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PhD thesis

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**Crime, the Body and the Truth.**

**Understanding the Shift towards**

**Forensic Science in Television Crime**

**Drama with the *CSI*-franchise**

PhD Thesis

submitted by Elke Weissmann

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the shift towards the use of forensic science in crime drama by combining an examination of the British national and historical contexts with a close textual analysis and content analysis of the three series of the *CSI*-franchise which were shown in Britain on the terrestrial broadcaster Five. *CSI* is the internationally most successful crime series that makes use of forensic pathology and other sciences in order to investigate crime.

The thesis describes how this shift occurred and draws attention to parallel developments towards a greater visibility of body traumas in medical dramas and documentaries which situates *CSI* in a tradition of programming. The analysis of the franchise highlights that *CSI* locates the truth about crime in a world *a priori* rather than in the statements of relatives and friends of victims and suspects. Furthermore, it allows viewers to participate in the multi-sensory experience of the investigation by engaging the viewer's body physically. Truth, therefore, is conceptualised as much more certain and objective than in traditional crime drama. Another shift in *CSI* relates to the greater emphasis on the victim than in conventional crime drama which creates its stories around the perpetrator.

Despite similarities in the franchise, the detailed analysis reveals that there are differences in the series which arise out of their different incentives during the investigations. While *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* celebrates the sciences by putting them at the centre of both the series' narrative and its style, *CSI: Miami* uses the sciences in order to highlight the suffering of the victim. Finally, *CSI: NY* depicts the sciences as a means to overcome the trauma of crime and presents them as a work of mourning.

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All pictures in this thesis, where not otherwise indicated, are images from the discussed texts.



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## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Television crime drama has undergone a noticeable change in the last thirty years. This is made subject in the BBC1<sup>1</sup> crime drama *Life on Mars* (2006-2007) which neatly pits two (imagined) forms of policing against each other: a form of 1970s investigation resembling *The Sweeney* (ITV1,<sup>2</sup> 1975-1978) and a more forensic science-oriented variation familiar to the 2006 viewer. The earlier form of policing revolves around cosy interviews, aggressive interrogations, fast car chases and the occasional physical altercation, while the later version is presented to be more cerebral, more technical and clinical but also less reliant on gut feeling. In the pilot episode, Sam Tyler (John Simm) finds himself propelled thirty years into the past from 2006 through some form of time travelling and is made to supervise his 1970s colleagues by his brutish boss. In a first briefing, he struggles to keep his temper as one of the detectives carelessly contaminates evidence with sandwich filling and another shows utter incomprehension in the face of Sam's insistence on forensic methodology.

What is particularly interesting in this scene is how the camera work and dialogue suggest that the viewer is assumed to be able to identify completely with Sam. Following conventions from other time travelling tales, the scene is

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<sup>1</sup> *Life on Mars* was actually produced by independent production company Kudos Film and Television. Rather than referring to the production companies which increasingly becomes the norm for referencing television programmes (see *Critical Studies in Television* 2006), I will list the channels on which programmes are first screened because my interest in this thesis lies with programme texts as they can be watched by audiences rather than texts as they are produced. See p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Although ITV has only been re-branded as 'ITV1' since August 2001, for reasons of convenience I will refer to the terrestrial channel ITV as ITV1 in order to distinguish it from the broadcaster ITV and the digital channels ITV2, ITV3 and ITV4.

shot entirely from Sam's (that is our contemporary's) perspective. More suggestive, however, is a combination of a close-up that draws attention to the contamination of evidence – allowing us to scrutinise the problem in detail with our own eyes – and the lack of a verbal comment. This combination suggests that we are assumed to fully comprehend that this is a *faux pas* of police detection. It also indicates that the use of forensic methodology in crime drama is now so established that viewers can be supposed to approach dramas of the genre with a different set of expectations and with knowledge that the 1970s audience did not have. What does this knowledge entail and, more significantly, how does it impact on our understanding of crime in these dramas?

These questions lie at the heart of this PhD thesis which examines crime drama that uses predominantly forensic methodology to investigate crime. These dramas have gained in importance on the international market since the 1990s but in particular since the arrival of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000-). By providing a detailed analysis of the *CSI*-franchise, which now includes the two spin-offs *CSI: Miami* (CBS, 2002-) and *CSI: NY* (CBS, 2004-), and its context, I hope to show that our understanding of crime is significantly shaped by the increased emphasis on forensic methodology.

## **1.2 Origins of the thesis**

My first encounter with forensic science in crime drama was when *Cracker* (ITV1, 1993-1995, 2006) and *McCallum* (ITV1, 1995-1998) were shown on late night television in Germany in the late 1990s and early 2000s. I instantly felt that these dramas were distinctly different from the crime drama that normally filled the schedules. At first I laid it down to their Britishness as, I had learned through experience, British television drama was in general grittier than American drama which dominated the German schedules and had a distinct and strong tradition



that was also completely different from German television. However, *CSI* made me realise that this difference was connected to the methodology of investigation rather than the national specificities.

*CSI* arrived on German television amidst a heavy load of marketing in 2001. It was sold to the German audience as the 'hit programme from the USA' and 'produced by Jerry Bruckheimer' who in Germany enjoyed a good reputation for his high-gloss and high-action films such as *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986), *Con Air* (Simon West, 1997), *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998) and *Pearl Harbour* (Michael Bay, 2001). The marketing campaign for *CSI* was geared to invest the programme with the attributes of a 'must-see' television programme (Jancovich and Lyons 2003, pp. 1-2), that is, it was presented as a television event that was more like a classical Hollywood film rather than 'average' television. However, when the first episode was screened, I was more struck with the similarities to other programmes.

True to Bruckheimer's reputation, *CSI* looked slick and glossy. In fact, it looked more like science fiction, which was the subject of my undergraduate thesis, than a crime drama. Its stylistic emphases were particularly interesting to me as they seemed to revolve around the sciences and therefore appeared closely connected to questions of epistemology. At the same time, I was aware of the fundamental differences between *CSI* and science fiction. Science fiction derives its stories from the possibilities offered by science and uses the sciences to extrapolate from fact potential, fictional stories of human endeavour and achievement. *CSI*'s style, on the other hand, revolved around the sciences to add a level of realism to its already realist crime stories which seemed to resemble much more those of *Cracker* and *McCallum*. Thus, rather than focusing on potential overlaps with science fiction dramas, this thesis will investigate *CSI*'s style and its connection to science in order to ask questions of epistemology.

In addition, *CSI*, like *Cracker* and *MacCallum*, presented me with people who were doing things that were not dissimilar from what I did: they researched their fields, they worked on the detailed analysis of an object, they went to conferences and they were essentially immersed in a world of knowledge creation. In other words: they were intellectuals in a genre that had traditionally looked down on intellectualism as Geoffrey Hurd argues (1981, p. 68).<sup>3</sup> There was, however, another aspect to this that I found compelling. In traditional crime drama, male police detectives usually chased criminals literally, either in cars or by running after them – and this is reflected in *Life on Mars*. Police detectives often needed to use violence to make an arrest and in general appeared as traditionally masculine in their aggression towards suspects. In these new crime dramas, the detectives were not only intellectuals, they were also less physical than their police counterparts. Moreover, they were prone to become victims themselves or were driven by an emotional need to achieve justice for the victims. In all, they appeared more feminine, even though the dramas I had watched all revolved around male protagonists. I therefore could not help but wonder if the investigation through forensic science also implied a less masculine and more feminine perspective on crime despite science normally being coded masculine. In other words, I began to wonder if these forensic crime dramas offered indeed a new – more intellectual and more feminine – framework to look at crime.

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<sup>3</sup> There are precedents for intellectuals in crime drama, most notably Sherlock Holmes. However, Sherlock Holmes – like most other intellectual detectives – worked outside the institution of the police, while the scientists of *CSI*, *MacCallum*, *Cracker*, etc. belong to institutions that are at least affiliated to the police. It is this institutionalised intellectualism that seems to constitute a significant shift.

### **1.3 Aims of the thesis**

Although I watched forensic-oriented crime drama quite regularly, I was never really what Matt Hills (2002, p. XI) describes as 'fan'. Rather, my interest primarily followed the 'ideal subjectivity of academia' (p. 3) – I watched from a trained and informed point of view that saw similarities and differences in other genres and overarching questions of epistemology. Moreover, the form of my interest demanded an analysis that went beyond the encyclopaedic knowledge of content but was also concerned with structure and form. As I informed myself further by starting research into crime drama, I realised that there existed nothing in the academic literature that offered a thorough analysis of forensic-oriented drama. My first aim, therefore, was to fill this gap with an examination of such television fictions. Although my interest incorporated *Cracker*, I realised that this programme presented something completely different as it revolved around forensic psychology rather than forensic pathology. Forensic psychology's aim is to establish the motivation and psychological profile of the perpetrator and therefore presents stories that centre on the criminal. Forensic pathology, on the other hand, investigates the bodies of the victims and therefore seems to revolve much more around them.

The analysis of forensic pathology-centred dramas essentially revolves around the key question of what we learn about crime if it is investigated through forensic science; that is the thesis is essentially focused around an epistemological project. My arguments are roughly based on Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics (1960) which describes reading as a dialectical process in which previous knowledge of the reader is in constant negotiation with knowledge presented by a text, allowing texts to gain new meanings with every new reader. At the same time, texts also influence what knowledge readers gain. Tony Wilson (1993) attempts a description of these processes for

the act of watching television. Whilst Wilson spends considerable time on describing the processes from the side of the viewer and leaves little space for the impact of the text, I here want to focus on the text in order to highlight what a viewer can take from it and what not. Wilson, following Husserl, describes the text as offering a particular 'horizon' which determines what is considered natural and taken for granted in a particular life-world (1993, p. 18). 'Horizon', however, implies primarily ideas of content while structural aspects of thinking are left aside. I will therefore use the word 'frameworks' instead. This thesis will investigate what frameworks forensic science dramas offer to viewers which they can then negotiate with their existing knowledge to form specific meanings. As my interest in the text is driven by my awareness of epistemology and hermeneutics and hence a focus on questions surrounding the viewing experience, I will exclude any production notes from my analysis.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis will examine

- if there is a shift towards the forensic in the representation of crime on television. An overview of 14 years of television programming in Britain will test the hypothesis that forensic science became gradually more prominent during the 1990s.<sup>5</sup>
- The thesis will further investigate how crime is investigated forensically. It is clear that the forensic investigation involves very different processes from those of conventional police detection. The thesis endeavours to describe them systematically.

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<sup>4</sup> Production notes on *CSI* exist in abundance: DVDs include short documentaries about set design and special effects and an article in David Wiener in *The American Cinematographer* (2002) reports on the work of *CSI*'s two main cinematographers who describe the shooting at two locations in detail. However, because this thesis is interested in the text as it is consumed by viewers, I will not make use of this – otherwise useful – information apart from occasional pointers in the footnotes.

<sup>5</sup> And not just there: forensic science became increasingly visible in crime reporting in newspapers, on the radio and in crime novels (see Kathy Reichs and Patricia Cornwell). A consideration of their work is beyond the scope of this thesis in which I will focus on televisual representations of forensic science and in particular the impact of the audiovisual construction on our understanding of forensic science.

- A third aim of this thesis is to establish what impact this form of investigation has on the stories about crime that can be told.
- Finally, I want to analyse how the forensic investigation is presented televisually. Here, my analysis is driven by my interest in *CSI*'s style and its impact on the viewing experience.

#### **1.4 Why *CSI*?**

Originally, the thesis set out to investigate several crime dramas that centred on forensic science but, as the project progressed, I realised that the thesis had to be built around the close textual analysis of these dramas which, considering that most of them have now run for several seasons, proved impossible to conduct for all series. This implied that I needed to focus on one crime drama and I chose the *CSI* franchise.

The reasons for this are manifold: first, *CSI* constituted the height of my interest in these dramas. Second, *CSI* was globally significant: since its second season *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* has been the highest rated scripted programme on American television, while *CSI: Miami* was the globally most successful programme of the 2005-2006 season (Reuters 2006). It therefore seemed unmatched by any of the other programmes in economic significance.

Third, this economic significance has also allowed *CSI* to have a cultural impact. Although it is not the first programme of this format, changes in the perceptions of audiences are usually attributed to the franchise. Thus, American media speak of the '*CSI* effect' when describing the changed perceptions of jurors in respect of the infallibility of forensic evidence (Byers and Johnson forthcoming). Moreover, *CSI* has clearly had an impact on other television programmes in the USA and elsewhere. In the USA, programmes such as *Cold Case* (CBS, 2003-), *Crossing Jordan* (NBC, 2001-), *Numb3rs* (CBS, 2005-),

*Medical Investigation* (NBC, 2004-2005), *House* (Fox, 2004-), *Jake 2.0* (UPN, 2003) and *Prison Break* (Fox, 2005-) have adopted similar styles or narrative emphases. In the UK, *Murder City* (ITV1, 2004-) was advertised as 'a British *CSI*' (*RadioTimes* 13-19 March 2004, pp. 22, 102), while the already existing *Silent Witness* (BBC1, 1996-) and *Waking the Dead* (BBC1, 2000-) changed their style to look and be more like *CSI*.

All in all then, *CSI* appears to be the most influential and culturally significant of the programmes in the forensic science strand. A detailed analysis can therefore offer an understanding of this globally important programme but also provide a starting point to discuss similar styles, narrative structures and narrative emphases (on the body, on forensic science, on medicine, etc.) in other programmes. Moreover, as this thesis discusses *CSI* in a particular, namely British context, it might also provide the means to consider the importance of foreign, and especially American, TV dramas for the British television landscape. This area is only starting to be explored; Paul Rixon (2003; 2006) is one of the first to write about the adoption of US programmes into the British environment, while a research project at the University of Reading, *British TV Drama & Acquired US Programmes*, considers the influence of American programmes on British drama. In other words, this area remains under-researched despite the continuing popularity of American programmes in Britain.

## **1.5 Methodology**

The methodology developed out of a struggle between my own viewing experience and traditional theories in Television Studies about how people watch. It recognised recent developments in broadcasting technologies which are leading to new forms of consumption. As John Corner points out, the new digital technologies are likely to bring with them 'the capacity for greater

purposiveness and selectivity in viewing' (1999, p. 124), in other words, people choose to watch particular programmes rather than submitting to the flow of programmes scheduled on one channel. Thus, programmes are likely to be even more central to the viewing experience than they have been as Jostein Gripsrud notes when he criticises flow and glance theory:

[what] they [flow and glance theory] share, however, is a theoretical and hence fundamental disrespect for the *programme text* in television, i.e. for the individual units around which TV production is organized, on which the television *schedule* is based, and which still tend to regulate much of most people's viewing, in a daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythm. (1998, p. 29, emphasis in original)

The recognition of the centrality of the programme text, however, often leads to discussions of programmes divorced from their viewing context. As Simone Knox argues, this is problematic in itself because programmes are transformed as they are adopted into different contexts: '[the] CS/ we consume and receive in Britain is not exactly the same as the CS/ as it appears in other countries (including the USA), marked as they are by particular distribution and broadcasting processes, including those concerning acquisition policies and practices, as well as scheduling, promotion and reception of imports within specific national television cultures' (forthcoming). My methodology recognises this as it does not only provide a close textual analysis of CS/ but places this within the specific viewing context.

First of all CS/ is a television programme that is watched in different countries. I wanted to investigate it in its British context as my first contact had been with British forensic science drama which in the late 1990s already seemed established.<sup>6</sup> In Britain CS/ would therefore not necessarily be

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<sup>6</sup> There is an argument to be made that the use of forensic science in *crime* drama is particularly prevalent in Britain which is likely to be connected to a tradition of crime stories that revolve around science and intellectualism as in *Sherlock Holmes*. The

considered an innovation but as part of a tradition of similar crime dramas. In the British context, the franchise is also connected to a particular channel history: *CSI* was shown on one of the terrestrial channels, Five,<sup>7</sup> which used it to boost its 'quality' image (Fanthome 2003). I decided to conduct a content analysis of the schedules in Britain from 1991 (the year of the first showing of *Prime Suspect* (ITV1, 1991) which, according to Deborah Jermyn (2003b, p. 49), was the first to depict the body as evidence in such an explicit manner) to 2005 (the first showing of *CSI: NY* in Britain) in order to establish if there were similar programmes and how they related to aspects of *CSI*. I put the focus on the schedules Five which I also examined in respect of its particular institutional history and channel identity.

Second, *CSI* is a television programme that follows particular rules that viewers recognise. These include its series format, the fact that it is a fictional not a factual programme, and its production values which align it with a host of other programmes. I examined *CSI* in relation to these attributes, that is the impact of the series format on the narratives and the characteristics it shared with contemporary television drama.

Third, *CSI* is a crime drama. As a genre programme, it follows and deviates from the conventions established over the history of the genre, alluded to in *Life on Mars*. I investigated the franchise in its adherence to crime drama by going back to structuralist genre theories (Todorov 1977; Neale 1980) and comparing it to descriptions of the crime genre by other scholars such as John Sumser

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stories of *Sherlock Holmes*, however, constitute an important difference to these later dramas: Sherlock Holmes makes use of the sciences only cerebrally; he has extensive knowledge of different subjects and uses them to interpret the clues offered to him primarily in the accounts of witnesses. The new forensic science dramas revolve around the visualisation of science and therefore offer a fundamentally different viewing experience. It is for this reason, that this thesis does not trace a history of forensic science drama to *Sherlock Holmes*.

<sup>7</sup> I will refer to the fifth British terrestrial channel as Five as it has been named since September 2002 (Fanthome 2003).



(1996) and Thomas Leitch (2002). I realised that the literature which provides a content analysis of programmes in relation to crime and investigates what crimes are committed by whom and against whom could offer me the ability to reduce the crimes in *CSI* to this basic narrative, while the structuralist approach allowed me to question how this basic narrative was presented and complicated through the way this story was told.

As *CSI* was, despite the discourses about its inventiveness that surrounded it, actually following established conventions in so many ways, I felt I had to dig deep in order to establish in what way it was unique. I therefore chose to conduct a close textual analysis of all episodes of the first four seasons of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, the first two of *CSI: Miami* and the first of *CSI: NY*<sup>8</sup> in order to keep my sample manageable and yet offer an analysis that could establish patterns rather than a discussion of a few exceptions. My analysis was informed by John T. Caldwell's *Televisuality* (1995) which investigates the images of television in detail in their construction and their impact on what meanings can be created and by Karen Lury's *Interpreting Television* (2005) which also gives consideration to sound and the construction of time and space in television. Both take the television text as the starting point of their analyses rather than institutions, policies or the viewing environment.

Last, I had a particular interest in questions of gender as I had noticed a change in how the detectives dealt with the investigation, a change that seemed to imply a shift towards a more feminine perspective. In general, I felt that feminist approaches could provide me with the means to think about several aspects of the text, including the depiction of the mutilated bodies which *CSI* returns to again and again, the stories about crime which feminists point out are

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<sup>8</sup> From now on, I will refer to the different series as *Crime Scene Investigation*, *Miami* and *New York* while calling the franchise as a whole *CSI*.

often deeply gendered (see Boyle 2005) and the way my own body reacted when I watched the mutilation of the bodies in the franchise.

Importantly, these several approaches that I have listed here do not stand independent from each other but rather inform each other. For example, my knowledge about the structure of the conventional whodunit from genre studies allowed me to conduct a close textual analysis of scenes depicting the investigation independent from scenes that depict the crime, enabling me to reveal the mechanisms of the drama which cause the investigation narrative to determine the story of the crime. Similarly, a finding relating to the television context of *CSI* in Britain allowed me to highlight how text and context work together to create a particular effect. The use of these different methodologies in conjunction with each other allowed me to draw up a detailed account of the several layers which contribute to the creation of meaning in and around *CSI* and which do not always construct a coherent, definite meaning. Rather, the programme, like other television texts (see Wilson 1993; Fiske 1987), offers a polysemy, allowing viewers to negotiate their own preferred reading.

With this approach, this thesis offers a discussion of the shift towards the forensic in relation to one programme rather than sketching a broader picture. This limitation is, however, also an advantage: it offers a discussion that recognises that such a programme is embedded in a wider context which influences its meaning for the viewers and describes the density of meanings in its own text. Moreover, the methodology could easily be applied to other programmes – including programmes that are not forensic science-related – as the methodology is meant to offer a way to investigate particular programme texts in detail while still recognising that these are watched within a particular context.

## **1.6 TV Studies in the Digital Age**

Television Studies has struggled to define what television actually is (see Brunsdon 1998b). Gripsrud (1998, pp. 18-19) points out that it means 'seeing at the distance' and argues that it is the liveness of television transmission that is the key aesthetic value. Raymond Williams (1974), on the other hand, argues that it is the flow of television which creates a unity out of disparate segments that is central to the television experience. Both 'liveness' and 'flow' are open to criticism: although most television was produced live in the early years, programmes are now to a large extent pre-recorded as viewers are often aware. Moreover, it is likely that, with the increasing availability of digital technologies, television is watched less as it is broadcast. Viewers instead time-shift their programme choices with recording technologies and watch them when it is convenient. The 'flow theory' has come under criticism by several scholars, most notably John Ellis (1982, p. 121) who suggests that it is indeed the segmentation of television texts that lies at the heart of the television experience.

This thesis attempts to engage with these debates and question how concepts such as flow are still useful for Television Studies at a time when the multi-channel digital experience is a fact for most British households (72.5 percent of all British households were able to receive digital in March 2006, see Ofcom 2006) and when the government promotes digital technologies with policies geared to a general switchover from analogue to digital. In the wake of such policies, a study by Ofcom (2006) reveals, viewers have acquired primarily those technologies that allow them to time-shift programmes to their own needs rather than having to remain dependent on the TV schedules. By analysing one programme example, I hope to show that the flow debate in particular is still relevant, even when it needs updating.

With my interest in epistemology and hermeneutics, my focus in this PhD is on the television text as it is watched. When TV scholars have written about their subjects, they often centre their discussions on the programme text as it is broadcast. Television, in other words, appears as what is on television rather than what is seen on television. This is most notable in discussions of particular programme texts as in the series of *Reading Contemporary Television* books (Akass and McCabe 2003; 2005; 2006) which all offer detailed discussions of one text; but this also underlies Lury's and Caldwell's books. Jonathan Bignell's *An Introduction to Television Studies* (2004) similarly displays an interest in describing television partially by what has been on it. At the same time, he is also concerned with how television has been studied before, which is also the underlying principle for Corner's *Critical Ideas in Television* (1999) and Christine Geraghty's and David Lusted's *The Television Studies Book* (1998). Others approach television by looking at institutions and their histories (see for example Briggs 1961-1995; Fanthome 2003). Williams (1974), Gripsrud (1998) and others, finally, think about television as defined by the viewing experience.

In my own approach, I mostly follow John Fiske (1987) who belongs to the last group of scholars. Fiske describes television by discussing how viewers might make sense of it and therefore defines it as a continuation of disparate texts that offer a polysemy that viewers, as they watch, negotiate to develop their own meanings. Fiske therefore speaks of the 'producerly text' (p. 95) as television texts are open enough for viewers to produce their own meanings. Fiske's theory is, however, deeply embedded in the discourses and technologies of the 1980s and, although he speaks of the VCR as a means to time-shift programmes, he gives little consideration to the different sites of meaning that the texts themselves offer, emphasising realism and ideology over the details of the construction of the text. In other words, whilst Fiske sees the ubiquity of the realist style and therefore a general prevalence of the dominant ideology –

which viewers can, however, negotiate – I want to examine how the particular text, namely *CSI*, is constructed in relation to narrative, image, sound, etc. in order to understand which meanings are available. Rather than struggling with the concept of ideology and its political implications,<sup>9</sup> I want to investigate what *CSI* can make known about crime and what it cannot. In other words, I intent to investigate the framework that the franchise offers, the framework that limits the polysemy of the franchise and causes the viewers to think about particular aspects of crime while ignoring others when they are watching *CSI* on television.

What, then, does watching television mean? To me, it first of all means watching television before watching a programme. Although I might switch on the box in order to see a particular programme, I am aware that I am watching this programme on television and on a particular channel. Moreover, if I have switched on a minute early so I do not miss the start and have the time to settle down, I will be reminded of the channel that I am watching by a channel ident. I am likely to see this ident even when I have time-shifted the programme to my own convenience by recording it as the ident is screened immediately before the start of the programme and can therefore be used as a demarcation point to which I might fastforward in order to catch the whole programme.

Second, watching television is still something done in the home. I do not have to go to the cinema, I remain in my known environment. This environment has been the space in which I have watched television before, indeed, the continuity of being able to watch television and perhaps even the same programmes again and again helps to create a sense of familiarity even when the actual space is different (for example because one has moved). The experience of watching television, therefore, is connected to feelings of

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<sup>9</sup> Fiske himself seems to struggle with this. There is a constant tension between his discussion of the reiteration of the dominant ideology and the idea of the producerly text.

continuity to which the structure of the schedule into recognisable slots and the formats of most television products (as series, serial or repeated format such as the news) contribute. Watching a television programme, therefore, means watching it within the context of other television texts. This experience is heightened as these programmes are intercut with trailers and commercials but also because there is no visible signal that marks the beginning and end of a programme quite as clearly as there is in film: the lights remain on, our attention is not drawn more to the screen than it is before the beginning of the programme.

At the same time, there are enough markers (the idents, the logo-screens, etc.) that signal the beginning and end of a programme. The ready availability of TV texts on DVD and other recording equipment means that we can watch programmes independent of the flow offered by one channel. However, there is still a sense of continuity created even with DVDs. Unlike films which are recorded onto separate DVDs, TV programmes tend to be available in three to four episodes per DVD, with box sets offering half or full seasons. This creates a sense of continuity over the episodes even if the programme has, like *CSI*, only very few cross-episode storylines. Moreover, when buying the DVDs on Amazon or in other shops, the buyer is often reminded of similar programmes that the seller thinks the buyer might also like. In order to understand the experience of watching television, then, it is important to still appreciate that these programmes are watched within a context which creates a sense of continuity even when there are signals of the end of one programme and the beginning of another.

There is another aspect to the technologies of VCR, PVR and DVD which needs to be tackled. These technologies make it very easy for viewers to avoid missing their favourite programme. This means that viewers can become experts who know every single episode and who can watch episodes as often

as they like. Programmes, therefore, are not only watched with greater 'purposiveness' (Corner 1999, p. 124) but also with greater attention to detail. This suggests that the level of attention follows that of a gaze rather than a glance, which Ellis argues (2000a, pp. 100-101) continues to be the dominant form of engagement with television. Although I do not want to contest that the glance might remain dominant in respect of how most television is watched (this would need a study of behaviour of actual viewers which this thesis will not provide), I want to investigate one programme here under the premise that viewers direct their full attention to it because they make the appointment to watch it – as the above-average viewing figures for *CSI* on Five suggest –<sup>10</sup> because they time-shift it and/or because they buy the DVDs. This PhD thesis takes the first steps towards conceptualising television as that which is watched in an era in which the viewer has much more control over what to watch and when than was the case when Williams (1974) wrote his seminal essay that described the 'flow' of television.

## **1.7 Overview**

The thesis is divided into two parts – Part One providing the context and Part Two analysing *CSI*. Part One consists of two chapters, first the literature review and second the overview of the British schedules according to the *RadioTimes*. The literature review provides a sketch of debates in relation to television studies, the crime genre and the representation of the body, all of which I draw on in my methodology. At the same time, the literature review also offers some contextual information for the understanding of *CSI*, in particular in relation to genre and the representation of the body in Western culture. These contexts are

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<sup>10</sup> Evidence for this can be found in the ratings reports as published in the *MediaGuardian* Online at different times during 2005 and 2006.

elaborated in the overview of the schedules in Chapter Three which establishes what was available on television to British viewers from 1991 to 2005 in relation to crime and the representation of the body. It sets up some basic arguments for the analysis of *CSI* while also examining how the franchise relates to the rest of the schedules, in particular to that of Five. The chapter also gives some general information about the franchise that is useful for the following analysis.

The second part, the analysis, consists of four chapters which follow in their structure Todorov's division (1977) between the story of the investigation and the story of the crime. Chapter Four investigates the teaser which sets up the puzzle of the crime and the beginning of the investigation. The teaser therefore fundamentally determines the tone of the episode. Chapter Five examines the first part of the story of the investigation, namely interviews and interrogations. It provides an analysis that is based on a comparison with traditional crime drama – I here use the example of the *Law & Order* franchise (NBC, 1990-) which contains structural similarities with *CSI*. The chapter demonstrates that *CSI* insists on the precedence of forensic evidence over the information derived from interviews and interrogations and thereby also rejects the basic structuring principles of traditional crime drama. Chapter Six looks at the second part of the investigation, namely the scenes which depict the processing of forensic evidence. It highlights that much of *CSI*'s style revolves around the attempt to glamorise the sciences, a style which also contributes to a viewing experience that relies on a multi-sensory engagement with the television text. This creates an environment which allows the viewer to experience crime with their senses and not solely cerebrally and, where *CSI* uses this sensory engagement in order to horrify, also with the viewer's body. Chapter Seven, finally, examines the story of the crime. It first discusses similarities in the franchises by providing a content analysis, before examining the individual structures derived from the slightly



different forms of investigation in the three series. These imply that each series develops unique stories with distinct emphases.

Last, Chapter Eight summarises the findings and provides conclusions while at the same time considering how my reading of *CSI* suggest that a methodology that recognises both the context and the details of the text can highlight the many layers that contribute to the polysemy of a television programme while at the same time uncovering the limitations to its meaning.

# **Part One – Context**

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review gives an overview of work and debates that are fundamental to the methodology of this thesis and establishes a framework that explains how *CSI*, a television crime drama which is shown on a particular channel in a distinct national context and which presents numerous mutilated bodies, can be made sense of by viewers who either make the appointment to watch or use one of the recording technologies to watch it at a later point.<sup>11</sup> I decided to draw on three areas of debate which could illuminate how meaning is constructed, following Fiske's model (1987, p. 95) of the 'producerly text'.<sup>12</sup>

The first area of debate that I draw on is that of Television Studies. Here, I discuss work that relates to how television programmes are assigned meaning through the constant 'flow' of other texts and through their relation to the particular channel they are shown on. I also discuss scholarship that revolves around formal markers which *CSI* shares with other programmes – as TV drama, as series and through its style – and which offer a means to understand how these markers impact on what meanings a text can provide.

The second area of debate is that related to the crime genre. First I discuss work which points to how genres develop distinct ways of telling stories and how the crime genre, in particular, functions. My aim is to understand how meaning is

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<sup>11</sup> This methodology could easily be adapted to consider how *CSI* can be made sense of when watched only on DVD by considering cross-continuation over episodes established by watching two and more episodes in one evening, or generic continuities that might be established by the viewer also watching programmes such as *Waking the Dead*, *Cold Case*, *Law & Order* or *ER* (NBC, 1994-). Here, it would also be interesting to look at packaging, marketing and DVD menus.

<sup>12</sup> See p. 23.

constructed by recurring structures and forms that *CSI* shares with other genre texts. I then give an overview of scholarship that relates to the representation of crime in the media. The focus here will be on discussions of violent crime as *CSI* deals nearly exclusively with murder. These debates provide the means both to understand the tradition of representation of violent crime into which *CSI* intervenes and to highlight concerns surrounding representation, in particular in relation to gender.

Finally, this review chapter discusses some theoretical work in respect of the representation of the body – the mutilated and dead body and the body as the object of the medical gaze. I draw on these works in order to tackle the representation of the victimised corpse as the object of forensic pathology which sits at the heart of most investigations in *CSI* but which is also the site of the programme's most lasting (dis)pleasures.

Although these fields of study appear relatively disconnected, I here bring them together in order to investigate the different sites of meaning construction a viewer of *CSI* encounters. My aim is not to study a particular aspect of *CSI* such as the representation of the victim's body but how they relate to each other and create a polysemy which viewers can negotiate to their own interpretation. In other words, rather than providing a definitive interpretation of the franchise, the thesis attempts to uncover the framework that *CSI* offers in which what is known about crime is manifold and often contradictory but limited by the fact that *CSI* is a forensics-oriented television crime drama watched on British terrestrial television at a particular time.

## **2.2. Television**

### **2.2.1 Flow and Scheduling**

Much academic writing about 'flow', the concept developed by Williams (1974), has criticised Williams's theory for its essentialism. Stuart Laing, for example, notes that the concept 'was asked to do too much' (1991, p. 167), including being the defining characteristic of television. Sue Thornham and Tony Purvis, focusing on the concept in relation to television drama, conclude:

There is clearly a tension, then, between Williams's sense of the centrality of 'flow' in any understanding of 'television itself', and the lack of usefulness of this concept for any discussion of specific television dramas. (2005, p. 3)

The vehemence with which the debate continues, however, suggests that Williams actually pinpointed an important part of television viewing when he theorised his experience of watching television in 1973 in the US.

Williams describes this experience as confusing and disorienting as he realised that trailers of future film events and advertisements intersected the original film he was watching. In his dazed state, resulting from his recent arrival in the US after days on an inter-continental liner, he imagined some characters from one film trailer in the wrong film and advertisements forming scenes of the film. This led him to describe television flow as

the replacement of a programme series of filmed sequential units by a flow series of differently related units in which the timing, though real, is undeclared and in which the real internal organisation is something other than the declared organisation. (1974, p. 63)

Ellis (1982, pp. 117-118) has criticised Williams for the emphasis on flow over 'items', as Ellis calls them. Items, according to Ellis, suggest film-like meaningful units which are organised into a flow which creates a new meaningful unity.

Contrary to this, Ellis stresses that television consists of independent segments, none of which are longer than five minutes, which are assembled together but do not create coherence.

While Ellis and Williams present the two poles of the debate, most other writing tries to mediate between them. Fiske, for example, stresses that 'flow' is an 'unfortunate metaphor' (1987, p. 105), but highlights that although television texts consist of segments, these are nevertheless placed into a succession where links are created not through cause and effect, but through association. As a consequence, television texts do not create a unitary meaning but remain open for contradictions that viewers can make sense of. Similarly, Tim O'Sullivan suggests that the concept might still offer useful insights, highlighting that it relates both to viewers' experience and to the 'holistic contours of TV output' (1998, p. 200). In contrast, Corner finds the flow debate an interesting starting point to discuss new developments in television technologies but sees the concept itself 'almost entirely of historical interest' (1999, p. 69). William Uricchio (2004), on the other hand, suggests that the concept is still important even in the post-network, post-broadcasting digital age as it allows academics to understand the experience of viewers who now create their own flow.

Although most critics tend to reject Williams's theory in its details (see also Gripsrud 1998), there is nevertheless a sense of having to grapple with the fact that television, as it is broadcast and as it is watched, tends towards a combination of different texts and segments rather than a separation. These segments might not be brought together in a logic of cause and effect, yet they are brought together by schedulers and by viewers, enabling links to be established where there might appear to be none. Although 'flow' in Williams's conception is problematic because it emphasises *unity*, it is nevertheless a useful concept to stress the *continuity* of the television experience. Indeed, schedulers work towards this with strategies that are aimed to attract and keep

the highest possible number of audience members, strategies that promise similar pleasures or pleasures that 'at least do not jar' (Sykes 2006) with surrounding programmes.

Work on scheduling emphasises the skills and creativity needed to organise the television schedule. Ellis even asks if scheduling is 'the last creative act in television?' (2000b, p. 25). The knowledge needed by schedulers to attract audiences is widely discussed. Sydney W. Head (1985), for example, points out that schedulers work with assumptions of what viewers do at particular times during the day and with the knowledge that they start watching certain programmes at a specific time. The aim is to attract and keep the largest audience possible for which schedulers have devised several strategies which are listed, amongst others, in Robert F. Lewine *et al.* (1985).<sup>13</sup> Amongst many scheduling strategies, Lewine *et al.* describe the 'lead-in placement' (p. 134) which is a strong programme at the beginning of a slot which sets the tone for the evening. As I will show, this strategy is used by schedulers for *CSI*.

In the British context, the watershed at 9pm is of another concern. Andrea Millwood Hargrave points out that the watershed provides a division between 'family viewing' and 'adult programmes' which contain swearing, sexual content and violence. Hargrave notes that the watershed as division is 'accepted and expected' (1995, p. 75) by viewers (see also Coloquhoun 1995). This suggests that crime programmes which graphically show the effects of violence (as *CSI* does) are likely to be scheduled after the watershed which implies their labelling as 'for adults' and, potentially, also as 'more serious'. This is certainly something to keep in mind when examining the schedules in respect of forensic science and other crime dramas. The description of scheduling strategies as offered in

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<sup>13</sup> See also Adams (1997); Blum and Lindheim (1987) and Broadbent *et al.* (1997).

the literature, on the other hand, enables me to investigate the particular function CS/ fulfils for the schedule on Five. In order to understand what this function might be, it is useful to know more about the channel.

### **2.2.2 Institution**

Five, the youngest terrestrial channel in the UK, started broadcasting in 1997. At this time television had entered into what Ellis has called the 'age of uncertainty' (2000a) in which traditional broadcasting was perceived to be under threat (see Cooke 2003). I briefly want to summarise the early debates about what form the channel should take before discussing writing on the history of Five.

The early debates were surrounded and permeated by a general sense of anxiety of the loss of quality through the deregulation of the broadcasting market (see Pratten 1998; Silverstone 1995; Mercer *et al.* 1995). Wilf Stevenson and Richard Paterson (1990), for example, wanted to redirect the debates in relation to the establishment of Five towards regulation in favour of 'moral standards' and notions of audiences as citizens rather than consumers. In their discussion of a commercial model for Five, they argue for a financial safety net which would have allowed for minority programming and which could have guaranteed quality.

In her historical overview of Five, Christine Fanthome (2003) draws attention to the continued emphasis on quality in the political decisions surrounding the channel. First of all, the ITC decided that the licence was to be granted to the highest bidder whose application would be satisfactory with regard to the 'quality threshold' which included a minimum of 30 minutes of news per weekday and three and a half hours of children's programming per week. Two applicants passed the quality threshold: Channel 5 Broadcasting Ltd. which brought together the interests of Greg Dyke, ex-board member of the ITC, and personnel



from Thames TV who had recently lost their ITV franchise; and New Century Television which named Rupert Murdoch as one of its directors, a fact that caused considerable concern (Fanthome 2003, pp. 83-84).

Channel 5 Broadcasting Ltd. was awarded the licence; not, however, in response to these concerns but because their bid was considerably higher than New Century's. Fanthome goes on to highlight that this had consequences which again shrouded the channel in a debate that was primarily concerned with quality: Channel 5 Broadcasting Ltd. was left in considerable debt which was increased by the extensive re-tuning of television sets to ensure maximum accessibility. As a consequence, Channel 5 was forced to accept cuts to their original programming budget, leading to acquisitions rather than home-produced programmes making up the greater part of the schedule. This triggered criticism by other broadcasters, journalists and audiences who were concerned by the lack of home-produced material and the amount of soft-porn programming in the late evening schedules.

The channel reacted and eventually re-invented itself as Five in September 2002 which was meant to highlight 'the channel's creative strategy; to refresh the channel's on-screen identity' (David Pullan, Director of Marketing for Channel 5, cited in Fanthome 2003, p. 183). In this context, *CS/* played a major part, as Fanthome argues, by '[raising] the profile of the channel, not only by becoming a popular appointment-to-view, but also by evoking the plaudits of various television critics' (p. 178).

The importance of *CS/* to Five's re-branding success is generally accepted in the academic literature. Ian Goode argues that it rescued 'a channel that was perceived to be struggling for audience and revenue' (forthcoming) and Knox highlights that *CS/* gave Five a reliable ratings success in a slot that had previously been occupied by films which 'attracted inconsistent ratings' (forthcoming). Goode highlights that, in the debates surrounding Channel 5,

what constitutes as quality became quantifiable because of a 'bundling together of diversity and hours per genre with the idea of quality' (Goode forthcoming). In Goode's description, this 'quality' seems to revolve primarily around the discontinuation of programming strategies from before the re-branding exercise in 2002, that is a replacement of football, films and soft-porn with an emphasis on American imports which are marketed together as 'America's Finest':

These programmes [*Law & Order*, *Boomtown* (NBC, 2002-2003), *The Shield* (Fox, 2002-) and *Miami*] are marketed together for Five as America's Finest with the channel claiming that it is the home of America's finest drama. So what evidently occurs is that new American drama with high production values becomes in the context of Britain's fifth terrestrial channel – a means of branding quality.

(Goode forthcoming)

Goode highlights that the 'quality' of *CSI* in particular is a 'surface quality' that revolves around the spectacular display of the scientific processes and not the intensity of the human drama. In the British context, this can be understood as 'quality' when 'it is viewed in other contexts such as ... the new fifth channel associated with a much lower quality of production.' (forthcoming).

Thus, the scholarship on Five highlights that in the British context *CSI* fulfils a particular function (as 'saviour') for Five that is closely connected to the channel's re-branding in relation to 'quality'. This suggests that the programme's meaning is at least partially connected to its context; a proposition put forward by Paul Rixon (2006). He argues that the meaning of television texts is not fixed, rather, they are created dynamically between the text, its context and the audience. Instead of American television 'taking over' British television, British broadcasters actively select programmes according to the needs of the channel and its audience. Viewers themselves assimilate programmes actively into their cultural context by critiquing and comparing them to national output. Rixon stresses the need to appreciate the overall organisation of television flow which,

in his eyes, is the main creator of cultural difference in relation to television (p. 28). Rixon's book, then, offers the means to think about how, firstly, the particular schedule environment and, secondly, texts such as idents, which embed *CSI* into Five's channel identity, might impact on the viewer's perception of the programme. Rather than accepting that *CSI* 'is the same program whether it is broadcast in the USA, North Africa or Australia' (Fiske 1987, p. 14), Rixon's work can help us to understand how the franchise is shaped by its broadcasting context in the UK.

### **2.2.3 Television Drama**

Whereas the debates that I have summarised so far revolve around questions of how the context creates meaning, the rest of this literature review is primarily concerned with aspects of *CSI*'s text and the different sites of meaning offered in the programme itself. I will follow a path from broader structures to the details of the text as I discuss scholarship that can help me to understand these different sites, beginning here with work on television drama.

There is a tendency in both British and American academic writing about television drama to focus on the national output alone. George Brandt's then seminal book *British Television Drama* (1981), for example, dealt exclusively with British writers of television drama. Brandt's emphasis on authors was meant to establish television drama as a worthy subject of study, highlighting that at the time of writing television drama was not considered to be of high cultural value. Although the emphasis on writers no longer constitutes the only means of studying television drama, the focus on national output remains the rule in academic writing with titles such as *Popular Television Drama* (Bignell and Lacey 2005) addressing previously neglected British programmes. Even in more general studies, such as in John Caughie's *Television Drama* book (2000), this

emphasis remains. Caughie's argument that there was a move from the theatrical to the filmic in television drama (p. 7) is widely confirmed in the respective literature (Bignell *et al.* 2000, pp. 27-41; Brandt 1993, p. 14; Cooke 2003, p. 139) although this account conveniently ignores dramas aimed at the American market such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (ITV1, 1955-1959), *The Avengers* (ITV1, 1961-1969) and *The Saint* (ITV1, 1962-1969), all of which were more filmic than theatrical.

The debate in America similarly seems to be focused so much on the national output that it fails to recognise outside influences. Thus, the television drama *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-87) is discussed in its relation to 'The MTM Style' (Feuer 1984), not however in relation to British crime dramas which, Nelson points out (2006), seem to have an equal influence on the style of the series. This emphasis on the national cannot account, as Knox points out, for influences of drama shown in one country (which includes foreign productions) nor for the experience offered to viewers who watch a foreign programme within the context of 'the scheduling, promotion and reception of import within specific national television cultures' (forthcoming).

Nelson (1997) is one of the few who have addressed developments in both British and American drama. He traces the move away from the single-narrative strand to the multi-narrative plot familiar from the continuous serial. This move towards narratives borrowed from the soap opera has been discussed, amongst others, by Jane Feuer who demonstrates that from the 1970s onwards many series developed plotlines that continued over episodes, a development that Feuer calls 'serialisation' (1992, p. 154). Jeffrey Sconce (2004, p. 97) similarly draws attention to this mix of serial and series narratives which he calls, following Horace Newcombe (1985), 'cumulative'. The 'flexi-narrative' as Nelson describes it is, however, more than simply an accumulation of 'nuances of plot and character as a series matures over several seasons' (Sconce 2004, p. 98).

Rather, it denotes 'the fast-cut, segmented, multi-narrative structure which yields the ninety-second sound-and-vision byte form currently typical of popular TV drama' (Nelson 1997, p. 24). This suggests that narratives in the 1990s are fundamentally segmented (Ellis 1982; 2000a) rather than offering a logical coherence of cause and effect.

Nelson further points out that the use of the flexi-narrative goes along with an aestheticisation of the image which is also linked to a shift in the soundscape and the use of popular music.

As TV drama has drifted away from sense-making narrative structures to looser compilations reflecting new patterns of production and consumption, however, music is increasingly used for the sake of its own appeal and only loosely related to the dramatic action. (1997, p. 25)

This does not mean that TV drama is emptied of meaning. Rather it has become more pluralistic in its ideology which implies a recognition on the side of producers and programmers that audiences 'comprise a range of people with differing perspectives' (Nelson 1997, p. 41). However, the engagement with social issues and tensions of earlier drama is lost. Nelson argues that they are displaced 'in the preference for the up-beat as an overemphasis on style displaces content' (p. 62).

While Nelson is critical about the potential of new narrative forms, there has been a remarkable trend in both popular and academic debate to discuss American dramas which are characterised by the qualities Nelson describes – the 'flexi-narrative', the emphasis on style and sound – as 'quality' (Feuer 1984; Thompson 1996). As Feuer and Thompson both stress, there is the tendency to equate 'quality TV' with 'liberal TV' (Feuer 1984, p. 56). The notion of quality in the popular debate, they both highlight, is connected to a programme's ability to capture the ABC1 demographic of young professionals. Their high production

values, multi-strand storylines and 'quality pedigree' (i.e. writers, producers, actors, etc. with an established reputation) is indeed partially a result of the programme's attempts to appeal to this particular audience. 'Quality' in these debates, therefore, is constituted by essentially middle to upper middle-class values. Importantly, this 'quality' of American drama can now be understood as a genre – the genre of American quality drama – with distinct textual markers as the ones described above. Thus, the term 'quality' no longer necessarily implies a form of evaluation, but has become descriptive in this context.

To summarise, television drama is perceived to have changed towards a looser narrative in which style displaces a critical engagement with social issues. This suggests that *CSI*, too, might offer a 'quality' that is marked by the aestheticisation of the image and the flexi-narrative, but might not offer a thorough social critique, concerns that I will test in the analysis of the franchise.

#### **2.2.4 Television Series**

Television dramas have been categorised and discussed in relation to their particular narrative formats – the series, the serial, the one-off drama and made for television film and the soap opera. *CSI* is a series and therefore belongs to the group which, from the 1970s on, has become one of the most popular and most enduring narrative forms on television (Newcomb 2005). This form has seen some changes in its format towards a hybridity that comprises aspects of both the series and the serial, leading to attempts by several scholars to redefine the series (Creeber 2004; Ndalianis 2005). Other scholarship about this narrative form has to a great extent focused on describing how the series format works and why it is so enduring. Corner, for example, highlights that series revolve around a repetitive form and therefore allow for economic story telling:

[in] the television series, although the end of each episode conventionally concludes a main plot, cross-programme continuity is achieved by an increasing familiarity with the main characters, with the setting, and with background story-lines which may run throughout the entire series. A lot of work which a feature film has to do in order to establish characters and setting is not necessary after the initial episode and the development of story-lines can be achieved more economically with such a degree of already established detail. Of course, overreliance on prior knowledge would quickly lead to individual episodes becoming incomprehensible when viewed independently, and so a degree of concise repetition is often built into the opening minutes of each programme. (1999, p. 57)

The familiarity with the series' regular content – in particular with the characters – becomes more pronounced as series develop towards a more serialised form, as Nelson highlights (1997, p. 34). This creates a narrative tension between the conclusion achieved by the episode and continuation over episodes through emphasis on the characters. The serialised series creates audience loyalty by ending on a cliff-hanger, enticing audiences back, while at the same time not deterring those viewers who feel they might have lost out on something crucial if they miss an episode.

In the academic literature, the multi-strand and more serialised narratives of the series are also discussed in terms of their ability to create complexity. Corner points out that work-based related series most readily achieve complexity as 'both the size of the cast and the nature of the occupation allow for [...] diversity' (1999, p. 58). Others have highlighted that the serialisation allows for the emergence of rounded characters (Feuer 1992; Hurd 1981). As Danae Clark (1990) demonstrates in her discussion of *Cagney & Lacey* (CBS, 1982-1988), the serialised format can also enable the private and the public sphere to merge: Clark shows that the closed sub-plot of the police drama of law

and order is complemented by the soap-like fragmented plot of Chris Cagney's and Mary Beth Lacey's private lives.

While the literature discussed so far can highlight how the multi-strand narratives of *CSI* create complexity in terms of narrative and character, there are other aspects of the soap opera that might impact on the serialised series. One of them relates to the construction of narrative time which has been discussed by Geraghty (1991, pp. 10-11) who argues that it is the defining difference between the series, the serial and the soap. While both the series and the serial develop narrative time according to the needs of narrative, the soap opera submits it to the time that passes outside of each episode which is marked by events of the calendar such as Christmas. If the series becomes increasingly serialised, one of the effects is likely to be that it too increasingly develops a sense of 'parallel time' (p.10) in which time passes from episode to episode and season to season according to the time experienced by its viewers.

Another impact on the series might be connected to the positioning of the viewer towards the storyline. Tania Modleski (1997/1981, p. 35) argues that the continuous serial favours no single character in one programme and instead considers everyone with empathy, thus offering a maternal viewing position. By including no permanent conclusion, 'soaps undermine the capacity to form an unambiguous judgement' (p. 40). This suggests that the serialisation of the series might also imply a shift away from definite moral judgements towards a moral ambiguity which is particularly interesting within the realm of the crime genre which often relies on a differentiation between right and wrong (Gever 2005, p. 459).

Series, then, have been discussed in relation to their repetitive narrative formats and the increasing complexity achieved through the serialisation and multi-strand narrative form. This offers a useful framework with which to discuss how meaning is constructed because of *CSI*'s adherence to the series format.



While these debates emphasise the structure of narrative texts, I now want to turn to discussions of how images and sounds create meaning in television.

### 2.2.5 Television Style

The literature about television's aesthetic devices is – particularly in comparison to Film Studies – still relatively thin. Jeremy G. Butler admits to having written his book on how to study television out of a frustration with the state of Television Studies books which neglect to 'offer students a way to analyse [the] industry's products from a critical perspective' (2002: x). He then goes on to offer a detailed description of the style – including images and sounds – of television.

The most influential work in this area has been conducted by Caldwell. As the title of his book *Televisuality* (1995) suggests, Caldwell emphasises television's image rather than narrative to argue that television has developed a unique aesthetic. This is marked by an overemphasis on style: 'style uber [*sic.*] alles' (p. 88). He quotes a camera person in order to highlight misconceptions about television:

In 'TV where you have a smaller image, you need to go in stronger to create an atmosphere. I am also trying to light with a fair bit of contrast. People have always said you mustn't be too contrasty for TV'. In one fell swoop, then, this primetime cameraperson throws out the traditional view of the medium in its entirety. Precisely because the TV screen is smaller than that of film, *producers need stronger stylization*, not the weakened style that academic theorists have dichotomized. (p. 89, emphasis in original)

This style owes much to the avant-garde and is deliberately self-conscious. Thus, rather than offering a seamless view onto the world, television draws attention to its image as image and therefore also highlights its constructed

nature. Caldwell discusses flawed, i.e. technically imperfect, images in connection with the overstylisation of the image and concludes that

televisuality is not dependent upon higher and higher resolution. Instead, imagistic and stylistic violations continually draw attention to the television screen and to the *status of its image* as an image. Strategies of image annihilation are far removed from the goals of classical media image-making, precisely because they work to show-off such actions as stylistic marks and stylistic accomplishments.  
(p. 98, emphasis in the original)

In order to emphasise style, the television screen becomes a surface that can be manipulated in different ways, for example through videographics or animations. This, however, fundamentally changes the function of television. Rather than being the 'window on the world', television flaunts 'videographic art-objects' of the world (p. 152). Despite television's own insistence in marketing and programming strategies on ontological and textual distinctions such as between reality versus fiction, television itself does not rely on a 'reality effect' or 'fiction effect' (that is the marking of a text as reality or fiction through its aesthetics) but, Caldwell argues, it relies solely on its 'picture effect' (p. 152).

This has an important effect for drama: as it is marketed and programmed as fiction, it does not need to signal its fictional mode with repetitive styles and narrative structures; TV drama can play with stylistic devices.

With *China Beach*, *thirtysomething*, *The Wonder Years*, *Quantum Leap*, *Northern Exposure*, and, yes, even less prestigious shows like *McGyver*, the viewer is now encouraged to speculate before each episode about what the program might *aesthetically transform itself into this week*: documentary, dreamstate, oral history, music video, homage to Hollywood, or expressionist fantasy.

(p. 92, emphasis in original)

As Caldwell insists on exploring the image rather than the narrative structure of television, he is able to point out that television has unique aesthetic

characteristics as a medium – its overstylisation and its consequent self-awareness of its modes of representation. Television therefore is presented as something uniquely televisual which creates its own problematic modes of interpretation as Caldwell's reading (pp. 302-335) of the reporting of the Rodney King beating exemplifies. Caldwell shows how, for example, images of King's scarred body were submitted to three competing discourses: surveillance video, Catholic iconography and medical diagnostics (p. 307). Through the competition, the authority of the image and the authenticity of King's body were put at stake.

Whereas Caldwell remains focused on the image, Lury (2005) also describes sound and the organisation of time and space. I here want to summarise her discussion of image and sound which both draw attention to the multiplicity of effects and meanings of televisual texts. Lury approaches television by describing in detail what happens on the screen. She points out that the technological basis of the analogue system contributes to the quality of the television image as tactile as there is a sense of images being picked up and transmitted to the television set, an aspect of television that is also recreated (at least partially) by the digital image (pp. 11-13).

Lury then investigates the functions of the image (dramatisation or demonstration) as well as considering textual qualities including graphic effects (colour, digital compositioning, split-screen, etc.) and the composition of the image (aspect ratio, framing, shot length, etc.). Her approach here appears to be influenced particularly by film studies, especially David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (1997). Lury gives similar consideration to the different aspects of sound which was traditionally considered to be the main characteristic of television. She discusses the use of the human voice (as voice-over and as 'speaking body' (2005, p. 64)), the use of music (as soundtrack and as score) and sound effects. Analysing sound in relation to *CSI*, Lury (forthcoming) highlights how sound is used in a variety of ways in order to emphasise the

effects of image (for example sound distortion is used in order to add to the visual distortions in reconstruction scenes). She also emphasises that sound creates its own narrative in which the skilful listening (for evidence) is compared to 'hearkening' (in which the ego is submitted to the need to tune into the world, a form of listening which is often related to the sacred). Lury suggests that in *CSI* the 'skilful listening' of the scientist is every now and again presented as not enough while 'hearkening' is suggested as the more useful form of listening.

As the work of Caldwell and Lury demonstrates, aesthetic devices in relation to both the image and the sound of television contribute as much to the creation of meaning as narrative structure. My examination of *CSI* will draw on their work for the close textual analysis. Such a close textual analysis is only possible for concrete case studies. This means that my analysis will have to focus on the concrete examples of the *CSI* franchise which I will consider within the context of similar episodes and programmes.

## **2.2.6 Conclusions**

In this part of the literature review I have discussed debates within the field of television studies which will inform my analysis of *CSI*. These debates have highlighted that meaning in television is created by the medium's characteristic of creating a flow that creates links between segments rather than offering separate instances of viewing like cinema. The debates about flow, scheduling and institutions offer the means to understand how a television programme is watched within a particular viewing context, suggesting that *CSI* is a different text when watched on another channel or in another country.

Other debates that I have summarised here relate to narrative structure and the style of television dramas. I will draw on them in my close textual analysis of *CSI* which will consider both narrative format and the audiovisual details of the

franchise. However, *CSI* is not just a television programme, it is also a crime drama which also offers sites of meaning. In the following section, I will discuss the relevant literature in the field of genre studies and the representation of crime in order to set up the framework through which to understand *CSI* as a genre text.

## **2.3. Crime and Genre**

### **2.3.1 Genre**

Most literature in the field of TV genre studies attempts to describe particular genres. Jason Mittell (2005) is exceptional in his attempt to describe how genres more generally come to exist in the intersection of production and reception. This means, however, that he provides no textual analysis and therefore offers little insight into how textual traditions might shape one particular text which is my focus here. More comprehensive accounts of how genres in general function have actually been written in film studies which have influenced and to some extent still dominate television genre studies.<sup>14</sup> Stephen Neale is the most prominent figure in Britain in the field. His early work is based on the theory of structuralist Tzvetan Todorov and his concept of the 'ideal narrative' which, according to Todorov,

begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power of force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by an action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical. (1977, p. 111)

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<sup>14</sup> *The Television Genre Book* (Creeber 2001) opens with a contribution by Stephen Neale who has contributed widely to the studies of film genres (1980; 2002).

Neale (1980, p. 20) argues that no equilibrium is definite; rather, they all carry the potential to be disrupted.

Neale's theory investigates both how genres are differentiated from each other and how individual texts relate to one genre. Genres are distinguished from each other, he argues (1980, p. 20; 1981, p. 7), firstly, by the distinct discourses employed in the narrative and, secondly, by the specific hierarchy of verisimilitude – what is likely or probable in a genre text (2000, p. 32). Tackling how the individual text relates to genre, Neale concludes that genres 'organise and systematise the difference each text represents, filling in the gap between text and system' (1980, p. 49). This suggests that genres are in a constant process of regulation and becoming but have little scope for change. Neale (2000, p. 219) himself critiques this at a later point, pointing to its lack of historic specificity and to the fact that genre texts present a playing through rather than a re-playing of conventions. This implies that individual genre texts can diverge from the conventions and facilitate change.

Rick Altman (1986) similarly tries to consider how individual texts relate to genre and argues that genres develop either a strong structure (or, as he calls it, 'syntax') in which meanings ('semantic elements') can be played with or strong semantic elements which allow for syntactic experiment. He concludes that individual texts can develop new meanings through syntactic play while 'generic meaning comes into being only through the repeated deployment of substantially the same syntactic strategies' (p. 38).

Feuer has critiqued the adoption of film genre studies for television studies as television texts 'appear to have a greater tendency to recombine *across* genre lines' (1992, p. 158, emphasis in original) which can also be attributed to *CSI* with its borrowings from the horror genre as I will discuss in Chapter Four. However, as the thesis's aim is to understand *CSI*'s forensic investigation and its impact on the stories of the crime, Neale's and Altman's work offers a means to

understand the gradual shift in the crime genre towards forensic science as well as highlighting adherence and difference in *CSI* as an individual genre text.

### **2.3.2 Crime Genre**

The crime genre has been one of the most discussed in film and television genre studies with the resulting literature mostly attempting to define the specificities of the genre (see Norden 1985; Robards 1985; Hurd 1981). I will here draw on writing on the crime genre in film, television and literature studies in order to highlight some of the most common themes that recur in *CSI*. Todorov (1977, pp. 44, 47) makes a distinction between the 'whodunit', the story revolving around an uninvolved detective whose main goal is to discover the identity of a killer, and the thriller in which Todorov includes the films and novels of the 'series noire'. While in the thriller, the detective is constantly under threat from violence, leading to crime being an ever-present danger, creating suspense, in the 'whodunit', there are two separate stories, the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. The detectives investigate the crime in the one storyline of the 'whodunit', namely the story of the investigation, while the second, independent storyline, the one that is uncovered by the investigation, tells what happened during the crime. Following the Russian formalists, Todorov argues that the story of the investigation determines the 'plot', that is the structure, of the story of the crime.

Todorov also describes how the notion of verisimilitude influences the text.

We find the same 'regularity' in any whodunit; a crime has been committed, the criminal must be found. Given several isolated clues, a whole is reconstructed. But the law of reconstruction is never the law of verisimilitude; on the contrary, precisely the obvious suspects turn out to be innocent, and the innocent are 'suspect'. The guilty man in a murder mystery is the man who does not seem guilty. In his

summing up, the detective will invoke a logic which links hitherto scattered clues; but such logic drives from a scientific notion of possibility, not from one of verisimilitude. The revelation must obey these two imperatives: possibility and absence of verisimilitude.

(p. 85)

This argument is picked up by Neale (1981, p. 23) who argues that this anti-verisimilitude is actually the genre's verisimilitude. In the detective genre, it is likely that something originally signalled unlikely is actually true.

In his work on the detective film, Neale draws widely on Todorov: first, he returns to the ideal narrative and suggests that in the detective genre the equilibrium is literally disrupted by violence, necessitating a working through which relies on discourses concerning the law, the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of legal institutions and agents, crime, legality, justice, social order, civilisation, private property and civic responsibility (1980, p. 20). Second, he comments on how the two stories of the whodunit work to forestall the revelation of the story of the crime by suspending the investigation and therefore also the resolution, an effect that Neale describes as 'retardation' (2000, p. 74).

Leitch attempts a definition of the crime genre in film by comparing it to other genres and asks 'what makes a genre strong?' (2002, p. 9). He concludes that it is the inherent structure which consists of

a pair of contradictory narrative projects: to valorise the distinctions among [the] three roles [of criminal, victim and avenger, i.e. investigator] in order to affirm the social, moral, or institutional order threatened by a crime, and to explore the relations among the three roles in order to mount a critique that challenges that order. (p. 16)

Though focusing on the ideological aspects of crime, Leitch's definition is closely related to Todorov's. Again, there is a stable situation, an equilibrium or an 'order', which is disrupted by a force, the crime. This order in Leitch's words is valorised and critiqued, that is a new, critiqued equilibrium is established.



Leitch's definition, therefore, like Todorov's and Neale's, highlights structure over content, with the three 'roles' of criminal, victim and avenger determining both. However, neither of them questions the gendering of crime drama which is an aspect feminists have drawn attention to.

Sally R. Munt argues that the stories of crime fiction are essentially male narratives. Looking at detective novels written by women, she points to the subversions these offer for women by, for example, feminising traditionally male authority or creating 'utopian models of female agency' (1994, p. 7). Munt's discussion of the development of the genre highlights that the knowledge employed in the investigation of the crime is usually masculine knowledge and that accordingly the story of the crime is shaped by a masculine perspective, something that is disrupted in female authored novels in which the knowledge employed is both feminine and marginalised.

The female detective has been discussed in the academic literature also in relation to the increase in narratives about forensic science. Rose Lucas (2004), for example, discusses the work of Patricia Cornwell and her Scarpetta-series. Lucas discovers several similarities with the hardboiled detective, including the use of first-person narration and the depiction of a morally instable world. Lucas also notes the similarities to the horror genre that Cornwell draws on widely, particularly in relation to the depiction of the fragmented body. The body at the same time becomes a map, 'a site from which clues might be extrapolated in order to locate answers, pathways to a less disrupted future' (2004, p. 218). Thus, Lucas argues,

Cornwell's texts are not only about a forensic pathologist, a reader of corporeality, its limitations and misadventures, but they implicitly offer forensics as a mode of reading, and as an epistemology of hopeful rationality. *(Ibid.)*

Similar arguments are brought forward by Linda Mizejewski who argues that '[the] discourses of medical forensics operates in crucial ways in these novels: it shapes the plotlines by providing leads and clues, it valorizes the authority of the main character, it functions as a convention of realism, and it provides a supposedly stable field of reference by which identity and evidence can be measured, recognized, and named' (2001, p. 6). Importantly, Mizejewski points to the connection between the female investigator and the victim which seems opposed to conventional male detectives whose aggressive masculinity brings them closer to the perpetrator.

