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