eliot is among them who spatialises the time, believe that time is likened to space and can be measured by units as well. Eliot considers time is similar to river. For him, the past exists in the present which involves the future. The second category regards time is subjective and psychological. It is opposed to the first since it includes stability and it is not permanent flow (Tilak 41-42). Eliot spoke of two basic parts of life, time and space, so as to show how they squandered instead of condensed his identity. Getting an essential tradition needs aware effort to gain the historical sense of the eternal and of the temporal at the same time. Eliot was stuck in a writer's sense of history when he was affected by what is temporal and what is timeless (Sigg 111).

In Eliot's *The Family Reunion*, Nevill Coghill explains that the influence of time is clear on Amy. When her husband left her and went abroad, and died, her thoughts were now for the future. That meant the future of Wishwood, the future of the Monchensey dynasty and that Harry must marry. She has to find him a suitable wife (25). As she gets aged, she wants to keep Wishwood safe. She does not wish losing her son as she lost her husband. She does not want to lose her family. Furthermore, in her opening speech she laments her advancing age and refers to her declining health which keeps her in the house for long time. It is autumn, summer sounds a long way off. At the age of youth, she had no fears that life at Wishwood might come to an end; Time would flow perpetually on through the seasons, year after year, and nothing would change. Wishwood and its objectives would calmly go on, but now Amy does not feel such security. So Coghill sees that much

of Eliot's philosophy of Time is represented in Eliot's following speech(180):

I have nothing to do but watch the days draw out.

Now that I sit in the house from October to June,

And the swallow comes too soon and the spring will be over

And the cuckoo will be gone before I am out again .

O Sun, that was once so warm, O light that was taken for granted

When I was young and strong, and sun and light unsought for

And the night unfeared and the day expected

And the clocks could be trusted, tomorrow assured

And time would not stop in the dark! (I. i. 67) ⁽¹⁾

Eliot's admiration of cyclical imagery and seasons meets the audience at every corner. Leonard Unger points out that months and seasons are among the most important sources of imagery in Eliot's writings. He adds that they are drawn from bygone literatures and myths (qtd. in Tilak 58). For that reason, they were among the essential props on which Eliot depends in expressing his feelings of time in his *The Family Reunion*.

The cold March of *The Family Reunion* is deeply wrought into the texture of the imagery. Eliot is among the writers who tend to identify, by the metaphor of seasons, the diverse objects of cyclical movement in nature. Winter, death, old age and evening have ready-made connections with one another in *The Family Reunion* and so have spring, young generation and birth (Frye 49).

As Eliot refers to the role of seasons in the action of the play, this action takes place in late March. Amy is waiting for the mercy of

⁽¹⁾ All quotations from *The Family Reunion* are taken from T.S. Eliot's play *The Family Reunion*. Introduced by Nevill Coghill. London: Faber and Faber LTD, 1969. Further references will be to the act, scene and the page number.

summer because of the coldness of Wishwood. But the painful rebirth of spring must come first and, as Mary says: "*The spring is very late in this northern country, Late and uncertain, clings to the south wall*" (I. ii. 97).

As far as Eliot is concerned and stuck in tradition, it is reflected in the play, especially his heroin Amy Monchensey. She believes that change is considered as the process which accelerates time on its way to death. A clock symbolizes the new order of time Harry ushers into Wishwood. The walk Mary and Agatha take around the birthday cake at the end of the play portrays this new order. Amy Monchensey represents frozen, lifeless time. She is a woman extremely clung in the past to ever move forward, or let her family move forward.⁽²⁾ Therefore, she is against any changes and she favours the circular life in order to maintain her family alive. She is anxious about the future as it will lead to the loss of her family and Wishwood because there is no one will take the leadership of the estate in case of the absence of her two sons. So, Time is observed as the adherent enemy for Amy. She suffers from time's imposing itself to control her life. She wished to suspend time by keeping every- thing unalterable in Wishwood through the course of Harry's absence for eight years.

