

Poetic Papercutting

Øyvind Rimbereid's *Why Heart Number Two* as an Ekphrasis and Paraphrase of a Hans Christian Andersen Papercut

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During Hans Christian Andersen's lifetime, it was possible to speak of a Danish-Norwegian common literature, which lasted until 1925 when a Norwegian branch of the Gyldendal publishing house was established and major authors were "brought home" to Norway. Before that, they were published in Copenhagen. Andersen reflected on these Danish-Norwegian literary connections in his satirical tale "The Rags" ("Laserne," 1868). Here, a Norwegian rag (used for the production of paper) insists on Norwegian cultural separatism, while a Danish rag sees this line of national and linguistic division as unnatural and unnecessary. The storyteller places himself in a position of reconciliation, claiming that even if the two rags end up divided by national and linguistic borders, fundamental affective bonds between the two countries will prevail:

It so happened that the Norwegian rag became paper on which a Norwegian wrote a loyal love-letter to a Danish girl, and the Danish rag became a manuscript for a Danish ode in praise of Norway's might and glory. (Andersen, 2024b)¹

Using today's theoretical vocabulary, we could say that Andersen points towards the existence of literary entanglements, cross-cultural inspiration, regional literature that extends beyond national boundaries, and international circulation of texts (Pollari et al., 2015). The focus of this article is on how Danes and Norwegians continue these literary entanglements based on Andersen's oeuvre. I will turn to Norwegian poet Øyvind Rimbereid's *Hvorfor hjerte nummer to* (2023; *Why Heart Number Two*),² which displays Andersen's papercutting of a double-hearted miller on the front cover, suggesting that Rimbereid's long poem was inspired

¹ "Tilfældet vilde, at den norske Las blev et Papir, hvorpaa en Nordmand skrev et trofast Elskovsbrev til en dansk Pige, og den danske Las blev Manuskript for en dansk Ode til Priis for Norges Kraft og Herlighed" (Andersen, 1868/2024).

² Hereafter referred to as *Why Heart Number Two*.

by Andersen's papercutting – something that the title, motifs and themes of the poem as well as what may be regarded as a title poem in the middle of the book reinforce.³

Formally as well as thematically, the cover image invites the reader to understand the poem not only through the lens of Andersen's specific papercut, but also through the aesthetics of papercutting in general. In this article I will explore *Why Heart Number Two* as a paraphrastic and ekphrastic endeavor at the plot level as well as philosophically. Papercutting serves as a motif with one of the protagonists engaging in this artform herself. The genre of poetry, the text demonstrates, mirrors the aesthetics of papercutting with both forms capturing the existential condition of seeing life through a filter of presence and absence, shifting perspectives, and sudden cuts. I will approach the comparison of Andersen and Rimbereid through Linda Hutcheon's notion of knowing audiences and finally suggest how a particularly knowing audience, i.e. Andersen fans and experts, can regard the double-hearted miller as embodying Andersen through Rimbereid. In illustrating the last point, I will include a reading of Andersen's tale "The Windmill" ("Veirmøllen," 1865).

Presentation of *Why Heart Number Two*

Why Heart Number Two is a long poem divided into three parts about Jim and his relationship over nine months with a girl named Thea who moves into the apartment below. Thea is fifteen and Jim is a year or two younger. Both live precarious lives. Jim has no parents and lives with his aunt; Thea has lost her father and lives with her mother. Jim often cuts school, seeking out thrills in forbidden places, trespassing into areas that are off-limits, stealing things whenever he can. Thea suffers from cyanotic heart disease and lives a more sedentary life. She moves slowly and has paper folding and cutting as a hobby. While they share a kind of outsider, loner status, they are also opposites, complementing each other: boy-girl, fast-slow. The setting is Stavanger in the 1970s. Linguistically, the poem alternates between Stavanger dialect and *bokmål*, capturing the perspectives of Jim and Thea respectively. As readers we become privy to their thoughts and actions through a stream-of-consciousness rendered as prose poetry. Jim's thoughts indicate somewhat straightforward observations of his world, while Thea's – rendered in italics – are more figurative musings. Thea's less coherent thoughts may pertain to her personality but could

³ Other recent examples include Norwegian Ingvild Rishoi's *Brightly Shining* (*Stargate*, 2021) and Danish-Norwegian Kristin Vego's *Late in the Day* (*Sent på dagen*, 2024), both of which make extensive references to Andersen's fairy tales.

also be regarded as part of an illness narrative indicating a more chaotic sense of how things are connected (cf. Frank, 2013).⁴

Jim and Thea become friends. Their first adventure together occurs one night when Jim takes Thea to a junk car lot, breaks into a car, and takes her on a ride to Paradise. The ride may be real or imaginary. This ambiguity is underscored by the name Paradise – which is the real name of a Stavanger neighborhood. Furthermore, heading for Paradise connotes bliss as well as death and the ride thus foreshadows the end. The poem culminates in Jim and Thea's decision to go to London. They have bought ferry tickets from Kristiansand and are on their way to the ferry on a bus when Thea suddenly faints and drops to the floor. The bus driver stops, gets her outside and calls an ambulance. Meanwhile Jim is instructed to stay inside the bus. Thea is picked up by the ambulance, and the bus oddly starts driving in reverse. Thea's last thoughts suggest that she is dying, and Jim's final thoughts express regret at their unfulfilled dreams:

