



Lars von Trier (1956 - present)

a sketch



What I miss today is a sense of joy
in narration, in invention. And
a sense of mystery, above all (29).

interview, from Stig Björkman's
Trier on Von Trier (1999)

Family & Childhood

- father: Ulf Trier
- mother: Inger Trier
 - freedom . . .
 - internal authority
 - anxiety & phobias
 - artistic expectations
 - Elmo 8mm
 - painting & music
 - creativity a crutch
 - Lars' rebellion



The problem with a phobia or an anxiety of this sort is that it isn't creative. You don't get anything out of it. You ought to be able to turn the anxiety into something else, because there's a fair amount of energy in it. But it just creates apathy instead . . . The phobias that I suffer from can obviously be used to my advantage sometimes. A person who's afraid of the dark will probably make a better horror film. But mostly phobias just make you uncomfortable (39).

interview, from Stig Björkman's
Trier on Von Trier (1999)

Education

- Lundtofte School: migraines, claustrophobia, truancy
- private tutoring: 6 months
- self-education: 2-3 yrs of painting; took exam for diploma
- Film experimentation: Elmo 8mm, 16mm projector, amateur Filmgrupp 16
- Orchid Gardener (1977, age 21), then Menthe
- film school (Copenhagen): writes own scripts; learns techniques



Cognitive Challenges

- phobias
 - nuclear war
 - cancer
 - air travel
- Mental illness
 - anxiety
 - depression



Europa Trilogy

- The Element of Crime (1984) / surrealism
- Epidemic (1987) / meta-narrative
- Europa (1991) / historical epic
- other: Medea (1988) / impressionism



“So then, all three parts [all three films of the Europa trilogy] are about exactly the same thing—that logic and common sense are one thing and knowledge and insight something else. When the audience goes to the cinema to watch Europa [. . .] they’ll have to leave all their knowledge at the counter when they buy their ticket” (Lumholdt 80).

Jan Lumholdt’s Lars von Triers Interviews (2003)

Deathbed Revelation

- affair w/ biological father
 - mom's motivation: artistic genes for son
 - impact on Lars
 - initially took it lightly
 - breakdown: loss of both
 - Reevaluation: mother not hands off—had plans for L
 - Lived in childhood home w/ 1st wife; smashing mom's possessions



Golden Heart Trilogy

- Breaking the Waves (1996)
- The Idiots (1998)
- Dancer in the Dark (2000)
- other: The Kingdom (1994) & The Kingdom II (1997)



USA-Land of Opportunity Trilogy

- Dogville (2003)
- Manderlay (2005)
- Washington (unmade)
- other: The Boss of It All (2006)



Mental Disturbance

- Antichrist
(2009)
- Melancholia
(2011)
- Nymphomaniac
(2013)
- Other: The House That Jack Built
(2018)