As one gets older, people say that time appears to go faster (Levine 39). Man lives in continuous panic of death and it is his last fate. And the most magnificent yearning of the human soul is for eternity (Tilak 38). Uncle Charles gives some signs of his fears of getting old and death. This feature, related to time passing, was connected to Eliot all along his life. As a matter of fact, human beings suffer from passing time all over the world. That matter from which no one can escape.

⁽²⁾ <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-themes-analysis-family-reunion-by-eliot-303822>. Accessed at : 12/12/2019

Charles, like Eliot, is haunted with the obsession that old age comes softly. He felt safe enough in the past, but now as he gets older he does not feel safe:

I suppose I'm getting old:

Old age came softly up to now. I felt safe enough;

And now I don't feel safe. (II. iii. 167-8)

Amy feels so frightened of the fact that time will have a stop and all the classes of society tremble with emotional feelings that the procession of seasons, and the succession of warm day and calm night may stop abruptly in darkness. This was her weak point which she had hidden throughout her life. Age has driven away her confidence in her own adequacy and in the world itself (*The Family Reunion*, Commentary 181). She seemingly wants to precede time in order to keep Wishwood safe. She devoted herself for the sake of the future of her family and Wishwood. She sacrificed herself for the next prosperous life in Wishwood. It is obvious through Amy's blaming her sister Agatha when she tells her that she knows Agatha's relationship with her husband. In addition, she didn't show any weakness and forced herself to the future of Wishwood. Amy did her best to erase her son's past life and to remind him of the years as he had been a happy boy at Wishwood. She exerts great efforts for Harry's successful future. She, in part two of the play, blames Agatha because Harry left Wishwood again. She stupidly thought that Agatha had changed after thirty-five years. Amy supposed that time might have made a change in Agatha but she didn't know that that period of time only made a change in her because she had got older:

And I thought that time might have made a change in

Agatha---

It has made enough in me. Thirty-five years ago

You took my husband from me. Now you take my son. (II. iii. 158)

She attempts to seize change and to immortalize the Wishwood she has 'supported' and which has 'supported her'. This is her protection against time. Yet when Harry does accept the position which she wishes to impose on him and Mary also evades her domination, she hints the weakness of that protection (Jones 105): *So you will all leave me! / An old woman alone in a damned house* (II. iii. 163).

The celebration of Amy's birthday indicated the ending time of her life. It enhances Eliot's lines in his poem *East Coker*: "In my beginning is my end... In my end is my beginning." When what one sees and what one can no longer be distinguished, time and space lose their relative meanings, and only in such eternal existence can the beginning and ending be the same. For Eliot, this coming together of beginning and end takes place when "the past and future / Are conquered and reconciled." In this state all life is experienced as immortality without change (Fairchild 72).

For that reason, the opening speech and the last words of Amy in this play apply to Eliot's lines. In her beginning is her end. She was afraid of time will have a stop and this is exactly what had been done: *And the clocks could be trusted, tomorrow assured, / And time would not stop in the dark!* (I. i. 9-10). Also this matter was a source of worry to Eliot in his life. He regards life and existence nonsense because they are lived under the shadow of time. He believes that a date of man's birth is really the date of his death. So Eliot compares the nearness of Amy's death to the devastation of modern life through time: *Agatha! Mary! Come! / The clock has stopped in the dark!* (II. iii. 171).

The use of flashback is essential in this play as well, especially with Harry. He, as Coghill sees, felt happy only when he was a child. When he escaped with Mary to a hollow tree in wilderness to play Red

Indians. He loves his childhood though there was a punishment but there was no affectionate love or repentance. There was innocence (26). He believes that if nothing is changed in time, one might echo a previous experience hopefully he might discover his other self in boyhood at Wishwood which he considers it the rose-garden. All that because he wants to flee from the sense he has “the particular has no language.” This sense which he can express it in hints of guilt (Frye 92). This idea indicates the nostalgia to the past and how cruel the present is. It is Harry’s desire to run away from his present when he agreed to marry Mary:

*When we were children, before we went to school
The rule of conduct was simply pleasing mother;
Misconduct was simply being unkind to mother;
What was wrong was whatever made her suffer,
And whatever made her happy was what was virtuous-
When we came back, for the school holidays,
They were not holidays, but simply a time
In which we were supposed to make up to mother
For all the weeks during which she had not seen us
Except at half-term, and seeing us then
Only seemed to make her more unhappy, and made us
Feel more guilty, and so we misbehaved
Next day at school, in order to be punished,
For punishment made us feel less guilty (II. i. 122)*