We can't get to England,
we can't get over there
in a bus that rattles and backs up,
and just then I hear it,
I feel it,
how Thea's heart pounds.⁵ (Rimbereid, 2023, p. 87)

We are left wondering how Jim feels Thea's pounding heart the minute she expires – the heart that on the one hand, biologically speaking, has been defective as a pump. On the other hand, her heart, symbolically speaking, has been full of trust and affection towards Jim. Overall, the poem is a tragic love story in which the heart serves as a main motif, as do scissors and cutting.

Andersen's Role in the Reception

The book cover invites the reader to read the book in light of Andersen's papercutting and his double-hearted miller. As it turns out, some Norwegian reviewers did just that. The

⁴ Frank discerns three types of illness narratives: The restitution narrative, the chaos narrative, and the quest narrative. The chaos narrative is characterized by an absence of narrative order: "Events are told as the storyteller experiences life: without sequence or discernable causality" (2013, p. 97).

⁵ "me komme oss ikkje te England, / me komme oss ikkje øve / i ein buss som skrangle og rygge bagøve, / og akkurat då e det at eg hørte det, / eg merke det, / koss hjerta te Thea dunke." In this article, all unmarked translations into English of Rimbereid's texts are my own literal translations.

overall reception of *Why Heart Number Two* was largely positive. Critics recognized that, unlike Rimbereid's other poetry collections that reflect critically on Norwegian (oil) history (Beddari, 2023; Hverven, 2023), this book represents an attempt to approach the feeling of childhood (Jordal, 2023). The way in which fantasy and reality mix is characteristic of the mindset of children and young adults and, furthermore, of the way one recalls one's own childhood.

Notably, two critics dwell on the connection to Andersen.⁶ NRK's Anne Cathrine Straume writes:

The book's cover shows a figure that the prominent Hans Christian Andersen has cut. In addition to writing the most beautiful fairy tales in the world, he was curiously enough a master at cutting elaborate sheets of paper. And what happens when you unfold the sheets? The finest figures emerge, usually attached to each other in a link. (2023, my translation)

In *Stavanger Aftenblad*, Helge Torvund writes:

The cover this year is a silhouette clip of a "millman" by Hans Christian Andersen. Silhouette clipping is a central activity in this collection of poems. Hans Christian Andersen was himself an example of how observation of concrete details and social conditions could be combined with creative and transformative imagination. A fitting gateway to the poetry collection. (2023, my translation)

The reviews disregarding the Andersen figure on the front cover as well as the more extensive comments by Straume and Torvund suggest a relationship between text and image that might well be understood through Linda Hutcheon's concept of knowing audiences.

Knowing Andersen Audiences

As Hutcheon points out in *A Theory of Adaptation*: "For an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences" (2006, p. 121). Hence, some may read a text as an adaptation while others do not. For the purpose of this article, I will read *Why Heart Number Two* as an adaptation from the perspective of a knowing Andersen audience. Hutcheon herself is quick to emphasize Andersen's status as a source of

⁶ In an interview about the book, Rimbereid himself makes references to Cicero's writing on friendship and Freud's notions of the id (Zahl, 2023).

intermedial adaptations from the onset of her book, pointing out that his texts are often adapted because of “their traditional and easily accessible themes” (p. 11). Hutcheon writes this as she discusses ballet adaptations of Andersen’s fairy tales. Rimbereid’s poetic adaptation of an Andersen papercut is a far less common phenomenon. When readers choose to focus on this relationship, they read as a knowing audience and perhaps also as “fans,” in our case of Hans Christian Andersen (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 122–123). Hutcheon has many ways of describing such a reading. She writes about palimpsestic, doubling, dialogical, echoing, and oscillating readings, for instance: “Adaptation as adaptation involves, for its knowing audience, an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing” (p. 139). Rimbereid’s text can thus be read as ongoing dialogue with the past, creating “the doubled pleasure of the palimpsest: more than one text is experienced – and knowingly so” (p. 116). In emphasizing the pleasure of such readings, Hutcheon further explains that the adaptation appeals to the intellectual and aesthetic pleasure of “understanding the interplay between works, of opening up a text’s possible meanings to intertextual echoing” (p. 117).

As an Andersen adaptation, *Why Heart Number Two* becomes a paraphrastic and ekphrastic poem. As a subcategory of adaptations, the paraphrase is characterized by its loose connection to the primary text. It can be regarded as “translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view [...], but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense, and that too is admitted to be amplified” (John Dryden qtd. in Hutcheon, 2006, p. 17). Andersen is primarily known as an author, but in this case, the adapted text does not actually contain words. The papercut – as it appears on the front page – is a work of visual art, and therefore it is also pertinent to read Rimbereid’s poem as ekphrastic poetry with an emphasis on the relationship between visual and verbal art forms.

