

PECULIARITIES OF POPULARITY OF LEGAL THRILLERS IN CONTEMPORARY
LITERATURE

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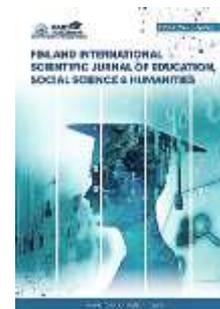
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Abstract: The article analyzes the evolutionary stages of detectives, defines the meaning of a legal detective, and points out the peculiarities of a legal detective from other types of detectives, emphasizing its popularity in contemporary literature. The author aims to reveal the necessity of justice and juridical system in a society, highlighted in legal thrillers.

Keywords: literature genres, legal thrillers, justice, attorney, investigation, legal process, court, corruption, social problems.

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Introduction

For decades, legal thriller readers' number is increasing, making them best-seller books. So researching the legal thrillers has taken many researchers attention as their main theoretical subject, starting from Russian and foreign literary scholars Savochkina E. A., Ageeva M.G., Owens J.B., Suxina E.B, Sauerberg L. to national scholars namely, Akobirova and Niyazov R.T

Literature review

Human being has always been curious about the pursuit of evil and unfairness, giving privilege to the triumph of goodness and justice. This tendency has lead to the creation of a detective genre in literature. The term “Detective” is still a cause of controversial debates among the literary researchers. While some researches claim the genre of detective is one of the newly appeared genres in literature, the opponents connect the evolution to some religious texts and the folklore, where there is a trio of characters like criminal-victim-judge, culminating the triumph over evil, and the reveal of the crime.¹¹² In the dissertation by Kholiqov B.A dedicated to the genesis of detective genre in literature, he considers some folk tales, beginning with crime before presenting a gradual narrative, as an archetype of detectives, as they bear some similarities in modern detective fiction. The opposing viewers state that the earliest example of detective fiction started with brilliant and eccentric detective C. Augustine Dupin in the work “ The Murders in the Rue Morgue” written by Edgar Allan Poe in 1841. However the term

¹¹² Kholikov, Bahodir Alikulovich (2020) “PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT OF DETECTIVE LITERATURE” Bulletin of Gulistan State University: Vol. 2020 Iss.3, Article 11 p:8

“detective” was not coined at that time and Poe called his works as “Tales of ratiocination”. The utmost concern of the fiction was the ascertaining truth combining intuitive logic with astute observation. The early detective stories concentrated on investigating the case from the starting till the end of the story, protagonist being more practical rather than emotional. Russian scholar Ageeva claims that over the period of the late XIX century American society was in need of policy to establish prosperity, peace and well-being of citizens throughout the country that led to the popularity of police officers, lawyers and detectives as protectors of socio-political interests depicted in detective fiction.

This tendency further developed in France with “Monsieur Lecog” by Emile Gaboriau (1832-1873). Protagonist Lecog reveals the most mysterious cases examining clues minutely. In England, Wilkie Collins, considered as “the grandfather of English detective fiction”, contributed to the further development of this genre with his “The women in white”. When Collin’s “ The Moonstone” was published, T.S Elliot praised his work as” the first, the longest, and the best of Modern English detective novels in a genre invented by Collins and not by Poe”¹¹³ Actually it was Collins who had a number of ideas about the classical features of the genre. Afterwards several other detective fictions appeared that got fame instantly: Arthur Conan Doyle with his “Sherlock Holmes” series.

The period of two World Wars is generally referred as “The Golden Age of Detective fiction”, constituting notable writers Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, John Dickson Carr who produced state-of -art works leading the genre to be in highly standardized form. During the period, genre got standardized with several conventions avoiding supernatural elements to maintain focus on the mystery itself .The objective of a detective fiction was to conceal the identity of a criminal in a complex puzzle drawing the reader’s attention to the mystique of a case.

As many writers tried their hands at mystery, different subgenres appeared with the distinction in the role of main characters and in their linguistic features. As other literary genres divided in several parts, detective genre has also witnessed such division, such as classical, historical mystery, psychological, gangster, police procedural, legal thrillers, educational, fantastic and detectives for children¹¹⁴.

In XX century, in American Literature, literary scholars describe three stages of the development of detectives.

1. Hard-boiled detectives (1920-1940s). The main character is private investigator
2. Police-procedural ((1950s) The protagonist is police himself

¹¹³ David, Deirde (2013) the Cambridge companion to the Victorian Novel. Cambridge University Press. p.179 ISBN 978-0521 182157

¹¹⁴ Detective, <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Detective>

3. Legal procedural (1980-90s). The main character in this subgenre is a professional lawyer depicting his experience and cases from his own life.

Results and Discussion

It is mentioned that “in terms of features of the genre, legal thrillers coincide with detective standards but for their topical specification”¹¹⁵. The legal thrillers mainly focus on the proceedings of the investigation, with particular attention to the impacts on courtroom scenes and legal system of the country depicting social justice experiences from the point of a lawyer’s view. The work should illustrate the lawyer’s authorship actions in a courtroom can affect the quality of character’s lives, highlighting innocence prevailing against injustice. Legal thriller books can vary in length and subject matter, but they tend to feature three common elements.

1. Main characters who work in the legal field: legal thriller protagonists are mainly judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers or jurors. The grounding in the world of courts and the law distinguishes legal thrillers from other genres.