Eliot wants to portray a similar situation between Harry and Christ. When Harry was commemorating his childhood in the wilderness in his dialogue with Mary, it reminds readers of the period of forty days Christ spent fasting in the wilderness, where he (Christ) was tempted by Satan and the latter was overcome. This period is spent by the

Christian as well in order to repent for his past sins and runs away from the world towards God (Southam 129). It highlights the subjection of Eliot's religious belief to time.

Harry seems to lose hope of recovering the happiest moments as he is growing up. He feels that life becomes more and more difficult over time when one's life progresses. He thinks that virtue is associated with childhood and it never gets back. Eliot tries to promote the role of memory in his play as one of the ways by which one can obtain gladness. This gladness, though it involves penalty, but it leads to purity. During Harry's conversation with his aunts and uncles, he believes that they are those people who are only able to comprehend a succession of events in Time. But they are not capable of receiving what is eternally there (the omnipresence of evil)(P. 192). He describes his experience as that one which has no peer among the family members of Wishwood. He expresses a type of agony that no one of them has ever met in his/her life. His belief is that his listeners might only suffer from things of the past but not from things that are still alive:

As for what happens-

Of the past you can only see what is past,

Not what is always present. That is what matters. (I. i. 82)

He sounds only to have heard the idea of Redemption negatively. He has informed us 'Everything is irrevocable, the past unredeemable' (I .iii. 73-74). He, as a creature in Time, staring at his past, sees the reality of his sin which can never be denied. What is done cannot be undone. But the Redemption (like every other act in Time) is also an act in Eternity, and if the things that are going to happen have already happened, and the things that have already happened are also just going to happen. The Redemption is "now", and involves all that

we who live in Time see as Past, Present and Future (P. 209). The conversation between Harry and Agatha shows Eliot's idea of time which is written in *East Coker*: "In the beginning is my end": *This is like an end / And a beginning...* (II. ii. 149).

In this dialogue Eliot is connected to his ancestral home. It sees time more personally and refers to Eliot mainly as well as to human beings. These two lines in *The Family Reunion* imitate the initial words of Genesis: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." It is seen that how Eliot associates the "beginning" with an ending, producing an Eliotian virtual circle. These lines would have had a nonexistent and immaterial purpose for Eliot. The progression of beginning and ending is a prediction of mortality and demolition. In this progression it could be noticed that the immortal cycle of creation and devastation, life is dominated by time (Fairchild 66). Time, for Eliot, sounded to have no redeeming characteristic during the World War I. He was concerned about the uselessness and meaninglessness of human matters, especially his own. Life was purposeless and absurd. Human beings suffered from the agony of the war and dishonor that the disaster of death and violence brings. Therefore, the word "time" takes place as much as "death" in Eliot's works (Johnson 215). This virtual circle reflects the effect of the meaningless and absurd life on Eliot, especially the life between the first and second World Wars. In this play, the picture offered of the world explains clearly that life is meaningless. A tepid and fatigued society can find nothing to do but continue as always through the open-ended cycles of time, with all vision of truth and purpose extinguished (Coghill 18).

Nevill Coghill argues that Mary is worried about time. She seems to be 'getting on for thirty' (I. i. 70) and believes that she has missed her life and youth. She feels lost among generations (196). She has fears of

getting older and Time started rising her obsession of spinsterhood: *I don't belong to any generation.* (I. i. 70).

Through the dialogue between Agatha and Amy, Coghill comments that Eliot used an echo from Henry James's short story entitled "The Jolly Corner". This echo refers to time as it is an infinite cord that here and there may furl back and make a round shape, and so two points of link are composed that gather past and present (187): *And it will not be a very jolly corner. /When the loop in time comes ----- and it does not come for/ everybody -----* (I. i. 73).

Proust wrote: "A single minute released from the chronological order of time has re-created in us the human being similarly released." In Eliot's words: "Only through time, time is conquered" (Meyerhoff 49).

