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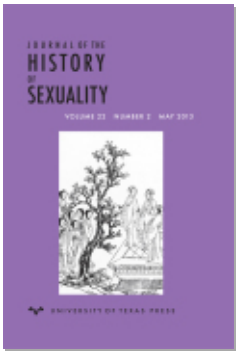

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Comrades, Queers, and "Oddballs": Sodomy, Masculinity, and Gendered Violence in Leningrad Province of the 1950s

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On a wintry November night in 1955, twenty-year-old Russian Red Army private Mikhail Yermolaev met a group of his comrades in the village of Rakhia near Leningrad. They were looking for a good time and found it in Barrack No. 18, a women's dormitory, where a party with vodka was in full swing. Mikhail drank his fill. He began to feel unwell. When his comrades decided to leave the party—perhaps in search of more vodka—they left Mikhail in the care of Aleksei (Alyosha) Kiselev, thirty-seven years of age, who took the soldier home to his room in the village bathhouse, where he lived and worked as a stoker. Kiselev played some music on his treasured gramophone; he told the younger man to undress and lie down. After first throwing up in the toilet, Mikhail went to bed. Later he told the police:

> I woke up and heard Alyosha say, "Get on top of me." At that very moment my belt was undone, my trousers and underpants were down, and my penis was exposed. Then he pulled me toward him and said, "Give it to me, give it to me in the ass." I got on top of him, for Alyosha was on his stomach with his back to me, but I was revolted so I didn't use him, even though my penis was erect. I went back to sleep. . . . After a little while Alyosha came to me again, first turning me over on my stomach. He got on top of me and tried to use me in the ass, but

I am grateful to the organizers and participants of the The(e)ories: Advanced Seminars for Queer Research, University College Dublin, and to participants of "Queering Eastern Europe: National Features of Sexual Identities" conference at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London, for comments on earlier versions of this article, and also to the two anonymous readers who greatly assisted in improving it. In this text I use a simplified form of Russian transliteration; in citations I use the modified Library of Congress system. All translations are my own. To preserve the anonymity of the protagonists in these cases, all names have been changed in the text and, when necessary, in the notes. The photographs have been altered to hide the identity of those pictured.

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> he didn't manage it because I wouldn't let him. He was only wearing his underpants, and I could feel his erection. He didn't say anything. I just turned away and went back to sleep.[1]

At two o'clock in the morning, Mikhail woke up, dressed, and left Kiselev to meet his comrades and catch a train back to his base. Before he left, he gave his host his surname and address. When he got to the station, one of his army buddies asked him, "Well, how did you sleep? They say he's a man and a woman." "Yes, of course—he's a queer [*pidarast*]," Mikhail replied, and no more was said between the men, who went back to their barracks on the late-night train.

What went on between the young soldier and the bathhouse stoker that night? What was Aleksei Kiselev hoping for when he offered Mikhail a bed to sleep off the drink, and why did the soldier accept his offer? What did these soldiers understand by the word "queer" in this time and place? And what did the women of Barrack No. 18 represent for them? Nothing systematic has been written about same-sex relations between men in rural Russia, and to begin to answer the questions that incidents like these pose, we need to consider the social and historical context more broadly.

The era after 1945 in Soviet history is attracting fresh attention. Interest focuses on that society's aspirations for a better life after the devastation of war and under the relentless demands of late Stalinism. Recent work often emphasizes the complexity and instability of the last years of Stalin's rule and the ambiguities of de-Stalinization, suggesting that 1945 was a significant temporal landmark in Soviet history.[2] Studies of family policies show the leadership's determination, sustained across the period, to find innovative ways to steer gender relations to solve the demographic crisis and to satisfy political objectives.[3] A significant emerging area of inquiry is the question of how public and private spheres were reconstructed in the postwar years in a "negotiation" between rulers and ruled.[4]

[1] Leningradskoi Oblastnoi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv v g. Vyborge (Leningrad Provincial State Archive in the City of Vyborg, hereafter cited as LOGAV), *fond* 3820, *opis'* 2, *delo* 4471, *listy* 223–24. The case file consists of two volumes, *delo* 4471 and *delo* 4471a. All further references are given thus: Morozov, d. 4471 or d. 4471a, l. 123.

