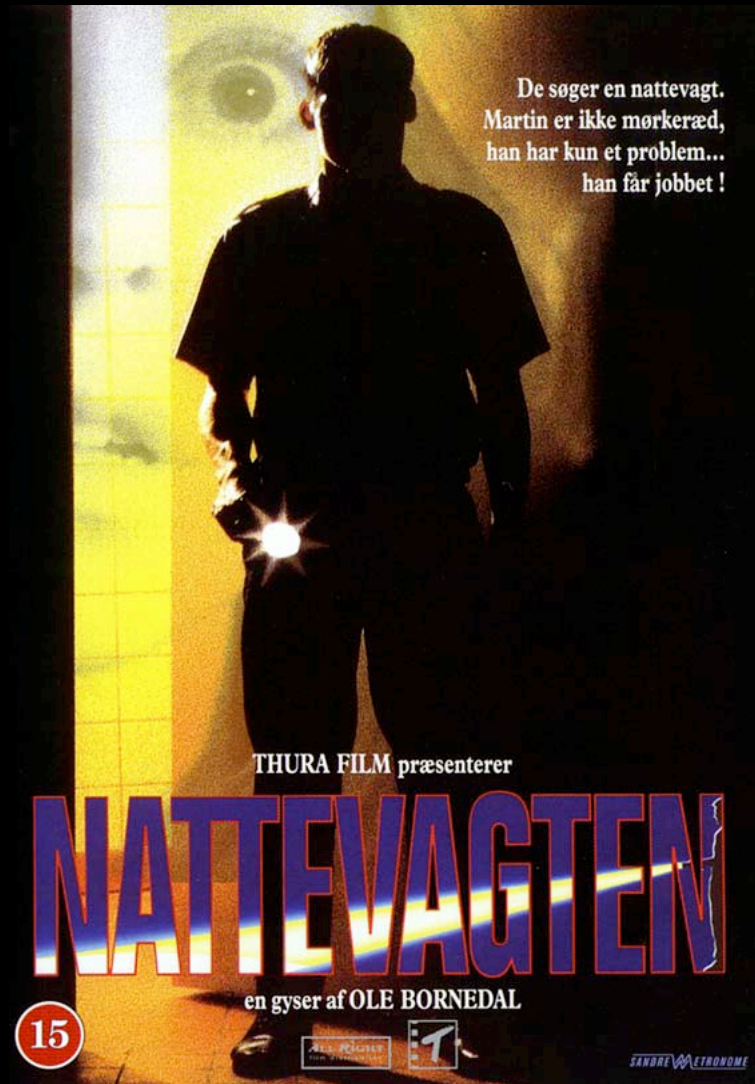


Why Do “Crime Scenes” Fascinate Us?



- An argument about *Nightwatch*
- Background story
 - Danish Cinema
 - Ole Bornedal (1958-)
- *Nightwatch* as crime scene
 - What is a crime scene?
 - What tools can we use to figure out how films represent crime scenes?
- Using *Nightwatch* to learn to use some tools
 - Some Sources of Fascination
 - Opening sequence
 - Looking for Patterns
 - Problems
- Methodological Conclusion

A black and white close-up portrait of Lars von Trier. He has dark hair, a beard, and is wearing a dark jacket with a light-colored scarf. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a subtle smile. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a crowd of people.

Danish Cinema Since the 1980s

Lars von Trier (1956-)

Elements of Danish Cinema Since the 1980s

- Art
 - Anti-narrative cinema
 - National expression
- Success
 - *Pelle the Conqueror*
 - *Babette's Feast*
 - Lars von Trier