Chorus in the play guides one to the truth that we must differentiate between two kinds of Time: First, the type understood by human beings as an unending span of Past, Present and Future. People live in the present, but the past is lost to them and the future is not yet reached. So that people do not see Whole Time, because they live in it. Secondly, Eternity in which All Time is apprehended in one endless glance (Coghill 208):

*I am afraid of all that has happened, and of all that is to come,
Of the things to come that sit at the door, as if they had been there
always.*

*And the past is about to happen, and the future was long since settled.
And the wings of the future darken the past, the beak and claws have
desecrated* (I. iii. 116)

S. Musgrove comments that T. S. Eliot has used Walt Whitman's material and behavior so as to refuse his philosophy. For Whitman, time expands in one unlimited linear orientation, towards an affirmative

and perfect future, in which the possession of something true and better than the present, looks forward to the rising spirit of man. As far as Eliot is concerned, the sense of a direction is deceitful, time is a perpetual present that cannot produce more than is now known, in which the only kind of possession imaginable is one equal in kind to dispossession from the requirements of the self (Davie 196).

Time is a complex phenomenon going beyond description in the sense that there can be no complete descriptive theory of time (Lofgren in Baert 39). As Shils says: "Time is ... a constitutive property of society." He also says: "Time provides not only a setting which permits the state of one moment to be compared historically with that of another moment. It is a constitutive property of society as well. Society is only conceivable as a system of varying states occurring at moments in time. Moreover, it (society) displays its characteristic features not at a single moment in time but in various phases assuming various but related shapes at different and consecutive moments of time (qtd. in Quie 271)

Understanding of time needs to be at the very core of any perspective on our society and time cannot simply be conflated with social change. Postmodernism annihilates any real potential for change. It posits an empire of signs, whose powers of social control over individuals and societies is so absolute that no movement is possible. It stipulates an end to history and a death to the subject whose individual and collective action and whose self -understanding(s) within time has made meaningful transformation and the contemplation of better future(s) possible (Quie 271).

What modernism agrees with postmodernism is an inclination to throw components of the past behind. The greatest degree of figuration of this is available in Nietzsche who states "every past is

worth condemning". The past menaces and weakens the existence as well as puts the present in difficult position (P. 280). Eliot in *The family Reunion*, by the character of Harry, shows the opposition of this view. Harry's hatred of the present represents the immortality of pain. He sees the happiness and joy in the past as it is leading to innocence and guiltlessness.

Eliot sheds light on the notion of time by his perception of Eternity. Eternity implicates Time but it sometimes surpasses it as well. It is utilized in three directions: 1- an ending range of time, 2- that which is completely eternal, and 3- that which implicates Time but it sometimes surpasses it as well. Eliot uses Eternity in the third direction. For him, time can be overcome only by time, as it is in the moment that the Eternal uncovers itself, therefore the moment is made endless (Tilak 42). Eliot employs the mythical mode as a criticism of the present. The past is exalted and the dirtiness of the present is shown by contrast. That is a sort of Eliot's methods of putting the past and present side by side (Tilak 50-51).

Carol H. Smith, in his essay entitled "The Family Reunion", states that future and past are made clear in this play as a new trend which has been traced in Eliot's final plays. *The Family Reunion* represents a negation of human love as presented by Amy's desire to impose her will on Harry's future, by Mary's offer of love that Harry looks forward to saving himself as well as by his wife's endeavor to predominate him by her will. Agatha also leads Harry to the authentic perception of his past and future via her love for him which, in turn, refers to the 'other side of despair.' As a result, by the effect of these parts of time, past and future, there lies two kinds of love in this play: human and divine love through a progression of characters who are part human and part divine (Sullivan 95).

