

Lars von Trier on ANTICHRIST

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Note that we have altered the formulations slightly in the interest of readability. To get a sense of the meetings' atmosphere, make sure to listen to our audio recording as well.

The first part features an interview with Peter Schepelern, a Trier scholar, and the second part is a Q&A with conference participants.

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Part 1: Conversation with Peter Schepelern

PETER SCHEPELERN: Lars, when I first saw Antichrist in this academic company, I thought it was actually a film about counselling PhD students and the problems of doing so. But also, about female PhD students with small children and the problems of writing PhD dissertations when you bring them to the summerhouse. But I suppose it was not your original idea to make a film about academic problems.

LARS VON TRIER: No.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Lars, maybe you could, as you have done several times before, tell the story about how this film was formed out of your depression?

LARS VON TRIER: Well, actually I started some years ago, and then the whole point of the film was that it was Satan, who had created...

PETER SCHEPELERN: Created us.

LARS VON TRIER: Yes. And I told that idea to Peter Aalbæk, who was the producer of the film, and he told it to a journalist straight away. Which would be like saying: "The butler did it". And of course, I cancelled the film straight away.

PETER SCHEPELERN: And that's some three, four years ago?

LARS VON TRIER: Something like that. And then I had this very famous depression.

PETER SCHEPELERN: One of the famous depressions...

LARS VON TRIER: I don't know, but I thought: "What would Bergman have said".

PETER SCHEPELERN: What would he have said?

LARS VON TRIER: He would have said; I had a depression and then I wrote this film. It's true that it started that way. I used my work to get out of bed.

PETER SCHEPELERN: And did it help?

LARS VON TRIER: Well, when you make a film, you have to be out of bed, otherwise it's very complicated, practically.

PETER SCHEPELERN: About fifteen minutes ago, you mentioned that somehow you feel that this film might not be so much your own piece of work as your other films.

LARS VON TRIER: Well, maybe the good thing that came out of this depression was that because the whole writing process and the working process was actually an attempt to just do something, I didn't rewrite the script so many times. I just wanted to do it very quickly and to get something written that could be filmed. So I don't think the story is burdened by, you could say, my tendency to mathematics; it's hopefully a bit messier, which I like. Or anyway, the idea of it being a bit messier.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Would you say that *Antichrist* is more spontaneous than your other films?

LARS VON TRIER: Yes. I think that the circumstances helped me.

PETER SCHEPELERN: It's obvious that there are many enigmatic elements and mysterious things going on. Do you feel you can explain where they come from, what they mean, and what they represent? Or would you rather say they are part of your intuitive, artistic vision?

LARS VON TRIER: Well, I know where some of the elements come from, but I have allowed myself to do something that I don't understand fully.

PETER SCHEPELERN: How about, for example, the animals?

LARS VON TRIER: Oh, the animals. I know exactly where they come from. But I don't know exactly what they mean... At a certain point in my life, I did some shamanic journeys. And all these animals came from these fantasy travels.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Do they belong to this kind of fantasy therapy?

LARS VON TRIER: Well, the whole idea with shamanism is that you travel to a parallel world as a shaman, and this world is of course full of animals and elements that have been very important to these primitive tribes. So you talk a lot with the animals. But I cut out a lot of the talking, and there's just one line left for the fox now. Which is a pity, because the fox really meant what it said.

PETER SCHEPELERN: I know it was complicated, that line for the fox. How would you describe the whole production of the film, in terms of shooting in Germany and in terms of the different visual styles? How did you accomplish that?

LARS VON TRIER: I didn't accomplish anything. But I did stay in Germany for three months, which is an accomplishment. I felt anxious, just to be there physically.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Is that something special about Germany?

LARS VON TRIER: It's special about this film.

PETER SCHEPELERN: So making a film in Germany would be on top of the pyramid of things you fear. You've said that you feel the visual style could have been different, but somehow you didn't manage to persuade the cinematographer to create the visual look you wanted. Is that correct?

LARS VON TRIER: Yes. In my other films, I've been stronger, and I've taken more control, but I didn't have the energy for that.