This closeness of the female forensic investigator to the victim is also stressed by both Joy Palmer (2001) and Eluned Summers-Bremner (2001). For most of her article, Summers-Bremner focuses on the representation of wounded bodies in Cornwell's novels and argues that '[while] the novels produce the corpse as a wound in the social body which inhabits the female detective, her task – impossible and so destined to be endlessly repeated – is to subdue its uncanny strangeness therein' (2001, p. 137).

To summarise, writing about the crime genre has highlighted its structures, suggesting that *CSI* might similarly include the two stories of the whodunit. This raises important questions for my analysis: are the story of the crime and the story of the investigation separated and how is the story of the crime structured in *CSI* in comparison to traditional crime drama? Munt's work will enable me to question the gendering of the stories and highlight how female investigators might disrupt traditional forms of storytelling, while the work on Patricia Cornwell's novels will help to understand this in particular in relation to forensic science. Feminists have also contributed widely to the debates about the representations of crime in the media to which I now want to turn.

### 2.3.3 Representations of Crime in the Media – Crimes, Stories and Character

Public and academic debate about crime in the media is often permeated by fears about the effects on particular groups of people (Boyle 2005, p. 2).

However, I here want to focus on the literature that describes what is represented and how in order to build up a framework in which to discuss the depiction of crime in *CSI*. As the franchise predominantly deals with murder, I will place the emphasis on literature concerning the representation of violent crime. This section draws widely on writing about representations of real crime and fictional stories as, Chapter Seven will show, there are several parallels in how crimes, perpetrators and victims are represented in both real crime and fictionalised accounts. The scholarship therefore gives a good indication of existing frameworks in the representation of crime in the media into which *CSI* intervenes.

Barrie Gunter and Jackie Harrison (1998, pp. 141, 151) describe tendencies in demographics for both victims and perpetrators of violent crime represented on television between 1994 and 1995. They notice that these were surprisingly similar: both perpetrators and victims were predominantly white, individual men who were young to middle-aged. They also note that most violence was directed against persons rather than property (p. 17). However, as Gunter points out elsewhere (1987, pp. 7-8), in comparison to real life crime statistics, women, ethnic minorities and older people are over-represented as victims of violence in the media. Similarly, violent crime is over-represented and the police are presented as more effective than they are (p. 15). These statistics are corroborated by others who also point to the fact that perpetrators tend to be of a higher social status in media representations than they are in real life (see Dominick 1978; Fabianic 1997; Fowles 1999; Reiner 2000; Reiner *et al.* 2003).

This suggests that the tendencies in the representation of perpetrators, victims and forms of crime have changed little over the last 30 years.

These studies focus on *what* is represented which is a useful starting point for the discussion of the story of crime in *CSI*. *How* this is represented, however, is given little attention. The rest of the literature review on crime will deal with different aspects of this (including how crime is visualised) and I will here begin with questions of narrative and character. Richards Sparks critiques the content analysis approach of these studies for their underlying assumption that 'this is what viewers see' (1992, pp. 79-80). Instead, he attempts to complement this approach with a structuralist analysis of crime drama and finds that there are particular narratives connected to the demographics of victims and perpetrators, concluding that 'criminality is in large measure the pursuit of wealth and power, most commonly by those who are already wealthy and powerful' (p. 143).

Using a similar approach, Richard Osborne (1995, p. 28) argues that the appeal of crime narratives lies in the re-assurance of security which is counterpoised to stereotypes of the under-classes which otherwise permeate popular culture. Looking at reporting about the O.J. Simpson trial, he notices the similarities between media representations of the case and a bestseller: 'rags to riches, royalty, rich people, crime and exotic locations' (p. 32). In other words, the reporting developed crime narratives that revolved around rich people but referred to other, established narratives of popular culture, most notably the Horatio Alger story. While Sparks's and Osborne's approach offer a means to think about the narratives surrounding crime, there are other aspects, including how characters and crimes are represented that I would like to investigate in *CSI*.

Sumser (1996) provides a means to think about the representation of character. He draws attention to persisting stereotypes that revolve around class. Looking at the agents that solve the crimes, i.e. the police or private

detectives, he concludes that the detectives are often upper-middle class, but are able to move through the different classes, while police are usually middle-class. For the coroner, that is the forensic scientist most often portrayed on television, he notes:

[the] television coroner is ... (1) an expert, (2) a regular guy, and (3) a bit of a ghoul. Which means (1) he has information we need, (2) he is no better than I am (we are), and (3) he is perhaps a little worse because, after all, what kind of person would know these things?

(p. 134)

This emphasis on the forensic scientist as 'a bit of a ghoul' who is different from the rest might stem from the apparent feminisation of the genre through forensic science. However, Sumser nearly completely focuses on male characters in his study, suggesting that female characters did not exist in his sample from January 1969, January 1975 and January 1986. Other overviews of crime fictions (Norden 1985; Robards 1985) support this emphasis on male characters, claiming that women remain marginal in crime drama (Robards 1985, p. 25).

#### **2.3.4 Representations of Crime in the Media – Issues of Gender and Race**

Feminists have picked up on the marginality of women in crime dramas. Looking at representations of female detectives in crime novels, Brigitta Berglund, for example, argues that 'women in detective stories have been victims, or they have been perpetrators, but they have not, on the whole, been detectives – they have not been given the most important part to play' (2000, p. 138). Only in female-authored novels, Munt discovers (1994), are women invested with this power. Munt's discussion of femininity and female detectives in two popular

novel series draws up two tendencies in the representation of female detectives: the feminised female detective who wears expensive clothes and make-up and the more masculine female detective who seldom wears make-up, is 'too cheap' to go to the beauty salon and is regularly involved in physical violence.

In Britain, the female investigator on television has also been connected to forensic detail. Deborah Jermyn argues that female knowledge is tied to the forensic sciences as programmes such as *Silent Witness* and *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002) 'pivot on female investigators and forensic detail – and indeed the exchange between the two' (2003b, p. 49). Julia Hallam, discussing the work of Lynda La Plante, agrees that the gaze that appreciates the details – an essentially forensic gaze – belongs to the realm of the feminine while masculine police detection revolves around 'intuition' (2005, p. 86). Interestingly, this also suggests a reversal of traditional gender associations with the masculine becoming connected to intuition and the feminine to science. It also seems to contradict Munt's assessment (1994) that female knowledge is essentially about marginalised knowledge as the sciences in terms of knowledge are of high cultural significance in Western societies. It is this reversal that underlies Nelson's proposition (2000) that the women of these forensic dramas perform masculinity. However, Thornham suggests (2003) that they remain within the realm of the feminine by not participating in the traditional division in medicine which relies on the masculine disembodied gaze and the feminine embodied object. Analysing both *Prime Suspect* (ITV1, 1991-2006) and *Silent Witness*, Thornham emphasises how, in both, the female protagonists are continuously framed with the corpse or images of it. These women therefore continue to disrupt the gaze because they 'must at the same time speak from the position of *the body*' (p. 79, emphasis in original).

While these scholars focus on character, Priscilla Walton and Manina Jones (1999) investigate what distinguishes female-authored detective novels from

male-authored ones in relation to the representation of crime. They argue that detective fiction with female protagonists discusses normally marginalised issues (such as abortion, etc.) and that there is a marked emphasis on otherness and role reversal. While the hardboiled male detective steps in for society to fight for justice for all, the female hardboiled detective fights for justice for those whom society sidesteps. Female protagonists therefore seem to give crime drama the opportunity to deal with issues and groups of society that are normally marginalised, a proposition which I want to investigate in more detail in relation to the female characters in *CSI*.

The debate about the representations of women is paralleled by work about the representation of race in crime fiction. One of the most detailed accounts is given by Jim Pines. Noticing a lack of black representatives and black issues in British film and television, he argues that this might have something to do with generic conventions which usually put black characters on the other side of the law.

Black villains are stereotypically linked to drug dealing, violent street crime (for example mugging) and prostitution; while black cop heroes tend to be characterised as noble figures whose mission is to clean up the criminalised black neighbourhood. (1995, p. 74)

Despite this criticism, Pines suggests that the crime genre is one of the most interesting as far as race-relations are concerned; unlike the sitcom with its formula, he argues, the crime genre offers space to explore the stereotypes. In other words, the detective genre where it does represent female and/or non-white detectives appears to be able to flag up issues that relate to the life of women and/or non-whites.

One such issue could be sexual crimes, an issue that I would like to put some focus on in my analysis as *CSI* has often been criticised for its emphasis on the erotic (Tait 2006, p. 53). The representation of sexual crimes, in particular

rape, lies at the heart of work by Lisa M. Cuklanz (2000), Sujata Moorti (2002) and Sarah Projansky (2001). Projansky gives a historical overview of rape law which defines women as property of men against whom the crime of rape has been committed before focusing on representations of rape in film and television in the era that she defines as post-feminist. Her conclusion highlights persistent motifs in film and television:

(1) the existence of a postfeminist backlash against feminism heightens a representational paradox in which all representations of rape contribute to a cultural assault on women, regardless of a text's more general ideological position; (2) many rape narratives contribute to a postfeminist definition of women's independence as limited to their relationships to family and/or to an abstract equality with men; (3) when men face rape in a postfeminist context, they emerge from the experience as idealized postfeminists who can embrace both masculinity and femininity and as a result become even better feminists than are women; and (4) the general white, middle-class, heterosexual focus of postfeminism is reinforced through post-1980 rape narratives. (p. 94)

Cuklanz (2000), looking at fictional representations of rape on television, is less pessimistic. She argues that there are varying plots that are repeated on television with the formula plot being the most conservative: a stranger grabs a woman and uses violence to subdue her. After the attack, a detective completely takes charge of the investigation, leaving the victim passive and useless. Cuklanz highlights that there are other versions in which feminist concerns have been incorporated including forms of rape that happen within the family, a recognition of the relationship between concepts of masculinities and rape and the move towards more active victims who are given greater agency by being allowed to express their feelings. Sharon Lamb, however, notices that

being victimised no longer stands for suffering an insult of oppression but is now equivalent to having a chronic mental illness; it



is a diagnosis, of sorts. Such a version of victim is both damaging to the victim herself and exclusionary in terms of other everyday forms of oppression that women and girls endure. More important, it robs victims of agency. (1999, pp. 8-9)

Here, victimisation seems to equal pathologisation which implies that any form of agency of the victim must be undermined.

Karen Boyle (2005, p. 79) points out that victims of rape are often framed in newspapers in terms of their sexuality and evaluated as either deserving or undeserving victims. Boyle's work highlights that representations of victims and perpetrators in general are gendered; men as perpetrators are rarely visible in their masculinity while victims are presented as powerless and are therefore feminised (p. 60).

Moorti (2002) notes that these stories are not only connected to questions of gender but also to questions of race. She highlights that in the experience of rape victims, these categories intersect in important ways. However, in rape stories presented on television (in news, talk shows and dramas), this intersection is rarely pointed to. Instead, the stories either focus on gender *or* race. Moorti also points out that these narratives are distinct according to their genre, with crime and legal dramas focusing on individual cases without understanding the socio-political background (p. 135). She reiterates Projansky's proposition (2001, p. 94) that men more readily appear as feminists but highlights that this might be because women might risk losing their authority if they positioned themselves as feminists in these dramas (Moorti 2002, p. 146).

While the summarised work establishes a useful framework to think about gender and race in the representation of crime in *CSI* (do female and/or black detectives bring to the foreground marginalised issues? Do women detectives have a particular stake in the forensic investigation? How do male and female detectives relate to rape? etc.), there are other political issues that I would like to

address which revolve around the increasing visibility of the body in connection with the representation of crime. The effects this visibility might have are subject of the next section.

### **2.3.5. Representations of Crime in the Media – The Increased Visibility of the Body**

Charlotte Brunsdon (1998a) offers a first tentative examination of the increased visibility of the body in her conclusions to an essay that revolves around actual contemporary issues of policing. Discussing three different television dramas in detail – *Prime Suspect*, *Inspector Morse* (ITV1, 1987-2000) and *Between the Lines* (BBC1, 1992-1994) – she notices a ‘structure of anxiety’ about policing: ‘who can police? Who is responsible?’ (p. 242). Concluding her essay with an overview of developments in television crime fiction, she argues that there is a trend to the medicalisation of crime drama which causes a shift towards scientists as heroes of detective fiction and a spectacularisation of the body of the victim. In Brunsdon’s opinion, then, the move towards the forensic is a direct result of the anxieties about policing through traditional means (that is interviews and interrogations) and causes a change of perspective in which the body becomes a prime site of investigation (see also Thornham 2003).

This emphasis on the body is, however, not unique to forensic science drama (see, for example, Connick 2003) and can also be found in real crime reporting, as Jermyn notes for *Crimewatch UK* (BBC, 1984-). She argues that ‘it is this compulsion to look at criminals, to try to “read” them, to try to spot the signs of their “difference” that constitutes the fundamental allure of *Crimewatch*’s photo-montages of haunted criminals’ (2003a, p. 178). Jermyn also points out that these images of the bodies are strategically framed: photos of criminals are often mug shots which displace the criminals from any context. Victims,

however, are framed within the context of their families and communities which, according to Jermyn, helps to stress the victim's innocence. However, victims become so much defined by their family ties that 'to not be in a family would be not to be a proper victim' (p. 185). This suggests that while perpetrators are defined as criminals through their physiognomy, the conceptualisation of a victim relies on their social role as member of a natural community. This raises interesting questions for my analysis: how are the bodies of perpetrators and victims investigated and how is their status as either victim or perpetrator defined through their relationships?

Brunsdon (1998a) and Thornham (2003) also note that the emphasis on the body goes along with a changed iconography. This has been discussed by Lury (2005, p. 54) who describes the close-ups of *CSI* and the intimacy they offer by often moving closer or even into the body with a 'snap-zoom' and the so-called 'CSI-shot'. The effect of these images exists in the tension between the objectivity of science and the subjectivity and intimacy of pornography. Sue Tait (2006), on the other hand, equates the *CSI*-shot with Michel Foucault's medical gaze (1973) which makes the invisible visible but also triggers carnographic pleasures which move the spectator's body just like pornography, eliciting the viewer's physical response (Pinedo 1997).

A more general discussion of the iconography of *CSI* is presented by Martha Gever who highlights the 'televisuality' of the series which she argues is also produced through the crime solving forensic scientists. This is connected to a 'particular way of seeing' (2005, p. 459) as the truth – what really happened – is discovered by a constant reading of inscriptions in photography, computer graphics and the visual details presented during the autopsy.

Forensic science therefore appears to bring a level of visibility and visibility to the representation of crime. Central to this is the visualisation of the body, including its insides, which goes along with a repositioning of the crime spectator

who before was engaged with crime cerebrally (Norden 1985) but whose body is now physically affected by the iconography around crime in ways that are similar to pornography and the horror film. In my analysis I will work from these conclusions in order to question what the visibility of the body in *CSI* means for both the represented crimes and the engagement of the spectator.

### **2.3.6 Conclusions**

This part of the literature review set up frameworks in order to understand how meaning is created by *CSI*'s adherence to genre conventions and its intervention in a tradition of representations of crime in the media. The literature suggests that genres constantly change because individual texts play with conventions rather than reiterating them. This insight offers a means to investigate how *CSI* relates to other genre texts and how the series has impacted on the development of the genre. At the same time, the literature suggests that there is a sense of stability, provided in the genre of the whodunit by the two separate stories – that of the investigation and that of the crime. I will draw on Todorov's theory (1977) for my analysis by dividing the programme text according to this distinction.

The literature on the representation of crime, on the other hand, offers me a useful reference and starting point for my analysis of the franchise. I will examine what is represented and compare it to the already existing statistics and I will consider how crimes are represented regarding stereotype and character, gender and the increasing visibility of the body. Although the articles I have discussed here offer interesting insights which I can draw on in my analysis, the thesis would further benefit from work in cultural studies which has dealt with bodies and the medical gaze.

## **2.4 The Body and the Gaze**

### **2.4.1 The Corpse**

Academic work on the body and in particular on the corpse is often based on Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection (see Shaviro 1993, Clover 1992, Creed 1993, Summers-Bremner 2001). As I will also draw widely on her theory in order to discuss the bodies in *CSI*, it is useful to summarise her work on the abject in some detail. The abject according to Kristeva is what we eject from ourselves in order to define our own identity. It therefore sits on the borderline of identity and threatens it; it is the place 'where meaning collapses' (1982, p. 2) as it exposes the fragility of the constructed identity. The corpse here appears as a threat to identity because the latter is constructed around the concept of being alive.

The corpse (or cadaver, *cadere*, to fall) that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death – a flat encephalograph for instance – I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – *cadere*, cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled. The border has become an object.

(pp. 3-4, emphasis in the original)

Kristeva describes these encounters with the corpse as horrifying but emphasises that the corpse is also a site of fascination.

This fascination stems from the closeness of the abject to the object. Both are opposed to the subject's identity. The abject, however, transgresses the border between object and subject and can therefore not be observed from a stable subject position. This is also included in the encounter with the corpse. As the knowledge of the decaying body which ultimately becomes a corpse is constantly dispelled in order for the living being to identify itself as alive, the immediacy of the corpse threatens its 'life' identity because it proves irrevocably that the body is decaying. However, as identity is developed in opposition to and desire for the object, the corpse – the immediate opposite of the 'live' identity – draws the living being towards it in order to explore what separates the corpse from the living and to re-define the borders of what it means to be alive. The search for meaning in this encounter with the corpse must be fruitless: because the corpse is abject, not an object, the borders of identity cannot be re-defined. The corpse thus threatens identity because it 'shows', that is visualises without the mediation of signification, the dependence of identity on abject borders. The abject is thus a direct reminder of the instability and vulnerability of the self.

There are ways of encountering the corpse that render it not abject:

[the] corpse, seen *without God and outside of science*, is the utmost abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. [...] Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us.

(Kristeva 1982, p. 4, emphasis added)

This suggests that both science and religion offer interpretive frameworks which render the body less horrific and fascinating because it is no longer abject.

Kristeva (1982; 1986) argues that this is because they fill the corpse with meaning as she demonstrates in relation to religion. Unfortunately, she provides no detailed analysis of science in relation to this.

Jason Jacobs (2003) provides an insightful discussion of the emphasis on body traumas under the gaze of medicine. He suggests that the medical dramas *ER* (NBC, 1994-), *Chicago Hope* (CBS, 1994-2000) and *Cardiac Arrest* (BBC1, 1994-1996) reflect the general contemporary obsession with the monitoring of bodies and with discourses of illness which pervade the everyday. Jacobs argues that both are connected to the perception that individuals have no influence on society which also appears as rigid and unchanging. As the societal status quo is unsatisfactory for many, people try to adapt to it by changing themselves. This change, Jacobs argues, is channelled through the body. However, the body is also monitored in order to infuse life with a sense of the real at a time when both 'truth' and 'reality' have become increasingly unstable concepts.

Kristeva's theory and Jacob's discussion of the medical dramas offer an interesting starting point to consider why the corpse in *CSI* might horrify and be an object of fascination at the same time. However, the corpses in the franchise do not remain abject as they are brought into the realm of science. Moreover, as Tait (2006, pp. 52-53) points out, the corpses in *CSI* are actually often eroticised and presented as conventionally beautiful, particularly when they are female. I therefore want to draw on Elisabeth Bronfen's work which investigates the use of female corpses in 19<sup>th</sup> century art. She argues that they function as a channel through which to investigate the self.

In the aesthetic enactment, we have a situation impossible in life, namely that we die with another and return to the living. Even as we are forced to acknowledge the ubiquitous presence of death in life, our belief in our own mortality is confirmed. There is death, but it is not my own. The aesthetic representation of death lets us repress our knowledge of the reality of death precisely because here death occurs at someone else's body and as an image. (1992, p. X)

Bronfen emphasises that this investigation of the self is facilitated because these corpses are female, enabling the images to stand in for other concepts than death, femininity and the body, namely the artist and the community of survivors and their attempt to master death through their masculine look onto the aestheticised female corpse.

Bronfen develops a complex theory which investigates several aspects relating to the representation of female death, but here I only want to draw attention to her discussion of Edgar Allan Poe's description of female death as 'most poetic of topics' (Poe cited in Bronfen 1992, p. 59) and of female death as sacrifice for a society in crisis. Female death, Bronfen argues, was perceived as poetic because it brings two unrepresentable aspects of Victorian life together – death and the female body which was also invested with the mystery of prenatal existence, the fantasy about and desire for otherness and the anticipation of a final resting place. Death and beauty include each other as 'beauty requires the translation ... of an imperfect animate body, into a perfect, inanimate image, a dead "figure"' (p. 64).

Female sacrifice, on the other hand, serves a greater purpose:

[the] construction of woman-as-other serves rhetorically to dynamise a social order, while her death marks the end of this period of change. Over her dead body, cultural norms are reconfirmed or secured, whether because the sacrifice of the virtuous, innocent woman serves as a social critique and transformation or because a sacrifice of the dangerous woman re-establishes an order that was momentarily suspended due to her presence. (p. 181)

The sacrifice of woman, however, goes beyond that. It becomes a sacrifice in order to allow for a masculine triumph over mortality and over deviation from societal norms. The female body functions as the site on which the struggle with society and its norms can be negotiated which eventually results in masculine submission to the norm. These different functions of the female corpse in 19<sup>th</sup>



century art essentially emphasise that the female corpse is used to negotiate struggles of both the masculine subject and society as a whole. Thus, rather than offering a disruption of masculine narratives, the female corpse – when it is aestheticised – can become a site onto which masculine anxieties about mortality can be displaced.

The literature discussed here suggests that the emphasis on the mutilated or dead body is closely connected to the search for 'the real' and identity. As Bronfen's contribution highlights, this might be a particular masculine endeavour in which the aestheticised female body does not represent the female subject so much as the masculine desire to master death. These insights open up a framework in which to discuss the symbolic meaning of the representations of the corpse in *CSI* in relation to these concerns. As Tait points out (2006, p. 55), there is, however, another aspect to the representation of the corpse which is less connected to philosophical concepts and more with bodily pleasures which she sees connected to the horror genre.

#### **2.4.2 Body Horror**

Several writers have highlighted the centrality of the mutilated body to the horror genre (Brophy 2000; Freeland 2000; etc.). Todd F. Tietchen (1998, pp. 98-101) argues that the camera itself plays a part in the dissection and fragmentation of the body in the slasher film, the sub-genre of horror that most explicitly deals with the mutilation of the body. He emphasises that the mutilated bodies 'are arranged as artistic displays' (p. 98) which implies that an act of destruction is presented to be simultaneously an act of creation. The staging of the bodies in horror is also highlighted by Richard Dyer (1999) who discusses how the bodies of 'Sloth' and 'Gluttony' in *Se7en* (David Fincher, 1995) are able to shock because the scene when they are discovered is staged in detail: the bodies are

played by actors and make up and imagery are used so that they tell just enough of their deaths in order for the viewer to visualise them. Dyer notices that *Se7en* is part of a shift in the horror genre where it is not so much the monster that induces fear anymore but 'the horror of the damaged, distressed, suffering body' (p. 59). Interestingly, Dyer sees this emphasis on body horror in recent film connected to the same obsession of monitoring the body as Jacobs (2003). This is countered by Carol J. Clover who believes that the development of the emphasis on the body is actually connected to the technological developments in cinema which enabled the camera to show the insides of the body. In her analysis of the slasher film, she highlights that the fascination with flesh and meat is 'that which is hidden from view' (1992, p. 32).

In Clover's comprehensive discussion of the sub-genres of horror, she draws attention to the gendering of the body in the possession film:

But insofar as they concern themselves with bodies penetrated, invaded and colonized – bodies convulsed by some alien force – they also attest to an archetypal horror story. And insofar as that story turns on bodily orifices, holes – natural passages to an inner space – it would appear to be a story built around the female body.

(p. 80)

Clover (p. 113), however, highlights that this does not mean that these films are about women; rather, these films are about the men who face the possessed women.

At another point in her book, she refers to those who are faced with the aftermath of the destruction of the body: the woman she calls 'final girl', that is the surviving woman in the slasher film. The films of this sub-genre closely monitor the woman's reactions to the destruction and the threat of it by the monster, allowing the viewer to see her whole terror. Clover notices that the 'final girl' has indeed been female since 1974 which she suggests is largely due

to the fact that the 'final girl' personifies abject terror and that this includes 'screaming, pleading, sobbing' (p. 158). Thus, in Clover's account, it is not only the female body that is central to the pleasures of the horror genre but also the physical reactions of a woman to these horrors.

While Clover's work offers a good starting point to discuss conventions that *CSI* borrows from the horror genre in relation to the representation of the body, Barbara Creed's book *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993) can draw attention to the fact that much horror resides in the sexuality of the female corpse and monster (or perpetrator). She argues that

[the] reasons why the monstrous-feminine horrifies her audience are quite different from the reasons why the male monster horrifies his audience. ...As with all other stereotypes of the feminine, from virgin to whore, she is defined in terms of her sexuality. The phrase 'monstrous-feminine' emphasises the importance of gender in the construction of her monstrosity. (p. 3)

Creed then goes on to discuss several case studies in which women are the site of horror because their sexuality is made visible. This raises the question whether, in *CSI*, the female bodies and perpetrators horrify for similar reasons.

Creed's work, then, throws light onto what causes the horrifying disruption in horror. This is further examined by Isabel Christina Pinedo (1997) who is, however, more interested in the female viewer than the male that both Creed and Clover assume. Pinedo investigates what forms of disruptions the horror film offers which the female viewer can work through in order to achieve a sense of mastery. She notices that there are several projects at play in the horror film including the blurring and transgressing of boundaries that are central to the experience of horror. These are incorporated in the textual composition through editing, camera angle and set design. Characteristic shots such as the 'solitary reaction shot' and the 'unclaimed point of view shot' (p. 52) reverse the logic of

cause and effect because they, respectively, show us a person reacting to the monster but not the monster itself and give us the point of view of someone who remains unknown to us. All of this throws the viewers' perception and thereby also their knowledge into question.

Pinedo also addresses the focus on the body which she argues is 'extreme' and borders on the pornographic, thereby offering also a physical experience of disruption:

It is this very carnality that relegates hard core and gore to the status of disreputable genres. [...] both are disreputable genres because they engage the viewer's body, elicit physical responses such as fear and disgust, and arousal in indeterminate combinations, and thereby privilege the degraded half of the mind-body split. (p. 61)

Pinedo emphasises that there is a difference between pornography and 'gore', namely pornography's fascination with the penetration of natural orifices compared to gore's emphasis on creating new orifices. Both genres, however, rely on the fragmentation of the body through the camera and in 'gore' also the literal segmentation of the body through violence.

Pinedo's discussion of the effects of horror highlights the similarities to pornography, an aspect that Lury (2005, pp. 54, 56) also finds in *CSI*. I therefore briefly want to summarise Linda Williams's work on pornography which can give an insight into how *CSI*'s images create similar effects. Pornography has been discussed widely in relation to violence against women (Dworkin 1981; Cornell 2000; Schwarzer 1994). Williams, however, attempts to describe how pornography works 'as neutrally as possible' (1999/1989, p. 29) in relation only to what happens on screen rather than considering the workings of the industry or the effects of pornography on the lives of women as these other studies have done. Williams argues there is a 'frenzy of the visible' (p. 50) in modern pornography which she traces back to the images of Eadweard Muybridge in the

19<sup>th</sup> century. Pornography revolves around making the sexual act and the sexual pleasures of its actors visible but as Williams highlights, this revolves primarily around female pleasures:

[the] animating male fantasy of hard-core cinema might therefore be described as the (impossible) attempt to capture visually this frenzy of the visible in a female body whose orgasmic excitement can never be objectively measured. (ibid.)

While male pleasures are recorded in the 'money shot' of pornography – the ejaculation in close-up – pornography monitors the female body for its involuntary confessions of pleasure. These 'confessions' of the female body are connected, first, to anxieties revolving around notions that sex could not be pleasurable (p. 134) and, second, and linked to the first, to anxieties about the fact that female pleasure can be faked. By giving up signs of its pleasure involuntarily, the female body indeed 'confesses' the truth.

Williams's work, therefore, highlights that in pornography the close monitoring of the female body is connected to notions of truth and the real which suggests that the body has indeed become a prime site to investigate what is real. It also emphasises that the physical pleasures of the viewers are closely connected to the visibility of the bodies in the text, suggesting that the emphasis on mutilated bodies in horror – and in *CSI* – is also able to trigger a physical reaction in the audience. As the bodies in horror and *CSI* are mutilated, this physical reaction is likely to be linked to a sense of disruption which the horror genre and, as we shall see, also *CSI* build up with stylistic conventions.

#### **2.4.3 The Gaze of Medicine and the Police**

In this last section of the literature review, I briefly want to discuss some scholarship on the medical gaze and the investigative gaze of the police as the

mutilated bodies in CS/ are not only the site of horror but also the object of forensic pathology.<sup>15</sup> There is a general tendency to suggest that science, because it is based on observation, relies on vision as its primary sense. Martin Jay, tracing developments in French thought about science, highlights that this is only partially true. Although vision was certainly the privileged sense of the Enlightenment (1993, p. 85) this was soon undermined by a general scepticism towards occularcentrism (p. 104). The advancement in visual technologies, in particular photography, re-established vision as a privileged sense in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The body was then dissected, photographed and mapped in detail in a way that had been unknown before (p. 142). Although photography triggered a celebration of vision as a means to document scientific fact, it also prompted renewed scepticism, most notably from Proust and Bergson. They were at the beginning of a move away from 19<sup>th</sup> century occularcentrism which continued with the Cubists, Surrealists and the Existentialists around Sartre (pp. 215-297).

Even Michel Foucault's description of the medical gaze highlights that, although it seems to be occularcentric, medicine relies on a holistic sensory experience:

[the] medical gaze embraces more than is said by the word 'gaze' alone. It contains within a single structure different sensorial fields. The sight/touch/hearing trinity defines a perceptual configuration in which the inaccessible illness is tracked down by markers, gauged in depth, drawn to the surface, and projected visually on the dispersed organs of the corpse. ...Each sense organ receives a partial instrumental function. And the eye certainly does not have the most important function; what can sight cover other than 'the tissue of the skin and the beginning of the membrane'? Through touch we can locate visceral tumours, ...; while with the ear we can perceive the crepitation of fragments of bone. ...The medical gaze is now

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<sup>15</sup> 'Forensic' indicates that the science is conducted in the name of the law and therefore not only asks medical but also questions that relate to the criminal case.

endowed with a plurisensorial structure. A gaze that touches, hears, and, moreover, not by essence or necessity, sees. (1973, p. 164)

Foucault, however, highlights that sound and touch remain important only as long as the body cannot be opened up; with the corpse, an autopsy can bring to light what remains 'in the night' before (p. 165).

Foucault's discussion (p. xiii) of the medical gaze also highlights how much its ability to 'see' depends on the knowledge of the observer: it can only bring its own light to the body. This 'observer' is, however, not an ideal, transcendent genius but the sum of all observers who, through errors, contribute to the powers of indication and increase the level of certainty implied in the gaze (p. 102).

Although Foucault describes the mechanisms of the medical gaze in some detail, he seems oblivious to its gendering (Ramazanoğlu 1993, p. 5). Indeed, Foucault's account also neglects to recognise the differences that the bodies of men and women present (Bartky 1997/1988, p. 131-132). Mary Jacobus *et al.* (1990, p. 2) consider the female body and its relation to science, culture, arts and media and highlight that many discourses in these areas have involved and invoked the female body. They point out that Francis Bacon was thinking figuratively about science as masculine and its object, nature, as feminine. However, over time, this became increasingly accepted as natural division between the gendered bodies:

[it] is a truism that whereas nature, the body that scientific knowledge takes as its object, is traditionally constructed as feminine, the subject of science, i.e. the scientist has usually been seen as masculine. [...] Associated alternately with nature and with the unconscious, with matter and with mystery, the feminine body functions as the imaginary site where meaning (of life) is generated; yet, in this scheme, women can never be meaning makers in their own right. (Jacobus *et al.* 1990, pp. 6-7)

This account also emphasises the exclusion of woman from the meaning-making processes as anything other than body, rendering her absent at the same time as her body is present. This is commented on by Thornham (2003, p. 80) who argues that in Freud's lectures, women were only present as bodies and as objects of studies, while Freud himself appeared as disembodied. Although science seems to be about women, it actually excludes them. Thornham suggests that the female scientist and lecturer must therefore take a position where she is both disembodied speaker and speaking through her body in order to disrupt this hierarchy of power.

The gaze of science is matched by the investigative gaze of the police. Thornham demonstrates that the two positions of disembodied speaker and speaking body are negotiated by the female police detective Jane Tennison in *Prime Suspect*. Thornham discusses a scene in the incident room in which DCI Tennison is shown giving a 'lecture' to her colleagues. The camera stays on the side of the listeners, either taking their position or panning behind them. Tennison is framed before a board with the photos of the mutilated bodies of the female victims of a serial killer-rapist. Thornham argues that 'whereas the male detectives are comfortable in distancing themselves from these objectified images, making jokes and addressing each other across the images, Tennison's body constantly threatens to dissolve into them' (p. 85).

Jermyn (2003b, p. 55) suggests that *Prime Suspect* highlights a difference in how male and female investigators look onto the female body. She argues that the refusal and the insistence to look at the body is connected to questions about male power. While DCI Tennison continuously demands to have a look at the female corpses, her male predecessor refuses to look. This has important implications for the investigation:

[it] is only when Tennison takes over the case that anyone 'sees' the victim for the first time, not as a collection of injuries and evidence,



not as an opportunity to break the station's record for the fastest arrest on a murder enquiry, but as a woman whom the others have failed to rightfully recognize. (p. 56)

This recognition acknowledges both the women's identity and their position and achievements (p. 55). The act of looking, therefore, appears as a means to control power. As the look is normally gendered male, it is also a means to control the power over women who remain powerless as long as they are not properly recognised.

To summarise, the medical gaze is not solely a gaze; it is informed by other senses. It relies on knowledge and makes visible only what is known. As feminist contributions have highlighted, it is also structured by a power hierarchy along gender lines and excludes women as subjects of the gaze. Where women do look, as police detectives and as scientists, they have the potential to recognise women's true identities and achievements. This raises several questions for my analysis of *CSI*: how does vision relate to other senses and to knowledge? How is the power hierarchy of the medical gaze negotiated, in particular if it employs a female pathologist? Is the female body conceptualised only as object? All of these questions highlight that it is worthwhile to consider the gender of the investigators and victims as well as the use of the camera which mediates this medical gaze for the spectator.

#### **2.4.4 Conclusions**

This last section of the literature review has revolved around one particular aspect of *CSI*, namely its mutilated bodies as sites of horror and objects of forensic pathology. It has highlighted that the emphasis on the body is connected to the search for the real and identity and is a means to investigate mortality. The mutilated bodies as a site of horror offer disruptions which are

connected to physical pleasures for the viewer. This physicality of the viewing experience seems strangely mirrored in the medical gaze of the pathologist which is not purely a gaze but brings together other senses, including touch, in order to investigate the body. This suggests a potential link between the actions of the investigators onscreen and the viewing experience of the audience at home which I will investigate in more detail in my analysis.

What the summarised debates here also highlight is that the images of the corpse and the gaze onto it are pervaded by power hierarchies which are connected to gender. I therefore want to approach the bodies of *CSI* by considering how they are gendered and how their function in the text changes when the sex of the scopic investigator is different.

## **2.5 Conclusions of Literature Review**

This literature review has laid the groundwork for the investigation of the many sites of meanings offered by a text like *CSI*. It discussed three areas of debate, television studies, genre studies and work in relation to the corpse, the mutilated body and the medical and investigative gaze onto it, which will inform my methodology and can account for how the text is constructed if one assumes a viewer who either makes the appointment to watch or time-shifts his or her viewing with the help of a recording technology.

I have discussed literature in the field of television studies which considers how television programmes are embedded in a flow of other texts which create associative links, therefore assigning meanings to the programme. This is also an effect of the adoption of a programme to a specific national context and to a particular channel which assigns the programme a function; in the case of *CSI*, this is to bring 'quality' to Five (Goode forthcoming). As these debates emphasise the ability of the context to create meaning, I want to investigate the

British televisual context in relation to how it frames *CSI*. In the following chapter, I will give an overview of the schedules in Britain from 1991 to 2005 in order to investigate how *CSI* fits into the British schedules: does it present something radically different or have there been similar programmes? How are the forensic sciences represented on British television and what role do crime dramas that revolve around forensic science play in Britain? I will put a particular emphasis on the analysis of Five's schedules in order to be able to describe *CSI*'s function for the channel. As Goode argues (forthcoming), the franchise also enables Five to 'brand quality', suggesting that this might also be connected to the channel's identity which is why I want to investigate the texts which most readily indicate the channel's strategy, the idents, in relation to *CSI*.

Beyond the context, the debates in Television Studies will also enable me to highlight aspects of *CSI* that relate to its textual construct: in terms of its narrative structure and in terms of its aesthetic emphases. I here want to investigate in particular how the flexi-narrative and the serialisation of the series format work towards a segmentation of the narrative which creates coherence, but not one that relies on cause and effect. The work on serialisation and the soap opera will also enable me to question how character-based narratives relate to episode storylines and examine if there is scope for complexity, moral ambiguity and polysemy. This might also be achieved by the over-emphasis on style that, Caldwell highlights (1995), can cause a competition of different discourses to exist in the text. I therefore want to examine in detail the findings of the close textual analysis of the franchise in order to question what meanings are carried in the aesthetic emphases of the text.

My analysis will be structured following the distinction made by Todorov (1977) between the story of the investigation and the story of the crime in the whodunit. In other words, I will first discuss scenes that deal with the investigation (Chapters Five and Six) in order to be able to unravel the plot of

the story of the crime (Chapter Seven). While in terms of structure, this is the most important insight of genre studies for my analysis, I will draw on the field in order to investigate how *CSI* creates meaning because it follows the genre conventions and because it diverges from them. In particular, I want to investigate how the convention of conducting an investigation through interviews and interrogation is played through and how the move away from this in favour of the forensic sciences impact on the stories that can be told.

The literature on the representation of violent crime in the media will underlie my discussion of what and how crimes are represented. The scholarship in this field will enable me to raise several issues, in particular in respect of character, gender and the spectacularisation of the body of the victim. My analysis of the latter will also be informed by the work in cultural studies in respect of the representations of the corpse, the mutilated body and the medical and investigative gaze which I have summarised in the last part of this literature review. My analysis of the corpse will question if the bodies in *CSI* horrify as well as fascinate (Chapter Four) and what impact this disruption has to the investigation and the engagement of the viewer. In particular, I want to investigate if the disruption caused by the mutilated body triggers a physical response in the viewer which would imply a shift away from the purely cerebral engagement with crime (Norden 1985). In this context, a general investigation of how *CSI* addresses its viewers will be useful. Thus, the close textual analysis will investigate not only how the text is constructed in relation to its meanings but also how the aesthetic devices enables a certain engagement with the text.

In sum, my aim is to provide a close textual analysis of the franchise which takes as its starting point the text as it might be watched and constructs textual meanings from there. As a consequence, the text is here understood to be in communication both with its programming context in Britain and with its viewers for whom it provides a polysemy which might find some ordering principle in the

particular address the franchise offers. I now want to begin the investigation of the polysemy of the franchise by considering how the British context creates meaning.

## **Chapter Three: Crime on British Television from 1991 to 2005: an Overview.**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter gives an overview of the British schedules from March 1991 to March 2005 and discusses the findings of the content analysis of the *Radio Times* over this period in respect of a) fictional representations of crime, b) factual representations of crime and c) both factual and fictional representations of bodies under a medical gaze. My aim is to establish the context offered on British television into which *CS/* intervenes. I here follow Rixon's proposition (2006) that a foreign television programme is actively assimilated into a national context both through the environment of the national television culture and through the particular strategies adopted for the programming of a television text.

I will first introduce the methodology and main research questions of the content analysis, before providing an analysis of the data, beginning with the establishment of the broader context. I will investigate how much crime drama was offered in the schedules over the period and when and where it was scheduled. I will also examine the origins and formats of the crime dramas – were they series, serials or soap operas? My aim is to give an idea of the culture established for the programming of crime drama in Britain in order to be able to question how *CS/* was adapted to this.

I will then analyse what crimes were represented and what plots these representations took. For example, how many crimes were murders and how

many of the plots revolved around the detection of a crime? Next, this chapter traces the shift towards the forensic in the representation of crime on television both in fictional and factual programmes. I will then provide a discussion of programmes that look at the body from a medical point of view in order to establish any potential connections to the representation of the body in forensic science drama. Last, this chapter will examine how *CSI* is scheduled on Five and give a general introduction to the programme in order to provide a basis for the analysis of the franchise in Chapters Four to Seven.

### **3.2 Methodology**

The data presented here is the result of a content analysis of the British schedules as published in the *RadioTimes* from the issue 2-8 March 1991 to the issue 26 February-4 March 2005. The *RadioTimes* is one of the leading television guides in the UK, published by the BBC, which, since 1991, offers the complete listings of all channels, terrestrial and satellite, which broadcast in Britain. While the *TVTimes*, published by ITV, similarly offers such an overview, the *RadioTimes* gives additional information about the making of and other background information of programmes which I found more useful than the star portraits of the *TVTimes*.

I decided on the starting date of the 2 March 1991 to allow a month's period before the first screening of *Prime Suspect* which, Jermyn argues, is the first to depict the body as evidence in such explicit manner. According to Jermyn, crime drama since then has 'routinely figured explicit description and images of forensics that would have been unheard of on prime-time TV in the era before *Prime Suspect*' (2003b, p. 49). In a later article, Jermyn reiterates this argument and concludes:

After *Prime Suspect*, the 'boundaries' which had once governed how much crime drama could show us of the corpse, and how it looked, would never be the same again. If any TV text seems indebted to this shift and pertinent to this discussion now, illustrating the degree to which television has become increasingly enchanted by the dramatic possibilities of forensic detail, it is *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. (forthcoming)

Jermyn therefore suggests a direct lineage from *Prime Suspect* to the *CSI*-franchise, which the starting date of this survey attempts to accommodate. The end date is set to include the first showing of *New York* (Five, from February 2005) as well as to complete the full 14 years.

Within the time period, I checked for all programming that was either related to crime or presented the body as object of scientific inquiry in some detail. The first category included fictional and factual programming that revolved around crime, including amongst others documentaries that investigated a particular case like *The Moors Murder* (Five, 28 September 1999) about serial killers Ian Brady and Myra Hyndley, long-running crime series that revolve around detection like *Murder, She Wrote* (CBS, 1984-1996) and one-off dramas about the impact of murder like *Green Eyed Monster* (BBC1, 9 December 2001) about a woman who discovers her husband's many secrets after his murder. With the second category, programmes that presented the body as object of scientific inquiry, I mean documentaries that use images of the body to demonstrate scientific theories and findings (for example *The Human Body* (BBC1, 1998)) and medical dramas that pivot on the body traumas of patients which are shown in some detail (for example *ER*).

I made a note of all crime drama, including the repeats, shown on the four, later five, terrestrial channels, excluding, however, animated series, children's drama and feature films if they were made for cinematic release. I excluded these programmes as I wanted to focus on programming targeted at adults and,



in particular, programmes that, like *CSI*, were made for television and therefore showed certain characteristics – like their televisuality, narrative formats, etc. – that characterise television texts. I recorded the date, time and length of every episode and every repeat screened on terrestrial television during that period. Rather than the actual running time of a programme, I recorded the length of the programme as indicated by the channel listings, thus including trailers and ads for programmes on the commercial channels ITV1, Channel 4 and Five. In order to categorise them later, I made a note of the basic plot of each series, serial and one-off drama. For the satellite and cable channels, I examined every first full week of the month and recorded any new programmes or repeats that were shown on the respective channel for the first time. A more detailed analysis of the non-terrestrial channels would have taken up too much time as constant and particularly daily repeats of whole programme blocks (Julie Light describes these as 'loops'; 2004, p. 125) meant that some channels were dominated by crime shows.<sup>16</sup> However, as some of the non-terrestrial channels showed programmes that were only much later picked up by the terrestrial channels<sup>17</sup> and in some cases were not picked up at all such as *Profiler* (Living, from February 2000), I felt it was necessary to acknowledge what was shown on the non-terrestrial channels in order to give a more comprehensive overview of the televisual context in Britain. In respect of the crime documentaries and the medical programming, I noted down all the new programmes shown on any of the terrestrial channels on any day during the 14-year research period and any

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<sup>16</sup> As an example, on Wednesday 22 September 2004, Bravo showed *Street Crime UK*: double bill (12-1 pm), *Police Beat* (1-1.30 pm), *Blues and Twos* (2-2.30 pm), *World's Wildest Police Videos* (2.30-3 pm), *Street Crime UK*: double bill (3-4 pm) *Police Beat*: double bill (4-5 pm), *World's Wildest Police Videos* (8-8.30 pm) *Blues and Twos* (8.30-9 pm), *Street Crime UK* (10-10.30 pm), *Street Crime UK* (12-12.30 am) and *World's Wildest Police Videos* (1-1.30 am).

<sup>17</sup> *Law & Order* is an example: it was shown on BBC1 from Monday, 8 April, till Monday, 23 September 1991 with a repeat of the first season in 1992 but no more airings on terrestrial television before Five picked it up on 2 February 2002. All the while it had a secure place in the schedule of Sky1.

new programmes on the satellite channels shown within the first full week of the month. In total, I collected data of 462 crime dramas, most of which were shown more than once, 253 crime documentaries and 138 medical dramas and documentaries on the terrestrial channels and of some 500 programmes on satellite and cable.<sup>18</sup>

I chose to use this methodology because I firstly wanted to get a comprehensive overview of the crime dramas shown on British terrestrial television. My aim was both to get a sense of development and a historical snapshot that would set up the context into which *CSI* was assimilated. Second, I hoped to sketch the development both in the representation of crime and the representation of the body on television over those 14 years and, third, I wanted to collect and systematise the sample in ways that could give an indication why *CSI* was such a success for Five (Fanthome 2003, p. 178).

I systematised the data by categorising them according to their protagonists, their narrative emphasis, their country of origin and their format as series, serial, etc. In terms of protagonists, I distinguished between:

- 1) a police detective: a police officer whose job revolves around the detection of crime, for example Lenny Briscoe (Jerry Orbach) in *Law & Order*,
- 2) a private detective: a member of the public who is paid by a private party to investigate a crime, for example Remington Steel (Pierce Brosnan) in the series of the same name (NBC, 1982-1987),
- 3) an amateur detective: a member of the public who investigates a crime because they have a passion for it, for example Miss Marple (Joan Hickson) in the series of the same name (BBC1, 1984-1992),

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<sup>18</sup> The data of the content analysis overloaded this thesis, but is available on request.

- 4) a police officer: an officer who is involved in the policing of a community rather than solely the investigation of crimes, for example Leela Kapoor (Seema Bowri) in *The Bill* (ITV1, 1984-)
- 5) a forensic scientist: a scientist whose work aids the detection of crime, for example Gil Grissom (William Petersen) in *Crime Scene Investigation*

I worked with these categories in order to be able to analyse if 'the identity of the scopie investigator' (Thornham 2003, p. 89) changed towards forensic scientists over these 14 years and if there were developments during that period towards an emphasis on any other characters. To be exact, I wanted to examine if the scepticism towards the police, that Brunsdon notes (1998a), led to a greater emphasis on protagonists outside of the institution of the police.

In respect of their narrative emphases, I distinguished between legal drama, murder investigation, police drama, detection plot and drama about murder. A police drama revolves around police officers who police a community rather than detecting crime. The investigation of crime more generally is at the heart of the detection drama while the murder investigation focuses completely on the investigation of murder. A drama about murder, finally, tells the story of members of the public rather than the police who are affected by murder. This distinction allowed me to examine both what crimes were represented (with the distinction made between 'murder' and 'other crimes') and what stories were told about the crimes: was the main narrative concern to solve a puzzle as in the detection plot and the murder investigation, was it on the legal implications of crime (as in legal drama) or on the effects crime has on people (as in the police drama and in the drama about murder)?

In order to investigate how much crime drama was shown in comparison to other drama, I recorded the number and the minutes of all fictional programmes aimed at adults for the first full week of March from 1991 to 2005. This data

enabled me to question the importance of crime drama for the schedules of channels and to investigate if there have been changes in terms of the length of programmes and the importance of crime drama in comparison to other drama.

Finally, the analysis of the medical documentaries and dramas focused on the summaries provided by the *RadioTimes* which I copied into my notes. Here, the emphasis was on investigating how the body was represented: were there close-ups of the body? Did programmes look at the insides of the body by either opening up or taking the camera inside the body? My aim was to discover if there was a gradual and general shift towards a spectacularisation of the iconography around the body that, Hallam argues, 'graphically depicts the gore of accidents, injuries and resuscitation' (1998, p. 29). This shift could potentially explain why the forensic sciences were perceived as particularly successful escape from the dominance of the police: as they work with the evidence provided by the body which, Jacobs (2003, pp. 41-45) suggests, has become one of the prime sites to investigate what is real, their work seems to uncover a truth that is based on fact rather than believable or incredible testimony. This suggests that the shift towards forensic science in crime drama is the result of a convergence of discourses in society – the investigation of the real through the body and the scepticism towards the police. This hypothesis underlies the examination of the findings of the following content analysis.

### **3.3 Crime Drama on Television – An Overview**

#### **3.3.1 The Quantity of Crime Drama on the Terrestrials**

During the analysed period, crime drama remained a stable part of the schedules of all terrestrial channels. In total, crime drama accounted for an average of approximately 14 percent of all drama scheduled on the channels –

for example, of a maximum of 179 programmes of fiction per week in 2002, approximately 25 were crime related (see table 3.1). However, when we look at the minutes that were dedicated to crime drama, another picture appears: of a maximum of 7670 minutes per week of drama in 2002, 1700 were dedicated to crime drama (see table 3.2), on average approximately 22 percent of the total number of minutes. This suggests that crime dramas tend to be longer than other dramas, therefore filling more schedule time than their number would suggest.

**Table 3.1: Number of dramas shown in the first full week of March each year**

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Crime															
Drama	21	14	8	16	15	17	15	23	13	13	16	25	30	32	16
Other															
Drama	82	93	108	99	98	91	119	127	135	141	133	154	134	141	89
Total	103	107	116	115	113	108	134	150	148	154	149	179	164	173	105

**Table 3.2: Number of minutes of dramas shown in the first full week of March each year**

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Crime															
Drama	1090	775	400	890	715	855	865	1150	780	750	1160	1700	1940	1935	1045
Other															
Drama	3330	3475	4075	3710	3945	3160	4341	5115	5305	5645	4785	5970	5110	5165	3190
Total	4420	4250	4475	4600	4660	4015	5206	6265	6085	6395	5945	7670	7050	7100	4235

The introduction of Five to the broadcasting landscape in Britain in 1997 at first only caused an increase in the overall drama output on the terrestrials – the number of dramas shown in one week rose from approximately 110 to more than 130 dramas per week. After the introduction of *CSI* to its schedules in 2001, there was also a marked increase in crime drama from approximately 15 to more than 25 programmes per week. This was indeed largely due to Five which used these dramas together with *CSI* in order to claim ‘that it is the home of America’s finest drama’ and thereby to boost its reputation (Goode forthcoming). Overall, the number of dramas became larger, suggesting that

drama became increasingly important to the terrestrials. Only the year 2005 saw a decline in both crime and other drama output – an examination of the schedules of this week revealed that they were instead filled with light entertainment, including make-over shows and reality television, and documentaries. These programmes replaced crime drama particularly during prime time.

The percentage of crime drama to that of other drama fluctuates from a minimum of 6.9 percent to a maximum of 20.4 percent, with no noticeable change after the introduction of *CSI* (see table 3.3). However, the table which compares the minutes of crime drama with that of other drama gives another picture: from 2002 on, the minutes dedicated to crime drama climb up to over 22 percent of all drama when they had taken up approximately 20 percent before (see table 3.4).

**Table 3.3: Percent of dramas shown in the first full week of March each year**

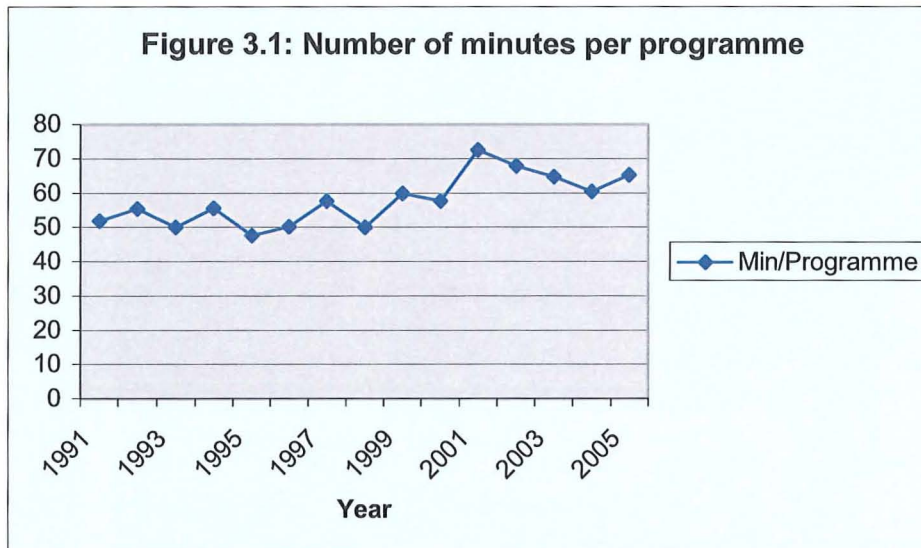
Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Crime															
Drama	20.4	13.1	6.9	13.9	13.3	15.7	11.2	15.3	8.8	8.4	10.7	14.0	18.3	18.5	15.2
Other															
Drama	79.6	86.9	93.1	86.1	86.7	84.3	88.8	84.7	91.2	91.6	89.3	86.	81.7	81.5	84.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Table 3.4: Percent of minutes of dramas shown in the first full week of March each year**

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Crime															
Drama	24.7	18.2	8.9	19.3	15.3	21.3	16.6	18.4	12.8	11.7	19.5	22.2	27.5	27.3	24.7
Other															
Drama	75.3	81.8	91.1	80.7	84.7	78.7	83.4	81.6	87.2	88.3	80.5	77.8	72.5	72.7	75.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

This suggests, that either crime dramas became longer (one hour or more), or other dramas became shorter (30 minutes and less). The average minutes per programme over the analysed period indicates that there was indeed an increase in minutes per programme from 1999 onwards (see figure 3.1). In other

words, the development to longer formats predates *CSI*; and it is largely due to ITV1 which increased the length of its crime drama from an average of one to one and a half hours.



### 3.3.2 The Channels and Crime

ITV1 is also the channel which over the years has proved to show most crime drama. This included the continuous police drama *The Bill*, series such as *Midsomer Murders* (March 1997-), *Inspector Morse*, *Agatha Christie's Poirot* (January 1989-) and one-off dramas and mini-series such as *Conspiracy of Silence* (August 1992) or *Forgotten* (February-March 1999), accounting for a total of 212 different programmes. This amounts to an average of over 15 dramas a year. In terms of schedule time taken up by crime drama, BBC1 followed close behind, even though it only offered 138 different programmes. However, BBC1 filled one early afternoon slot on weekdays with crime drama repeats (for example, in 1991, *Starsky & Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979), from February 1998, *Ironside* (NBC, 1967-1975)), thus filling up nearly the same amount of time per week with fewer dramas than ITV1.

Most of the afternoon dramas on BBC1 were imports from the US. From 1992 onwards, with the exception of occasional one-off dramas, this was the only slot that BBC1 filled with imports – all other crime drama was produced in the UK. While ITV1 originally continued to show several imports in the evening, such as *LA Law* (1991, Thursdays 9-10pm), *Nash Bridges* (1997, 10.30-11.25pm) and *Millennium* (1997, 10-10.55pm), it also increasingly switched to indigenous programming. Both channels primarily imported crime shows from the US, although they both screened Australian imports too (ITV1 *Blue Heelers* (from February 1995) and BBC1 *Police Rescue* (from March 1991)). Generally speaking, the amount of imports decreased over the years on ITV1 and BBC1 so that from January to September 2001 the only non-British crime drama shown on both channels were the repeats in the afternoon on BBC1.

This suggests that there are distinctions made between the programmes that are shown during the afternoon and those in the evening. For ITV1 and BBC1, a crime drama intended for the evening increasingly meant that it had to be produced in Britain while American programmes, particularly if they were repeats, were shown in the afternoon, suggesting that they were not considered to be able to bring in a prime-time audience nor to be too violent for family viewing. In fact, a similar strategy was adopted by BBC2 which scheduled several crime dramas, including repeats and the new series *Monk* (USA, 2002-) from March 2003 in their Saturday afternoon slot and by Five which showed quite a few American repeats on weekday afternoons including *Hart to Hart* (from May 2000), *The Streets of San Francisco* (from July 1997) and *Charlie's Angels* (from January 2001). As a consequence, repeats of American crime drama produced from the 1960s onwards remain a staple of the British terrestrial afternoon schedules.

A similar scheduling strategy that assigns programmes to distinct slots is noticeable for the dramas scheduled before and after the watershed. While most



crime drama in the evening is shown after 9pm, the dramas shown before can be categorised as either police dramas that are often characterised by their narrative closeness to the soap opera like *The Bill*, *Heartbeat* (ITV1, March 1992-) and *Hamish MacBeth* (BBC1, March 1995-May 1997), as legal dramas such as *Kavanagh QC* (ITV1, January 1995-April 2001) and *Judge John Deed* (BBC1, January 2001-) or as more nostalgic crime dramas such as *A Touch of Frost* (ITV1, December 1992-) and *The Inspector Lynley Mysteries* (BBC1, March 2001-). This suggests that there is a distinct type of crime drama that was scheduled after 9pm on ITV1 and BBC1, a drama that is unlike the police, legal and nostalgic dramas described above and that is likely to be British.

In comparison, both Channel 4 and Five relied primarily on imports with the reruns of both *The Sweeney* (C4, from July 1995, and Five, from September 1997) and *A Mind to Kill* (Five, from August 1997) notable exceptions. While Channel 4 showed mostly US imports like *Homicide: Life on the Street* (from November 1993) and *NYPD Blue* (from January 1994), Five at first primarily acquired Australian programmes such as *Halifax FP* (from April 1997), *Water Rats* (from February 1998) and *Cody* (from July 1997) and only introduced American crime programmes that had previously not been shown on British terrestrial television with *C-16 FBI* (from April 1998) and *Pacific Blue* (from May 1998). A year later, Five acquired *Martial Law* (from April 1999) and in 2001 finally *Crime Scene Investigation* (from June 2001). After that, the channel acquired *Law & Order* (from February 2002), *The Shield* (from October 2002), *Boomtown* (from January 2003), *Miami* (from February 2003), *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (from July 2003), *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* (from January 2004), *The Lyon's Den* (from June 2004), *Murder Prevention* (from October 2004) and *New York* (from February 2005), building up a strong portfolio of contemporary crime drama which is grouped together as 'America's Finest'. Most of these dramas dealt with the investigation of murder and all, with

the exception of *Murder Prevention*, were imported from the US and were scheduled after the watershed. All in all, Five showed an average of six different crime dramas a year.

In sum, the distribution of crime dramas on the terrestrial channels suggests that there are some shared scheduling strategies: repeats of American drama are shown in the afternoon, while contemporary crime drama that is not a police, legal or nostalgic drama is scheduled after the watershed. While BBC1 and ITV1 have changed their scheduling strategy to show mostly indigenous dramas in the evening, Channel 4 and Five rely on American imports. This gives a clear indication of a culture of programming in which contemporary American crime drama can most easily be assimilated into the schedules of either Channel 4 or Five who are likely to schedule it after the watershed. I now want to briefly analyse what formats these dramas took.

### **3.3.3 The Formats of Crime Programmes**

The most common format of crime drama over the analysed period was that of the series. In March 2004, this reached a peak with 27 of a total of 32 crime dramas per week being a series. However, even in 1993, the year with the lowest number of crime dramas per week, three quarters of all crime dramas shown that week were also series, highlighting that this is indeed the dominant format of crime drama. Despite this apparent stability, crime dramas did take on a new format during this period that affected one-off dramas as much as the series: increasingly, crime dramas were shown in two parts on consecutive nights. This development appears to be the result of *Prime Suspect*'s lasting impact.

In 1991, most crime dramas that were not series were either one-off dramas shown on one evening such as *Sherlock Holmes: The Master Blackmailer* (ITV1,

January 1992), *Agatha Christie's Murder is Easy* (ITV1, March 1991) or *A Murder of Quality* (ITV1, April 1991) or a serial shown on the same weekday in several consecutive weeks such as *Chimera* (ITV1, July-August 1991) or *Murder in Eden* (BBC1, July-August 1991). The only exception to this rule was indeed *Prime Suspect*, shown first on ITV1 in April and then on Channel 4 in November, and the Canadian import *Love and Hate* (BBC1, August 1991). Similarly, in the following year, *Prime Suspect 2* (ITV1, December 1992) and the US import *Cross of Fire* (BBC1, August 1992) were the only two programmes with two parts shown on two consecutive nights.

In July and August 1993, BBC1 and ITV1 scheduled several programmes in this manner, all of which were imported from the USA, while *Prime Suspect 3* (ITV1, October 1993) was the only indigenously produced programme shown on two consecutive nights. This pattern continued until 1996 when, in February, BBC1 introduced *Silent Witness*, a series with episodes split into two parts that were shown on the Wednesday and Thursday of the same week. BBC1 also screened *The Sculptress*, a two-part one-off drama, on the 2 and 3 March of the same year, indicating a new strategy for both the production and scheduling of crime drama produced for the BBC. This continued with *Harpur and Iles* (BBC1, September 1996), *The Ice House* (BBC1, April 1997) and *Bright Hair* (BBC1, September 1997). This pattern was subsequently imitated by ITV1 with series such as *Trial and Retribution* (ITV1, October 1997) and one-off dramas such as *Painted Lady* (ITV1, December 1997) and *An Inspector Wexford Special* (ITV1, November 1998). The two-part episode series became more prominent in the early 2000s with *Waking the Dead* (BBC1, from September 2000), *In Deep* (BBC1, from February 2001), *Messiah* (BBC1, from May 2001), *Outside the Rules* (BBC1, from February 2002) and *The Commander* (ITV1, from February 2003).

Interestingly, quite a few of these programmes are forensic-oriented or rely heavily on forensics to solve their crimes. *Silent Witness*, *Waking the Dead* and *Outside the Rules* are all forensic science dramas, while *The Commander*, *Trial and Retribution* and *Messiah* feature forensic scientists. Moreover, they all show the gruesome details of the corpse, enabling the full horror of crime to be visualised. All of these dramas are shown after the watershed, suggesting that these dramas are aimed at adults. Most of them have achieved critical success, with particularly *The Commander* and *Trial and Retribution* being discussed in terms of the high quality of their writing as they – like *Prime Suspect* – were written by Lynda La Plante (see Hallam 2005).