[2] New social and cultural histories of the 1945–64 period include Elena Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998); Juliane Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (London: Routledge, 2006); and Polly Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[3] On gender policy, see, for example, Mie Nakachi, "Population, Politics and Reproduction: Late Stalinism and Its Legacy," in Fürst, *Late Stalinist Russia*, 23–45; and for the post-1953 era, Melanie Ilic, Susan E. Reid, and Lynne Attwood, eds., *Women in the Khrushchev Era* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[4] In addition to essays in the collections cited above, see Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ed., *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006);

With some important exceptions, the history of Russian sexualities for this period remains relatively unexplored, and yet the acts of individuals in pursuit of a sexual life and the meanings ascribed to their actions can tell historians a great deal about gender relations, public-private boundaries, and the politics of everyday life.[5] Existing accounts of Russian homosexual history in the 1950s describe a primarily urban gay subculture, with Moscow the focus on one detailed excavation.[6] It appears that homosexual self-awareness and experience were confined to a fortunate few in Soviet Russia's largest and most sophisticated cities. Infamous public toilets, cafés, and bathhouses—and the streets between them—formed a surreptitious queer public space where men could meet and then begin the hunt for a corner of privacy in which to realize their desires. Elite students and members of the cultural intelligentsia figure prominently in narratives of those who managed to live queerly in this time and place.[7]

Men also felt queer desire outside of the big cities of Soviet Russia, however, and their experience can be analyzed with an eye to the models developed to study rural queer lives in other contexts. Historical work on such relations in twentieth-century American states, like John Howard's study of Mississippi and Peter Boag's of Oregon, has shown how men used the rural environment to pursue and express same-sex desire.[8] Their work, perhaps unconsciously infused with American optimism, emphasizes the affirmative and the positive in the stories of rural queer men's lives. The subaltern queer world of "wolves" and "lambs" or "jockers" and "punks" (in Boag's description of itinerant worker sexuality on the US northwest coast), for all its toughness, is presented as a site of tenderness and affection too. Homophobia and violence are chiefly external to the subjects of these histories: attacks on same-sex-desiring people come from moral reformers, police, medical experts, and "straight" toughs. Even in Jens Rydström's comparatively mordant study of homosexuality in rural

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Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2007); and Stephen Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[5] On sexualities, see Nakachi, "Population"; K. Roth-Ey, "'Loose Girls' on the Loose: Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival," in Ilic, Reid, and Attwood, *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, 75–95.

[6] Dan Healey, "Moscow," in *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories since 1600*, ed. David Higgs (London: Routledge, 1999), 38–60, especially 51–57.

[7] In addition to Healey, "Moscow," see, for example, Simon Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature and Culture: The Impact of the October Revolution," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1989), 348–64.

[8] John Howard, *Men like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

Sweden, male same-sex sexuality is depicted with little reference to violence or brutality, except as imposed upon male homosexuals by a moralizing and medicalizing state and its agents.[9]

My stories come from a different historical context, where the patterns of male sexuality and male violence are comparable to but distinct from the American and Swedish cases. In the two criminal investigations from Leningrad province examined here, some of the men who had sex together also inflicted violence and brutality upon women and effeminized men. Often they used that violence to facilitate and hide their same-sex sexuality, in one case killing a queer man. It is problematic to interpret these cases as evidence of a positive subaltern queer world, and indeed some observers challenge the simple notion that violence is always external to the same-sex-desiring person.[10] In reading these cases, I try to probe the character of queer violence and look for other contexts to explain it. The chief frame of reference I propose is gender, specifically, the dilemmas of masculinity confronting men of the post-1945 generation. The cases raise many questions about these dilemmas. How did men adapt to postwar Soviet conditions in the provinces? What prospects—for jobs, housing, leisure, and sex—faced the demobilized Red Army soldier? How was a young man's private life divided from his public life? In what ways were relations between the sexes changed and changing? How did homosocial bonds affect relations between the sexes? What meanings did homosexual acts carry for these men, and how did they fit in a postwar popular conception of masculinity?

