Lars von Trier (1956 - present)

Immoral Moralist?
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: liberal childcare, LvT’s resulting anxiety
- constraint: artistic pressure; creativity as therapy—and crutch
- Lars’ rebellion
- unknown biological father
Mental Challenges

- Phobias
  - nuclear war
  - cancer
  - air travel
- anxiety & depression
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)
“He [von Trier] has decided on an interpretation of the world as hell.”

interview w/ Ernst-Hugo Järegård, concerning Lars von Trier, contained in video Tranceformers
Europa Trilogy

- Epidemic (1987)
- Europa (1991)
- other: Medea made in 1988
“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).

Currently, decadent film-makers are proud of fooling the audience through illusions, leading to superficial action. “The result is barren. An illusion of pathos and an illusion of love . . .”

“Dogme 95 counters the film of illusion by the presentation of an indisputable set of rules known as THE VOW OF CHASTITY.”
The Vow of Chastity

1. shoot on location; no props or sets created
2. sounds and images recorded simultaneously, and no non-digetic sound
3. camera must be hand-held
4. film must be in colour; no special lighting
5. no optical work or filters
The Vow of Chastity

6. superficial action (murders, weapons, etc.) is strictly forbidden

7. film must take place here and now

8. no genre movies

9. format must be Academy 35mm

10. director must not be credited
Golden Heart Trilogy

- Breaking the Waves (1996)
- The Idiots (1998)
- Dancer in the Dark (2000)
- other: The Kingdom (1994) & The Kingdom II (1997)
In these grotesque works [...] we find that connections which we would expect in the customary kind of realism have been ignored, that there are strange skips & gaps which anyone trying to describe manners and customs would certainly not have left. Yet the characters in these novels are alive in spite of these things. [...] Their fictional qualities lean away from typical social patterns, toward mystery and the unexpected”

FO’s “The Grotesque in Southern Fiction” (1960; 1965)

Beginning with The Kingdom, von Trier creates frequent jumps forward in time through editing to “open up the unknown and the unsettling and the frightening”

Sit Björkman’s Trier on Von Trier (1999)
USA—Land of Opportunity Trilogy

- **Dogville** (2003)
- **Manderlay** (2005)
- **Washington** (unmade)
- other: **The Boss of It All** (2006)
“It’s more a sign of my culturally radical upbringing and my rebellion against it. One of the main rules of my upbringing was that there is no such thing as good or evil—they don’t exist. But they do exist” (Lumholdt 54).

interview w/ Lars von Trier, 1987
Mental Disturbance

- **Antichrist** (2009)
- **Melancholia** (2011)
- **Nymphomaniac** (2013)