Seeing Bones Speaking:
The Female Gaze and the Posthuman Embodiment
in Reichs’s Forensic Crime Fiction

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Abstract
The central question that informs the South Central Review special issue on women detectives published in 2001 is, “Whose body makes it possible to identify mystery and detective fiction as feminist?” In response to the above concern, this essay aims to address the issue of the body in terms of the posthuman embodiment. The body is important in women’s crime fiction because it provides a perspective nearer to that of the victim and his/her body, in contrast to the kind of police procedural novel that is focused on the psyche of the killer. Women’s crime fiction has two other features that distinguish it from its police procedural counterpart: the female forensic pathologist’s “affective” view of the dead and her becoming an intended victim herself. These three aspects of women’s crime fiction point to the possibility of posthuman embodiment in the relationship between the heroine’s gaze and the victim’s body. The TV series Bones, which is adapted from Kathy Reichs’s novels, provides the visualization of the heroine’s posthuman embodiment. For us, this posthuman embodiment is based on a “parallax view” (to follow Slavoj Žižek’s usage of the term), an interface, or an empty screen, by which the heroine’s gaze is inscribed into the bones, enabling her to embody them. We will borrow Jacques Lacan’s theory of the gaze and N. Katherine Hayles’s idea of posthuman embodiment to help us understand the interface or interplay between the gendered technological gaze and the body, as well as the twofold process of disembodiment and reembodiment of the body as rendered in Reichs’s novels.

Keywords
forensic crime fiction, the posthuman, embodiment, gaze, parallax view

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