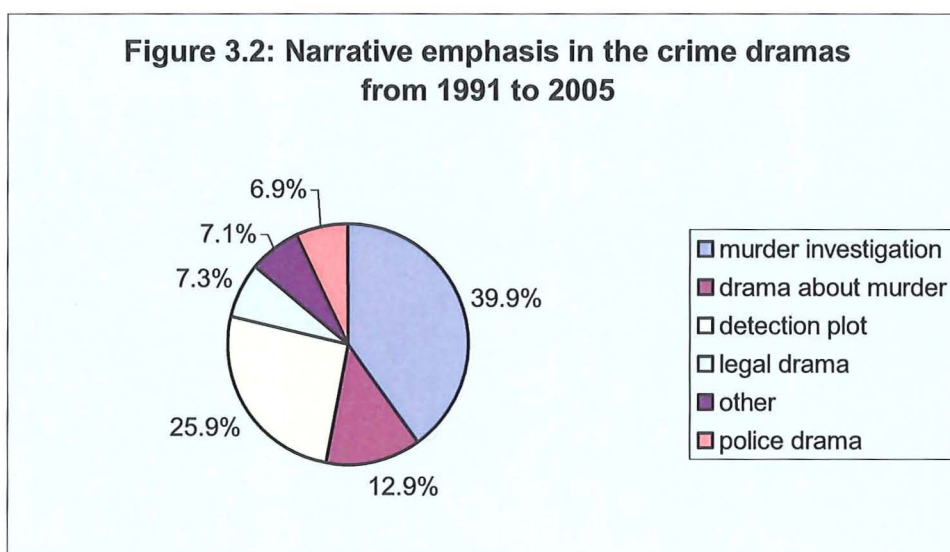
### **3.4 Crime on Television: the Data**

As the popular and the academic debate about the representation of crime in the media highlights, murder is the most common form of crime to be found in the media. Osborne argues that

murder, and especially serial murderers, preoccupy the media. It is the single most newsworthy kind of crime, simple to understand, endlessly different in its permutations and often ordinary in its gruesomeness. Murder is also the main fodder of crime/detective shows, as well as novels, comics, films and any other variation of narrative strategy that the media can invent. (1995, pp. 39-40)

Evidence for this can be found in the crime dramas shown between 1991 and 2005. Looking at the narrative emphasis in these dramas, in total, 52.8 percent of all programmes revolved around murder during that period (see figure 3.2). These dramas included murder investigation stories such as *Murder, She Wrote* (BBC1, from January 2003) and *Inspector Morse* (ITV1, from March

**Figure 3.2: Narrative emphasis in the crime dramas from 1991 to 2005**



1991) but also dramas about murder such as *And the Sea Will Tell* (ITV1, July 2003), which told the story of two couples on a sailing trip where one couple murders the other, and the fictionalisation of *The Murder of Stephen Lawrence* (ITV1, February 1999). The figure is even higher for post-watershed drama: here, 57.7 percent of all crime drama shown after 9pm revolved around murder.

While murder predominates the crimes, the most common narrative revolves around the solving of a puzzle: 65.8 percent of all dramas dealt with either the investigation of murder or the detection of other crimes. This suggests that television fictionalises crime as something about which apparently clear questions can be asked (What crime was committed? Who did it? Why did the person do it?) which also trigger clear answers (a murder, the gardener, for greed). Moreover, stories about crime appear to be intrinsically linked to discourses about knowledge and information. In murder investigation and detection dramas, viewers are encouraged to identify with the detectives of the fiction, therefore following them on their journey towards knowledge about a crime. This might explain why *CSI* which openly engages with knowledge – here scientific knowledge – is so popular with audiences.

The emphasis on murder and the riddle-solving detective diminished at particular times of the analysed time period. The success of *Heartbeat* (ITV1,

from April 1992) which looked at policing in the 1960s sparked a series of dramas in a similar nostalgic setting. These included *Hamish Macbeth* (BBC1, from March 1995) which followed the attempts of its title character to police a small coastal town in Scotland and *Dangerfield* (BBC1, from January 1995) which was set in the rural areas of Warwickshire. Although *Dangerfield* included murders and bodies which were usually depicted in graphic detail, the emphasis was clearly not on the detection of murder or the dissection of the bodies; rather the series revolved around the moment when the police surgeon Dangerfield told families of the death of a family member and their subsequent attempts to cope with it. In 1999, *Badger* (BBC1, from July 1999) about wildlife police continued the nostalgic theme. Unsurprisingly, these nostalgic dramas were, with the exception of the more gruesome *Dangerfield*, scheduled before the watershed.<sup>19</sup>

There was a similar shift away from murder in 1997 when several crime dramas focused on drug related crimes. These included *Supply and Demand* (ITV1, February 1997), a one-off drama about an undercover police squad, *Blue Murder* (C4, July 1997), an Australian drama about a corrupt police officer teaming up with a gangster in order to get rid of a drugs' squad sergeant, and *Bombay Blue* (C4, from October 1997), a series about a Glaswegian drug squad travelling to India in order to catch the drugs suppliers there. In 1998, *Liverpool One* (ITV1, from September) continued the drugs theme. With the exception of *Bombay Blue*, these dramas were shown after the watershed, suggesting that drugs were considered to be a topic more suitable for adults than for the whole family. Other drama focusing on particular aspects of policing were *The Vice* (ITV1, from January 1999) about a vice squad and *C-16 FBI* which focused on kidnapping. Both were shown after the watershed.

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<sup>19</sup> *Heartbeat* was scheduled from 9-10pm only in its first season.

As *The Vice* already indicates, crimes against moral decency and sexual crimes were considered to be too serious to be aimed at a family audience. Thus, rape stories as in *The Third Twin* (Five, October 1999), the episode 'Victim of Rape' of *Dangerfield* (BBC1, February 1995) and the series *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (Five, from July 2003), which deals with sexual crimes, were shown after the watershed. However, crime dramas rarely only depict rape and the combination of rape and murder tends to be the rule for crime dramas as in *Prime Suspect* which centred on the murder of several women who were also sexually abused and *Trial and Retribution VI* (ITV1, October 2002) which focuses on the murder and abuse of a young girl. A similar mixture of murder and sexual abuse can be found in *This is Personal – The Hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper* (ITV1, January 2000), *The Inspector Pitt Mysteries*, a murder mystery set in Victorian London and following the Jack the Ripper case (ITV1, September 1998), *The Verdict*, about a sexually and physically abused wife who kills her husband (ITV1 specific regions only, July 1998) and *Sirens*, about a psychologist who rapes and then murders several women (ITV1, October 2002). This suggests that sexual assault and rape only become serious enough for the police or detective to investigate if they are connected to murder and only then become visible. Boyle emphasises that this is a common theme in reporting of sexual murder which suggests that some forms of violence are not criminalised while others are and that strategies such as the gendering of the victim and the mythologizing of the perpetrator render some of his<sup>20</sup> crimes invisible while the continued portrayal of the sexual murderer as unique individual 'allows other abuses – and abusers – to hide in his shadows' (2005, p. 66). Some of the questions that consequently arise for

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<sup>20</sup> Boyle (pp. 58-68) in the discussed chapter writes explicitly about male sexual violence while the representations of rape in crime drama that I refer to here also revolve around male perpetrators.

my discussion are how murder and rape – and perhaps other crimes – are connected and if sexual abuse in *CSI* only becomes visible after a murder is committed. As Boyle's discussion of the reporting of sexual abuse suggests, the visibility of sexual assault or rape might have something to do with relationships, race, age and the violence used to commit it: sexual abuse might be visible in cases where the attacker and the victim are practically strangers, but it might be invisible where the attacker and the victim have a family relationship. Similarly, it might be visible when the rape is inter-racial but not when it is intra-racial, when the victim is either a child or elderly or when the attacker used physical violence to overcome the victim, but not if he drugged her or used verbal violence.

In sum, the content analysis sketches a picture of crime drama shown on British television in which murder dominates, with an increase in the number of dramas revolving around a murder after the watershed. The narrative emphasis in most crime drama was that of investigation and detection, suggesting that crime was presented primarily as a puzzle. With its murder investigation narrative, *CSI* could easily be assimilated into the British schedules as it combines the emphasis on murder with the narrative set-up of a puzzle. In the following discussion of the shift towards the forensic in representations of crime on British television, I demonstrate that the franchise could also be assimilated because the forensic sciences had been established as trustworthy tools of investigation before *CSI*'s arrival on Five.

### **3.5 The Shift towards Forensics**

Brunsdon's description (1998a) of a reflection of the crisis in policing in the three crime dramas *Inspector Morse*, *Prime Suspect* and *Between the Lines* could also be applied to include other programmes and in particular documentaries of the 1990s. Several documentaries question the justice of verdicts reached by



courts on the strength of police evidence such as the documentary series *Rough Justice* (BBC1, 1991) and *Trial and Error* (C4, from April 1992). Others interrogate the justification of police arrests as in the case of two documentaries in the *Critical Eye* series (C4, November 1991). In May 1992, BBC2 dedicated a whole season, consisting of dramas and documentaries, to the examination of concerns about the working of the criminal justice system (*Crime and Punishment*, from May 1992). Another documentary of the *Critical Eye* series looked at deaths in police custody (C4, October 1991), while the series *Watching the Detectives* (C4, April 1991) and the seven-part *Murder Squad* documentary (ITV1 from February 1992) scrutinised detective and police work by giving a fly-on-the-wall account of detectives and a unit of Scotland Yard respectively. Initially, forensic science was not exempt from this scrutiny: the *Antenna* episode 'The Maguires: Forensic Science on Trial' (BBC2, June 1991) looked at a case in which a conviction was reached on forensic evidence which then proved to be wrong and an episode of *Public Eye* ('DNA – Do Not Accept', December 1994) looked at mistakes made with DNA identification. The then still relatively new technology of DNA profiling – it was first discovered in 1984 – remained under scrutiny in the *Equinox* Special 'DNA in the Dock' (C4, October 1995) which focused on the abuse of DNA testing.

This critical view on forensic science was, however, not the only perspective offered on the field. The episode 'The Witness was a Fly' in *The Natural World* series (BBC2, April 1992), for example, described in detail the work of an entomologist; an *Antenna* episode from April 1991 followed the work of a forensic artist in the reconstruction of a face for identification purposes and the documentary series *Expert Witness* (ITV1 from May 1996) depicted the work of different forensic scientists. These more informative documentaries soon replaced those which were critical about forensic science.

Moreover, they increased in number from the mid-1990s on so that in 1999 BBC1 aired *Inside Story: The Russian Cracker* (August) about a Russian forensic psychologist, while Channel 4 showed amongst others *The Coroner* (from February), a four-part documentary about a coroner's work in Britain, *Dead Man Talking* (April), a documentary about a murder and its investigation with the help of forensic science and the documentary series *Secrets of the Dead* (from June) which used forensic science to reveal how people died from the middle ages to present time. Five also put an emphasis on forensic science in their documentary crime programming with *Autopsy* (from August), *Murder in Mind* (from August) about forensic psychology and *Murder Detectives* (from December) which followed forensic investigations of several murder cases. As these documentaries informed their audience rather than scrutinising the truth claims of forensic science as in the earlier documentaries, they helped to establish forensic science as a tool that in contrast to other forms of detection appears objective and incorruptible.

Forensic science, then, was increasingly portrayed as trustworthy at a time when the police had come under scrutiny both in real life and in the representations of their work on television. Scientists seemed indeed to be one alternative group, apart from ordinary members of the public,<sup>21</sup> that appeared to be better suited to take over from the police as they relied on science and thus factual evidence to make their cases rather than interrogation and statements which could easily be forged or manipulated. The increasing number of informative documentaries is an indication of that; but the growing presence of

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<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that the 1990s also saw several series and one-off dramas centred on a character who, professionally speaking, had nothing to do with crime such as *Jonathan Creek* (BBC1, from May 1997) about a magic trick inventor and a journalist, *Hetty Wainthropp Investigates* (BBC1, from January 1996) about a housewife and *A Masculine Ending* (BBC1, Sunday 12 April 1992) and its sequel *Don't Leave me this Way* (BBC1, Sunday, 30 May 1993) about two academics. Although the amateur detective or sleuth is not a new invention, there was a renewed interest in this particular character in that period.

forensic scientists as heroes of fictional representations of crime makes this even more apparent. Again, it is useful to trace the development from *Prime Suspect* (see Jermyn 2003b).

*Prime Suspect* included an onscreen pathologist in a minor role who discussed the autopsy findings with DCI Jane Tennison by demonstrating the findings on the body, a novelty insofar as autopsies were now shown rather than just talked about as previously in, for example, *Murder, She Wrote* or even *Quincy* (NBC, 1976-1983). The onscreen pathologist also became increasingly established in American drama such as *Homicide: Life on the Street* (NBC, 1993-96). However, the first forensic scientists as protagonists of a series shown on British television were psychologists, starting with Dr. Eddie Fitzgerald (Robbie Coltrane) in ITV1's crime series *Cracker* (from September 1993). The series was adapted for American television and was also shown on British television as *Fitz* (ITV1, from February 1998). Other crime series that focused on psychologists as forensic scientists that were screened on British television were the Australian *Halifax FP* (Five, from April 1997) and the two American sci-fi/crime hybrids *Millennium* (ITV1, from June 1997) and *Profiler* (Living, from February 2000). The latter also featured an onscreen pathologist (Grace Alvarez played by Roma Maffia).

The move to pathologists as protagonists occurred only minimally later and started on British television with Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) in the American programme *The X-Files* (Sky1, from February 1994, and BBC2, from September 1994). The fact that this was again a sci-fi/crime hybrid suggests that at least initially the forensic sciences, particularly in America, were perceived as lying outside of reality. Although in *The X-Files* forensic pathology was used as a means to ground Special Agent Fox Mulder's (David Duchovny) theories into reality and thus provide a way to prove the reality behind what seemed

paranormal occurrences, forensic science as a whole seemed obscure and associated with the paranormal as it was framed by the genre of science fiction.

British drama that focused on forensic pathologists followed a more realist tradition. These included *McCallum* (ITV1, from December 1995) which focused on a Scottish pathologist (John Hannah) working in London,<sup>22</sup> *Silent Witness* (BBC1, from February 1996) which followed the career of Sam Ryan (Amanda Burton) from private pathologist to professor of pathology in London, and *Mortimer's Law* (BBC1, from February 1998) about a female lawyer who turns pathologist. *Dangerfield*, which focused on a police surgeon rather than a pathologist,<sup>23</sup> to some extent anticipated this trend towards a realist depiction of forensic science and the body by revolving around a doctor who was interested in the body for medical reasons and thereby rendered the body and often the corpse visible. However, as in *Prime Suspect*, the body in *Dangerfield* played only a minor role in providing evidence while it became central to *McCallum*, *Mortimer's Law* and particularly *Silent Witness* which took the body as their main site of evidence collection. This implied that the body did not simply become visible, it became the main site of investigation of the crime. The move to forensic pathologists as protagonists therefore triggered a shift away from the survivors of murders – witnesses, perpetrators and investigators – to the victim.

This also relates to another interesting point of these dramas, namely the gender of the pathologists. The forensic pathologists in *Profiler*, *The X-Files*, *Prime Suspect*, *Silent Witness* and *Mortimer's Law* are all female. Are women considered particularly adept at the work of forensic pathology? Or do they have a particular stake in their work that is not mirrored by their male colleagues? Hallam (2005, p. 86) suggests that an investigation through women – a

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<sup>22</sup> Although *McCallum* did turn towards the fantastic in its second season.

<sup>23</sup> The work of a police surgeon revolves around the care for injured people in police custody, providing health care for the living. A pathologist examines a corpse for the reasons of its death.

feminised investigation – allows an attention to detail that the masculine investigation which relies on ‘gut feeling’ and intuition cannot encompass. This implies that the gaze of the female pathologist employs an attention to detail that enables ‘anyone [to see] the victim for the first time, not as a collection of injuries and evidence’ (Jermyn 2003b, p. 56) but as a person with a particular backstory. There is, however, more at stake. Thornham (2003, p. 79) points out that the female forensic scientist is able to disrupt the hegemony of the assumed masculine gaze of the scientist onto the (often female) victim with her own body which suggests that the female forensic scientist understands the suffering of the victim not only as symptom for a crime but also as pain. In other words, the female forensic pathologist is able to mediate the suffering of the victim, therefore highlighting their stories over the story of the perpetrator. The focus on female forensic pathologists is therefore central to the shift towards the story of the victim.<sup>24</sup>

Forensic science drama, then, was born out of a need to establish new heroes after the police had come under scrutiny in the 1980s and 1990s. Documentaries about forensic science established the field as a reliable tool that enabled detectives to investigate crime objectively and incorruptibly. While American drama initially offered a generic outlook that was closer to sci-fi than crime drama, an outlook that *CSI* inherited in its style, British dramas were indebted to the realist portrayal of policing in Britain (Nelson 2006). Both share a tendency to include female pathologists – which *Miami* continues in the *CSI* franchise – which accentuates the shift away from perpetrators to the victim because female pathologists can mediate the suffering of the victim, therefore rendering the story of the victim more central. The shift to the victim is caused by the detailed examination of the corpse in these dramas which is in line with other

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<sup>24</sup> In Chapter Five, I will highlight how this can also be facilitated by the focus of forensic science itself. See p. 177.

representations of the body in medical documentaries and dramas of the analysed period.

### **3.6 Other Representations of the Body**

Medical documentaries and dramas saw a similar shift towards the detailed investigation of the body as crime drama between 1991 and 2005. In the early 1990s, most medical documentaries were about ethical dimensions of medicine and therefore focused on interviews with medical staff or family members as in *Heart of the Matter* (BBC1, March 1991) about ethical dilemmas facing family members of coma patients. One episode of *QED*, 'Smoking' (BBC1, March 1991), was exceptional as, according to the *RadioTimes*, it talked

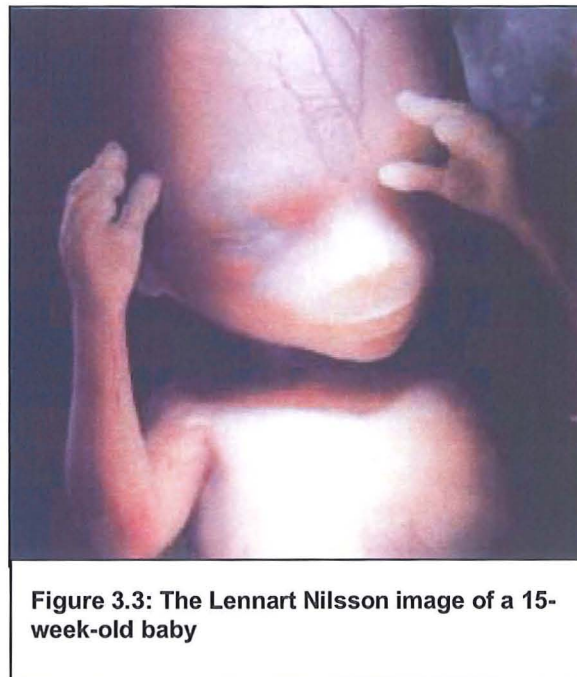
to life-long smokers, and with extraordinary film taken inside a smoker's body, takes a compelling look at how a moment's pleasure leaves its marks on human flesh. (9-15 March 1991, p. 62)

These images apparently give us direct access to see the evidence ourselves. They suggest an understanding of medicine as something concretely physical that can be made visible, related to physical evidence and fact. Medicine here appears as science rather than as a caring and nurturing profession. This also implies a shift away from the ethical dilemmas of earlier documentaries, now highlighting general fact over individual suffering.

Images taken inside the body remained rare in medical documentaries in the early 1990s. This changed, however, with the documentary series *The Human Body* (BBC1, from May 1998) which showed the development of a human being from conception to death and used both outside and inside imagery of the body. Lury (2005, p. 45) suggests that the 'visceral close-ups' used in *The Human Body* constitute a 'bodily intrusion' which stands in opposition to their apparent factuality: they bring the body too close to the

viewers for their comfort, therefore disrupting the apparent distance of the medical gaze.

Other programmes that used similar images were the six-part *Body Story* (C4 from November 1998) and *Bodyscapes* (C4, March 1999) which used microscopic filming to reveal the world in and around a body. Most of these documentaries used imagery resembling the photography of Lennart Nilsson (see figure 3.3), a Swedish medical photographer whose photographs themselves were used for a documentary on Channel 4 (*The Saga of Life*, November 1996).



**Figure 3.3: The Lennart Nilsson image of a 15-week-old baby**

A similar emphasis on the details of the body can be found in the increasing number of cosmetic surgery programmes such as *Hollywood Knives* (BBC1, from May 2001), *Plastic Surgery Ruined My Life* (Five, from November 2002) and *The Clinic* (C4, from April 2003). Here, the boundaries of the body are often breached in moments when the camera captures incisions made during operations or moments when skin is lifted off the flesh and remodelled to form new bodily shapes.

The images of the insides of the body are fundamentally different from images that show the opened-up body in the plastic surgery programmes and in dramas like *Casualty* (BBC1, from September 1986) and *ER* (C4 from February 1995). With the opened-up body, the camera stays firmly outside and shows the rupturing of the boundaries of the body. The opened-up body, therefore, appears wounded, in need of repair and healing. The inside images on the other hand imply that there are no boundaries that the camera cannot transgress, suggesting that the insides of the body are just an extension of its outsides. The body's insides appear as landscape which can be mapped and defined in order to provide definite answers. As a consequence, the individual body becomes an anatomical model which can be explained in order to create knowledge about how all bodies work. Lucas suggests that this mapping of the body is also notable in Patricia Cornwell's fictions and concludes that '[wounds] might thus be seen to be a language inscribed upon the inarticulate body' (2001, p. 218). Thus, the wounds of the body also function as signs for things that are not related to the body direct.

Jacobs (2003) argues that the move towards the visceral in medical dramas such as *ER* and *Cardiac Arrest* is related to society's search for the real. As I discussed in Chapter Two, these dramas monitor the bodies in order to see how they can be adapted to a society that is perceived as rigid and unchanging. Similarly in the cosmetic surgery programmes, the bodies are re-shaped in order to adapt them to this society. However, the visceral images of the medical documentaries discussed here highlight the real for other reasons. Lury argues that they have a 'pornographic structure' (2005, p. 56) as they monitor the body closely in order to record its (involuntary) reaction to a stimulus, like pornography monitors the body for the signs it gives of its pleasures. As Boyle and I argue in relation to similar images in *CSI*,



[the] 'pornographic' qualities that have been widely attributed to *CSI* in academic and popular responses relate not only to the penetrating camera and its graphic exposure of bodily injury and decay, but also, as we have argued in this essay, to the equation of maximum visibility with 'truth'. (forthcoming)

The close-ups of the insides of the body, like the focus on 'the frenzy of the visible' (Williams 1999/1989, p. 50), are meant to provide proof of the real and consequently give greater credence to this form of medical documentary as it suggests that the body is indeed real evidence and does not lie.

The increased depiction of the insides of the body, therefore, goes along with an emphasis on the real. What is at stake in these documentaries – and consequently in dramas that similarly investigate the body – is the body's absolute and incorruptible truth. The iconography around the body in *CSI* therefore has two implications: first, images of the opened-up body emphasise the disturbance of the body's natural boundaries and consequently the wounds and suffering of the victim. Second, the visceral close-ups of the body's in- and outsides highlight the truth it holds and give greater credence to the story of the victim. The move towards the forensic in crime drama therefore not only places the victim at the centre of the narrative but it also invests the victim's body with the power to hold the absolute truth. I will now give a general overview of *CSI* in order to lay the groundwork for the close textual analysis of the franchise which will investigate these images and issues in more detail.

### **3.7 *CSI* in the UK**

#### **3.7.1 Scheduling Environment in the UK**

*CSI* arrived on British terrestrial television in June 2001 with its original series, *Crime Scene Investigation*. As Knox (forthcoming) points out, Five was able to

acquire the already successful programme because it promised to 'take care of it.' This primarily meant that the series was given a secure scheduling slot at 9pm on a Saturday, replacing an unsuccessful film slot. At first, *Crime Scene Investigation* was coupled with a film afterwards and changing programmes before. This changed in February 2002 when Five acquired *Law & Order* and placed it together with *Crime Scene Investigation*'s second season. From March 2002, *High-Speed Pursuits*, a documentary series about speed crimes, was scheduled permanently before *Crime Scene Investigation*, and in May 2002 the documentary series *Murder Detectives* was scheduled permanently after *Law & Order*, creating a four-hour block of crime on Saturdays. When *Crime Scene Investigation* returned for its third season on Tuesday, 28 January 2003, it was coupled with the new crime series *Boomtown* and shown after the documentary series *Crime and Punishment*. Thus, Five created a three-hour block of crime leading into a feature film.

These scheduling strategies continued with the introduction of the second *CSI* series, *Miami*, to Five on 1 February 2003. From then on, *Law & Order* was coupled with this spin-off which was shown after *Dark Angel*, an American sci-fi thriller series, and the news. The move to schedule *Miami* in the Saturday slot previously occupied by *Crime Scene Investigation* suggests that Five was eager for *Miami* to do as well as the original. In February 2003, the three-hour block on Tuesdays was briefly extended to four hours by adding the documentary series *Murder Trial* at the end, before cutting it back to three hours in March 2003 by offering other documentaries (amongst them *Fifth Gear* and *Ultimate Hovercraft*) before *Crime Scene Investigation*, establishing each *CSI* episode as lead-in placement for the post-watershed crime programming. In June 2003, when *Boomtown*'s season ended, Five scheduled repeats of *Crime Scene Investigation*'s first season after its new season, creating a two-hour *Crime Scene Investigation* block on Tuesdays. From 1 July, the American police drama

*The Shield* was added, thus opening up the block again to include other American crime drama and extending it to three hours.

When both *Crime Scene Investigation*'s and *Miami*'s season ended, repeats of both shows were scheduled on Tuesdays with *Miami* at 9pm, *Crime Scene Investigation* at 9.55pm and *The Shield* at 10.50pm. The Saturday block was then filled with repeats of *Crime Scene Investigation* at 9pm, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, a new acquisition from the *Law & Order* franchise, at 10pm and repeats of *Law & Order* at 10.55pm. These blocks remained stable until the new season of both *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami* started on Tuesday, 27 January 2004. Then, *Crime Scene Investigation* was scheduled Tuesdays at 9pm followed by *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, another acquisition from the *Law & Order* franchise, and the documentary series *The Real CSI* at 10.55pm. *Miami* was shown Saturdays at 9pm followed by the new season of *Law & Order* at 9.55pm. The acquisition of the two *Law & Order* spin-offs showed that Five now relied as much on other American crime drama as on *CSI* to boost its image as the channel with 'the best American cop shows' (Dan Chambers cited in *The Media Guardian* 17 November 2003).

Until July 2004, the schedule remained unchanged when the introduction of the American legal drama *The Lyon's Den* (from Tuesday, 6 July) replaced *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*. In the following weeks, Five also moved *Miami* to the Tuesday slot and *Crime Scene Investigation* to the Saturday slot. The Tuesday block was complemented with *The Shield* at 10.50pm which eventually moved to Saturdays at 11pm leaving the schedules for Tuesday and Saturday to follow the following pattern:

Tuesday		Saturday	
9pm	<i>Miami</i>	9.10pm	<i>Crime Scene Investigation</i>
9.55pm	<i>Crime Scene Investigation</i>	10.05pm	<i>Law &amp; Order: Special Victims Unit</i>

10.50pm *The Lyon's Den*

11pm *The Shield*

11.55pm *Law & Order*

This pattern remained stable until October 2004 when *The Lyon's Den* was moved backwards to make room for the documentary series *Cosmetic Surgery*. This constituted the first time that *CSI* was scheduled together with a documentary that had a medical theme which meant a departure from a purely crime-oriented environment towards one that could include medical issues, a field that similarly influenced the programme as the importance of autopsies and DNA analysis suggests. From 1 February 2005, the beginning of the new season, *Crime Scene Investigation* was at first scheduled with a repeat of the *Miami* episode which introduced *New York* ('Miami/NY Non-Stop', 2.22). The Saturday after that (5 February), *New York* started on Five followed by *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, continuing the scheduling together of one series of the *CSI*-franchise with one series of the *Law & Order*-franchise. Coincidentally, both *New York* and *Special Victims Unit* are set in New York, linking the two dramas together not only through subject matter but also through location, therefore creating a strong sense of coherence over the two hours.

On the whole, then, *CSI* remained firmly scheduled in a crime block on Five which contrasts with the scheduling of *Without a Trace* on Channel 4 (from January 2004). Channel 4 used the crime drama to establish a stable (American) quality drama block in their schedule from 10pm with *Without a Trace* followed by *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-) on Monday nights, *NY-LON* (September-October 2004) and *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001-2005) on Tuesday nights and *Nip/Tuck* (FX, 2003-) and *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004) on Wednesday nights.<sup>25</sup> Channel 4 had introduced this stripped schedule of similar programmes (in this case dramas of the American 'quality' genre Monday,

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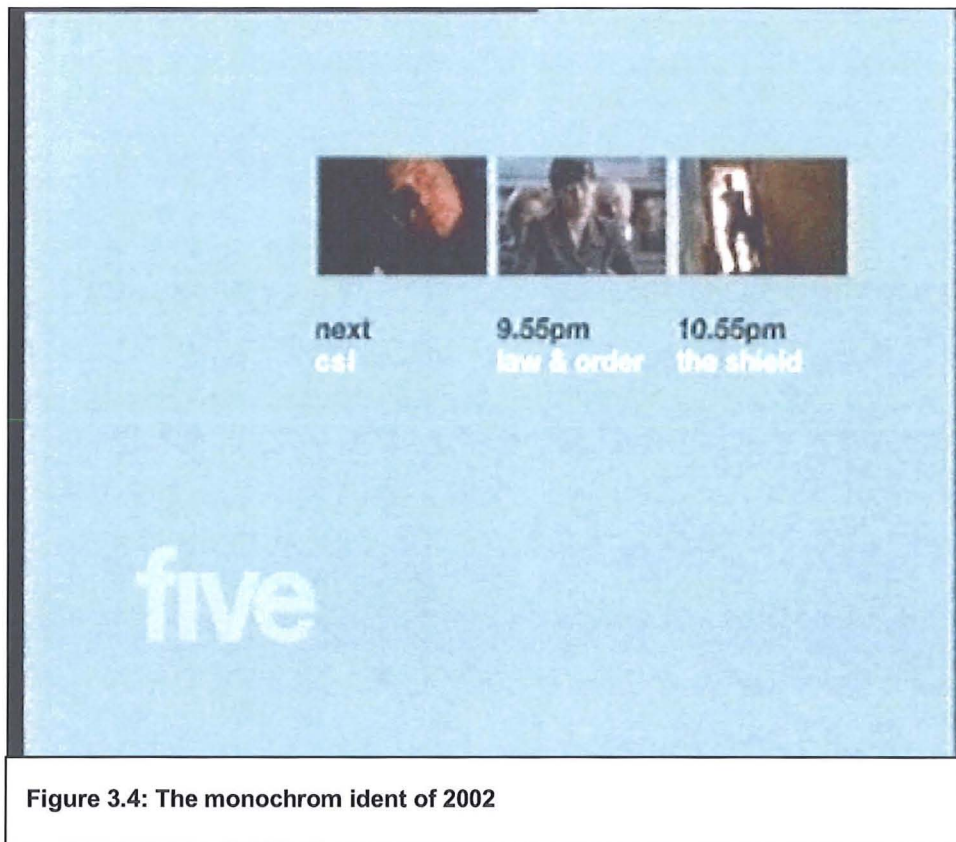
<sup>25</sup> This data was taken in week 11-17 September 2004.

Tuesday and Wednesday from 10pm) after *Friends* (NBC, 1994-2004), *Sex and the City* and *Frasier* (NBC, 1993-2004) ended their first run. However, Channel 4 insisted on creating a drama rather than a crime environment, as Mark Thompson put it: 'we're not going to go head-to-head with cop dramas: we need programmes with a twist' (The Guardian 15 July 2002). Consequently, the slot in which *Without a Trace* is scheduled is a 'quality' drama rather than a crime slot, marking *Without a Trace* as drama comparable to *The Sopranos* with a subsequent emphasis on the dramatic aspects of the show rather than crime. *CSI*, on the other hand, was scheduled firmly in a crime slot, meaning that at least in Britain, the scheduling context highlighted that the franchise belonged to the crime genre. This also meant that the drama arising out of relationships played a lesser role in how *CSI* was framed.

The scheduling context also gives an indication of the importance of the franchise for Five. As Five's first major ratings success, *CSI* is used as a lead-in placement which is defined by its capacity to start the evening's crime block and attract a big audience which, it is hoped, will continue to watch throughout the evening (Lewine *et al.* 1985, p. 134). *CSI*, then, begins the evening's crime drama block and is perceived as its main attraction. This is also highlighted by the idents which follow the news and a short trailer pointing towards another, unrelated programme. Knox argues that 'the presence of *CSI* on British television has further been given shape and meaning by Five's advertising and marketing strategies' (forthcoming). The idents in particular highlight *CSI*'s central role for the channel.

The idents all more or less directly refer to *CSI*. While the idents used before *CSI* from September 2002 were simple monochrome screens with the word 'five' written on it and little windows showing scenes from upcoming programmes (see figure 3.4), in 2003 they became animated and showed relatively simplistic cityscapes with some movement in them which resembled the cityscapes in *CSI*

as they highlighted the urban landscape (see figure 3.5). In 2004, police-themed  
idents followed which included American cops shot from hip-angle or an



American police car covered in snow with the word 'DONUT' written on one side (see figure 3.6). This series of idents was the most explicitly related to the crime



Figure 3.6: The police themed-ident of 2004

theme of *CSI*. In late 2004, the idents became more general and lost their American cop theme whilst still referencing *CSI*. The idents included the word 'five' made up of meat floating in the sea and a shark attacking it (see figure 3.7) and reflections of neon lights including the word 'five' on wet asphalt. Both are again reminiscent of *CSI*: the shark ident evokes episodes of *Miami* which feature shark attacks ('Wet Foot, Dry Foot', 1.3, and 'Bait', 2.9) and the neon light ident pays tribute to the opening shots of *Crime Scene Investigation* which are usually of the neon-lit strip at night. In 2005, finally, the 'America's Finest' slot on Tuesdays and Saturdays received its own animated ident which consisted of a montage of different *CSI*-shots (see figure 3.8), emphasising the continued importance of *CSI* to 'five's' channel identity (Fanthome, 2003, p.



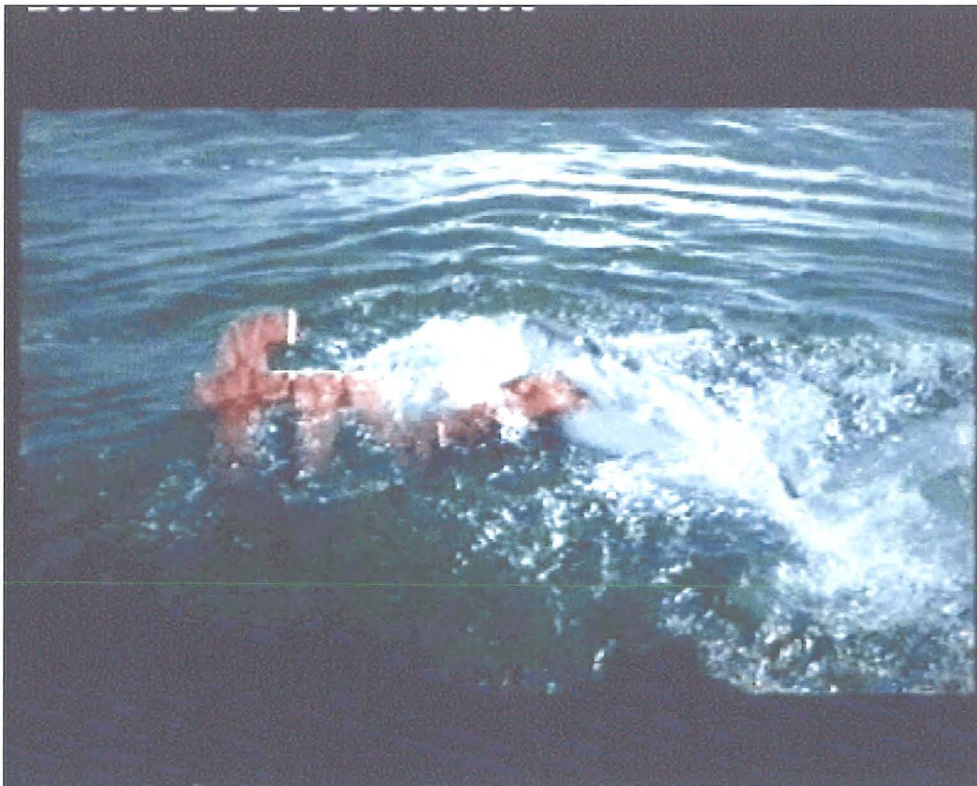


Figure 3.7: The shark-ident of October 2004

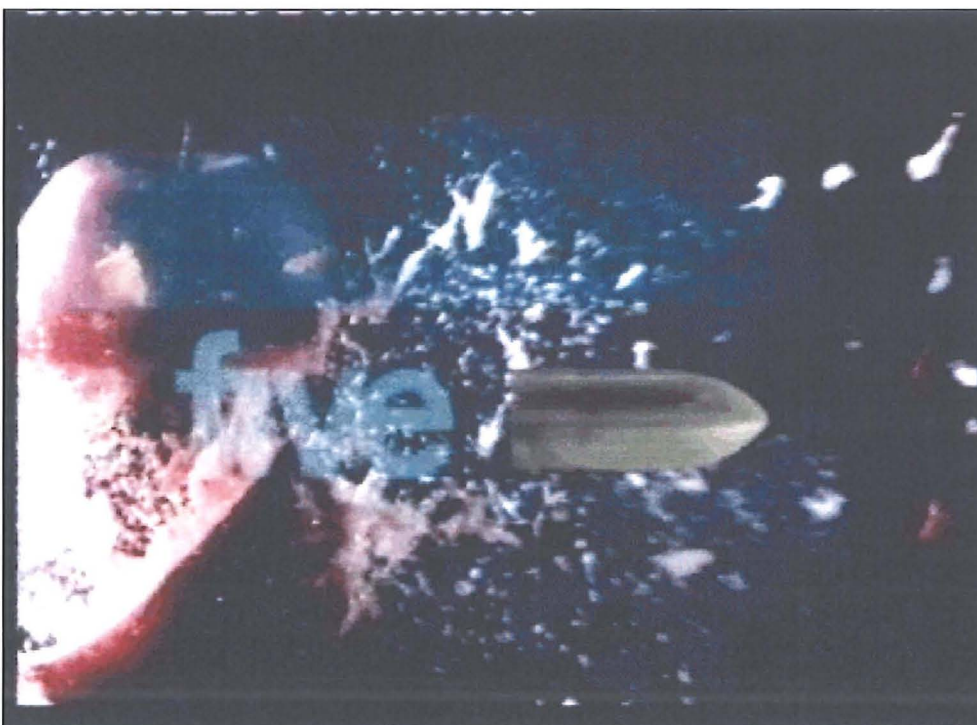


Figure 3.8: The CSI-shot ident of 2005



178).<sup>26</sup> Knox argues about this last ident that

[similar] to *CSI* cutting through the tele-visual clutter of competing (US) programmes, this arresting trailer not only cuts through Five's own flow and draws attention to its imports, but also, by extension, together with *CSI*, helps Five cut through the tele-visual clutter of the multi-channel environment. Underscoring that *CSI*'s discourse of quality is very much a visual quality, the trailer's expensive spectacularity draws attention to the promotion itself, whereby, in a circular process, the quality of the trailer both references and 'proves' the quality of *CSI* ..., as well as, by extension, the quality of Five.

(forthcoming)

This trailer, therefore, fundamentally fuses *CSI* with Five's identity and the attempt to attract viewers. For the viewer, therefore, the episode scheduled after this trailer is filled with expectancy to deliver something exciting and visually sophisticated which adds to the perception that the screening of a new *CSI* episode in particular constitutes an event on Five.

These idents highlight the centrality of *CSI* also to the following block which is further emphasised by the continuity announcer who speaks over the ident. He or (more often) she either announces briefly the crime of the programme following *CSI* or the content of the *CSI* episode that is just about to begin. In both cases, the continuity announcer also draws attention to the crime block, therefore emphasising the effect of the scheduling which marks *CSI* as the beginning of the crime slot.

The continuity announcer, however, fulfils also another function. Often, he or she warns viewers of the content of the following episode. In some cases, the warnings only extend to the flashing images but in others they concern either the violence and gore or the effects scenes might have on the audience. These

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<sup>26</sup> This emphasis on *CSI* only changed in autumn 2005 when Five developed a new marketing strategy in which the American dramas *House*, *Prison Break* and *CSI* were grouped together with actors from these dramas looking out of a white screen (Steinke 2006).

include hints of a 'gruesome discovery' or 'bloody crime' or of 'scenes that some viewers might find upsetting'. They therefore draw attention to the gruesomeness of the following episode, potentially increasing its impact. As a study of the Joint Industry Group (1997, p. 75) revealed, these warnings do not only have the effect of allowing viewers to choose not to watch a programme but they can also increase viewers' interest in a programme. Thus, the announcements draw attention to those aspects of *CSI* that demand a less cerebral engagement with the text and rely more on an emotional investment: the viewer is expected to react with disgust and potentially fear to the 'gruesome discovery'.

The viewing context offered on British terrestrial television therefore clearly influences what aspects of *CSI* are highlighted: its scheduling environment emphasises crime over human interest drama while its function in the schedule as lead-in placement and the style of the idents emphasise the importance of *CSI* to Five. Last, the continuity announcer highlights the gore of the franchise and therefore aspects that it borrows from the horror genre, inviting an engagement with the text that goes beyond the cerebral normally associated with murder investigation dramas.

### **3.7.2 Introduction to the Programme**

*CSI* is a franchise that consists of three discrete series. The first series, *Crime Scene Investigation*, is set in Las Vegas and revolves around the work of the police department lab's nightshift team, headed by Gil Grissom (William Petersen). Other members of the team are the former erotic dancer and single mother Catherine Willows (Marg Helgenberger), Warrick Brown (Gary Dourdan) who is black and the only member of the team born and raised in Las Vegas, all-American boy Nick Stokes (George Eades) and the reclusive Sara Sidle (Jorja

Fox) whom Gil brings in after another member of the team, Holly Gribbs (Chandra West), is shot.<sup>27</sup> The series begins with the disruption of the team through the murder of Holly which results in the original team leader Jim Brass (Paul Guilfoyle) being transferred to homicide while Gil is promoted to lead the lab. Although Gil is an expert in entymology, the other team members are presented as more general crime scene investigators who collect evidence at the scene but hand it over to experts for the analysis. Two of these experts are particularly central: the medical examiner, Dr. Al Robbins (Robert David Hall), and Greg Sanders (Eric Szmanda), the DNA expert.

The city of Las Vegas as location offers the series stories that revolve around gambling and the sex and sleaze associated with the casinos, their show girls and their mafia-affiliated bosses. However, as Las Vegas is a bustling city surrounded by nothing but desert, it also reflects one of the central processes of forensic science: namely the analysis of evidence under the microscope. When material is prepared for the analysis under the microscope, it is decontextualised and separated from any connecting material. Similarly, Las Vegas presents a decontextualised sample of American life, separated from the wider cultural context.

The second series, *Miami*, follows the team of lab technicians of Miami Dade Police. While in *Crime Scene Investigation*, the investigators are scientists who work for the police, in *Miami*, the members of the team are cops. The head of the lab, Horatio Cane (David Caruso), is particularly characterised by this: he used to work for the bomb squad, has a brother and a sister-in-law who also work for the police and is a very good shot who often uses his gun to make arrests. His team consists of Megan Donner (Kim Delaney) who soon leaves the lab for personal reasons, 'new man' Tim 'Speed' Speedle (Rory Cochrane), Eric

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<sup>27</sup> For photos of the cast members, see Appendix A, p. 334.

'Delko' Delektorsky (Adam Rodrigues) who is from a Latin-American background and dives, ballistic expert Calleigh Duquesne (Emily Procter) and medical examiner Alexx Woods (Khandi Alexander).<sup>28</sup> In *Miami*, the location at the edge of the USA evokes stories of migration and transgressed borders, subjects which are investigated in episodes about the marginalised Latin-American community, about plane crashes and about boat accidents.

The last spin-off of the franchise, *New York*, revolves around the team of Marc 'Mac' Taylor (Gary Sinise) who, like his counterpart in *Miami*, is characterised as cop rather than scientist. Mac still mourns the death of his wife in the terrorist attacks of September 2001, which is the central subject of the series and closely connected to its setting in the east coast metropolis, giving it, particularly in its first season,<sup>29</sup> a dark edge. Other members of the team are Mac's old friend Stella Bonasera (Melina Kanakaredes) who is part-Greek, Danny Messer (Carmine Giovinazzo) who is haunted by his troubled upbringing and affiliation to an Italian gang, tough and street-smart Aiden Burn (Vanessa Ferlito) and the black medical examiner Dr. Sheldon Hawkes (Hill Harper). The team is supported by the police detective Donald 'Don' Flack (Eddie Cahill).<sup>30</sup>

In terms of basic plotlines, the three series are very similar and characterised by their strict adherence to the series format which is unusual for much other contemporary American drama. The notion of 'concise repetition [...] built into the opening minutes of each programme' that Corner (1999, p. 57) describes extends in *CSI* beyond the teaser into the whole format: a crime is committed or a body found; the investigators examine the crime scene; they hear the findings of the pathologist, the ballistic expert, trace expert, DNA technician; talk to relatives and friends and, finally, bring the pieces together into

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<sup>28</sup> For photos of the cast members, see Appendix A, p. 335.

<sup>29</sup> Nichola Dobson (2006) points out that the programme avoids the darkness from its second season.

<sup>30</sup> For photos of cast members, see Appendix A, p. 336.

a story that explains how the crime was committed, by whom and why. This story development is repeated week after week, offering only a resolution for the particular incident but leaving the overall problematic unresolved. As Ellis (1982, p. 127) argues, this is characteristic of series in general: one crime is solved, but the occurrence of crime continues, requiring further investigations. Thus, the series format suggests that despite the containment of the particular criminal in the episode, crime remains a troubling presence. Crime, indeed, seems so ubiquitous that often one episode includes a second case, allowing for the 'multi-strand narratives, switching to and from concurrent lines of action' which, Corner points out, are 'most notable in workplace-based series' (1999, p. 58).

*CSI*'s way of telling the story, then, is very formulaic. This implies that the attraction of *CSI* does not lie in its story development and the ability of the series to transform itself into different genres or forms (Caldwell 1995, p. 92), but in what crime stories are told and how they are told: what crimes are being investigated and what the investigation can uncover about their context. Plot-twists in relation to the story of the crime abound in the franchise, following the principle that Todorov established for the whodunit, namely that 'the obvious suspects turn out to be innocent, and the innocent are suspect' (1977, p. 85). This highlights the franchise's adherence not only to the series formula but also the conventions of genre. *CSI*, then, works within a highly established and very repetitive order: namely that of the whodunit series, promising a safe (because it is established and known) form in which the chaos created by crime can be played through and investigated.

This rigid order could potentially include a strict moral ideology. In this respect, the multi-strand narratives are noteworthy as they allow, as Corner (1999, p. 58) suggests, for more complex narratives in which one story reflects on another. Moreover, the serialisation in *CSI*, although limited, adds to this increased complexity. It revolves around the different ensemble casts who talk

to each other about their lives as well as their work, allowing for their stories to illuminate the backstories of perpetrators and victims. Thus, although this rigid structure is prone to include definite notions of guilt, the multi-strand episodes and the serialisation of *CSI* allow scope for moral complexity.

The rigid structure also highlights the centrality of the crime and its investigation to *CSI*. The franchise is not about the human drama involved in a work based on crime; it is primarily about crime and can therefore be scheduled within a crime context. The repetitive structure of the episodes also allows me to focus my analysis on these aspects – the investigation and the crime – and to use particular episodes as examples as they repeat this pattern which I discuss in more detail as the analysis in Chapters Four to Seven progresses.

### **3.8 Conclusions**

This chapter has given an overview of the British schedules from 1991 to 2005 in respect of crime drama, documentaries about crime and dramas and documentaries that investigate the body in some detail. It established that crime drama is an important part of drama programming on the terrestrial channels. The introduction of *CSI* affected the British broadcasting landscape with a subsequent increase in the number of crime dramas which was largely due to Five. Although Five has a strong portfolio of contemporary American crime drama, it was ITV1 which showed most crime programmes in the analysed period (an average of over 15 different dramas a year in comparison to 6 on Five). Like BBC1, ITV1 increasingly relied on indigenous programming, with only afternoon slots reserved for American crime drama repeats. All channels have adopted particular strategies for the scheduling of crime drama which meant that an American crime drama that was graphic in the depiction of the effects of

violence like *CSI* was most likely to be adopted by either Channel 4 or Five for their post-watershed programming.

With its series format, *CSI* belongs to the largest group of crime drama formats on British television. The importance of *CSI* to Five is reflected in its scheduling as the lead-in placement for the crime slot in which it is the main attraction. This is also marked by the idents shown before *CSI* which all include more or less direct references to the franchise.

The shift to the forensic as trustworthy tool was preceded on British television by both informative documentaries and dramas that involved forensic scientists as protagonists. These documentaries and dramas established forensic science as an alternative to ordinary police work which had come under scrutiny. With their emphasis on the body of the victim, they brought about a shift in the focus of the investigation from perpetrator to victim whose story became more central to the investigation particularly in cases when the forensic pathologist was a woman. The emphasis on the body, which is also reflected in medical documentaries and dramas, enables these programmes and *CSI* to present findings as 'real' facts and as the absolute truth. The victim, therefore, is not only more central to the story of the investigation, his or her body also holds the absolute, incorruptible truth about the crime, therefore investing the victim with the power to reveal what really happened. This power, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Five, had previously resided with the perpetrator.

All in all, the overview suggests that *CSI* was easily adapted to the British schedules because it continues a tradition of crime drama programming as series, as murder investigation, and as forensic science drama. As forensic science drama, however, it is part of a shift in crime drama towards a greater emphasis on the victim, suggesting a fundamental change to the crime genre, which I will investigate in more detail in the following chapters. With the different set-up of characters and the different locations, the three series might also

diverge from each other despite their repetitiveness as whodunit series. These differences and similarities will be explored in detail in the close textual analysis to which I now want to turn.



## **Part Two: Analysis**

## **Chapter Four: Setting the Tone of the Investigation of the Crime: The Teaser**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter analyses the teaser, the scenes before the title sequence, in *CSI*. It will discuss how these scenes fundamentally determine the tone of the episode, both in terms of how the crime is introduced and how the investigation is conducted. I will investigate the repetition offered in the opening minutes (Corner 1999, p. 57) and how this enables particular narratives to emerge that differ slightly from series to series.

As my last chapter established, *CSI* in Britain is put into a context which marks it as crime drama rather than human issue drama. In this chapter, I will investigate how the teaser itself offers discourses that revolve around law and order and forensic medicine which suggest that *CSI* follows the conventions of the crime genre as Neale (1980) describes it. Following his theory, I will investigate if it is violence that causes the disruption of the first equilibrium or if the disruption is not rather caused by the effect of violence, namely the 'damaged, distressed, suffering body' (Dyer 1999, p. 59). This would suggest a generic closeness to the horror film and I will draw on Kristeva's theory of abjection (1982) for the analysis of the encounter with the corpse.

The chapter is divided into the different scenes of the teaser and begins with a discussion of the opening shots which show us the cityscapes of the three locations, then continues with an analysis of scenes in which the crime is

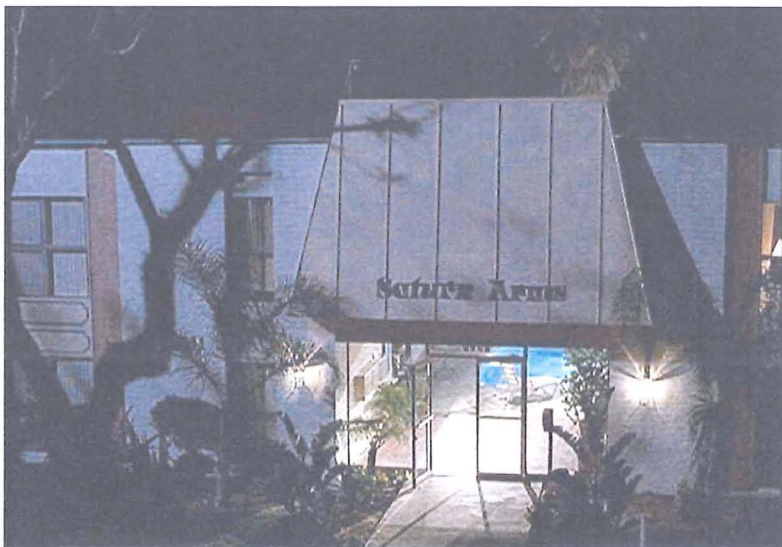
discovered and, alternatively, scenes in which the crime is committed, before ending with an examination of the scene in which the investigation begins.

#### **4.2 The Cityscapes**

Cityscapes form the establishing shots of each episode. *Crime Scene Investigation* usually starts with images of the neon-lit strip at night and then slowly moves into suburbia (see figures 4.1 and 4.2). *Miami* focuses first on



**Figure 4.1: The opening shot in *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Strip Strangler' (1.23)**

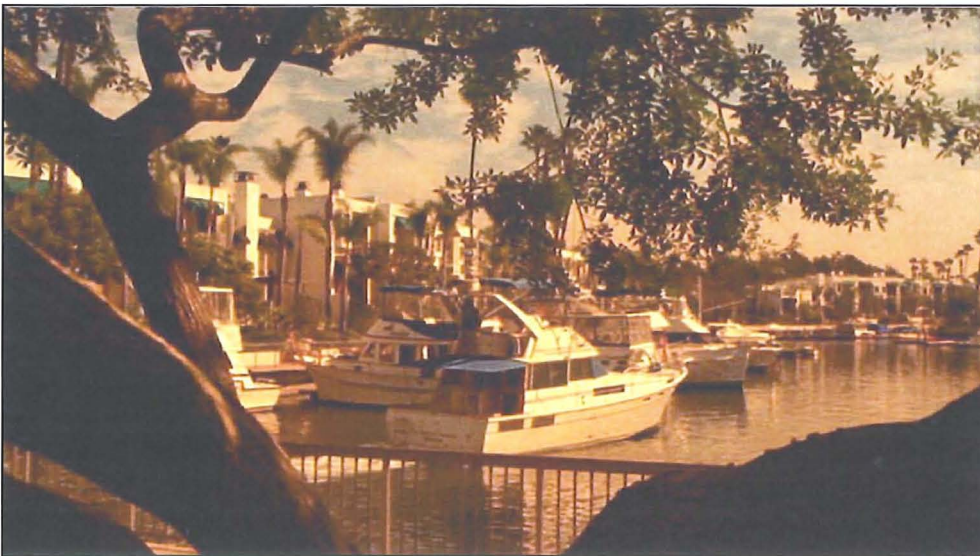


**Figure 4.2: The second shot from 'Strip Strangler'**

images of the skyline in which the sea and the beach form an important backdrop and then cuts to residential areas or public places (see figures 4.3 and 4.4). *New York*, finally, begins with the skyline of Manhattan from above before rapidly cutting or moving to street level (see figures 4.5 and 4.6).



**Figure 4.3: One of four cityscape shots of *Miami: 'Wannabe'* (2.18)**



**Figure 4.4: The cityscape shots give way to establishing shots of a residential area in the same episode**





Figure 4.5: The opening shot of *New York: 'Rain'* (1.7)



Figure 4.6: The second shot moves to street level

On average, there are three such shots which are cut to match the accompanying music. The music used in these opening shots ranges from melancholic hymn to fast techno track, determining the style and pace of the editing. *Crime Scene Investigation: 'After the Show'* (4.8), for example, uses a sad melody sung by a female alto and slow dissolves for the editing of the

opening shots. In *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Lady Heather's Box' (3.15), however, the cuts are irregular to accentuate the fast pans of the opening shots and the beat of a techno track. The editing of the establishing shots is particularly in *Crime Scene Investigation* visually noticeable and therefore bears resemblance with the editing of the music video which Carol Vernallis describes as '[being] sometimes meant to be noticed and [bringing] out aspects of the song' (2004, p. XI). This suggests that *CSI* draws on genres outside of television drama (here the music video) which include other pleasures than that of narrative. In this case, they seem to revolve around the enjoyment of the audiovisual characteristics of the text which indicates that some of the pleasures of *CSI* indeed lie in its style. As these are the opening shots of an episode, the music at this point also helps to draw attention to the screen, which Simon Frith notes is one of the central functions of music on television. Arguing that television is primarily a picture-centred medium, he points out that '[music] on television is less often heard for its own sake than as a device to get our visual attention' (2002, p. 280). As these pictures are, like those of the music video, extremely stylised, they draw attention to the construction of the text and thereby also to the visual aspects.

Within the British context and the continuity announcements with their warnings that draw attention to the gore of *CSI*, this points to a spectator address that lies beyond the cerebral normally associated with crime dramas. Rather than inviting an engagement that is determined by the wish to unravel a puzzle, the continuity announcer and these opening shots suggest that the pleasures to be gained from *CSI* are either emotional (enjoying the feelings of fear, disgust, etc.) or sensory (appreciating the audiovisual construction of the text). Both engage the spectator's body more than his or her mind, creating a hierarchy of pleasures that subverts the normal order (Pinedo 1997).

The music used for these scenes also has another function: it helps to set up the tone for the subsequent narrative. In this way, the music works as stock music which, K.J. Donnelly describes, to follow 'the same cues ... for different action, meaning that stock music fits stock situations, and was the logical choice for standardised genre drama, particularly in the series format which now dominates television' (2002, p. 334). An example of this is given in *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'After the Show' (4.8) which with its slow soundtrack and dissolves evokes melancholy and grief which is carried into the next scene in which we see, first in extreme close-up then close-up, a giant television screen showing the interview with a young showgirl while a hand passes over the screen and a sad voice says: 'She is so beautiful. I never meant to hurt her.' Thus, the music, although at first working with the images in a way similar to the music video, forms an important part of the narrative as it sets up the tone of the following scene.

Although the use of music is similar across the franchise, the pattern of cutting is different in each series. *Crime Scene Investigation* usually uses flashcuts between the different opening shots of the cityscape. These flashcuts are essentially rapid dissolves into white and a dissolve into the next image, accompanied by a sound that resembles that of the flash of a photo camera – a foreshadowing of the photographic processes during the investigation. These opening flashcuts are therefore linked to pieces of evidence that are photographed by one of the investigators and suggest that the city of Las Vegas as a whole comes under the scrutiny of forensic science and not just the crimes that happen there. This is interesting as it suggests that in *CSI* the investigation is able to uncover previous crimes or, alternatively, that the social network that Las Vegas represents is scrutinised for its part in the crime. The reference to the photographic processes, however, also highlights *Crime Scene Investigation's*

fascination with the processes of forensic science which provide the main inspiration for the stylistic choices of the series.<sup>31</sup>

*Miami*, in comparison, edits its cityscape shots with either a continuity cut or a slow dissolve. This suggests a lower investment of *Miami* in a style derived from forensic science. Instead, the series uses a style which is appropriate to the particular episode's storyline and therefore follows the more filmic tradition of post-1980s American television drama (Caldwell 1995, p. 12, 98). For example, excessive filters or bleaching effects are normally used when the storyline facilitates them as in 'Slow Burn' (2.14) in which extreme orange filters are applied in the opening shots in a storyline about a fire in the everglades. Similarly, the rather conventional modes of editing for cityscape shots suggest subordination to narrative as they do not draw as much attention to themselves as the flashcuts of *Crime Scene Investigation*.

*New York* uses a whole range of editing devices for its opening shots, including continuity shots, flashcuts and dissolves. Here, the editing is determined by narrative. In episodes that include cases particularly close to the investigators, the shots are usually edited as dissolves. Flashcuts are used for episodes that highlight the complications of the plot where one crime often leads to other crimes. Continuity cuts, finally, are used for more regular episodes and are used most often. The editing draws attention to the fact that of the three series *New York* is the most closely related to conventional crime drama, highlighting either the genius of the investigators (who are able to solve such complicated cases as those that start with flashcuts) or their struggle as investigators (who get personally involved as in those episodes that start with a dissolve). What is important to note is that *New York* takes longer to establish a pattern as the irregularity of its editing devices for the landscape shots cannot

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter Six, p. 216.



instantaneously be understood as a pattern in the same way as the flashcuts in *Crime Scene Investigation*. This suggests that by the time *New York* was first broadcast, the producers could rely on a dedicated audience that would watch the whole season, rather than only the first two episodes which allowed them greater freedom to experiment.

The opening shots also use conventions from another genre which *CS/* widely draws on. As I have described above, these shots usually move from the recognisable location towards the crime scene. This allows the series to show off the sights of their particular location: the strip with its neon lights in Las Vegas, the beach and the sea in Miami and the tourist sites such as the Chrysler Building and the Statue of Liberty in New York. This extends also into the episodes with images showing off the Nevada desert landscape as visually spectacular, as in *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Outside the Box' (3.23) in which a scene set in the dessert cuts back several times to panoramic shots in order to highlight the scenery. Similarly, in *Miami*, well-composed long shots draw attention to the modernist architecture and good weather as in 'Blood Brothers' (2.1) (see figure 4.7 and 4.8).



**Figure 4.7: The spectacular Nevada desert landscape in *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Inside the Box'**



**Figure 4.8: The nice weather and modernist architecture in *Miami: 'Blood Brothers'***

Steve Blandford (2005) discusses this emphasis on the touristic in Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish drama in respect of what stories can be told and in relation to iconography. Analysing *Monarch of the Glen* (BBC1, 2000-2005), he argues that it has 'an attitude to place that undoubtedly owes more to the discourses of tourism than of drama' (2005, p. 173). He concludes that 'popular BBC television drama emanating from "the Celtic periphery" in the 1990s has tended, with some minor reservations, to retreat to the iconography of other cinematic eras [e.g. *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minelli, 1954)]. When it has not done so, it has rarely been recommissioned by the network controllers in London' (2005, p. 179). Whereas in these dramas there is a motivation to show off the regions in order to attract tourists and to cater to nostalgic stereotypes associated with them, *CSI* with its crime narratives hardly invites holiday makers; rather it uses the style associated with tourist information guides and, in the case of *Crime Scene Investigation*, also with the nostalgia surrounding Las Vegas's casinos to create a product that looks glossy and stylish, but does not give any meaning to it. It is indeed a style that emphasises the 'quality of the

surface', as Goode (forthcoming) argues, a style for style's sake, and therefore marks *CSI* as truly televisual (Caldwell 1995).

There is, however, more to *CSI*'s opening shots than the setting up of a tone and style for the episode. With its move towards the specific crime scene, the series also follow an established pattern of the horror genre which Freeland (2000, pp. 217-225) discusses in detail in relation to *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980). Freeland argues that the helicopter shots over the landscape to the site of the hotel in *The Shining* suggest that evil could be everywhere but in this case finds a haven in the hotel. Similarly, crime, and with it to some extent evil, could happen everywhere in the city, but in each episode finds its particular location where it lurks behind the recognisable façade of Miami, New York and Las Vegas. By highlighting the everywhere of crime, these shots also render the crimes everyday by suggesting that crimes can be found every time the helicopter flies over the locations.

This can be read in two different lights: first, these shots emphasise the ubiquity of crime which feeds into debates around the fear of crime as described, amongst others, by Sparks (1992); second, it suggests that the depicted crimes are not the work of abnormal people that are marked as other. On the contrary, perpetrators in *CSI* are shown to be like us, part of the human species. As Catherine tells Nick in *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Slaves of Las Vegas' (2.8): 'Human beings are capable of anything'. This, however, implies that every human being is also capable of crime which poses a problem for the investigation of murder as it has been traditionally conducted in crime drama. Sumser points out that instead of murder, crime drama normally investigates

actions leading to murder. The three things that need to be established in any investigation following murder are motives, opportunities and capabilities. Opportunities and capabilities are *necessary* conditions for being a suspect or a villain. (1996, p. 82)

If every human being is capable of crime, the search for the suspect or villain is undermined and the stability of the whole investigation therefore threatened. Interestingly, these questions all revolve around the perpetrator, which indicates crime drama's primary fascination with that party of the crime. If *CSI* does not investigate crime within the parameters of conventional crime drama, it might also disregard the perpetrator as its primary site of investigation and instead focus on either the murder itself or the victim whose body sets the investigation in motion in the first place. I will now analyse the scenes in which the body is discovered in order to examine how *CSI* establishes a central focus on the mutilated body of the victim.