PETER SCHEPELERN: What kind of look would you have liked for the film?

LARS VON TRIER: My original idea was to create a big difference between the monumental, stylised scenes and a documentary style. So it should have been messier, but it didn't happen. Partly because I wasn't able to operate the camera, like I did in three or four of my other films.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Why weren't you able to persuade the cinematographer to make the pictures you wanted?

LARS VON TRIER: Maybe I just didn't have the energy to try. All the things I'd like to criticize are the director's faults.

PETER SCHEPELERN: You didn't insist?

LARS VON TRIER: No. It's really unpleasant and humiliating, not being able to handle the camera like I used to do. I've built up a technique with the actors, handling the camera and working close to them. But the actors were a great help. They knew this was not a perfect situation for me.

PETER SCHEPELERN: So the problem was to persuade the cinematographer to create a visual style slightly different from what we have seen?

LARS VON TRIER: Yes, but maybe he didn't understand. Maybe I never made it clear. We've made many films together, and normally, I would ask five times for what I want, and this time, I might not have said it even once. I had this illusion, which you can have in a marriage, about knowing what the other person thinks.

PETER SCHEPELERN: So you were disappointed that he didn't guess your intentions.

LARS VON TRIER: Maybe that's what happened.

PETER SCHEPELERN: It still looks fantastic, but you didn't want it to look fantastic.

LARS VON TRIER: Well, we agreed on these stylised...

PETER SCHEPELERN: On the fabulous elements, the mythical elements. But not on the ordinary realism?

LARS VON TRIER: No, I thought that was too Hollywood-like. The lighting, everything looked too nice.

PETER SCHEPELERN: How about the controversial theme of a woman who prefers that a little boy falls out of the window, and realizing that womanhood is bound to

daemonic forces, and destructive forces in nature. Where did you get this theme? Did you decide to show that women are basically evil?

LARS VON TRIER: Not in this film, but one day I will, yes! Anyway, the whole sequence uses slow motion, which is something I did a lot in film school, but it could have been much better.

PETER SCHEPELERN: It could? What could have been better?

LARS VON TRIER: Everything. But that has nothing to do with Tony [Anthony Dod Mantle, cinematographer] or anybody else; we just didn't have enough time. I have done this kind of film a lot earlier on, and with more energy, it could have been much better. But still, it's showing off a little bit. It's like going back to something you've done before and then do it again, which isn't a big thing. I'm not that proud of it either. But I'm sure I could fool someone like you.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Indeed. And perhaps a few other people present.

LARS VON TRIER: They were fooled too.

PETER SCHEPELERN: It's the Händel music.

LARS VON TRIER: Then forget what I just said.

PETER SCHEPELERN: You mentioned there are some elements from your very early work; not only your film school work, but even as far back as your university work.

LARS VON TRIER: Did I use slow motion back then?

PETER SCHEPELERN: No, not slow motion, but you would find parallels in your early work.

LARS VON TRIER: But especially in the use of the slow motion. When you use a phantom camera, which can go up to a thousand frames, it can't go wrong. As soon as it goes into super slow motion, it looks good. I could have used it more.

PETER SCHEPELERN: You could have shot the whole film in super slow motion.

LARS VON TRIER: Well, what I like about the first scene is, that it has this commercial look, but the story is somewhat different. Which I think is good.

PETER SCHEPELERN: In terms of the penetration shot for example. Well actually, a certain type of commercial film would use such shots, but that's another story.

LARS VON TRIER: We had these body doubles that were screwing, and I asked this guy to screw extremely quickly, to make it look right on the thousand frames.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Because you knew it would be slowed down.

LARS VON TRIER: Otherwise, people would fall asleep. So we had to have a little more action. I know there's not a lot to cheer about in this part of the film.

PETER SCHEPELERN: The film of course takes a sudden movement when she gets very evil about two-thirds into the film. Tell me something about this change of the story.

LARS VON TRIER: I don't think she suddenly gets evil.

PETER SCHEPELERN: But after all, you think: "My goodness, what's going on?"

