

# ТРАЕКТОРИИ ЛИТЕРАТУРНОГО ПРОЦЕССА XX–XXI ВЕКОВ



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## SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXTS OF THE SOVIET PERIOD IN LATVIAN DETECTIVE NOVELS

Alina Romanovska

Daugavpils University (Daugavpils, Latvia)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7048-4352>

*Abstract.* Peculiarities of Soviet ideology mean that literary works should follow a certain canon which reflects a positive image of Soviet society. In search of possibilities to reflect the diversity and contradictions of this society, many writers chose to emphasize psychological experiences grounded in the social environment, thus also diversifying the form of literary works. Detective novels became one of the types of Soviet socio-psychological prose. The aim of the research is to analyse the features of the Latvian detective fiction during the Soviet period and to consider how the Soviet ideological system determined the development of the Latvian detective novel.

In Latvian literature, detective novels occupy a marginal place as a relatively small number of authors work in this genre; moreover, the published works have not become really popular with readers. During that time, only one Latvian writer, Andris Kolbergs, managed to find a successful solution and developed a social and psychological detective novel, using the message promoted by the Soviet ideology. Kolbergs raised the Latvian detective novel to a new development level, having proved that it is not the genre of popular literature which does not usually fit into the core literary canon. The mobility peculiar to the genre of detective fiction and its development are inextricably linked to the cultural trends of a certain time. Development of detective fiction determined by the ideological system stipulated the appearance of its specific features – the focus shifted from solving the criminal mystery to the reasons for committing a crime. As a result, the social and psychological context of the Soviet period came to the fore. Despite the fact that Kolbergs' socio-psychological detectives may be considered a certain exception in the development of the history of Latvian literature, they largely correspond to the traditions of the Russian Soviet socio-psychological detective fiction, which began to develop especially intensively in the 1950–60s.

*Keywords:* detective novel; crime; social and psychological context; Soviet period; popular literature

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## СОЦИАЛЬНО-ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ КОНТЕКСТЫ СОВЕТСКОГО ПЕРИОДА В ЛАТЫШСКИХ ДЕТЕКТИВНЫХ РОМАНАХ

Романовска А.

Даугавпилсский университет (Даугавпилс, Латвия)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7048-4352>

*Аннотация.* Особенности советской идеологии означают, что литературные произведения должны следовать определенному канону, отражающему позитивный образ советского общества. Стремясь

отразить разнообразие и противоречия этого общества, многие писатели предпочитали делать упор на психологизм, тем самым также диверсифицируя форму литературных произведений. Детективные романы стали одним из видов советской социально-психологической прозы. Развитие детективной литературы, определяемой идеологической системой, обусловило появление ее специфических черт – акцент сместился с раскрытия преступной интриги на причины совершения преступления. В результате на первый план вышел социально-психологический контекст советского периода. Романы часто не заканчиваются раскрытием детективной интриги, а продолжают до тех пор, пока не достигнут полной ясности о дальнейшей жизни персонажей и дополнительных сюжетных линиях, включая исторические, психологические и социально-экономические контексты. Цель исследования – проанализировать особенности латышского детективного романа советского периода и рассмотреть, как советская идеологическая система определила его развитие.

В латышской литературе советского периода детективные романы занимают второстепенное место, поскольку в этом жанре работает относительно небольшое количество авторов; к тому же опубликованные работы не стали популярны у читателей. В это время только одному латышскому писателю – Андрису Колбергсу – удалось стать популярным, разработав свою версию социально-психологического детектива, используя послание, предлагаемое советской идеологией. Несмотря на то, что социально-психологические детективы Колбергса можно считать определенным исключением в развитии истории латышской литературы, они во многом соответствуют традициям русского советского социально-психологического детектива, который особенно интенсивно стал развиваться в 50–60 годы XX века.

