

**Metaphorically Mapping Brady Hartsfield's Personality Disorder Linguistically
Represented in *Mr. Mercedes***

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Abstract

Cognitive linguistics emerged in the late 1970s, countering the prevalent methods in formalist criticism of studying language and cognition. This discipline is grounded in experiential principles, emphasizing embodied realism, which acknowledges the mind's physical grounding, the subconscious nature of thought, and the metaphorical essence of abstract ideas (Zlatev 415), thus, interconnecting language, cognition and reality within a psychological and linguistic theoretical framework. Stephen King's *Mr. Mercedes* from the Bill Hodges' trilogy depicts the psychological workings of the character of Brady Hartsfield; the narration, its linguistic expression and metaphors construct the spatiality for representation of the character's cognition through language. As a theory of linguistics, metaphorical mapping is applied to the novel's metaphorical representations to reveal the character's cognition and its functioning in the context of crime/criminality.

Keywords: Crime-fiction, Metaphorical mapping, Cognitive linguistics, Crime novel, Hard-boiled literature.

Cognitive linguistics emerged in the late 1970s, countering the prevalent methods in formalist criticism of studying language and cognition. This discipline is grounded in experiential principles, emphasizing embodied realism, which acknowledges the mind's physical grounding, the subconscious nature of thought, and the metaphorical essence of abstract ideas (Zlatev 415), thus, interconnecting language, cognition and reality within a psychological and linguistic theoretical framework.

The concept of cognitive linguistics argues that the meaning of linguistic expression evolves from interactions between cognitive processes, such as perception, attention, memory, and socio-cultural contexts (Robinson 3-8). The primary objective of this paper is to demonstrate that language is considered the passive reflection of reality and cognition. As a linguistic framework, cognitive linguistics analysis involves the examination of the language and structure of the work to reveal the cognitive processes and conceptualizations that underlie its meaning. Cognitive linguists investigate how knowledge is represented by identifying phrases linked to modal schemes, manifesting in language as a visual or sensorimotor “metaphor” (Cedric). One of the main approaches in cognitive linguistics is metamorphical mapping developed by Fauconnier and Turner in *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending* (2002); it uses metaphors in the work, it concretizes the metaphors to create a new concept from an abstract idea, which is basic to conceptualizations of everyday discourse as well as the cognitive processing that takes place in the construction and construal of the text. Mapping of metaphors examines the linguistic expressions in the text, and how the cognitive structure of the work elevates our understanding of the text. In metaphorical mapping, a concrete domain of the text is mapped onto the abstract domain of the concept (Freeman). The main objective of metamorphic mapping is to elevate the understanding of the work to

the abstract level of thinking of the reader. The process of mapping is a complicated substitution involving three types: selective mapping, partial mapping, and conceptual mapping. Selective mapping connects some aspects of the concrete domain to the target domain. The next mapping technique is partial mapping in which the mapping is incomplete which leaves some aspects of the mapping accounted for, the last technique of the mapping is conceptual blending in which concrete and abstract ideas are both combined to create new ideas. Metamorphical mapping is a powerful tool for creating new meanings and concepts and it helps in explaining complicated ideas in simpler terms and shaping our understanding of abstract concepts, as metaphor influences language, thought and culture. The major outcome of the metamorphical mapping is to help cognitive linguistics uncover the intricate mechanisms behind human cognition and language, demonstrating how metaphors are involved in our understanding of the world and ourselves.

One of the latest cognitive linguistics approaches which arose from Fauconnier and Turner's blending theory and especially focused on cognition in literature, is called cognitive poetics, which Reuven Tsur (1980) is credited for originating the term. Also, he has conducted a cognitive poetics project called —*Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics* (1992), in which he outlines the beginnings of a theoretical approach based on Gestalt psychology, Russian Formalism, New Criticism, literary criticism, linguistics and neuroscience. According to Tsur (2002), cognitive poetics offers a theory which explains systematically the relations between the structure of literary texts and their perceived effects.