LARS VON TRIER: Well, the weak point in this film is that we move from nature being something green that surrounds you, and then suddenly jump to nature inside people. This sounds good in words, but on film, it doesn't really make sense. I think it's about that time she gets evil.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Real nature can be evil when a tree falls on somebody, and she gets evil and hits somebody. With a tree. Or what?

LARS VON TRIER: Well, I must say, I don't see her as being so evil. I see her as being afraid.

PETER SCHEPELERN: So all this with his leg, she's just afraid he's getting away?

LARS VON TRIER: She's afraid he will run away and hurt himself.

PETER SCHEPELERN: After all she's right; he will run away.

LARS VON TRIER: Well. The film is of course also about the therapy that I have gone through myself. Every time I said: "These are only thoughts, they will not change reality". Which is what I'm discussing.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Who are all those women at the end of the film?

LARS VON TRIER: That's very easy to say, they are extras from northern Germany. And for some very strange reason, they are wearing gloves. Nothing that I saw or asked for at the time, but I think it was a practical thing. The guy who took care of the extras asked them to wear gloves that day, because it would be cold.

PETER SCHEPELERN: And they could get scratches.

LARS VON TRIER: Yes, so for some strange reason, they're wearing gloves, and if you look at it, it's looks significant, but it's not.

PETER SCHEPELERN: It's not what you intended, because somebody else made this part of the film.

LARS VON TRIER: Yes, and if you look carefully, you can see this specific woman with gloves three or four or five times in the background. That's computer work.

PETER SCHEPELERN: And are they witches that are going to be burned, or are they sisters of that unnamed woman?

LARS VON TRIER: Something like that.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Or, are they berry pickers in the forest?

LARS VON TRIER: They could be that too. But, for once, please allow me not to answer all questions. Because I remember somebody saying that you shouldn't ask the chicken about the chicken soup.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Okay.

LARS VON TRIER: I don't remember who it was, but there was some kind of logic in that.

Part 2: Q&A with Conference participants

PIA TIKKA: Great pleasure to meet you, and to have seen *Antichrist*. I think it was a very powerful film. At some points I had to close my eyes, because I can't stand violence, but I found it an extremely impressive film. I'm interested in this discussion about women being evil. I don't know if you really agree to that idea, but in this film, I actually think it was the man, who was forcing the woman into therapy to treat her with his psychological abilities, and as we know, men often don't have a very strong emotional understanding of feelings. So I think these two people didn't understand each other.

LARS VON TRIER: Yes, I agree completely.

PETER SCHEPELERN: There are no evil women in this film.

LARS VON TRIER: But she's the one getting killed, we don't know about him.

HENRY BACON: I'd like to hear more about the ideas of the imagery you had in mind when creating this film. The images are fantastic although you said, you weren't able to realize them quite as you wanted, but was that part of the creative process?

LARS VON TRIER: This particular part of the film with the metaphysical and monumental images, I agreed on. I just wanted a bigger difference from the reality layer. I thought that was too nicely lit.

HENRY BACON: Was it part of the initial idea and the way the whole thing evolved, to have those ideas of that imagery of nature and people in there? Rather than just having a plot?

LARS VON TRIER: If you're asking if these images were part of the script, they were.

PETER SCHEPELERN: This scene where they're having sex in front of the tree with the bodies, was that an idea you had and wanted to fit into the plot?

LARS VON TRIER: Yes, at some point, I was pressed very hard by somebody I won't mention by name, to do the Wagner opera *The Ring*, and I used some of those images for this film.

PETER SCHEPELERN: So it had some purpose after all.

HENRY BACON: May I just ask, how about the use of the Rinaldo Aria? Was that a conscious choice at a certain point?

LARS VON TRIER: It was a conscious choice. I heard it on the radio, it's one of the ten most well known arias I think, and I liked the lyrics. I forgot them, but it's something about female suffering. Which is always good.

AARON TAYLOR: Thank you for an extraordinary film. You said that you shouldn't ask the chicken about the chicken soup, would you like to ask us a question?

