

# Leaving belfast



Focused on a conflictive time for Belfast, Andrew Motion tries to express the devastation that Belfast suffered during the economy's decline years and the influence that the political issues had in the society. The narrators sadness for having to leave his beloved city can be felt all over the poem. The poem was published at a very difficult time for Belfast. Conflicts and violence were present in all the streets.

On the one hand, manufacturing industries were on a decline and economy was in its worst situation; on the other hand, the city was divided in two parts: the Catholics and the Protestants. The poem introduced us two people going to the airport. One of them has decided to stay in the city, but the other wants to leave it. On the way to the airport, the narrator looks back from the top of the hills of the road and feels nostalgia for leaving the city behind. The author uses lots of descriptions which are representative of the sadness of the narrator, but also of the image that the city had acquired.

As the narrator states, he doesn't leave Belfast because of fear, although the violence of the bombs could make him feel scared; he leaves it because he feels like a stranger in his own city and because the political issues are having a tremendous impact in the habitants of the city. In the last part of the poem, the narrator explains what is the thing most annoying for him. His beloved city doesn't seem to be on the way of the change so, unfortunately, he has to leave from Belfast and let it behind. Leaving Belfast is a 7 stanzas poem consisted of 4 lines in each stanza, what we call a quatrain.

The feet analyzed in the poem don't seem to have any relation between them, but we could say that although the position of the stressed syllable doesn't seem to have any concordance, most of them are what we call Rising feet, because in most of the occasions the unstressed syllables happen to appear before the stressed one and not the other way. The poem is a free verse poem; it doesn't respect any regular rhyme scheme as it is written in a narrative way, using the narrative techniques that were widespread in the 20th century, trying to reflect his feelings by the words of a narrator.

The first stanza introduces us the main characters, the one staying in Belfast and the one leaving. In the second and the third stanza the narrator, the one staying, tells us about the way they have done leaving Belfast, how he feels doing it and what he sees while he is moving away. In the next stanzas, the narrator builds up a strong feeling of devastation referring to Belfast. He shows us a society which is in decline and under a world of violence. Finally, in the last stanzas, he expresses his feelings in this situation, feeling like a stranger, and goes ahead with his decision to leave the city.

The poem, which at first sight doesn't seem to be very complex, hides lots of stylistic devices that should be mentioned. The devices that appear more regularly are the figurative ones, which explain something but in an inordinate way. The biggest example could be what we call Imagery. The text is very rich in images of Belfast, as the narrator helps the reader to visualize the way Belfast is decaying and how it is not more a sweet home for him. This can be perceived all along in the poem because the entire poem is highly representative of the Belfast society.

There are other type of devices such as Paradox, on the first line of the third stanza, " geographies of punishment and love"; Personifications, third stanza " silence deepens under rain" or fifth stanza " the moon filling rooms with shadow politics"; or also Metaphors, third stanza " gust of light explains itself as flames" referring to the suns flashes, which are so heavy as flames, or in the last stanza " until it disappears at last in darkness... " Referring to his Journey, that he has already left Belfast behind.

The sound techniques, on the other hand, are not so clear. The most representative one could be the use of the stressed words made by the author, which immerse the reader in the Belfast atmosphere. The poem reflects the dramatic situation Belfast was suffering in those days where violence was common in the whole town. The poem has been created by the strong emotions Andrew Motion felt for his country and hometown, because the authors own feelings of the topic are represented everywhere. Those many details allow us to picture the Belfast scene.