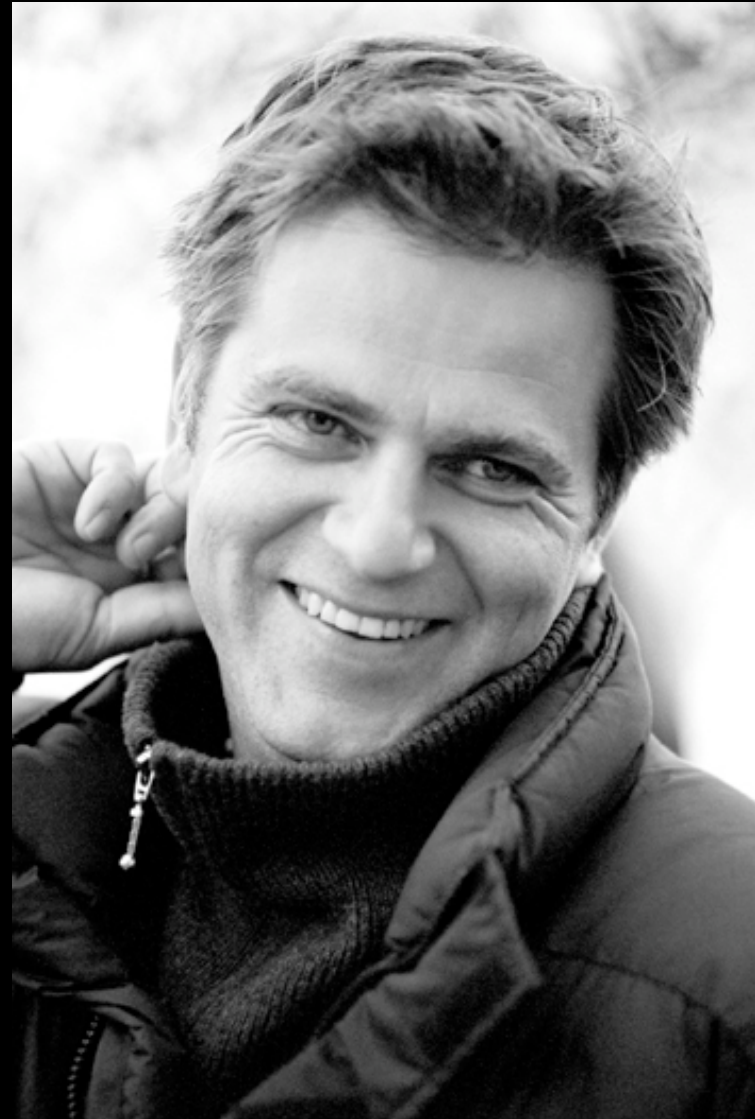
- Money
 - Danish Film Institute (DFI)
 - Popular Successes
- Dogma '95
 - Cinema of limitations

The Idiots (von Trier, 1998)



Ole Bornedal (1959-)

- Comparative outsider
- Writer and Director of *Nattevagten*
 - 1994
 - 1998
- Bornedal's style merges classical Hollywood narrative and elements of Danish art-film tradition
 - Plot-driven films
 - Director's intention may explain narrative links, when plot cannot
- Bornedal's films
 - *Charlot and Charlotte* (1996)
 - *Dybt vand* (1999)
 - *Dina* (2001)
- Combination of relative psychological depth and tight narrative helps us see how crime scenes are constructed



What is a Crime Scene?

- Representation of an “act of violence”
- “Object, manner, and means” (Aristotle)
- Act of violence is infinitely malleable through alteration of the quadrangle

Representation of
act of violence

Exposed Light
(Medium)

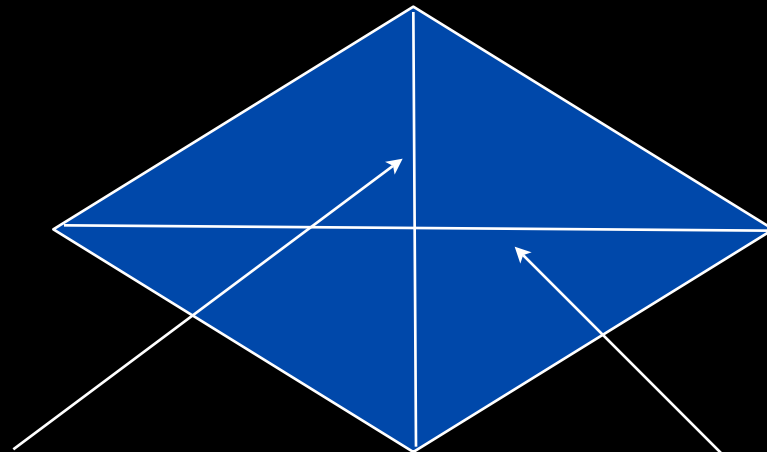
Bornedal & Co.