Part of what is interesting in this intertextual relationship, is that even a knowing audience, used to reading Andersen’s tales, most likely will not feel that they “know” his paper-cutting, especially not what Andersen’s biographer Jens Andersen refers to as “clumsy, but charming ‘millmen’” (J. Andersen, 2002, my translation). Andersen cut various versions of the figure over time, and we may wonder what the double-hearted miller, his ladder, his pen-shaft arms, and his cane really are about, and how, in turn, they have inspired Rimbereid.

Before entering further into the reading of the text as an adaptation, it is important to acknowledge that a reader, as most of the reviews indicate, may largely ignore the connection

to Andersen's papercut, reading as unknowing readers, even though the millman appears on the cover and the book clearly contains a poem dedicated to this specific papercut. Among knowing audiences, on the other hand, one might find readers who behave as more or less in the know, from merely recognizing the connection to the millman, to drawing on extended knowledge of Andersen's oeuvre, including both his papercuts and his writing.

Any Andersen-knowing audience will most likely read the poem, musing at the interplay between Rimbereid and Andersen. Trying to figure out exactly how Rimbereid was inspired by Andersen is part of the reading enjoyment. As it turns out, Rimbereid was in the process of writing the book and had already decided that Thea with her heart condition had papercutting as her hobby when he came across Andersen's double-hearted miller. He found the figure strange and striking and chose it for his book cover. It furthermore inspired the book title and prompted him to write a title poem.⁷ Whereas Rimbereid has divulged this background information in private correspondence, the average knowing reader is left in a state of uncertainty, prone to look for clues that can confirm the reading of the text as an adaptation. One such clue is the immediate introduction in the story of papercutting.

The Hour of the Scissors

The opening poem is told from Jim's point of view and introduces the motif of cutting with scissors. It is November and Jim has gone to bed but does not want to fall asleep right away. It is the hour of the scissors:

Now that it's evening again,
I cut with my scissors in the veil in front of me,
then it leaves a little gap
and I can stare out on the other side,
out there I am already seventeen, or nineteen.
This is before I fall asleep.
It is just the time of the scissors.⁸ (Rimbereid, 2023, p. 7)

Jim dreams of growing up. He wants to go to new places, to unknown alleys and towns. The metaphorical veil is temporal, it is the veil of the future, while another veil hangs down behind

⁷ Personal conversation with Rimbereid at Blå, September 17, 2024, followed by e-mail exchange September 8, 2025.

⁸ "Nå som det igjen e kveld, / klyppe eg med sakså mi i sløret framfor meg, / så bler det igjen ein liden gløtt / og eg kan stirra ud på den andra sidå, / der ude e eg allerede sytten, eller nitten. / Dette e før eg sovne. / Det er bare sakså si tid."

him, that of the past, which he never cuts into. He is not the type to look back. Jim is constantly on the go, seeking new more or less shady adventures. At the same time, we are left with the feeling that something may have happened to him in his past that he wants to forget about and repress. His aunt stands outside his bedroom door, listening, making sure he is asleep. We are never told where his parents have gone.

A few pages further ahead we find out that Thea also uses her scissors at night, before falling asleep. Hers are literal yet also open for dreaming. It is December, Thea's second night in her new bedroom, and she is afraid of the dark. Not wanting to wake up her mother, she turns on her bedside lamp:

I turn on the bedside lamp,
want to see my scissors on the new desk.

And the sheets, the pencil and the glue stick.
Aren't they all asking me to come over?
Over to the other side of the night?⁹ (p. 16)

Papercutting transports Thea mentally to the other side of the night, to a dreamworld. There, Thea holds a new sheet of paper up against the window and the street light shines through it. She considers how to cut out a new home, turning her imaginary paper home into a safe space:

Then the street light can flow into the paper room in the paper home
With the bed in which I will momentarily fall asleep.¹⁰ (p. 17)

Fantasy and reality merge surrealistically as Thea is about to fall asleep.

In Thea's next poem about papercutting, some days have gone by:

Scissors, knife, soft pencil
food paper, glue, clothespins
and paper, with a fold in the middle.

⁹ “[...] slår jeg på sengelampen, vil jeg se saksen min på det nye skrivebordet. // Og arkene, blyanten og limstiften. / Ber de meg ikke alle om å komme over? / Over til den andre siden av natten?”

¹⁰ “Så kan gatelyset flyte inn i papirrommet i papirhjemmet / med sengen jeg om et øyeblikk vil sovne i.”

Then cut around, cut over, and across.
With the knife, cut out a square, crescent, circle.
Carefully pry out with a fingernail.

Blow lightly. And see! What is left over,
simply falls to the floor.

