

## **Artisticism in John Grisham and Scot Turow's Legal Thrillers**

Ravshan NIYAZOV

PhD student of Uzbekistan State

World Languages University

*The article discusses the courtroom cases and their depictions in contemporary American writers John Grisham and Scott Turow's works.*

**Key words:** *courtroom cases, comparison, novel, political and social problems, detective, psychological and philosophical attitudes, literary analysis, literary character.*

American popular law culture is the arena in which Americans have articulated and explored this fascinated mixture of attraction and repulsion with their regard for the lawyers and their favorite law. Without doubt, lawyers are not as famous in any part of the world as they are in America and their statuses are also flourishing day by day, for the reason of that the inhabitants of America need lawyers even for minor issues. Nowadays, it is a tradition for them to have family lawyers, when in some parts of the world there are not firm lawyers in some companies. One thing that we cannot avoid is that literature is the mirror of the society, and, of course, it is relevant, from ancient till contemporary times, to literature of the world. Having a great reputation and a significant role of lawyers among people make writers fictionalize them in their works. Nevertheless, when a writer is a lawyer, no one can describe the court cases better than him or her. At the same time lawyer-writers' contribution to literature can be defined with sprawling the genre of a legal thriller. In modern American literature there are two figures who dominate in this field of fiction, they are Scott Turow and John Grisham. It can be said that Scott

Turow is the founder of a modern legal thriller and John Grisham develops it with his best-selling books. Psychological study of clever, cynical lawyers' behavior is the central topic for Turow's works. His four exciting novels "Presumed Innocent" (1987), "Burden of Proof"(1990), "Pleading Guilty" (1993) and "Personal Injuries"(1999) depend on narrative voice to obfuscate guilt and responsibility. These four novels are set in a fictionalized Chicago area called "Kindle Country" and gain depth and interest from studies of those caught up in the justice system, from street cops, pathologists, judges, ad attorneys to lonely wives, angry children, cynical jurors and ruthless politicians.[3; p.33].

In these Kindle Country Novels many of the characters appear in more than one book and the author has used the intertextuality deliberately. Scott Turow can achieve to write his crime thrillers with the help of stylistic devices and he has broken the fact that in the genre of legal thriller it is impossible to use literary-stylistic methods and devices. Critics and reviewers consider his works as literary complete and it is a difficult task to be accepted by both scholars and readers. The novels written by Scott Turow depict total truth as unknowable, betrayal as inevitable, and legal officialdom as having more in common with criminals than with decent citizens. He is virtually invented the contemporary legal thriller in 1987 with "Presumed Innocent". Scott Turow is a very productive writer, he is successful in depicting the crucial events of the 20th century in his novel "Ordinary Heroes". The book refers to the World War II and its moral conflicts and it is far from the author's fictionalized Kindle Country. There will be always written works about World Wars, Turow reminds us 40 million deaths in Europe and 20 million ones in Asia and he has taken a familiar path –the World War II as a romantic adventure. "Ordinary Heroes" is much about how we feel and think about the war today. One chapter of the book begins with "All parents keep secrets" and in trying

to unravel his father's, Stewart represents all the children of the greatest generation, with his mix of admiration, curiosity and misplaced envy, as he tries to understand what his father's heroism meant or how his mother came "to value the ordinary." Theirs was the last generation to have had military action as its defining experience. Stewart, like us, can see it only in reflected light: "When we tell our parents' tales to the world, or even to ourselves, the story is always our own." [8; p.42]. The novel is dedicated, not incidentally, in memory of Turow's father, who was an officer in Europe during the war.

In general, Scott Turow is one of the blockbuster writers of modern literature and he can manage to show problematic issues of the society as John Grisham, yet Scott contributes to the genre of a legal thriller and improves it adding his own concepts of writing.

John Grisham, the most famous author of American literature, made his first step into literature via the novel "A Time to Kill" in 1989, and since that time, the author has established himself as one of the blockbuster novelists of the late 20th century. As a realist author Grisham could raise contemporary problems around us and without a doubt, he claims that law can be strong, however sometimes it is too weak to protect human rights.

Despite the huge popularity with readers, Grisham's works have gathered a mixed response from critics. For example, "The Last Juror" has been found the author's finest accomplishments by some reviewers, while others have dismissed the book, deeming it poorly structured and deaf to the plot's sociologically relevant undertones.

Yet at the same time, some reviewers have heralded the author's handling of social issues, claiming as did commentator Timothy Rutten, that "... no other writer of his popularity is quite so keen-eyed or as fierce a social critic. He's an idealist but not an optimist; a moralist but not a moralizer." [7; p.22]. While some critics have

concurred with Mark Hemingway's perception, that "(Grisham's) novels are at best glorified screenplays, rife with odious liberal populist messages." [7; p.22].