Us

Means
(Codes)

Steel
(Object)

Manner
(Communication)



What Tools Can We Use?

- What is the “manner” in which a film represents the act of violence?
- By studying a film’s formal codes, we can dissect its manner to better understand its depiction of crime scenes
- Formal codes
 - Cinematography (type of shot, angle, movement, lens, composition)
 - Lighting
 - Mise-en-scene
 - Transitions (editing)
 - Sound

Nightwatch Opening Sequence






KIM BODNIA

The opening shots of the film introduce the motif of *unmotivated* camera movement through hallways. (The camera's perspective is not attributed to any character.)

ULF PILGAARD



A close-up shot of a cluttered wooden desk in a dimly lit room. The desk is covered with various items: a black cordless phone, a black coffee maker, a pen holder with several pens, a stack of papers, a blue folder, and a black electronic device. In the background, a wooden chair and a bed with white linens are visible. The text 'lyd MICHAEL DELA NINO JACOBSEN' is overlaid in a yellow-green font on the upper part of the image.

lyd
MICHAEL DELA
NINO JACOBSEN

After initial introduction to apartment, close-ups begin to single out details, which will reappear later in the film. The phone will become a key prop when Martin is suspected of murder.



Close-ups at the dinner table provide a quick and intimate introduction to the main characters in the film -- Martin and Jens



Kalinka and Lotta are shot in medium-long (plain american) and medium shots, indicating they will figure less prominently in the film than Martin and Jens, who get the close-ups



Close-up on the television featuring an interview with Inspector Peter Wörmer, indicating his future significance to the story



The close up on spilled wine leads to a scream -- get ready for more frightening reactions

The Manner of the Crime Scene

- The film “trains us” to view it by introducing from the beginning a cluster of techniques, or, codes
- These codes will cue our expectations throughout the film -- invite hypotheses
- Modulations alter the representation of the crime scene, and we respond in various ways
- Multiple functions of these codes

Multiple Function of Crime Scenes



Law book on the desk...



Jens with pastor's clerics on...

- Opening sequence of “worldmaking” also introduces key narrative elements
- Messy apartment’s objects introduce major themes
 - Martin’s job
 - Lotta’s job
 - Kalinka’s studies
 - Characters’ attitudes
 - Youth and responsibility
 - Class position
 - Murder of prostitutes
 - Apartment and friends
 - Rites of passage and celebrations