#### **4.3 Scenes of the Discovery of the Crime**

There are two ways in which the crime in *CSI* is introduced: either by scenes that depict the perpetration of the crime or by scenes that show the discovery of the crime. Both are used to a similar extent in all three series suggesting that the franchise has no preference for either. Scenes of the discovery of the crime draw heavily on the horror genre as I will show. They usually start with the depiction of an everyday event such as children playing in the park, a couple looking at real estate, the cleaning of a building or another work situation. Several writers have indicated that the depiction of the everyday prior to its disruption through horror is a central motif in the American horror film (Freeland 2000, p. 239; Sobchack 1987), and it is apparent that *CSI* draws on this as well as other aspects of the horror genre.

*Crime Scene Investigation: 'High and Low'* (3.10) offers an average example. Here, the everyday situation is that of two male teenagers roller-skating in a park. Close-ups of their roller-skates are followed by medium shots as one of the teenagers tries another stunt and receives the congratulations of

the other. This scene is suddenly disrupted by a low thud sound which is then followed by a low angle shot from their point of view showing the building with a blurred object falling down. The camera then cuts back to the same medium shot of the boys as the object lands just before them. The medium shot is held for some time, showing their shocked and disgusted reaction. The scene is accompanied by a dance track which is slowly faded out just before the thud sound after which a beeping sound followed by menacing strings are mixed into the soundtrack, emphasising the change of tone from something fun and everyday to something abnormal and terrifying. The scene therefore creates a transition from the everyday to the horror of crime through a carefully composed mix of images and sounds.

This example also highlights that *CSI* draws on the horror genre in its reliance on young adults who discover the bodies. Young adults and teenagers have dominated the slasher film as protagonists, including in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974), *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Jim Gillespie, 1997), *Scream* (Wes Craven, 1996) and *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002). *CSI* makes this indebtedness explicit with intertextual references to the horror genre itself. *Miami*: 'Wet Foot/Dry Foot' (1.3) is an interesting case in point with its direct reference to *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975). The boat scene is set up to mirror the scene in which Police Chief Martin Brody, Quint and Matt Hooper are on the ocean waiting for the shark to attack, drinking beer and throwing chunks of meat into the ocean. Two camera angles are imitated by *Miami*, one framing the fishermen from a relatively low angle as they sit on chairs and drink beer and the reverse medium shot of a man throwing meat into the sea from the position of one of the men (see figures 4.11 and 4.12). *Miami* thus proves to be intertextual in its iconography, setting up a link to the horror genre that can be recognised by the knowledgeable audience.





Figure 4.9: *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975)

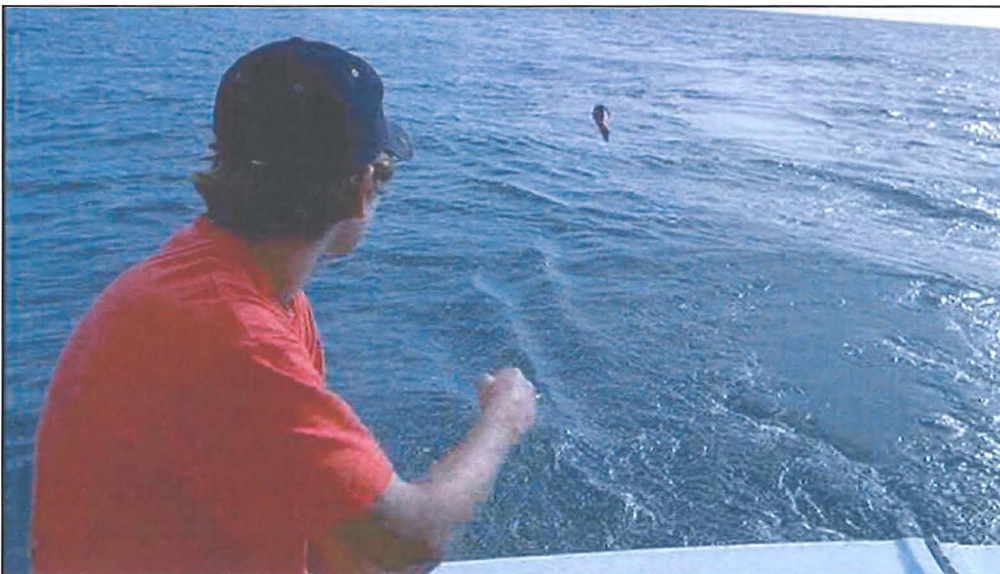


Figure 4.10: A similar frame in 'Wet Foot/Dry Foot'

*CSI* also plays with conventions of the horror genre in scenes in which women discover the body as in *Miami: 'Innocent'* (2.24). The discovery scene here begins with a long shot of a young couple lying on the grass of a park,

kissing, with the beach and sea in the background. While the boy seems desperate to go for more, the girl is evasive which is emphasised by close-ups of her face turning away from the boy's kisses. Suddenly, a mobile phone rings and the camera changes its angle by approximately 90 degrees towards the sea in order to give a long shot with the ringing mobile phone in the foreground and the couple looking towards it in the background. The girl finally gets up, walks towards the phone and crouches down to pick it up. This is shown in a sequence of continuity shots which ends with the same frame as just described with the mobile phone in the foreground and the girl, now in medium shot, picking it up. As she gets back up into a standing position the camera angle changes from grass to eye level, watching the girl looking first at the mobile phone and then at another discovery as her facial expression changes from wonder to shock. A reverse shot gives her point of view with a close-up of the face of a dead woman. This is followed by a reaction shot of the now clearly shocked and horrified girl as she screams 'Oh my god' before the scene finally ends with a long shot from above which depicts both the body and the girl backing away from it.

The horror expressed here bears similarities to the terror of one of the horror genre's central female figures, the woman Clover calls the 'final girl' (1992, p. 35). Clover highlights that the final girl is also gendered masculine in her attempts to fight the monster. However, it is less this aspect than the careful monitoring of the terror and panic of the 'final girl' that is mirrored in *CSI*. Several close-ups of her face convey her gradual development from wonder to shock and horror. Her terror is an expression of the processes of abjection in which the unclean is confronted in order to be finally rendered abject.

The horror film attempts to bring about a confrontation with the abject (the corpse, bodily wastes, the monstrous-feminine) in order finally to eject the abject and redraw the boundaries between the human and

non-human. As a form of modern defilement rite, the horror film attempts to separate out the symbolic order from all that threatens its stability... (Creed 1993, p. 14)

In *CSI* the woman who discovers the body is invested with a similar role as the final girl in horror. Her terror too is carefully monitored by reaction shots and close-ups. The abject that she and, with her, the audience ejects seems to be that of the body which in the moment of discovery is seen 'without God or outside of science' and is therefore 'the utmost abjection' according to Kristeva (1982, p. 4).

In crime drama, the corpse also comes to signify the most heinous of crimes: murder. Kristeva discusses crime and its significance within her theory of abjection and argues that

any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility. (1982, p. 4)

In the opening scenes of *CSI*, it is not clear yet what motivation led to the crime which is central to Kristeva's definition here. This, however, adds to the sense of instability and vulnerability because it draws attention to the fact that murder (and death) happen, that law and order can easily be broken and that it takes effort to restore them. Moreover, as these early scenes focus on the reactions of ordinary people, they stress how easily we – as the 'ordinary' audience – can become involved in crime even if we are not perpetrators or victims, therefore again highlighting the ubiquity of crime. The crime before its investigation remains abject because crime itself disrupts the social order, because the mutilated corpse presents a threat to the identity of those who look at it (the discovering person and the spectator) and because the investigation with its ordering discourses of science and law and order has not yet begun. The



discovering woman therefore is faced with two abjects: the corpse and the crime. As the scenes of the discovery of the crime are so central to *CSI*'s capability to render both the body and the crime abject, women's abject terror is portrayed even in cases when it happens off-screen. In *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Table Stakes' (1.15), for example, the discovery of the crime is announced by a woman screaming off-screen.

When men discover the body, the body of the victim is portrayed in ways that highlight its abject qualities. While in *Miami*: 'Innocent' the woman had to be presumed dead because of her inanimateness and the shocked reaction of the discovering woman, bodies found by men are often either extremely bloody, crawling with insects or badly mutilated. In *Miami*: 'Hard Time' (2.3), the attempted murder of a woman is discovered by a man who finds maggots in the shield of his ceiling lamp. The shots of his discovery move from medium shots to close-up and extreme close-up which are rapidly edited in order to give a greater sense of the crawling of the maggots. Here the body itself has to evoke the horror in order to enable the processes of abjection which in cases where a woman finds a body is expressed in her abject terror. In both cases, when a man or when a woman discovers the crime, the franchise highlights the horror of the mutilated body with the help of conventions borrowed from the horror genre. As a consequence, *CSI* also has the capability to move the viewer's body in ways similar to 'gore'. With its extreme focus on the mutilations of the body in scenes in which men discover the body, *CSI* copies the slasher film in its use of 'close-ups (of wound, weapons) and the literal spectacle of the body in bits and pieces (dismembered limbs, exposed viscera)' (Pinedo 1997, p. 62). In the British context, the continuity announcements with their warnings of *CSI*'s horrifying scenes can create a sense of expectation and hope for these reactions and therefore create an environment in which the horror of the body is particularly effective. The horror created by the corpse, then, is not just

something to be observed, it is something that might affect the spectator's body.<sup>32</sup> The next section will examine if the same effect is achieved in scenes which depict the perpetration of the crime.

#### **4.4 Scenes Depicting the Crime**

Scenes showing the crime also set up situations of the everyday, therefore again drawing on horror: couples in restaurants, individuals at work, people having a take away coffee, looking at photographs or posting a letter. All scenes that depict the crime avoid images of the perpetrator.<sup>33</sup> In *Crime Scene Investigation* '35K O.B.O.' (1.18), for example, the camera stays mainly on the couple who will become victims of a double murder as they walk towards their car, using pans, close-ups and reaction shots as well as minimal lighting in order to hide the perpetrator. At the same time, however, the presence of a threatening force is hinted at by point of view shots which are combined with breathing sounds, another convention borrowed from horror (Freeland 2000, pp. 161-190; Pinedo 1997, p. 51). A similar effect is achieved by close-ups on someone who looks scared. Pinedo introduces the term 'solitary reaction shot' to describe such shots and argues, 'what is unsettling about this convention is that it subverts rationality by reversing cause and effect. We see the effect (the incredulous stare of the victim) without seeing the cause (the monster)' (1997, p. 52). *Miami*: 'Death Grip' (2.4) is a case in point. Here, an abduction scene ends with a close-up of the girl as her eyes widen in fear but she is stopped from

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<sup>32</sup> Similar affective experiences can be found in recent horror films such as *Saw III* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2006) which caused several viewers to faint (The Guardian, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006). While such films revolve around these 'pleasures' for their own sake, *CSI* potentially uses the affective experience to create a particular effect in viewers. This will be explored in more detail below, p. 228ff. I will here not investigate the affective quality of the horror films further.

<sup>33</sup> *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Killer' (6.15) is the first and so far (October 2006) the only episode that gives us the identity of the perpetrator at an early stage.

screaming by a muffling hand over her mouth. The abductor remains invisible throughout this scene, creating a sense of suspense which continues into the next scene.

Suspense is also generated by obscuring the image with objects that are placed before the centre of focus. This is perhaps used to its best effect in *Miami*: 'Deadline' (2.19) in which a man is shot in a run-down housing estate in front of a journalist. Throughout the scene, as the two men walk up flights of stairs inside the house, the camera rarely picks up their faces. In close-ups, an object, which is out of focus and therefore leaves part of the image blurred, is usually placed between the camera and the two men. Additionally, a hand-held camera effect destabilises the point of focus, demanding a continuous reordering of the image. This creates a sense of instability and danger which in this scene is also conveyed by one of the men nervously glancing over his shoulder and asking his friend if 'it is safe'. Suspense, then, lies at the heart of the scene leading up to the crime which means that although borrowing conventions from horror, *CSI* here also follows the genre of the thriller in which the threat of violence is constant as Todorov points out (1977, pp. 47-48). This positions the spectator on the side of the victim whose safety is under threat and for whom we feel suspense. Consequently in this scene the crime itself constitutes the disruption rather than the victim's body.

More often than not, however, the crime is not actually shown. The examination of an average example indicates the central strategy used to avoid showing the murder, namely by focusing on a second person in the moment of the murder. In *Miami*: 'Evidence of Things Unseen' (1.16), the scene of a murder of a Russian immigrant starts with a pan from left to right over peep show dancers, crosscut with a pan into the other direction over peep show viewers. It then cuts to the scene in one booth where we see a viewer in close-up and, in reverse shot, the dancer of that booth. The casting of Pavel Lynchnikoff as the

Russian viewer is interesting here as it seems motivated by notions of the stereotypical features of a Russian man with a relatively long face, high cheekbones and a broad, slightly crooked nose. This is the only scene in which the immigrant is alive and also one of the very few that focuses on his face rather than his mutilated body. As a consequence, his rather stereotypical features are part of the visual code of the image that allows for a quick recognition of characteristics, his Russian descent, which will later be read within the text by the investigators. By giving these visual clues that are based on stereotype, therefore, *CSI* is able to establish a parallel between the evidence reading investigator and the image reading audience.

The scene continues with the shutter of the peep show going down, before again cutting to close-ups of the peep show dancer, the Russian viewer and coins being inserted in a slot. When the shutter goes up for the third time, the camera offers a medium shot of the dancer through the glass. She hesitates and then starts to scream. By focusing on her, the scene avoids showing the actual murder. Her image is, however, at first blurred by a focus on a red patch on the right. A reverse shot confirms that this is indeed the blood of the immigrant that has splashed onto the dividing glass screen. His face is pushed against the screen behind the blood spatter which blocks out the view onto his features which are hardly visible in the first place because of the use of low key lighting. Two reverse shots, first a close-up and then a quickly edited extreme close-up of the screaming peep show dancer finish the scene. Again, the emphasis is put on the blood which highlights the decay of the corpse (see figure 4.13). Lucas suggests that '[blood] functions as a potential trace of meaning in the Derridian sense; ... It sounds a visceral and urgent call for the acculturating leap into language – an urgent desire for the language of analysis, detection, explanation' (2004, p. 216). The excessive emphasis on blood in *CSI*, therefore, also establishes the detective narrative as central meaning-giver. Apart from the



**Figure 4.11: Emphasis on the object in 'Evidence of Things Unseen'**

emphasis on the blood, the scene also provides another example of the abject terror of a woman who survives – the 'surviving woman' – which is shown to be just as central to the scene of the crime as it is to the scene of the discovery of the crime.

*CSI* even uses her abject terror as a central part of the story of the crime in episodes in which the woman does not survive. *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Stalker' (2.19) functions as a particularly good example. The episode focuses on the stalking and murder of Jane Galloway. The teaser starts with shots of the strip at night and a telephone ringing, an answering machine answers with a mechanical voice. Just before the beeps, there is a flashback to a close-up of the answering machine. The camera pans to the right where Jane Galloway is crouched on the floor, her back against the wall, baseball bat in hand. The house is dark but there is enough light to make visible that she is crying. A man's voice speaks on the answer machine. Jane looks to the left and the camera takes her point of view to show three locks on her front door in a medium shot. When the phone rings again, there is a cut back to a close-up of Jane as she shivers and bites her nails. This time the caller tells her not to bite

her nails, which again evokes the horror film where a similar narrative device was used, amongst others, in the opening scene of *Scream*. Jane then jumps up, jerks the telephone cable out of its box and runs away. This is shown in a series of quick shots with an extreme close-up of the telephone box and a tilting pan following Jane. As there is not enough light to capture all movements the tilting and the quick movement of both the camera and Jane causes the image to be blurred which adds to the creation of suspense.

The camera then follows her into her bedroom where she hides in the closet.<sup>34</sup> There is now a series of point-of-view shots from Jane's perspective. These are partially obscured by the doors of her closet, but also by more rapid pans and hand-held camera effects that highlight her panic and fear. When she relaxes a little with her dog in her arms and moves further back into the closet, a close-up reveals how the undistinguished background suddenly becomes animate and two black forearms and hands grab her and start suffocating her. The camera stays long enough in the close-up of her face to show her eyes widen in fear and capture her scream as it is quickly muffled by her attacker's suffocating hand. The last shot of the scene is a long shot from above of her dog barking and jumping up to the dark figure that has grabbed Jane. Again, the murder happens off-screen when the attacker, as is later revealed, suffocates her with a plastic bag, an object that is not present in this scene.

The off-screen murder is the norm rather than the exception when women or children are the victims. Even in the rare cases when their death is shown onscreen, their death appears to be of a different quality than that of the men. *Miami: 'Kill Zone'* (1.9) functions as a good example with its two male and two female victims. While the first woman dies off-screen, the second woman's

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<sup>34</sup> Again, this seems to be an intertextual reference, this time to *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978). Whereas the closet in *Halloween* offered Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis) some safety and the weapon to fight her attacker off, in 'Stalker' the closet actually holds the danger.

death through a bullet is shown in a medium close-up. All we see of her murder is something hitting her head before she falls to the ground. In comparison, the camera moves closer onto the face of the two men which makes the blood spatter emanating from their wounds visible. Thus, while we see the rupturing of the body's boundaries in the depiction of the men's deaths, this remains invisible in the woman's. As a consequence, her body also appears as less wounded than the male victims'.

In its portrayal of crime, then, *CSI* sets up a difference based on the gender of its victims. Women are usually not shown as they die. When their deaths are depicted, it is usually a death through a clean, i.e. non-bloody, gunshot. This means that women in *CSI* are not invested with a hyper-femininity that, as Jermyn (2004) describes for a series of crime films, would give them the power to disrupt the narrative and create a sense of discomfort in the spectator, urging them to look away. Men's death, in comparison, is shown in its whole abject horror: even if they are shot, the image reveals a blood or brain spatter and they are often framed in order to highlight the gore. Their bleeding corpses bring them into the realm of the feminine which Kristeva (1982, p. 71) associates with the leaking body. In other words, the male body, displayed to show its mutilations, is feminised which highlights its powerlessness and victimisation, a theme, as I will show,<sup>35</sup> that continues throughout the episodes. The depiction of male victims in scenes in which the crime is committed therefore provides an early indication of *CSI*'s struggle to combine the two concepts of masculinity and victimisation, often leading to more conventional versions of 'the powerless victim' (Lamb 1999, p. 7). In the following, I will establish that the initial investigation, however, sets up the victim as an active agent who can contribute to the detection of the crime.

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapters Six and Seven, pp. 237, 292.

#### **4.5 The Investigation of the Crime**

The initial investigation of the crime, contained in the teaser, reveals several differences in the three series, an indication that what changes from series to series is not so much the crimes, but the incentives of the investigation. The overall scene structure, however, remains the same in the three series. The scene usually starts with an establishing long shot of the crime scene and then follows the forensic scientists as they investigate the on-site evidence while a police officer talks them through what has happened and what they know about the victim. It usually ends with a close-up of the main investigator of the series – Gil Grissom in *Crime Scene Investigation*, Horatio Caine in *Miami* and Mac Taylor in *New York* – as they deliver the punchline, the last sentence before the titles. This last sentence, although not always humorous, follows the structure of jokes as Jerry Palmer describes them: ‘all jokes, verbal or visual, have two stages, the preparation stage and the culmination stage’ (1987, p. 40). Furthermore, ‘the distinction between “preparation” and “culmination”, or punch line, ... shows that any expectation that the audience may have is necessarily produced in the text as well as deriving from the “discourse of the social structure”’ (1987, p. 59). Like in a joke, *CSI* prepares the punchline by following a rigid structure that becomes established in the series and presents a ‘culmination’ of the initial investigation scene with the punchline that also sets the tone for the rest of the episode.

Moreover, the punchline derives some of its significance from the fact that this format of preparation and culmination has been established in other crime drama, most notably *Law & Order*. Dick Wolf (2003, p. 18) describes how the punchline delivered by Lennie Briscoe is part of the constants of the series. As such it helps form a particular brand identity for the series which also includes



'Mike Post's unmistakable theme music, the black locale cards with the accompanying "ching-ching," and Steve Zirnkilton's rumbling baritone introduction, "In the criminal justice system..." And each is marked by *Law & Order's* visual tautness and scarcity' (2003, p. 12). By adhering to these characteristics, Wolf points out, the brand identity can easily be transferred to other product – in the case of *Law & Order* to its two spin-offs. *CSI's* teaser with its repetitive structure therefore does not only set up the tone for the episode, it establishes a recognisable brand identity that can be transferred to its own spin-offs. While this suggests that there exist many overlaps between the series, I will in the following analysis focus on the differences between the three dramas.

These are already apparent in the editing devices that mark this scene off from the previous one. *Crime Scene Investigation* uses another flashback to separate the investigation scene from the previous one. It remains within the photography metaphor, putting the stress on the visual and professional investigation through forensic science. With its bright demarcation of the two scenes through the flashback, *Crime Scene Investigation* creates a clear borderline between the everyday and the investigation which suggests that the investigators are distanced from the ordinary world. This is complicated by the two spin-offs. *Miami* uses a slow dissolve to white and therefore evokes the image of the approaching white light – the supposed death experience. This highlights *Miami's* alignment with the victim which marks the whole series. *New York*, finally uses either the dissolve to white, again stressing the experience of the victim, or a continuity cut. This second editing device renders the transition from discovery to investigation nearly invisible, suggesting that the sight of the body is as horrifying for the investigators as it is for the layperson discovering the crime. This emphasises the strain of working with corpses and the effects crime has on the investigators themselves.

After these differences, the establishing shots of the investigation scenes are again remarkably similar. The first shots of the crime scene offer a mise-en-scène that evokes the presence of law and order: the sound of police car sirens, their blinking lights or the yellow crime scene tape suggest that the threat of crime has been contained by the presence of the police and that the investigation has begun. Thus, *CSI* here follows the genre conventions by evoking discourses around law and order as Neale describes is fundamental to the detective genre: '[the] narrative of the detective genre ... directly dramatises the tension inherent in the signifying process through the mobilisation of a series of discourses concerned specifically with the law' (1980, p. 26). The investigation also transforms the abject body into a non-threatening object. Kristeva (1982, p. 4) suggests that within the frameworks and discourses of science and religion, the corpse loses its abject qualities as these discourses fill the corpse with meanings other than that of border between life and death. Discourses of law and order similarly have this potential as they fill the corpse with meanings in relation to crime: a crime has been committed and this body is the victim. They also allow for a reading of the corpse which, as it looks for the symptoms of crime (the round wound of a gunshot, the bloody dent of blunt force trauma), is similar to the medical gaze.

The way the investigators look at the body again differs in the three series and is to a great extent dependent on the main investigator. In *Crime Scene Investigation*, this is clearly Gil Grissom.<sup>36</sup> William Petersen brings an acting history to this role that accentuates the series' depiction of science as lying

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<sup>36</sup> The three series use different forms of address for the characters, depending on who speaks to whom, reflecting the characters' relationships. I will from now on refer to the main characters of the three series by their first name with the exception of the medical examiner and homicide detective in *Crime Scene Investigation*, which I will call, like everyone in the team except Gil, 'Dr. Robbins' and 'Brass' respectively, with the exception of Tim 'Speed' Speedle in *Miami* who is generally known as 'Speed' and with the exception of the medical examiner in *New York* who most people in the series refer to as 'Hawkes' and the detective who is known as 'Flack'.

outside conventional police detection. Petersen is best known to a crime audience for his part as FBI Agent Will Graham in Michael Mann's *Manhunter* (1986), a film in which the focus is on forensic psychology. Graham is a loner, unwilling to return to FBI work because of a troubled past. Rather than offering another model of the 1980s action hero or hard body (Jeffords 1994), Graham is an intellectual who abhors violence and uses his gun only when absolutely necessary. Petersen thus brings to his role a history of portraying pacifism and intellectualism that is mirrored in his *CSI* character.

The scene depicting the investigation of the crime usually starts with him arriving at the crime scene and continues with him looking at evidence with extreme close-ups from his point of view till the moment when he delivers the punchline. This last shot shows him in front of the crime scene which fills the whole background and therefore seems to surround him completely. This is partially the result of the low key lighting of the series which leaves many of the objects in the background obscure, creating a sense of instability. Gil thus seems immersed in a world without stability, a world of crime and victimisation. Indeed, the vulnerability of the investigator is a recurring theme in *Crime Scene Investigation* which begins its series run with the murder of one colleague and continues with attacks on Gil ('Strip Strangler', 1.23), Nick ('Stalker', 2.19) and Catherine ('A Little Murder', 3.4).

The punchline, however, creates a distance to this world of crime. *Crime Scene Investigation*'s teaser usually ends with a humorous sentence which offers the speaker and the listener relief from the horror of the murder and creates a distance that can re-establish the boundaries between the observing scientist and his<sup>37</sup> object. In the first season episode 'Sounds of Silence' (1.20), the humour is implied in the delivery – the long pause before the second

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<sup>37</sup> This is indeed a male endeavour (Bronfen 1992).

sentence when Gil states: 'O'Reilley, I wouldn't book those suspects just yet. – I think they ran over a corpse.' – and the only really humorous line is delivered by Catherine in 'Face Lift' (1.17):

**Gil:** I think our robbery suspect just became a homicide victim.

**Catherine:** One way to beat the rap.

In the second season, the punchlines are more explicitly humorous. In 'Primum Non Nocere' (2.16), for example, an episode about a murder during an ice hockey game, Brass concludes: 'Hockey. Rough game.' Gil answers as the camera cuts back to him: 'Yeah. It's murder.' From season three on, *Crime Scene Investigation* increasingly plays with the expectation of the punchline which leads to the titles. In 'Fight Night' (3.7), for example, Gil delivers a punchline in close-up after which the first sounds of the title song, The Who's 'Who Are You?' (1978), are phased in. However, rather than this leading to the full song and the known sequence of images and graphics from the titles, Gil's beeper goes off which necessitates him to look at another crime scene. Only after the investigation of the third crime scene is the normal order – punchline in close-up, title song and title images – restored.

In accordance with the distancing humour of the punchline, the investigation of the body at the crime scene is performed with little empathy for the victim. Rather, the corpse is an object of scientific study and is discussed in terms of its relevance as evidence. This is reflected in the use of the camera which lingers on the wounds of the body rather than the markers of the victim's individuality such as his or her face. In 'Sounds of Silence' (1.20), for example, Sara, Warrick and Gil discuss the meaning of two sets of tyre prints on the victim's chest of which there are several close-ups while his face is only shown briefly. As a consequence, the victim's person is hardly acknowledged and his (or her in other cases) life appears as less important to the investigation than the evidence

his or her body holds. Instead, science becomes the central truth giver and the body, stripped of its individuality, acts only as inanimate evidence. As Boyle and I argue, '*Crime Scene Investigation* visually underlines the scientists' objective distance and the victim's object-status' (forthcoming).

Despite this, however, *Crime Scene Investigation* highlights the importance of the body in its storyline by suggesting that the investigators enter into a dialogue with it. This is already evident in the 'Pilot' episode (1.1) which starts with the apparent suicide of a middle-aged man. When Gil approaches the body, the camera looks at him from the bathtub. Part of a textile hangs over the rim, framing the bottom of the shot. The camera here seems to take the point of view of the victim who appears to watch Gil. Gil himself is shown in several close-ups as he looks at the body which is intercut with medium shots of the body from behind his head. This shot pattern resembles the shot reverse-shot convention for dialogue in film and television which suggests that the body, despite being silent, enters into a dialogue with the investigator. This also underlies several episodes in which the 'talking' body is made subject of a conversation as in 'Cool Change' (1.2):

**Police detective:** Do you want to talk to her [the victim's girlfriend]?

**Gil:** Not yet. Right now, I want to talk to him [the victim].

**Police detective:** How do you talk to a dead body?

**Gil:** I let him talk to me, actually.

This 'listening to the victim' is, however, conducted by looking at the body. In the teaser, vision is given predominance over the other senses, suggesting that the series' evidence lies indeed in its visuality (Gever 2005). However, as Gil's growing deafness indicates (he is able to 'hear' people speak by lip-reading) this visibility might only be a translation of something that is normally perceived as sound. Thus, looking at the victim can really be listening to him or her. Despite

relegating the victim to the status of evidence, then, *Crime Scene Investigation* still sees the victim's body as more important than other, and in particular verbal evidence,<sup>38</sup> therefore allowing the victim to take the central place in the investigation of crime.

In *Miami*, the victim is central both as prime site of investigation and as the person that the narrative revolves around. This is largely due to the medical examiner, Alexx Woods, who is characterised as caring and nurturing. Unlike in *Crime Scene Investigation* where the medical examiner is marginal in this initial investigation scene, Alexx plays an important part in *Miami*, suggesting that it is primarily the victim rather than the whole crime scene which is the focus of the investigation. Moreover, Alexx expresses her empathy with the victims directly and thus highlights the loss of a human being that the victim's death represents. A good example is 'Grand Prix' (2.7): while Horatio interviews the on-site doctor about what he knows, she examines the body of a racing crew member. Horatio comments on the fact that Grand Prix cars use methanol rather than 'gasoline' in order to make the driving safer. Alexx is subsequently shown in a close-up, crouching over the body which is at the bottom of the frame, turning towards him and saying: 'Wasn't any safer for you, was it, sweetheart?' Her comment and the framing establish her as a maternal figure, physically close to the dead and caring for them as if they were still alive. In addition, Alexx influences quite literally the perspective of the investigation as she provides most of the point-of-view shots on the face of the victim. In 'Grand Prix', there is a close-up of the victim's face which is then followed by a close-up of Alexx looking at it, establishing the previous shot as her point of view. Her look acknowledges the individual rather than seeing it as 'just another body' which mirrors Jane Tennison's ability to see the victim properly for the first time in an investigation

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<sup>38</sup> This will become very evident in Chapter Five.

that she has taken over from a male colleague. Jermyn argues that '[looking] is inscribed as an empowering act for men who can withhold or grant the gaze and the recognition it carries, on women. ...it is ... a system of looks that is ... embedded in gender and power' (2003b, p. 56). The woman's look, however, can subvert this gendered hierarchy of power. As Thornham (2003, p. 84) points out, it is also opposed to the objectifying look of the male police officers. Similarly, by looking at the faces of the victims, Alexx acknowledges their individuality and their life story while examining their bodies.

Alexx's gaze, however, is not solely of a caring nature; it is also medical. As the medical examiner she looks at the bodies of crime victims in order to give a diagnosis. As the gaze of science is traditionally perceived as masculine while its subject is constructed feminine (Jacobus *et al.* 1990, p. 6), there must necessarily exist a tension between the possessing gaze of the scientist and the recognition of the feminine subject. Alexx manages to overcome this tension by suggesting that the medical gaze need not be objective and rational, that indeed the medical gaze does not exclude subjectivity and emotions. Alexx's gaze, therefore, is both medical and empathetic, able to both establish a diagnosis and to feel for the victim.

Alexx's presence in the teaser generally allows for a strong expression of emotions. In 'Slow Burn' (2.14), which offers a good example, she investigates a body in the everglades with Eric and becomes trapped in a fire. Once again, her face is shown in several close-ups, highlighting the emotional impact of the events on her. In comparison, Eric is shown in only one close-up when he discovers a puma in the reeds. The shot is mainly motivated by the dialogue (he warns Alexx of the danger of the puma). Alexx's close-ups, in contrast, do not follow the pattern of shot reverse-shot of a dialogue but are clearly reaction shots to the dangers faced by both Alexx and Eric. This is particularly apparent in the long take of her turning slowly around to see the puma herself which

emphasises the fear on her face. The camera's dwelling on her face indicates how much *Miami* relies on the female investigators for the emotional and empathetic approach in the investigation of crime.

While Alexx is the character most strongly coded as caring and empathetic, the female police detectives similarly participate in the creation of empathy. Unlike more conventional crime drama which tends to focus on male cops, *Miami* includes as many regular female as male detectives (two). The female detectives, however, appear more often than their male counterparts. Furthermore, both are from the Latin-American community of Miami, aligning them with a group that the series represents as underprivileged in several episodes.<sup>39</sup> *Miami* therefore presents a workforce that prefers female to male detectives and therefore a less chauvinist approach to law and order than conventional crime drama – an approach which is not based on the competition between masculinities. Rather, it aligns itself with those not normally privileged by law and order, namely women and ethnic minority groups, an aspect that it shares with other crime fiction with female protagonists (Walton and Jones 1999).

By focusing on female characters, then, *Miami* is able to put the stress of the investigation on empathy and a more feminine approach to law and order. The punchline also works towards this even though it is, like in *Crime Scene Investigation*, usually delivered by a man. Here it is Horatio who is normally shown in close-up, often before a blue sky, as he puts his sunglasses on. The episode that highlights the empathetic approach most emphatically is 'Innocent' (2.24) in which the body of a porn star is discovered. While several male police officers guard and look at the body of the woman because they know her as a porn star, their gaze still objectifying her body, Horatio is shown to care for her

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<sup>39</sup> I will discuss the representation of the Latin-American community as underprivileged in Chapter Six, p. 302.



as a human being when he says: 'She is also somebody's daughter and *that* is what we'll focus on' (emphasis in original). The punchline is delivered in a close-up of Horatio crouching over the girl's face, so that her face is in the same frame as Horatio's, emphasising his closeness to the victim which, Laura Mulvey's work (1975, p.13) suggests, works against the objectification of the woman.

The casting of David Caruso as Horatio Caine adds to the emphasis on the empathetic and the feminine. Caruso's voice is, for a man's, fairly high and soft which gives credibility to his portrayal of the caring, nurturing character who does not seem to be afraid of his feminine side. Caruso is also known to a crime drama audience for his part as Detective John Kelly in *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993-2005), a part to which the break-up of his marriage and his subsequent emotionality were central. Caruso's acting history therefore aligns the character with the strong feminine side which is central to the general feminine perspective of *Miami*.

Horatio is himself characterised as caring and nurturing: after his brother's death, he takes care of the widow and her son. The final scene of episodes often show him looking out for those who are left behind, giving the impression that Horatio is driven by the need to care for those who are easily victimised. Yet during the investigation he is often shown as fulfilling the more traditional masculine role of police detective who chases and shoots criminals. This more aggressive masculinity is, however, justified by his commitment to the cause of the victim. Interestingly, Gil in *Crime Scene Investigation* is similarly characterised by a mixture of traits that have traditionally been considered feminine and masculine respectively. While Gil is a rational scientist who is shown to be emotionally inept in his dealings with his colleague Sara (traits traditionally considered masculine) he is also shown to be a pacifist who does not like carrying a gun, rarely does so, and therefore easily becomes a victim.

A similar mixture also characterises Mac Taylor, the protagonist of *New York*. The loss of his wife seems to drive this character who is consequently extremely dedicated to his position. This tension between personal trauma and duty is mirrored in other characters that star Gary Sinise has played, most of whom were troubled authority figures. Amongst others, he played Forest Gump's captain in *Forest Gump* (Robert Zemeckis, 1994), was the detective-turned-criminal in *Ransom* (Ron Howard, 1996) and played a captain of a mission to Mars trying to find out what happened to an earlier mission during which his wife was killed in *Mission to Mars* (Brian de Palma, 2000).

Similarly important to Mac's character are aspects of the military which Sinise's portrayal evokes by emphasising the sense of duty and problems with the hierarchies of the police. Indeed, this is part of the character's history: Mac used to be in the marines. The military is also evoked by other elements of the text including the title song, The Who's 'Baba O'Riley' (1971), which is edited to include only the lyrics: 'Out here in the fields/ I fight for my meals/ I get my back into my living/ I don't need to fight/ To prove I'm right/ I don't need to be forgiven'. By including the word 'fight' twice and connecting it to the word 'fields' (i.e. battlefields), the song at this point evokes a war-like situation in which the singer is an active participant.

The setting of the third series in a post-9/11 New York further enhances the conflation of military and police by evoking the attacks which American politicians have since interpreted as a declaration of war against America. This setting, however, also allows for another theme to emerge in the series, namely that of mourning. Mac's wife died in the World Trade Center attacks which loom as a recurring theme in the background. This context suggests that his work as forensic scientist allows Mac to cope with his trauma but also highlights the centrality of death and mourning to the city and the work of the investigators. As a consequence, the processes of working within the police and the impact of

death on people who survive is given much greater scope in the storylines than in the rest of the franchise.

This, however, does not mean that the victim is of similar centrality as in *Miami*. On the contrary, they usually remain faceless and marginal to the initial investigation. Their bodies do not appear quite as disruptive in the discovery scenes as in the other series due to the fact that they are less gory and often shown only in medium shots or are partially blurred. This is in line with most other crime drama and suggests that *New York* again moves closer to established conventions. Here, the victims are completely stripped of their individuality and instead appear as blank pages, inscribed only with the most obvious characteristics: their names, their race, their gender, their age and their work.

In *New York*'s investigation scene, the victims' bodies are usually framed through the lens of a diegetic camera, thus separated from the investigator and the viewer through a technological border. 'Creatures of the Night' (1.2) offers a good example. Here, Stella takes photos of the victim at the crime scene. We see Stella in close-ups, but images of the victim are either medium shots of the ambulance or shots that appear to be photographs: close-ups and extreme close-ups of the victim's bruised and bloodied body are stills and are intercut with flashcuts, suggesting they are the developed photographs that Stella is taking. This framing of the body as photographic evidence puts a mechanical device between the victim and the investigators, creating a safe distance for both the investigator and the viewer to look at its horror. The distance to the body is also conveyed through performance: rather than crouching down to look at the body, the investigators remain standing over it, with medium shots and close-ups creating no physical connection between the investigators and the corpse.

As a consequence, the body of the victim appears as less central not only to the series' narrative but also to the investigation. While the empathetic approach of *Miami* meant that the victim was placed at the centre of the investigation from the beginning and the scientific approach in *Crime Scene Investigation* gave the victim's body the status of important evidence, in *New York* the body only plays a part in so far as it signifies that a crime has been committed and as it provides a little information for the investigation that can, however, be read from photographic evidence. This again suggests that *New York* follows the more established conventions of crime drama where the body of the victim remains in the background of the investigation. This emphasis is also carried by the punchline which usually has something to do with the investigation of the crime. In 'Creatures of the Night' (1.2), Mac comments to Stella on the crime scene: 'Looks like we got ourselves an 800 acre crime scene' and in 'A Man a Mile' (1.5), he remarks on their methodology when he answers Danny's question about how people can work underground: 'The same way we will: rock by rock.' Both punchlines put the investigation at the centre of attention. This further emphasises *New York*'s focus on the impact of the work on the investigators which marks the series as fundamentally different from the other two shows of the franchise.

#### **4.6 Conclusions**

This chapter examined the teaser of *CS/* and discussed the implications of its repetitive structure including the opening cityscape shots, the scenes in which the crime is alternately committed or discovered and the initial investigation scene. It emphasised that what changes from series to series is not so much the crimes but the investigation and their incentive. The analysis established that *CS/* highlights discourses of law and order in its mise-en-scène in the initial

investigation scene, suggesting that it follows conventions of the crime drama. The disruption that needs to be worked through with the help of these discourses is, however, alternately presented by the crime or the corpse, highlighting *CSI*'s generic closeness to the horror genre.

All series use stylistic devices borrowed from genres outside television drama, including the music video, tourism guides and horror. The conventions from music video and tourism guides allow for an engagement with the text that revolves around sensory pleasures which foreground *CSI*'s style. *CSI* therefore appears as truly televisual (Caldwell 1995) while also displaying a similar surface engagement with issues like other 'flexi-narratives' as described by Nelson (1997, p. 25). The conventions from the horror genre, however, allow *CSI* to challenge some of the conventions of the crime genre.

First, they suggest the ubiquity of crime and emphasise the social web that connects people to crime even if they are not perpetrators or victims. Crime therefore does not seem to be something that happens between individuals – it is of social significance. Second, the conventions from the horror genre construct the disruption around the corpse of the victim. This puts the victim at the centre of the narrative and marginalises the perpetrator who is normally at the heart of the investigation. In scenes that depict the perpetration of crime, this focus on the victim is conveyed with the help of conventions borrowed from the thriller.

Third, conventions from the horror genre invite an emotional response that is also connected to the movement of the viewer's body (Pinedo 1997). Together with the more sensory address achieved with conventions from the music video and tourism guide and, in Britain, in the context of the continuity announcer's warnings, this subverts the normal hierarchy of engagement of crime drama in which the mind is given precedence over the body. With its

emphasis on gore, the portrayal of the corpse as abject and its textual style, *CSI* also solicits – and in the teaser foremost – the viewer's body.

While the establishing shots and the first scene suggest broad similarities between the series, the investigation scene highlights that differences exist in the franchise. *Crime Scene Investigation* emphasises the distanced approach of science and therefore introduces narratives in its teaser that revolve around the form of the investigation. In contrast, *Miami* focuses on the victims of crime which it approaches with empathy particularly if they are from marginalised groups. *New York*, finally, reverts back to conventions of more traditional crime drama by highlighting the plight of the investigators. At the same time, however, its stories revolve around the theme of mourning. These differences mainly exist in the way the investigations are conducted in the three series which will become more evident in the examination of the story of the investigation which is subject of the next two chapters.

## **Chapter Five: The Story of the Investigation: Interviews and Interrogations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the interview and interrogation scenes of *CSI* and is one of two chapters looking at what Todorov calls 'the story of the investigation' (1977, p. 45). In this chapter, I will argue that *CSI* proves to be fundamentally different from more traditional crime drama as it is sceptical of verbal statements from which other crime drama derive their solution and, with it, their 'truth'. In contrast, the interview and interrogation scenes of *CSI* suggest that this cannot be gained from statements; rather physical evidence appears as the locus of truth. This has important consequences for the conceptualisation of truth. While other crime dramas establish what happened by a search for an inter-subjective consensus (Habermas 1988, pp. 31-33), that is by looking for commonalities in the statements of many people, *CSI* looks for the truth in a world *a priori* (Kant 1966, pp. 21-78), the world outside of us, before human perception and interpretation. Kant argues that this world outside of us is not actually accessible without some frameworks that give sense to it. Our understanding of time and space render the world outside of us comprehensible which would otherwise appear as chaos. Similarly in *CSI*, there are frameworks used to access the world – namely those of science. However, the franchise does not problematise this, rather it suggests that the world is accessible for science to understand and deduct the absolute truth from it.

This chapter will first analyse the use of statements in conventional crime drama by examining the *Law & Order* franchise which broadly follows the conventional set-up of crime drama. This is necessary as interviews and interrogations have yet to be systematically discussed in academic literature about crime fiction even though scholars such as Todorov (1990; 1977) and Walton and Jones (1999) point to the fact that detective stories rely more on knowledge gained from talking than on action.

The second section will give an overview of interviews and interrogations in *CSI* and discuss how the franchise subverts the conventions in order to highlight the futility of statements. I will thirdly examine the only statement that is given some truth value, namely the final interrogation with the perpetrator when guilt is already established. This section will show how the series – because of the different incentives established in Chapter Four – take very different stances towards the last interrogation in which the question of motive plays a central role. Fourth, I will discuss how interviews and interrogations are used in order to test theories developed from evidence, while the fifth section will analyse those scenes in which new evidence is found in the interrogation room. These last two sections of the chapter describe the submission of statements to science and physical evidence which is at the heart of an understanding of a truth that exists outside of language.

## **5.2 Conventions in *Law & Order***

*Law & Order* is, like *CSI*, a franchise consisting of the original *Law & Order* which has been running since 1990, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (since 1999), *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* (since 2001) and *Law & Order: Trial by Jury* (2005-2006). In America, all are shown on NBC. In Britain, *Law & Order* was first screened on BBC1 in the late night schedule in 1991, but left the terrestrial



schedules after only one season. In February 2002, Five brought it into their schedules to complement its already established crime block.<sup>40</sup> Five also acquired *Special Victims Unit* (in July 2003) and *Criminal Intent* (in February 2004) which are now shown in rotation after one of the *CSI* series.<sup>41</sup> *Trial by Jury* has been on ITV3 since 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

The original series of *Law & Order* depicts both the investigation through the police and the court proceedings through the eyes of the district attorneys. While the first part of each episode is primarily concerned with the solution of the whodunit, the second part focuses much more on the moral aspects of the crime with the D.A.s deliberating about the meaning of guilt. This allows the second part to understand guilt in a wider sense and consider other people as suspects. This inclusive concept originally set *Law & Order* apart from its contemporaries such as *Homicide: Life on the Street* but was not used to the same effect for the next two series of the franchise. Both *Special Victims Unit* and *Criminal Intent* feature one rather than three district attorneys, suggesting that the legal processes play only a marginal part in their narratives. Rather, the police investigation plot is moved into the foreground of the narrative. *Trial by Jury*, on the other hand, follows nearly exclusively the court proceedings, shifting the emphasis from the investigation plot to the prosecution plot. This, however, means that it hardly lends itself for a comparison with *CSI* and I will here concentrate on the three other series of the franchise.

While the original *Law & Order* deals mostly with murder investigated by two police detectives and two district attorneys who are supported by their superior officers, *Special Victims Unit* focuses on sex-crimes ranging from rape and

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<sup>40</sup> See Chapter Three, p. 109.

<sup>41</sup> At the end of the survey, March 2005, *Criminal Intent* was shown at 10pm on Saturday after *New York*. Interestingly, Five is not alone with scheduling the two series together. In Germany, the cable channel VOX offers *Criminal Intent* after *Miami* on Monday nights (April 2005).

abuse to sexual murder. The two main characters Detective Elliot Stabler (Christopher Meloni) and Detective Olivia Benson (Mariska Hargitay) are supported by a team of investigative officers. *Criminal Intent*, on the other hand, revolves completely around the two detectives, Robert Goren (Vincent D'Onofrio) and Alexandra Eames (Kathryn Erbe)<sup>42</sup> who, with the help of Goren's encyclopaedic knowledge, solve murders. The series all use a similar lighting and camera style which focuses on overall visibility rather than depth of image, therefore following the realist convention of lighting of American television. All use some handheld cameras particularly during early scenes at the crime scene or interviews with relatives, but revert to a more static camera by the middle of the episode.

These similarities in style are paralleled by commonalities in respect of how the investigation is conducted. Although all series feature some forensic science, the main means of investigation is through interviews and interrogations. Following Dominick *et al.*, I define an interview as 'a structured, non-confrontational process. Fault, accusation and culpability are not at issue' (2004, p. 157). An interrogation, on the other hand, 'adopts a confrontational tenor, becoming accusatory toward the suspect. From that point, the ... investigator's only goal is the suspect's confession and acknowledgement of guilt' (p.158). Interviews are therefore more broadly interested in any form of knowledge the interviewee can provide, while the interrogation is primarily concerned with a confession of guilt.

In the early stages of the investigation, interviews are mostly used to gather knowledge about the victims, their habits and acquaintances. At later stages, interviews are used to reassess statements or information gathered in

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<sup>42</sup> From season five alternating with Detective Mike Logan (Chris Noth) and Detective Carolyn Barek (Annabella Sciorra). At the time of writing (October 2006), this was not available in the UK where Five had just finished screening season three for the first time.

interrogations. While the early interviews are usually not longer than one and a half minutes and often last for less than a minute, later interviews and particularly interrogations can take up to three and a half minutes. The first interview can take place within the space of the first minute, but usually not later than the third minute of the episode, and interviews take up at least 20, but often as much as 32 minutes of a 43-minute episode. This indicates how central interviews and interrogations are to the investigation as they both take up the bulk of the episode's time and are used as one of the first sources of information after the crime has been discovered. It also highlights the emphasis on perpetrators with whom interviews and interrogations take much longer than with relatives and friends of the victim at the beginning. This is also underlined by the fact that most interviews with friends and family are shot in medium shot – largely due to the handheld camera which makes the image too jerky for a close-up – while the interrogations with the suspects include several close-ups, allowing for a closer, scrutinising look onto their faces which might betray emotion.

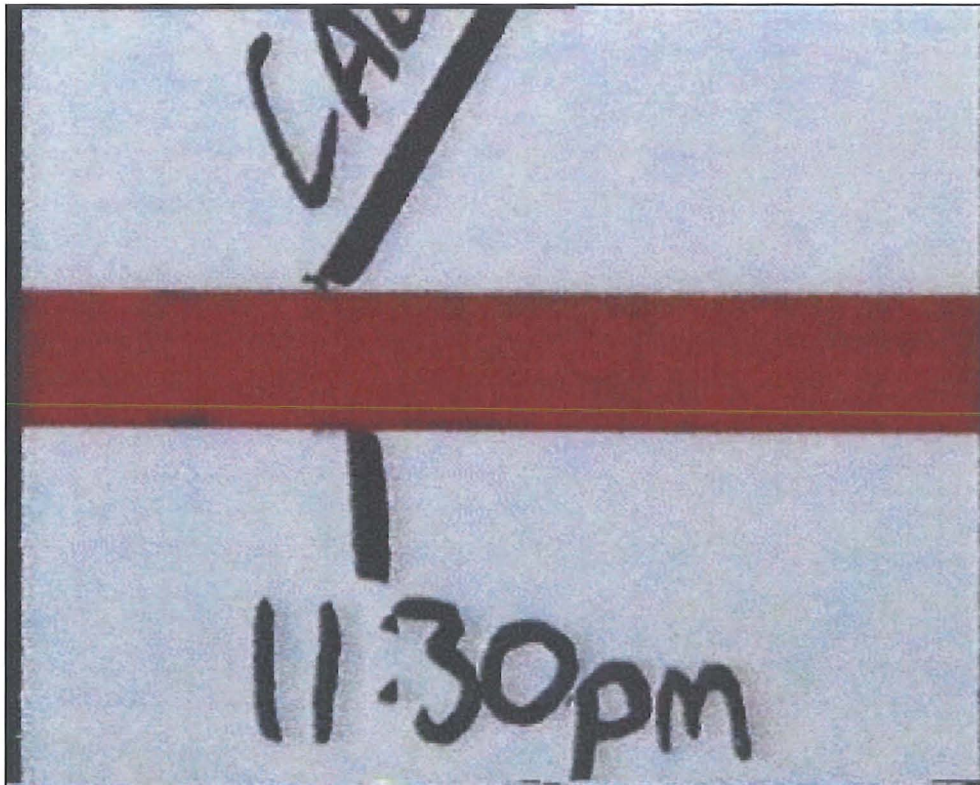
To give an example from an average episode: in *Law & Order*: 'High and Low' (10.22), the first interview takes place two minutes and 21 seconds into the episode. It is with the parents of a murdered college woman and establishes that she used to work part-time in an investment bank. The interview lasts for approximately 50 seconds and then follows the clue of the workplace to the next interview with her alleged boss. When it turns out the woman did not work there and had only applied for a summer placement, the detectives turn to the best friend who tells them she actually worked as a stripper. In the subsequent interviews the detectives follow this lead to the strip club owner who tells them she got breast implants, then the doctor who gave her the breast implants and then the friend who accompanied her to the operation. The succession of interviews is rapid in tempo, none of them lasting for more than a minute, which

is further emphasised by the use of handheld camera giving it a greater sense of urgency and adding to the pace through its jerky pictures. This pace only slows down when the investigators arrest three skinheads and interrogate them one by one. Then, rather than handheld camera, a static camera is used that lingers on the skinheads' faces as they struggle with the decision what to tell in answer to the detectives' questions.

The structure of this episode gives a clear indication that in *Law & Order* one interview leads to the next and eventually to the suspects. By talking first to friends and relatives, the investigators learn about the victim's life and establish what seems to deviate from its ordinariness – in this case the work as a stripper. Each interview offers clues that lead to new interviews and new information. The structure therefore follows the logic of cause and effect in which one interview gives cause for the next interview while at the same time gradually unravelling a story of the victim's life where one event causes the next, basically establishing a timeline. Indeed, in 'High and Low', there is a sense of filling the holes in the puzzle of what the victim did in the time that she kept hidden from her parents. Once the puzzle is completed, the truth can be revealed. This emphasis on establishing a timeline for the victim's life seems to suggest that the victim is relatively central to the investigation. However, she actually remains marginal – there are no flashbacks with or even crime scene photographs of her. The victim is indeed only spoken about, but remains physically absent from the story. Moreover, rather than focusing on what the victim did, the detectives try to establish what other people might have done to the victim, constructing the victim as essentially passive. This is in line with other representations of victims, as Lamb points out, where '[being] victimised... is a diagnosis of sorts' (1999, p. 8).

The importance of timeline for the investigation of a crime in non-forensic crime drama is particularly apparent in the Jerry Bruckheimer-produced *Without*

a *Trace* (CBS, 2002-) where it is the one recurring visual motif of the series (see figure 5.1). The creation of a timeline is what guides the detective through



**Figure 5.1:** The timeline in *Without a Trace*

their interviews. By establishing where the victim was and who he or she met they are able to determine who had the opportunity to kill. For this reason, alibi is a contentious issue in crime dramas like *Law & Order*. A safe alibi instantly proves the innocence of a suspect, while an unsafe alibi which cannot be attested by another witness draws attention to the suspect's potential guilt.

The investigators elicit a confession of guilt through a studied performance towards the suspect. The verbal behaviour of detectives which is often matched by body posture and language is regularly marked as performance in all three series. *Law & Order* often shows the detective partners take on the role of good

cop/bad cop. Detectives Briscoe and Green (Jesse L. Martin)<sup>43</sup> tend to set themselves up in this way (most notably in episodes involving young offenders, as in 'Loco Parentis', 10.10). *Criminal Intent*, too, uses this pattern which here is also structured around the gender binaries (as in 'Jones', 1.5). The performance aspect is particularly highlighted in *Special Victims Unit*: 'Pique' (2.20) in which detective Stabler is sent into an interrogation by a psychologist with the advice that he should let the suspect believe he hates women. Stabler then takes on a persona which revolves around sexist jokes and complaints about women. He thus both talks about women derogatively and speaks the language associated with misogynist behaviour; both content and form are structured by the aim to deceive the suspect who subsequently admits to having killed his ex-employer. Stabler's behaviour is in line with the performance of the other detectives who all aim to bring about momentary lapses where the perpetrators partially and sometimes even fully admit to the murders of which they are accused. This method is, however, only used in interrogations where it is meant to elicit a confession that is otherwise not to be had.

This points to a problem with language in *Law & Order*. Although it relies nearly completely on verbal statements in order to establish the truth, there is a sense that people do not always say the truth or hide something from the detectives. While perpetrators will not confess to their crimes as they do not want to go to jail, witnesses are usually considered to be truthful and represented in ways that suggest their cooperativeness. However, the detectives still have to be able to read between the lines. In *Special Victims Unit*: 'Nocturne' (1.21), for example, the investigators have to infer from the interviews in a neighbourhood that the residents knew of the sexual abuse of boys by their piano teacher though none of the witnesses directly says they did. By being able

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<sup>43</sup> From seasons ten to fourteen.

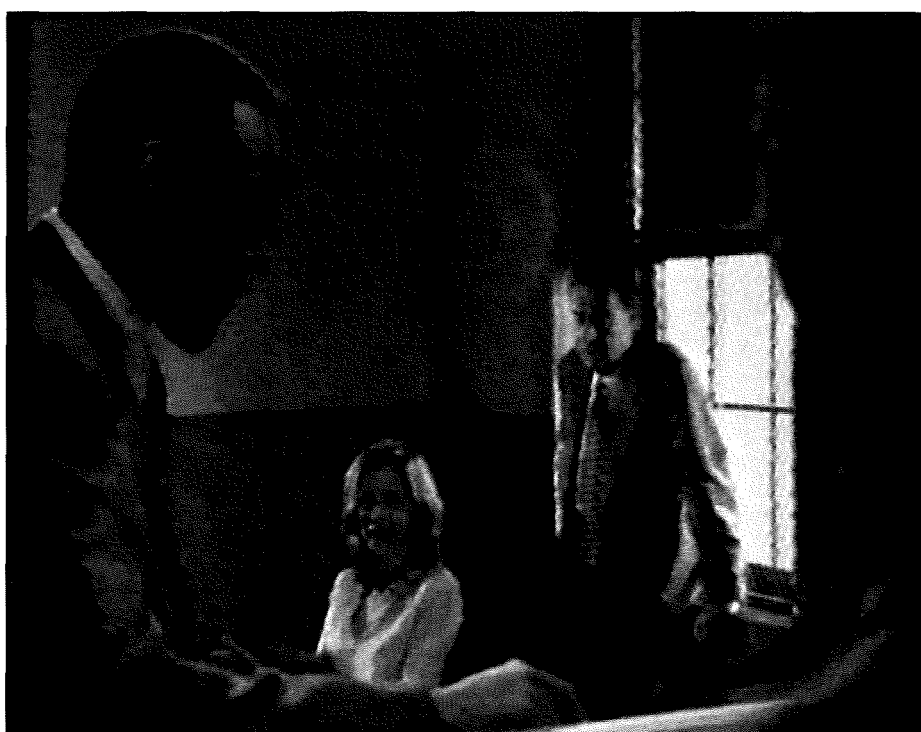
to understand the use of language, listening closely to what and, more importantly, how people say things, the detectives are able to articulate the hidden parts of the witnesses' stories.

In accordance with other crime drama, the detectives reflect on their abilities that help them solve crimes on a regular basis. This renders their abilities visible and allows for the audience to share in their knowledge. In *Special Victims Unit*: 'Slaves' (1.22), detective Stabler points out to his partner that the suspect used the present tense when talking about a victim, suggesting the victim is still alive. The clue that the investigators can follow is here again a verbal one. However, rather than simply believing the truth of the content of a statement and reading between the lines as in an interview, the interrogation relies more on the detectives' ability to understand the form of language, suggesting that detectives do not only have to be good listeners but also good linguists.

In a similar vein, the bodies of suspects are scrutinised in their relation to language by both investigators and the audience who are positioned on the side of the investigators. The visual metaphor that makes this most apparent in the *Law & Order* franchise is the one-sided window. Nearly each episode of the original series includes a scene in which a shot through the one-sided window into the interrogation room is offered. Most of the time, a senior officer and/or a D.A. watches the interrogation which suggests that they are able to gain information that the detective who conducts the interview might not. This information primarily revolves around an understanding of body language: the supervising officer and district attorney are able to see if a suspect is lying or if a suspect is not giving up information because they are able to understand the body language of a suspect.

The scrutiny of the suspect's body is connected to a position of power which is again emphasised by the visuals. The faces of the people watching often reflect lightly in the glass, but not to such an extent that they overlap the image

of the interrogation room (see figure 5.2). This establishes their presence at the same time as their unobstructed and unobserved view into the interrogation room and onto the suspect is shown. As the spectators are positioned with the observer, they share this position of power and are thereby given the same knowledgeable access to the interrogation. Even when the camera moves inside of the interrogation room, the spectator is still in this position of knowledge that allows a deeper scrutiny of both the interrogation process and the bodily reactions to questions. In order to emphasise this, *Law & Order* often bridges the border between the two spaces by placing either one of the detectives leading the interrogation or one of the people observing close to the frame of the window, thereby rendering it less visible (see figure 5.2).



**Figure 5.2: Looking through the one-sided mirror in *Law & Order*. The D.A.'s face is lightly reflected in the glass**

In *Special Victims Unit*, the notion of gaining knowledge by watching the body language of a suspect becomes increasingly apparent with the introduction of Dr. Huang (B.D. Wong). The forensic psychologist monitors interrogations



through the one-sided window in order to advise the detectives on their strategies, but also in order to gain an understanding of the suspect's psyche which he is able to infer from their body language as much as from the things they say. The forensic psychologist functions as a means for *Special Victims Unit* to reflect on the importance of body language to detect if a suspect tells the truth.

As this section has established, the three series of the *Law & Order* franchise ascertain the truth about crime primarily through interviews and interrogations and therefore through verbal testimony which is scrutinised for its truthfulness by an understanding of how verbal and body language work. The emphasis on language to establish guilt goes along with the focus on a timeline and therefore also with a narrativisation of the events leading to murder. As a consequence, the story of the crime follows these two principles: despite the fact that the detectives develop the timeline discontinuously, what they do establish is a continuous line of events that lead from one to the other. They thus uncover a causal model of the story of the crime where one event leads to another both in terms of effect and in terms of time. The story of the crime is therefore a story that follows the principles of beginning, middle and end and even Todorov's ideal narrative (1977, p. 111) in which an equilibrium is disrupted and needs to be re-established.

### **5.3 The Crisis in Language**

In *CSI*, interviews and interrogations also occupy a part of the series' time. There is, however, a material difference to a series such as *Law & Order*, a difference that is made explicit in the second episode of *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Cool Change'. In an interview with a suspect, Gil stresses the forensic science's distinction from conventional police detection:

We're not detectives, we're crime scene analysts. We are trained to *ignore verbal accounts* and rely instead on the evidence the scene sets before us. (emphasis added)

Interviews, then, do not appear as the locus of truth precisely because the investigators are not police detectives. Instead, their work is based on another premise, namely that physical evidence and in particular the body can convey what really happened. This is stressed by Jermyn who argues that '[in] the ...opening episode [of *Crime Scene Investigation*], from hair follicles to fingerprints, from toenail cuttings to the size of a bullet wound, the body is quickly established as a key channel through which evidence, and thus the truth, can be reached' (forthcoming).

As a consequence, interviews are of secondary importance and this is mirrored in the comparatively small amount of screen time given to them. The amount of time spent on interviews and interrogations fluctuates from episode to episode but usually remains under 20 minutes. In the first seasons of all three series, there are episodes that include as little as three to five minutes of interview and interrogation time, but the more usual scenario is around twelve minutes. This is less than half of the time *Law & Order* usually spends on interviews.<sup>44</sup> Unlike *Law & Order* which has episodes in which the first interview takes place in the first minute, *CSI* does not usually include a first interview until at least five minutes into the episode. In these five minutes, the investigators gather evidence from the crime scene and interpret the crime scene for the first time, thus offering a first scenario of what happened even before they have spoken to any of the witnesses. To demonstrate this with an average example: in *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Boom' (1.13), the whole team are shown investigating the crime scene and discussing the origin of the explosion,

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<sup>44</sup> See above, p. 166.

demonstrating the deduction process whereby the truth is gained from evidence. The scene is shot in several long and medium shots which are intercut with close-ups and extreme close-ups of evidence, emphasising the material importance of physical evidence to the investigation plot. Gil eventually talks to a witness, only to return to his team who are still collecting evidence and to deride the witness as a 'live one' (that is as crazy). His comment emphasises that the interview was of no importance to Gil, while the move back to the evidence collecting team suggests that interviews also have little impact on the advancement of the investigation narrative. This is in stark contrast to *Law & Order* in which interviews are the only means to push both the investigation and the crime narrative forward.

The subordinated status of interview and interrogation scenes is highlighted by a minimum of technical effort in their imagery. Although *CS/* continues to use the elaborate visual style which revels on sharp contrast, complex lighting schemes and colour coding, the interview and interrogation scenes are nowhere as technically advanced and lavish as the scenes depicting the investigation of physical evidence.<sup>45</sup> Most of the interrogation and interview scenes are shot in the established shot-reverse-shot pattern with cuts usually motivated by a change of speaker or in order to show the reaction of the non-speaker. Both the investigators and interviewees are usually framed at the centre of close-ups or medium shots, with interviews often shot over the shoulder of a listener while interrogations tend to establish no connection between interviewee and interrogator.