**Ключевые слова:** детективный роман; социально-психологический контекст; советский период; популярная литература

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## Introduction

The genre of detective fiction is one of the most popular literary genres, but literature studies does not pay enough attention to it. This probably happens because it is considered a branch of popular literature and is usually not included in the core canon that comprises the history of national literature and is part of the cultural heritage. Literature theorists have mainly analysed the genre of detective fiction, emphasizing the norms and conventions of the genre that must be followed in order for a detective novel to become a successful example of its genre and to gain popularity with its readers. The origins of this tradition can be found in the works by researchers into the Golden Age detective fiction (the 1920s-1930s). For example, S. S. Van Dine [1928] and Ronald Knox [1929] believe that it is the norms of the genre, which must be strictly observed, distinguish detective fiction from classic literature. Van Dine, for example, writes that a detective novel should contain “no long descriptive passages, no literary dallying with side-issues, no subtly worked-out character analyses, no ‘atmospheric’ preoccupations” [Van Dine 1947: 187]. Tzvetan Todorov later noted that unlike elitist literature, which is characterized by indivi-

dualism, popular fiction, which strictly adheres to the norms of the genre indicates that works of the detective genre belong to popular literature. He suggests that detective fiction can be reduced to just three general types, which he defines in terms of the plot structure: the whodunnit, the thriller, and the suspense novel [Todorov 1977]. Other researchers, such as Pierre Bourdieu (1996) and Ken Gelder (2004), point out that works of the detective fiction genre are subject to strict standards because of the need for commercialization: certain criteria must be met for a detective novel to be successfully sold. Definitions of the detective fiction genre provided in modern encyclopaedias are also based on the list of certain genre norms: “The traditional elements of the detective story are: (1) the seemingly perfect crime; (2) the wrongly accused suspect at whom circumstantial evidence points; (3) the bungling of dim-witted police; (4) the greater powers of observation and superior mind of the detective; and (5) the startling and unexpected denouement, in which the detective reveals how the identity of the culprit was ascertained. Detective stories frequently operate on the principle that superficially convincing evidence is ultimately irrelevant. Usually it is also axiomatic

that the clues from which a logical solution to the problem can be reached be fairly presented to the reader at exactly the same time that the sleuth receives them and that the sleuth deduce the solution to the puzzle from a logical interpretation of these clues" [Encyclopaedia Britannica].

Today, there are studies aimed at analysing works of the detective fiction genre as an individual and changeable phenomenon, the nature of which cannot be reflected by considering a particular literary work only from the viewpoint of norms and conventions peculiar of the genre. Mauricio Ascari, for example, creates the *counter-history* of the detective fiction genre and denies its strict canon [Ascari 2007]. Jesper Gulddal, Stewart King, and Alistair Rolls, in turn, propose modes of mobility in crime fiction, which highlights the idea of the genre variability. The researchers write: "...we argue that crime fiction is nonetheless characterized by a transgressive impulse that actively reflects on and challenges its own generic limitations, thereby potentially recuperating the genre from the stasis of established forms. (...) crime fiction, far from being static and staid, must be seen as a genre constantly violating its own boundaries. There is an unacknowledged experimental streak to this genre – an easy slippage between affirming the codes and conventions on the one hand, and on the other hand boldly calling into question and venturing beyond its textual, generic and national traditions" [Gulddal, King and Rolls 2019: 1].

We should acknowledge that certain peculiarities of the detective fiction genre, which distinguish it from other literary genres, exist, although they are varied and may differ both in different national literatures and in individual works by various authors. According to the features of the detective fiction genre, the plot is based on crime and its inspection, during which logical judgements are made. There is often a need for additional information concerning the social and psychological conditions of the persons involved, which may reveal reasons and preconditions of the violation. A detective novel holds in the focus of its attention not only the crime as such but also investigating its causes in a particular time and space as well as delving into typological situations which would have contributed to the formation of the intention to commit the crime. Hence, the detective fiction genre depicts human experience, feelings and emotions as well as reflects the social, econo-

mic, historical, national, etc. aspects of the society. Social collisions depicted in the novel rather often have an obvious relation to daily life peculiarities of a certain stage.

The study focuses on Latvian detective novels published in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Detective novels are a notable variety of Soviet socio-psychological prose of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They should be considered not only as an element of mass literature, but as an integral part of the general literary process [Agejeva 2014]. The detective fiction shows the diversity of patterns and values of life, thus revealing the peculiarities of a certain era [Chernjak 2002: 192].

