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**Bordering with Others: deconstruction of “military town” in Andra Manfelde’s novel
“Virsnieku sievas”**

Latvian writer Andra Manfelde in her novel “Virsnieku sievas” (Officers’ Wives, 2016) provides a poetic deconstruction of the Soviet military history segment. The action in the novel is set in the officer town of Liepaja Naval Port that was located in the territory of Latvia within the Soviet Union. The so-called military town (‘voennyi gorodok’) in the time of Soviet occupation was an artificially built infrastructure network for military needs having a secret status. It covered the whole territory of the Soviet Union. Military towns were designed as closed complexes of residential and administrative buildings for the Soviet Army needs. Their residents were militaries with their families, with strategic military objects located nearby. The titular ethnicities of the occupied territories of the USSR were separated from Soviet militaries by both territorial and mental borders manifested in communication as hatred, non-acceptance, ignoring, or aggressivity. Dealing with the topic of borders, the text foregrounds the paradox of inverse exile. The romantic town of hippies and talents, Liepaja for Soviet militaries is a frightening foreign area because it draws a border between the USSR and the West; for this reason near the town there is located a Soviet marine and submarine base serviced by the residents of the military town. Militaries and their family members in the Baltic countries and elsewhere in the USSR formed their own Soviet subculture acquiring among the local population a subaltern status of being caught between two cultures and not “at home” in either of them. It is felt by those who lack a clearly defined cultural identity.

Novel “Officers’ Wives” presents a deconstruction of the Soviet military ideology by depicting both the colonized and colonizers as victims of totalitarianism, the officers and their families marginalized by their displaced unhomeliness in territories occupied by the Soviet Union. A. Manfelde in her novel not only juxtaposes the Soviet occupants and occupied Latvians, both mutually marked as ‘other’, but also brings out the inner contradictions within the occupant subculture between militaries of various range and their family members, Soviet ideology and personal attitude to religion and ethnic identity.