LARS VON TRIER: I have to be very frank with you: No. Of course I would like to hear about your life, and what the weather is like where you come from, and stuff like that, but not what you think about this film. I do not work with an audience in mind. I make films that I would like to see myself and I regard myself as the audience. And of course, there has to be somebody who pays for the film and that would be a few people, spread around the world. We do make some test screenings, but we don't ask people if they liked the film or the first scene, or if they care for a certain character and so on. But we do ask questions regarding the understanding of the film.

ED TAN: I saw in the credits that there was research done for the movie. I'm curious to know what kind of research, especially the horror film research. Did you need it and how did you use it?

LARS VON TRIER: Because I found myself in this stupid situation, I tried to watch some horror films, which I wouldn't normally do. I would rather just depend on my feelings, or how I felt about horror films. I start with the shower scene, and I don't hit it. I watched some horror films, I'm sure you all know some Japanese ones, *Dark Water*, *The Ring*, and I'm not sure it was that interesting to watch horror films, but it was interesting to see some Japanese images. But I haven't really used it, because to some degree, this is not that kind of horror film. But I did watch ten or twelve horror films.

ED TAN: I thought your hospital television series was a sort of horror.

LARS VON TRIER: A little bit, yes. But that one, I didn't really research. Of course, I watched the old horror classics like *The Shining*, which I like very much as I like Kubrick, and *Carrie*, which is a great film, and *The Exorcist*, which I like very much too, but these are all classics to me. I do not normally watch new things. But I tried it this time, I don't know what it did to the process, but it was very nice to watch new films. The good thing about horror films is that it allows you to make strange images. You can almost use any sort of material in a horror film, which makes it interesting to watch in my opinion.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Speaking of research, there was a strange person who called me up and told me to ask you if you actually made research on putting the wrong shoe on the wrong foot. This lady didn't believe you could break a bone that way.

LARS VON TRIER: No, but it's not broken. Did the X-ray show that? No!

PETER SCHEPELERN: It's harmed somehow.

LARS VON TRIER: They talk about a small deformity.

PETER SCHEPELERN: But did you talk to a doctor about it? Or did you accept it as part of your plot.

LARS VON TRIER: I didn't talk to a doctor. But there's many times in my life, I should have talked to a doctor, but didn't.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Of course, we know that.

BEN MEAD: Well, I wanna go back to that horror film issue because the films that frighten me the most are the one that have the most plausibility. And you mentioned some of the classics that I'm very fond of, too. My question is: Where did you come up with that gag with the grinding wheel through the leg? Where did that come from?

LARS VON TRIER: You know, in *Dogville*, I had a wheel also, it was being dragged around.

PETER SCHEPELERN: There must be a wheel in your torture scenes.

LARS VON TRIER: In my torture scenes, what do you mean?

PETER SCHEPELERN: Isn't it a kind of torture? And you have a mill wheel in *Dogville*, and here you have a...

LARS VON TRIER: Oh yes, it's called "torture porn". It's something I haven't heard of before but I'm definitely gonna look it up on the Internet. It's called torture porn.

TIM SMITH: I'd like to thank you for every intriguing film, as the rest of your films have been. You say, when you're making the film, you don't have a particular spectator in mind. But I wonder whether you do have in mind the fact that it is gonna be looked at. Because a lot of your filming decisions, your compositional decisions, seem to be trying to make it hard for the viewer to lock onto the faces. Things like jump cuts, the instability in the image, which you have sometimes here, I wonder if that is a conscious thing you do?

LARS VON TRIER: Hopefully it's conscious.... If you're talking about this jump cutting, or whatever you call it, then it's something that actually started when watching this crime series from the USA, what was it called?

PETER SCHEPELERN: *Homicide*.