Patterns in the Scene

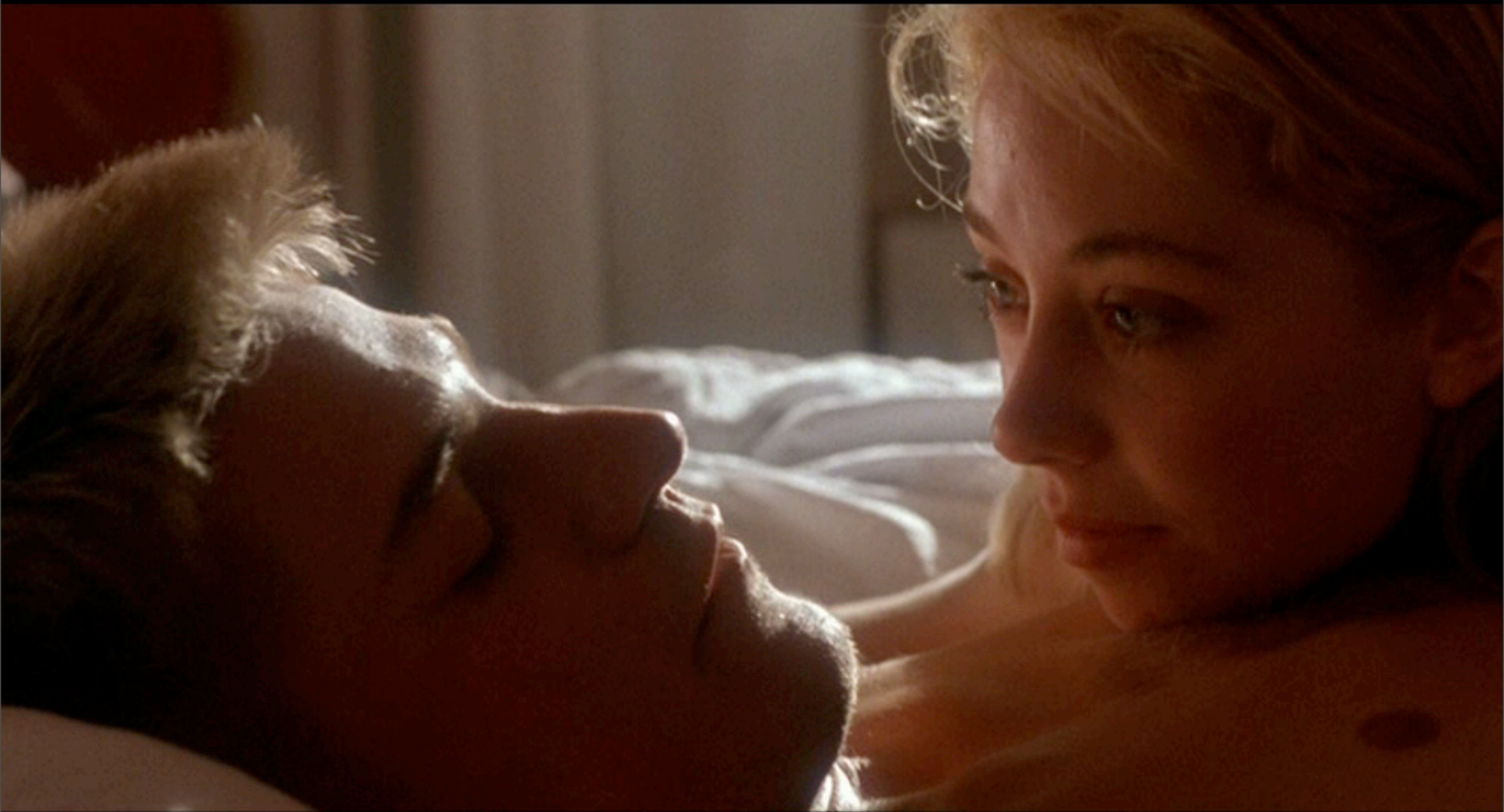
- Apartment ↔ Hospital
 - Hallways at hospital
 - Rooms at home
 - Nightwatchman's room
- Camera movement
 - Long shots in hallways
 - Dangerous rooms
 - Steadicam in hospital rooms
 - Static cameras and overhead shots in safe rooms
 - Bedroom
 - Nightwatchman's office
- Types of Shot
 - Long shots down hallways
 - Doors
 - Windows
 - Medium and close ups at home
- Lighting
 - Fluorescent hallways
 - Softer light in rooms
 - Natural light and candles at home



What is down the hall, behind the door?



What are those concealed objects?



Close-ups, static cameras, and warm lighting make the bedroom safe and warm, situating it in contrast to the long shots that make the hallways stark, fluorescent and frightening

Hallways and Moving Cameras -- With Steadicam Inside



Hypothesis and Fascination



What is in that tub?



Fascinating silence - but what about the cords?

- One way of creating fascination is to use codes that solicit hypotheses by viewers about what must happen next
- Three codes that prompt hypothesis formation
 - Effects in search of causes
 - Steadicam
 - Ambiguous motivation
 - Crosscutting to inform viewer
 - Wine bottle
 - Murder of Joyce
 - What must happen next?
 - Identification with characters
 - On-screen presence
 - Point of view
 - Characterization and motivation
 - Problems of identification
 - Gender
 - Misogyny

Can Overuse of A Code Undermine Its Communicative Function?





Notice the the contrasts created by shot length, camera movement, composition, and lighting that work to distinguish the hallways and the nightwatchman's room

A Methodological Conclusion



- Examine key details--like the opening sequence
- Map key sequences
- Identify issues and patterns
 - What codes are used?
 - How do they solicit hypotheses?
- Venture some hypotheses
- Look for problems and points of criticism