2. Mystery and twists: some legal thrillers are murder mysteries, where a killer’s identity is unknown for much of the novel. Others feature wrongfully accused people, and readers must delve deep into the book to discover the true perpetrators. Readers are drawn to legal thrillers containing twists and surprises, and these twists usually involve criminal activity.

3. A sense of justice. Justice tends to be a prevailing theme in legal thrillers. While main characters may strive for other things as well- like romantic fulfillment and personal glory- they are often driven by an overriding need for justice. Sometimes justice takes the form of court verdicts; other times it manifests as revenge on perpetrators.¹¹⁶

In linguistic features, the research done in finding out linguistic functional language use in legal detective works by Tregubova, collected more than 1000 examples of language units comprising specific language vocabulary in legal detective works by popular thriller writer John Grisham. Many investigations were conducted by Savochkina E.A, and Jerdeva O.N. to learn the linguistic features and it was pointed out in their researches that the legal detectives are full of idioms, slangs, abbreviations, and acronyms. It was concluded that in each legal detective

1. There are exact names of legal organizations existing in USA legal system. The authors precisely describe the overall procedure in a courtroom giving their names specifically. For example, in “Confession” by John Grisham, more than 20 names of legal firms, courtrooms, police departments and prisons were highlighted.

¹¹⁵ Tregubova Yu(2021) Peculiar lexical features of the American legal thriller (based on John Grisham’s novels). Research Results. Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, V.7 (2), 135-145, DOI:10.184 13/2313-8912-2021-7-2-0-13

¹¹⁶ Baldacci David (2022) Teaches mystery and thriller writing. MasterClass articles

2. In legal detectives there are many lexical units frequently showing people's legal status in a case: Detective Kerber, Judge Grule, Deputy US Marshal Duboski, US Attorney Roy Foltrig.

The formation of legal thriller is tightly connected with the works of John Grisham, a lawyer and American novelist. After graduating Mississippi State University, he practiced criminal law for about a decade, which helped him further to precisely depict the crime and the procedures in a courtroom that can be seen almost in all his works. John Grisham's first novel "A Time to Kill" was published in 1989. The idea of writing the story popped in the courtroom, impressed by the words of a victim girl who was violently raped and beaten, which is the proof of his career influence. After four years his first bestseller book "The Firm" immediately got the attention of readers, after which he gave up his career in jurors. Many best-seller legal-thrillers were followed by John Grisham after that, instantly flourishing his career as a detective writer. "The Pelican Brief", "The Client", "A Painted House" and others. The instant fame that he gets after each novel intrigued many scholars to search for the reasons of his works that can't be ignored by the reader. Ageeva in her dissertation states that the works by John Grisham are always on focus as they reveal difficult social problems (racial discrimination, death penalty, bribery)¹¹⁷. Americans have always struggled for their rights to be fulfilled without any obstacles, and they were always willing to get acquainted with the cases that teach them law, its practical use, and the crime analyzed in details. In this way, Americans can not only enjoy the work itself, but also they can get useful advice on legal cases. Niyazov R.T in his dissertation claims that "John Grisham is able to depict the whole legal system of America as it is, with all details and managed to find his position in American literature."¹¹⁸

Many readers adore John Grisham for his simple and familiar story that they have faced in their life. Mal Warwick on his review's "Why do so many people buy John Grisham's book", he highlights the fact that "John Grisham's plotting is masterful. He weaves together the threads of each story into a compelling and often heart-pounding tale. There is nothing superfluous in John Grisham's writing -- not a thought, not a word." Deep knowledge of law has always helped the author to make a perfect story. Whenever he starts a story of a victim, he relates the case in real life that we heard a lot, have seen on TV, or have read on newspapers. He takes the reader to their world, leading them to search for reasons, to find clues for the solution. "When Grisham tells a story of a young man - and, for that matter, his family and his community - victimized by a corrupt system, he's relating to us a

¹¹⁷ Ageeva, Marina Gennadivna (2014): Эволюция детективного романа в Американской литературе XX века, dissertation, Ijevsk, p:101

¹¹⁸ Niyazov, Ravshan To'raqulovich (2020) "Jon Grisham ijodida detektiv romanlarning badiiy o'ziga xosligi", avtoreferat, Tashkent 2020 p:14

true story of America today. And the details of the story don't matter, because we know in our hearts that the unprincipled police officers and prosecutors and judges, the self-seeking politicians, the heartless insurance executives and the greedy lawyers that populate Grisham's books are the people we believe are running our lives" states critic Mal Warwick in his "Courtroom Dramas, Mysteries and Thrillers" book review.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

In summary, detectives have always intrigued the readers with its capability to maintain the reader's attention, from describing the case, till revealing the crime with most unexpected solutions. Detectives are more popular rather than other genres with their capability to attach reader's long attention span to the work depicting more authentic cases familiar to the reader and they don't cause any difficulty for the audience. Thanks to writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, detective genre has flourished and the heroes Sherlock Holmes, Herquil Poirot, Sam Spade and C. Auguste Dupin are many people's favourite ones. In contemporary literature, legal detectives can be ranked as best-seller books, as they are in high demand among the audience. As it was stated above, legal detectives depict mostly familiar cases, giving a chance to the reader to get familiar with the juridical activities, citizen's rights and legal system of a particular country. The vivid example of such genre are the works of John Grisham—one of the most outstanding representative of the genre. Legal detectives illustrate the weak points of not only society but also the faults of law and legal system in the country.

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¹¹⁹ <http://malwarwickonbooks.com/reviewer-mal-warwick/>

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