The reality of the Soviet period was largely determined by ideology which very specifically defined the allowed and forbidden in art. As Catherine Clarke notes, the task of the socialist realism method in art, cinema or literature, was to set the correct guidelines for people, to provide them with accurate route maps. In the socialist realism art, positive heroes embody the basic social virtues; their lives and deeds throughout the narrative symbolically repeat the victorious progress of the Soviet people towards Communism, thereby legitimizing the status quo and asserting that Soviet society is on the right Marxist-Leninist path [Clark 2003: 8]. Peter Vail and Axander Genis point out that in the 1960s, in the Soviet Union, heeding Khrushchev's admonition, there began a phase of truth-seeking [Vail and Genis 2013: 183–186], which also significantly influenced the development of culture and literature. It was the time when the first best detective novels appeared in Latvian Soviet literature, focusing not only on the solution of the detective plot (as a certain search for truth), but also on the revelation of the multifaceted social realities, in which complex psychological experiences of contradictory personalities were formed.

The aim of the research is to analyse the features of the Latvian detective fiction during the Soviet period and to examine how the Soviet ideological system determined the development of the Latvian detective novel.

### **Peculiar Development Features of Latvian Detective Novels in the Genre Context**

Significance of a socio-psychological context in the genre of detective fiction increased in the course of its development and is related to the his-

torical and cultural conditions within which detective fiction works appear. In order to understand the peculiarities of the Latvian detective novel, it is useful to provide an insight into the most important stages of the detective fiction genre, and the socio-cultural situation which created preconditions for the development of the detective fiction genre. Though detective stories in European culture have existed since the time of Antiquity, and the idea of crime and punishment is an intrinsic part of the Bible, detective novels as a specific genre appeared in the European literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when authors writing in English introduced the plot of crime in their works. These works were a natural response to the changes in the socio-economic and cultural situation brought about by the Victorian era. As a result, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century authors in their novels put forward themes and characters that embody the contradictory features of their era: greediness of the society and its victims, a protest against the cruelty of the capitalist system, an opposition of rural and urban life, idleness of the aristocracy, prosperity of the middle class, and controversial attitudes towards scientific advances [Badina 2014].

Both the socio-economic situation and sphere of ideas, namely, the transition from a romantic type of culture to a realistic one, influenced the development of the detective fiction genre. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, European culture underwent significant changes, bringing a realistic type of culture to the forefront. Under the influence of the positivism philosophy, authors began to pay more attention to the depiction of everyday life, creating in their works the effect of reflecting a typified reality. Fedor Fedorov notes that the realism understanding of the world is the understanding of a dialectical diversity of the life rhythm, of a demythologized world [Fedorov 1995]. The described situation in the sphere of culture naturally influenced the appearance of detective novels. Their focus is not only on the idea of crime and its investigation, but also on depicting the characters' psychology and reflecting the socio-cultural space, as the causes of the crime are to be found in the characters' environment. Crime becomes an inevitable and integral part of society's existence in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century culture. At the same time, however, there is an understanding that crime is a violation of social norms and it must be investigated to determine its psychological, social, economic

or any other reasons. The investigation of crime in a detective novel is based on the rational and logical judgments of the investigator, and this feature is fully consistent with the positivism paradigm.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the development of psychology led to the fact that literary works increasingly focused on personal experience, its causes and consequences. C. G. Jung points out that in the psychological novel the author attempts to bring a psychological explanation of the event from the mere description of the event to the forefront [Jung 1923]. As a result, more attention in texts of the detective fiction genre started to be paid not only to the intrigue of criminal investigation, but also to the psychological features of an individual (investigator, criminal, victim, etc.), as well as social, economic, and political characteristics of the situation, as it contributed to the development of the detective novel and gave it the necessary depth [Jung 2011].

