

Poems from the 'book of matches'

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



I have decided to use two poems from the book of matches, 'Those bastards in their mansions', 'I've made out a will' and the poem 'Kid' to compare and contrast. Simon Armitage wrote 'Book of matches' in 1993. It is a selection of poems without titles. Each poem is meant to be read in the time that it takes for a match to burn down. There is a pun in the title, a packet from which we tear out the matches a book, but this is also a book in the normal sense, with words for us to read.

Both of these poems are fourteen lines long, but they are not strictly a sonnet in form. 'I've made out a will' has irregular rhymes, both full and half rhymes. It is split so that there is a first block of eight lines, then a second block of six lines, which is split into a four and a two. The final section is split so that it ends in a couplet like a Shakespearean sonnet. Some may argue that this poem is not a sonnet because it does not follow a conventional sonnet form, such as a Shakespearean sonnet or a Petrarchan sonnet.

'Those bastards in their mansions' has some weird features to its structure. Ten of the first eleven lines end in an unstressed syllable, and there are some rhymes such as "ditches/britchess", "porches and torches", and there is the part-rhyme in "shackles/ankles". At the end of the poem, there is short lines and true rhyme on one syllable, "sun" and "gun". This may suggest the power of the shadowy outlaw, who eludes his wealthy foes.

Like 'Those bastards in their mansions', in the poem 'Kid', every line ends with an unstressed syllable. Every line ends with the '-er' sound. The poem starts off with heavy syllables to emphasise that Robin, the persona of the poem is annoyed. The heavy syllables are almost like Robin is shouting, and

they show that he is in a mood. It is almost comical how the poet manages to end every line with '-er'. As the poem progresses, the reader wonders how the poet is able to continue with this pattern. The poem is ideally suited to be read aloud, as the ending lines accumulate, the listeners wonder how the reader will keep up.

'I've made out a will' is about an organ donor with a reservation. The speaker in the poem explains how he has decided to donate his body to the National Health Service. He says how he is going to donate everything apart from his heart. Not only is he going to donate his organs, but he has also 'made out a will' so that his wishes are taken out after he has died. He lists all of the parts that he is 'sure they can use', but some things would only be useful for research, such as veins and nerves.

In 'Those bastards in their mansions', the persona of the poem has a grudge against people. He mentions words such as 'mansions', 'palaces' and 'castles'. Here this is probably a large exaggeration, but it could be taken literally as the poem could be set in the past, there is mention of 'burning torches' and 'cuffs and shackles'.

Like in 'Those bastards in their mansions', in 'Kid', Robin has a grudge against Batman. Simon Armitage imagines that Robin has separated from Batman and that he has succeeded and that Batman has turned into a failure. It says how Batman has 'nothing in the walk-in larder'. This is the opposite to 'Those bastards in their mansions' because in that poem the persona has nothing compared to the people he has a grudge against and is jealous.

At the end of the first eight-line section, the speaker concludes his list with the one exception, 'but not the heart, they can leave that alone'. And at the end of the poem, he repeats this, 'but not the pendulum, the ticker/leave that where it stops or hangs' he does not say why he does not want his heart to be used again, maybe it is because it is the part of him that keeps him alive, and he does not think that it would be right if someone else used this part. To the national health, the heart is the most valuable organ, so we do not know why the reader wants so much to hold onto his heart, he emphasises how much he wants his heart by the amount of times that he says that he does not want it to be used.

This poem has a vivid series of metaphors, which are in lists. The metaphors portray different things. Some of the images have medical overtones, 'tubes', 'stitches' and 'wounds'. These are quite graphic words and show us that the reader predicts dying maybe in an accident, and that he could receive surgery. There are words to do with workshops such as glues and chassis. Others respond to food or cookery such as 'jellies', 'syrups', 'loaf' and 'gallon... of bilberry soup'. There are a lot of different images only for one thing. The skeleton is known as the 'chassis', 'cage', and 'cathedral of bone'. Throughout the second part of the poem, there is an extended metaphor. This is one of a clock. Here there is 'loops and coils and crockets and springs and rods, the twines and cords and strands, the face, the case, the cogs and the hands,' 'the face' and 'the hands' are already words for parts of the human body, but other parts of this phrase can be worked in to go along with other parts of the human body. In the last two lines he says how he does not want his heart to be touched, he compares this with 'the pendulum, the

ticker'. These are the parts of the clock that makes everything work, just like the human heart. In this passage, Simon Armitage uses lots of metaphors. This is to emphasise points. For example, he uses not only 'pendulum', but also 'ticker' to talk about the heart.

Throughout this poem the poet describes the human body merely as lots of parts, he shows no emotion towards anything apart from the heart. This could be because the speaker sees the heart as being the most important part of a mechanism, like a pendulum in a clock. It also maybe that he values the heart as a symbol of all things that make life worth living, a heart is the symbol of love, affection, energy, desire, and much more. Or, perhaps he feels that he is inside his heart, and it is like a soul, and if he gives up his heart then he is giving up his immortality.