

## **Seeing is Believing: *CSI*, Serial Mortality, and the Discourse of True Vision**

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### **Abstract**

This essay considers the fascination and seduction of death as it is portrayed in the long-running American crime show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000-present), exploring the relatively recent trend in and popularity of crime procedurals in which death, dying, and violence are repetitively enacted. *CSI*'s narrative and visual form both suggest that the more investigators repeat, the closer they arrive to truth and justice. As with the episodic imperative of narrative television more generally, *CSI*'s repetitive drive offers eventual visual gratification for its viewers while situating them in a discourse of true vision—or, vision as truth—in which the show's investigators also circulate. This essay ties these specific interrogations of *CSI* to an articulation of the concept of the televisual gaze, a scopic function that derives its meaning from the subject imagining herself as part of a field of other gazers and gazes.

### **Keywords**

television, the gaze, crime, truth, repetition, visual pleasure, spectatorship