The marginality of these scenes, indicated by the less elaborate style, is also conveyed by a disregard of what is said in these scenes, as the above example of 'Boom' demonstrates. This is further reflected in the scenes with

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<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the visuals used in scenes depicting the investigation and analysis of physical evidence see Chapter Six, p. 216ff. Also compare Lury (2005, pp. 44-56).

non-English speakers in which there is no attempt made to render the language of the speaker comprehensible. In *Miami*, both the investigators and the suspects often speak Spanish which is sometimes not translated either by subtitles or through a re-articulation by the bilingual speaker. Although these scenes can primarily be found in *Miami* where the Latin-American community provides the appropriate background, they also occur in *Crime Scene Investigation*.<sup>46</sup>

The lower status of interviews and interrogations is largely due to the fact that statements in general are considered unreliable in *CSI*. In *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'And Then There were None' (2.9), this is exemplified by a series of early interviews with witnesses at a crime scene, each witness naming a different number of perpetrators that they have seen. The interview series is rapidly edited together, each intercut with reconstructions showing the amount of perpetrators that the witness believes to have seen. The quick succession of interviews allows for the information to be compared which highlights how far the statements differ from each other and of how little use they consequently must be. This is further emphasised through images of Brass's face who looks exasperated as he takes the interviews. The episode clearly illustrates how unreliable statements are to record the truth even when the witnesses do their best to help. This is made explicit in another episode of *Crime Scene Investigation* ('Too Tough to Die', 1.6) where Warrick says after the discovery that the statement of an eyewitness of a shooting is partially fabricated: 'So she just filled in what she thought happened. Typical eyewitness.' The problem, therefore, lies not so much with witnesses and suspects trying to hide their involvement in a crime but more generally in the act of witnessing itself: as it is

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<sup>46</sup> Most notably in 'Snakes' (5.12) where Nick spends whole scenes speaking only Spanish with his suspect.

subjective, it will always be incomplete for which it will try to compensate with assumptions rather than knowledge of what happened.

CSI's suspicion of and its attribution of a lesser status to interviews and interrogations are made explicit in the pilot episode of each series. In *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Pilot'* (1.1), the first interview takes place in the house of the bereaved mother. Gil presents the evidence of the taped suicide note that was left at a crime scene. Once the mother has listened to the tape, she tells Gil that the voice on it is not her son's. Though this would be crucial evidence in other crime drama such as *Law & Order* which would then try to establish whose voice it might have been and if there have been other murders, 'Pilot' does not follow this clue at all and literally ignores the information the mother has given. This information is only followed up upon in a later episode, 'Anonymous' (1.8), where the investigators compare the tape with another audio recording of the son's voice which reveals that the mother was indeed wrong: this was the son's voice, thereby highlighting that even a mother's statement cannot be relied upon.

*Miami's* first episode ('Golden Parachute') also suggests that interviews are in general insignificant to the development of the investigation plot. Here, evidence spotted by the investigators is given priority. The first interview is with a fisherman who witnessed a plane crash. The interview is conducted by a police detective and none of the main characters of the forensic team is involved. Instead, Megan and Speed watch from afar as the interview takes place at the crash site. The sound of the interview is turned down while the dialogue between Megan and Speed is phased in as they discuss the different items the fisherman used for his alleged fishing. Indeed, they soon conclude that he was actually poaching alligators. Thus, the investigator's trained eye is able to spot other crimes where the police detective can only take a statement. At the same time, the uncovering of illegal activity makes the witness suspect in both

meanings of the word: not only the suspect of a crime, but also dubious as a reliable witness – he might have something to hide himself. The visual clues which are interpreted by the investigators, therefore, mark the witness's account itself as problematic as it highlights the general suspicion that underlies *CSI* that statements cannot be disinterested and are thus usually manipulated to at least some extent.

Finally, the first interview in *New York*'s episode 'Blink' (1.1) again does not lead to information that the investigators use in any way. Echoing more conventional crime drama, Mac asks the husband of a victim found by the river when he last saw his wife. The answer – before she drove off in a taxi – could in conventional crime drama be used to establish timeline. The next step here would be to try to establish who drove the wife and conduct an interview with the driver. However, 'Blink' offers no such development. After taking this statement, Mac and Stella return to another body which was found at a similar place with the same bruises and investigate the evidence on and inside this body in an effort to understand how the two women were murdered and who might therefore be the killer. The time of death is similarly established by a return to the body rather than by filling the holes in a timeline of the victim's life. This rejection of an attempt to establish a complete timeline suggests that *CSI* is not interested in telling the story of the crime continuously. By returning to the body, the investigators determine *how* somebody was murdered *when* rather than *who* had the opportunity *when* to murder someone. As a consequence, rather than being driven by the quest for the perpetrator, the investigation narrative focuses on the victims which, I suggested in Chapter Three,<sup>47</sup> is one of the implications of the shift towards forensic science.

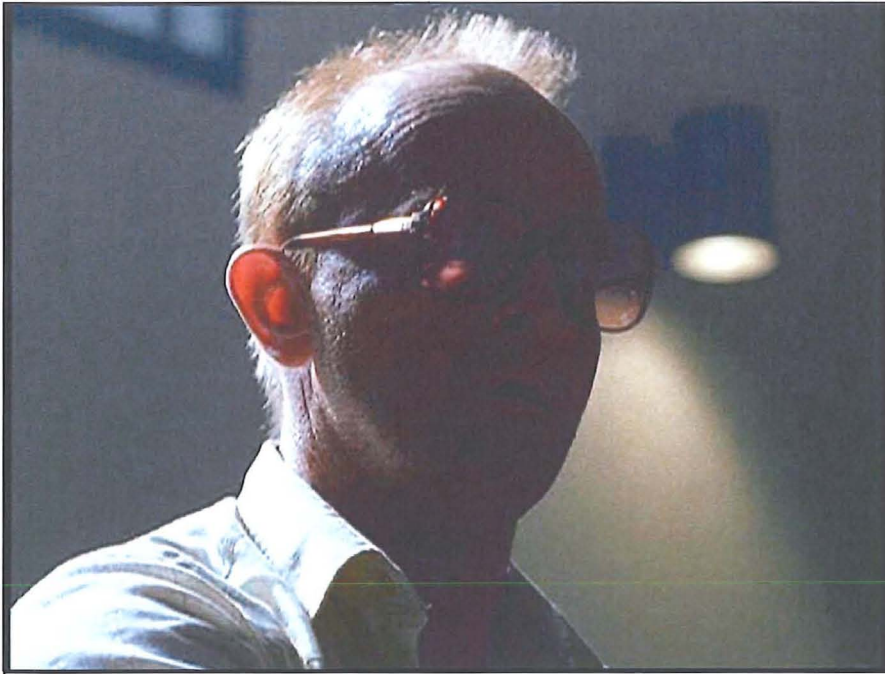
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<sup>47</sup> See p. 108.

In general, then, statements of witnesses and perpetrators are ignored because there is a strong sense that they are unreliable; and the visual coding of the scenes often accentuates this. Where *Law & Order* uses a realist lighting style, *CSI* is deliberately expressive. Gever suggests that this style is largely dependent on its particular narrative set-up – for example, ‘the show’s Las Vegas setting provides a rationale for lots of neon glitter’ (2005, p. 449) – but that it also transgresses the televisuality described by Caldwell (1995) as it merges the machinery of the police with its particular style. Thus ‘[in] *CSI*, ..., televisual style reiterates and reinforces technologies of the social machine’ (Gever 2005, p. 450). This becomes most marked in the scenes that depict the analysis of physical evidence but is notable in the interview and interrogation scenes too. Extreme close-ups of the interviewee’s body often highlight the investigative look that scrutinises the suspect’s body for physical evidence.

However, *CSI* goes beyond this by using the camera for particular narrative purposes. A suspect’s face is usually only half lit, leaving the other half in dark shadow. Rather than marking straightforward guilt, the lighting suggests that the person hides something. In the second episode of *Crime Scene Investigation*: ‘Cool Change’, for example, a suspect’s face is completely in shade until he confesses to having attempted suicide. Despite the light remaining relatively low on his face, his features are now visible, indicating that he has come out of the darkness and has told them his secret (see figures 5.3 and 5.4).

The shade on the face of an interviewee is also used in connection with people who may not be the murderers but remain suspicious. In *Miami*: ‘Broken’ (1.6), for example, a man with a prior charge of sexually attacking a child is interviewed by Horatio in the interrogation room. At some points his face is in complete shadow as the camera takes a long shot of him in profile, with the light source behind him. The man states that the prior charge was made up but doubts remain about his credibility as it is unclear what he was doing at a



**Figure 5.3: The man's face before...**



**Figure 5.4: ... and after he confesses his secret in 'Cool Change'**

children's playhouse. Thus, on an explicit level the text itself leaves the question open whether the man is guilty or not, while the lighting suggests on an implicit level that he should not be trusted.



A device used to suggest guilt is the extreme close-up of a suspect's face. A particularly good example is given in *Crime Scene Investigation: 'After the Show'* (4.8) where a suspect in a rape and murder case is continuously framed in extreme close-ups, beginning with the scene in which he places the phone call to the police, more or less confessing to the murder, and continuing in later scenes when Catherine interrogates him. The extreme close-up of someone's face places the spectator uncomfortably close to the person, not allowing for a scrutiny of the whole face, but instead emphasising particular aspects of the face, most often the eyes or mouth. Hallam (2005, p. 128) discusses this device in respect of *Trial and Retribution* and suggests that it highlights the investigators' inability to read the body language of the perpetrator which plays into this episode too: Catherine and Gil are here criticised by Sara for allowing the perpetrator to lead them on a wild goose chase because they believe they can gain information from him by talking to him and watching him. The extreme close-up therefore highlights that the truth cannot be gained from listening to and watching a suspect. At the same time, both the extreme close-up and the use of shadow on someone's face help to position the spectators emotionally against the characters and therefore create mistrust towards their statements. The spectator is consequently aligned with the similarly suspicious investigators.

Coding devices are also used in the framing of the tragically guilty. In *Miami: 'Ashes to Ashes'* (1.5), a mother confesses to having killed a priest because she wanted to protect her son from going to prison. He had killed his father in order to protect the mother from being battered to death. The scene takes place in the interrogation room with Megan and Adell present. Adell fills up a glass of water for the woman which indicates her feelings of care towards the woman. Megan sits opposite of the woman and tells her what she knows which is shown in a bleached-out reconstruction of events through her point of view. The woman begins to cry and confesses. From this point on, the camera remains primarily in

medium shots, with long takes highlighting the credibility of her statement. At last, the camera moves up into a high angle which shows the three women as islands: the woman sits, her arms next to her body, crying; Megan, though leaning partially over the table, cannot reach her and has to retreat; and Adell stands at the window, looking out. This shot emphasises the tragedy of the situation as it highlights the women's inability to reach each other. At the same time the camera seems to retreat out of respect for the complexity of the situation which led to the killing of two men. Here, the camera and the sad music that accompanies the last images align the spectators with the woman's tragedy, therefore predisposing them towards her.

This gives an indication of the major difference between *Law & Order* and *CSI*: where *Law & Order* needs interviews and interrogations in order to gather information about the crime and the lives of both perpetrators and victims, *CSI* uses these scenes to allow the spectator to engage with suspects and perpetrators, therefore creating the space to morally judge their behaviour. This moral judgement is, however, largely determined by the coding of the images and the music which highlights the innocence or guilt of a suspect.

There is, however, also something else at stake: by suggesting that there is no verbal account of what happened that can reveal the truth, truth itself is rescued as something beyond the individual and thus beyond subjectivity or even inter-subjectivity (Habermas 1988, p. 31-33). While *Law & Order* has to establish the truth from the contributions of several individuals and therefore constructs a narrative of truth based on an inter-subjective consensus, *CSI* rejects this completely. Truth in *CSI* is located with the physical evidence which belongs to the world 'out there', the world '*a priori*' as Kant calls it (1966, p. 21-78). Later sections will show how exactly truth relates to the world *a priori*; here it is enough to point out that *CSI* bases its whole philosophy on a very positivist view of the world. Describing the philosophy of Auguste Comte, Hans Joachim

Störig summarises the basic principle of positivism as to 'start with the given, the factual, the "positive" and to discredit all exploration and questions which go beyond this as useless. What is, however, given to us alone as "positive fact"? The phenomena!' (1999, p. 534).<sup>48</sup> Thus, positivist thought fundamentally revolves around observable fact which is manifested in matter. Although positivism as a school of philosophy is historically grounded in the particular experience of the Victorian age, it has survived in the philosophy of Marx and the political manifestations of European social-democratic movements (Störig 1999, pp. 559-570). With the emphasis on the body as the matter which holds all knowledge about crime, *CSI* seems to similarly embrace this positivist principle, thus giving precedence to knowledge gained from material over any other source, particularly verbal statements.

Yet, still a significant amount of time (approximately 25 percent of the episode) is taken up by statements, suggesting that they still contribute something to the narrative. The rest of this chapter will look at the different functions of interview and interrogation scenes in the franchise.

#### **5.4 The Final Interrogation and Guilt**

There are basically three functions for interview and interrogation scenes that recur in the franchise: a) the final interrogations in which guilt is clearly established, b) scenes in which evidence is presented and, through the interview or interrogation, interpreted and c) scenes in which new evidence is found during the interview. The next three sections will each analyse one of these and I will start here with the final interrogation.

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<sup>48</sup> 'Das Grundprinzip des Positivismus ist, vom Gegebenen, Tatsächlichen, "Positiven" auszugehen und alle Erörterungen und Fragen, die darüber hinauszielen, als nutzlos abzutun. Was ist uns aber als "positive Tatsache" allein gegeben? Die Erscheinung!' (my translation).

As I have established above,<sup>49</sup> interrogations usually aim for a confession of guilt. In traditional crime drama, guilt must be confessed as the investigation, based on questions of opportunity, capability and motive (Sumser 1996, p. 82), can only tentatively establish who is a suspect. In *CSI*, guilt is established through physical evidence, making a confession of guilt less important. As I argue above,<sup>50</sup> with its emphasis on the everyday of crime, *CSI* suggests that everyone is capable of crime which leaves the traditional form of investigation unstable. The traditional form of investigation is further undermined in *CSI* as the question of motive cannot inform the analysis of evidence. In the interrogation scenes, it is exactly the question of motive that suggest the biggest discrepancies in the three series.

As the previous chapter established, there are different incentives that guide the series. *Crime Scene Investigation* is a celebration of science, *Miami* empathises with victims and *New York* focuses on the plight of the police and the mourning of people left behind. In this light, it comes as little surprise that *Crime Scene Investigation* is the drama that gives most scope to the establishment of motive: it sees motive as another part of knowledge about crime, the piece missing to complete the puzzle. As Gil says in 'Blood Drops' (1.7) in answer to Nick's rhetorical question:

**Nick:** Who cares why they did it?

**Gil:** I care. *I don't like holes.* What are they hiding?

(emphasis added)

The knowledge of motive, then, is able to fill these holes and complete the puzzle about a crime.

Motive in this particular episode is established as a means to tell part of the story of the crime that the simple following of evidence could not reveal: the

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<sup>49</sup> See p. 165.

<sup>50</sup> See p. 134.

investigators find out that the motive for the murders was the sexual abuse of the oldest daughter and then her daughter by her father. The telling of motive also gives more depth to the characters who had previously only been talked about as 'perps'. Moreover, motive in the case of 'Blood Drops' is able to uncover another crime which might be less easy to police, namely a crime in the family which is notoriously hidden from the public domain as Boyle (2005, p. 48) points out.

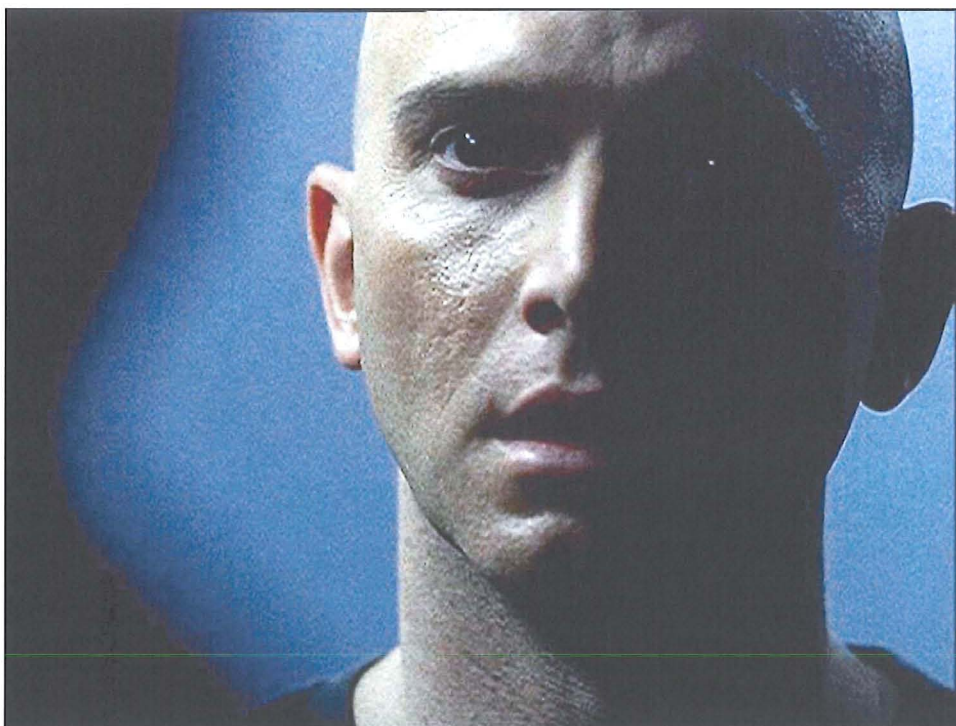
The uncovering of other crimes is a fairly common theme in the last interrogations of *Crime Scene Investigation* and occasionally, there is a similar concern with unravelling social injustice. In 'Paper or Plastic' (4.14), for example, the final interrogation with a female supermarket employee reveals that she helped a group of robbers because her boss deliberately kept her one hour below the hour mark which would enable her to qualify for health benefits. Her confession of motive is shot in slow pans in medium shot, suggesting that she belongs to the group of perpetrators that the series wants to establish empathy for. The accompanying melancholic music supports this. As a consequence, her motive, combined with the audiovisual construction of the text, render her part in the crime as tragic rather than evil, transferring the blame of her behaviour to her faceless boss (he is only mentioned but never introduced as a character) and therefore to a capitalist system in general which exploits its workers in order to make the highest maximum profit.

In general, however, *Crime Scene Investigation* tends to suggest that crime arises more out of the relationships of individuals rather than society as a whole, therefore putting the blame onto particular individuals. In 'Got Murder?' (3.12), the murder of a mother by her teenage daughter is explained by emphasising that the responsibility lies with the mother. Here, the daughter takes over the role of the mother after the latter unexpectedly leaves the family. When the mother returns years later, the daughter kills her. Rather than questioning the

silent acceptance of both the father and society as a whole which expects that the daughter will take over the mother's role, the daughter is presented as mentally disturbed as a consequence of the mother's actions.

In blaming the individual, *Crime Scene Investigation* also presents some evil perpetrators. What is interesting is that the marking of evil is achieved again primarily on the level of the image rather than on the level of content, that is motive. This is particularly true for the serial rapist-murderer in 'The Strip Strangler' (1.23). In the final scene in which Gil tells him he has enough evidence to convict him, the rapist-murderer explains why he did it, namely because he was rejected by several women who, he says, initially sought his attention by behaving flirtatiously towards him in the gym. The motive, although hardly enough to justify his murders, could be considered as something other men might empathise with which the regular focus on women's looks and behaviour in press reporting of rape suggests (Boyle 2005, p. 76, 82). As a consequence, his motive itself is not enough to mark the perpetrator as evil and this must therefore be implied in the image: while he tells Gil why he murdered the women, his face moves half into shadow, leaving his right eye glinting in the dark (see figure 5.5). This emphasis on the madly lit eyes is again a convention from horror – pointing to *CSI*'s general indebtedness to that genre – which highlights that this episode clearly categorises him as monstrous and therefore also marks his behaviour and his words as those of someone who has a distorted view of the world.

In *Miami*, the depiction of perpetrators as evil predominates which, in the light of its emphasis on the victim, is hardly surprising: perpetrators must be demonised because they hurt those people we are aligned with. In 'Kill Zone' (1.9), this general conceptualisation of perpetrators as evil is made explicit when Horatio is faced with a sniper and murderer of several people:



**Figure 5.5: Marking the perpetrator as evil with the help of the visuals in 'Strip Strangler'**

**Sniper:** Don't you want to know why I did it?

**Horatio:** Because you are evil and enjoy taking lives.

This is the only time the perpetrator in 'Kill Zone' is allowed to speak, highlighting how little the series is interested in understanding the perpetrator. Horatio's categorisation of the sniper as 'evil' suggests that *Miami* relies indeed on stereotypes for the characterisation of its perpetrators. Here, they appear as 'bad guys' who kill not because they have a reason but because they are inherently bad.

This is even suggested in cases where there is more scope given to establishing the character of the perpetrator. In 'Blood Moon' (2.13), the perpetrator is the son of a woman who helps Cuban refugees. His characterisation is dependent on that of his mother who was a prisoner in Cuba and was tortured and raped over years by her jailer. The mother's story establishes her as victim, therefore firmly on the side of the 'good people' in *Miami*. Through association – in *Miami*, like in other representations of crime

(Jermyn 2003a), families mark someone as good and as a 'proper victim' – the perpetrator also appears to be good. His motive for killing the victim, too, suggests that he can at least be partially exonerated: he killed the rapist and torturer of his mother who managed to escape prosecution by fleeing to the USA. However, the final interrogation with him suggests otherwise. Here, Horatio tells the son that they found evidence that he is also the son of his mother's rapist. This information allows the son to reassess his actions: rather than revenge and justice for his mother, he sees it as the genetic inheritance of his father, the evilness of his father breaking through his normally good personality. Evilness and goodness, therefore, seems to be connected to genetics and is consequently inherently inscribed in a person, independent of circumstances.

This implies that *Miami* simplifies motivation to such an extent that no understanding can or should be created with the perpetrator. The episode 'Camp Fear' (1.11) illustrates the unwillingness of the investigators to gain such an understanding. In the final interrogation, Horatio and Calleigh present the mother of a dead teenage girl with her share in the girl's death. When the mother tries to defend herself, she is cut short by Calleigh:

**Mother:** (pleadingly) You don't understand.

**Calleigh:** (cold) No, I don't.

Here, the mother attempts to make the investigators and, with them, the audience see her side of the story. Calleigh rejects this, however, keeping the focus of the story of the crime completely on the girl who remains the only object of the spectators' empathy. As the interrogation ends with these words, they are able to highlight that, in some cases at least, the perpetrator does not deserve the effort of understanding. As complexity in the story of the crime is therefore relinquished in favour of a focus on the victim, justice appears very rigid and



impermeable because it is similarly concentrated on the victims. Justice for the victims becomes the rule that the investigators submit to. Nicole Rafter suggests that '[criminal] trial films set up a tension between two courts of law: immutable natural law or justice on the one hand and fallible man-made law on the other' (2001, p.10). In *Miami*, a similar tension can be found. Instead of following man-made law, the investigators around Horatio appear as agents for natural justice which also explains why they are so often at odds with the police.

At the same time, this allows perpetrators only to appear in a positive light if they are also and foremost victims. As the above discussed example of 'Ashes to Ashes' (1.5) suggests, some perpetrators are tragic even in *Miami*. Here, the episode takes pains to establish the mother first as victim: when Megan first meets the mother, she is quick to read both the mother's body and house in respect of domestic violence. Megan's point of view is conveyed in several close-ups – of the mother's strangled neck and a dent in the wall with blood and hair – which allows the viewer to read with Megan the signs of the abuse before Megan speaks of it. This gives the viewer time to imagine how the mark on the mother's neck and the dent in the wall came to be there, enabling a deeper understanding of what exactly the woman had to endure than the abstract words of 'domestic violence' can imply. As a consequence, greater empathy with the mother can be created, enabling an alignment of the viewer with the mother long before the final interrogation. The general emphasis on the victim in *Miami*, therefore, leaves relatively little scope for perpetrators in the final interrogation to add to the story of the crime. Instead, the focus in these scenes lies on the presentation of what happened through the investigators who, in the name of the victim, restore justice.

Finally in *New York*, with its emphasis on the investigators and mourning, perpetrators generally appear as relatively marginal. This is reflected in the narrative in 'Creatures of the Night' (1.2) which actually excludes the last

interrogation. Here, the last scenes depict the whole team combining efforts to find trace evidence that can link the perpetrator to a violent rape. Once this is found, Stella watches the perpetrator being led to his cell. A long shot conveys the distance between Stella and the perpetrator who looks at her but is unable to disprove or justify his crime by speaking to her.

This undermining of the perpetrator's right to speak is also suggested in scenes in which *New York* appears to follow the pattern set by *Crime Scene Investigation*. In 'Officer Blue' (1.9), for example, the perpetrator explains in the last interrogation that he shot a police officer because the police do nothing against the corruption in the force which led to the premature death of his father. In *Crime Scene Investigation*, this motive might trigger a reaction in the investigators which could convey a sense of validity, suggesting indeed that a critique of the system is necessary. In *New York*, however, the ability to understand the perpetrator because of his motive is dismissed and, instead of empathy, Mac's answer highlights the confrontational view the series takes towards perpetrators. As Mac says: 'Eye for an eye.' This part of the dialogue also points to *New York*'s closeness to a post-Reaganist neo-conservatism: the quote is a direct reference to the Old Testament which is at the heart of George W. Bush's evangelism that has gained in significance in American politics after 9/11.<sup>51</sup>

In this context, the fact that episodes often end with a dialogue between one of the investigators and one of the people left behind by crime seems important too. While *Crime Scene Investigation* gives quite some time to the final interrogation, *New York* keeps them relatively short and instead returns to other people involved in crime to complete the investigation and crime plot. This is

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<sup>51</sup> The location of New York here seems indeed to stand in for issues around the 9/11 attacks rather than providing a truthful reflection of political views represented in the actual city New York.

most pronounced in 'Night Mother' (1.10) where the whole episode shows more interest in a woman who was found at the crime scene with her hands in the victim's chest. The final interrogation with the perpetrator is kept very short – Stella tells the murderer how and why he killed a young woman within less than a minute – and instead the episode ends with Mac returning to the woman to talk to her about what she was doing at the crime scene. This emphasis on people who are left behind after a crime suggests that the investigators in *New York* are primarily concerned for them rather than for the perpetrators or the victims. With its setting in the city which was the scene for the attack on the World Trade Center, the emphasis on people left behind must be seen as a playing through of the trauma for those who witnessed and survived the attacks.

In *New York*, then, the marginality of the perpetrators' final interrogation, the dismissal of their motives as a means to understand them and the emphasis on the people left behind contribute to the theme of mourning which, I suggested, is already hinted at in the teaser. This means that despite apparent similarities – namely that the perpetrators are sometimes given the opportunity to explain themselves – *New York* is essentially different from *Crime Scene Investigation*. The original series requires motive to complete the puzzle of the crime. The final interrogation in which motive is established therefore plays a role in the generation of knowledge about crime, the wider aim of the scientific project undertaken during the investigation. By allowing this scope, *Crime Scene Investigation* can reveal other crimes. *New York* dismisses this because of its neo-conservative politics, while *Miami* complicates the revelation of other crimes through the establishment of individuals as victims before they become suspects. Both *New York* and *Miami* therefore offer a relatively simplistic view on crime while *Crime Scene Investigation* allows for greater complexity in which blame is partially transferred to society or other individuals, suggesting that more than one person is responsible. These differences, as in the teaser, arise

primarily from how the investigation relates to the crime – that is, from how crime is investigated rather than from what crimes can be found.

### **5.5 Testing the Validity of Theories in Interviews and Interrogations**

The above section has discussed the use of the final interrogation in *CSI* and its relation to the crime narrative. From now on I will concentrate on interviews and earlier interrogations and analyse their function in the investigation narrative.

One reason why *CSI* still uses interviews and interrogations, despite the fact that it does not see them as the locus of truth, could be that it has not developed any other way of advancing the narrative. Although the analysis of evidence can be shown visually, the significance of the findings has to be translated into verbal accounts in order for them to work as television narratives and the interviews and interrogations might provide one space to do this. Indeed, the investigators regularly present evidence and their interpretations in interviews and interrogations. However, it would be too simplistic to believe that interviews and interrogations only provide the investigators with the opportunity to explain their findings and narrativise their knowledge. Something far more substantial is offered in interviews and interrogations – namely the testing of their findings through a contextualisation of evidence.

The findings derived from evidence in *CSI* are considered to be interpretations of evidence and are called 'theories' which are tested in a subsequent trial and error phase. As a consequence, rather than following the logic of the narrative of the victim's life as in *Law & Order*, finding the perpetrator in *CSI* often involves accusing several people of murder before finally finding the right perpetrator. Early suspicions often have to be renounced because the suspect has an explanation for the evidence that is just as convincing as the investigators'. The theories are presented in both the interviews and early

interrogations where suspects, friends and relatives have the chance to offer alternative readings of the evidence or provide further information that can help to contextualise the evidence. In *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Cool Change'* (1.2), for example, the first suspect is presented with a theory which is acted out in a reconstruction based on the evidence that has been processed so far. He subsequently tells his story which also confirms the evidence but has a different ending and is again acted out in a reconstruction that follows the evidence, visually emphasised by an extremely low angle shot which reveals the trace evidence on his shoes. As Nick and Gil have not yet finished examining all the evidence, they have to accept the suspect's story as credible too. As Gil says: 'I believe you.'

This comment emphasises the scientific approach to the investigation as it relates to the central question that occupies the philosophy of science: the fragility of scientific theory. As Karl Popper (1959, p. 33) points out science can never verify completely, it can only falsify a theory. Thus, science can really only prove the probability of events, never their absoluteness. This suggests that even the final theory in *CSI* cannot be trusted to reveal the truth. However, as I will show in Chapter Six, the DNA technologies with their probabilities bordering on certainties have a decisive impact on creating a sense of absoluteness for the final theory. For the duration of the investigation, however, trial and error remain the central motif. Theories are constantly reassessed and adapted to new evidence. *CSI* accepts this as part of the investigation process and does not visually devalue early theories in comparison to later solutions. From the very beginning of the episode, the reconstruction scenes adopt a certain form of distortion that is consistently used throughout the episode, including tint, bleached-out effects, bleeding lights, extreme contrast and double exposure, often mixing two distortion effects together for greater effect. Lury highlights that in the reconstruction scenes 'voices are often made fuzzy and distorted to fit

with the shaky and blurred quality of the image' (forthcoming). Thus, sound adds to the visual distortions of these sequences (see figure 5.6). The fact that these



**Figure 5.6:** The reconstruction in *New York: 'Night Mother'* (1.10) has a brown tint, is blurred at the edges and sounds canned

reconstructions are distorted rather than shot naturalistically highlights the uncertainty of their truth and their status as possible rather than confirmed scenario. Their visual style is reminiscent of dream sequences in film and television and distinguishably different from the visually elaborate but never distorted images of the processes of investigation which therefore highlight their status as speculation rather than fact.

The reconstructions in *CSI* thus exist within the scientific framework of the investigation. Rather than offering final solutions, the reconstructions are visualisations of the theories that were deduced from evidence. Consequently, the reconstruction scenes are based on and structured around the evidence which is highlighted by close-ups or lingering shots on the evidence. In *Miami: 'Complications'* (2.11) for example, the bleached out and high-contrast reconstructions in several interviews and interrogations concentrate on the evidence that was found at the scene: the curtain rope with which the victim was

hanged is shown in a close-up as the perpetrator rips it from the curtain rail and the trace evidence that was brought in by somebody else is shown in an extreme close-up in the moment of transferral. The visual realisation of the reconstruction therefore puts an emphasis on the evidence and incorporates it into the story so that its status as basis for the theory is stressed.

To conclude, one of the functions of interviews and early interrogations is to give the investigators the space to test their theories derived from the evidence analysed so far. These theories can be rejected or confirmed by interviewees and suspects but are usually elaborated on by new information that leads to more evidence, necessitating the reassessment of the previous theory. As this testing follows a trial and error principle, the accusation of several suspects can sometimes appear rather random, creating a sense of fragmentation and segmentation, suggesting that *CSI* follows this principle of television (Ellis 1982; 2000a), and highlighting the fact that interviews and interrogations in *CSI* are not submitted to the establishment of timeline as in *Law & Order*. Interviews and early interrogations, then, do provide useful information, information that is, however, primarily used to find new evidence, implying that physical evidence remains more important than the statements of friends, family and suspects. This is even more apparent in interview and interrogation scenes in which new evidence is found on the bodies of the interviewees.

## **5.6 The Overriding Importance of Evidence**

So far, this chapter has established *CSI*'s difference from conventional crime drama in relation to interviews and interrogations which are of lower importance and which are given different functions than in other crime drama. By looking at interview and interrogation scenes in which new evidence is found, I now gradually turn towards the aspect that is more important to the franchise, namely



physical evidence and its analysis through forensic science. Evidence is frequently found on the body of suspects and interviewees in the interview room, as for example in *Crime Scene Investigation: 'A Night at the Movies'* (3.19).

From the observation room, Warrick and Nick watch the interview of the brother of a dead teenager who was found in an old warehouse. Nick spots a bandage on his left elbow and goes in to investigate this more closely. He finds that the brother is bruised all over his body. In a series of medium shots from interviews with the other teenagers from their group, all of them have to lift their shirts to reveal their bruised bodies. As these teenagers do not speak much in these shots, their bodies dominate the space which in conventional crime drama would have been given to their statements (see figure 5.7). Thus, the episode



**Figure 5.7: Looking at the body in the interrogation room in 'A Night at the Movies'**

highlights the subordinate status of interviews as a path to the truth and highlights the significance of physical evidence to the investigation plot and the solution.

This physical evidence found in the interrogation room does not only allow for new approaches, it also enables the investigators to dismiss someone as



suspect. In *New York: 'A Man a Mile'* (1.5), Mac interviews one of the construction workers of a water tunnel. The man admits to having been in a fight with the deceased which is told in a yellow-tinted reconstruction. Mac looks at him intently, the camera taking his point of view in an extreme close-up, showing a scar on the man's forehead. This is the important clue for Mac as he understands that this scar is connected to a massive brain injury which caused his temper to change to a more aggressive version of his former self. Here, the physical evidence is able to reveal a whole backstory of the suspect which suggests he is a victim rather than a natural aggressor, leading to Mac rejecting the man as suspect. Mac is juxtaposed to Flack who keeps addressing the victim as a suspect and himself remains aggressive towards him. Mac's superior knowledge, then, is connected to a deeper insight into behavioural patterns which stem from physical changes to the body which can be visually traced on it. As a consequence, the physical evidence appears to be the only means to justly evaluate a suspect and therefore his or her statement.

This suggests that *CSI* gives credence to statements only by considering evidence as well. Where *Law & Order* has to believe in the truthfulness of a witness which may be determined from body language and the use of certain phrases, *CSI* can always fall back on the physical evidence to establish truth. This is most apparent in scenes in which the interview or interrogation is edited to create a juxtaposition with the investigators examining the evidence. In *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Paper or Plastic'* (4.14) for example, the interrogation with a suspect is intercut with a scene where Warrick examines the clothes of the same person. The scene stays for a substantial time in the lab with several close-ups of evidence and Warrick investigating it which is matched by close-ups and extreme close-ups of evidence on the body of the suspect (his injured hands in particular) in the interrogation room. The scene ends with Warrick coming into the interrogation room and presenting the vital evidence that puts

the robber at the scene of the crime. Thus, the episode is a good example of *CSI*'s tendency to undermine the status of verbal statements by juxtaposing them with the more elaborately shot and developed scenes which depict the analysis of evidence.

At the same time, this device can also emphasise the truth of a statement. In *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Blood Lines'* (4.23), the statement of a rape victim is intercut with the investigators finding evidence that backs up the statement, with several close-ups of the different items of evidence. What is important to note, though, is that it is the evidence that proves the statement to be right, not the other way round, pointing to the hierarchy that runs through *CSI* in which evidence is always given precedence over statements.

There are several recurring motifs in the franchise which reflect this hierarchy. The first is the futile interrogation. In these scenes a police detective is shown to conduct an interview with a suspect but is unable to make the suspect talk or even confess. The scene is then disrupted by one of the investigators coming in, taking some evidence and leaving again. Rather than staying in the interview room with the police detective, the camera then follows the investigator into the lab where the evidence is processed. In *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Lady Heather's Box'* (3.15), for example, Brass talks to one of the women from the nightclub where a male prostitute was found dead. While they talk, the woman flirts explicitly with Brass who becomes increasingly embarrassed and unable to conduct a proper interview. Somewhat disturbingly and obviously in reference to *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992), the camera takes up his point of view as he glances at the body of the woman and particularly her exposed thighs which are shown in a close-up. This pornographic image of the woman as sex object which she seems to promote freely ruptures and threatens to halt the investigation narrative in similar ways as the female star in classical Hollywood cinema that Mulvey discusses (1975, p.

11). As soon as Gil comes in, however, the narrative order is restored: he asks for permission to get some hair from her and pulls out a strand before leaving the room again. In the moment when Gil pulls her hair, the camera jumps from close-up to medium shot which emphasises her loss of control which she clearly wielded over Brass and tries to exert over Gil. However, because Gil looks at her only in terms of evidence, a look that rests on scientific objectivity which excludes sexual desire, her attempts are futile. Here, the focus on physical evidence is shown to be able to keep the investigation unbiased and firmly in the hands of the investigators rather than suspects who with their verbal statements are shown to exert power over the detectives.

A similar scene can be found in *New York: 'Grand Master'* (1.4). Here, detective Flack has more or less reached a dead end in the interrogation of a possible suspect in a murder case when Aiden comes in. She takes some photos of the suspect's hands, then leaves again. The storyline follows her and the evidence that she has gathered as she shows Mac the bruises to the man's palms which the photos have revealed. Here, the usual scenario in conventional crime drama is completely subverted: rather than information from forensic science being brought into the interrogation room where it can help to corner a suspect, a suspect is kept in the interrogation room so that forensic science can get a new piece of evidence from him. As a consequence, physical evidence is again shown to take precedence over statements.

In this scene, Flack's relaxed seating style (he leans far back in his chair) and the fact that no new information is presented in the interrogation seem to suggest that rather than conducting a proper interview, Flack only tries to pass time and really waits for the investigators to come in and collect their evidence. The police themselves therefore seem to attribute a higher status to physical evidence than to statements. This might be true for *New York* but not for *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami* which have multiple storylines that revolve

around the tension between police and investigators.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, a lot of the tension between the police detectives and the investigators revolve around the police's lack of understanding of the importance of forensic science as a means to uncover the truth. In the 'Pilot' episode of *Crime Scene Investigation*, Catherine directly points this out: 'The cops. Forget it. They wouldn't know fingerprints from palm prints. And the detectives chase the lie. We solve.'

This tension between the police and the investigators is the second motif to be discussed. *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami* both highlight the detectives' inability to understand evidence sufficiently and/or proficiently and their subsequent incompetence to solve crimes. In *Miami*: 'Dispo Day' (1.18), the investigators themselves are interrogated after drugs are stolen during a transfer from the lab to the destruction plant. One after one, the CSIs have to take a lie detector test as they give evidence of what happened in relation to their work on the day. In one scene, Calleigh takes the lie-detector test. She behaves erratically, leading the police detectives to ask her if she has taken any drugs or stimulants in order to influence the outcome of the test. While their test is shown to be futile in establishing what happened, Calleigh's body itself serves as an important clue to Horatio who understands that she must have inhaled cocaine while she was recovering bullets at the crime scene. This leads them to one of the men involved in the drug heist.

The episode therefore highlights *CSI*'s distinction from other crime dramas. Where other crime dramas try to read the body in order to determine if a person speaks the truth, *CSI* reads the body in order to uncover the truth it holds. As

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<sup>52</sup> To name but a few: *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Paper or Plastic' (4.14), 'Pilot' (1.1), 'Who Are You?' (1.6), 'All for Our Country' (4.2), and *Miami*: 'Bait' (2.9) and 'Simple Man' (1.17). What is particularly interesting in *Miami* is that the women detectives Adell and Yelina are both invested with a greater sense of understanding for the processes of forensic science and are portrayed as much more sympathetic towards the investigators than either Frank or John who, as Calleigh's love interest, could potentially be a lay CSI. This indeed suggests that forensic science is more compatible with a feminine approach to detection (Hallam 2005, p. 86).

John Durham Peters points out, the polygraph or lie-detector test is used to tap directly into the body in order to monitor its physiological indicators. He suggests this 'shows the retreat to the body as a haven of truth' (2001, p. 712). Although *CSI* similarly 'retreats to the body' in order to establish truth, there is a fundamental difference between the polygraph test of ordinary police detection and the understanding of the body with the help of forensic science. Rather than reading the reactions of the body in its relation to verbal accounts, forensic science reads the body independent from any statements. Though its truth can be translated into language by those who are able to understand its anatomy, the body is freed from its reliance on language to make a point. Thus, the body as a site of truth can be investigated in detail in the autopsy which turns it inside out;<sup>53</sup> the body as an expression of truthfulness – with the help of the polygraph test or with the help of a detailed knowledge of body *language* – loses its importance.

This is highlighted by a third motif in *CSI*: namely the emphasis on the fact that no one watches the interviews and interrogations. Several episodes of *Crime Scene Investigation* stress the emptiness of the observation room by placing a lamp directly behind the screen, allowing for the space of the observation room to become visible (for example in 'Stalker', 2.42, and 'Cats in the Cradle', 2.43). In a similar vein, *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Gentle, Gentle' (1.19) uses a long shot of the interrogation room from the observation room which, with the use of a slight pan, is shown to be empty. *Miami* often includes long shots from outside the interrogation room, usually the corridor, with nobody standing there. *Miami* also emphasises its difference to other crime drama by framing these shots as long shots rather than medium shots as for example *Law & Order*. As a consequence the spectator, though placed outside of the

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<sup>53</sup> See my discussion of the autopsy scenes in *CSI* for a more detailed account of how the body becomes a site of truth. Chapter Six, pp. 237ff.

interrogation room in a similar fashion to *Law & Order*, loses the ability to scrutinise body language as the bodies are too distant to be read. Moreover, as nobody watches in *Miami*, the spectator does not share the same knowledgeable position with another investigator or detective. This lack of interest in body language is displayed by Horatio himself. Rather than looking at interviewees intently to scrutinise their body language during interviews, he is often shown not looking at them at all, often by standing with his back towards the suspects (see figure 5.8). This suggests that he completely disregards body language as a means to establish truthfulness.

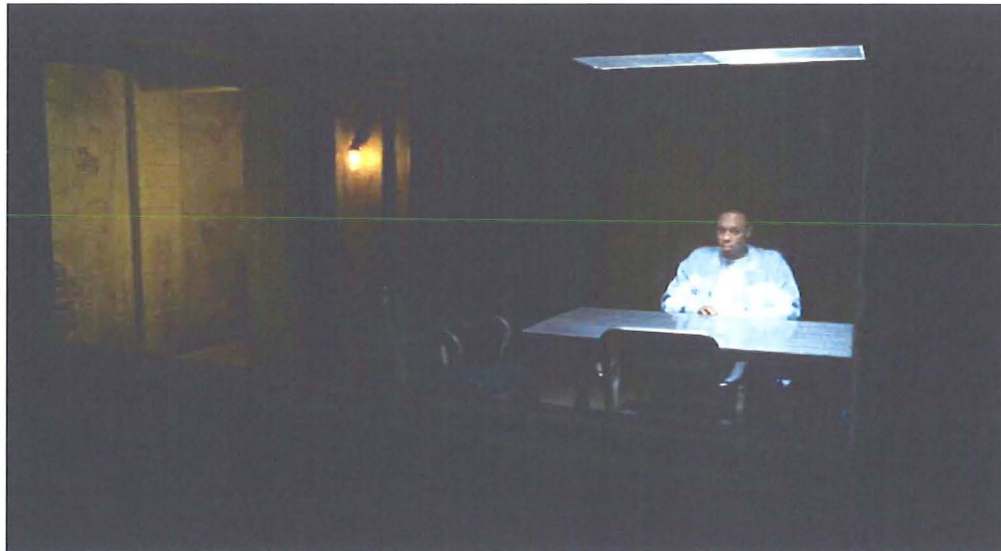


Figure 5.8: No one watches the suspects, including Horatio, in *Miami: 'Innocent'* (2.24)

Similarly, *New York*, though regularly featuring an interrogation room with a one-sided window, never creates an expectation of somebody watching. Unlike *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami*, *New York* does not emphasise the emptiness of the observation room or corridor outside, but rarely includes any shots from outside the interrogation room or shots of somebody watching the interrogation process. Whereas *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami* revel in multi-layered images (Lury 2005, p. 47) created by glass walls that suggest the



permeability of the different rooms and therefore the transparency of the processes within as Lury (2005, p. 47) describes in some detail, *New York* highlights the closure of the interrogation room. The walls, painted grey, emphasise their solid materiality and the one-sided window only reflects the image of the interrogation room back at itself (see figure 5.9). As a



**Figure 5.9: The one-sided window in *New York: 'Grandmaster'* (1.4)**

consequence, the interrogation room appears as a closed space, allowing for a sense of discreteness both in terms of separation from the outside world – nobody is watching – and separation from each other within this space. In other words: where *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami* create a sense of elusiveness by creating a practically endless space, *New York* has a solid space in its interrogation room in which investigator and suspect can come face to face and from where a suspect cannot easily escape. This again highlights *New York's* investment in conventional detective work that distinguishes the series from the other two series of the franchise.

Correspondingly, *New York* might also copy conventional crime drama in terms of reading the body language of a suspect as a means to establish the truth. However, *New York* only remains interested in the body as evidence as

the episode 'Creatures of the Night' (1.2) exemplifies: here, the erratic behaviour of a suspect is not read as a sign of his nervousness because he does not tell the truth in the interrogation. Rather, Mac sees his body's reactions in relation to a drug addiction, thus again reading the symptoms of the body rather than its language.

The search for symptoms rather than signs highlights *CSI*'s scientific approach that attempts to establish a truth outside of language. A symptom, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is a '(bodily or mental) phenomenon, circumstance, or change of condition arising from and accompanying a disease or affection, and constituting an indication or *evidence* of it' (1989, emphasis added). A sign, in comparison, is arbitrary and has no causal relationship with what it signals (de Saussure 1974, p. 67-70). By approaching the body in terms of its symptoms, *CSI* follows a medical discourse that relies on knowledge of health and illness rather than social discourses structured around the dichotomy of normalcy and deviance. As a consequence, the body does not easily give up signs of guilt and is not read in these terms. Rather it becomes part of the overall evidence that is analysed and interpreted to explain what happened.

Interview and interrogation scenes therefore establish the hierarchy in *CSI* which gives evidence precedence over statements. By suggesting that interviews and interrogations only provide the space to find new evidence, statements as a means to establish truth are completely undermined and thereby the conventions of traditional crime drama subverted. With the help of the three motifs I have discussed, *CSI* emphasises evidence over language and also creates a different relationship to the body of the suspect: it becomes another piece of evidence which gives up its truth by itself without needing verbal language to confirm it. Truth therefore becomes independent of language as it exists without it and therefore also 'before it'. Truth is indeed '*a priori*'.



## **5.7 Conclusions**

This chapter examined the interview and interrogation scenes in *CSI* which form part of the story of the investigation. The analysis of more traditional crime drama established that these scenes normally construct a narrative about the victim's life which is determined by cause and effect and follows a comprehensive timeline. In contrast, *CSI* does not aim to tell the victim's story by constructing a logical, coherent narrative; rather it offers a more fragmented account that explains what happened when to the victim. All three series reject statements as the locus of truth and rather use interviews and interrogations to test theories deduced from physical evidence and to gather more material for the scientific analysis, completely reversing the normal hierarchy of traditional crime drama in which statements are given precedence over physical evidence.

The series differ mostly in the way they handle motive: while the two spin-offs reject the perpetrator's right to explain his or her actions – *Miami* because of its emphasis on victims, *New York* because of its investment in working through the trauma of the World Trade Center attacks – *Crime Scene Investigation* needs motive to complete the puzzle of the crime, allowing some moral ambiguity in its solution. However, motive is established only after the crime is solved which implies another shift away from the traditional form of investigation which revolves around motive, opportunity and capability (Sumser 1996). As Chapter Four established, capability has become obsolete for the investigation as all human beings are considered capable of crime. With the questions for motive and capability relinquished, *CSI* offers a fundamentally different approach to the investigation in which the victim's body, as Chapter Six will highlight, becomes central.

This shift away from the traditional mode of investigation confirms what Chapters Three and Four already hinted at, namely that the perpetrator is no

longer the focus of the investigation. Moreover, the investigation does not appear to rely on language. Whereas traditional crime drama establishes opportunity, capability and motive by speaking to friends, relatives and suspects, *CSI* establishes what happened by referring to physical evidence. This suggests that the truth is now freed from language and only dependent on the matter left behind during the crime, matter that the scientists can pick up and understand in relation to the crime. *CSI* therefore proves to follow a truly positivist principle in its approach to the investigation. Moreover, it suggests that the world *a priori* holds the truth and that this can be unravelled through science. How *CSI* constructs this process of deduction is subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter Six: The Story of the Investigation: Science

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the scenes which depict how the sciences are used for the detection of crime. It therefore completes the project begun in the previous chapter of providing an examination of the story of the investigation, here, focusing on those scenes that set *CSI* apart from more traditional crime drama. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, it is in the way the three series depict the scientific investigation that they differ most. This is primarily determined by the incentives to which I have already pointed in Chapters Four and Five. *Crime Scene Investigation* celebrates the sciences by displaying them as beautiful and constructs a narrative that revolves around knowledge creation. *Miami* showcases the sciences too, although less in order to celebrate their achievements than to highlight their ability to reveal the story of the victim who is constantly put centre-stage. In *New York*, the sciences play only a minor part and seem to offer only an opportunity for the actors to perform. As this brief overview indicates, much of this difference is determined by each series' style.

This chapter will therefore put an emphasis on the analysis of aesthetic devices in scenes which depict the scientific investigation. In order to lay the groundwork for this, I will begin with a discussion of the central sciences which determine *CSI*'s particular structure. The second section will then analyse the different stylistic choices of each series, while the third will consider how this style impacts on the epistemology of the series: how does *CSI* conceptualise the

acquisition of knowledge and how is this translated into a viewing experience? This will be further discussed in the fourth section which will question how the differences in the series influence what knowledge and what kind of truth is provided. Last I will consider the impact of the investigators themselves on what the three series make known about science and the crime.

## **6.2 The Central Sciences**

Although *CSI* uses an array of sciences in the course of the seven seasons that are under examination in this thesis, there are only five fields that recur regularly. These are the examination of trace evidence, fingerprint and DNA analysis, pathology and ballistics. As I will discuss in more detail later, these fields are of different importance in the three series, with *Crime Scene Investigation* dedicating most and *New York* least screen time to them, again indicating that the original series tends towards a celebration of science while *New York* reverts back to more traditional forms of investigation.

Generally speaking, however, there are some commonalities in the series in their use of the sciences, beginning with the examination of trace evidence. In all three series, trace evidence appears as doubly important, both because the franchise is built on Lockart's Theory which stipulates that every contact between two people leaves trace evidence on both, and because this particular field of analysis enables the franchise to establish a sense of unity in an otherwise fragmented narrative.<sup>54</sup> Trace evidence appears as vital to the investigation because it can establish who had contact with the victim and who might therefore be the murderer. For each episode, trace evidence constructs

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<sup>54</sup> See Chapter Five, p. 194.

coherence both for the investigation and the crime narrative; a coherence that is, however, not dependent on cause and effect.

An example of an average episode should make this clearer. In *Miami*: 'Complications' (2.11), the investigators discover the first trace evidence, a cigarette butt with lipstick, in the teaser. This leads them to a female suspect, a patient of the victim who worked in a beauty clinic. Other trace evidence is found at the crime scene later – including the rope from a curtain, leather scrapings on the door, a sticky substance on the floor – and some is recovered by Alexx before the autopsy including a hair caught in the victim's belt and fibres and silicon on the victim's body. Different CSIs each analyse some of the trace evidence and follow the leads it provides to different suspects: the husband of a woman who died during an operation in the clinic, the male boss and a female colleague of the victim. Trace evidence therefore enables the investigators to follow different lines of inquiry, giving the episode a flexi-narrative form (Nelson 1997): the CSIs are focused completely on their trace evidence and suspect, thus enabling the episode to develop several narrative strands that are relatively independent from each other. Each strand ends with a reconstruction which explains how the evidence came to be there. As a consequence, it is not only the story of the investigation which fragments into several independent pieces but also the story of the crime itself which appears to consist only of segments.

The story of the crime, however, only makes sense when brought together: the cigarette butt was from the patient who also had an affair with the victim (hence the silicon on his thigh). When the victim's boss and colleague came to speak to the victim about the fatal operation, the colleague, who is also the victim's girlfriend, spotted the cigarette butt and, in a rage, killed the victim by strangling him and then hanging him from a railing with the curtain rope. After she had left, the husband of the woman who died during the operation broke into the victim's flat, transferring both the leather scrapings and the hair. In total, the

story of the crime appears as coherent, yet perhaps more complex than that of traditional crime drama which is based on timeline and therefore a *continuity* of cause and effect. By developing the investigation into independent storylines, *CSI* is able to reveal several things happening at the same time which, brought together, create a complex set of circumstances that lead to the crime. This suggests that crime does not follow a simple logic of cause and effect, but rather arises out of the messiness of life. This messiness is inscribed in the many material clues that the investigators find at the crime scene and on the victim's body, highlighting the need to investigate crime through science in order to reveal the complex truth behind the crime.

All in all, then, the examination of trace evidence appears not only to be important for the investigation itself, but it is fundamentally important in determining the structure of the episode's narrative. This is also evident in the way the discovery of trace evidence connects the different sciences together: trace evidence discovered at the crime scene and on the body is analysed in the different labs. For example, fingernail scrapings are analysed in the DNA lab and the ballistic expert examines the casings of bullets left at the crime scene. Trace evidence therefore also links the different fields of investigation together and creates coherence throughout the investigation narrative from crime scene to the different analyses to the solution and the revelation of what happened.

The other fields of science do not have the same impact on the narrative structure; rather they determine the solution and how it is perceived. Fingerprint analysis, ballistics and DNA all establish potential suspects because they can reveal, independent of timeline, the identity of the person who left trace evidence behind. DNA and fingerprints both identify potential perpetrators by finding unique markers of the person's body, while bullets can lead to suspects because they are engraved with unique striation marks which can be connected to a particular gun and its owner. Whereas guns can be stolen, borrowed or broken

and fingerprints altered or faked – and both scenarios are played out in *CSI*<sup>55</sup> – DNA appears to be the one incorruptible form of evidence that can absolutely determine identity as Palmer highlights (2001, p. 61). DNA technologies, therefore, enable *CSI* to provide reliable solutions.

This is also possible because DNA works with probabilities that border on certainty. As I argued above,<sup>56</sup> science cannot verify a theory but can only establish probabilities. *CSI* does not dispute this as the following extract from dialogue in *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Cool Change'* (1.2) indicates:

**Greg:** Well, according to my DNA data, the types are 814 quadrillion to one that your suspect is our killer.

**Sara:** Pretty good stats.

**Catherine:** Yeah, considering there's only six billion people in the world.

Here, Greg does not present a definite truth, but probabilities. However, these prove to be beyond what is possible in this world, suggesting therefore that it is very unlikely that anyone else other than the suspect could be the killer. As a consequence, DNA not only appears as incorruptible, its findings are also definite. With these probabilities, DNA technologies indeed seem able to establish with certainty the absolute truth. This truth is again based on matter – and therefore again belongs to the world *a priori*.

Whilst DNA reveals the truth about the perpetrator, pathology uncovers this in relation to the victim. The medical examiners are able to read the bodies and re-tell the stories of their deaths. For example in *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Eleven Angry Jurors'* (4.11), Dr. Robbins examines a body which is covered by red bumps. He instantly reads them as evidence for a severe allergic reaction.

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<sup>55</sup> For example, *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Table Stakes'* (1.15) investigates a case which leads to one suspect whose gun was stolen, while *Miami: 'Broken'* (1.7) tells the story of a suspect who alters his fingerprints in order to avoid detection.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter Five, p. 192.

After scrutinising the body more closely, he discovers the bump of a bee sting which he concludes caused the allergic reaction and ultimately the victim's death. As a medical science, pathology looks for the symptoms of death which give evidence of what happened to the body. This, however, involves a form of interpretation which, unlike the findings of DNA, rest on possibilities rather than certainties.

Pathology therefore constructs the story of what happened to the victim, while DNA reveals the true identity of the perpetrator. The narrative emphasis therefore remains on the victim even though the absolute truth is constructed around the identity of the murderer. Trace evidence connects these two parts of the story of the crime together, establishing a story that appears complete even though it might at first seem fragmented. Importantly, the truth about crime does not depend on timeline and is therefore freed from the continuity of cause and effect, allowing for complex stories to emerge (Corner 1999, p. 57). In the rest of this chapter, I will investigate in more detail how the three series portray the sciences.

### **6.3 Science and the Styles of CSI**

The aesthetic devices used in *CSI* to depict the scientific investigation are, particularly in comparison to the interrogation scenes, elaborate and lavish. They have the expensive look of being shot on film and the mise-en-scène is structured in layers of rooms to create a sense of depth (Lury 2005, p. 46). This highlights *CSI*'s indebtedness to the cinematic which, Caldwell (1995, p. 12) argues, constitutes one of the major shifts in American television drama from the 1980s. *CSI*, however, also relies on visual effects such as snap-zooms, close-ups of computer screens and computer generated images (CGI) which lie closer to what Caldwell describes as the 'videographic' (p. 12). In general, *CSI*'s



investment in the image highlights the importance of visuality to the investigation while at the same time contributing to the spectator's sensory engagement with the whodunit narrative.

There are two members of staff to whom the move towards the cinematic can be attributed: first, executive producer Jerry Bruckheimer whose Hollywood blockbusters all revel in the beautiful image that cinema can provide and who wanted a similarly slick look for *CSI*;<sup>57</sup> second, the franchise's main director, Danny Cannon, who originally directed films. He was recruited to shoot the first script but became increasingly involved in production and writing. His style, which is marked by an emphasis on symmetry, structurally well-composed long shots and the use of coloured light, sets the tone not only for *Crime Scene Investigation* for which he still directs most episodes but also *Miami* and *New York*. Cannon can, however, also be credited with the emphasis on the videographic in *CSI* as it was he who, from the script of Anthony E. Zuiker, 'created' the *CSI*-shot (Cannon and Zuiker cited in Tait 2006, p. 54), *CSI*'s main visual effect which I will discuss in detail below.<sup>58</sup>

In general, *CSI*'s style is excessive and, as I pointed out in Chapter Four, proves truly televisual in its tendency to employ style for style's sake. The franchise uses panoramic shots, long shots, coloured light, stylistic conventions borrowed from tourism guides and the *CSI*-shot, which gives the impression the camera enters into a body or machine, to offer constant sensory stimulation. This also includes scenes in which music completely dominates the soundtrack and in which the editing often accentuates aspects of the music, indications of their indebtedness to the music video (see Vernallis 2004). While other

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with Jerry Bruckheimer on DVD box set season 1.1, region 2.

<sup>58</sup> The *CSI*-shot certainly proves to be one of the central technological features that also provides an important viewing pleasure, similar to those of science fiction cinema between 1989 and 1995 (Pierson 1999). This strand of thought would, however, lead me away from the investigation of the franchise *in relation to crime* and is therefore not followed through here.

American drama such as *House* or *Ally McBeal* (Fox, 1997-2002) similarly use an excessive style in their first episodes but gradually return to a greater emphasis on realism, in *CSI* – with the exception of *New York* – this style becomes notably more excessive as the seasons progress. This suggests that *CSI* defines itself through its aesthetic emphases as much as through its storylines and characters. As a consequence, *CSI* offers to a great extent pleasures that are primarily sensory in nature.

The style of each series is, despite these overlaps, distinctly different and is guided by both the main incentive of the series and by its location. *Crime Scene Investigation*'s aesthetic emphasis for the outdoor scenes lies in the neon-light visuality associated with the Las Vegas Strip and casinos. Crime scenes often blink with the lights of slot machines or light shows and the camera is often placed in low angle shots in order to capture their scale. In 'Lucky Strike' (3.16), for example, the crime scene is placed under a neon-lit canopy which fills about a third of the image (see figure 6.1). The spectacle of the neon-lights actually



Figure 6.1: Neonlights detracting from and glamorising the crime scene in 'Lucky Strike'

detracts from the investigation of the crime scene and the body but render the scene beautiful which also has an impact on how the investigation itself is perceived: rather than appearing as a gruesome job, the investigation of a crime scene looks decidedly glamorous. It is this depiction of crime scene investigation as glamorous which undoubtedly has led to the increase of applications for forensic schools in the USA which has been attributed to *CSI*'s success (Tait 2006, p. 46).

For the indoor shots, *Crime Scene Investigation* uses coloured light following conventions associated with tinted film which Ledig (1988) discusses in some detail. In one scene in which Catherine meets her new love interest in 'Early Rollout' (4.15), the room is completely bathed in red light with Catherine and her love interest only in silhouette, following the convention of red tint for love scenes in early films (Ledig 1988, p. 107).<sup>59</sup> The colour coding is most consistently used for the indoor shots of the lab. Blue or turquoise light signifies 'science'. Originally used primarily in the autopsy scenes but later also in other lab scenes, the coding is in line with one of the sci-fi/crime dramas which brought forensic science onto American television, namely *Profiler* (NBC, 1996-2000) which was, according to the lead actress Ally Walker,<sup>60</sup> the first to use blue lights specifically as effect in autopsy scenes. In its use of computer projections, *Crime Scene Investigation* is also surprisingly similar to *Profiler* (see figure 6.2 and 6.3). The colour coding of the sciences and the spectacular videographics of *Crime Scene Investigation*, then, align it with the genre of sci-fi/crime drama of the early 1990s which emphasises the series' investment in

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<sup>59</sup> This convention was held up even in early tri-colour films such as *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Flemming, 1939), where Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler kiss a last time before he leaves her for the army in front of a blood red sky, lit by the fire the blazes in Atlanta. Indeed, the scene from 'Early Rollout' seems to be an intertextual reference to this particular scene in *Gone with the Wind*.

<sup>60</sup> See voice-over commentary of the pilot episode of *Profiler* on the DVD box set, complete first season, region 1.

both horror and suspense and science and rationality which, like in the *X-Files*, *Millennium* (FOX, 1996-1999) and *Profiler*, sit at times uncomfortably next to each other.