In Latvian literature, works of the detective fiction genre occupy a marginal position as a relatively small number of authors work in this genre; besides, the works published do not gain the expected popularity with the readers. The fast development of Latvian literature started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Alina Romanovska writes that “the situation in Latvia at that time was specific: the whole of the European cultural heritage entered the Latvian culture at the same time; the Latvian cultural consciousness was absorbed in the processes of cognition, compilation, and analysis (acceptance or non-acceptance) of this heritage” [Romanovska 2020: 360]. Having quickly studied the experience of European literature and culture, Latvian writers focused on creating genres and works of “core canon”, considering detective novels popular or “low-value” literature. That is why, there were no significant works of the detective fiction genre created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A detective intrigue was frequently included in the plot of literary works of various other genres; this way the additional interest of readers in the specific work was created. (The novel “The Time of the Land Surveyors” (“Mērnīeku laiki”) written by Reinis and Matīss Kaudzīte in 1879 is one of the first and most well-known examples of this kind). Unlike Russian literature, where the canon of Soviet ideology was recognized and the genre of detective fiction reflecting reality began to develop in the 1920s and

1930s [Britikov 1976], Latvian literature came under the influence of Soviet ideology only in the 1940s, while the first more or less notable works of the detective fiction were published in the 1960s. Until then, the Latvian readership enjoyed reading works by European and American authors in translation and works by Russian authors, which, along with the socio-political processes, strongly influenced the formation of the detective tradition. In the 1950s and 1960s, Latvian authors began to learn to write according to the canons of social realism. In the second half of the 1960s, psychologism became increasingly prevalent in Latvian literature, and it became important to portray the personal experience of an individual. It was the time when first detective novels appeared in the Latvian literature of the Soviet period. That was probably determined by both the new ideological positions and the processes in Russian Soviet literature, as both literatures existed in a unified cultural system. It should be noted that since the mid-1950s, a new stage of flourishing of the Soviet detective fiction (the second half of the 1920s – the first half of the 1930s) took place. It was the time when such classics of the Soviet detective fiction as A. Adamov, Yu. Klarov, A. Bezuglov entered literature, the famous master of the detective fiction L. Sheinin continued his work, Yu. German was writing his novel about the Soviet militia “One Year” (“Odin god”); this text later became the literary basis of the film “My friend Ivan Lapshin” (“Moj drug Ivan Lapshin”). The films “The Rummyantsev Case” (“Delo Rum’anceva”) and “The Variegateds Case” (“Delo pestrjyh”) and other famous Soviet detective films of the 1950s were watched by tens of millions of viewers in the USSR. In the 1960s, literature saw the entrance of such masters of detective psychological prose as E. Khrutsky, A. and B. Weiners, N. Leonov, G. Losyev, Yu. Semenov, L. Slovin, etc.

Anatols Imermanis was one of the first authors who worked with the genre of detective fiction in Soviet Latvian literature (“The Guide Casts a Shadow” (“Pavadonis met ēnu”), 1964, “Airplanes Fall in the Ocean” (“Lidmašīnas krīt okeānā”), 1968, etc.). He chose to describe the foreign environment, which allowed him to disregard the rules bound to depict the Soviet reality. Other authors also aspired to write detective novels depicting the Soviet reality. Vladimirs Kaijaks (“Chicken Idol” (“Vīstu elks”) (1967), The Director’s Rock” (“Direk-

tora klints”) (1970)) focused on the depiction of everyday and psychological problems, but failed to capture the readers’ attention. In the 1970s, there were also authors, such as a former criminal investigator Mirmilis Steiga, Gunars Cirulis, and Viktor Lagzdins, who became known mainly as the authors of detective novels. However, they were not especially popular with the readers and published only a few novels. Guntis Berelis characterizes the situation as follows: “The situation is really hard to explain: at the time when there is the overproduction of detective prose fiction in the world and the detective novel has passed a full cycle of development – from “serious” literature to trivial and then back to the postmodern “serious” one – in Latvia during the recent half century only one prose fiction writer has appeared who works in the detective genre at a professional level – that is Andris Kolbergs” [Berelis 2011].