Tsur believes that there are two kinds of readers. The first group is interested in rapid conceptualizing and may not put up with uncertainty and ambiguity. They miss the aesthetic qualities of the poem during their reading by rapid conceptualizing. The second group perceives artistic enjoyment by delayed conceptualizing. Its tendency is for open-ended readings as well as figuring out the aesthetic possibilities of a literary text (Tsur 279).

Generally, according to his belief, rapid conceptualization is concerned in cognitive linguistic studies, not cognitive poetics which comes up with delayed conceptualization.

Cognitive linguist Lakoff (1987) believes that —one must understand human categorization in the special case of natural language (Lakoff 113). He suggests four kinds of cognitive models, namely: Propositional models, Image-schematic models, Metaphoric models and Metonymic.

Propositional models specify elements, their properties and the relations holding among them. That is a large part of —our knowledge structure is in the form of propositional models. Image-schematic models —specify schematic images. Metaphoric models are —mappings from a propositional or image-schematic model in one domain to a corresponding structure in another domain. Finally, Metonymic models are models of —one or more of the above types, together with a function from one element of the model to another (Lakoff 114). Since metaphor takes in propositional and Image-schematic models and Metonymy is the basis of metaphor, these two models will be the more important models to be studied in their application to the works of Stephen King's criminal characters and the understanding of their cognition through language.

In Stephen King's crime thriller, *Mr Mercedes*, he employs language to shape the reader's perception of the criminals; he frequently uses metaphors and similes in the description of his characters and their actions, which enables the application of the theoretical framework of metaphorical mapping analysis of cognitive linguistics to his works. The character of Mercedes in the novel represents a force of unpredictability, disrupting the tranquillity of City Park, Ohio (King 12). In the novel, Stephen King portrays this novel as a cat-and-mouse game between Bill Hodges and Brady Hartsfield. Metamorphic mapping in the novel connects to explore the hidden meaning.

"The Mercedes was a killer, and it had come to make its mark on the city." (15), where Mercedes is not a car company name with a high brand value but it's a symbol of destruction and violence. In this sense, the novel itself represents Mr. Mercedes as the antagonist of the novel - Brady Hartsfield with his evil intentions and disturbed psychology. The car resembles the dark personality of Hartsfield, its mark metaphorically indicates a scar on the city, as Brady Hartsfield caused an accident when he stole the Mercedes car at a job fair and murdered thirteen people. This incident created a cultural impact on the city which resulted in the event being known as the Mercedes massacre. Thus, the Mercedes is metaphorically projected as dark psychological trauma in the psyche of the city and its memory.

"From the other eye he could see the Mercedes not just emerging from the fog but seeming to create itself from it. A big gray sedan, maybe an SL500, the kind with twelve cylinders, and right now all twelve were screaming" (14). The Mercedes tragedy, the novel itself got its name from the incident because the whole trilogy of Hodges develops from the tragic incident; an extended metaphor which reveals the true identity of the Brady Hartsfield. Later in the novel, he is known as Mr. Mercedes - "Brady Hartsfield was the kind of guy who made you want to take a shower after you looked at him." (123). Mr. Mercedes, Brady Hartsfield, is the epitome of evil and its metaphorical representation in the novel. His narcissistic personality disorder propels his need for control and admiration, while also making him incapable of empathy and impulse control, culminating in his brutal and manipulative actions.

"Unlike sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, Under Debbie's Blue Umbrella is a chat site where old friends can meet and new friends can get to know one another in TOTAL GUARANTEED ANONYMITY. No pictures, no porn, no 140-character Tweets, just GOOD OLD-FASHIONED CONVERSATION" (83). It's the website utilized by Brady Hartsfield

named “Under Debbie’s Blue Umbrella”, used for anonymous chats with friends; as a means for Brady to manipulate the thoughts of other characters and to deceive them through his plan. It serves as proof of manipulating others' minds with modern-day technology with ideas of materialism and self-development. The website is abstracted as the pervasiveness of technology in modern society and its possibility as an apparatus of manipulation of human psychology, reflected in its structure and linguistic expression with its characteristic of guaranteed anonymity.

The Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R), the most widely used risk-assessment tool measuring psychopathy in forensic settings, reflects several facets of narcissism that Cleckley (1941) included in his seminal work on the characteristics of the psychopath, including a sense of entitlement, ego-centricity, and a lack of empathy. According to Kernberg, psychopathy is a malignant form of narcissism that manifests as sadism, paranoid tendencies, antisocial qualities, and NPD.

Brady Hartsfield's cunning and charm enabled him to deceive and manipulate those around him - including his mother, victims, and even investigators. He expertly exploits individuals' vulnerabilities, preying on their fears, insecurities, and emotional weaknesses to achieve control and influence. With a mastery of manipulation, Brady employs tactics like gaslighting, emotional blackmail, and sympathy play using language to get what he desires. He skillfully creates the illusion of control for others, while in reality, he pulls the strings. Even those closest to him, like his mother, are not immune to his manipulation, which helps maintain his secret life and avoid suspicion. Brady's manipulation is a defining aspect of his character and a hallmark of his evil nature, making him a formidable and terrifying villain through his intelligent, charming, and technologically savvy means of control and domination. The other way of manipulating people is by using tools. He leverages technology

and its linguistic expression to manipulate and dominate others, demonstrating his intelligence and cunning.

Brady uses social media to gather information about his victims and create fake online personas to manipulate them (King 123). He hacks into computer systems and uses surveillance to monitor and control people's actions (King 145). Brady's technological expertise allows him to access sensitive information and exploit vulnerabilities, making him a formidable villain. Through his use of technology, Brady exercises control over others, perpetuating his evil deeds. His actions are a testament to his intelligence and cunning, making him a compelling and terrifying character. “What creeps in to take its place is a terrifying idea: he, Kermit William Hodges, has committed the crime of shoddy police work, and has aided and abetted Mr. Mercedes by so doing” (60).

Brady is considered as Mr. Mercedes the entire novel for his tragic accident. This is a metaphor since the word Mercedes is combined with an accident, so it has a dark trait permeates the entire novel in this linguistic representation. The antagonist of the novel is considered to be Mr. Mercedes, which relates to him as an extremely evil man. “Since his retirement from the police force, he thinks this man is too bright to be doing this job, one that’s a little like scuba diving in a sewer without a wetsuit” (1).

The pivotal event of the novel - Billy Hodges' retirement – is a metaphor for the transformation from a life of service to a life of purpose. He served no purpose after his retirement because he was partying in life but his detective activities in the Mercedes case gave him purpose in life.

Hodges leverages his vast experience and expertise to meticulously examine clues and connect the dots, reconstructing the puzzle of evidence. He trusts his instincts, allowing his intuition to serve as a compass, guiding him through the complex investigation and uncovering critical leads. His exceptional investigative skills and intuitive insights prove

instrumental in unravelling the mysteries surrounding the Mercedes Massacre, ultimately revealing the truth. Initially, Hodges is introduced as a retired detective, implying a sense of closure and finality to his career. However, as the story progresses, he becomes increasingly invested in the investigation, and his role evolves. He transforms from a retired detective to a vigilant seeker of justice, driven by a strong sense of purpose and responsibility.

This metamorphosis is fueled by Hodges' encounter with Brady Hartsfield and the Mercedes Massacre. He becomes obsessed with uncovering the truth and ensuring that justice is served. Hodges' transformation is not just about his role but also about his personal growth and redemption.

Through his investigation, Hodges confronts his own mortality and the limitations of his retirement. He rediscovers his passion for justice and his ability to make a difference. This transformation is a metaphorical connection to his past, as he revisits his skills and experience to tackle the case.

In the culmination of "Mr. Mercedes," the transformative journey of Bill Hodges illuminates the intertwined nature of personal growth, redemption, and the quest for justice. His metamorphosis shines as a radiant example of hope, illustrating that individuals can rediscover their purpose and forge new paths in life, even when confronted with formidable challenges.

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