Remaining, there is only half, always only half.
A kingdom will never be whole!
Only half can a kingdom live.¹¹ (pp. 21–22)

Thea is a paper-cutter, meticulously aware of every part of the process. She is her own audience, musing not just on the final result but also on the process. What is the significance of the holes in the final work, she wonders, as well as the leftovers on the floor? How are the two halves connected? Enigmatically, Thea concludes that a *kingdom* can never become whole and *complete* – it can only *live* if it is half. The claim suggests a metaphorical reading pertaining to human beings and the notion of couples making each other complete, being each other's (better) halves. It can also be understood metapoetically as an artwork always having to leave something unspoken or unshown. What is missing makes it vibrant and alive, allowing the reader or viewer to fill it out. Reading the poem as an Andersen adaptation is one way of filling out its gaps.

Thea continues her musings a few days later, revealing that she wants to make a paper lantern. Again, she contemplates the relationship between the presence of the artwork and the absence of something else, this time the absence of a person.

It is the paper lantern that is the real test.
The one I'm most looking forward to cutting.

[...] it can stand in our window at home, when mother is out.
Or when a name, too, is gone, cut in the wind.

[...] As if every cut and every little gap

¹¹ "Saks, kniv, bløt blyant, / matpapir, lim, klesklyper / og papir, med brett på midten. // Så klippe rundt, klippe over, og på tvers. / Med kniven skjære ut rute, halvmåne, sirkel. / Lærke forsiktig ut med en negl. // Blåse lett. Og se! Det som er til overs, / faller helt enkelt på gulvet. // Tilbake finnes bare det halve, alltid bare halve. / Aldri blir vel et rike helt! / Bare halvt kan et rike leve."

is enough that it will always be able to burn and shine.

Shine on everything that is around it and on what is not.¹² (p. 30)

The paper lamp can comfort Thea by reminding her of those who are missing: her mother on an errand, and her father who is permanently gone. It is the cuts and slits – the missing parts – that enable the lamp to burn and shine. Absence and presence interact as the lamp functions and burns, through its combination of paper and holes. The holes let in oxygen that keeps the burning flame alive. Considered metapoetically, Thea again suggests that the artwork's play with presence and absence keeps the interpreting, fantasizing mind engaged and alive.

Thea also cuts portraits in silhouette, once more marveling at the cut-out pieces:

The eyes don't exist, those
that are the opening into the soul.

So if the forehead becomes a little low,
the chin too big, what does it matter?

More important is the nothing-silhouette.

Everything that does not exist where the face was.¹³ (p. 35)

Again, Thea's focus is on the cut-out pieces that provide openings, cuts, gaps, slits, entrance and breathing holes. She is, as mentioned above, fascinated with the interplay between presence and absence, both as contrasts creating something new, like a burning lamp, and from a temporal perspective in which absence, that which is not, is that which once was, but is now gone. Hence the last lines stating the importance of the "nothing-silhouette" insist that where we now see nothing at all, where nothing seems to exist, there once was a face. While her poems describe missing people, her mother and her father, we are also left with the impression of Thea's existential thoughts as she wonders about her own presence in the world. Her reflections on papercutting ultimately revolve around death, around that which

¹² "Det er papirlykten som er selve prøven. / Den jeg lengter mest etter å klippe. // [...] den kan stå i vinduet vårt hjemme, når mor er ute. / Eller når også et navn er borte, klippet i vinden. // [...] Som om hvert kutt og hver minste gløpe / er nok til at den alltid vil kunne brenne og lyse. / Lyse på alt som er rundt den og på det som ikke er."

¹³ "Øynene finnes ikke, de / som er åpningen inn til sjelen. // Så om pannen blir litt lav, / haken for stor, hva betyr vel det? // Viktigere er ingenting-silhuetten. / Alt det som ikke finnes hvor ansiktet var."

apparently disappears, yet has left its imprint on the world and in that sense still exists so that a lamp can shine on everything surrounding it *and* on that which does not exist, that which in some sense haunts the space of the living. As Rimbereid puts it in an article on poetic pauses and cuts, i.e. caesuras, the caesura “cares for what *is* not, for what does not exist here and now”¹⁴ (2019, p. 33). Personifying the caesura as someone who cares for that which does not exist here and now, yet may be connected to something existing in a different time and space, also captures Thea as a figure who thus can be seen as embodying the caesura.

The Title Millman Poem

In Part II the papercutting motif appears at the very end, in what may be considered the book’s title poem, where the concept of “heart number two” is introduced. At this point it becomes clear, at least to a knowing audience, that Rimbereid is writing an ekphrastic poem based on Andersen’s millman:

Why is there suddenly a second heart
in this red paperclip of mine?

Do the two hearts beat the same beat?
Is one completely unwilling while the other
running after, at a limping pace?

Or do the two hearts beat in their respective realms?
The one on the left, the one that will fit
every bit that is cut away

while the heart to the right,
the one that beat so much when the sheet was unfolded [...]

Is that the one that promises more than it can deliver?¹⁵ (Rimbereid, 2023, p. 64)

Thea is clearly pondering a papercut resembling Andersen’s miller as we see him on the book’s front cover. The papercutting is red and has two hearts, and Thea wants to know

¹⁴ “har omsorg for det som ikke er, for det som ikke finnes her og nå.”