Against the background of Latvian detective prose fiction of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> century, A. Kolbergs’ detective works stand out by attracting the attention of wider public, gaining positive acclaim of critics and literary historians; as a result, they became very popular. A. Kolbergs is an author whose complete works were published in 1994 during the writer’s lifetime. He is also considered to be the most translated and published abroad Latvian novelist – the full circulation exceeding 5 million copies. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Astrīda Skurbe wrote: “Andris Kolbergs is one of the prominent and famous Latvian writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. He is the writer without whom it is impossible to think about the Latvian prose, and especially the novel in Latvian literature in the last thirty years. (...) His books are popular with scientists and workers, as well as businessmen, and students. Kolbergs is also remarkable because most of his novels were turned into films, and these films were a success not only in Latvia” [Skurbe 2006: 3].

A. Kolbergs gained his popularity already during the Soviet period which was the most productive time in his career as a writer. He continued to write in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. His first novels published in the 1970s, which focused on a detective plot, were soon followed by works devoted to the description of social environment and depiction of the characters’ psychological experiences; although, the detective intrigue still formed the basis of the plot. It should be noted that at that

time the Soviet Latvian psychological prose was gradually entering the phase of its flourishing – in literature such authors as Visvaldis Lāms, Alberts Bels, Regīna Ezera were successful, their novels gained great popularity among readers and were filmed.

A. Kolbergs' novels are based on crimes committed in Latvia. During the investigation of these crimes, there is certain additional information on characters, their past, thoughts, personality traits, habits, and other individual features is revealed. Characterisation of the social and psychological context is considered as one of the most successful and peculiar features of A. Kolbergs' detective prose fiction. A literary scholar Raimonds Briedis points out: "By precisely describing the life of his time, A. Kolbergs in his novels binds the crime plot with the analysis of social problems revealing phenomena that facilitate the degradation of the society. In his novels, instead of revealing crime according to the specificity of the genre, the causes of criminal offence are searched in the disorderly economic environment, conditions of the social system, showing the way, unable to express his abilities and strivings, a person is forced to self-realization in a deformed way" [Briedis 2001: 92].

G. Berelis considers a hidden dialogue with the canons of the detective fiction genre to be one of the most important features of Kohlbergs' writing style [Berelis 1992]. He reconsiders traditional methods of detective novels, ignoring them in some places, or, sometimes, swapping or exaggerating them. Both Latvian literary scholars and critics note that Kolbergs' novels cannot be explicitly referred to as detective novels, as they have features peculiar to social and psychological novels. Experimenting with the classical canon of the detective fiction genre, A. Kolbergs also discusses the interpretation of crime and punishment, and emphasizes social and psychological causes of crime.

Scholars think that A. Kolbergs' turning to investigation of social and psychological causes of crime is not incidental, as his writer's talent developed in the Soviet period when many topics were tabooed. "In the completely positive socialist order, crime was not allowed to be treated as a regular part of social negativity. It had to be something extraordinary, exceptional in the otherwise positive scene of the world" [Berelis, 2011]. Many traditional features of the detective fiction genre, which attract readers' attention, could not be im-

plemented, for example, the idea of an inspector was transformed as well.

The detective fiction genre is a successfully chosen form that made it possible for A. Kolbergs, when depicting crime, provide broader characteristics of the society in the reality of the Soviet period as well as the impact of socio-economic and political peculiarities on the population's collective and individual identity and moral norms. A. Kolbergs indicates that crime is not exceptional; it is the result of particular society development.

### **The Role of Social and Psychological Features in the Development of the Detective Fiction Genre in the Soviet Period**

Modern researchers believe that a detective novel has the potential to reflect the culture of its time [Brylla 2015]. Description of psychological experiences of an individual as well as depiction of the macro-world provide the psychological intensity of a detective novel. The most important event in a detective novel is often included in a series of many insignificant events. As a result, the text acquires the psychological intensity. Flashbacks are often used to provide more information about characters' thoughts, feelings, and ways of their personal development. In a socio-psychological detective novel, the emphasis shifts from committing and investigating a crime to the interpretation of the characters' motivations (criminals, investigators, etc.). Moral rather than legal aspects, which do not always coincide, often become more important in the investigation of a crime. The psychologization of the message, through readers' interest, helps fulfil the art basic function – catharsis, since readers at the same time follow the detective plot, trying to identify the criminal in the course of the narrative, as well as receive emotional pleasure immersing themselves into the dramatic conflict.