It seems that Eliot employs Warburton's speech to Harry so that he refers to Amy's happy future. Warburton makes Harry leave thinking of the past and he is requested to keep Wishwood and his mother safe. Harry is asked these two things by accepting Wishwood leadership and getting married to Mary. He is stuck to the past and he refuses to keep anything safe in the future. He has that pessimistic view of future because of his past guilt. He considers time has stopped in the present. He is concerned with talking about the past even it were nonsense. So he asks Warburton to tell him about his father even though it is meaningless:

But what we are concerned with

Now, is your mother's happiness in the future,

For the time she has to live: not with the past. (II. i. 122-23)

Time is similar to change yet in the middle of change perpetuity is hidden permanently. Maharishi assures that although the permanent change of bodies in the past, present, and future, but the immortal self remains the same forever (Fairchild 67). Fairchild further adds that Eliot conceives and supports nonchange as the therapy to remedy the human wretchedness. He adopted this idea through his observation that the world was snared in time and its supporters change (94-95). When a life is described as a complete aimlessness, in this case it may be named as a "life without time." It is temporal only because either needs have not been satisfied yet or goals are still at one's disposal. So in Amy's life, goals no longer exist. Time did not exist in the play when Harry had come back home. Thus, the events were going in circles and time seemed to be somehow immobile because there was no change in Wishwood (Lal 135).

F.O. Matthiessen mentions that because Eliot kept in mind Henry James's short story, 'The Jolly Corner', while writing his play is clear

when one of the opening speeches describes how Eliot's hero, Harry will be encountered everywhere by the ghost of his past): *The man who returns will have to meet The boy who left* ... (175-76). Harry has sensed that meeting with his old self, 'the boy who left', brings the fear into the safe side as the Eumenides are seen for the first time. He has felt that they are ubiquitous; he has been acquainted with the fact that they were watching him. He believes that their existence is timeless which results in his eternal agony. He is making an effort to separate himself from his past, which at the moment sounds unreal. And from previous self which 'knew her' (his wife) and which seems in retrospect to have had no spiritual definition ('I was not any person'). He is about to realize that he cannot detach himself the past or claim that it was different from what it was:

When I knew her, I was not the same person.

I was not any person. Nothing that I did

Has to with me. The accident of a dreaming moment,

Of a dreaming age, when I was someone else

Thinking of something else, puts me among you. (I. ii. 110-11)

Harry should hold past and its results as true in the present in order to establish a future as Agatha believes. The hope of redeeming the past by future action exists only when that past is accepted (Jones 93-94): *The future can only be built/*

Upon the real past (I. i. 72)

Eliot may have gone to a Greek play for the basis of *The Family Reunion*. He started to conform classical material to naturalistic form. This play adheres to the Unities of Time and Place; the time of the action is one day. One of the interlocutors in the 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry' explains what might have been Eliot's opinion of the Unities at one time—that they 'make for intensity' (Jones 87). Eliot adopts the

doctrine of the Anglo-Catholics, who mean, to him, the powerful link in the tradition of religion that connects the past with the present and expects the future. Eliot believes that the reason the present age is meaningless and has no order and plan, lies in its lack of religious belief. So he, in despair at the meaningless distortion and annihilation in contemporary life, is in search for alternative motive that will create meaningful life. It is his embrace of the creed of the Anglo-Catholics (Buck 238).

Johnson says that Eliot saw time as a priceless ware and it has to not be wasted. He adds that the word "Time" is usually repeated in Eliot's best poems. The sense of time excites a consonant and recurrent punctuation of Eliot's verse, varying in volume and intimacy from tickings and heartbeats to the rhythmic throbbing of drums. Eliot permanently made effort at whatever he was working. He was careful and felt guilty if he was inert. He could set to work at once without any time-consuming initiative rituals. This panic of time passing constantly-"time lost"-made him grasping for knowledge. Eliot's insufficiency to practice every kind of physical activity, which is considered a time-consuming dimension of life, left a big gap to be filled by academic work. His physical feebleness was an invaluable endowment of time to be spent on his writings. He loved studying tiny things in great detail over long hours in the field of sex, which is regarded a greedy consumer of young man's time and power, less is known of Eliot's activities and inactivity. He said he was virgin until his marriage (Johnson 205-207). Johnson continues arguing that in Paris, he attended the lectures of Henri Bergson who is another man interested in time. He said that he knew "nobody", adding that the best way to profit from the city was to remain isolated, since the people there he was likely to meet

were “futile and time wasting” (210). He, in his works, insists on some abstracts and some concretes or substances.