¹⁵ “Hvorfor finnes brått et hjerte nummer to / i dette røde papirklippet mitt? // Slår de to hjertene samme slag? / Er det ene helt uvilleg mens det andre / løper etter, i haltende takt? // Eller slår de to hjertene i hvert sitt rike? / Det til venstre, det som skal romme / hver bit som er klippet bort // mens hjertet til høyre, / det som banket sånn da arket ble brettet ut ... / Er det det som lover mer enn det kan holde?”

what the relationship between these two hearts is. They could symbolize Jim and her falling in love, yet are they synchronized? Does it make a difference that her heart is weak, that her heart beats irregularly, and that she moves slowly and falls behind? Would that make Jim hesitant and “unwilling”? Is his the heart on the left side – the heart that she hopes will encompass her heart? And is her heart the one on the right side, the one connected with the cane and a weaker physique – the heart that may be promising more than it can keep? Through the papercutting, Thea worries about the reciprocity of her feelings for Jim, and whether her heart condition may be an obstacle, understood as a disability slowing her, and thus also him, down.

In an interview, Rimbereid refers to Cicero’s writings on the essence of a friendship. A true friend is someone who, so to speak, is a second you. Jim, according to Rimbereid, would risk his life for Thea and is “a heart number two, perhaps, for someone with heart failure”¹⁶ (Zahl, 2023). Hence, Rimbereid epitextually provides an interpretation of his book title and title poem. A knowing Andersen audience may nevertheless take the interpretation one step further, as I will show later, seeing it as involving Rimbereid and Andersen as well.

Thea picks up on her previous thoughts on half and whole kingdoms. Do the two hearts beat in separate realms or kingdoms? Or do they, perhaps, make up one kingdom? The question is pertinent to ask in connection with Andersen’s papercut as well. Does the miller constitute one or two beings? As Straume writes in her review: “Andersen’s figure has two hearts. It can resemble one fat figure, or two smaller figures each with his own heart, hooked in the back” (2023, my translation). If it is two beings, how are we to understand that combination? And if it is only one being, why would it have two hearts? The questions are related, yet toward the end of the poem Thea, as we shall see, describes being one person with two hearts in a manner that is not just metaphorical, but also literal.

Heart Failure

In Part III Thea again picks up the motif of scissors and cutting. It is the month of May, and she and Jim are outside. Thea is lying on the grass, looking up towards a hilltop, Jim plans to jump from, holding onto a tarpaulin that hopefully will make him fly. Thea watches him from below, reversing notions of up-down perspectives, seeing sudden red lines and bright flashes of light. She asks:

¹⁶ “eit hjarte nummer to, kanskje, for ei med hjartefeil.”

and why does it beat like that,
this heart number two
going where
and the tingling in the lips
the fingers and then come the scissors
huge and cut questions around
and nauseating white stars over there
don't want to lose, some kind of plane, myself
and the voice that says something.¹⁷ (Rimbereid, 2023, p. 70)

Thea evidently suffers a spell, getting queasy, and momentarily passing out. Her heart starts pounding, and her referring to it as “heart number two” can indicate the strangeness of the experience – as if she has a normal heart that beats regularly, and then sometimes heart number two, the sick heart, takes over with its irregular beats. At the same time, it is also a medical fact that for people suffering cyanotic heart disease with low oxygen blood levels, the problem lies in the right ventricle of the heart. The right-left problematic is indicated by alternate names for the disease, such as Right-to-left cardiac shunt. “Blood that is low in oxygen returns from the body to the right side of the heart” (National Library of Medicine, 2023). Here it is pumped to the lungs where it picks up more oxygen before it is circulated to the left side of the heart from where it is pumped out to the rest of the body. Thea has a disease where the right chamber of her heart has a defect, and this may be one of the reasons she distinguishes between a right and a left (side of the) heart. Again, Andersen’s two-hearted miller is suggestive of this perspective on the heart, as he can be regarded as one person with a heart on the right side as well as on the left. Returning to the poem, we see that the anxiety she experiences leads her to think of her paper-cutting, the activity that evidently calms her down and allows her to contemplate existential questions. The fact that the scissors are huge, however, also connote fear of dying. These could be scissors cutting her lifeline as she tries to hold on to herself (“don’t want to lose [...] myself”) and to Jim whose presence is intertwined with her own. He could be the plane as he tries to fly with the tarpaulin (“a kind of plane”) and the voice trying to reach her (“a voice that says something”).