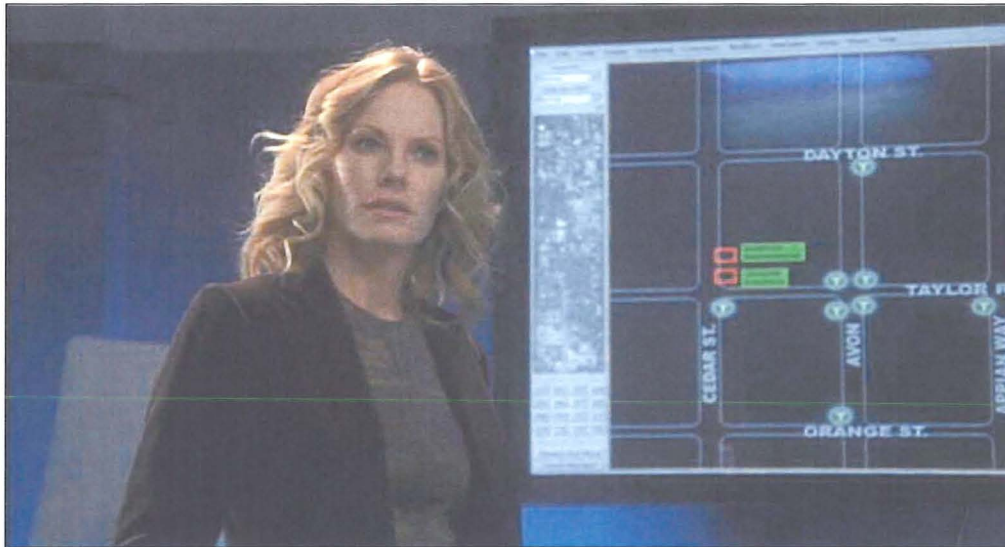


Figure 6.2: Computer projections in *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'One Hit Wonder' (3.14)



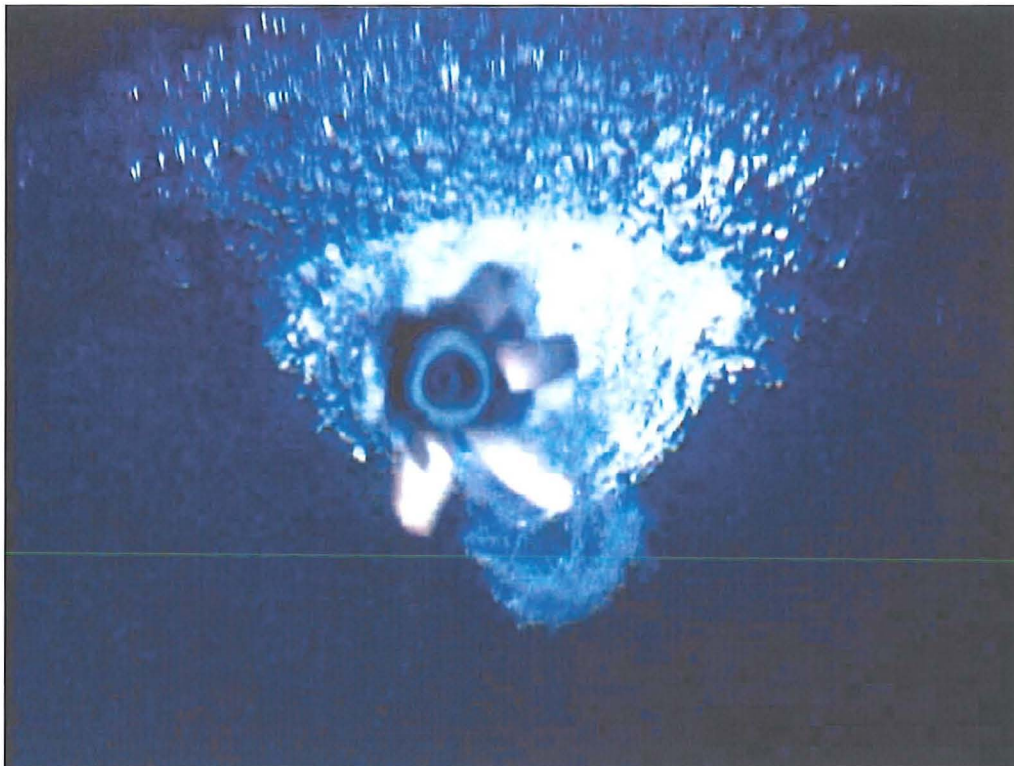
Figure 6.3: Sam in front of the large computer screen in *Profiler* 'Modus Operandi' (1.6)

As I suggested in Chapter One, there is a difference in how *CSI* uses these stylistic devices. Whereas *Profiler* used the blue light to convey the coldness of

the autopsy room, in *Crime Scene Investigation* the blue light is connected to scientific machinery that helps in the detection of evidence. Blue light is a means to discover invisible marks such as wiped-off blood and semen. The investigators have a torch which they either combine with orange glasses or an orange filter to make the stains reappear. The blue light is first used in the pilot episode when Gil looks in a suspect's bathroom for his nail-clippings ('Pilot', 1.1). Here, it is introduced as one of those puzzling gadgets available only to the CSIs which creates a difference between them and non-scientists. Only later the light becomes more established as a regular tool which is used for practically every crime scene and therefore appears as less alien to the audience. At this point, the light is an established tool that regular viewers recognise, allowing them to understand with the investigators the evidence that the light makes visible. The use of blue light to code scenes as 'science' therefore suggests a continuity between the scientific tools in the diegesis and the stylistic preferences of *Crime Scene Investigation*, highlighting its investment in science as narrative as well as aesthetic inspiration.

All in all, *Crime Scene Investigation* represents processes of the scientific investigation as visually pleasurable. These processes range from ballistics to the spectral analysis of different substances. Usually, the camera lingers in extreme close-up on patterns created during these processes with the lighting adding to the visual effects. In 'Cool Change' (1.2), for example, Catherine fires a gun into a test tunnel filled with water. The series of close-ups and extreme close-ups showing how the bullet is fired, penetrates and travels through the water is slowed down, highlighting the beauty of the pattern created by the bullet (see figure 6.4). The sequence is accompanied by melancholic piano music. Taken out of its context, the scene emphasises the beauty of ballistics as an experiment. Yet even in its context, only the sad music connects the close-ups of the bullet to the murder of one of Catherine's colleagues. The depiction of the





**Figure 6.4: The beautiful pattern the bullet creates in 'Cool Change'**

pattern does not enhance our knowledge about bullets and guns and how to connect them to a particular murder at all.

Similarly, the 'musical insert' scenes create sensory pleasures while not adding much to the narrative. Nelson describes such scenes in relation to *Miami Vice* (NBC, 1984-1989). He argues that 'the music is unrelated to the narrative and used for its discrete appeal, typically in *Miami Vice* dubbed over a car chase and used as a regular insert whatever the context of any particular storyline' (1997, p. 184). Similarly, in *CSI* music is used as a regular insert to accompany either the work of a technician in the lab or an investigator at the crime scene. Lab scenes are usually shot in close-ups and extreme close-ups of the analysed material and of the investigators who works wordlessly on one object. This process is not explained and can only be assumed to be what it is by its context. The scene usually ends with a close-up of a paper coming out of the printer and

another investigator walking into the room and asking questions about the findings of the analysis. During the period when music dominates the soundtrack, the editing is usually determined by the beat of the music. In *Crime Scene Investigation*, from season two onwards, the music used to accompany these scenes is usually from British and American independent rock and pop. The bands included on the soundtrack are, amongst others, Mazzy Star, Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson, Radiohead and Portishead as well as the European artists Rammstein and Sigur Rós. The type of music was specifically chosen by the show's composer John M. Keane in the hope that it 'adds aesthetic value and bolster's [*sic.*] the show's hip factor' (Johnson 2003, p. 2). The music, therefore, is central to the aestheticisation of science in *Crime Scene Investigation*.

Although the version of the musical insert described above is the one most regularly used in *Crime Scene Investigation* (and in the other series), there is another version that is more distinct. Often this is set at the crime scene, suggesting that the investigators are indeed primarily *crime scene* investigators, and is shot in one frame with dissolves so that the investigators appear to jump from one place to the next. This is used for example in 'Revenge is Best Served Cold' (3.1) in which Nick investigates a disused airfield which is shot from a low angle with dissolves as he gradually makes his way towards the camera. Here the dissolves indicate the passing of time while at the same time highlighting the rhythmic repetitions of the track by DJ Shadow which accompanies the scene. Importantly, the editing is made visible with characters gradually disappearing while re-appearing somewhere else (see figure 6.5). Vernallis (p. 27) points out that in the music video in which the editing is similarly noticeable it assimilates and extends the iconography of the pop-star, which similarly plays into these scenes in *Crime Scene Investigation*: they develop an iconography that showcases the CSI at work.



**Figure 6.5: The dissolves emphasise the rhythm of the music in 'Revenge is Best Served Cold'**

All in all, *Crime Scene Investigation* invests in the depiction of science as beautiful and therefore allows the viewer to experience science as something that appeals to the senses as well as the intellect, adding to the already described shift from cerebral to sensory experience of crime. Moreover, this sensory engagement with the text and science is increasingly given preference as the series progresses through the seasons, so much so that visuality is often favoured over visibility. In 'Recipe for Murder' (3.11), for example, when Gil points to a defensive wound on the victim's hand, the scar is hardly visible as the light in the room is so full of contrasts that the particular wound disappears half into shadow and half into a glaring light (see figure 6.6).

While the visuality of *Crime Scene Investigation* is dependent on how the sciences are depicted, as Gever (2005) rightly points out, the aesthetic emphasis in *Miami* is more arbitrary: lab-scenes are not colour-coded and the sciences are not shown to produce beautiful patterns. Instead, outside scenes often operate with an orange filter that highlights the warmth of the location. Interior shots accentuate the architecture and interior design of the lab with its big windows, light and black tiles. Similarly, inside shots often use the darkness

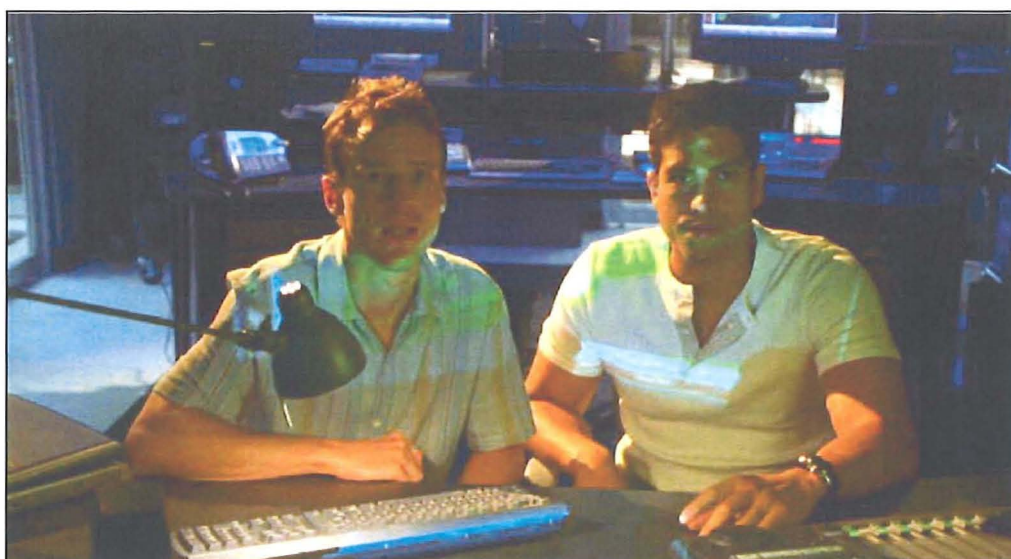




**Figure 6.6: Gil points to a practically invisible scar in 'Recipe for Murder'**

of the black tiles and counterpoise it with strong, colourful light. As a consequence, the scenes in which investigators work with science still look stylish, however, this style is no longer determined by science. In 'Blood Brothers' (2.1), for example, in a scene in which Eric and the lab technician reconstruct a crime scene on the computer, their faces are lit by the light of different objects on the computer screen which are beamed onto their faces (see figure 6.7). Otherwise the room is nearly completely dark which creates a strong contrast to the saturated colours on their faces. From its second season, *Miami* increasingly uses saturated primary colours as different light sources in the frame, again privileging visuality over visibility. This is perhaps most apparent in 'Slow Burn' (2.14) where the investigators look at three different cars which are parked in the lab's garage with primary-coloured light sources surrounding them (see figure 6.8).

This suggests that *Miami*, like *Crime Scene Investigation*, shows off the sciences as beautiful. This is also achieved with the musical inserts which are shot in a similar way as the one most common for the lab scenes in *Crime Scene Investigation*. Again, there is a version that is stylistically more



**Figure 6.7: Lights of the computer simulation beamed onto the faces of Tyler and Eric in 'Blood Brothers'**



**Figure 6.8: The car and the primary lights in 'Slow Burn'**

elaborate and therefore more strongly associated with the series. An example of this is given in 'Invasion' (2.16): Eric is here shot in different close-ups and medium shots as he looks for evidence in a shop. These shots are cut either by dissolves or flash-cuts in the rhythm of the music which breaks up the image and highlights the beat of the music, giving greater emphasis to the sound of the sequence. In *Miami*, the musical insert is in general accompanied by music that can be associated with Café del Mar, a type of Latin-American inspired

electronic dance music. Other music featured is the more mainstream dance music of Underworld, Paul Oakenfold, Massive Attack, Sasha and even Kylie Minogue. Thus, science in *Miami* appears as beautiful because it is framed and shot glamorously and sounds good.

Unlike *Crime Scene Investigation*, *Miami* floods rooms, and in particular the autopsy theatre, with light. This has two effects: first, the mood of the series appears lighter and, second, it enables a better visibility in general and onto the body of a victim in particular. Whilst in *Crime Scene Investigation* the victim's body often disappears into the darkness and indistinctness created by the blue light, in *Miami* the multiple light sources in the autopsy theatre make the body of the victim visible as a whole. As a consequence, in *Crime Scene Investigation* the body often appears only as a wound, removed from markers of identity such as the face. In *Miami*, in contrast, the whole body of the victim is visible including the victim's face which allows a gaze onto the body that recognises the individual as well as the damage done to it, mirroring Alexx's ability to feel empathy with the victim and to establish a diagnosis.<sup>61</sup> The effect is increased by *Miami*'s tendency to set up the autopsy theatre as a theatrical space with different layers, often accentuated through long shots from the observation room down onto the main theatre. The layers of the room are increased by three and more monitors which show the victim's face on the slab in close-up, redirecting the attention of the viewer to it and therefore the victim's subjectivity. The episode 'Extreme' (2.10) exemplifies this: the scene starts with a close-up of a screen with the victim's face in close-up and a pan to the right to reveal a long shot onto the autopsy theatre from the observation room (see figure 6.9). There are three more screens in the background showing the victim's face; but her face is also clearly visible on the slab itself. The gaze onto the victim's face that

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<sup>61</sup> See Chapter Four, p. 154.





**Figure 6.9: The layout of the autopsy room in 'Extreme'**

the mise-en-scène invites is also shared by Alexx and Horatio who both direct their look to the face. Even in close-ups of Alexx and Horatio, the screens with the victim's face remain in the background, framing both continuously in relation to the victim (see figure 6.10). This highlights the general focus of *Miami* on the victim's subjectivity and life which is here literally shown to loom large over the heads of the investigators: their central aim and concern is indeed to recognise



the individual victim rather than the criminal damage.<sup>62</sup> Within the context of the aestheticisation of the sciences, this suggests that the sciences are spectacularised in order to highlight their ability to serve the victim's cause. This implies that all narratives in *Miami* revolve around the victim's life.

In *New York*, finally, science is nearly exclusively framed as musical insert. In 'The Closer' (1.22) even an autopsy is shot as musical insert, emphasising how little the sciences are part of a narrative about science creating knowledge which needs to be conveyed through talk. Instead, science is showcased only as spectacle. *New York* regularly uses the format associated in *Crime Scene Investigation* with the musical insert for the lab scenes. Again, *New York* has its own particular style that stands out from the rest, namely one or more pans which are dissected with rapidly edited flash-cuts. This is used amongst others in 'Supply and Demand' (1.20) where Stella and other forensic investigators look through the house of a suspect. The relatively slow camera pan from right to left and back, which takes seven seconds, is here cut up with four flashcuts. In *New York*, the music is exceptionally varied with either mainstream rock and pop including U2, classical music such as Mozart, or jazzy dance music and rap all of which reflect the different styles of music available in a city like New York.

Indeed in the latest spin-off, the city of New York seems to provide the main stylistic inspirations. Throughout each episode in establishing and cut-away shots, *New York* returns to helicopter shots of the city and particularly its landmark buildings and architecture such as the Chrysler building, Times Square and the Statue of Liberty. Outside scenes, however, tend to focus more on the constriction of space between the buildings. In 'The Fall' (1.17), for example, several long shots of a crime scene emphasise the narrowness of streets closed-off by several buildings. Moreover, the scene draws attention to

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<sup>62</sup> I will discuss this in relation to the gendering of the medical gaze below, pp. 237, 244.

the city's verticality as the victim lies on a canopy and Danny and Dr. Hawkes need a hydraulic stage, which we see move up in one long shot and down in another, to recover the body. There is also a brief reconstruction of the body lying on the canopy, shot from above which highlights its position above street level (see figure 6.11). All in all, *New York* depicts a city in which things – including crime and its scientific investigation – happen on top of each other,



Figure 6.11: Highlighting verticality in 'The Fall'

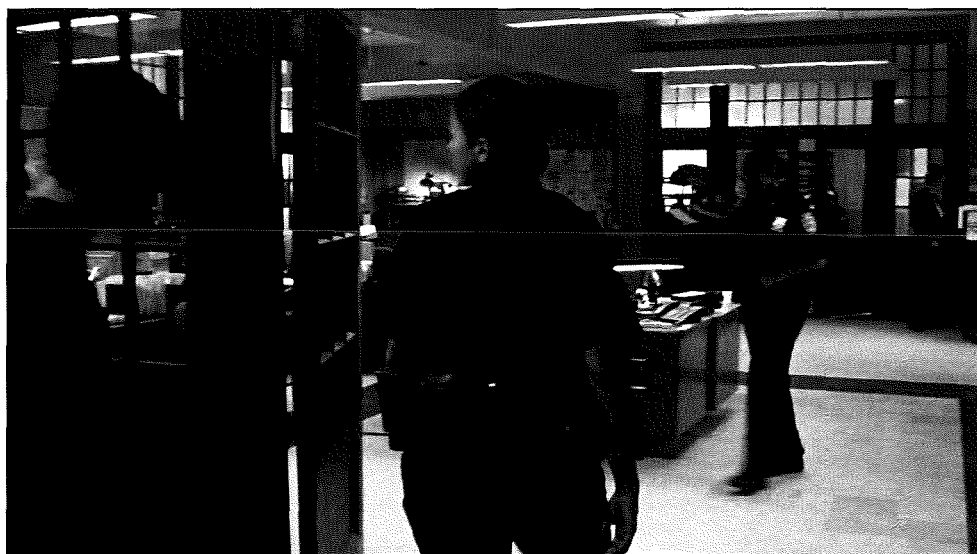
again pointing to the World Trade Center attacks which emphasised the vulnerability of such a vertical structure.<sup>63</sup> It is this emphasis on the vertical that distinguishes *New York* from other crime drama set in the city although it shares quite a few other features with them.

*New York* invests in an iconography that resembles other crime drama set in urban spaces, and particularly New York, including *Law & Order*, *Hill Street Blues* and *Cagney & Lacey*. Colours in *New York* are muted and filters often highlight the blue and brown tones, thus resembling the drained-out colours of

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<sup>63</sup> As Ann Donahue points out in the Special Feature: 'The World's Largest Crime Scene' for *CSI: New York*, DVD box set, season 1.2, region 2.

*Law & Order*. Moreover, the rooms of the police station resemble those of *Hill Street Blues* and *Cagney & Lacey* more than those of the other two series: the main office is open-plan in which there is a constant hustle and bustle. The architecture itself looks old and slightly shabby with rotting wooden frames and blank concrete walls (see figure 6.12).<sup>64</sup> A similar architecture marks the DNA



**Figure 6.12: The police station in *New York: 'Creatures of the Night'* (1.2)**

and medical examiner's office, although the autopsy theatre with its gothic arches resembles more the asylum in *Twelve Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995). But whereas the space in *Twelve Monkeys* was chaotic and disordered, the repetition of arches and freezer doors in *New York* gives the space a sense of order and organisation, suggesting that the chaos has been rendered safe. As Carey Meyer, production designer of *New York*, points out,<sup>65</sup> this is the chaos of 9/11.

In comparison to both these other sets and the lab sets in *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami*, the lab set of *New York* is relatively unspectacular. It consists of a relatively empty white space with large overhead lights, a few

<sup>64</sup> This changes drastically in season two when the departments move into a new building which is as stylish and new as the sets for *Miami* and *Crime Scene Investigation*.

<sup>65</sup> 'New York Set Tour', DVD box set, season 1.2, region 2.

tables and some computers. The whiteness of the lab gives an impression of it being a blank space in which science can be performed, rather than a space of science. In the lab, the main characters gather to 'do' science by filling the space with evidence and paraphernalia associated with it such as the microscope or other optical instruments. Importantly, it is the investigators who fill this space with the tools of science rather than the investigators entering a space already filled with these instruments. Science, then, appears in *New York* as a spectacle resting on character performance rather than a spectacle in its own right. This again highlights *New York*'s emphasis on the character of the investigator whose ability is here the focus of the scientific display. Thus, both the iconography used for the depiction of the DNA and police offices and the simplicity of the architecture in the lab contribute to *New York*'s alignment with more conventional crime drama: this is again a crime drama that focuses on the investigator's character and their relation to the urban, vertical space outside.

In sum, despite some similarities, the visual and aural devices used for the depiction of the scientific investigation highlight the differences between the three series which rest on their incentives: *Crime Scene Investigation* builds its style around science, thereby highlighting science as narrative and aesthetic inspiration. *Miami* showcases the sciences as beautiful but creates a visual and narrative focus on the victim, and *New York* uses a style that foregrounds its indebtedness to more conventional crime drama. In all three, however, there is an over-emphasis on style, 'style uber [sic.] alles' (Caldwell 1995, p. 88) which underlines *CSI*'s general investment in creating a sensory experience for the viewer. It is this sensory experience that I want to discuss now in more detail in relation to our understanding of science.



#### **6.4. Science, the Senses and the Real**

Critical writing on *CSI* so far tends to focus on the visual aspects of the sciences. Sue Tait, for example, points out that 'physical evidence, its collection and analysis, enables proof to be visualized' (2006, p. 48). Although visuality is undoubtedly important to the depiction of the sciences in *CSI*, there are other things at play that complicate this focus. Indeed, *CSI* proves to be much less occularcentric than it first appears and seems to have based some of its style on philosophical thoughts about the sciences. Philosophers have stressed that scientific observation does not rely on sight alone. Although science is based on observation – which seems to foreground the visual – scientific observation relies on a multiplicity of senses, as Foucault argues (1973, p. 164), in which touch and sound bring to light things that must remain invisible to the eye. Jay (1993, p. 197) points out that 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers advocated the use of lived experience as basis for every scientific experiment which includes all senses.

It is exactly this privileging of lived, multi-sensed experience that also lies at the heart of *CSI*. Although it privileges sight to some extent by emphasising visual technologies such as the blue light, the microscope and magnifying glass through which the camera repeatedly looks, the franchise often shows the investigators using other senses when they first encounter evidence. In *Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Gentle, Gentle' (1.19), for example, Gil kneels down to smell the carpet for bleach as a sign of a clean-up, while in *Miami*: 'Hard Time' (2.3), Alexx wonders about the warmth of a body before she realises that the victim is still alive. This use of other senses is often highlighted with close-ups of the investigators as they make use of these senses. *Miami*: 'Golden Parachute' (1.1), for example, includes several close-ups of different investigators as they

listen to recordings found at the crime scene.<sup>66</sup> All in all, then, *CSI* suggests that all senses are important to the scientific investigation and there are different means to convey this to the viewer.

First, the stylisation of the image and the soundtrack, for example through the musical insert, highlight the audio-visual pleasures of the text. Second, the viewer is drawn into the episode with the help of horror which moves the viewer's body and therefore has a distinctly physical effect. Third, the body remains portrayed in ways that highlight its gore and mutilation. Although the body is embedded in a scientific discourse that sanitises it from the moment when the investigators arrive,<sup>67</sup> it continues to disrupt the medical discourses as the camera returns to aspects of its unexplained gore rather than the parts that medicine explains.

To give a particularly instructive example: in 'Precious Metal' (3.18), Dr. Robbins performs an autopsy on a body that was stored in a sealed container where it gradually degraded to a soap-like consistency. As Dr. Robbins takes the body out of the container, he explains why the body has been 'souponified'. Again, he uses a medical discourse that stresses the general and objective, thus apparently distancing the viewer from the decomposed body. However, this is undermined by the camera which lingers on the dripping of the decomposition fluids (see figure 6.13). Moreover, slurp and squelch sounds continue to disrupt Robbins's medical lecture. There is also a student to whom the lecture is directed whose face is shown in several close-ups (see figure 6.14) as he gradually turns pale and disgusted, before finally leaving the room. Here, the

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<sup>66</sup> Although this scene, like many others, also includes an image of the audiograph, the emphasis here is really on listening. In total, there is only one shot of the screen where the lab technician takes out a track. In general, the audiograph, though adding to the beautiful aesthetics, has not as much narrative value as the sound which includes all the important clues. The only exception are those episodes in which sounds are matched with the graphs (such as *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Anonymous'*, 1.8, and *Miami: 'Hard Time'*, 2.3).

<sup>67</sup> See Chapter Four, p. 149.



**Figure 6.13: The dripping of the decomposition fluids and the disgusting body in 'Precious Metal'**



**Figure 6.14: The disgusted student in the same episode**

body is clearly made to break through its medical sanitisation, remaining abject, highlighting that although medicine promises a distanced gaze, it cannot contain the body completely. Of course this also implies that the body in these scenes

continues to trigger a reaction that is not cerebral and intellectual, but remains within the bounds of the physical and kinetic.

It is the kinetic engagement that is also triggered by what has come to be known the 'CSI-shot' as Lury points out (2005, p. 32). This sequence is considered the central aesthetic innovation of *CSI*, but has actually been a staple of scientific documentaries and science displays (Lury 2005, p. 48). It was also used in *Three Kings* (David O. Russell, 1999). Within television fiction, however, the apparent move into the body that the *CSI*-shot conveys remains new and one of the central elements of its aesthetic devices that the franchise uses to promote its technical investment and innovation. Its impact on American drama has been remarkable as other series including *House*, *Prison Break* and *Jake 2.0* deploy similar aesthetic devices to establish their brand identity and narrative specificity. In *CSI*, the *CSI*-shot emphasises both brand identity and narrative specificity as it is part of the emphasis on the detailed, often microscopic investigation of physical evidence.

There are two types of *CSI*-shots: those of bodies and those of technology. All shots of bodies and technologies use a mixture of real bodies/machines with a snap-zoom (which is either a rapid zoom or a rapid centre-wipe to white and to a closer close-up of the object or body) onto and apparently into the body or machine. The 'into'-effect is achieved by a seamless cut just as the image comes out of the zoom or wipe and by a continuation of the camera movement into the corpse or object. In *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Pilot'* (1.1) the first *CSI*-shot of the franchise begins with a medium shot of an unwounded chest. The camera then rapidly zooms onto the body which is then followed by a few very dark frames suggesting the camera enters the darkness of the corpse. The camera continues at the same speed inside the body towards an unidentifiable organ where it comes to rest for a brief moment, before rapidly zooming out again, ending with the same medium shot as before which now shows the chest

with a bullet wound (see figures 6.15 to 6.21). This sequence lasts for approximately five seconds which is the average amount of time for a *CSI*-shot.

All of these shots are accompanied by a range of sounds: bullet-wound *CSI*-shots usually include the sound of the gun being fired, while knife wounds start with the sound of a knife being sharpened (a metal-on-metal sound). A hollow cracking sound usually highlights the breaking of bone. All body *CSI*-shots also include rupture, squelch, thud and slurp sounds. Technology shots usually use beeps and other sounds familiar from computers as well as wind and rush sounds. While the technology shots are spectacular and seem to take the viewers on a roller-coaster ride, the body shots have a more sinister aspect to them. The body *CSI*-shots are clearly meant to disgust. The image of a penetrated body with its blood and ruptured flesh is in itself rather an unpleasant sight but is made worse by the squelch and rupturing sounds which highlight the damage to the body.

This suggests a glitch to the sequence's ostensible embedding in scientific discourses. Because of a verbal explanation that precedes the *CSI*-shot, the sequence seems to offer a visualisation of what is said, a model that helps and adds to the words. As the *CSI*-shot's move into the body follows the conventions established in scientific documentaries and displays, its apparent use as scientific visual aid is underlined. However, the information we are given with the *CSI*-shot is actually superfluous: in 'Pilot', only the size of the bullet wound, not the move into the body, is read in relation to the crime. Indeed, the close scrutiny of the body, its penetration and apparent ejaculation suggests an investment of the *CSI*-shot with a structure that is, as Lury points out (2005, p. 56), essentially pornographic. Surprisingly, it is exactly this pornographic structure, Boyle and I argue (forthcoming), that enable it to highlight the real: just like pornography suggests this is 'what real people having real sex look like', the *CSI*-shot suggests this is what a real body being really damaged looks like.



Figures 6.15-6.21: The CSI-Shot in *Crime Scene Investigation* 'Pilot' (1.1) begins with a close-up of the chest, then moves into the body towards an organ and then zooms out again to finally reveal the bullet wound



This is made possible because both the images and the sounds highlight the ruptured flesh of the corpse, thereby contributing to the body breaking out of its containment. The sequence shows flesh normally hidden from view, therefore evincing a similar fascination as the slasher film (Clover 1992, p. 32). There, the emphasis on flesh triggers a distinct physical reaction,<sup>68</sup> as Pinedo points out (1997, p. 61), namely that of disgust which the *CSI*-shot shares with the slasher film too: for the moment of the *CSI*-shot I can actually feel my stomach heave. As the shots are so rapid, looking away is not an option; *CSI* apparently forces its viewers to watch the damage done to the body.<sup>69</sup> This physical reaction adds to the sense that the *CSI*-shot brings the corpse closer to the spectators who are taken into it where they can see and hear its carnality which moves their own bodies, creating a sense of physicality that mirrors the experience of touch. In other words, the sequence is the central element that allows the viewer a similar engagement with the sciences as the investigators, namely one that relies on a multi-sensory experience: sight, sound and something similar to touch. This multi-sensory experience also means that the viewer experiences the body as real as it is touch which, in a positivist world, defines what is real and what not.

The body in *CSI* therefore appears as distinct matter, part of a world which is experienced as three-dimensional. This impression is generally created in the franchise by the camera often moving – though particularly in *Crime Scene Investigation* at a surprisingly slow pace – into different directions not only along

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<sup>68</sup> There has been some good work done on the physicality of film images by Vivian Sobchack (2004) and Laura U. Marks (2000). There is a difference, however, to their description of the tactile experience of film. Sobchack and Marks both discuss how the viewer's body knows what happens in particular scenes because it can draw on memory. In the *CSI*-shot, physicality is not achieved through memory but through disgust. Thus, the experience is much more involuntary and based on an experience of the images rather than a coincidence of image and memory.

<sup>69</sup> Compare this to the *CSI*-shots in *House* where the camera travels at a much more leisurely speed, allowing the viewer to look away, but also taking the viewer much more gently into the body than in *CSI*.

the image plane from right to left or left to right, but also out of or into the image with tracking shots, CSI-shots, zooms and snap-zooms. Moreover, the set designs themselves suggest that they are multi-layered, creating depth and apparent three-dimensionality in a two-dimensional image. As Lury points out, 'the layers of glass produce the sense of rooms within rooms, and this enables the directors and cinematographers to set up three or four layers within the scene, thus creating depth. This sense of both depth and transparency at a visual level neatly echoes the push towards "transparency" and truth in the crime-solving narrative' (2005, p. 47). There is, however, more to the layering of rooms. Within them, the camera moves freely and also presents them as filled with technology and scientific paraphernalia which often obscure the medium shots and close-ups of the investigators. Matter, therefore, seems all-encompassing in CSI, a fact highlighted by the many microscopic close-ups (a close-up of an object through the microscope) which enhance and make visible matter that normally remains invisible, giving the impression that even what we think is empty space actually includes matter.

In a world that is three-dimensional, filled with matter and accessible not only audio-visually but also tactilely, crime gains a new dimension: where it is shocking, sad but essentially cerebral in conventional crime drama like *Law & Order* – something to be imagined, talked about, thought about – in CSI it is also something that can be felt. As crime affects, leaves its traces on and can be investigated through matter, it can also hurt those investigating it (including the viewers). The concept of crime as painful is not new but it is a new television experience. With this innovation, however, also comes a limitation. Crime can only be investigated and experienced if it affects matter which excludes practically all non-violent crime with the exception of counterfeit money or forged paintings. Although the lack of representation of non-violent crime is a commonality of all crime drama (Reiner 2000, p. 148), other crime drama can



potentially investigate these crimes. *CSI* cannot. Overall the scientific investigation in *CSI* highlights the franchise's investment in a positivist ideology. However, this does not mean that the series all perceive the truth (about crime and in general) in exactly the same way. The next section will establish this in more detail by discussing how the three series make different use of the *CSI*-shot.

### **6.5 Science, Knowledge and Truth**

With *Crime Scene Investigation*'s emphasis on science and its investment in scientific discourses, the *CSI*-shot functions primarily as a visual aid, which is emphasised by its distinct style. In *Crime Scene Investigation*, the *CSI*-shot usually begins with a flashcut, highlighting the photographic technology that the series uses unproblematically as evidence collector. This creates a distinct boundary between the fiction of the autopsy scene and the photographic evidence that the *CSI*-shot apparently presents. Here the viewer's engagement changes from a suspension of disbelief, demanded by the fictional text, to belief in the medical truth of the sequence. Moreover, the sequence is usually presented as general rather than specific truth, an effect that is achieved by focusing on the wound rather than on aspects of the body which would mark its individuality. This is in line with the general depiction of the body in *Crime Scene Investigation*.

Two thirds of the *CSI*-shots in *Crime Scene Investigation* are of bodies rather than technology and 60 percent of the body sequences are of male bodies. This seems hardly surprising in the light that most victims in crime drama in general are male (Fabianic 1997, p. 199). However, with its particular style and structure, the *CSI*-shot suggests that it actually penetrates a feminised body: a ruptured, bleeding body 'of the *victim* that is made to confess the truth

... [and in] this way, the truth of the *CSI*-shot in *Crime Scene Investigation* is most closely related to the truth that hard core attempts to elicit from the female body' (Weissmann and Boyle forthcoming). This creates a tension between the representation of the male corpse on the slab during the fiction of the autopsy scene and the feminised body of the medical truth of the *CSI*-shot, a tension that is partially resolved by the fact that the victims' faces remain marginal. Thus, the male corpse in *Crime Scene Investigation* is not a corpse with a recognisable masculine subjectivity; it is a corpse devoid of individuality and subjective agency; only evidence, not a person.

In this connection it is noteworthy that in *Crime Scene Investigation* the medical gaze is indeed male (Jacobus *et al.* 1990, p. 6): both of the regular medical examiners of the series are male and the bodies are often examined by an all-male group. The gaze is distanced, highlighted by close-ups and medium shots of the investigators who are framed only by the technology of the autopsy room, disconnected from the bodies. Moreover, the gaze is usually directed only onto the wound or at X-rays. In 'Ellie' (2.10), for example, there is one close-up of the victim's face at the beginning of the autopsy scene after Warrick asks 'Is this our con-artist?' Although the close-up suggests a recognition of the individual, he is only named by his occupation, reduced to a type which emphasises his function in the crime narrative. Both Dr. Robbins and Warrick then look at the bullet wound at his ear which is explained with a *CSI*-shot, again emphasising the wound over the otherwise intact body, before turning to an X-ray which shows the bullet lodged in his cracked skull. Warrick then looks at other X-rays which he puts on a board at the side of the room, removed from the body, realising that he was also a drug-mule (see figure 6.22). The further information does not lead to a better understanding of the person, it only adds another (criminal) type to the victim's characterisation. Pathology in *Crime Scene Investigation*, then, is not used to establish who the victim was as a



**Figure 6.22: Looking at the body removed from the corpse in 'Ellie'**

person or create empathy with the victim as the body is only read as evidence within an investigation that is scientific in nature.

The representation of pathology is in line with a narrative that is primarily concerned with *general scientific* knowledge rather than knowledge about a *specific life*. Most of the screen time in *Crime Scene Investigation* is taken up by different people learning new details about the case or science in general. The series presents a lab full of established and recurring experts who regularly present their general knowledge about their fields: apart from the coroners Dr. Robbins and David, there is the ballistic expert Bobby, the audio-visual expert Archie, the DNA expert Greg, the trace expert Hodges, the fingerprint expert Jacqui, a calligraphy expert, etc. As these sciences all need their own regular characters, the assumption must be that all of them require too much knowledge for one person to possess. Science, therefore, is presented as fields that require knowledge in order to develop answers about a specific case.

Similarly, the protagonists are set up as experts in one field or another. Gil has a PhD in entomology and consequently understands the development of

insects and bugs. Nick, on the other hand, watches the Discovery Channel which accounts for his extensive knowledge about wildlife and birds. These different fields are so specialised that they highlight the range of knowledge available to the CSIs who simply cannot be aware of everything. Instead, all of them are experts in some and more or less ignorant in other fields of knowledge.

This set-up allows *Crime Scene Investigation* to develop its whole narrative around scientific knowledge. During every process, one person knows more than another and explains it to the other, thus conveying scientific knowledge not only to other characters but also to the viewers. However, this knowledge is not perceived as final as it cannot account for all scenarios. This is made explicit in 'Sex, Lies and Larvae' (1.10). Here, the case in which a woman's body is found riddled with insects requires Gil's specialised knowledge about bugs which he communicates to both Sara and Brass. The timeline he establishes with the help of the insects, however, exonerates the main suspect and Sara urges Gil to dig deeper. As a consequence, Gil looks at the blanket, finds it was very tightly wrapped around the victim and conducts an experiment to prove that the tightness of the blanket could decelerate the process. The experiment is shot with a focus on the recording equipment, a digital camera and a camera that Gil uses to take photos which are both shown in several close-ups. Moreover, Gil is framed in medium shots and close-ups taking notes in a notebook. There are also some photographic close-ups (shot as still images, often with the frame of the focus finder in the same image) of the flies infesting the pig. This suggests the importance of documentation for scientific experiments and therefore emphasises the ability of scientific experiments to create knowledge beyond the criminal case the investigators are working on.

This is further highlighted by the number of references to articles the CSIs have read and conferences or seminars they have attended. In 'Justice is Served' (1.21), for example, Nick reminds Warrick of a seminar which dealt with

different animal faeces. The knowledge they gained there allows them to distinguish between faeces at the scene that are relevant to their case and those which are not. At the same time as seminars and articles provide them with scientific knowledge that later proves useful, cases themselves can generate scientific knowledge they can use for later cases. In 'Revenge is Best Served Cold' (3.1), Nick and Greg ponder the potentially fatal effects of eye-drops used to spike a drink by remembering Nick's first case which revolved around a prostitute who used eye-drops to make men pass out so she could rob them ('Pilot', 1.1).

In keeping with this fascination with knowledge creation, the corridor briefing scenes revolve more around the scientific findings than their relation to the case. These scenes resemble the briefing scenes in *The West Wing* (NBC, 1999-2006) and show the team walking along a corridor and talking about their findings. They are usually shot in one long take in medium shot with the team walking towards a backward moving steady cam. The simplicity of the shot here focuses attention onto the dialogue which remains scientific and distanced, emphasised by the lack of close-ups which could betray emotional reactions of the investigators. In 'Chasing the Bus' (2.18), for example, Sara, Nick, Gil and Warrick walk through the corridor while Sara and Gil tell of their findings. Though at first, these seem entirely to relate to the crime and have no scientific interest, the emphasis changes when Nick asks: 'Why chloroform?' Gil then goes on to explain how chloroform works as a chemical in relation to rubber.

This scientific fascination is also displayed in the scenes in which the lab experts give details of their results. Even when the CSIs turn to the experts for a first evaluation, the emphasis is on the details these experts know about their field. In 'The Execution of Catherine Willows' (3.4), for example, the fingerprint expert, Jacqui Franco, tells Catherine in detail about the problems of recovering fingerprints from different materials and the machines and tools available to her

in order to combat these problems. This enables regular viewers to become increasingly knowledgeable themselves, thus aligning them again with the investigators.

The task for the CSIs (and for the viewers at home) is to combine these findings to solve the puzzle. Thus, the dialogues with the experts offer clues that in traditional crime drama are included in the interview and interrogation scenes, suggesting that the conversations between experts and CSIs also have a particular narrative function which normally resides in the dialogue between suspects and detectives. The clues offered in these conversations allow for first conclusions of what happened to be drawn which are, however, only considered 'theories' as Sara calls them in 'Crate & Burial' (1.3),<sup>70</sup> that is potential scenarios rather than definite ones. The 'theories' which are played out in the reconstructions are distinguished from the reality of the investigators, I have argued above,<sup>71</sup> by alienation effects such as bleaching processes, filters and sound distortions. As a consequence, the theories appear only to be tentative. Even though the reconstructions continue in the same style, there is a change in the perception of the conclusions once all the evidence is collected. Then a general, final truth emerges which in *Crime Scene Investigation* is also certain because of its emphasis on DNA technologies. Before then, however, it is in the admittance of fallibility that *Crime Scene Investigation* displays the strength of its fascination with scientific knowledge. As science does not provide all the answers yet, the investigators continue to conduct research in their field. The constant search for answers allows the viewers to participate in the scientific quest for knowledge which is also facilitated through the choice of language in the dialogues. Although the experts use jargon, this is usually combined with

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<sup>70</sup> This remains the established term for their interpretation throughout the rest of the series.

<sup>71</sup> See p. 193.

enough visual or non-jargon information which makes the conversations comprehensible which distinguishes *CSI* from programmes such as *ER*.

To some extent, the set-up of *Crime Scene Investigation* is copied by *Miami*. Here, the cast itself consists of different experts. These include Alexx who is the medical examiner, Calleigh who is the ballistics expert and Megan who originally is in charge of DNA. By setting up the investigators as specialists, *Miami* emphasises the different fields of knowledge while at the same time reducing the extent of knowledge required to become an expert: Calleigh can be both a ballistics expert and a crime scene investigator which suggests that neither the workload nor the knowledge required for both fields exclude each other. This is in stark contrast to *Crime Scene Investigation* where the DNA expert Greg eventually moves from the DNA lab into the field but this involves him giving up his position as DNA expert and his higher salary.

Although *Miami* has its regular lab technicians who are specialists in their field such as Tyler, the audiovisual expert, or Valera, the DNA expert, there are not as many as in *Crime Scene Investigation*'s lab. Nor are they portrayed as ingenuous or knowledgeable as in the Las Vegas series. In 'Blood Brothers' (2.1), for example, it is Calleigh who comes up with the idea of checking the MTV footage for any clues as to what happened before a model was intentionally run over. Moreover, Calleigh is better at spotting the important parts of this footage, which reduces Tyler to a technician who knows how to enlarge the picture but little else. To be a scientist in *Miami* does not seem to require an extensive amount of specialist knowledge, nor does science depend on the ingenuity of its specialists in order to provide the correct answer. As a consequence, science seems to be a tool that everyone can use to access the truth. This conception of science, however, also means that science is no longer presented as an object of fascination and reverence which would put it at the centre of the narrative.



In general, *Miami* revolves less around the knowledge *required* for science and more around the knowledge *acquired* through science. As science seems to be able to answer all questions during the investigation, it appears to be practically infallible. This is also conveyed in the *CSI*-shots of technology, and particularly gun technology, which *Miami* uses regularly. Ballistic scenes often include a shot of a bullet slowly coming out of the barrel, getting its unique striation marks and flying off into the distant target (see figure 6.23). The regular

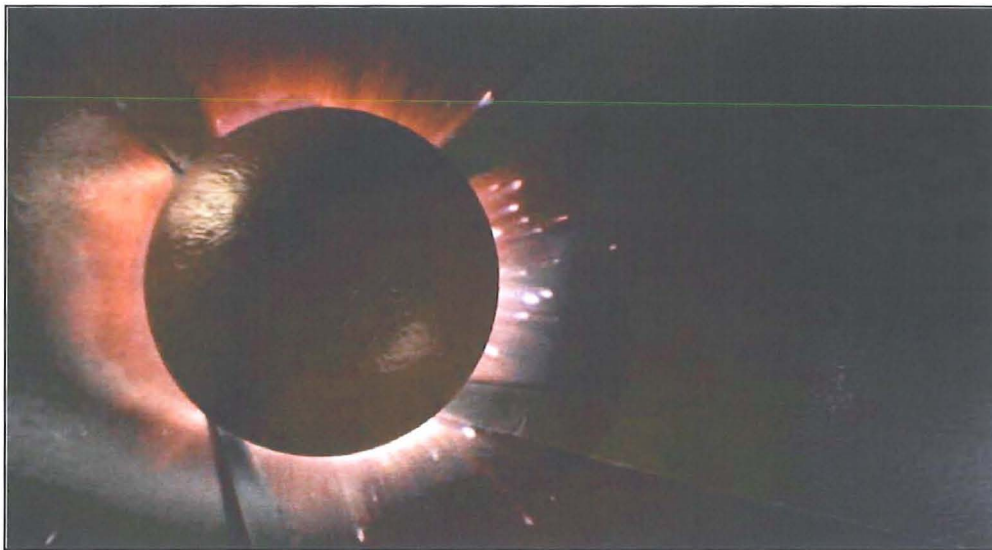


Figure 6.23: The bullet in the barrel in *Miami*: 'Bait' (2.9)

use of this sequence highlights the centrality of ballistics to the investigation which is used more regularly in *Miami* than in *Crime Scene Investigation*. Moreover, the sequence gives ballistics the status of an infallible science: by showing how the striations are engraved, the theory behind this evidence seems self-evident. At the same time, Calleigh's character frames how ballistics is understood. With its relative seclusion from the rest of the lab and Calleigh's Zen-like attitude to life, ballistics seems to be in part an 'exact science', as Calleigh calls it, free from the uncertainties of other sciences, in part a meditation exercise and in part a particular way to empower women. This is most apparent in the episode 'Body Count' (1.24) in which Calleigh's knowledge



of weapons not only enables her to track down an escaped killer but also to face her male nemesis alone without the offered protection of her love-interest Detective John Hagan. The sciences in *Miami*, therefore, although providing the objective truth, are intrinsically connected to the characters' subjectivity.

This is also evident in the way Alexx's character determines what pathology can reveal. As discussed in Chapter Four, Alexx's approach to autopsies is very different from all three of her male colleagues in the other series and is guided by a humane interest in the victims. This empathetic approach with the individual victim is highlighted by the set-up of the autopsy theatre.<sup>72</sup> Alexx is often framed with the victim in the same shot, sometimes mediated through the background screens. These shots highlight Alexx's physical proximity to the victim and make her own body visible which interrupts the distance of the masculine medical gaze as Thornham points out (2003, p. 79). Alexx's closeness and empathy with the victim, therefore, suggest a feminisation of the medical gaze which is no longer limited to seeing only the symptoms, the evidence and a general scientific truth, it can also see the individual subject, the pain and the specific, personal truth of someone's death.

This is also reflected in the *CSI*-shot of bodies. First, *Miami* contains fewer *CSI*-shots of bodies (47.1 percent) than of technology. This suggests that the series is comparatively reluctant to scrutinise a victim's body and make it confess to the same extent as *Crime Scene Investigation*. The *CSI*-shots of bodies are moreover usually embedded in a short reconstruction which presents the victim as active and alive. In the autopsy scene of 'The Best Defence' (2.5), for example, a *CSI*-shot which follows the bullet into the victim's mouth begins with a frame that shows the victim screaming, showing that this body is alive and reacting to its environment. The same shot is later repeated and held longer,

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<sup>72</sup> See p. 222.

allowing the victim's death to be brought to the foreground. Whereas in *Crime Scene Investigation* the CSI-shot explains the wound as evidence, *Miami* shows what happened to the victim in the moment of death.

In *Miami*, the sciences are indeed used to find out what happened to the victim and therefore clearly work towards establishing the narrative about the victim's life which is more in line with the use of pathology in Cornwell's fictions. Sue Turnbull describes Cornwell's main investigator as follows: 'Scarpetta sees the body as the person, and the violence directed at that body as violence directed at the individual concerned. Cornwell therefore insists on the coherence of individual identity expressed through the materiality of the body' (1993, p. 30). Similarly in *Miami*, the body itself is re-narrativised with knowledge of the victim's life. In 'Slaughterhouse' (1.8), for example, the autopsy of a teenage boy reveals that he suffered from a stomach ulcer and that his teeth were worn down, both signs of the stress he was under when looking after a family with four children whose mother suffered from post-natal depression. In the same episode, Calleigh and Horatio conduct an experiment in which they try to explain a blood spatter on the ceiling of the house. As they take on different positions for the shooting, they realise that the mother, who until then was thought to have committed the family murder-suicide, was shot while she was asleep. The scene starts with medium shots of them building the stage for the experiment and taking aim at the dummy. When they finally shoot the dummy while it is in a sleeping position, the camera snap-zooms onto the dummy's face to highlight the damage done to it, before cutting to a close-up of Calleigh and Horatio, both looking upset. In both cases in 'Slaughterhouse', then, science tells of the suffering of a specific victim rather than offering general scientific truths.

Importantly, in *Miami* these truths, though based on science, are expressed in such a way that they are easily accessible to non-scientists (the investigators avoid medical and chemical jargon) and therefore highlight primarily the plight of

the victim. The sciences in *Miami*, therefore, establish objective, yet accessible truths that revolve entirely around the victim.

In *New York*, finally, the CSI-shots are primarily of bodies and are again used to visualise the explanations given by the medical examiner, Dr. Hawkes. In comparison to *Crime Scene Investigation*, the CSI-shots are even shorter and do not linger on the last image before cutting back to the investigators. Moreover, penetration shots are relatively rare; rather the camera cuts directly from the medical examiner to the insides of the body. In 'American Dreamers' (1.3), for example, a CSI-shot presents the visualisation of Hawkes's explanation about the changes to the collarbone at a particular age. The camera cuts directly from Hawkes to a close-up of a skeleton at shoulder height and back to a close-up of the medical examiner. As these images also do not involve squelch sounds, the affective aspects are significantly reduced. Even when the camera penetrates the body, it does not enter the body as deeply as in *Crime Scene Investigation* where the mouth, for example, is perceived as doorway to both the stomach and the lungs. Rather, *New York* only offers images of what lies directly behind the orifice as the episode 'What You See is What You See' (1.23) demonstrates. Here, the camera moves only as far as the back of the mouth where Hawkes discovers something white (see figure 6.24).

By excluding all kinetic effects, the CSI-shot in *New York* is not invested with the same affective qualities as in the other series. In fact, in *New York*, the CSI-shots are relatively unspectacular and one shot of a ribcage is even repeated in two different episodes ('Supply and Demand', 1.20, and 'The Closer', 1.22). As a consequence, however, the CSI-shots are also much less able to move the viewer's body, therefore reducing the television experience again to one that relies on sight and sound alone.

In keeping with its general move away from science as the main aesthetic and narrative inspiration, *New York* includes very few specialised experts other



**Figure 6.24: The camera inside of the mouth in 'What You See is What You See'**

than the medical examiner Dr. Hawkes and the two DNA experts. At the end of season one, the series also introduces a regular trace expert.<sup>73</sup> This means that very little time is spent on explaining the different sciences beyond their use as a means to investigate crime. Similarly, the sciences do not appear as different fields of study which rely on extensive knowledge and can produce general scientific data. Rather, they are nearly exclusively presented as tools submitted to the solution of crime which is emphasised by the suggestion that the investigators in *New York* are not so much scientists as they are cops.

Unlike Gil in *Crime Scene Investigation*, Mac does not have a PhD; he is an ex-marine officer and primarily a policeman. Though his work involves him going into the lab, looking into microscopes and wearing a lab coat, his prior knowledge in the field of science is practically non-existent. The same is true for the other CSIs. All seem to be able to work trace or even prepare samples for DNA, but none of them actually has the scientific knowledge to understand their work as anything other than a mechanised process leading to the solution of the crime. In 'MIA/NYC Non-Stop' (1.0), Aiden works in ballistics and again helps

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<sup>73</sup> The trace and one of the DNA experts do not resurface in season two.

Mac in ballistics in 'Creatures of the Night' (1.2). In 'Officer Blue' (1.9), however, Stella seems to be the one who knows all about guns and rifles while Mac is shown to understand the details of bullets when he reconstructs one used to shoot a police officer. As a consequence, ballistics does not appear to be a specialised field that requires an extensive education. In general, the sciences appear less to be connected to fields of knowledge and research and more to the production of particular answers to specific, case-related questions.

This is also reflected in the way *New York* makes use of jargon, namely often by joking about it. In 'Tri-Borough' (1.11), Aiden tells Detective Flack, with whom she investigates the death of a construction worker, what the combination of chemicals found on him was:

**Aiden:** Dodecylbenzene sulfonic acid, tetrasodium EDTA,  
benzothiazolone...

**Detective Flack:** Whoa, benzothiazolone?!

**Aiden:** You know what that is?

**Detective Flack:** ...No

Flack and Aiden here ridicule the use of medical or chemical jargon which confuses rather than educates viewers, thereby highlighting the series' own commitment towards using a comprehensible language. Whereas *Crime Scene Investigation* creates understanding by explaining things with the help of the investigator's knowledge, *New York* suggests knowledge is democratically available and does not depend on jargon. Indeed, scientific knowledge is here presented as something that can be read up upon on the internet, as Aiden does in this episode. This also implies that the investigators themselves do not seem to have experienced any higher education. Rather their job requires them to become knowledgeable during the investigation. The difference is striking when compared to both *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami*. In the pilot episode of *Crime Scene Investigation*, Catherine tells Holly Gribbs that cops do not know

the difference between fingerprints and paw prints, highlighting the ignorance of other law enforcers and the knowledge needed before one can start to work as crime scene investigator. In *Miami: 'Extreme'* (2.10), Detective Frank Tripp (Rex Linn) is further pushed into an antagonistic stance because he looks down on the technology of the CSIs. The scientific knowledge in *New York*, on the other hand, does not set the CSIs apart from the rest of the world. Instead, the series presents scientific knowledge as democratically available and not as a reason for reverence.

This is also evoked in scenes in which Flack is presented as just another member of the team. While in *Crime Scene Investigation*, Brass has knowledge that is decidedly different from that of the investigators as it is in connection with the background stories of suspects, in *New York*, Flack is seen to work with the team in every respect. In 'What You See is What You See' (1.23), Aiden even recruits him to help her find the motorbike used as a get-away vehicle. He mounts the different bikes, spins a brief round and then kneels down with Aiden to check the tyre prints. Their equal status is emphasised by the medium shot that frames them both (see figure 6.25).





Only when the case itself involves science, does *New York* show an interest in understanding the field of knowledge better. In 'Blink' (1.1) the case involves a Russian doctor who lost his licence to practice and now conducts experiments by abducting women and putting them into a state of physical imprisonment (the victims are fully aware of what is happening but are unable to move anything other than their eyelids). In this episode, Mac turns to Dr. Leonard Giles (Grant Albrecht) in order to learn more about the victims' condition and the perpetrator's ability to bring it on. In no other episodes, however, is the doctor's role extended to that of an expert other than in order to confirm a DNA match or not.

The series' general lack of interest in knowledge outside of the investigation of crime is highlighted in the episode 'Crime and Misdemeanor' (1.19) in which Danny investigates how a dead homeless person came to end up as a human statue in a park in Manhattan. Mac orders him off the case when Hawkes establishes the cause of death as natural, meaning no crime was committed. When Danny keeps investigating it, Mac disciplines him. In comparison with the *Crime Scene Investigation* episode 'Evaluation Day' (1.22) in which Gil reminds Sara good-naturedly of her priorities in a case of animal trafficking, Mac's treatment of Danny seems rather harsh. It also raises awareness that *New York* is indeed completely crime-focused whereas *Crime Scene Investigation* is not.

The emphasis on understanding science only in relation to crime is also evident in the conversations during scenes in which the CSIs brief each other in the corridor. The information given out in those scenes relate to the case and to the case only. Questions such as Nick's 'Why chloroform?' are not asked. Rather than allowing different sciences to contribute to the puzzle, the *New York* CSIs are particularly interested in recording equipment. In nearly all episodes the investigators fall back on some form of documentation, be it photographs in 'Blink' (1.1), realist sketches of the city in 'American Dreamers' (1.3), computers in 'Grand Master' (1.4) and 'Three Generations are Enough' (1.8) and CCTV

footage in, amongst others, 'A Man a Mile' (1.5), 'Rain' (1.7) and 'Night Mother' (1.10). In 'On the Job' (1.21), Mac finds a mobile phone at the scene where Danny shot a police officer which they use to get an acoustic recording of what happened. The unlikeliness of the event of a mobile phone recording just as a shooting is happening highlights *New York's* need for mechanical witnesses instead of relying on the sciences. Indeed, *New York's* only separation from conventional crime drama seems to be the substitution of human witnesses with mechanical ones.

This reliance on mechanical witnesses points to *New York's* emphasis on the working through of the trauma of the World Trade Center attacks. As Stephanie Marriott (2001, p. 732) points out, live-event reporting relies on the endless replaying of the moment that it tries to capture. In the case of 9/11, television channels replayed the moments the second plane hit one of the towers, the collapse of the first and then of the second tower. The images of the first plane hitting the towers were recorded by accident which is reflected in the accidental recordings that the investigators return to in *New York*. As Jean Baudrillard suggests, the attacks on the twin towers has 'radicalised the relation of the image to reality' (2002, p. 27). Interestingly, films have since made use of sound-only recordings in order to highlight the plight of the victims (see *11'9"01* (Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, 2002)). Similarly, with its mechanical witnesses, *New York* enables the investigators and, with them, the viewers to see and hear again and again what happened, enabling the recording to be scrutinised in detail which, when seen and heard often enough, gives up its clues. Thus, *New York* establishes a direct correlation between recording and reality. This, however, implies that the truth no longer resides in the body as in *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami* but in the recorded images and sounds.

Thus, the *CSI*-shot and the use of different sciences in the series suggest that there are substantial differences in how the series understand the use of



science within criminal investigation. With the multiplicity of sciences represented by regular lab technicians outside of the original cast and the spectacularised use of the CSI-shot, *Crime Scene Investigation* develops a spectacle of science itself and therefore celebrates science beyond its use as a tool to solve crimes. *Miami*, on the other hand, does not spectacularise the body in the same way as *Crime Scene Investigation* and therefore creates scope for empathy with the victims. By making the regular cast experts in their fields, *Miami* also enables the sciences to be framed through the characters and therefore allows for a feminising of both pathology and ballistics. *New York*, finally, neither spectacularises the body in the way of *Crime Scene Investigation*, nor does it empathise with the victims as *Miami*. The sciences also play a relatively minor role which indicates that they have little narrative value other than being tools in the investigation of the crime. The body in *New York* becomes one of many objects that need to be investigated and the crime becomes the entire narrative focus. Thus, *New York* seems to be much more in line with conventional crime drama than *Crime Scene Investigation*. Similarly, individual knowledge connected to the investigators, must move into the background and be substituted by a different level of involvement in the cases. This will be explained in more detail in the next section in which I discuss the contribution of the investigators to the scientific investigation of crime.

## **6.6 The Investigators**

The cast in all series are essentially set up as work-based family with, as Carlen Lavigne points out, 'a white male in charge of a crime lab, his white female second-in-command, and assorted underling "children" – some of whom may belong to minorities. This nuclear family arrangement provides a "father knows best" narrative base' (2006). In *Crime Scene Investigation*, there are two white

female investigators, two white male investigators and one black male investigator. In *Miami*, there are again two female members of the crime lab, one white, one black, two white male investigators and one male investigator with a Cuban-Russian background. In *New York*, finally, there are two white male investigators, one of whom is Italian, one black male medical examiner, one white female and one female investigator with a Greek background.

Despite these similarities, the programmes handle the different character back-stories very differently. In *Crime Scene Investigation*, race and gender play a vital part in positioning the investigators towards suspects and also influence what the different characters know about the crime. Catherine, in particular, often makes use of specifically female knowledge in order to understand a crime. In 'After the Show' (4.8), she puts on a similar pair of tights as the female victim, literally putting herself into the female victim's shoes and thereby learning to understand what happened through the victim's perspective. Her insight into female points of view also enables her to solve cases. In 'Sounds of Silence' (1.20), for example, Catherine instantly knows that the young, pregnant woman on Dr. Robbins's slab knew of her pregnancy because she understands how a woman in the victim's situation (single, living with her parents) would react. Her knowledge of what women do, think and feel resembles *Prime Suspect's* Jane Tennison's ability to solve cases because she recognises the women's individuality (Jermyn 2003b, p. 55). In this case ('Sounds of Silence'), Catherine's knowledge of the woman's likely reaction to her pregnancy help her to understand that the shooting was not a mob hit but started with the woman's lover killing her and then subsequently shooting everyone else in the coffee shop in order to eliminate any witnesses.

Sara, similarly, knows particular things about women. Although she is usually thought of as the one lab member who finds it hard to relate to people, Sara has a particular understanding for women in abusive relationships. This is

already obvious in 'Sex, Lies and Larvae' (1.10) where she can instantly read a victim's X-rays in terms of her history as an abuse victim. While Sara looks at the X-rays and lists the different fractures to her head, the camera gradually moves closer into an extreme close-up of Sara emphasising her increasingly emotional involvement as she realises the scale of the abuse. This knowledge about abuse also extends to rape cases – starting with 'Too Tough to Die' (1.16) in which she forms a particularly close bond to a rape victim who was shot but now lives in a vegetative state and including 'Homebodies' (4.3) in which she becomes protective of a teenage rape victim.<sup>74</sup> Where Catherine's knowledge is shown to be empowering (it enables her to solve cases), Sara's seems limiting as it draws her closer to the victims and often makes her overly emotional when she needs to stay focused. This, however, also allows for greater empathy with the victim on behalf of the viewer.

Both Nick's and Gil's backgrounds remain relatively invisible, suggesting that their white masculinity is normative. If anything, Nick's family background (he has four sisters and a brother) is the only thing to have any impact, enabling him to talk to suspects or survivors when other CSIs fail. In 'Burden of Proof' (2.15), he has a hunch that would explain how a brother's semen came to be on his sister's nightgown. Requesting to speak to the teenage boy, he is able to eliminate the son as suspect. This is the only case in which there is a hint of a distinctly male knowledge that Nick has access to while others have not. Nick, who is characterised to be slightly laddish, instantly understands the teenage boy's sexuality when other, less masculine men do not. Gil's identity as white male forty-something only plays a role in 'Butterflied' (4.12) in which a man, similar to him – a doctor in his 40s who has fallen in love with a much younger woman after a life dedicated entirely to his career – kills a woman who

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<sup>74</sup> Her attachment is later, in season five, explained as stemming from an abusive family background.

resembles Sara. In the final interrogation scene, Gil, unable to prove that the doctor was the killer, explains what happened by telling his own story in which his status as a male professional and his age play important parts.

Warrick's race is relatively downplayed by the series. Rather, in the first season, his gambling addiction is the part of his background that is highlighted. His knowledge gained from his experience as gambler is, however, only used in 'Table Stakes' (1.15) where he can identify a man's gambling lifestyle from his pocket contents and in 'Fahrenheit 932' (1.12) in which he helps Nick and Catherine in their investigation with his expert knowledge of the world of sports betting. His race is only tentatively addressed in 'Crate 'n Burial' (1.3) in which he forms a close bond with a young black offender and later in 'Evaluation Day' (1.22) in which he comes to the rescue after the same teenager is the only witness in a stabbing incident in the juvenile prison. Even in 'Random Acts of Violence' (3.13), in which the daughter of his former mentor is shot in Warrick's old neighbourhood, Warrick's race plays less a role than his upbringing in this particular neighbourhood: although there is at first a suggestion that the shooting was racially motivated (a black offender shooting a white boy and accidentally killing the girl), the episode excludes any allusions to racial problems after the teaser and suggests that everyone is treated objectively by both the lab and the police. Furthermore, the episode eventually reveals that the motive behind the shooting was revenge for the exclusion of a boy from the football club of Warrick's mentor. Thus, rather than foregrounding race, the episode's real concern is the relationships between people in a particular neighbourhood.

