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### **ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF TRAGEDY AND DECISION IN SCOTT TUROW'S NOVELS**

Khaydarova Umida Pulatovna

Acting Associate Professor Foreign Languages Department,  
Tashkent State University of Law

#### **Abstract**

Scott Turow is considered one of the writers who made the greatest contribution to the development of American legal thriller in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Both as a writer and as a practicing lawyer, he is a man who has deeply mastered the internal mechanisms of the legal system, creating complex dramatic scenes in his novels that revolve around the courtroom, the criminal investigation, and the moral choice of the individual. The most important feature that distinguishes Turow's creative style from representatives of other genres is that he interprets the judicial process not merely as a means of solving a mysterious crime, but as an artistic field that reveals a person's inner world, their struggle with sin and conscience, and the moral veins of society. It is for this reason that both the tragedy and the solution in his works are simultaneously both legal and existential in nature, leading the reader not only to a simple detective interest but also to deep philosophical reflection.

The genesis of the tragedy in Turow's first and most famous work, the novel "Presumed Innocent" (1987), deserves special attention. The novel begins with the murder of the protagonist, Carolyn Polhemus, an associate and former lover of prosecutor Rusty Sebich, and at first glance, it seems like a simple detective plot. However, Turow develops this plot step by step in such a way that the true tragedy behind the crime is not in the wound on the body, but in Rusty's own life, in the silence in his family, in the long-term patience and anger of his wife Barbara.



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Before taking the tragedy to the courtroom, the writer depicts it through the protagonist's memory, conscience, and experiences: the incessant exchange between past and present, first-person narration, long monologues, and internal dialogue—all of which serve to express the multi-layered essence of the tragedy. Thus, the murder in the novel becomes not only a legal phenomenon but also a symbol of Rusty's past betrayal, Barbara's years of suffering, and the internal collapse of an entire family.

Turov's skill in depicting a tragedy lies in the fact that he never gives the reader a ready-made conclusion. Throughout the novel, the reader experiences Rusty as both the culprit and the victim; the defense at the trial, led by lawyer Sandy Stern, reveals the second layer of the tragedy—how relative and interest-based the legal system itself is. It is here that another important artistic method of Turov is noticeable: he gives the solution not with the identification of the killer, but with the disclosure of the last, most bitter truth among several layers of truth. The famous scene at the end of the novel "The Accused Is Innocent"—when Rusty learns that Barbara is the real killer and decides to keep the secret for his son—is a purely moral and humane solution, completely different from the legal one. The court acquits Rusty, but the hero condemns himself to a lifetime in the inner courtroom. In this way, Turov shows how far the concepts of "legal rehabilitation" and "spiritual rehabilitation" can be from each other.

In the writer's next major work, the novel "The Burden of Proof" (1990), the tragedy is revealed in a different way—not through an extreme event, but through the truth behind the silence. This time, the protagonist is the lawyer Sandi Stern from the first novel, and the work begins with the unexpected suicide of his wife, Clara. In the process of searching for the reason why his wife took such a step, Stern enters a world that has literally become two courtrooms—first, the criminal investigation surrounding his father-in-law's business, and second, the closed,



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unspoken inner world of the family. Turov describes the tragedy here not as an event of death, but as the ultimate explosion of pain that has accumulated over the years and has never been spoken aloud. The phrase "burden of proof" in legal proceedings serves as a multi-layered metaphor for the novel: for Stern, it becomes not just a legal concept, but a metaphor for his own suffering as a husband from a life he could not know, notice, and at the same time protect.

In the novel "Personal Injuries" (1999), Turov reveals the themes of tragedy and solution from new angles. At the center of the work is Robbie Fever, a lawyer who bribes judges and agrees to cooperate with the FBI. Turov describes this character as a person who makes both sinful and tragic decisions at the same time: Robbie's wife is on her deathbed with ALS, and her entire life is the result of struggling with this difficult situation. Turov demonstrates one of his most significant artistic achievements here—he uses the protagonist's personal tragedy not as a "justification" for his criminal activities, but as a deeper portrait of human vulnerability. The reader does not judge Robbie, but he does not pity him; he simply understands him, and it is this understanding that creates the strongest artistic impact of the novel. The solution here lies outside the traditional legal judgment—in the scene where FBI agent Evan Smith, after conducting an operation using Robb, "says goodbye" to him as a different person: both characters have deeply changed each other, and this change does not fit into any judgment.