A similar but fatal spell occurs at the very end of the long poem. Thea and Jim are on the bus to Kristiansand from where they plan on boarding a boat to England. Thea faints,

¹⁷ “og hvorfor banker det sånn, / dette hjerte nummer to / på vei hvor hen/ og prikkingen i leppene / fingrene og så kommer saksen / diger og klipper spørsmål rundt / omkring og kvalme hvite stjerner der borte / vil ikke miste, et slags fly, meg selv / og stemmen som sier noe.”

and we enter her mind one last time, as this is the book's last poem told from her perspective. She is lying on a stretcher:

Count and the year is right
calculate
that it's right
that your voice is right
and you need no scissors to cut
what is left over, nothing
left over.¹⁸ (Rimbereid, 2023, pp. 86–87)

Thea has previously counted the years 1975, 1976, 1977 repeatedly (p. 25). This could be tied to a prognosis due to her heart condition. It could be the years she thinks she has left to live. What is “right” at this moment could be that it is 1977. Hence, this might be her moment of death as she apostrophizes herself as a “you” – the living version of herself – who no longer needs scissors since her life is over and there is nothing left for her to ponder through her papercutting.¹⁹ The repetitions, caesura and possible enjambement in the last two lines nevertheless create ambiguity. On the one hand, leftovers can connote death. There is nothing left of Thea's life. She has been cut out of the fabric of life, and she is like the cut-out scraps of paper that fall to the floor and are thrown away. “Left over”, “nothing”, and “left over” serve a repetitive function with “nothing” echoing the previous “left over” which once more is repeated in the final line, insisting that Thea is dead and gone. She also no longer needs scissors to shape her life and thoughts.

On the other hand, one can also read “nothing / left over” as a negation, insisting that nothing is (simply) left over. Everything still exists. Following the logic of papercutting, Thea lives on as a figure in the fabric of life, albeit as the cut-out, airy part. She figures in the image of the paper and provides it with significance through her absence. Nothing, the poem insists, is simply leftover and gone. This can be seen as pertaining to Jim's future life as she will have left an indelible imprint on his adolescence. She will continue to figure in his life through her absence, in the form of a memory. Rimbereid makes a similar point in his essay *Hvorfor ensomt leve* (2006; Why Live Lonely) in which he

¹⁸ “Telle og året stemmer / regne ut / at det stemmer / at stemmen din stemmer / og du trenger ingen saks til å klippe det / som er til overs, ingenting / til overs.”

¹⁹ Complications that may accompany cyanotic heart disease include abnormal heart rhythms and sudden death, heart failure, stroke, and death (National Library of Medicine, 2023).

writes about the necessity of friends and friendship: “when you die, what you have done and stood for through life, can continue through your friends”²⁰ (p. 23). Clearly this is a topic that has engaged Rimbereid over the years.

In *Rimbereid's lyrikk. Hendelser og poetiske øyeblikk* (2018; Rimbereid's Poetry. Events and Poetic Moments), Per Thomas Andersen analyzes five of Rimbereid's poetry collections, emphasizing how they all revolve around an Event. He uses Slavoj Žižek's definition of an event as “an occurrence that shatters ordinary life, a radical political rupture, a transformation of reality, a religious belief, the rise of a new art form, or an intense experience such as falling in love” (Žižek qtd. in P. T. Andersen, 2018, back cover). While Andersen proceeds to focus on those of Rimbereid's poems that capture radical social change, such as *Solaris korrigert* (2004; *Solaris Corrected*), *Why Heart Number Two* is about the intense experience of falling in love. It is about the intense bond of affection connecting children around the age of puberty. It is about a feeling of love between friends that may border on erotic love. And it is about the intense feeling connecting two vulnerable people who feel lonely as social outsiders until they meet each other and connect. Seen from the perspectives of both Jim and Thea, their nine-month relationship is a life-changing event; it is an occurrence “that shatters ordinary life.”

Analyzing Rimbereid's poetry, Andersen's aim is nevertheless twofold as he focuses on Events and poetic moments. The point is that the reading of a poem also can constitute an Event. As Andersen reminds us: “The intense poetic event changes the experience of life and death. Perhaps mostly in the moment – but the poem relates the Event and keeps it beyond the epiphanic moment” (p. 17, my translation). The notion is romantic, suggesting that the poet is gifted with a particular sensitivity and ability to experience and capture epiphanic moments and poetic events (cf. P. T. Andersen, 2018, p. 17). For the knowing reader of *Why Heart Number Two*, who reads the poem in light of Hans Christian Andersen and his millman, the Event revives Andersen. Rimbereid enters into a dialogical relationship with Andersen, drawing inspiration from his papercutting and creating a poetic moment that also leaves us looking at Andersen's miller anew. In that sense, Andersen and Rimbereid make up a kingdom embodying the two halves of the miller, both of whom are writers with pen-shaft arms.

²⁰ “Når en dør, vil det en har gjort og stått for gjennom livet, kunne fortsette gjennom ens venner.” Rimbereid writes this in a passage in which he mostly paraphrases Francis Bacon.