A detective novel reviews the social structure of society, where there is a conflict between different social strata and their representatives. The conflict arises because of the unequal distribution of power and resources in society [Knapp 1994]. Psychological features of the characters, which have an impact on the crime, form an important basis for the conflict in a detective novel. Although society as a whole is not perfect, each individual bear a personal responsibility to make decisions according to moral standards. Charles

Wright Mills believes that the conflict between people is based on their life experiences and the sphere of their direct activity, or the social environment in which they have grown up and in which they consciously act [Mills 1963]. The conflict (problem) arises when people feel dissatisfied with the social environment and strive to transfer to another environment, which they consider more suitable [Mills 1959]. A person's value system and worldview are formed under the influence of a particular social environment (a group, community, or collective). The group determines activity vectors of the individual. However, there are always people who strive to step outside the group and form their own individual views and attitudes [Fine 2012].

The author's clear message on distinguishing between the world of "norms" and the world of "anti-norms" is important in a detective novel. Traditionally, the investigator represents the world of "norms" whereas the criminal represents the world of "anti-norms". However, over the course of the novel, a number of ambiguous situations are often disclosed where the investigator also has to violate legal or moral norms to solve the crime. In general, the process of solving a crime is always a moral act, so minor breaches which the investigator commits in the course of his work are morally justified.

Discussing the perception of crime and punishment, Kolbergs in his novels offers situations for consideration and reflection. The social system and formal legal and moral laws allow for different interpretations of crime. The crime committed is not clearly connected with the punishment in question, so the novels are often filled with a sense of bitterness and social injustice.

Depicting the Soviet environment, Kolbergs also delves into past events that had shaped personalities of the characters. Moreover, important events are sought not only in the lives of the characters, but in the lives of their predecessors, which provides for a wider political and historical context. For example, Mārtiņš Smukauss, the protagonist of the novel "In the Car in the Morning" ("Automobilī rīta pusē") is a descendant of the Latvians who were deported to Siberia. In the novel, he is portrayed as a stranger as upon his return to Latvia, he is not accepted in the society because both his language and behaviour are different. The novel describes the conflict between the protagon-

ist's feelings and the society's attitude: Mārtiņš Smukauss longed for his homeland, Latvia, but upon returning there, he feels excluded. Although the topic of the deportations was a taboo during the Soviet period, Kolbergs dares not only describe this part of Latvian history, but also give his opinion about it: "If you happen to take the Moscow-Omsk-Novosibirsk railway today, don't forget to take off your hat for a moment at the small station still called Colonia, and pay tribute to the brave men from Becri, Kauguri, and Estonia who were the first to "stand upright" so that later we could find ourselves and become aware of ourselves" [Kolbergs 1986]. In the abovementioned quotation, the author develops an associative flow about the history of Latvian people, including various stages of their historical development and this way metaphorically hiding taboo topics.

Descriptions of historical events help successfully enrich the diverse storyline and add extra aspects to the psychological features of the characters, as well as provide precise cultural and historical evidence of a certain time, which creates a colourful image of the past and makes readers think about the destiny of Latvian people highlighting the national dimension.

Flashbacks provide an important socio-psychological context, which allow to understand the characters' motivations and characterize various stages of the historical development of the state of Latvia. Novels, which describe the events happened in the 1990s and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, search for socio-economic and psychological causes of crime in the Soviet period. The novel "Look for a Woman" ("Meklējiet sievieti") (1996) is a vivid example of this causal relationship. Personal features of the characters in this novel were shaped during the Soviet period, and both socio-political life and individual psychological experience determined their development. The novel contains information about regularities of social and political life and reveals some hidden facts about the political backstage in the Soviet period, as well as successfully describes social and political twists and turns during the first years of Latvia's independence. At the end of the novel all people involved in the crime have been identified, although, no one is arrested: one person dies in a traffic accident, another one dies in the explosion in his car, but the third, the murderer, is a member of parliament, therefore, it is almost impossible to arrest him,

as it requires the Saeima decision but there is too little evidence.