Eliot’s attachment to the culture of the past and present, including literary legacy and his continual use of its prosodic patterns, is at best a matter of bricolage and at worst merciless (Bedient 142). Chronotope is defined, by Mikhail Bakhtin, as one or another temporal-and-spatial image of man. It refers to the planning standard for a series of narrative events. It is the way space becomes interactive to time (180).As a result, Eliot uses chronotope in Harry’s journey and with life at Wishwood during Harry’s absence.

Amy and her sons act out feelings and emotions, that she waits for their return home because emotions too are motions. Amy’s waiting helps to pass the time. If they did not leave one another or re-unite, then they would be lost, and these are actions which cannot happen without taking up time. What Eliot presents us with the family members is motivated by his wish to show that each member is the other’s pastime, and that reunion facilitates endurance of the meaninglessness of existence (Lal 136).

When Eliot wrote about eternity, he had felt the pressure of time which has no future. His life became conquered by bureaucracy and worry like many of his contemporary people of that time , snared in a middle period when pre-war life sounded delusive and post-war life unreasonable (Fairchild 79). Eliot did not simply, as he has been accused, move back into a search for the timeless (presence) at the expense of time. Concerning this matter he is in amazing agreement with Derrida and other theorists of his time who believe that time cannot be surpassed at all, even the timeless does not have anything to do with time. This is the discrepancy between time and timelessness that Eliot confronts throughout some of his writings. Time, for Eliot,

cannot only be put within the area of time, as a result it cannot be separated from it. It is the suggestion of the eternal in the wonderful world, and the solution of this discrepancy that happens in individual awareness (87). Eliot in *The Family Reunion* could embody that contrast through Lady Monchensey's failure to insure the future of Wishwood after Harry's second departure. Harry's leaving couldn't stop time from being passed but rather it transcended to reach Amy's death.

3. Conclusion

Eliot presents his experience of time in the characters of the play, and Amy is among them. Eliot was stuck in the permanent fear of getting aged and fearing death. Harry, on the other hand, like Eliot, also suffers from the agony of being away from his home and family. Eliot practiced time in experience more than in nature. He stood against any change as a reference of the devastation between the first and second World Wars. He advocates the state of being lived in the past and not growing up as an escape from the present that, in turn, leads to torture and death.

Eliot shows a paradoxical situation when Amy fights the change but she desired that her sister Agatha had changed during some period of time. She wants Harry to forget his past and focus on the future. Eliot considers time wherever he utilizes it. He regards life meaningless since it is subjected to time. Furthermore, memory is used in the play as those periods of time in which innocence and purity exist. Harry employs his past memory as a method of crossing to the safe side of his life. Eventually, Eliot couldn't solve the problem of being eternal and he gave up to time. He believed that what is done cannot be undone.

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الحس الزمني في مسرحية تي إس إليوت "اجتماع شمل العائلة"

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الملخص

إن أهمية الوقت شغلت عدد كبير من الكتاب في العالم الحديث كونها تحتل مساحة واسعة في الأدب الإنكليزي. تي إس إليوت كان من بين هؤلاء الكتاب الذين انشغلوا بفكرة الوقت وانعكست بوضوح في كتاباته. يهدف هذا البحث الى بيان تأثير الوقت على الشخصيات الرئيسية في مسرحية إليوت "اجتماع شمل العائلة" (١٩٣٩). يحاول البحث تمكين القارئ من إدراك مدى تأثير فصول السنة والتأريخ والذاكرة وعناصر الزمن الرئيسية (الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل) على أفكار الكاتب. يبرهن البحث أيضا بأن التجربة المريرة لإليوت هي واضحة في شخصيات المسرحية من خلال القراءة الدقيقة لسيرة حياته. وأخيرا كشف البحث من خلال مجرى أحداث المسرحية حالة البشرية للفترة ما بين الحربين العالميتين الأولى والثانية والتي تعد حالة من عدم المعنى والتفاهة كما لو أن العالم يسير في دائرة مغلقة دون أي تغيير في الحياة.