

# DIVISION

A QUARTERLY PSYCHOANALYTIC FORUM

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NO. 7 SPRING 2013

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## O N P O E T R Y

### The One Supposed to Know David LICHTENSTEIN, Editor

In a front-page article published by the *New York Times* on February 2, 2013, Alan Schwarz reported the circumstances surrounding the suicide of 22-year-old Richard Fee. The story involves addiction to prescription amphetamines, an apparently psychotic reaction, and the profound failure of the mental health system. There are many lessons to be drawn from these events regarding the excessive use of psychiatric medications and the assumptions and practices that support this excess. However, it is

also a story about the link between knowledge and power in clinical work, and about the erosion of an ethic that recognizes and respects the limits of the former in order to moderate the effects of the latter.

A unique feature of Schwarz's article were the verbatim records of the clinicians treating Richard Fee, and who continued to prescribe the medications that were apparently causing him such great harm. The records were obtained by Richard Fee's father, the legal representative of his deceased son. They

provide rare access to the recorded reflections of various clinicians, the ability to assess their impressions and their doubts, and to do so in relation to how the actual events unfolded in real time. They are clinical notes and thus not necessarily comprehensive, but they are candid, credible, and strongly convey a certain quality of clinical thought, a quality characterized by a tragic lack of inquiry.

We also have the story as told by Richard's parents, Rick and Kathy Fee, who were aware that their son was in trouble,

FILM

# (Waiting to Happen) Bettina MATHES

It is generally understood that the reality principle involves the individual in anger and reactive destruction, but my thesis is that the destruction plays its part in making the reality, placing the object outside of the self. For this to happen, favourable conditions are necessary.

“The Use of an Object and Relating Through Identification,” D. W. Winnicott

Lars von Trier’s *Melancholia* is the kind of film critics love: enigmatic, stunning, beautiful, self-conscious, and rich in philosophical, historical, and cinematic references. *Melancholia* makes us write. As if to say, “No, no—the Earth has not been destroyed. I know you, Melancholia; I interpret you; I own you. Subject and Object, Here and There.” An escape of sorts, if you will. Critics tend to be impatient—that’s their job.

But what about the longing for disaster and catastrophe? The wish that there was no escape? *To disappear completely*. What about the pleasure derived from waiting (and wishing) for the end of the world—quietly, in the dark, unobserved in the company of strangers? The cinema is one of the few spaces left in our culture where waiting is not considered a waste of time or money. (A psychoanalyst’s office is another.) When we watch a film, we’re waiting for things to happen. To watch *Melancholia* is to sit with two sisters, a boy, and a horse as they await the inescapable. “The Earth is evil, no one will miss it.” We also watch people who cannot wait, who escape: the father, the groom, the husband-scientist. We watch and we wait.

How different it is to write. When I write, I’m making things happen—word by word, sentence by sentence. Writing is the day to the cinema’s night, a flight from waiting. Let’s pretend I’m writing this essay in the dark, in the privacy of a sold-out movie theater. Let’s pretend I’m waiting, still. *There, there*.

## The Wedding

where time is money, and the bride is swimming upstream,  
 where toasts and tag lines are next,  
 where sometimes I hate you so much, and that was two hours ago,  
 where zero is the degree of art,  
 where I am all the beans that you choose not to count,  
 where eighteen holes make a golf course,  
 ...we’re drowning by numbers.

I’m slowing you down, so slow you arrive late for your own wedding. *Sorry*. I make you make everybody wait. I make sure they will lose their patience with you. What is this about, they wonder. And perhaps you wonder too: why I weigh you down, and wear you out? Your white wedding dress—so light, so bright—feels like a schlep. Why I make you smile, and smile, and smile until your face goes numb. It’s the happiest day of your life and all I want you to look forward to is death.

## The Waiting

when escape is not an option,  
 when death is weightless and destruction beautiful,  
 when the hunters don’t return,  
 when buildings bring out the worst in us,  
 when you see with your eyes closed,  
 when every object casts two shadows,  
 ...we’re waiting to happen.

*Where have you been?* You’ve been hiding behind the sun far too long. So green...and lonely. But you found me. Heaven brought you here. To me. I’m your bride, you know that. Bathing in your cool light at night, naked. Being exposed never felt so right. Melancholia and Earth: a cosmic love affair only one of us can survive. You. That’s how I want it. Tell me that you want it too. You know that I know things. Internal nebula. I see you coming!

## The Writing

As I step out of the theater into the busy streets of downtown Manhattan, I feel cleansed, healed. I’ve destroyed the Earth, and the Earth has survived! Not all is lost. There are other worlds out there. Cinema, the magic cave!

Once again, I am ready for words.

It is only in recent years that I have become able to wait and wait for the natural evolution of the transference arising out of the patient’s growing trust in the psychoanalytic technique and setting, and to avoid breaking up this natural process by making interpretations...If only we can wait, the patient arrives at understanding creatively and with immense joy, and I now enjoy this joy more than I used to enjoy the sense of having been clever.

“The Use of an Object and Relating Through Identification,” D. W. Winnicott

To the memory of Rainer Apel.

## REFERENCE

Winnicott, D. (2005). The use of an object and relating through identification. In *Playing and reality* (pp.115–127). London: Routledge Classics.