Kolbergs' novels suggest an idea that social and psychological factors and society's morals not only provide for the basis for committing a crime but also become an argument that makes punishing the criminal impossible. Thus, a vicious circle is formed, which is almost impossible to break because punishing criminals, i. e. preserving social morality norms and a system of values is often impossible, it rather becomes an exception than regularity.

Researchers note that the personality of a detective plays a very important role in the detective fiction genre [Millers 2011]. The attractive and charming personality of a detective often make a novel popular (the works by Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, or Georges Simenon are unforgettable). In the history of detective fiction genre, private detectives are often opposed to police officers, and it is private detectives who have gained popularity and fame and shaped the mythology of the detective fiction, while police officers stay in the background unable to solve crimes by themselves.

Under the Soviet system, only militiamen could be investigators; accordingly, they could only act in accordance with the law and should not violate generally accepted norms of behaviour, thereby creating a positive image of the militiaman in the collective consciousness of Soviet society. The attitudes of the Soviet literature canon determined the peculiarity of Kolbergs' detective novels, including the characteristic features of an investigator. Since it was impossible to create a vivid and specific image of the investigator meeting the set requirements, the writer aspired to describe the world of his own ideas and feelings in order to make the investigator closer to the reader. The novel "In the Car in the Morning" ("Automobilī rīta pusē") (1986), for example, describes how the investigator, looking at a corpse found on a beach in Jurmala, identifies himself with it in some way, thinking about suicide: "Forty-five sneaked on me, this poor bird Arkādijs Pinks is over now, although he couldn't be much older. And this brings us together in a strange way, I begin to feel sympathy for Pinks, I begin to feel his despair – suicide is a dead end and I feel sorry for him, even though he may not deserve any pity" [Kolbergs 1986: 57]. In other works by Kolbergs, there are also paral-

els between the investigator and the victim or offender. This technique not only enables to develop a psychologically deeper image of the investigator, but also provides generalisations about the relationship between the individual and society.

In his novel "Look for a Woman" Kolbergs re-considers the most popular opposition of the detective genre – a private detective versus a police officer, where the police officer is positive, bright, and efficient, but disdainful to the private detective. The description of the private detective is not appealing: "I bumped into the detective Kim Anufrijevs at the street. Still wearing the same worn but sturdy lace-up boots of his. Greeted each other but didn't say anything to each other. He seems to be very upset that I work for the criminal police. Promised to drop in one day, but probably won't" [Kolbergs 1986: 154]. A private detective is temporarily involved in the investigation of a crime and provides considerable assistance, but a criminal police officer is clearly a more striking image in the novel. In this respect, Kolbergs continues the Soviet writing tradition, which was determined by the socio-political structure of the state.

Kolbergs' paradoxically ironic style of writing, in which subtle irony about socio-economic features and human vices borders on unobtrusively posed questions about morality and the value system, also forms a reflection of social negation. In many places, his style reveals in the aphorism form: "Fools fight for the justice of others, wise men fight for their own well-being", "Maybe love is just an escape from loneliness?", "I know that it's more convenient to adapt to the world we live in than to adapt the world to our own understanding, but I still don't think that a more convenient way is worthy of a person" [Kolbergs 1994–1995: 79]. Therefore, stylistically, Kolbergs presents various aspects of social life and describes the characters' psychological experiences, placing accents in the form of aphoristic expressions.

The storyline in Kolbergs' novels is not typical for the detective fiction genre; it has so many side lines and it is so unpredictable that when you read the beginning of the novel you often lose the coherence and understanding of the individual events. Readers are offered fragments from the lives of different people in different historical periods. Only having read most of the novel, the fortunes of these different people gradually come in touch and an overall picture of the circumstances,

causes, and participants in the crime emerges. In addition, the story about specific characters involved in the narrative often alternates with general speculations about the patterns of human development, the characters' memories, and historical insights into the near or distant past. The narrative is steeped in seemingly insignificant details that have nothing to do with the main mystery and investigation of the crime. Despite the fact that Kolbergs does not follow one of the most important rules of a classic detective novel – to constantly maintain emotional excitement and intrigue, he manages to keep his readers interested. In addition, Kolbergs achieves another effect – the novel's message develops at the same time with the process of investigating the crime – on the basis of a deductive method. While solving the crime, the investigator initially only finds certain people, facts, and objects, for which additional aspects appear during the investigation and the amount of unclear and, at first glance, irrelevant information increases. And only gradually a complete picture of the crime is formed. Kolbergs' novels follow this structure: the mosaic is put together from many separate pieces, which results in the unity of the narrative.