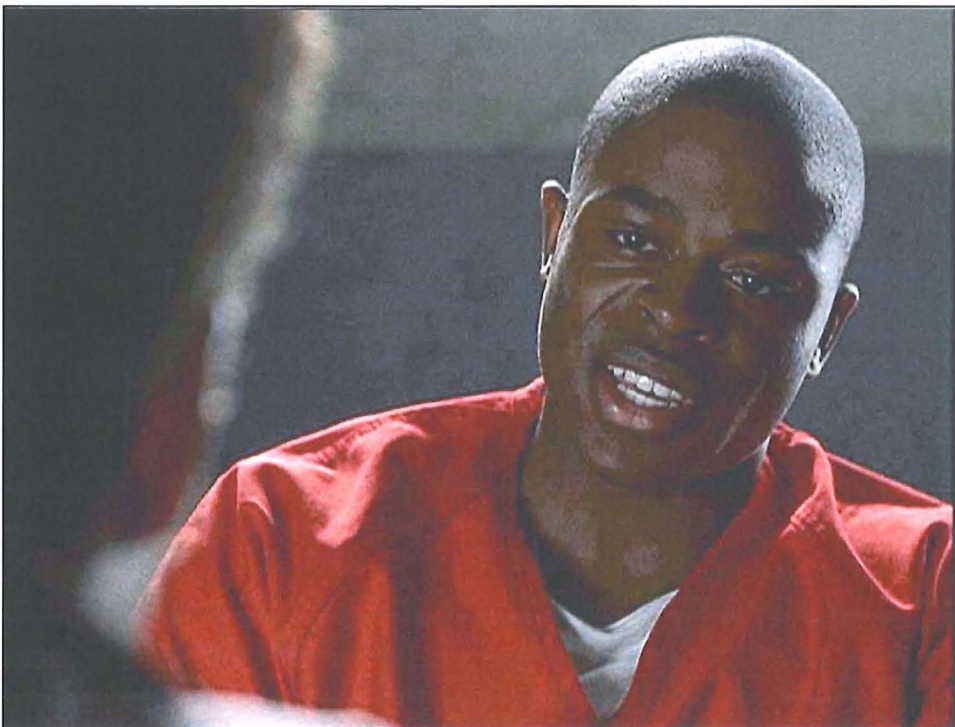
Warick's race is, however, able to highlight the tensions between different groups within the black community. In this respect, *CSI* follows established stereotypes in presenting blacks as connected to 'drug dealing, violent street crime ... and prostitution; while black cop heroes tend to be characterised as noble figures whose mission is to clean up the criminalised black

neighbourhood' (Pines 1995, p. 74). Warrick, the black scientist-cop, is shown to have chosen a life within law enforcement and therefore promotes lawfulness; but there are other black men (and to a lesser extent women) who choose lawlessness. While Pines's discussion suggests a division which is based on a character's position towards the law alone, in *CSI* this division seems to be also driven by class. In the relevant episodes types of black people (the lawful, *middle-class* black person and the lawless, *working-class* black person who insists on their black identity as indicated primarily through their language) are pitted against each other. This is most apparent in 'Evaluation Day' (1.22) in which he is contrasted to a black gang member from California who is proud to be 'black as night' and to be the boss of a gang of fellow black men. In the final interrogation, he is literally put in opposition to Warrick who, with his blue eyes, paler complexion, angular features and middle-class language, appears as practically white in comparison (see figures 6.26 and 6.27).

The series tackles racism only in two episodes. In 'Pilot' (1.1), Warrick is stopped by police on his way to a judge's house because they were informed that a black man was walking around in the rich and obviously white neighbourhood. In 'Blood Lust' (3.9), Sara and Warrick discuss the fatal beating of an Indian cab driver. When Sara tells Warrick that the attack was obviously racially motivated, Warrick reminds her not to get sidetracked by this but to stick with the science. This suggests that science, itself colour-blind, can bring true justice to cases that are motivated by race or ethnicity. In fact, his comment draws attention to the ability of science to see beyond the constraints of race and gender. *Crime Scene Investigation*, therefore, presents gendered knowledge as valuable, while race does not empower characters with a deeper understanding for the life of a group of people. This suggests that *Crime Scene Investigation*, like other American drama, as Sharon Ross (2004, p. 149) points



**Figure 6.26: Warrick, the black man with blue eyes and fair skin in 'Evaluation Day'**



**Figure 6.27: Warrick's nemesis in 'Evaluation Day': 'Black as night'**

out, gives scope to consider issues related to gender while neglecting those of race and constructing white masculinity as normative.

In *Miami*, gender and ethnicity rather than race are somewhat more important to the narrative. However, it is again primarily gendered knowledge that is perceived as valuable. Here, Calleigh is the character around whom this knowledge is constructed. She admits to reading glossy magazines and watching entertainment shows and therefore is shown to participate in the feminine realm of gossip which goes along on the one hand with a feeling of guilty pleasure – she apologises regularly for it – but on the other hand also with a particular form of knowledge which she shares with other female investigators in crime writing and drama (Clark 1990; Munt 1994). Thus, in ‘Stalkerazzi’ (2.15), she is the one with the access to the women’s magazines which enable the team to view a roll of film stolen from the crime scene that contains the vital clue to the killer’s motive.

Other knowledge that she has exclusive access to is in connection with consumer objects that are designed for women: in ‘Extreme’ (2.10), for example, she tells Speed of the differences in the clip-on fingernails that they found at the crime scene. Speed listens to her explaining the different applications and finally says: ‘Okay, I should have known that.’ But Calleigh disagrees: ‘I would be scared if you did.’ Gendered female knowledge here is understood to be entirely the domain of women. Although Calleigh also knows more about guns than Speed, a field with its technical aspects and its machismo connotations traditionally considered a male domain, feminine fields remain firmly in the hands of women. Although this is empowering to women who have access to both sides, it also devalues their experience as irrelevant to men.

In respect of ethnicity, the characters of Eric as well as the female detectives, Adell Sevilla and Yelina Salas, enable *Miami* to address particular issues. All of them are of the Latin-American community which *Miami* portrays as relatively closed-off as the episode ‘Wet Foot/Dry Foot’ (1.3) suggests: here, Horatio and Megan need Adell’s help to gain access to a young man who has

just arrived from Cuba. However, ethnicity is not perceived to empower the investigators to solve particular cases. Although Eric keeps pointing out that crime scenes are just around the corner from where his parents live, this does not lead to him explaining what living in that neighbourhood means. Rather, it reveals the politics behind cases. In 'Death Grip' (2.4) in particular, his ethnic background makes him more aware of the injustice of the media and the police who focus on the abduction of a white, blond girl while the abduction and murder of a Latin-American girl remains unreported and uninvestigated.

Eric does, however, derive one advantage from his ethnicity and that is his fluency in three languages: English, Spanish and Russian. While English is presented as the main language of Miami, Spanish is shown to be a second language that the investigators speak fluently and that gives them access to the otherwise closed Latin-American community. Language skills indeed seem to promise access to such communities as Eric's Russian also suggests. In 'Evidence of Things Unseen' (1.16), when Eric first meets the Russian cousin of the murder victim, he takes hair samples from his work shirt and asks him about his job in Russian which is translated in the subtitles. According to his boss, the Russian man does not speak English. Eric's ethnic background therefore gives him the skill to access information that the other CSIs cannot. However, Horatio later forces the man to admit that he does actually speak English, apparently rendering Eric's skill obsolete. As with the team's knowledge of Spanish, Eric's knowledge of Russian is primarily useful in biasing witnesses in favour of the CSIs, making them more willing to talk to them than to the police. Ethnicity as knowledge in *Miami*, then, is understood primarily as language skills rather than cultural knowledge. Again, gendered knowledge is perceived to be able to contribute to the solution of cases while ethnic knowledge can only highlight the politics behind them and give access to information that non-language speakers



do not have, allowing for stories to emerge that highlight the lives of those normally marginalised.

*New York* proves to be the most diverse in its cast – Danny is Italian as his affiliation with an Italian street gang suggests, Stella is Greek and scolds Mac in her mother tongue in 'The Closer' (1.22) and Hawkes is black – but the series rarely develops stories around gender, race and ethnicity. Aiden and Stella are not shown to possess any gendered knowledge that would enable them to solve cases quicker or with a deeper understanding of what happened. And Hawkes does not possess any racial knowledge that he could bring into an investigation. None of these backgrounds gives them access to knowledge not available to others.

Rather, two of the characters are given personal back-stories that bring them closer to the different cases. Mac's wife was killed in the World Trade Center attacks. As a consequence, he feels particularly close to a female victim in 'Blink' (1.1) who the investigators find alive but in a vegetative state at a crime scene. In subsequent scenes he is shown to talk to her as he processes her body, and once he discovers she suffers from 'locked-in syndrome' tries to communicate with her through blinking. In general, Mac's background aligns him with people who *survive* crime or are left behind, an aspect that I will come back to in the next chapter. His personal involvement does, however, not help him solve cases. Rather, it helps to bring the suffering of the victims and survivors closer and in this respect resembles more Sara's knowledge about abuse victims. Danny, on the other hand, gains from his old affiliation to the Italian gang and therefore has access to a particular form of ethnic knowledge. When Mac approaches him in 'Tanglewood' (1.13) about a tattoo he uncovered on the back of a murder victim, Danny instantly recognises it as fake as it lacks an entry date. Here, Danny functions as an expert Mac can turn to for his

knowledge, similar to Warrick in relation to his gambling in *Crime Scene Investigation*.

Within the three series, therefore, the investigators' backgrounds are allocated very different functions. While in *New York* the mix of ethnicities, races and genders primarily seems to represent the mix of the city itself, in both *Miami* and *Crime Scene Investigation* the background of the investigators is shown to enhance their knowledge. While gendered knowledge is represented as able to contribute to the solution of crime, racial knowledge is not given that privilege. Instead, race in *Crime Scene Investigation* is used to portray the black community as divided. Ethnic knowledge in *Miami*, however, offers insights as the language skills open otherwise closed-off communities, while cultural knowledge derived from ethnicity seems less important.

## **6.7 Conclusions**

This chapter analysed the scenes in which science is used to investigate crime. I have shown how the five central sciences fundamentally structure the narratives of episodes and enable the complex set of circumstances which leads to crime to be unravelled. The flexi-narrative structure in *CS/* therefore seems the result of the franchise's investment in the scientific investigation and offers an investigation and a crime narrative that is not based on the continuity of cause and effect, as in traditional crime drama, but that shows several things to happen at the same time. There is also a greater complexity in how the text offers the viewers ways to engage with crime: although the cerebral still remains important – *CS/* tells narratives that revolve around knowledge about crime – viewers are offered to engage with crime through their senses and through their emotions. As these emotions are triggered by elements of the text that highlight the carnality of the body, they have the potential to move the spectator's body,

thus also bringing a physical component to the viewing experience which mirrors the investigator's use of touch during the investigation. This multi-sensory experience of crime which is facilitated by *CSI*'s investment in an excessive style therefore aligns the spectator closely with the investigators. This suggests that *CSI* rejects the logic of traditional crime detection and emphasises the need to investigate the messiness of crime through material that is inscribed with the crime but also brings the crime physically closer to the viewer.

Despite these overarching similarities, the three series prove to be very different from each other in how they portray the sciences. *New York* shows little interest in exploring the sciences as fields of knowledge, but rather depicts them as mechanised processes that can be showcased but need little explanation. As a consequence, the sciences appear to be unproblematic truth-givers. In general, *New York* returns to conventions of traditional crime drama by replacing eyewitnesses with recording equipment, by emphasising the urbanity of the location and by suggesting that the investigators are cops rather than scientists. However, with the replacement of the unreliable human eyewitness with the reliable mechanical recording device, *New York* seems to surpass traditional crime drama in terms of the certainty of the solution, suggesting that it can achieve a definite moral judgement. This has undoubtedly effects on how crime is looked at which will be discussed in the next chapter.

*Crime Scene Investigation*, although also able to provide definite solutions thanks to DNA, highlights that scientific findings must be considered much more tentatively throughout the investigation. The original series shows a fascination with the knowledge that can be gained from science and revels in the different fields of knowledge available to the investigators, celebrating them by spectacularising them and using them as both aesthetic and narrative inspiration. As a consequence, the aim of the series seems to be much less to find out who did it, but to understand the whole context and relations that bring

about crime. Science and the sometimes gendered knowledge of the investigators therefore become tools which help us not only to understand crime but also life and its circumstances.

Although similarly spectacularising the sciences, *Miami* does not use the sciences as aesthetic and/or narrative inspiration. Rather, it takes a clear stand for the victim. By putting less of an emphasis on the spectacularisation of the body by using fewer CSI-shots and by embedding the CSI-shot in a narrativisation of the victim's life which implies that the corpse can now appear as the remains of a human being, *Miami* manages to focus on the victim as a person rather than an object of analysis. This is further emphasized by the framing of medical science through the character of Alexx who is empathetic with the victims and addresses them as if they were alive. *Miami*, then, takes a much more biased stance than *Crime Scene Investigation* as it positions the viewer on the side of the victims which necessarily leads to a decreased interest in the motivations of the perpetrators. Again, this suggests that the use of forensic sciences in *Miami* has an impact on how the crime is judged and looked at, and it is exactly to these questions – what stories of the crime can be told, how are they told and what are the emphases – that I now want to turn.

## Chapter Seven: The Story of the Crime

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the story of the crime in relation to the investigation. It therefore completes the project developed in the two previous chapters by reconstructing the story of the crime out of the plot presented by the story of the investigation (Todorov 1977). I will show that despite similarities in the crimes – what crimes are committed, who the victims and who the perpetrators are – each series tells essentially different stories of the crime both in terms of their structure and their outlook. This is due to the different incentives of the series which come to the fore in the story of the crime. With its celebration of science, *Crime Scene Investigation* apparently objectively develops a story of the crime that remains open for ambiguity; *Miami* with its focus on the victim plays through the moment of their death and delineates the innocent from the guilty; *New York* with its focus on police work and mourning emphasises survivors and highlights the trauma of crime.

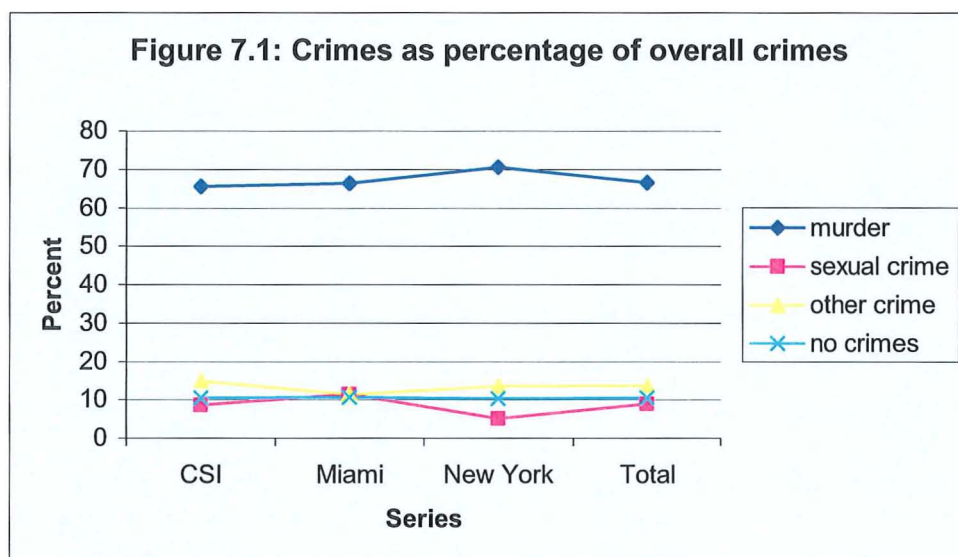
I will begin this chapter by analysing statistical data on the representation of crime in the franchise. The data was gathered in a quantitative study of all the crimes depicted in the first four seasons of *Crime Scene Investigation*, the first two of *Miami* and the first of *New York*. My categorisation broadly follows established categories from similar studies (Reiner, *et al.* 2003; Gunter and Harrison 1998) with a focus on the type of crime, gender, age and race of perpetrators and victims and their relationship.

While in general, the studies of crime in the media find it sufficient to analyse the statistics alone, my textual analysis has already highlighted that

even though the crimes might be the same, their representation is not. The chapter therefore also provides a close textual analysis of each series with particular emphasis on the reconstruction scenes through which most of the story of the crime is told. I will highlight the structure of these scenes within the text and discuss how aesthetic devices are used to convey the emphasis of each series. Here, I will return to a discussion of gender and highlight how gender is one of the means of creating a moral stance towards the crime.

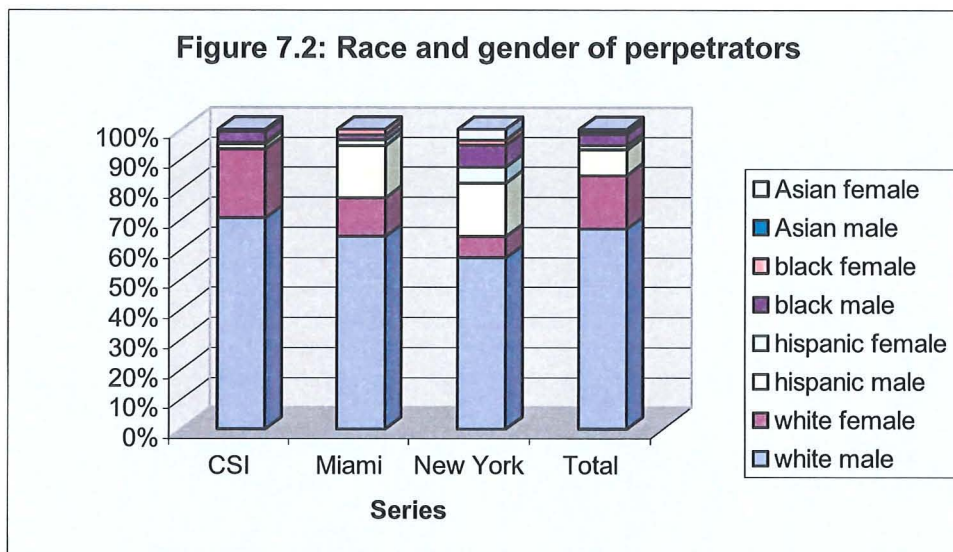
## **7.2 The Effects of Science: Crime as Messy and Complicated**

This section gives a general overview of the crimes in *CSI* and establishes the similarities in the franchise. In keeping with most television crime drama, *CSI* represents primarily murders (Osborne 1995). *New York* currently has the highest percentage of murders or attempted murders per committed crime (70.7 percent in comparison to 65.6 percent in *Crime Scene Investigation* and 66.4 percent in *Miami*) while cases that turn out to be accidents or suicides take up approximately the same number of cases in all three series (around 10.5 percent). Another category that stands out is that of sexual crimes which accounts for roughly 9 percent in the franchise (see figure 7.1). In general, *CSI*



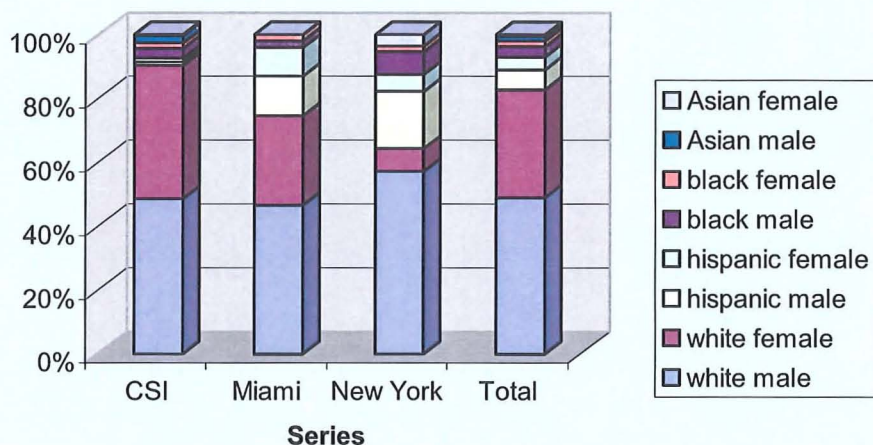
tends to focus on violent crime, including violent rape, therefore being in line with the general representation of crime in the media which, Reiner *et al.* (2003) note, tends to focus on serious crime and in particular on violent crime against an individual.

*CSI* also shares the emphasis on white male victims and white male perpetrators with most representation of crime on television (see Gunter and Harrison 1998, p. 15-17). In all three series, perpetrators tend to be white and male (*Crime Scene Investigation*: 70.5 percent, *Miami*: 64.2 percent and *New York*: 57.1 percent) and victims are approximately 50 percent white and male (*Crime Scene Investigation*: 48.7 percent, *Miami*: 46.6 percent and *New York*: 57.1 percent; see figures 7.2 and 7.3). Just over 15 percent of perpetrators and victims are non-white, highlighting the franchise's (and American television's) tendency to represent whiteness as normative. Although female perpetrators are represented more often than in actual crime statistics (which indicate that in 2005 women made up 17.9 percent of all offenders arrested for violent crime; see U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation 2006), there is a significantly smaller number of female perpetrators than there are male (20.7 percent are female in the franchise). Women are more likely to be victims (42.5 percent of all victims of *CSI* are female).



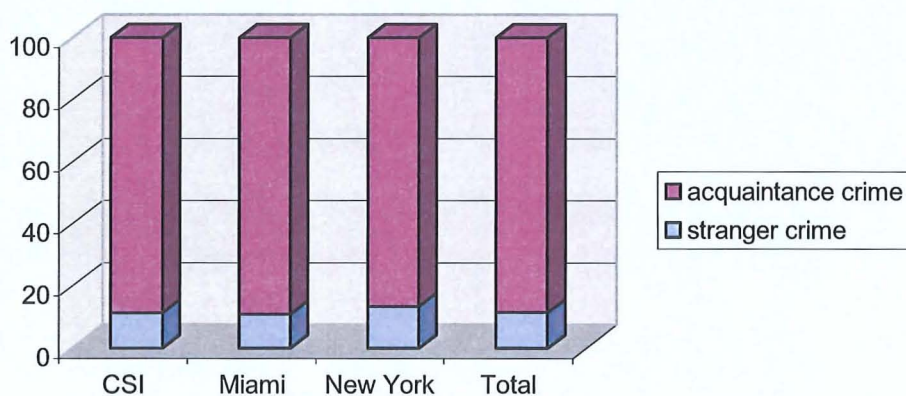


**Figure 7.3: Race and gender of victims**



There is, however, a difference to other representations of crime in the media in terms of relationships between victims and perpetrators. As the successful investigation of crime in CSI/ relies primarily on trace evidence, crimes are usually shown to be committed between acquaintances rather than strangers. Indeed, in all three series more than 80 percent of the crimes are committed between acquaintances; the overall average across the franchise is 88.5 percent (see figure 7.4).

**Figure 7.4 Stranger and acquaintance crimes in all crimes**



This suggests that crime arises from the interaction between people rather than from premeditated schemes in contrast to other representations of crime. In



Reiner's overview of representations in the media, he notices that 'criminals were rational and purposive... [and] they usually had to engage in violence to achieve their ends' (2000, p. 148). This suggests that perpetrators are normally represented to plan their actions. In *CSI*, crime seems to be borne out of difficult relationships: at work, in friendship networks, within families and sexual relationships. All of these suggest that rather than offering a clear indication of who the 'bad guy' or the good person is, *CSI* can offer a portrait of social life as difficult and complicated. *CSI* therefore provides a portrayal of the circumstances of crime as messy which also makes the use of a legal discourse difficult: in a world in which people are driven to crime how can guilt be defined as absolute? In this question lies one of the main tensions of the franchise, namely that between moral or ethical guilt and the legal definition of guilt. However, as I will discuss, only *Crime Scene Investigation* draws attention to this question.

As crime arises out of difficult relationships and is investigated with the help of trace evidence, it must also be portrayed as messy in its manifestation. The bodies in *CSI* are therefore usually surrounded by blood pools and blood spatter which is often highlighted through the choice of framing as I have discussed in relation to the teaser.<sup>75</sup> One example is given in *Miami*: 'Bunk' (1.13) where an elderly woman is found in a pool of blood. As the investigators look through the flat, they find several blood pools and smears which are all shown in close-ups (see figure 7.5). The amount of blood is later explained by a reference to a particular drug which the victim took, but in this first depiction it highlights the importance of excessive physical evidence (such as blood) to the franchise's ability to depict crime. Even when the crime at first appears clean, the

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<sup>75</sup> See Chapter Four, p. 144.



**Figure 7.5: One of the blood smears in 'Bunk' in close-up**

investigators' gadgets often recover what has been washed away,<sup>76</sup> therefore revealing the essential messiness of crime in general. In *New York: 'Outside Man'* (1.6), for example, Mac and Stella find a man lying dead in his bed, apparently peaceful. Mac then turns back the sheets to find the stump of the victim's leg covered in a blood-stained bandage. The subsequent close-ups from Mac's point of view emphasise his ability to uncover the messiness of crime and to reveal the chaos of the moment of the victim's death when different attempts to help himself left traces of more blood and broken glass. Mac eventually uses luminol which makes blood stains visible, revealing yet more blood evidence (see figure 7.6).

With this emphasis on the injured, mutilated body as the inscription of violence and as one of the major sites that are examined during the investigation of the crime, it is not so much violence that disrupts the original equilibrium, as Neale (1980, p. 20) suggests is defining for crime drama, but the effects of violence on the body. I have highlighted throughout this thesis that *CSI's* style

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<sup>76</sup> Often with the blue light as discussed in Chapter Six, p. 216.



**Figure 7.6: Mac reveals the blood evidence with luminol in 'Outside Man'**

enables the viewers to engage with crime not just cerebrally, but also with their senses and their bodies. This is not unlike the physical reaction of Sam Ryan to a film about the holocaust in an episode of *Silent Witness* that Heather Nunn and Anita Biressi discuss.

The camera cuts between this imagery and close-ups of Ryan's face as she watches the film, first stunned and then moved to tears. Here, the role of witness is partly that of bodily registering of another's pain. The physicality of this response is signalled, albeit inadequately, in the phrase "reflex of tears", which John Langer uses to describe the way in which a bystander to some terrible event "becomes the bearer of the emotional payload of a story" [...]. The close-up of the witness's face becomes the "nodal point of identification" that encourages audiences to participate in the emotional moment as well. (2003, p. 197-198)

In *CSI*, the spectator's participation as witness is achieved through two means. First, by watching the (usually female) investigator watching the effects of

crime.<sup>77</sup> In *Crime Scene Investigation: 'Bloodlines'* (4.23), for example, we see Catherine watching the rape victim vomit when shown the drawing of her attacker. While the images of the victim remain in medium shots and long shots, Catherine's visibly upset face is shown in close-up, allowing for the viewer to indeed 'participate in the emotional moment as well.' Second, the witness participation is also achieved by enabling an engagement with the text that moves the viewer's body. This is made possible in scenes in which the body is discovered, in which the body breaks out of its medical containment and in the *CSI*-shot. Thus, the viewer registers directly the effects of crime on his or her body without the mediation of an investigator.

This engagement is also elicited for the sexual crime cases of *CSI* which otherwise constitute a slight exception to the rules set up in this section. I want to investigate this in some detail in order to understand how *CSI* conceptualises these crimes. Tait highlights that the franchise tends to give an 'instrumentalized view of the corpse [which] enables the performance of a Gothic eroticism and the conceit that a rational imperative frames our looking authorizes a necrophilic gaze' (2006, p. 46). Thus, the series seems to allow an eroticisation of the corpse even when it looks at the body as a means to trace the trauma of crime. Within this context, an understanding of how the franchise relates to sexual crimes can further highlight a conservative politics.

Surprisingly, the three series deal with sexual crimes in very similar ways. In comparison to real crime statistics, *CSI* presents the investigation of sexual crimes as more common than in real life (of all crimes, 10 percent are of sexual nature in *CSI* in comparison to 6.8 percent of all real-life crimes; U.S.

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<sup>77</sup> This suggests that this particular form of witnessing is indeed perceived to belong to the realm of the feminine, a suggestion highlighted by Thornham's discussion (2003) of the female investigators as relating to crime also through their bodies and therefore disrupting the masculine gaze.

Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Information 2006).<sup>78</sup> With the exception of one case (*Miami*: 'Forced Entry', 1.14), all victims are female, but all perpetrators are male. Stranger crime in sexual crimes is much more common than in the other categories (about a third are committed by strangers). This is particularly interesting as real crime statistics actually suggest the opposite: seven of ten victims stated that their rapists were known to them (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics 2006). In *CSI*, rape of adults tends to be committed by strangers while the sexual abuse of children is presented to occur in families (only three of 13 cases that involve strangers involve children). Overall then, in terms of rape stories, *CSI* widely seems to follow the most conservative plot that Cuklanz (2001) describes: a stranger rapes a woman.

A similar tendency to follow the conservative plot is apparent in the way the rapes are represented: practically all of them are physically violent and most end with the murder of the victim. Only in cases with surviving victims is there scope for more progressive forms of representation. Cuklanz notes that there is a development in the 1990s in the representation of victims in television fictions where victims are increasingly able to articulate their feelings. Within the four central rape episodes of *CSI* that feature surviving victims (*Crime Scene Investigation*: 'Homebodies', 4.3; 'Bloodlines', 4.23; *Miami*: 'Hard Time', 2.3; and *New York*: 'Creatures of the Night', 1.2), this ability to articulate also extends to their agency in the investigation. Rather than leaving it to the male cop, these women decide their fate themselves: in 'Homebodies', the victim makes Sara take her to the hospital, in 'Bloodlines' the surviving victim gives a detailed description of her attack, in 'Hard Time' the victim's testimony helps to keep her

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<sup>78</sup> The number for *CSI* here also includes cases in which the sexual abuse of children was made visible through the investigation of a murder. In other words, they include unreported crimes, while the real crime statistics are based on reported crimes.

rapist behind bars, and in 'Creatures of the Night' the victim actively decides against the wishes of the investigators to face her attacker again which could trigger the regaining of her memory. However, their agency is undermined by a second attack which leaves them either dead or in a coma, silencing them in favour of a usually male investigator who solves the crime for them. The rape stories in *CSI*, therefore, seem to fit into a tradition on prime-time television which prefers stranger rape over acquaintance rape and represents rape in relation to the violence inscribed on the body of the victim who, although allowed greater agency in the investigation of the rape, is ultimately silenced in favour of a male investigator.

Crime in *CSI*, therefore, is primarily violent crime and most often murder. In this respect as well as in its representations of victims and perpetrators, the franchise seems hardly different from conventional crime drama. The only aspect that distinguishes *CSI* from other representations of crime, it seems, is the emphasis on acquaintance crime over stranger crime and the depiction of crime as messy which, I have suggested, is largely due to its emphasis on forensic trace evidence. However, to look at the representation of crime only in relation to this data would ignore that the representation of crime is also connected to narratives which are structured in particular ways as Sparks (1992) rightfully notes. It is to these narratives and structures that I now want to turn with a discussion of the story of the crime in each series.

### **7.3. Crime Scene Investigation: Ambiguity and Perspective**

As I have argued throughout this thesis, the different series follow different incentives in their narratives. With its celebration of science as an investigative tool, *Crime Scene Investigation* develops its narrative primarily around physical evidence which has several impacts on the story of the crime. First, the amount

of time actually spent on the development of the story of the crime is relatively small. This is also due to the relatively small amount of time given to interviews and interrogations in which most of the story of the crime is developed in all three series.<sup>79</sup> Second, many stories highlight Las Vegas and Nevada as a location because trace evidence is often connected to geographical specificities. For example in 'No More Bets' (4.22), the investigators follow the sparkle of glass splinters which was transferred from a 'neon-light cemetery' to a suspect's house. Here, the city's history as a neon-lit gambling town full of casinos feeds into both the investigation, the analysis of key trace evidence, and its story of the crime: a casino owner has the victim beaten up in the cemetery where the perpetrator follows them and kills the victim because he tried to surpass the perpetrator in cheating. Although other crime dramas might want to make use of a location, during the investigation they can emphasise the location only as a backdrop as they talk to different witnesses and suspects. In *Crime Scene Investigation*, the location itself can reveal the story of the crime, thus moving the city centre stage and suggesting that the story of the crime is indeed intrinsically connected to the location.

Third, the use of forensics has an impact on the structure of the story of the crime (Todorov 1977, p. 42-52). There is an argument to be made that *Crime Scene Investigation* actually contains two different plots of the story of the crime: first one that follows the investigation and is therefore entirely structured by its logic of finding and analysing evidence and, second, one that sums up these findings and brings them into a continuous logic. The latter is usually contained either within a final interrogation with a suspect where it is most often told by one of the investigators or within a briefing scene in which all the investigators partake in the telling of the story of the crime.

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<sup>79</sup> For a discussion of the interrogations and interviews in *Crime Scene Investigation* see Chapter Five.



This has an important effect on the story of the crime: rather than remaining a puzzle that consists only in its parts and must be brought together by the viewer cerebrally over the duration of the narration, the puzzle of physical and affective clues is brought together at one point of the text as solution.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the parts of the puzzle are rendered meaningful as a whole as well as separately. In their parts they explain how particular evidence came to be where it is and how particular matter was changed or influenced by crime. The emphasis here is on the effects on matter. In the continuous form, which brings the puzzle together, the emphasis can be on the whole duration of the crime including the before and after. Here, the actions themselves move more into the foreground and the interest is on how one action triggered another and had a certain effect over time.

The analysis of one average example in detail should make this clearer. 'Felonious Monk' (2.17) investigates the murder of four Buddhist monks. The episode opens in the Buddhist temple where long and medium shots establish the monks at prayer. The actual murder of the monks is depicted in a series of close-ups: first of the face of one of the monks, then of two hands holding the trigger and the barrel of a rifle, next of the barrel of the rifle, then of some candles which are splashed with blood and finally of the monk as he falls back. The scene then cuts out of the temple into a medium shot of the building with only the sound of the three other shots signalling the murder of the other monks. Here, the emphasis is on the shooting by focusing entirely on the material involved: the images of the gun do not reveal its shooter or his/her relationship to the monks, but do signal the act and the matter (the rifle) of a shooting. The close-ups of the blood-splattered candles highlight the injury to the body of the

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<sup>80</sup> This is not a new phenomenon. Agatha Christie's sleuths in particular tend to present their neat solution by telling someone involved what happened which, in their televised forms, is often shown in an extensive flashback.



victim and the rupturing of its healthy borders (Jacobs 2003), while the falling back indicates the death of this body. At this point, we know practically nothing about the victim or the perpetrator: the victim we only know to be a Buddhist monk of Asian decent which we have to gather from the few clues that the episode provides at that point (including the title and the setting). Of the perpetrator we know nothing at all. Even when the investigators arrive, little is added to the story of the crime. Rather, the clues left at the scene *exclude* types of perpetrators: a close-up of the full money tree rules out robbery as Gil points out.

In a first interview with the only surviving monk, the team soon find out that they were Buddhist monks from Thailand, that they were planning to build a school and that he had been to the bank to make a deposit for this school when the shooting occurred. The interview is first shot as a long take in medium shot as O'Riley talks to the monk. Only when Gil asks a question does the camera cut to close-ups of the monk and Gil, moving the viewer physically closer to the monk, thereby suggesting that information now obtained is more important. But Gil and the monk speak in riddles, constructing a new puzzle that centres on the monk.

The first clue the investigators follow up is the rifle found in the garden. A test bullet fired from it is an exact match to the bullets recovered from the monks' corpses, indicating that this was indeed the rifle used to shoot the monks. On its handle, the investigators find fingerprints of the surviving monk suggesting that he might be the killer. In a subsequent interview, the monk is given the chance to explain how his fingerprints came to be there.

**Monk:** I entered through the back. The rifle was on my desk. I walked into the prayer room to ask my brothers about the gun. I returned to my office, placed the weapon outside and went for help.

Following the pattern described in Chapter Five, the interview is here used to test the theory that the monk might be the murderer. However, as his explanation is viable, Gil and Sara return to the evidence which indeed exonerates the monk: the gun was held by him only at the handle, not at the trigger which suggests that he only carried it with the barrel pointing to the floor.

Another piece of evidence that the investigators find at the crime scene is the placard of a known gang. Nick explains to Gil that the gang it represents was wiped out after they killed two German tourists. Gil and Nick therefore believe the sign to be a fake which was put at the crime scene, as Gil later says, in order to mislead the investigators.

The next clue to the investigation is a surveillance image which the army provides. A close-up of the image on a screen reveals a car parked next to the temple. The car leads the investigators to their first suspect: a young man and his father. The father admits that he, like other people in the neighbourhood, did not like the monks but was not near the temple. Two other clues, paint and a footprint, bring the investigators back to the son who is brought into the interview room. For reasons of clarity and detail, I have transcribed the interview scene into the following table.

Scene	Shot	Action and Dialogue
Interview room	medium shot from corner of the room, Gil with his back to the camera, the son sitting opposite of Gil at the table, the father, further away from the camera, next to his son, slow pan towards the table until it shows us the son in profile	<p><u>Son</u>: I've never been to the temple. Never.</p> <p><u>Gil</u>: Well... See... this boot print says you were.</p> <p><u>Father</u>: Tell them who you lent your boots to. Tell them or they'll accuse you of something else.</p> <p><u>Son</u>: Nobody else wears my boots.</p> <p><u>Father</u>: Son!</p> <p><u>Son</u>: (sighs) We heard that</p>

		this place was freaky. That there was a money tree and drugs. We wanted to see for ourselves.
Reconstruction	Medium shot, tilted, orange filter and bleaching	Three young men walk in. <u>One of them</u> : Look right there, baby!
	Medium shot, tilted, orange filter and bleaching	They go to the Buddhist altar, pick things up
	Close-up of one of the men, slightly tilted, orange filter and bleaching	<u>Second person</u> : Check it out! Gotta be solid gold, man!
	Medium shot of the son, standing over second person, looking down at him, tilted, orange filter and bleaching	He looks shocked at the second person. Sound of door being closed.
	Medium shot of the three, tilted, orange filter and bleaching.	They run away, one of them pockets a Buddha statue. <u>Son in voice-over</u> : We heard someone coming and we took off. That's...
Interview room	Close-up son	<u>Son</u> : ...why you found my boot prints.
	Medium shot Gil	<u>Gil</u> : No.
	Medium shot Son	He looks confused at Gil.
	Medium shot Gil	<u>Gil</u> : You see, our dust lifter is only effective on very recent prints.
	Close-up Son	Son looks apprehensive.
	Close-up Gil	<u>Gil</u> : I think you were there on the day of the murders.
	Close-up son	Son still looks apprehensive.
	Close-up father	Father looks quizzical.

	Close-up son	<u>Son:</u> It was a week ago when I went there with my friends.
	Close-up Gil	Gil looks at son.
	Close-up son	<u>Son:</u> But Tommy, he copped a statue. I went back to return it, and... I was removing my boots when I looked inside and saw them laying there.
Reconstruction	Close-up feet on carpet, slightly tilted, orange filter and bleaching, tracking shot following the feet, then gliding over the faces of shot monks	Son walks over carpet, discovers monks. Screeching strings sound.
	Medium shot son, slightly tilted, orange filter and bleaching	Son stands over monks, looks at them shocked.
	Four close-ups of the faces of shot monks	
Interview room	Close-up son	<u>Son:</u> I wanted to call the police. But I knew if they found me there, they'd think I did it.
	Close-up Gil	<u>Gil:</u> How did you know to remove your boots?
	Close-up son in profile, father in background	Son looks upset.
	Close-up Gil	<u>Gil:</u> You'd been there before.
	Close-up son	<u>Son:</u> Maybe.
	Close-up father	<u>Father:</u> What are you accusing my son of now?
	Close-up Gil	He looks at father, then at son.
	Close-up son	<u>Son:</u> They were my friends.

	Close-up father	<u>Father:</u> They what? Those monks were your friends?
	Close-up son	Son nods imperceptibly.
	Close-up father	<u>Father:</u> I'm taking a walk. (gets up)
	Close-up son	He has tears in his eyes.
	Close-up Gil	He watches the father leave. Sound of chair being moved
	Close-up son	He too watches his father leave.
	Close-up Gil	Sound of door being opened and closed. Gil looks back at son.
	Close-up son in profile	<u>Son:</u> Someone once asked the Buddha: 'How do we escape the heat of a summer's day?' And the Buddha said: 'Why not leap into a blazing furnace?'
	Close-up Gil	He looks at him.

The story of the son, therefore, seems to lead away from the actual story of the crime, creating a moment of incoherence, but adding some detail to the characterisation of the monks who are shown to be good and forgiving, rendering the murder strange: why shoot those who are even able to forgive robbery? The characterisation is also advanced by the apparent rapport that develops between Gil and the only surviving monk which further highlights that they are essentially trustworthy and good. Gil's alignment, however, is contrasted to the distrust of both Nick and O'Riley who both instantly suspect the remaining monk as the murderer; O'Riley even suggests he stole money from the temple as a deposit he made to the bank was one thousand dollars short of what the temple had raised. Gil's closeness, therefore, must be considered to be

exceptional and based on a wider acceptance of difference than both Nick and O'Riley seem to muster. Their behaviour is, however, based on ignorance which, within in the context of a celebration of knowledge,<sup>81</sup> renders their attitude suspect and aligns the spectator with Gil and the monk, therefore enforcing the characterisation on an emotional level.

The story of the crime is finally brought to a conclusion by following the last clue, a piece of chewing gum. The analysis reveals that it contained a particular spice that would have to be imported. Gil goes back to the temple to look through the spices. As Gil talks to the monk, he reveals that it was spices that the temple imported, not the rumoured drugs, linking this story back to the story of the son. Gil, finally, realises that it was the cook who first stole the missing thousand dollars and then killed the monks. I have again transcribed the next two scenes (approximately two minutes) into a table in order to describe the details which reveal the story of the crime.

Scene	Shot	Action and Dialogue
The monk's office	Close-up box	Gil lifts the lid.
	Snap-zoom to extreme close-up of a powder.	
	Close-up box, camera then follows Gil as he straightens up again and moves backwards into a medium shot of Gil, the monk and, in the background, O'Riley.	Gil bends down to smell the powder. <u>Gil</u> : Curry powder.
	Close-up Gil	<u>Gil</u> : Your temple employs a part-time cook.
	Close-up monk	<u>Monk</u> : Mr. Suddahara moved on.
	Close-up Gil	<u>Gil</u> : After you caught him

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<sup>81</sup> See my discussion of *Crime Scene Investigation* in Chapter Six.

		with his hand in the till?
Reconstruction	Close-up of the box, yellowish tint, bleaching.	Someone opens the box, sound of money rustling.
	Extreme close-up money in someone's hand, yellowish tint, bleaching	Someone counts the money. There's powder on the person's hand. Sound of door being opened.
	Medium shot cook, yellowish tint, bleaching	He looks up, frightened.
	Closer medium shot, same frame, yellowish tint, bleaching	Monk now in foreground in focus, cook in background (blurred) looks at him.
The monk's office	Close-up monk	He nods.
	Close-up Gil	<u>Gil</u> : Why didn't you tell us about Mr. Suddahara before?
	Close-up monk	<u>Monk</u> : Because a man steals doesn't mean he also kills.
	Close-up Gil	
	Medium shot of Gil and monk in foreground, O'Riley in background.	
Interview room	Medium shot of cook, camera gradually moves closer to him into close-up	He writes and chews gum, then puts the pen down, pushes notepad away. <u>O'Riley</u> : Got any more of that gum, Mr. Suddahara? <u>Cook</u> : Fresh out.
	Close-up O'Riley	He looks at cook. Sound of door being opened.
	Medium shot Gil	<u>Gil</u> : Yep. His DNA matches the gum sample.
	Close-up cook	<u>Gil</u> : You thought Ananda [the monk]...
	Medium shot Gil	<u>Gil</u> : ...was going to report you to the police for stealing the money.

	Close-up cook	<u>O'Riley</u> : Went home, got his...
	Close-up O'Riley	<u>O'Riley</u> : ...rifle, came back to make sure he didn't talk.
	Close-up Gil	<u>Gil</u> : And he'd gone to the bank to protect the rest of the money.
	Close-up cook	<u>Gil</u> : But you didn't know that.
Reconstruction	Medium shot cook and four monks, orange tint, bleaching	Cook has rifle and stands, monks sit cross-legged and chant. <u>Cook</u> : Where is he? Did he go to the cops already?
	Close-up barrel of rifle, orange tint, bleaching	As in teaser
	Close-up cook, orange tint, bleaching	He holds the gun, takes aim. <u>Cook</u> : If they ask what I look like...
	Medium shot cook, orange tint, bleaching	<u>Cook</u> : ...here's your answer. He shoots one monk.
	Close-up monk, orange tint, bleaching	Monk falls back and hits carpet (as in teaser).
Interview room	Close-up cook	<u>Gil</u> : I'm curious about one thing though.
	Close-up Gil with cook in foreground, focus shift on cook,  then back to Gil	<u>Gil</u> : Why did you shoot them all in their sixth chakra? <u>Cook</u> : I shot them between the eyes.

In these two scenes, the story of the crime is revealed by Gil who tells what happened. His narration in turn triggers the reconstructions. However, by finishing the first reconstruction with a close-up of the monk who is also in close-



up in the first frame after it, the scene also suggests that it is to some extent the memory of the monk. Similarly, by surrounding the second with two close-ups of the cook, the reconstruction appears to be the memory of the murderer.

Importantly, the first highlights the physical evidence: both the money and the spice are shown in extreme close-up. The whole story of the crime is, however, only unravelled by both reconstructions which can easily be brought together in the viewer's mind because the second follows relatively soon after the first.

Here, a narrative of cause and effect emerges in which one crime leads to an action which is then misunderstood, leading to the murders. As in *Miami*:

'Complications' (2.11),<sup>82</sup> however, there is a temporal overlap of two actions (the monk going to the bank and the cook shooting the four monks), suggesting that the programme still does not rely on timeline. Interestingly, the last reconstruction uses two shots from the teaser. However, these shots are now embedded in a narrative of what the perpetrator did to the monks and why, thereby providing an understanding that focuses more on human behaviour than on the materiality of crime.

This story of the crime is juxtaposed with another case, namely that of the murder of Catherine's best friend. Here, the crime was supposedly already solved, but the deathbed confession of the man convicted throws doubts over the conviction. Indeed, Catherine's investigations show that one of the police officers involved in the investigation planted a piece of evidence as he was biased against the suspect. Catherine's story therefore highlights how easy it is for investigators to become corrupted by their feelings and prejudices and how important it is to follow evidence objectively. Catherine is unable to solve the murder of her friend which means that this case is not brought to a conclusion and so, what we see of the murder, remains focused on the materiality of the

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<sup>82</sup> See p. 208.

crime: the knife with which Catherine's friend was stabbed, the blood on the knife after the stabbing and the planted evidence with blood. As juxtaposition to the first story of the crime, it helps to criticise Nick's and O'Riley's prejudiced attitude and render Gil's more valuable. Gil's and Catherine's apparent objectivity has to be understood in the context of *Crime Scene Investigation's* celebration of science. The principle of objectivity is fundamental to Western science which bases its research on objective observation of experiments as James Ladyman (2002, pp. 1-24) argues in his overview of the philosophy of science. Catherine's and Gil's objectivity towards suspects therefore is an extension of their work as forensic *scientists*.

With its original emphasis on the material details of the investigation, other aspects at the centre of conventional crime drama, including the establishment of motive and the quest for the perpetrator, lose some of their importance. Although the category of victim seems relatively stable due to the emphasis on the body, the narrative focus is not on understanding how this person came to be a victim, but on how this body was mutilated. In the autopsy scenes, Dr. Robbins's report explains what happened to the body: the bullet or knife had this effect on these organs. As I showed in Chapter Six, this goes along with a CSI-shot and a general depiction of the body as consisting only of wounds which function as evidence. As a consequence, there is no empathy built with the victim, suggesting that during the investigation no moral judgement is made about the crime.

This means that all wider categories, even that of the victim, remain open enough to be subverted or blurred before a solution is achieved. There are two consequences to this: on the one hand, the series has to find other means to stabilise these categories in order to reach its solution which depends on the moral, if not legal, definition of these categories. On the other hand, *Crime Scene Investigation* can suggest that these categories are indeed unstable and

present what seems to be the victim as the actual perpetrator. One case is given in the episode 'Blood Drops' (1.6) where a family is found murdered with the only survivors the two daughters, one of them a teenager, the other four years old. As the story unfolds, there is particular emphasis placed on the younger daughter whose testimony is one of the first Gil solicits. Her answer to the question if anyone had been in her room, 'the buffalo', turns out to also be the answer to how and why the murders happened. The older daughter asked one of her boyfriends to kill her family because her father had started to rape her sister who is also the daughter she had after the father abused her. The buffalo is the emblem on a pendant the father used to wear which reduces him to this animal symbol, signifying both his animalistic behaviour and his aggression. This reduction is evoked by the use of close-ups of the buffalo pendant rather than his face and the mediation of the only medium shot of his face through a reflection in the mirror. By contrast, there are several, often lingering, close-ups of both daughters. The episode therefore aligns the spectators with the daughters and distances them from the father. As the episode highlights the trauma of the younger daughter through close-ups of her staring into the distance and through several scenes in which she is shown with the similarly reclusive Sara, the rapes are rendered particularly horrific, implying that the older daughter's murderous plans are to some extent excused. In this episode the question of guilt remains unanswered: although the teenage daughter has been arrested for the murder, the episode ends with the close-up of the shocked face of Gil who is speechless. He, at least, cannot fully lay the blame at the daughter's door.

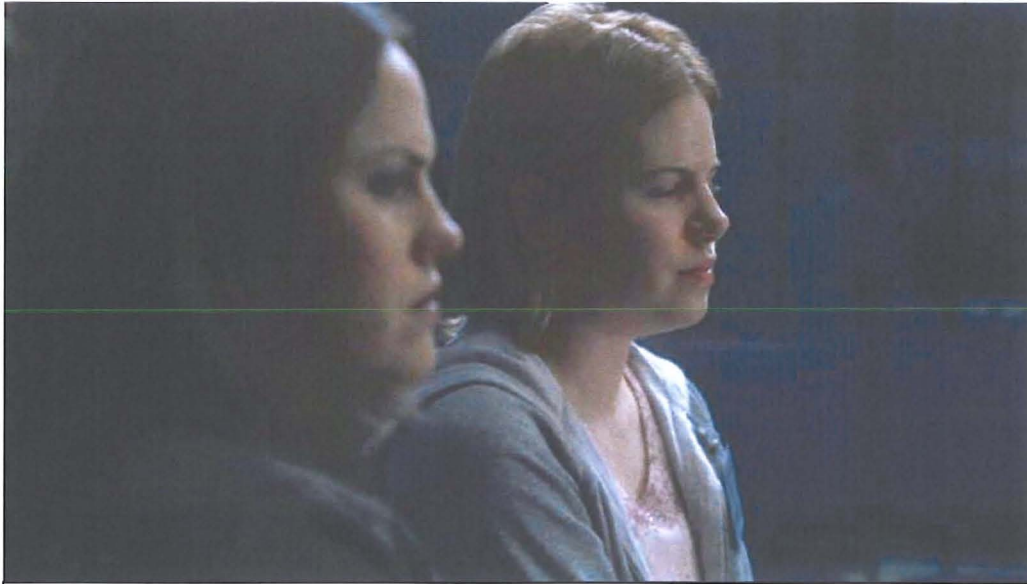
Where there are clearer judgements made, alignment is often achieved with the help of music. In 'Crate 'n Burial' (1.3), for example, music is used in a scene to highlight that the driver in a hit and run which killed a girl is not the 'bastard' Catherine thinks he must be. After Catherine and Warrick dismiss a first

explanation of the accident, the suspect, a grandfather, gives them another explanation. From then on, melancholic piano music accompanies the scene shot in close-ups of the grandfather as he confesses and of the grandson as he reacts. Moreover, Catherine and Warrick discuss grandfather and grandson as 'the good guys' whom they ought to help, offering an empathetic perspective on them. This explicit alignment focuses the attention of the episode on the perpetrator rather than the victim, a focus which also extends to the reconstructions. Here, the close-ups of the victim are very brief and there is only one in which her features are clearly visible while there are several lingering close-ups of the perpetrator.

This is in stark contrast to cases in which the victim is at the centre of attention as in 'Homebodies' (4.3) which revolves around two women who were attacked by the same men. The first woman, an elderly lady, is found mummified in a closet and a first reconstruction shows her death and mummification which is framed in a low angle shot in which her face takes up the largest part of the frame. Later, Gil puts himself into her position by going into the closet and switching off his flashlight. The scene cuts from the high angle shot of Gil to the same frame which now shows the woman in the closet. This reconstruction consists of several extreme close-ups which explain the presence of particular evidence but is intercut with close-ups and medium shots of the woman as she becomes more and more distressed and finally gives up and lies down. When she lies down, the camera takes the same position as before when we see the mummification process.

While the spectator is aligned with the first victim because of the emphasis on her face and because Gil puts himself into her shoes, reliving her experience for the benefit of the spectator, the second woman's story creates empathy with the victim through narrative. Here, a teenage woman turns to Sara for help after the two attackers raped her. Again, the woman is framed in several close-ups

and there is one pan in medium shot around her and Sara as they talk which highlights Sara's emotional closeness to her, facilitating a greater emotional participation on the part of the spectator as well (Nunn and Biressi 2003, p. 198, see figure 7.7). In terms of narrative, the episode introduces her after the attack



**Figure 7.7: The emotional closeness between Sara and a rape victim, emphasised through the physical closeness the pan around them creates**

and follows her as she at first looks for medical care, but then tries to actively participate in the investigation by facing the line-up of suspects. The scene is intercut with a conversation her father and Gil have about the inability of the father to protect his daughter which continues in a voice-over over the images of her looking at the line-up. This juxtaposition seems to imply that the narrative focus is shifted onto the father, situating the story of her rape in a tradition of rape law and stories in which the victim is not so much the woman who was raped but the man presiding over her fate (Projansky 2001, p. 4).<sup>83</sup> However, the episode suggests that the father's grievance is not so much the rape itself than

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<sup>83</sup> Projansky talks about the 14<sup>th</sup> century rape law that saw rape as a crime against the property of man. Although the daughter here is not perceived as the property of the father, there is still a sense that he suffers at least as much as her as a result of the rape.

the fact that the father was robbed of his power to protect the daughter as he was locked into a closet. While the conversation between Gil and the father continues in voice-over, the camera in the line-up sequence pans slowly closer and closer to the daughter's face until it reaches an extreme close-up of her eyes which are filled with tears. This extreme close-up highlights the tension of the scene as it focuses on her emotions which freeze the action in the line-up scene, a freezing of narrative that matches her emotional freezing up which prevents her from naming the perpetrator. Thus, although the scene is dominated in terms of sound by the voice-over of the father, the camera allows for the closeness with her to continue as the experience of freezing up is translated into images. The episode ends with her death which marks her as double victim: a victim of a rape and of a premature death<sup>84</sup> which marks her as another rape victim who is eventually silenced.<sup>85</sup>

As these two cases ('Crate 'n Burial' and 'Homebodies') make clear, empathy and alignment is created by aspects of the text which do not necessarily relate to the crime. This means that the moral judgement about the crime is also not contained by the crime itself, but has to be added. One way to achieve this, these examples suggest, is through the alignment of the investigators – who also act as moral guides – with either the perpetrators or victims. This throws the investigators' apparent objectiveness into doubt and highlights that science, although it provides the *solution* to the crime, does not provide the *resolution*. One means to achieve this is by creating empathy with the victim. So far, I have discussed two cases with female victims and male perpetrators each of which aligns the viewer with the perpetrator and the victims respectively. However, as I pointed out above, the majority of crimes are

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<sup>84</sup> This death is violent as the blood pool around her head indicates. But it is unclear who caused it as her death means the beginning of a new case for the investigators.

<sup>85</sup> See p. 273.

committed between white men and I now want to investigate with whom spectators are aligned in these cases.

'Precious Metal' (3.18) deals with two cases in which a white man kills another white man, in line with the average representation of perpetrators and victims. The first story deals with an ex-army man who now plays in 'Robot Wars' games, a sport that the episode suggests is based on masculine competition and aggression. The victim's body is found in a barrel where it decomposed into a waxy substance. This makes it appear as non-human which is particularly apparent in the autopsy scene which focuses on the dripping fluids, squelch sounds and other aspects that make this body appear disgusting.<sup>86</sup> This also means that there are fewer images of the man's face which, in any case, has decomposed into an unrecognisable lump. We do, however, get to see the man's face in reconstructions. Here, the victim is presented as an aggressor who enjoys destroying the robots of other competitors, laughing sadistically as he does so. This characterisation is enhanced by the story of the Robot War manageress who tells that he tried to attack her with his robot and who calls him a 'dumb, vicious army guy'. Thus, he is clearly characterised as unsympathetic and unpleasant.

This characterisation of the victim could open the space to present his killer with greater empathy; but this is not the case. The perpetrator is another Robot Wars competitor whose robot was smashed by the victim's. In the final interrogation when Nick and Catherine tell him of his crime, Catherine approaches him for a moment with compassion:

**Catherine:** I know what it must have been like for you.

Having created something only to lose it.

**Perpetrator:** Let me guess: you have a kid?

**Catherine:** Yes. I have a daughter.

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<sup>86</sup> See the discussion of the autopsy scene in Chapter Six, p. 231.

**Perpetrator:** And you think just because you squeeze a baby out between your legs, you know how I feel. That's biology. Any animal can do that.

**Catherine:** Uhugh.

**Perpetrator:** But I took a thought from my head and I made it real. It was perfect.

This dialogue is shot in a shot reverse shot sequence of close-ups of Catherine and the perpetrator. While the perpetrator talks, we see Catherine react aghast, reflected in the incredulous 'Uhugh'. The last shot of the dialogue is a close-up of Nick – another white man who might be able to empathise with the perpetrator. However, Nick looks quizzical and shakes his head, suggesting that he, like Catherine, thinks the perpetrator's evaluation of his achievement speaks of a deranged mind. As a consequence, any empathy built up with the perpetrator is destroyed and the episode aligns the viewer neither with the perpetrator nor the victim. Rather, it critiques masculinities that assert themselves only through competition and aggression.

The second case of the episode deals with the murder of a man by a shady coin dealer. Although the victim is not portrayed in ways that suggest he was someone with whom it is difficult to empathise, the episode still does not align us with him. In a first reconstruction of the murder, we only see his silhouette rather than his face and even in a later reconstruction there is only one brief close-up of him. As a consequence, he remains practically faceless, a man whose identity is not very important to the episode. Instead, the episode creates some empathy with his wife who talks to Gil. The information she gives does not really enhance the story of the crime as she tells only of how she tried to find him after he went missing. This suggests that the scene has a non-narrative function which is to offer a moral anchor by portraying her grief (she cries and speaks with a broken, but dignified voice). As a consequence, her plight is emphasised over that of her murdered husband. This suggests that *Crime Scene Investigation* avoids an



empathetic approach to white male victims – they remain evidence and wounds, scientific objects rather than human beings who we should feel sorry for – whilst empathy with women is at least an option.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, white male victimisation presents a problem to the franchise as a whole. Male victims are excessively feminised through blood pools, their penetration by both material and the camera in the CSI-shot and an emphasis on their wounds which are essentially orifices to the insides of the body. This is enhanced by a focus on the flesh of their bodies, on the sounds their bodies produce and, as I will show, by the denial of voice in reconstruction scenes. In the reconstructions of 'Friends and Lovers' (1.5), for example, we see the white male victim go to a party and take a drug, but we do not hear him speak. This denial of voice highlights the male victim's passivity which puts him even further into the realm of the feminine (Boyle 2005, p. 6). Interestingly, in the B-story of the episode, another male victim is shown to speak excessively. Here, the victim is shown to have brought his death on himself by continually blackmailing his murderer. His body is not displayed to the same extent as the first victim whose corpse is made the object of the masculine, medical gaze twice (at the crime scene and in the morgue) and to whom we return again and again during scenes in which his friend visits the lab. This suggests that the feminisation of the male victim is limited to the innocent or 'good' victim who is, through the feminisation, not only rendered passive but also denied an active part in the investigation. This means that the shift in forensic crime drama towards the victim, which could convey a sense of agency for the victim in the solution of crime, as I argued in Chapter Four, only works towards a greater empowerment of the investigators who speak for them and take the active part in the investigation.

In *Crime Scene Investigation*, as in the other series, women are shown to be the better victims. This is particularly noticeable in episodes in which both men

and women are victimised in the same storyline. In 'Paper or Plastic' (4.14) the death of a police officer is only mediated by Brass through a telling of events. His death, which is tragic as he only stumbles on an armed robbery, could easily be the focus of the investigation but is marginalized in favour of the accidental shooting of a white female victim at the same site by another police officer. This highlights that for *Crime Scene Investigation* the depiction of white men as victims poses a problem in a way that the portrayal of the white female victim does not. While the series can empathise with white female victims when they are both alive and dead, a same emotional closeness to the white male victim is not possible.

The alignment with the victim and/or the perpetrator is fundamental to the ability to judge the crime morally. While in the case of 'Homebodies' (4.3) the murder of the two women must be understood as reprehensible and devastating, the murder of the police officer in 'Paper or Plastic' (4.14) is not laden with the same moral judgement. This allows the crime to be assessed in the light of the perpetrator's motive, revealed in the final interrogation. As I argued in Chapter Five, this allows the perpetrator the space to justify him- or herself. In 'Paper or Plastic' the motive highlights the injustice of the capitalist system which gives employers too much power over employees.<sup>87</sup> Thus, rather than suggesting that the perpetrator is solely responsible for the crime, the episode hints at the social and economic context which keeps her in an underprivileged position.

This also implies that relationships between perpetrators and victims themselves can be portrayed as fraught with difficulty and problems. While 'Blood Drops' (1.6) completely reversed the categories of victim and perpetrator suggesting that the perpetrator of the murders was the actual victim, other

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<sup>87</sup> The motive was that the manager had deliberately not given enough working hours to the woman to qualify for benefits. See Chapter Five, p. 184.

episodes suggest that even though the categories remain stable, the moral judgement of guilt is not that easy. I will here focus on the portrayal of the murdering mother to propose that *Crime Scene Investigation* emphasises the difficulty born out of social roles or relationships over the definition of guilt.

Boyle points out that the violence of women poses 'a double deviance' (2005, p. 95) – a transgression of the law and a transgression of gender norms. In discussing representations of Rose West, the English female serial murderer, Boyle (p. 117) argues that West's crime is often presented as particularly horrific because she did nothing to protect her own children. The murdering mother, therefore, appears as particularly evil and monstrous because she transgresses the law, the gender norm (which assumes her to be non-violent) and nature with which women are culturally identified as a consequence of their ability to bear children (p. 118). Interestingly, *Crime Scene Investigation* does not follow this simple equation. Instead, the series is rather ambivalent towards mothers. In 'Turn of the Screws' (4.21), the investigators find the body of a thirteen-year-old girl. When the mother comes in, Warrick is instantly suspicious of her because she did not report her missing for 24 hours. Catherine explains to him how difficult it is to keep track of a teenage daughter when you are a single mother, allowing for some empathy to be created with the mother. Here, Catherine's own back-story, developed over the four seasons, allows for the playing through of discourses around mothering as difficult rather than pleasurable, emphasising the moral ambiguity towards the murdering mother enabled by the soap-like storyline (Modleski 1997/1981).