Shallow character development and simplistic plots are usually central topics of the critical observation on John Grisham's works. The writer interviewed to "Writer's Digest" (July, 1993): "You have to start with an opening so gripping that the reader becomes involved. ... The end should be so compelling that people will stay up all night to finish the book. ... You take a sympathetic hero or heroine, an ordinary person, and tie them into a horrible situation or conspiracy where their lives are at stake. ... No flashbacks. ... When you are writing suspense, you cannot spend a lot of time on persons, places, or settings." Grisham is not afraid of saying such commentary: "I write to grab readers. This isn't serious literature." [10; p.35].

However, each work written by the writer depicts the character descriptions in details: age, profession, interest, some specific features and appearance, it is true; it helps to improve the imaginative picture of any fiction. At legal process each minor item can play significant importance to find out expected results. Because of his professional skills, Grisham's fictions are always accepted as interesting practical lessons examples.

Creating the notion that John Grisham's works have political, social and economic influence on his readers, one of the most successful critical articles is Jennifer Rubin's "John Grisham's Law: the Social and Economic Impact of a Pop Novelist". First of all the author tries to clarify what is Grisham's law, it is a dark and devious world in which corporations are filled with expert conspirators, not banal paper-pushers. They blackmail, cover up, rig settlements, manipulate juries, and demonstrate stealth to a degree that would put the CIA to shame. It is a world in which the regulatory apparatus of the federal government is virtually nonexistent. [4; p.12].

In Grisham Law “causation” is the basic link between the wrongful act and the injury in tort law. At the root of the tort system is the notion that the law is a great equalizer between the strong and the weak, and at the same time ultimate source of justice. Moreover, this justice depends on an unbiased eye to the facts and a denial to be blinded by emotion. Hence, John Grisham is a blockbuster novelist of contemporary literature and there are some shadows of mass culture in his works. As a literary critic Timothy Rutten claims, the writer sometimes seems less a literary personality than a force of nature – his books give a showy kind of regularly reoccurring natural phenomenon. [1; p. 22]. John Grisham also proclaims: “I’m not a Southern writer ...I’m a commercial writer who lives in the South. I try to write commercial fiction of a high quality – no attempt at literature here – just good book that people enjoy reading. The libraries are already filled with great literature. There’s no room for me.”[ 6; p.61].

Despite of this fact Grisham is a leader in the tendency of political and social issues of modern world literature. His readers are common people, he writes in common language, might be one of the reasons of his popularity is simplicity. Even in political and governing system of the country the culture has played a remarkable role. While romanticizing and glamorizing the depiction of law in the popular culture, it acts as a strong protection against changes and helps jurors and judges to create legal theories. When popular culture and the law are intermingled, there is no more influential figure than John Grisham.

Both writers’ protagonists are lawyers and plots of their works circle around legislation. Both of them are masters of traditional American legal thriller genre.

Grisham and Turow are not shouting in the wilderness, of course, but producing images for mass consumption. Their plaintiffs go platinum. Their bailiffs and bondsmen are boffo. Their powerful pictures of justice are what your clients, your family and your jury pools know best of due process. [12; p. 28].

It is easy to catch some different and similar features between Turow and Grisham's works. It seems to the reader that the fictional world of the authors is in contrast. Both of them have their own fictionalized place to most of their works:

John Grisham's Ford Country and Scott Turow's Kindle Country. They write mostly court cases and describe perfect attorneys as main characters and the personages of their works are common people around us. The central topic in both writers' fictions is social life and problems of an ordinary class. The significant tool is law and its function for government and for citizenship. Their language is very simple, understandable and acceptable by scholars and readers.

The main difference is time between the two authors' works. Scott has used the preset time and as well as the time of the World War. Another interesting thing with his last book "Identical" that it is based on a Greek myth "Castor and Pollux". John Grisham as a modernist always describes the processes of nowadays. He never retells his stories in past times.

The next difference, as we mentioned before, is with their fictional characters. Scott prefers to use the same personages in several works, intertextuality among his novels like "Presumed Innocent", "Burden of Proof", "Pleading Guilty" and "Personal Injuries", however Grisham consumes separate images for each work. In Turow's works even his minor characters are so complex and the author states out that they come to life on the page.

Capital punishment or death penalty is one of the important themes for both writers. Surviving people's life is considered as humanistic measure in their works. John Grisham's "The Chamber", "A Time to Kill", "The Confession" and his nonfiction "The Innocent Man" depict the pictures of death penalty and the author's attitude to this punishment. For example, in "The Chamber" the plot is centered on the trial of an elderly Ku Klux Klan member who has been sentenced to death for fire-bombing the office of a Jewish attorney. By the end of the book

nobody wants him to be killed. The description of the novel and the sequence of events are written very skillfully and the author makes his readers feel pity for his terrorist character, however we are sure Sam has done an unforgivable crime.