LARS VON TRIER: *Homicide* [1993, *Homicide: Life on the Streets*]. We were very impressed by it and thought it was fantastic that they cut so freely. So we have done that for several films, because the technique is great for me. You can ask for a lot of different ways of acting a scene, different intentions, different directions to take. You can tell the actors: "Let's play a little game, it's not going to be part of the film, but you come from this situation and you come from that situation, and it gives you lots of different material. I think that what I added to this technique was to cut the different psychological situations together without giving people the time to really change. So you get the essence of the character. The idea is to ask the actors to stay in character, but to do the scene in different ways by giving them

different tasks. That, I thought, was interesting. It's actually a long story because we worked with jump cutting. A jump cut, or a time cut, is basically defined by sound. What we found out when making this film is that if you do not make a cut in the sound, you will have a tendency to perceive the action as "one to one": The brain wants to see the image as one long action. Whenever you make a time cut, the sound will mark that cut very clearly. We found out that the image jumps a lot but it's kind of glued together with the atmosphere and the sound. So we had a theory that whenever you build up to any emotional sensation, fright or whatever, then a time cut will reset the emotional mood of the spectator. That means that you can build up to something, and if you make a time cut, the brain resets again, and you have to build up a certain mood again. And this wasn't the case if you didn't mark the time cut with a sound cut. I believe that the brain wants to glue all information together so you want to see an action or a story as a whole. And I think that's what happens when you do not time cut in both sound and image at the same time. I found that interesting.

TIM SMITH: I found it very interesting too. And I think my experience of those sequences where the sound is continuous is that you get a very abnormal perception of duration. You're feeling like you're missing something or it's distorted. And that gives you a very strange position as a viewer in the relationship with the image because you've got continuity on one level, and not on the other.

LARS VON TRIER: Oh yes. The idea in the first place, when you do a time cut, is to let somebody take the first step up a staircase, and then you cut to the last step, because you know what's going on; he's walking up the staircase. And we just take something out to compress the whole thing. But then again, we found out that in emotionally, it was very, very bad if you make such a time cut. Then it looks more like a montage.

DAVID BORDWELL: I was going to ask you about the sort of traditions you would insert this film into, beside the horror film. I mean, many of your films are about control, both your directorial control; either maximizing it or letting things happen by chance and so on, and your films are about characters controlling one another. With this one, I was particularly struck by the dynamic of who is controlling whom in various moments. And I was thinking of films like *Persona*, and Strindberg's *The Stronger*, the play. And I know, I've just read in the press kit, that Strindberg seems to have been on your mind, when you were making this film...

LARS VON TRIER: And Bergman too.

DAVID BORDWELL: ... So I'm wondering, with this film, the dynamic is very much in the plot between the characters' struggle for control. The game is being played between the characters, maybe not so much for you, and I think you've already said that maybe you weren't trying for that kind of extreme swing between what you called mathematics and messiness. In terms of the film, does this make it a more straightforward film or a more accessible film, you think, for the audience? Because it has a very gripping central situation, that isn't sort of overlaid by the more formal, I wouldn't call them games exactly, but formal play that you set up? I mean, do you think audiences would plug in to this easier than *The Boss of It All*?

LARS VON TRIER: If you asked me, I would say that *The Boss of It All* was very easy to watch, but it turned out that it wasn't. So I'm not the right one to ask because I have my ideas, and then it turns out as the opposite. But you get experienced along the way. I think that to some degree, this film is more human somehow, even though they're doing inhuman things.

DAVID BORDWELL: One of the things about *The Boss of It All* that's interesting to me, is that you have continuous time in the image, but you have very harsh sound cuts because ambience sound changes from one camera position to the other, so the opposite of the time cut you were talking about...

LARS VON TRIER: Yes, absolutely, but that's because we tried this *automovision* as we called it, meaning that the sound had a certain system, and the image had another system, so whenever we made a cut, you could hear it clearly.

PETER SCHEPELERN: David liked the film.

LARS VON TRIER: He liked the film.

DAVID BORDWELL: Yes, very much, actually.

CASPER TYBJERG: You were talking about shamanism. And you get witches burned, I mean, is there a link there? Is that part of the research as well?

LARS VON TRIER: No, the shamanism was just something I was interested in. It actually came from a very poor film by Ken Russell, called *The Experiment [Altered States, 1980]*. Or, anyway, a film I was not too fond of. Oh, sorry, in Danish it was called *The Experiment* for some strange reason. I thought it was fantastic, the idea about an isolation tank, where you lie and hallucinate. But the whole thing of shamanism came from that. Without wanting to, I actually found myself doing fantasy travels, which I am very good at, I must say. And it's very enjoyable and really, really funny. But that's a long time ago I did these things, although it's really fantastic, it's kind of...