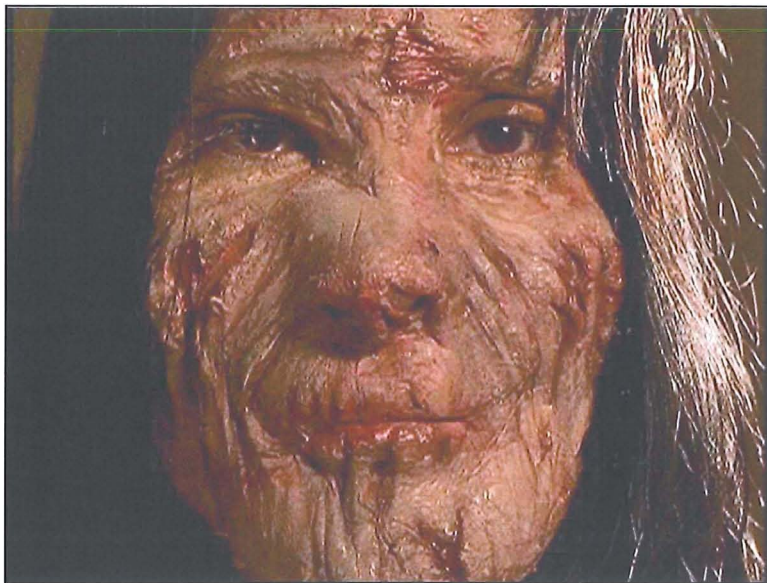
Even towards the end when the investigators find out that the mother killed her own daughter, the episode does not present the mother as monster. Images of the mother do not mark her as evil, something that *Crime Scene Investigation* does not shy away from in the representation of other female (or male) perpetrators (see for example 'Justice is Served' (1.21) and 'Alter Boys' (2.6),

and compare figures 7.7, 7.8 and 7.9). It is Catherine's face that guides the spectator towards the 'proper' reaction (namely shock) while her comment highlights the failing of the mother as mother. To the mother's '[my boyfriend] was the best thing in my life', Catherine retorts: 'No. Your daughter was the best thing in your life.' Despite this apparent judgement, some of the ambiguity remains: there is no indication that the mother is under arrest. Thus, rather than offering a conclusion that ends with the punishment of the perpetrator and therefore a sense of legal justice and containment, *Crime Scene Investigation* remains ambiguous.

To conclude, *Crime Scene Investigation* depicts crime as deriving from difficult circumstances, social roles or relationships and this is made particularly evident in episodes with female perpetrators. Although episodes first focus on the materiality of the crime which emphasises the horror of the abject body and therefore also the horror of crime, in the final retelling of the story of the crime, they give more space to context. This goes along with a blurring of boundaries between the categories of perpetrators and victims and a rather ambiguous stance towards a definition of guilt. Even though perpetrators are often arrested in the end, the final interrogation gives them the space to explain their actions which allows for the moral judgement to be formed with an understanding of the context of the crime. The alignment with perpetrators and victims adds to this. What is interesting, however, is that this empathy with the victim in *Crime Scene Investigation* is primarily an empathy with white female victims rather than white male victims who, as I have shown above, make up the largest group of victims in the series. This suggests that victimisation poses a problem to masculinity in *Crime Scene Investigation* which is emphasised by its tendency to suspend the moral judgement for crimes between men. I will now turn to *Miami* to investigate how the spin-off, which puts an emphasis on the victim, deals with these issues.



**Figure 7.8: The murdering mother in 'Turn of the Screw'**



**Figure 7.9: The perpetrator marked as monstrous through her image in 'Justice is Served'**



**Figure 7.10: The perpetrator marked as evil through mise-en-scène in 'Alter Boys': is he inhabiting hell?**

#### **7.4 Miami: Speaking for the Victim and Containing Evil**

With its emphasis on the victim, *Miami* presents a story of the crime that is structured differently to *Crime Scene Investigation*'s. Although reconstructions in both focus on the transfer of evidence, *Miami* does not retell the whole story of the crime in a final reconstruction. Instead, *Miami* focuses on the moment of the victim's death. This is already established in the first episode, 'Golden Parachute' (1.1), which revolves around a victim who was pushed out of a plane. In the last reconstruction scene the emphasis is completely on the woman and her assailant: it is shot in several close-ups of her and her employer as she fights against his attempts to push her out of the plane. There is then a close-up of the employer who looks out of the plane with a satisfied expression. The reconstruction ends with her fall which is depicted in several shots from different angles, highlighting the length of her fall and focusing the attention of the reconstruction on her plight while ignoring the death of the other eight passengers on the plane who were shown in an earlier reconstruction.

In terms of the structure of the story of the crime, *Miami* follows the usual structure of crime drama more than *Crime Scene Investigation* and establishes bit by bit what happened but rarely shows all. However, parts of the reconstructions are repeated over and over again, namely those which depict the moment of death and therefore focus attention on the suffering of the victim. This is particularly obvious in 'Extreme' (2.10) in which the smothering of a young woman is shown three times: once in the context of the autopsy scene in which Alexx explains how she was smothered, then for the second time when Speed finds the murder weapon, and lastly in the final reconstruction after Horatio tells the perpetrator what happened. This replaying allows for the

moment of the victim's death to be at the centre of the story of the crime not just in the final reconstruction but as a general tendency.

The focus on the victim is also possible because the investigators are themselves empathetic, in particular Alexx whose approach to pathology I discussed in the previous chapter. Horatio too is explicitly empathetic with the victims, often looking out for those left behind after the crime has been solved. This nurturing attitude towards the victims is often symbolically expressed in scenes in which his own body is shown to bleed as a consequence of the same crime: in 'Losing Face' (1.2), a splinter from a bomb explosion that kills Horatio's bomb squad friend hits his own face, leaving a bloody cut. Here the bleeding body of the investigator symbolises his personal pain which the male body can perhaps not quite as readily express in tears. Indeed, when Nunn and Biressi (2003, p. 197-198) discuss the physical manifestations of an emotional reaction they describe how Sam Ryan, a *female* pathologist, reacts with tears. Thornham (2003) argues that the *female* investigator can and must disrupt the investigation with her own body which suggests that a manifestation of the pain of the victim on the body of the investigator is possible in cases which are investigated by *female* pathologists and detectives in crime drama. However, this also suggests that the body of the *male* investigator cannot as easily become a site for this. Thus, Horatio's body, rather than simply having an emotional response to the crime which is expressed in the physical evidence of tears, has to be made to show its physical response through metaphor – here the bleeding cut caused by the outer impact of a splinter from the bomb. Only with the help of this strategy can Horatio's body become a site on which the emotional effects of the crime

are manifested physically which highlights his closeness to and empathy with the victim.<sup>88</sup>

The rest of the cast in *Miami* similarly contribute to the creation of compassion with the victims. Empathy with the non-white group of Latin-American immigrants is primarily channelled through the characters of Eric, himself the son of a couple who emigrated from Cuba, and the two Latin-American detectives, Adell Sevilla and Yelina Salas. Their background, although not empowering them with knowledge to solve crimes,<sup>89</sup> makes them sensitive to the differences between the white and the non-white communities which they express during investigations, therefore giving the viewer a deeper insight into the problems of non-white communities.

The large Latin-American community in Miami also provides the series with stories of the crime that are specific to *Miami*, namely stories in relation to immigration and non-American ways of life. One of these is 'Wet Foot/Dry Foot' (1.3) which tells the story of a ship of Cuban refugees who are forced overboard by their captain when the boat is trapped in a storm. After the initial discovery of an arm inside the body of a shark and then a wider investigation of the crime, the episode soon focuses on one further victim: a young woman who is found washed-up in a makeshift lifeboat. When she is first discovered, Alexx, Horatio and Megan look at her body for evidence of the way she died and soon find that she was shot in the thigh, but that someone tried to save her by using her tights as ligation. They also realise that she was very likely on the same boat and that she had relatives in Miami who sent her a pendant as a charm. All of this is told rather than shown in a reconstruction. Several close-ups of Alexx, Megan and

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<sup>88</sup> When Speed dies in 'Lost Son' (3.1), Horatio's face remains covered with Speed's blood for the duration of the same and the next scene. Here Horatio literally leaves part of the victim on himself.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter Six, p. 259.



Horatio display their empathy, while a close-up of the victim's face allows viewers to share the investigators' empathy with the victim.

In a later scene, Alexx explains her autopsy findings to Horatio and tells him that the Cuban woman suffered from asthma and that she had inhaled a lot of her medication. The medium shot of Alexx and Horatio is followed by a reconstruction with a close-up and an extreme close-up of the woman using her inhaler. Thus, the episode also provides close-ups of her when she is still alive which adds to the empathy created with her as she is no longer just a body but also a living being struggling to stay alive. In further reconstructions, which focus more generally on the situation on the boat, she is again and again shown in close-up when all other passengers are shown in medium shots that do not focus on them specifically but on the situation on the boat in general. Thus, the episode aligns the spectator with her throughout the episode even when there are other lives at stake which is similar to the emphasis on the female victim in 'Golden Parachute' (1.1). This is a pattern in *Miami*, suggesting that the series, like *Crime Scene Investigation*, finds it easier to create empathy with individual female victims rather than groups or with men.

The tragedy of her situation is, finally, revealed when the investigators find her brother and interrogate him. In this final interrogation scene, Horatio starts telling the story of the crime. Again, there is a reconstruction which shows the struggle on the boat and the moment when the brother grabs the gun before jumping overboard with his sister and swimming to the inner tube. The scene cuts back to Horatio who asks why the brother shot his sister. The rest of the story is then told by the brother himself and is complemented by a reconstruction which now focuses on them entirely. In a series of close-ups and medium shots, the scene shows them drifting for several hours in the seas before the coastguard suddenly appears. As part of US immigration policy, the coastguard has to send all refugees back to Cuba unless they are injured in

which case they have to take them to the nearest hospital. As the sister does not feel strong enough to swim to the shore, she begs her brother to shoot her, which he eventually does. However, due to her overmedication, her blood is thinned and she bleeds out nearly instantly. The moment of her death is shown in a close-up as she registers the pain, turns pale and dies. From then on, the camera follows completely the brother's point of view as he swims off towards the distant shore, looking back only to see the coastguard ship turn around without even having discovered them. The reconstruction from her death onwards is also accompanied by a sad hymn-like song, which highlights the tragedy of the situation and his loss. In keeping with other interrogations with tragic perpetrators,<sup>90</sup> the camera does not cut back to a close-up of him but rather a medium shot from outside the interrogation room which further emphasises his forlornness. As a consequence, the emphasis and empathy now shifts towards him.

As this is practically the last scene of the episode, the focus remains on the story of the brother and sister rather than on the story of how a 'boat captain who was smuggling drugs became greedy, took some Cuban refugees with him and forced them off the ship when it hit a storm.'<sup>91</sup> The actual crime here moves into the background in favour of a story that highlights the problems involved with the 'Wet Foot/Dry Foot' policy for Cuban immigrants.<sup>92</sup> The problems this policy creates for the wider Miami community is also highlighted by a series of protests that face the investigators when they search for the brother in a Latin-American dominated neighbourhood. It highlights the sense of separation of the Latin-American community from the white-dominated law which forces them to hide their members rather than allowing the investigators to talk to them. This

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<sup>90</sup> See Chapter Five, p. 180.

<sup>91</sup> As Horatio retells the story of the crime when they find traces of cocaine in the boat.

<sup>92</sup> For Cuban immigrants to be granted refugee status in the US, they have to reach the shore by themselves without any help from a US citizen.

sense of separation is found again and again in *Miami*, particularly in cases which depict the Hispanic community as underprivileged and neglected.<sup>93</sup>

This separation of one ethnic group offers *Miami* inspiration for several storylines. Other stories focus on the seaside location, foregrounding the sea both as border which – as it can be travelled – connects the US to other countries and as a means to earn a livelihood. 'Dead Zone' (2.2) which looks at the subject of treasure hunting is such an example. A diver is found murdered with a spear and when the team investigates they soon realise that he and his partner had discovered the remains of a Spanish ship which had sunk in a hurricane several centuries earlier when it was already loaded with gold and gemstones from the New World to be shipped back to Spain. This story therefore highlights Miami's connection to a colonial past and the remnants of it, the Spanish-speaking community living in the city. Eric, who is the team's diver, is sent down to investigate the ship and finds enough treasure to give them an idea of the fortune the two divers must have picked up. Here, the subject matter of the episode allows for underwater filming which shows off the diving opportunities in Miami. In the series, the underwater filming functions as a stylistic trademark, again highlighting the franchise's investment in a style derived from tourism guides.

The touristic is also foregrounded in those stories in *Miami* which focus on the city as a party town. In 'Spring Break' (1.21) several storylines are developed around the annual spring break which brings students from all over the US to Miami. These stories focus on what is perceived as typical student activity, namely the taking of soft drugs and too much drink. The B-story focuses on a white male teenager who smoked too much cannabis during a contest with his

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<sup>93</sup> See for example 'Death Grip' (2.3) which highlights the difference of treatment of a white abduction victim to a Hispanic abduction victim by both the police and the press. See Chapter Six, p. 259.

friends and died of an aneurysm in his brain. The A-story revolves around a white female teenager who was raped and murdered and left lying on the beach. The focus soon shifts to a second victim, also white and female, who managed to escape but was bitten in the thigh like the first victim. She herself tells her story which is shot in several close-ups of her. A reconstruction also tells of a party where she let other people drink alcohol from her navel, during which the camera's focal point, however, remains her face. As she finishes her story, the camera cuts back to a close-up of her as she says: 'It wasn't supposed to be like this' before cutting away to a medium shot of her and Horatio as she cries and Horatio holds her. The emphasis therefore is, like in *Crime Scene Investigation*, shifted onto the living female sexual assault victim and away from the dead. *Miami* here also allows for an expression of the victim's feelings in quite some detail: Horatio later asks for her help when she has already packed her bags to leave. She is reluctant to do so as she 'only wants to go home' but eventually gives in to his pleading. Her expression of discomfort, however, is carried into the next scene which shows a forensic photographer taking photographs of the bite marks with several medium shots and close-ups of her face revealing how much this examination contributes to her distress.

This episode highlights that it is again female victims with whom most of the empathy sits: the story of the male teenager is not invested with the same emphasis on his emotions and suffering. This emotional focus on female victims is also achieved by portraying the crimes against women as particularly heinous. 'Hard Time' (2.4) is the episode with probably the most horrifying teaser. Although it starts with the usual emphasis on the abject – in this case crawling maggots in a lamp shade – and continues with an explanation of where these maggots come from, namely the body of a female victim with an extreme close-up of the maggots feasting on her bloody head wound, the true shock comes with the realisation that this body is still alive. The horror is partially created by a

subversion of the established conventions: the abject body, the viewer has learned over the course of three seasons of *Crime Scene Investigation* and one season of *Miami*, signifies death. Thus, for *CSI* what originally disturbs borders and collapses meaning (Kristeva 1982, p. 2-4) has been filled with meaning: the corpse with its sickening pus has come to signify death in the same way as a flat encephalograph does in medical drama. Although the bloody, mutilated body remains disgusting, over four seasons it has lost some of its power to disturb. However, in 'Hard Time', that which signifies death suddenly turns out to be alive. In other words, the border of death and life has been re-disturbed. Rather than death encroaching on life (Kristeva 1982, p. 4), life encroaches on what signifies death. The signification of death is therefore what has been disturbed and it is this instability of signification that makes the discovery so horrific. Thus, the female body is the site on which this disruption can take place, but the excessive horror of the body here also means that the crime which caused it must be considered more violent and heinous than any of the others depicted in *Miami* in the first two seasons. Again, the implication is that victimisation is something more easily associated with femininity while masculinity excludes passive victimisation.

This is particularly apparent in the episode 'Forced Entry' (1.14) which is one of the few episodes that does establish empathy with the male victim. Interestingly, here, the victim is also the perpetrator: the victim of a robbery and rape murders his attacker. His story is contrasted to the story of several female victims none of whom is a viable suspect: one killed herself after the rape; another refuses to speak to the investigators as the trauma of reliving the rape would be too distressing. Both are presented as essentially passive, enduring victims of rape. As the perpetrator/victim is the only male victim of the rapist, his revenge must be read with a recognition of his gender: while femininities can endure, masculinities must spring into action, they cannot be passive. This is

critiqued by the episode which ends with the man's arrest and Horatio's moral judgement on him:

**Victim:** I didn't start it.

**Horatio:** No. No, you didn't start it. But you finished it.

**Victim:** I wanted justice.

**Horatio:** Leonard, justice is not for you to dispense. And  
now you're gonna pay for it.

This dialogue makes it clear that a good victim is not invested with the right to restore justice. The episode therefore highlights that *Miami* conceptualises victimisation as essentially connected to passivity, suggesting that empathy can only be earned by those who accept their suffering and endure it. This is a very Judeo-Christian conceptualisation which revolves around the depiction of Job as someone who endured his suffering and was eventually rewarded for it by God. By bringing justice to those who endure their suffering, the investigators in *Miami* are invested with a spiritual role similar to that of God in the story of Job, rewarding those with peace of mind who trust in God (or the CSIs) to restore it.

As *Miami* creates so much empathy with the enduring victim, the perpetrators in *Miami* cannot be looked at with the same 'objectivity' and possibility for compassion as in *Crime Scene Investigation*. In *Miami*, perpetrators are the bad – and sometimes even the evil – guys. This again fits into the conceptualisation of the CSIs as fulfilling a spiritual role. The distinction between good and evil does not belong in the realm of science but rather in that of religion. The difference is made quite explicit in 'Kill Zone' (1.9). When the perpetrator is arrested, he asks Horatio if he does not want to know why he did it, therefore echoing the pattern established in *Crime Scene Investigation*. In 'Kill Zone', however, Horatio only answers 'because you are evil and enjoy taking lives' which takes this opportunity away from the perpetrator and instead allows for an explicit labelling of him as evil. Moreover, it gives the last word to Horatio.

Unlike in *Crime Scene Investigation*, motive is often already established during the investigation in *Miami* which suggests a greater sense of premeditation as well: someone had motive to kill someone and then he or she decided to actually commit the crime. Thus, in 'Not Landing' (2.21), when the investigators find a pillow case with a mathematical formula on it, they understand that the motive for the murder was to protect the rights over the formula from the victim who wanted to steal it. The motive leads them directly to the killer: the woman who developed the formula. Here, the form of the murder also highlights the premeditation as the perpetrator drills a hole into the exhaust pipe and into the cockpit of a plane to give the victim carbon monoxide poisoning. Premeditation adds to the gravity of the crime as it cannot be excused with a momentary lapse of control but must be considered to arise out of rational thinking.

Evilness is particularly attributed to white male rapists or murderers who kill their own families. In 'Broken' (1.6), for example, a paedophile who kills an intended victim is rendered particularly evil by his confession. He tells Horatio that he 'never even got to play with her', suggesting that he had planned much worse. His apparently deranged mind is indicated with an extreme close-up of his face which is half in shadow (see figure 7.10). Within a narrative that has unearthed the scale of repetition of his deed (the investigators find several graves of young children on his property), this confession must seem particularly monstrous. His monstrosity is also emphasised by the contrast created with the face of his first victim who resembles popular representations of angels: blond curls, big eyes and a continuous smile. The casting of the girl therefore highlights *Miami*'s tendency to portray its victims as extremely good and innocent and its perpetrators as evil.



**Figure 7.11: The evil perpetrator in *Miami*: 'Broken' marked by his half-shadowed face**

*Miami*, unlike *Crime Scene Investigation*, often contains references in the final interrogation to legal punishment of the perpetrator with usually a close-up of Horatio telling the perpetrator the minimum amount of years he can expect. In 'Body Count' (1.24), Horatio tells the perpetrator that he will make sure the perpetrator will remain behind bars for most of his life by re-arresting him if necessary. With this comment, Horatio essentially refers to the containment of evil within a legal justice system that puts – and keeps – evil perpetrators behind bars. The narratives of *Miami*, therefore, can be understood as a playing through of the effects of evil (the body trauma, the effects on life) but also as a rendering safe and a containment of evil in storylines that end with the suggestion of imprisonment.

The only exception to this rule is given in episodes in which the perpetrator is also established as victim or the victim as perpetrator. 'The Oath' (2.20), for example, goes to great pains to establish the perpetrator first and foremost as victim. When Calleigh follows up trace evidence from another crime, she encounters a young Latin-American woman who is introduced as victim of domestic violence. The woman later stabs her husband with a kitchen knife, thus



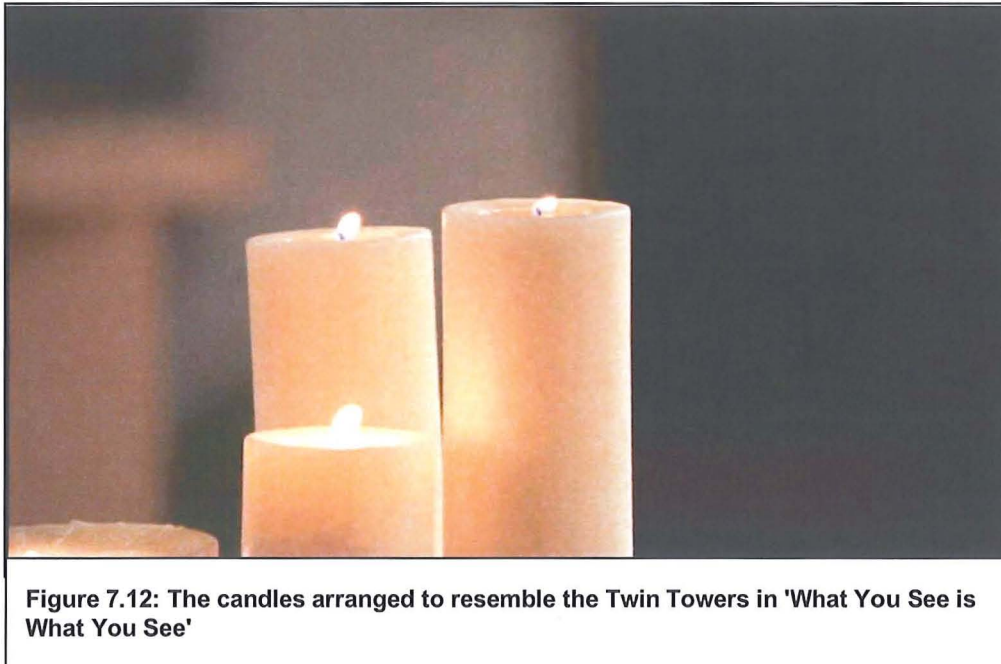
apparently becoming the perpetrator. The reconstructions of her attack on the husband, however, focus primarily on his abuse of her. The first begins with a medium shot pan that follows the woman as she runs screaming away from her husband. The same medium shot is used at the end of the second reconstruction which now focuses completely on the battery. Here the scene portrays his aggression against her in detail. A close-up of the woman having fallen onto the bed remains focused on the sheets as she gets up again, revealing blood drops and a tooth which indicate the force used by her husband. The medium shots of the battery are then used again in a last reconstruction, highlighting clearly who is the victim and who is guilty, when Calleigh tells the husband what happened. This is followed by a *CSI*-shot into the woman's body, revealing the broken blood vessels in her muscles. Thus, the *CSI*-shot complements the story of the crime rather than being a visualisation of the scientific explanation as in *Crime Scene Investigation*. The focus, then, remains on the battery even after the woman has stabbed her husband. This means that, within the episode, she is perceived as the victim even after she has committed a crime which, as Calleigh points out to her husband, was really only self-defence. This portrayal is in line with other media representations of women who kill their abusers (Boyle 2005). As Boyle points out 'women who kill or otherwise harm those who abuse them (or their children) are – like the female victims of murder, rape and domestic violence ... - most likely to be sympathetically treated if, in other ways, they occupy (or can be made to occupy) their proper feminine place' (2005, p. 103). In 'The Oath', the femininity of the abuse victim is stressed by highlighting her feminine appearance (in particular her long hair) and her essential passivity which is underlined by the fact that she only speaks broken English, is an illegal immigrant and therefore does not have access to institutions which would allow her to help herself.

To conclude, *Miami* tells stories of the crime in which guilt is a much more stable category than in *Crime Scene Investigation*. With its empathy with innocent victims and its labelling of perpetrators as evil, *Miami* plays through stories of crime in which evil people do horrible things to good people. The notion of evil and goodness, however, is removed from the objectivity of science and belongs much rather into the realm of religion or spirituality. What *Miami* offers, then, are moral stories which contain evil in both meanings of the word: they are about evil, but they also ultimately render evil safe by highlighting the ability of the investigators to put perpetrators behind bars. The evilness of the perpetrators, however, depends to some extent on the ability to portray the ordeal and distress of victims in detail which is facilitated by a focus on female victims, even if there is a whole group of male victims as well. Again, the suggestion is that women constitute the better victims while male victimisation is shown to be a problem.

### **7.5 New York: Forensics as a Work of Mourning**

While so far, I have focused on a discussion of the structure of the story of the crime and an analysis of the relationships between investigators and perpetrators and victims, I will now have to introduce a new category, namely that of the survivor. The survivor is not the survivor of a crime such as attempted murder, the survivor is the person left behind because of a crime: relatives or friends of victims. This category is largely necessary in order to explain the emphasis of *New York* on the forensic processes as a work of mourning but also because of the context of 9/11 that *New York* establishes. The series includes references to the terrorist events from 2001 primarily through its lead character Mac Taylor whose wife died in the attacks; but references crop up throughout the first season. These can be direct as in 'Rain' (1.7) when the investigators

realise that a murder victim was covered in dust from the 9/11 events and must therefore have lived in the vicinity of Ground Zero. Or they can be included in the narrative by focusing on male-dominated work groups that evoke the fire fighters of New York as in 'A Man a Mile' (1.5) which follows the story of the sandhogs who build the tunnels under Manhattan and have to trust that each member of the group will risk their lives in their fight for the greater good. Sometimes, the references are even included in the iconography: 'What You See Is What You See' (1.23) ends with the image of candles which are arranged in a way so as to resemble the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center (see figure 7.11). This background means that the general mood of the series is that



**Figure 7.12: The candles arranged to resemble the Twin Towers in 'What You See is What You See'**

of coming to terms with what happened and working through the trauma of the terrorist attacks. As a consequence, *New York* focuses much more on the emotional lives of the investigators than any of the other series of the franchise.

As I argued Chapter Four, the teaser already highlights this greater trauma for the investigators: the moment of discovery of the body is not separated from the investigation with a flashcut or dissolve to white, but edited only with

continuity cut, suggesting a continuation of the trauma rather than a distancing from it. Another way of bringing the trauma of crime closer to the investigators is by involving personnel who work with the investigators or other police officers in the crime. In the first season, there are seven out of 23 episodes in which either a police officer or a paramedic is involved. In 'Officer Blue' (1.9) a police officer is murdered by a sniper, but the story actually focuses on the injured horse which he was riding when he was shot. While the murdered officer remains faceless, the horse's flight after the shooting is shown in detail, including some point of view-shots from its own perspective. In addition, we learn more about the horse's 'family' than about the murdered police officer's: the horse was gifted to the police by a family who lost their own father, another police officer, in a police-work related event. The horse, then, becomes the symbol of mourning that Mac tries to protect at all costs, even when Stella makes it clear that his protectiveness hinders the investigation into the murder of the police officer.

Mac here shows himself emotionally involved in the investigation, a theme that repeatedly crops up in *New York* which stands in stark contrast to the objectivity of the investigators in *Crime Scene Investigation*. In *New York*, a similar involvement is also pointed to in Danny's closeness to the side of the perpetrator, established in his back-story which tells of an affiliation with an Italian street gang. In 'On the Job' (1.21), Danny is also involved in a shooting with another police officer who is killed by a bullet either from Danny's or the perpetrator's gun. Danny's character allows for the boundary between investigator and perpetrator to be blurred which also creates a stark contrast to *Miami* which demarcates its perpetrators as evil and therefore as characters with whom no identification is possible. In contrast, Danny's affiliation to the gang suggests how easy it is for ordinary, good people to be turned bad through association. In the light of 9/11, this highlights the need to monitor ordinary people as they, like the terrorists, can easily be corrupted into criminality. This

suggests a rather liberal stance towards perpetrators. However, this is complicated by the confrontational tone of *New York* which gives no space to perpetrators to explain themselves. Rather, it suggests that once people have been corrupted, there is no redemption. Within this argument lies the justification for the constant monitoring of people who are thereby also kept under control.

Mac's back-story brings him not only close to victims but also to the survivors: he himself is a person left behind by a crime. In 'Night, Mother' (1.10) his closeness to survivors is portrayed in some detail in a story about a sleepwalking woman. The crime at stake is the murder of a young woman who is discovered with the sleepwalking woman kneeling over her with her hands in the woman's chest. While detective Flack is willing to instantly make an arrest, Mac holds him off, looking back at the woman who is already sitting in a police car. The camera here cuts from a close-up of Mac to a close-up of the woman who looks dazed. Mac instantly recognises her mental suffering which is also hinted at with her name: Ophelia (a reference to Hamlet's lover, who becomes mentally ill after the murder of her father and drowns herself).

As Mac and Stella look at the CCTV footage, Mac soon realises that Ophelia was indeed sleepwalking and was therefore unlikely to have committed the murder. The same CCTV footage much later gives up the real murderer, but for the time being the episode follows Ophelia's story: first, Mac and Stella go to her house where they find furniture arranged so as to block the way from the bedroom to the corridor of the apartment block. As they look at the bedroom, the camera cuts first to close-ups and then to a high angle long shot of the room which are both superimposed with a DX image<sup>94</sup> of Ophelia getting up from bed and sleepwalking her way past the objects by bumping into them and then navigating around them. Although some understanding is now created, the

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<sup>94</sup> A DX image is a digital image that is inserted into the main picture and looks slightly ghostly and ethereal.

episode presents Ophelia's sleepwalking as a subject of further investigation. In another scene, a sleep experiment is conducted with her. After falling asleep, she suddenly sits up and takes the wires off, which are used to monitor her body functions, gets out of bed and then kneels down to repeatedly hit an imaginary object as she screams.

These scenes highlight the episode's fascination with her plight over the story of the crime that surrounds the actual murder. This extends to the last scene which is not the final interrogation with or the arrest of the murderer, but a conversation between Mac and Ophelia. Mac assumes she actually wanted to help the victim by giving her a heart massage in the way she saw doctors perform a heart massage on her son. She then finally tells of her own trauma which is shown in a reconstruction: her husband and son were killed in a car accident. Ophelia's story of trauma and survival here clearly takes precedence over the actual story of the crime and is mediated primarily through Mac's empathy with the survivor.

Even when Mac is less empathetic, the series depicts the anguish of survivors as an important part of its storylines. In 'American Dreamers' (1.3), the parents of a runaway teenager who is assumed to be a murder victim crop up several times in the episode. In the first scene with them, the information provided is relevant to the investigation but highlights their sorrow and pain. Both mother and father are framed in close-ups as they tell the story of their son which is accompanied by melancholic piano music. When Mac and Stella show them the evidence photographs, the camera lingers in particular on the mother's grief-stricken face as she holds on to the two photographs of possessions that used to be her son's. The scene then reveals that the murder victim was not their son which means that Mac's and Stella's investigation must now exclude the parents. However, the episode gives them another scene in which they ask for news about the investigation in relation to their son. When Mac and Stella

remain silent, the father expresses what they do not dare say themselves: namely that their son is no longer the focus of the investigation. The camera this time cuts between medium shots and extreme close-ups of them, revealing the parents' anger and distress which is highlighted by another sad piano tune.

Although the story of the survivors here is relatively marginal in comparison to 'Night, Mother', it is still important to the story of the crime: when Mac and Stella finally find the perpetrator, who is the couple's lost son, the interrogation with him does not end with a reproach for having killed a teenager over two dollars, it ends with the reproach that the son did not think of his parents. As Mac says: 'You may have started over. But your mother and father never stopped looking for you.' Mac therefore suggests that the greater guilt of the son was that he never told his parents and therefore left them in the belief that he was dead, making them suffer and mourn like other survivors when they did not need to. This again highlights the emphasis *New York* places on the work of mourning by suggesting that the horror of crime is not so much the crime itself, but the loss and the trauma for those who are left behind. Forensic science here seems to be able to give survivors back some peace of mind as the episode 'American Dreamers' suggests: in the final scene, the perpetrator is led out past his parents who are shown in a long shot as they get up. Rather than grief, it is relief that seems to be written on their faces: they have finally found their son and therefore gained certainty, even if this is connected to a new anguish.

*New York*, then, seems to play through the trauma of crime primarily for the benefit of the survivors who, through a better understanding of it, can learn to come to terms with it. This is also connected to the regular use of recording equipment on which *New York* relies for its investigation as I have pointed out in the previous chapter. The recording equipment as an apparently reliable witness enables *New York* to replay the moment of crime repeatedly, thereby creating a parallel to the replaying of the attack and collapse of the World Trade Center in

the television reporting of 9/11 (Lury 2005, p. 116). Moreover, the recordings give reconstruction scenes more credence. In 'The Dove Commission' (1.18), the moment of the shooting is repeated again and again, also with the help of news footage filmed at the incident. Beginning with the teaser, there are several long shots of the death of two victims, a man and a woman. The opening scene uses slow motion to allow closer scrutiny of the image as the woman is hit by a bullet and falls to the floor. While the teaser also shows how the man is shot in the back, the first reconstruction of the shooting focuses entirely on the murder of the female victim. The reconstruction is marked as the memory of one of the witnesses, the murdered woman's friend. The series of shots used for the reconstruction is, however, exactly the same as before, therefore adding nothing new to the investigation, but allowing for a replay of the trauma focused on the story told by a friend. When Mac and Stella look at the news footage, no new insights are added to the investigation again: the footage shows how the two people are shot in long shot.

Only in the final interrogation with the perpetrator does the reconstruction explain why both were shot. At this moment, the story of the crime is told by Mac whose narration triggers the reconstruction. The sequence is a 'complete reconstruction': rather than consisting primarily of one shot length (long shot in this case), it involves different shot lengths and different perspectives to tell its story. This pattern is unique to *New York* which uses it for all episodes. In 'The Dove Commission', long and medium shots show how the murder was committed: a remote-controlled chopper, navigated by the ex-lover of the female victim's friend, was used to kill the two victims. There is again an emphasis on the murder of the woman which is highlighted by several shots of her as she dies, giving the impression she was actually hit four times. By then, the investigators know that she was the primary target which explains this focus here. However, the episode actually foreshadows this by making her friend retell



the story of the crime, allowing the viewer to be slightly better informed than the investigators.

What the structure of the story of the crime in this episode highlights is the emphasis in *New York* on the replaying of the crime over an understanding of the wider context. Rather than adding a significant amount of information to the story of the crime, *New York* stays with the moment of death. It therefore seems to resemble *Miami*; but whereas in *Miami* this replaying goes along with a focus on the victims (shown in close-up as they die), in *New York* neither the investigation narrative nor the final reconstruction establishes the victim as central. Rather, *New York* marks the final reconstruction as complete through its use of different shot lengths and multiple perspectives. As a consequence, it also seems to present all the details from all perspectives that can be presented and therefore establishes an absolute truth. Although this is also implied in *Miami* and *Crime Scene Investigation*, the notion of truth is nowhere near as important as in *New York* where the final reconstruction explains what really happened with the effect that the trauma can be overcome. The truth of the final reconstruction, then, is more connected to ideas about being able to overcome the disruption of crime (Kristeva 1982, p. 4) by containing it within a narrative that presents itself as complete. The playing through of the trauma over and over again must be seen as a strategy of explaining the unexplainable while also containing the images that are too horrific to be made sense of. In this respect, *New York*'s reconstructions resemble the live event reporting of such events as 9/11 as Lury (2005) and Marriott both discuss. Marriott points out that event television offers 'only the same moment, time and time again'. She goes on: 'to deconstruct the ineffable is, inevitably, to disenchant it [...], to empty it of significances other than the strictly calculable' (2001, p. 740). *New York* similarly seems to empty the moment of crime of all significances other than who did what to whom, allowing for crime to become calculable and less traumatic.

This repeated replaying of the trauma also fixes the moment of guilt to the moment of crime. In other words: guilt is equated with committing a crime. In this respect, *New York* can be understood as completely opposed to *Crime Scene Investigation* which, as I have discussed above,<sup>95</sup> gives greater scope to understanding the crime in its context and therefore suggests guilt is not absolute. In *New York*, guilt, particularly moral guilt, is a much more stable entity than in *Crime Scene Investigation*. Here, punishment is referred to not so much in order to highlight the containment of evil as in *Miami*, but to express the moral stance of the investigator. In 'Officer Blue' (1.9), Mac tells the perpetrator in the final interrogation that he should be given the death penalty for shooting a police officer.<sup>96</sup> 'Eye for an eye' as Mac tells him. Here, the contextualisation that the perpetrator's motive offers – namely that he killed people to revenge the death of his father through a corrupt legal system – is overridden in favour of this definite judgement. Rather than showing the complexities behind the crime, *New York* reduces them to clear delineations with separate categories of perpetrator and victim about whom clear moral judgements can be made. This, however, remains the only boundary not breached in a drama that otherwise emphasises the closeness of the investigators to victims, to perpetrators and to survivors. With its main focus on survivors, however, victims and perpetrators remain marginal in the story of the crime and therefore often also faceless enough to allow for them to appear as substitutable. A discussion of their gender and race therefore appears as relatively fruitless.

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<sup>95</sup> See p. 294.

<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, *New York* is of the three states in the franchise – Nevada, Florida and New York – the only state that has not executed anyone in over a decade. Whereas *Miami* presents the death penalty as viable option because it believes in evil, *Crime Scene Investigation* seems to be ambiguous towards it: the episode 'The Execution of Catherine Willows' (3.6) questions the ethical basis of the death penalty but provides no answers.

Thus, crime in *New York* no longer appears as messy as in the other two series. In *New York*, crime can be judged and guilt assigned. This goes along with a portrayal of the body as relatively clean, not abject. As I have discussed in Chapters Four and Six, the body in *New York* is not shown to be surrounded by blood pools or crawling with maggots in the same way as in *Crime Scene Investigation* and *Miami* and the CSI-shot rarely penetrates the body. Thus, in *New York*, the original disruption is not so much the abject body; it is again violence. *New York* then follows the established formula of the detective genre much more than the other two series. Within narratives that focus on survival rather than the complications of the story of the crime, however, this formula is adapted to highlight the plight of survivors over the ingenuity of the detectives.<sup>97</sup> At its centre remains the trauma (of crime in general and the particular trauma of 9/11) which needs to be replayed over and over again to be made sense of and contained.

## **7.6 Conclusions**

This chapter discussed the story of the crime in relation to the investigation and has highlighted that despite similarities in the crimes, the stories of the crime are fundamentally different from each other in the three series. Overall in the franchise, there is an emphasis on murder and on white male perpetrators and white male victims, most of whom are acquainted with each other. The exception to this rule are sexual crimes which tend to happen to a greater extent between strangers and are usually committed against white women. In the

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<sup>97</sup> Compare this to the investigators in *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* (NBC, 2001-) whose ingenuity is regularly highlighted. However, this emphasis changes drastically in the second season of *New York* which moves the investigators out of their gothic surroundings and apparently out of the trauma of 9/11.

representation of rapes, the series in general show most similarities when otherwise diverging greatly from each other.

In *Crime Scene Investigation*, the emphasis on forensic science in the investigation determines the outlook onto crime with unstable categories of victims and perpetrators. Investigations in *Crime Scene Investigation* often uncover other crimes which subverts preconceived notions of who the perpetrator and who the victim is. It can also subvert the notion that the victim is completely devoid of agency. Most importantly, however, *Crime Scene Investigation* presents guilt as not absolute. Rather, it shows that crime is born out of complicated relationships and social roles and presents crime as messy in both its circumstances and its manifestation. Although most of its perpetrators and victims are white and male, the series aligns the spectator primarily with female or feminised male victims which suggests that good victims remain disempowered in favour of an empowerment of the investigators. However, alignment in *Crime Scene Investigation* is not only reserved for victims. As my analysis has shown, alignment is also possible with the perpetrators who are given the space to explain themselves and therefore add to the story of the crime in the final interrogation. As a consequence, the series withholds an absolute judgement and ambiguity remains central to its depiction of crime. It allows crime to be shown as born out of a difficult life towards which the investigators and the spectator can take no definite moral stance. *Crime Scene Investigation* then challenges conventional crime drama not only by portraying crime as crime between acquaintances rather than strangers but also by blurring the categories and relationships between investigator, perpetrator and victim. Unlike other crime drama, then, it does not 'valorise the distinctions among [the] three roles [of criminal, victim and avenger, i.e. investigator] in order to affirm the social, moral, or institutional order threatened by a crime' but only '[explores] the

relations among the three roles in order to mount a critique that challenges that order' (Leitch 2002, p. 16).

*Miami*, in contrast, offers a clear moral judgement in which the opposition between good and evil plays an important role and which ends with the containment of evil. With its emphasis on the plight of the victim, victims are portrayed as innocent or good which is often achieved by a focus on female victims even if they are the only women within a group of people. This has two effects: on the one hand it assesses crime as committed against the individual, and on the other it contributes to the representation of the victim as passive and enduring. The exception to this rule is when the perpetrator is presented as primarily and foremost a victim. In these cases, victims are shown to have agency but only to the extent that they re-act rather than act. This allows the investigators in *Miami* to take over a spiritual role as their investigation delineates the good from the evil and even contains evil through eventual punishment.

*New York's* emphasis is on the process of mourning which is highlighted by the constant playing through of the original trauma until an 'objective truth' is achieved. However, whilst this truth is based on context in *Crime Scene Investigation*, *New York's* 'objective truth' remains focused on the moment of the crime which highlights guilt and establishes a clear boundary between perpetrator and victim. This solution, however, primarily enables closure for the survivors rather than the victims. By aligning its main character with survivors in general, the youngest series of the franchise solves its crimes to bring peace of mind to those who are left behind. The actual victims of crime, in contrast to *Miami*, remain relatively insignificant.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusions

### **8.1. Findings**

This thesis examined the impact of the shift towards the forensic by analysing *CSI*, the franchise which has proved to be globally the most successful and culturally significant. I investigated *CSI* in the British context as Britain seemed to be the originator of this shift. My analysis therefore recognised both the historical and national contexts which influence what meanings can be constructed from a text and the different layers of meaning offered by the text itself. My aim was to answer the questions a) if there is a shift towards the use of forensic science, b) how crime is investigated forensically, c) how this investigation is presented audiovisually so that particular forms of spectator engagements are facilitated and d) how the investigation through forensic science impacts on what stories about crime can be told.

The chapters of this thesis all focused on particular aspects of the context and the text which contribute to the creation of meaning in *CSI*. Chapter Three investigated the national and historical contexts of *CSI* in Britain by providing an overview of programmes scheduled between March 1991 and March 2005 according to the *RadioTimes*. It established that there exists a distinct programming culture in Britain for crime drama which made it most likely for *CSI* to be adopted for the post-watershed schedules of either Channel 4 or Five. Crime dramas in the UK were mostly concerned with murder and most often revolved around detection plots. Moreover, the forensic sciences were already established as tools to investigate crime objectively by several programmes, both fictional and factual, which made *CSI* fit smoothly into a tradition of crime

programming rather than stand out as an exception. This also applies to the franchise's detailed depiction of the corpse which in the UK was preceded by several documentaries and medical dramas which investigated the body microscopically. Five used *CSI* in order to brand quality and to change its channel identity, creating a marketing strategy for the channel which also established *CSI* as central event in its schedules. The scheduling context and the continuity announcements, however, stressed *CSI*'s closeness to crime drama while also emphasising its gore.

Chapter Four, which investigated the teaser, suggested that both the crime drama and the horror genre are invoked by the disruption of the equilibrium through either the crime or the body in *CSI*. The teaser, which sets the tone and style for both the investigation and the crime narrative, uses styles borrowed from outside of the crime genre, including horror, the musical insert and aesthetic devices associated with tourism guides, offering sensory pleasures beyond the cerebral normally associated with crime drama (Norden 1985). As a means to draw in the viewer, the representation of the body with conventions borrowed from the horror genre also enables a physical engagement with the text. Despite these similarities in the franchise, the analysis of the investigation scenes also highlighted that differences between the three series exist – with *Crime Scene Investigation* developing stories around the celebration of science, *Miami* around a focus on the victim and *New York* reverting back to more conventional crime drama in order to play through the trauma of crime and to present forensic science as a work of mourning. These differences became more apparent in the main body of the episodes which I examined in the following chapters.

Chapter Five analysed the interview and interrogation scenes by comparing them to more traditional crime drama as presented in the example of the *Law & Order* franchise. While traditional crime drama relies on verbal accounts of what

happened, constructs a timeline that represents crime continuously in the logic of cause and effect and focuses on the perpetrator in order to reveal the truth, *CSI* rejects the idea that the truth about crime can be revealed by following a continuous timeline and by listening to friends, relatives and suspects. Instead, the franchise uses the interview and interrogation scenes to subvert the hierarchy of traditional crime drama which gives greater credence to statements than to physical evidence. *CSI* suggests that only physical evidence can reveal what really happened. The reversal of the traditional hierarchy is most apparent in interview and interrogation scenes in which the investigators test theories already derived from evidence or in which they gather more physical evidence. As a consequence, truth is no longer defined as an inter-subjective consensus but as something that exists in the world *a priori*.

This emphasis on locating the truth in a world *a priori* is more pronounced in scenes which deal with the scientific investigation of the crime, as Chapter Six established. As *CSI* invests in a lavish style for these scenes and emphasises the body's mutilation by dwelling on the wounds and presenting them in *CSI*-shots, the franchise offers the viewers a multi-sensory experience in which a physical component similar to touch complements the senses of sight and sound which are conventionally solicited by television. This multi-sensory engagement with the narrative aligns the viewer with the investigators who are shown to use all their senses in the investigation of the crime. In *CSI*, crime appears to be manifested in the physical evidence. By focusing on the analysis of material clues, *CSI* is able to develop into a complex flexi-narrative structure which suggests that crime is messy and often arises out of complicated circumstances. All in all, the franchise works with a positivist ideology. Crime is presented as intrinsically connected to matter and therefore to the world *a priori* which science unproblematically makes accessible for us. As a consequence, the sciences can present the absolute objective truth rather than a truth that is determined by



common denominators in subjective statements. Although this rather conservative ideology, which gives the investigators the power to solve cases with a sense of finality that traditional crime drama can only gain through the perpetrator's confession, is shared by the three series, they differ substantially in how they handle science and to what purpose. While *Crime Scene Investigation* completely revolves around science as narrative and aesthetic inspiration and *Miami* celebrates the sciences in order to highlight their achievements for the cause of the victim, *New York* gives relatively little narrative space to an understanding of the sciences. Rather, it presents them as something that can be performed by the investigators which suggests that the sciences are moved into the background in favour of more traditional narratives revolving around the ingenuity of the investigators who are now empowered with the absolute truth and certainty.

As Chapter Seven highlighted, these differences are also apparent in the stories of the crime. Although the overall statistical data suggested similarities between the series – the most common crime is murder, white men present the majority of perpetrators and victims and most crimes are committed by acquaintances of the victims – the stories developed around these details are very different in the three series. *Crime Scene Investigation* with its celebration of science creates stories in which the distinctions between perpetrator, victim and investigator are blurred, giving scope for moral ambiguity. Crime is presented as arising out of difficult, often messy circumstances which partially exonerate perpetrators. Moral judgement is therefore not inherent in the crime narratives themselves, rather, empathy is created by other means including music and framing and can be directed towards both the perpetrators and the victims. In *Miami*, moral ambiguity is rejected in favour of a focus on the victim's story. The story of the crime here replays the victim's suffering and death, rendering the cause of their suffering, the perpetrator, evil. Empathy in *Miami* is

most often created with women or socially marginalised groups, all of whom are presented as disenfranchised, passive and enduring. As a consequence, the investigators in *Miami* seem to fulfil a spiritual role, namely to bring justice and peace of mind to those underprivileged by society. *New York*'s stories of the crime, finally, revolve around the trauma of the World Trade Center attacks. They create a narrative focus not on the victims, who remain marginal – as in traditional crime drama but also mirroring the absence of bodies after 9/11 – but on the survivors, the people left behind, whose suffering and pain is foregrounded. With its emphasis on recording equipment, *New York* re-plays the crime over and over again in order to make it calculable with clear distinctions between perpetrators and victims. The stories of the crime in the three series, therefore, all reflect the incentive of their investigation – to celebrate science, to focus the narrative on the victim and to work through a trauma respectively – which emphasises that the story of the investigation indeed fundamentally determines the story of the crime (Todorov 1977).

## **8.2 Conclusions**

These findings allow for several conclusions to be drawn. First, they suggest that the shift towards the forensic in crime drama was a gradual process in Britain. Arising out of the anxiety about who could police, crime drama put a greater emphasis on the body of the victim (as exemplified in *Prime Suspect* but also the forensic science dramas). The body itself, however, became increasingly visible in medical documentaries and dramas. Mutilations of the body were read as general scientific evidence, allowing for crime drama to reinterpret the body of the victim not only as a signifier for crime but as a central piece of evidence which could reveal what happened.

Second, this shift towards the forensic meant that in crime drama the character of the perpetrator lost its narrative function which is potentially the most radical change that the crime genre has seen in the last decade or so. While traditional crime drama needed to establish a narrative that revolved around the perpetrator's capability, opportunity and motive (Sumser 1996) and relied on the perpetrator's confession to reach a solution, forensic science drama can reveal what happened by following material clues that are found on the victim's body. This also shifts the narrative emphasis to the victim whose body is read and re-inscribed with a narrative of how the different clues came to be there. Moreover, it allows forensic science drama to develop stories that are independent from a strict timeline and a *continuity* of cause and effect. Although cause and effect remain important – this action caused this effect on the body – they are freed from the need to adhere to a temporal continuity. Instead, the stories reveal a complex set of circumstances which overlap temporally and together lead to murder. In other words, the origins of crime can become visible as messy and complicated rather than logical.

Simultaneously, the viewer's engagement no longer relies purely on the cerebral. The understanding of crime does not remain dependent on a comprehension of a set of definable clues, but can appear as confusing and illogical. The clues point to different suspects who all are shown to be involved some way or another, creating a sense that crime is circumstantial rather than planned. Only by bringing the circumstances together and testing them against each other, can the truth be revealed.

By soliciting an engagement with the text that is no longer focused on the cerebral, crime can also be presented and experienced as painful. The emphasis on the mutilated bodies make the suffering of the victim visible which can be magnified by a narrative focus on the victim, as the case of *Miami* suggests. Moreover, female investigators can channel this pain, offering the

viewer the ability to participate empathetically (Nunn and Biressi 2003).

Aesthetic devices such as the *CSI*-shot can visualise the source of pain while also enabling viewers to register the mutilation on their own bodies. All in all then, forensic science drama is able to put the victim centre-stage and to offer the viewers an understanding of the victims' suffering which is not just cerebral but also bodily.

This, however, means that crime is experienced by viewers and must therefore be understood to belong to the world *a priori*: it is mediated not only with a verbal or visual explanation but also by creating a physical connection which we can register but might not be able to translate into cerebral knowledge. The truth therefore seems to lie outside of any conceptions of time and space (Kant 1966), outside of the ordering frameworks of science and outside of the inter-subjective consensus which relies completely on already existing discourses. By offering such an engagement with the text, *CSI* essentially rescues the truth from the all-encompassing relativity of postmodernism (Baudrillard 1994; Derrida 1979) and locates it again with something that exists beyond us and appears lasting. Both Jacques Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida celebrate the lack of an origin and therefore also the lack of an established or establishable truth. Derrida suggests that we should free our thinking from the notion of language as spoken by a person with an intention. Rather, we should perceive language as lacking an originator, as only copying itself. Baudrillard similarly stresses the idea of the copy in his work *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994)<sup>5</sup>. He argues that in the postmodern world, nothing exists as an original but only as a simulation. In other words, nothing can be read as a source for an absolute truth.

*CSI* puts against this the positivist principle that the given, the world of phenomena must be the basis of all reasoning and therefore truth. It suggests that by observing matter, and in particular the body, scientist can establish the

absolute and incorruptible truth. Thus, *CSI* creates a problematic utopia, namely that the truth about what happened exists in the world before our perception and can be found eventually. As a consequence crime appears to be absolutely solvable, and this has affected the perception of what forensic science can achieve: as several criminologists complain, jurors believe that forensic evidence can and must illuminate what really happened. This has come to be known as the '*CSI* effect' (Byers and Johnson forthcoming).

With its emphasis on the body as a means to ground its stories in reality, however, *CSI* is part of a wider trend, as Palmer highlights.

Functioning as a concrete, fleshy sign of the self – the final 'what about...?' – bodies are now invoked by many critics as means to confront the deconstructive excesses of poststructuralism. Theorists thus continue to pursue what Stuart Hall refers to as a kind of 'residual materiality' that seems to "resolve" or appear to resolve the unspecified relationship between the subject, the individual and the body ... It pins back together or "sutures" those things which the theoretical and the discursive production of subjects, if taken to its limits, would irrevocably fracture and disperse.' (Palmer 2001, p. 68)

Thus, *CSI*'s representation of the visceral body that moves our own bodies works within already established cultural patterns and can therefore be effective.

Overall in the franchise, *New York* seems to be the odd one out. It returns to conventions from more traditional crime drama, offers definite moral judgements which are, however, divorced from any empathy for the victim and presents science as less central to its narrative. The context of the World Trade Center attacks certainly offers an explanation for this, but there seems to be a wider move back to old forms of investigation. *Life on Mars*, for example, quite explicitly returns to the traditions of 1970s cop shows by creating a nostalgic view onto the world of *The Sweeney*. In other words, within the period of study in this thesis, there seems to be a movement first to the forensic and then back to

more police-centred investigations. Thus, *Crime Scene Investigation* celebrates the scientific investigation as innovative and new, *Miami* presents the impact of this form of investigation – namely the focus on the victim – as central, while *New York* returns to the old traditions, but with two exceptions: the perpetrators are still denied the right to contribute to the solution, and the truth, still gained from science, remains absolute.

The question then arises if this shift back to more traditional crime drama is more noticeable in general. An overview of crime drama in the year 2006 presents a diverse picture: there is still a large array of forensic science drama that focus either on pathology (the *CSI*-franchise, *Bones* (Fox, 2005-), *Silent Witness*, *Crossing Jordan*, etc.) or psychology (*Wire in the Blood* (ITV1, 2002-), *Cracker*, *Criminal Minds* (CBS, 2005-), etc.), and there are the more traditional crime dramas (*Midsomer Murders*, the *Law & Order*-franchise, *Without a Trace*, etc.). The series of the *CSI*-franchise themselves have changed noticeably. *Crime Scene Investigation* increasingly experiments with narrative formats in season five while still leaving an emphasis on the sciences by transferring to the field the lab technician Greg who learns and is tested about forensic processes and by introducing a new character, Sofia Curtis (Louise Lombard), who speaks while she processes a scene. In season six, however, another development occurs which brings the stories of the crime increasingly into the foreground. Thus, rather than explaining in detail how the sciences work, *Crime Scene Investigation* ponders where crime comes from and how it affects people. *Miami* remains true to its narrative emphasis on the victim but becomes increasingly serialised. This allows the characters who will later become victims to be more rounded (Feuer 1992), while a focus on the relationships between future victims and regular characters also means that their deaths are presented as more devastating. In its second season, *New York* becomes decidedly lighter, as Dobson points out:

the first episode of season two of *CSI: NY* opened bathed in glorious sunlight. The offices were modernised, the labs and morgue had moved out of the basement (and the cast were wearing very tight clothes, perhaps a coincidence). The opening credits were also altered to include new images of the cast in brighter environments and some of them actually smiling!

The season continued in this style, even removing the character, (the very gloomy) Aiden in the second episode and replacing her with a younger more 'upbeat' female character. (2006)

With these changes away from the 'darkness' of the first season, the theme of mourning is moved into the background.

This suggests that my findings are indeed specific to the moment in time. As the analysis showed, they are also specific to the national context. I argued in Chapter Three that the forensic sciences were already established in Britain in several crime dramas. *CSI* therefore did not appear as particularly inventive as it might have in the US. Thus, my analysis highlights that national and historic contexts give particular meanings to a text. These contexts are part of the many sites of meanings offered by a text even when we assume a viewer who either makes the appointment to watch or who records a programme from broadcast television.

### **8.3 Methodological Implications**

An analysis as I have conducted here can situate into a context landmark television programmes which have all too often been discussed without reference to their cultural and historical specificity (see, for example, the *Reading Contemporary Television* series, Arkass and McCabe 2003, 2005, 2006). This thesis drew attention to the British national context and the overlaps that existed there in programme styles, narrative focus and genre developments. These are probably registered by viewers who are unlikely to restrict their

television consumption to one programme. This suggests that any programme is actively assimilated into a culture of television programming which gives particular functions to these programmes and therefore determines some of its meanings as Rixon (2006) rightly points out.

My analysis further highlighted the usefulness of a historical understanding of texts. A historical overview can draw attention to the wider shifts that suggest that programmes do not simply appear out of the blue (or as products of a genius author) but are developments within a particular culture. It can also point to elements of continuity that viewers can bring into play when trying to negotiate their own meaning of one programme. A historical analysis can further draw attention to how particular texts make use of the old in order to reorganise and change their particular genre.

To give an example of a historical understanding of a television text, we could trace a lineage to forensic science by emphasising that *Prime Suspect*, although it focuses on a female investigator and presents the body in more detail than previous crime dramas, remains within the tradition of the hardboiled crime drama. The emphasis on the body is already established in medical documentaries and dramas which also continue this focus. *Cracker* remains a traditional crime drama in that it investigates crime through talk but introduces science as investigative tool. This narrative emphasis is continued in *Silent Witness* and *McCallum* which, however, revolve around pathology, thus combining the emphasis on the body with the investigation through science. At the same time, science fiction dramas become increasingly set in a contemporary setting and focus on a mixture of crime and the paranormal. *CSI*, finally, mixes the style of these dramas with the format already presented in *Silent Witness* and *McCallum* and sparks a wave of copycats itself.

By using a historical angle, we are able to draw up a lineage of change rather than presenting one programme as innovator which brought about a shift



in the whole television landscape. It allows us to step away from the focus on the author that permeates discussions of outstanding 'quality drama', as Robert J. Thompson (1996) points out, in order to highlight the wider cultural influences. Such a discussion might also allow us to understand that the term 'quality' is used within a tradition of aesthetic evaluation that goes beyond the targeting of the ABC1 demographics (Feuer 1984) and might even be connected to particular narrative emphases.

This historical angle would also allow us to steer the 'quality TV' debate in Britain into a new direction. British television has picked up American television drama as quality television after it was branded in that way in the US (see San Martín 2003; Williamson forthcoming). What constitutes as quality, however, is something different here than it is in the US. The American debate has pointed out that 'quality TV' is now a genre which 'is defined by what it is not. It is not "regular" TV' (Thompson 1996, p. 13). In the light of my own analysis this is problematic as it would indeed suggest that 'quality' must be reserved for innovative programming that comes out of nothing. Instead, it might be much more useful to consider how 'quality' has been assigned to programmes in a history of television programming and reception. It might indeed be argued that those American programmes that are considered 'quality' in Britain share many formal markers with earlier British television drama that achieved critical success. Indeed, it might be a useful exercise to compare textual elements and reviews of *Six Feet Under* with those of *The Singing Detective* (BBC1, 1986). In all, the British debate should recognise that 'quality' is connected to a history of evaluation which, Brunsdon (1990, p. 73) rightly points out, is always connected to issues of power.

As this thesis demonstrated, power relations are often deeply ingrained in the text: *Crime Scene Investigation*, I have argued, suggests that the victim is given the power to reveal the truth about crime. However, through the

audiovisual construction of the text, the victim is feminised so that his or her passivity is stressed, thus transferring the power to reveal what happened to the investigator. Such aspects of the text can only be uncovered with a detailed analysis. A close textual analysis as I have conducted in this thesis can reveal the many layers of meaning that viewers can negotiate to form their own meanings. Such scholarship is becoming more prominent in television studies in Britain as the Screen Conference in 2006 revealed (see Pheasant-Kelly 2006; Davis 2006). Such analysis can also highlight contradictions and tensions in the text which create the polysemy which viewers can negotiate.

For a project that is epistemological in nature, that is a project that, like this thesis, wants to investigate what knowledge viewers might be able to gain from a text, a close textual analysis can be a fundamentally revealing tool. By scrutinising the details of the text, such an analysis can draw attention to the limits of this polysemy which excludes a number of interpretations. In this thesis, I have suggested that the polysemy of *CSI* is limited by the focus on crime, by the focus on forensic science and by the address that includes a level of physicality. Thus, the drama primarily revolves around crime rather than human interaction, perpetrators are given a relatively marginal status and the truth is presented as absolute as it belongs to the world *a priori*. It is exactly these limitations to the polysemy of crime drama, I have argued, that suggest the largest generic shifts in crime drama. Thus, a close textual analysis cannot just reveal how the text is constructed but also how this construction impacts on our understanding of the programme and ultimately on our expectations for future dramas.

## Appendix A: Cast Photographs



Figure A.1: The Cast of *Crime Scene Investigation*

The cast of *Crime Scene Investigation* from left to right:<sup>98</sup>

Sara Sidle (Jorja Fox),

Greg Sanders (Eric Szmanda),

Warrick Brown (Gary Dourdan, in the back),

Nick Stokes (George Eads),

Gil Grissom (William Petersen),

Catherine Willows (Marg Helgenberger),

Captain Jim Brass (Paul Guilfoyle),

Dr. Al Robbins (Robert David Hall).

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<sup>98</sup> Image from <http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,12084,1512169,00.html>



**Figure A.2: The Cast of *Miami***

**The cast of *Miami* from right to left:**<sup>99</sup>

Chief Medical Examiner Alexx Woods (Khandi Alexander),

Tim 'Speed' Speedle (Rory Cochrane),

Megan Donner (Kim Delaney),

Horatio Caine (David Caruso),

Calleigh Duquesne (Emily Procter),

Eric 'Delko' Delektorsky (Adam Rodriguez).

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<sup>99</sup> Image from [http://www.spookyweb.de/csi/files/wallpaper\\_csim\\_gruppe\\_800.jpg](http://www.spookyweb.de/csi/files/wallpaper_csim_gruppe_800.jpg)



**Figure A.3: The Cast of *New York***

**The cast of *New York* from left to right:<sup>100</sup>**

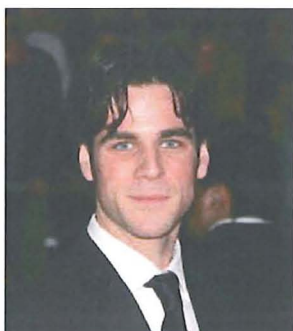
Dr. Sheldon Hawkes (Hill Harper),

Aiden Burn (Vanessa Ferlito),

Marc 'Mac' Taylor (Gary Sinise),

Stella Bonasera (Melina Kanakaredes),

Danny Messer (Carmine Giovinazzo).



**Figure A.4: Detective Donald 'Don' Flack**

Detective Donald 'Don' Flack (Eddie Cahill)<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Image from <http://i19.photobucket.com/albums/b187/stillfiguring/csi-ny.jpg>.

<sup>101</sup> Image from [http://www.tv.com/photos/viewer.html?type=21&ref\\_id=24125&ref\\_type\\_id=101&expand=1&picnum=15](http://www.tv.com/photos/viewer.html?type=21&ref_id=24125&ref_type_id=101&expand=1&picnum=15)

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