The emphasis on socio-psychological aspects enables the author to maintain a complex plot, which is often based on a number of paradoxical and unexpected events. Kolbergs often uses a stylistic effect known as the "effect of deceived expectations". In the novel "Look for a Woman" ("Meklējiet sievieti"), the paradox structure is not only linked to the peculiarities of committing and investigating the crime, but it is also one of the structuring techniques. This is already implemented in the title and content of the novel: the title is a direct quote of the famous French expression "cherchez la femme". This expression as a title of the detective novel implies that the woman will be directly blamed for the crime. However, it turns out that this is not the case at all. Titles of Kolbergs' novels do not very often reflect the basic principle of the detective plot, as it is traditionally the case with novels of this genre, but they are related to the social and psychological aspects emphasized in the novel.

### Conclusion

Observing the development of the Latvian detective fiction genre in the Soviet period, it is

possible to identify the peculiarities of the Soviet ideology in the given period of time, and to determine the boundaries of the allowed and forbidden. During that time, only one Latvian author of detective novels, Andris Kolbergs, found a successful solution and, using features of the message allowed in the Soviet period, developed a social and psychological detective novel. It is a syncretic form of literature that, while keeping the plot typical of a detective novel, provides an insight into a particular social environment, leads to a deeper exploration of the characters' psychology and gives a detailed comprehension of their motivation. Kolbergs' detective novels are about a particular time and the people who live at that time, their psychology, and their collective and individual life experiences.

Kolbergs harmoniously fits into the processes of Latvian literature, where in the 1960s-80s the branch of psychological prose was rapidly developing, as well as follows the main traditions that have developed in Russian Soviet detective literature since its inception: increased psychologism, a shift in the focus of the image from the process of solving a crime to the inner world of characters (both criminals and investigators), increased social, historical and cultural determinism of action.

Kolbergs' novels often focus on psychological characteristics of people involved in crime, peculiarities of their lifestyles, causes, and motives of their actions but not the process of crime investigation itself. In his novels, the focus shifts from the crime investigation to the commission of crime. The stream of sensual images activates characters' associations and memories revealing hidden and often traumatic events of the past. The novels proceed slowly, with numerous digressions and additional plot lines. The novels do not end with the solution of a detective plot but continue until they reach a full clarity about the characters' life and additional plot lines including the historical and socio-economic dimension. The detective fiction genre is a successfully selected form that made it possible for Kolbergs, in depicting the world of "anti-norm", characterize the wider public in the Soviet time reality and the impact of socio-economic and political peculiarities of that time on the collective and individual identity of people and moral norms.

Kolbergs' novels suggest the idea that social and psychological factors and society's morals do not only provide for the basis for committing a crime but they also become an argument that makes punishing the criminal impossible. Thus, a vicious circle is formed, which is almost impossible to break because punishing criminals, i. e. preserving social morality norms and a system of values is often impossible, it rather becomes an exception than regularity. Kolbergs searches for causes for committing

a crime, not only in the life of a specific criminal, but by creating longer causal links, even over several decades, by delving into the country's history, politics, and social relations. Kolbergs has taken the Latvian detective novel to a new level of development, proving that it is not a "low" genre of popular literature. His detective novels go beyond boundaries of the genre: they are inextricably linked with the development of literature and culture, and provide a vivid image of the period.

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**Данные об авторе**

Романовска Алина – доктор филологических наук, ведущий научный сотрудник Института гуманитарных и социальных наук, Даугавпилсский университет (Даугавпилс, Латвия).

Адрес: LV5400, Латвия, Даугавпилс, ул. Виенибас, 13, каб. 323.

E-mail: [alina.romanovska@du.lv](mailto:alina.romanovska@du.lv).

**Authors' information**

Romanovska Alina – Doctor of Philology, Lead Researcher of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Daugavpils University (Daugavpils, Latvia).

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