PETER SCHEPELERN: Funny the same way that *Antichrist* is funny?

LARS VON TRIER: Not that funny, no, but funny like when the fox is talking, that's really strange. I had a member of the family that went to hospital, and found out that she had cancer. And when she was in hospital, I said: "Maybe you'd be interested in shamanism, you can make some journeys", but she replied: "I can't, I have tried a lot of times". So I said: "Okay, I'll do like the shamans used to do; I will travel for you". And I asked her if she had any animals in mind; you have to have this power animal, that's what it's all about. And she said: "Yes, I had this fox that I used to feed outside my house, and when I was on my way to the hospital, just before I had this bad news, I saw that the fox had been run over by a car". And so I travelled for her, and I very quickly found a fox. And this was the fox that is in the film; it was biting itself and then it disappeared, it was very unpleasant actually. I went searching for it, and I found a silver fox. And they looked like a Disney couple, a man and a wife and their children, and for some reason, I told the man and not the woman: "I just met a fox". And he said these words that I still find remarkable: "Never trust in the first fox you meet!" This was a blow to me. I went back to my family member and told her not to believe in the first fox you meet, which we did

not understand at that time. But when she came home from the hospital, she found out that it wasn't her fox that had been run over. So we actually talked a lot about foxes. I made three or four travels for her, and the last travel was on the day before she died, and I saw this star constellation called the fox. And I told her, that beside her hospital bed, there would be four foxes. I have a letter from her saying this was the best letter she ever got and she died just after that. I thought that was very touching. I don't know if it means anything at all, but it's journeys like these that the images come from.

TODD BERLIN: You must have known when you wrote the script that this would be a very difficult movie for actors; they have to carry every scene. I just wanted to know if there were any scenes that were particularly difficult for you or for the actors to get right, to get in the way you wanted it?

LARS VON TRIER: Some scenes are always problematic, for instance information scenes where the actors have to give a lot of information to the audience, that's always very difficult. And we cut them of course. I remember doing one in *Breaking The Waves*, where the actors were laughing so much that in the end we had to cut the scene out because it was ridiculous. But some of the scenes that you might think were really difficult to make, the naked scenes, the violence, I didn't see those as a problem and I don't think the actors did either. We discussed these scenes beforehand when we talked about the script and whether they wanted to do the film. So I was never nervous in the morning, because I didn't have to say: Now you have to masturbate, because everybody knew that would happen. And she [Charlotte Gainsburg] decided to do the film. It was just what I needed at that time, she said: I know I'm not supposed to say this, but I'm dying to get the part, which is fantastic. That's really what you want. When that happens, the film can be very good, and I think she is very good in this film, I really admire her for what she does.

ANDRAS KOVACS: In one of your earlier responses you mentioned Bergman and Strindberg, you didn't mention Tarkovsky, and you dedicated this film to Tarkovsky. And so, I was looking through the film, to see what is Tarkovsky, and beyond the obvious pictorial quotations from *Mirror* and from other films that one can discover, I found this interesting that you mentioned Bergman. What struck me in the film was that it was a way of getting rid of psychology. And this was to me a way from Bergman to Tarkovsky.

LARS VON TRIER: Okay, you mean there's not so much psychology in Tarkovsky?

ANDRAS KOVACS: There's no psychology in Tarkovsky.

LARS VON TRIER: No, maybe not.

ANDRAS KOVACS: And there's a lot of psychology in Bergman. And this film, in the first part, it was like a psychological drama. Just like a normal Hollywood drama that uses professional psychology. It disturbed me a little, when the husband said that he was a therapist, but I was very glad to find out at the end...

LARS VON TRIER: ... That he was a very bad therapist! Of course the film is very much of a construction. But the idea of making a film with only two persons is something I think a lot of directors want to do at some point.

ANDRAS KOVACS: ... And very few can.

LARS VON TRIER: Bergman could!

