

UDC 004.2

THE CONCEPT OF “CRIME” IN TESS GERRITSEN’S DETECTIVE NOVELS: A COGNITIVE AND DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. This paper explores the concept of “Crime” in Tess Gerritsen’s detective novels (*The Surgeon*, *The Apprentice*, *The Sinner*) from cognitive and discursive perspectives. Gerritsen’s narratives portray crime not only as a legal violation but also as a complex psychological and social phenomenon. The cognitive approach analyzes conceptual metaphors and mental models that shape the understanding of criminal behavior, while the discursive perspective examines the linguistic construction of criminals, victims, and law enforcement. This interdisciplinary analysis demonstrates how Gerritsen’s fiction intertwines cognitive perceptions with societal discourse, highlighting gendered narratives, moral evaluations, and forensic details that guide the reader’s interpretation of “Crime”.

Key words: Tess Gerritsen, crime, detective fiction, cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, narrative, forensic investigation.

Introduction

Detective fiction reflects cultural and social attitudes toward crime, justice, and morality (Knight, 2010). Tess Gerritsen, a prominent author of medical thrillers, merges detailed forensic knowledge with suspenseful storytelling, creating narratives that explore both the procedural and psychological aspects of crime. In *The Surgeon* (Gerritsen, 2001), a serial killer uses precise surgical techniques, transforming murder into a controlled and methodical act. *The Apprentice* (Gerritsen, 2002) depicts crime as embedded in social and professional networks, highlighting the manipulation of trust and authority. *The Sinner* (Gerritsen, 2003) portrays crime as a complex interplay of personal trauma, moral choice, and societal expectation. This study analyzes how cognitive and discursive mechanisms construct the concept of “Crime” in these novels.

Main Text

Cognitive Perspective on Crime

From a cognitive perspective, Gerritsen employs conceptual metaphors to structure readers’ understanding of criminal acts. For instance, in *The Surgeon*, the

killer's surgical precision metaphorically frames murder as an extension of medical expertise, linking physical acts to moral transgression (Gerritsen, 2001). Similarly, in *The Apprentice*, crime is conceptualized through schemas of mentorship and apprenticeship, where betrayal in professional relationships becomes a form of moral and psychological violation (Gerritsen, 2002). Cognitive mechanisms such as mental modeling and narrative simulation allow readers to predict criminal behavior, empathize with victims, and anticipate investigative outcomes (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Murphy, 2002).

Discursive Construction of Crime

Discursively, Gerritsen's novels construct crime through language that encodes moral and social evaluation. Criminals are depicted using emotive and evaluative terms emphasizing deviance, danger, and moral corruption, while victims' experiences are narrated to evoke empathy and highlight vulnerability (Tasmashis, 2025). Gendered narratives are particularly evident: female victims often face sexualized violence (*The Sinner*, Gerritsen, 2003), whereas male perpetrators are framed as rational but morally deviant agents. Law enforcement characters, such as Detective Jane Rizzoli, are linguistically positioned as authoritative, ethical, and cognitively superior, guiding the reader's moral interpretation. The discursive framing of crime reinforces social hierarchies and ethical judgments embedded in the narrative.

Integration of Cognitive and Discursive Perspectives

Gerritsen's novels demonstrate the interplay between cognitive and discursive mechanisms. Conceptual metaphors and mental schemas provide structural frameworks for understanding criminal acts, motives, and investigative procedures. Discursive strategies shape moral evaluation and social interpretation, influencing how readers perceive justice, victimhood, and culpability (Doychik & Tomasz, 2021). For example, the tension in *The Surgeon* arises not only from the procedural investigation but also from the psychological framing of the killer as both a medical professional and a moral transgressor, engaging the reader cognitively and morally.

Summary and Conclusions

Tess Gerritsen conceptualizes crime as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by cognitive schemas and discursive constructions. Cognitive frameworks allow readers to simulate and interpret criminal behavior, while discursive strategies encode moral, social, and gendered evaluations. By combining these approaches, Gerritsen's novels illuminate the psychological, ethical, and societal dimensions of crime, demonstrating the interplay between narrative form, reader cognition, and social discourse. This interdisciplinary analysis underscores the potential of detective fiction as a site for exploring human perception, moral reasoning, and linguistic representation of criminality.

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17, 115–122.

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sent: 23.12.2025

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UDC 004.2

THE LINGUOCULTURAL CONCEPT “BODY” IN THE DETECTIVE DISCOURSE OF TESS GERRITSEN’S NOVELS

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Abstract. This paper examines the linguocultural concept “BODY” in the detective discourse of Tess Gerritsen’s novels “The Surgeon”, “Body Double”, and “The Mephisto Club” from cognitive and discursive perspectives. The concept “BODY” is analyzed as a multidimensional phenomenon integrating physical, psychological, social, and symbolic aspects. The study focuses on lexical-semantic markers, somatic vocabulary, gender and sociocultural projections, as well as the motif of the double as a narrative and conceptual tool. The analysis demonstrates that in Gerritsen’s detective fiction the body functions not only as an object of crime and investigation but also as a marker of identity, moral evaluation, and narrative tension, shaping readers’ interpretation of corporeality within contemporary detective discourse.

Key words: linguocultural concept, body, detective discourse, corporeality, somatic vocabulary, motif of the double, gender representation, sociocultural context, Tess Gerritsen.

Introduction

Contemporary detective fiction reflects dominant cultural attitudes toward the body, identity, violence, and morality, positioning corporeality at the center of narrative tension and ethical evaluation. Within linguocultural studies, the body is regarded not merely as a biological entity but as a culturally marked and discursively constructed phenomenon that integrates physical, psychological, social, and symbolic dimensions (Goloborodko, 2002; Selivanova, 2012). In detective discourse, corporeality acquires particular significance as the body becomes a site of crime, investigation, trauma, and meaning-making. Tess Gerritsen’s novels “The Surgeon” (2001), “Body Double” (2004), and “The Mephisto Club” (2006) represent a distinctive type of contemporary detective fiction that combines medical discourse with psychological and ethical problematics. As noted by Knight (2010), modern crime fiction increasingly foregrounds the body as a narrative and symbolic object, reflecting societal anxieties related to violence, vulnerability, and control. This study focuses on the linguocultural concept “BODY” as a key organizing element of Gerritsen’s detective discourse, aiming to reveal how linguistic representation of