

Journeying in Time and Space “through the tall heat that slept”: Larkin’s “The Whitsun Weddings”

N. Belgin ELBIR
Atılım University, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract:

This paper examines Philip Larkin’s use of the metaphor of a train journey in his famous poem “The Whitsun Weddings” to transform time into space in such a way so as to enable the speaker to present a geographical and historical survey of the rural, urban and industrial landscape of mid-twentieth-century, post-war England, registering the social and cultural changes brought about by the process of modernization. The paper argues that the train journey functions as a metaphor for an imaginative journey, through time and space, that brings, in a characteristically discursive manner, Larkin’s solitary and contemplative speaker from a state of detachment and superiority to one of heightened and thoughtful realization of the deeper implications of his perceptions as the train, and the poem near the final destination. In other words, the railway journey through the spatial and temporal metaphor of “the tall heat that slept” becomes a means of revealing and patterning the speaker’s changing responses to the modern English landscape and English people.

Keywords: Philip Larkin, “The Whitsun Weddings,” spatiality, temporality, train journey as metaphor