ANDRAS KOVACS: I have to say, that this is one of your films that I like the most.

LARS VON TRIER: Yeah, it doesn't say much; I don't know what you feel about the rest, but thank you.

ANDRAS KOVACS: Do you like this film?

LARS VON TRIER: I've come to like it but I wasn't excited when I did it. No.

PETER SCHEPELERN: But when you saw it?

LARS VON TRIER: I don't know. I like it now.

ANDRAS KOVACS: Is it like a burden to you?

LARS VON TRIER: No, it was just that I did it in a bit of a haze, without knowing really where it was going and what was happening. I've felt much more confident about my other films when I made them. But maybe it had to do with my situation, I don't know. Some of the images were meant to be monumental and I think we achieved that very well, and I knew that when we shot them. But I was not sure if the story would work.

HENRY BACON: I'm very interested to hear more about the way you work with your actors. Because you have been able to get such extremely good performances, here from these two, but also in your other films. Is working with the actors part of the creative process? How much scope do you leave for the actors?

LARS VON TRIER: Like I said before, I was unhappy with not being able to handle the camera. So I was unable to be as close to the actors and as supportive as I would have liked to be. But one good thing about having made some films, is that the actors have an idea about what kind of film it's gonna be. I'm thinking of the last film by Carl Dreyer, *Gertrud*. He was almost not directing it, he was very old and sick. And it became the clearest Dreyer film somehow because everybody had an idea about how a Dreyer film should look. I think that's an important part to remember. I just support the actors, and I think I'm quite good at seeing the potential in where they could go. And then I take them too far. The problem with shooting is that I always go too far and I don't stop where the scene is peaking. I go on. And then I go back and say: Okay, this was not the way. It's unsatisfactory to the actors because they want to end up with a success. And they don't do that, because I ask them to make different approaches to the scene. And when they really want to do the same film as you, they can go really, really far. Especially the women have a tendency to give into the film at a certain point, also because I ask so many different things of them, it's really hard for them to control the film. And if they do that and we agree on where the film is going, I can make something good out of it.

HENRY BACON: Can I just ask, have any of these great actors been prepared to do another film with you?

LARS VON TRIER: Willem Dafoe did another film before. Some of them have said they wanted to do another film, anyway. I don't know if they meant it.

PAUL TABERHAM: I wanted to ask you about hypnosis. I know you had an interest with it in your early films, and it came up again this time. I've had a little bit of hypnosis and I found myself becoming suggestible during the scene where she visualizes herself turning green. I thought that was very effective. So, a couple of things, is your interest in hypnosis reinvigorated or is it just because it was relevant to the plot that you brought it up again? Also, were you attempting to make your audience perhaps more suggestible by sort of inducing a kind of hypnosis into them through the sequence?

LARS VON TRIER: First of all, I would like to say that this film is probably most powerful for people who tend to suffer from phobias and know about anxiety. It's not really hypnotism; it's actually an exercise that exists in cognitive therapy, which is the reason why it's in the film. I like it, because it has a lot to do with film watching. If you watch a good film, you go deeper and deeper into it, which helps the film.

PIA TIKKA: Well, actually, I don't know if this is a good question to continue with since this is a quite interesting psychological issue. I wanted to ask about a camera technical thing. How did you create the images where some parts were distorted inside the frame?

LARS VON TRIER: We used something called a lens baby. Actually it's two lenses that are held together by a little piece of rubber, you can twist to get these distorted images. And some of it is added later, done electronically.

PETER SCHEPELERN: How, Lars, would you sum up your work with this film in 25 seconds?

LARS VON TRIER: How would you sum up tonight's event and this little talk?

PETER SCHEPELERN: Well, it's interesting that the people surrounding Dreyer knew how a Dreyer film should look, so that he could simply let them make a Dreyer film. I think your crew evidently has something to learn, because even though you've worked with some of them many times, I can feel you are being slightly critical about their attempt to make a Trier film. But let's summarize; they did make a Trier film. With or without your help, or without your blessing, it was a Trier film!

LARS VON TRIER: Some of it, yes.

PETER SCHEPELERN: Thank you, Lars.