The Aesthetics of Papercutting

Finally, I turn to the ekphrastic aspect of the poem. In the tradition of ekphrasis, artforms are set up against each other, often in a rivaling manner. The verbal artist is inspired by a work of visual art and wants to paint the same picture – or an even greater one – with his words. In the case of *Why Heart Number Two*, I see Rimbereid not as competing with the papercutting, but as elaborating on the notion that papercutting and poetry are similar art forms. Most obviously, the defining characteristic of poetry is the caesura which is Latin for cutting. This especially holds true for the narrative poem which is not characterized by regular patterns of rhyme and rhythm. The caesura is the poet’s meaningful cutting. As Terry Eagleton puts it: “A poem is a fictional, verbally inventive moral statement in which it is the author, rather than the printer or world processor, who decides where the lines should end” (Eagleton qtd. in P. T. Andersen, 2018, p. 38). Rimbereid also defines his poetics as a matter of cutting. Contrasting it to a novel, he claims that: “The novel is a time frame which narrates everything occurring around that time. Poetry eliminates all transportation stages and concentrates only on what is most important.”²¹ (Berthelsen, 2023, my translation). The art of cutting calls for concentration on the part of the artist as well as the audience. One imagines the surprised viewer as the paper cutter folds, cuts, and unfolds the paper. There is a clear element of awe and surprise. On the plot level, Thea experiences this thrill regarding her own papercutting: she cuts, uses her nails to pry out the cut-out pieces, blows on it, and marvels at the result (Rimbereid, 2023, pp. 21–22).

Hans Christian Andersen, on the other hand, performed this art form live in front of audiences that were often spellbound by the magic of his papercutting. His biographer Jens Andersen describes it as follows:

When Andersen started turning the colored pieces of paper around the calm tip of the scissors, then none of the children around the table knew what would happen. He usually started talking a bit, and his talking would be accompanied by an improvised fairy tale related to the theme and motives of the cutting. Several times the poet could stop to put a new longitudinal or transverse axis on the paper, breaking the symmetry and forcing new angles and perspectives. (J. Andersen, 2002, my translation)

²¹ “Romanen er eit tidsbilete som fortel om alt som skjer rundt. Diktet interesserer seg ikkje for slikt. Det kuttar vekk alle transportetappar og konsenterer seg berre om det aller viktigaste.”

Hence, the point of the papercutting was the process, not just the end result. It was the constant element of wonder that made his artform interesting: the constant use of new angles and new cuts.

Rimbereid's poetry, in which his prose consists of poetic caesuras, cuts in time, and cuts in perspective, similarly leaves his readers suspended, wondering where the long poem will take them.²² And rather than ending up with a miller, Rimbereid uses Andersen's miller as his point of departure, creating his own kind of suspension and oscillation between visual and verbal art, past and present, life and death, Andersen's thinking and his own. For the knowing reader, Rimbereid's long poem is enlivened by Andersen's miller and his art of papercutting – and vice versa.

Andersen's Thought Mill Revisited

As Hutcheon points out, a text read as an adaptation affects not only the way we read the adaptation but also the way we (re-)read the original:

If we know the work(s) in question, we become a knowing audience, and part of what hermeneutic theory calls our 'horizon of expectations' involves that adapted text. What is intriguing is that, afterward, we often come to see the prior adapted work very differently as we compare it to the result of the adapter's creative and interpretive act. (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 121)

Hence Rimbereid's long poem allows us to imbue Andersen's papercut with new meaning. As Andersen fans who are familiar with his oeuvre in general, the knowing reader is furthermore likely to draw on Andersen's fairy-tale universe. In terms of content, Andersen has written several tales about love and adventure between young people, capturing a sense of childhood innocence and aspirations threatened by the realities of adulthood. Kay and Gerda in "The Snow Queen" and the protagonists of "The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweep" come to mind, with both stories culminating in scenes of reverse travel similar to the one in Rimbereid's poem. From the perspective of ekphrasis and paraphrase, however, a knowing audience with extensive knowledge of Andersen might turn to his lesser-known

²² Rimbereid similarly insists on this aesthetic in an essay on poetry and translation: "Is it not the juxtapositions, breaks, and deviations that provide dynamics and prevent a text from becoming rigid?" ("Er det nå ikke slik at det er sammenstillingene, bruddene og avvikene som gir dynamikk og hindrer at en tekst stivner?") (2006, p. 154).

“The Windmill” as this story provides significant insight into Andersen’s thoughts on mills, millers, and artistic/intellectual inspiration among authors, dead and alive.²³

“The Windmill” clearly elaborates verbally on many of the ideas captured by Andersen’s double-hearted miller as both are at the same time man and windmill. As in Andersen’s other so-called object tales, the titular windmill is an anthropomorphized everyday object used in an existential allegory. Like the papercutting, it is also an artist figure. While the double-hearted miller has pen-shaft arms, the windmill in the fairy tale refines thoughts by virtue of his wings. The buildings surrounding him have thoughts, too, but they do not have wings, i.e. they are not as enlightened, and they do not have the same prominent (social) position. The anthropomorphized windmill in “The Windmill” is thus an inspired, thinking being whose end product is the result not of grain, but of thoughts that have gone through a process of purification brought on by wind turning wings and millstones grinding thoughts. The process can be seen as laborious as well as inspired from above. The windmill-author houses a family of thoughts, he explains, of which the miller is his main thought. This miller is married, with his wife representing his better half – hence her thoughts cannot be separated from those of the miller:

My most powerful thought, the one that rules and governs, is referred to by the other thoughts as: the *The Gw at the Mill*. He knows what he wants, he stands high above flour and grain, although he has a spouse and she’s called the Missus; she has a kind heart [...]. (Andersen, 2024a)²⁴

The windmill, in other words, needs both halves, the rational miller and his more emotional, soulful, loving wife. Their children represent immature, somewhat disturbing thoughts that have to be disciplined so that they will eventually turn into useful thoughts.