Scott Turow's "Ultimate Punishment: A Lawyer's Reflections on Dealing with the Death Penalty" is the European revulsion against capital punishment, and in Europe's assumption of moral superiority vis-à-vis the United States in this respect, a sign of the historically inferior level of legitimacy of European governments compared with that of the United States. [1; p. 27]. Scott Turow, in the interview with the reviewer Elfrieda Abbe, pointed out that he had been involved in capital punishment, in many ways, that had been a horrible case because the defendants had been innocent. They had been prosecuted for a decade, and it was a horrible injustice.

In John Grisham's fictional world law is too much with us, with every operation of law creating yet another obstacle to America's righting itself. [12; p.28].

Some Grisham's protagonists at the end of the novel leave the law. They reject the messy world of legislation. It is very common with Grisham, he chooses a very astonishing end and it is sometimes unexpected or unbelievable that if a human being can find such solutions in reality as the writer depicted in his novels.

However his short-stories are much closer to life than his novels and in his stories Grisham could show himself as a realist writer. As an author and a lawyer, he suggests that the law, as we know it, will not permit his young idealists to achieve justice over the long term. This is true, of course. But it is his own view of law that stops his protagonists from effecting meaningful change. [12; p.28].

Being totally different from Grisham's works, Scott Turow's lawyers are representatives of rational system of abstract justice, embodiments of the social

world's realm of ultimate restraint, whose daily currency nonetheless is the passion of human conflict. [11; p.118].

In most of Turow's works there is one truth that the law does not and cannot solve the problems of the society. Indeed, his strongest theme to his fictional world is, as the writer and the attorney Terry K. Diggs stated out, the law is without jurisdiction in the regulation of our most consequential connections, our ties to family. There are a lot of points of view about Grisham's and Turow's popular fictions, it is easy to catch similar approaches as the professor of Harvard Law School Martha Minow says: "These images have been shown to structure people's lives in a powerful way, perhaps more powerful than a judicial opinion." But sometimes it is a difficult task to find such strength as both authors describe. As John Grisham mentioned in "The Chamber" there might not be difficult professions than being lawyers. Why do lawyers practice? Why can't they just work like everyone else? Do plumbers practice? Do truck drivers practice? No, they simply work. But not lawyers... They are special, and they practice. With all their damned practicing you'd think they'd eventually become good at something. [5; p.151].

Populism, professionalism and individualism have always colored his works with the help of law and lawyers. While Turow uses a strong current of Darwinism in his writing and there is a metaphysical contest between reason and unreason portrayed as 'eternally' and or 'naturally' opposed forces. [9; p. 87].

The author in his third novel "Pleading Guilty" shows exactly the dimension to the eternal contest of reason and unreason. Scott Turow's fictions and non-fictions inherit much more psychological and philosophical attitudes rather than John Grisham's works. Both Grisham and Turow's works say much more about the notion of law and how it is supposed to work in life. Grisham's fictional characters suffer not because they have too much law, yet because they have too little.



Moreover, we come across such confrontation of two choices: John Grisham sees law as a process that doesn't work absent some extraordinary intervention, while Scott Turow believes law as a complex organism with its own internal logic.

## REFERENCES

1. Daniels A. Reflections on the Black Cap. *New Criterion*, 2004. – P. 27.
2. *Criminal Proceedings: The Contemporary American Crime Novel*. Ed. Peter Messent. –London: Pluto Press, 1997.
3. Macdonald G. Scott Turow: Overview. *Contemporary Popular Writers*. Ed. Dave Mote. Detroit: St. James Press, 1997.
4. Rubin J. John Grisham's Law: the Social and economic impact of a pop novelist. *Commentary* 127.6 (2009):56.
5. Grisham J. *The Chamber*. – London: Arrow, 1994. – p.151.
6. Grisham J. *The Faulkner Thing*. – The Oxford American, 2013.
7. John Grisham. *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 273. Detroit: Gale, 2009.
8. Kanon J. The Greatest Generation Gap. *The New York Times Book Review*. (Nov. 6, 2005): Arts and Entertainment: P.30(L).
9. Heffernan N. *Law Crimes: The Legal Fictions of John Grisham and Scott Turow*.
10. Randolph Paul Runyon. *John Grisham: Obsessive Imagery*. *Southern Writers at Century's End*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997
11. Turow S. *Pleading Guilty*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Viking, 1993. – p.118.
12. Terry K. Diggs. *Through a Glass Darkly*. *ABA Journal*. Oct. 1996.
13. Rutten T. *Deft Social Realism and Iffy Grammar*. – Los Angeles Times, Jan 29, 2008. \_\_