Another important feature of Turov's artistic expression of tragedy is his style of working with time and memory. The writer never develops the plot in a straight line; he constructs the past and the present in such a way that the moment of the crime and the moment of the trial constantly illuminate and explain each other. In the novel "Ordinary Heroes" (2005), this style finds its most vivid expression: modern journalist Stuart Dubinsky finds documents related to the investigation of a case committed by his late father during his military service and embarks on the



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process of reconstructing the past. The novel develops simultaneously in two time layers - the period of World War II and the modern United States - and Turov thereby expresses the heredity of the tragedy, the nature of pain passed from father to son, and from generation to generation. The solution comes here with the discovery of the truth, but this truth brings no relief to anyone: Stuart begins to understand his father, his father's decisions, and the moral complexity of the wartime behind those decisions, and it is this understanding that is the most correct form of solution for Turov.

Another distinctive feature of Scott Turov's works is that they are never built around a single tragedy. In every novel, the writer depicts several intersecting tragic lines: family tragedy, professional tragedy, and moral and existential crisis. Its characters—often middle-aged men and women at the peak of their professional careers—are forced to simultaneously drag professional responsibility with failures in their personal lives. Such multi-layeredness gives Turov's realism a special depth: he shows that human life never runs in only one direction, and both tragedy and solution are always born at the intersection of several axes of time and space. It is this feature that sharply distinguishes his works from ordinary detective literature, bringing them closer to the tradition of classical psychological realism - the direction of authors such as Dostoevsky, Faulkner, and Graham Greene.

If we look at the artistic expression of the solution, one important pattern can be noticed in Turov's work: the legal solution never fully coincides with the spiritual solution. The verdict in the courtroom—whether it's an acquittal or a guilty verdict—is not the end of the plot, but rather the beginning of a new phase in the protagonist's inner journey. In the novel "The Accused Is Innocent," Rusty is acquitted, but the true verdict for him is the necessity to keep his wife's secret for the rest of his life in order to protect his child. In the novel "Guilt Proved," Stern finds himself again in a new relationship after his wife's death, but this novelty



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comes not with the forgetting of the past, but with its final full understanding. In the novel "The Innocent" (2010), written as a sequel to the novel "The Accused Is Innocent," Rusty is once again brought to trial, and Turov thus demonstrates that the tragedy never ends once: it returns, repeats itself, demanding a new answer from the protagonist in every generation.

Turov's artistic style also deserves special attention due to the unique theatricalization of the courtroom. The writer transforms the judicial process into an arena of classical drama in an Aristotelian context: where witnesses serve as characters, questions and answers as dialogues, the final speeches of the lawyer and the prosecutor as monologues, and the jury's verdict acts as catharsis. However, Turov distorts this classical form in his own way: the jury's decision never brings true catharsis to his novels. On the contrary, catharsis often occurs outside the judicial process—as the protagonist walks alone in the hallway of a house, in a difficult conversation with his family, or in a moment of peaceful conversation with his conscience. This approach reflects the writer's deeply ambivalent attitude toward the legal system: he respects the law and works within it, but he is also perfectly aware that the law cannot fully establish justice.

In conclusion, it can be said that the artistic expression of tragedy and resolution in the novels of Scott Turov is one of the important phenomena of modern American literature. The writer elevated the legal thriller to a high level of intellectual and psychological prose, turning the judicial process into a field for studying the complex relationships between personality, morality, and society. In his works, tragedy is never merely an external phenomenon, but a violation of a person's relationship with themselves, their family, and the world around them; the solution never ends in a legal verdict, but is expressed in whether the protagonist is capable of living with their tragedy. It is from this artistic point of view that Turov's work can be recognized not only as genre literature but also as a true successor to classical humanistic literature.