The windmill is well established, approaching the end of life, and pondering the fact that one day he will be gone. He remains confident, though, that he will not be entirely gone. His intellectual property, so to speak – his thoughts – will live on:

²³ I am grateful to Andersen-expert Jacob Bøggild for calling my attention to this tale.

²⁴ “Min stærkeste Tanke, den der styrer og raader, kaldes af de andre Tanker: Manden paa Møllen. Han veed hvad han vil, han staaer høit over Meel og Gryn, men har dog sin Mage og hun kaldes Mutter; hun er Hjertelaget” (Andersen, 1865/2024).

Then a day will come when things are over and done with for me, and yet not at all so! I am to be pulled down so as to rise up new and better; I am to cease to be and yet continue to exist! become someone completely different and yet remain the same! (Andersen, 2024a)²⁵

As predicted, the old windmill dies – he burns to the ground – and a new windmill is erected. His family of thoughts, however, remains unscathed: “What had been alive at the mill was still there, nothing happened to *that* as a result of the incident, in fact it gained from it” (Andersen, 2024a).²⁶ What is gained is a new abode, a new and better mill:

The miller’s family, one soul, many thoughts and yet only one, acquired a lovely new mill that served them well, it completely resembled the old one. People said: look, there stands the mill on the hill, a proud sight! but this one was better equipped, more up to date, for things move forwards. (Andersen, 2024a)²⁷

The moral of the story is that an author’s body may disappear, but his thoughts live on – not just as a family of thoughts in a new abode, but also as interconnected thoughts that transcend boundaries between people, dead and alive. In our case, we can see Rimbereid’s text as housing the Andersen thoughts that inspired him, and Andersen as the dead and gone windmill-author who is not really gone, for his thoughts and ideas live on in a contemporary (“more up to date”) text. Hence, Andersen seems aware that future generations will build on his thoughts and ideas, erecting new windmills.

What, then, are the thoughts housed by Rimbereid’s poem – i.e. how does he use Andersen’s double-hearted miller and the art of papercutting? As I have suggested, the double-hearted miller captures at least four aspects of his text: 1) the notion of Jim and Thea’s love with their two hearts being brought together within a hybrid body, 2) the idea of Thea’s cyanotic heart disease with a defective right valve, 3) the presence of the dead through their absence, and 4) the idea of a palimpsestic text in which we capture the heartbeat of two writers – Andersen and Rimbereid – simultaneously.

²⁵ “Saa kommer der en Dag, at det er forbi med mig og aldeles ikke forbi! jeg skal rives ned for at reise mig ny og bedre, jeg skal høre op og dog blive ved at være! blive en ganske Anden og dog den Samme!” (Andersen, 1865/2024).

²⁶ “Hvad Levende der havde været paa Møllen blev, det kom ikke Noget til ved den Begivenhed, det vandt ved den” (Andersen, 1865/2024).

²⁷ “Møllerfamilien, een Sjæl, mange Tanker og dog kun een, fik sig en ny, deilig Mølle, den kunde være tjent med, den lignede aldeles den gamle, man sagde: der staaer jo Møllen paa Bakken, stolt at see! men denne var bedre indrettet, mere tidssvarende, for det gaaer fremad.” (Andersen, 1865/2024).

For a knowing reader and an Andersen fan, the question of why Rimbereid would engage in this process arises. He appears to be filtering Andersen’s art through his “own sensibility, interests, and talents” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 18), ultimately paying homage to Andersen. In addition, he pays homage to art forms that rely on cutting – on caesura – including papercutting as well as prose poetry.

Da Capo

In “The Rags,” Andersen wrote about the reciprocal, and positive relationship between Danish and Norwegian writing in which they write love letters and poems praising each other. I read Rimbereid’s *Why Heart Number Two* as an example of the continued entanglement of Danish and Norwegian literature. While the transnational aspect is noteworthy, I nevertheless think the interartial aspect is what most significantly connects Andersen and Rimbereid in this ekphrastic poem. In his previously mentioned essay on friendship, Rimbereid draws on an essay by Bacon that he reads in, and translates from, Danish. His point is that the lonely human being needs to enter into dialogue with someone or something outside himself, and this, he points out by quoting Bacon, can be visual art: “one should rather communicate oneself to a statue or a picture than let one’s thoughts be suffocated by lack of air”²⁸ (Bacon qtd. in Rimbereid, 2006, pp. 24–25). In *Why Heart Number Two*, Rimbereid enters into dialog with Andersen’s miller, and this brings air and life to his thoughts and his artform.

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²⁸ “En skal heller meddele seg til en statue eller et bilde enn å la sine tanker bli kvalt av mangel på luft.”

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