Using two unusual police investigation files from the archives of the province (*oblast*) of Leningrad, the rural district surrounding present-day Saint Petersburg in northwestern Russia, it is possible to pose answers to these questions. These cases arose from extreme crimes—rape and murder; therefore, claims to representativeness of the situations they describe must be cautiously advanced. Such criminal violence was nevertheless on the increase in Soviet society in the postwar years, and the unusual element in these cases was evidently the homosexual motive accompanying these crimes.[11]

[9] Jens Rydström, *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[10] One analyst of murders of gay men in Britain writes: "This raises a set of difficult questions for gay analysts and commentators on these murders. We have long viewed violence against us by heterosexuals as part of our shared cultural history. The current study suggests, however, that we must understand gay people not merely as the victims of violence, but also a significant amount of the time as perpetrators of that violence, at least in the context of gay sexual homicide. A simple division between gay victim and non-gay perpetrator is not sustainable" (Peter Bartlett, "Killing Gay Men, 1976–2001," *British Journal of Criminology* 47, no. 4 [2007]: 573–95, quoted at 582). For a study that integrates intramale violence into a conception of modern homosexual acts and identity, see Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997).

[11] Russia's criminal records are dispersed and damaged and have been culled principally to save space. Not all files are released to researchers. Murders registered by Soviet Russian justice authorities fell to just 1,641 in 1943—after two desperate years of war, when administration

Perhaps for this reason, police investigations into these cases dug deep. In particular, officials interviewed many dozens of witnesses and perpetrators, so the crime files constitute a meaningful body of texts about daily life. Naturally, these are statements to police under an extremely authoritarian, even "totalitarian," regime and might be dismissed as of dubious truthfulness if we presume that state terror and social atomization made people fearful and tight-lipped when dealing with authorities. However, contemporary scholars of Russia see a more complex reality in the relationship between state and society, and I read these case files using their insights and against the backdrop of new interpretations of Soviet social history.[12]

The first case involves eight men accused and convicted of sodomy and rape in 1951. The second, involving the Kiselev described in the opening of this article, is a murder investigation of the late 1950s that opens a window into a queer life in an unlikely setting. After presenting the facts of each case, I discuss the local context, and then the gender world revealed in these files, with the dilemmas for men and the responses they shaped, including their relationships with women and their retreat into homosocial spheres. Finally, I explore the meanings that men gave to their sexuality, same and opposite sex, from the evidence of these admittedly extreme and isolated cases. I argue that these men exploited their relationships with women and effeminate men in their attempts to produce homosexual space and homosexual spheres of action. Gender privilege and sometimes even the violent exploitation of women helped these men to build spaces that enabled same-sex sexuality and emotional relationships between men.

CASE 1: RAPE AND SODOMY IN NEVDUBSTROI, 1946–1951[13]

In January 1951, in the settlement of Nevdubstroi, about thirty kilometers east of Leningrad, a thirty-three-year-old woman, Lidia Babenko, complained

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was strained—but soon rose to 4,000 to 5,000 per annum in the postwar decade; in 1954, 5,941 murderers were convicted. Other crimes against the person (including rape) rose from 31,000 in 1943 to 173,000 in 1953; see Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation), *fond* A353, *opis'* 16, *delo* 20, *listy* 6, 9. Although statistics are difficult to find, rape evidently increased sharply during the period, compelling authorities to raise penalties in 1949, as discussed in note 14. Comprehensive statistics on the prosecution of sodomy (a crime from 1934 to 1993) do not exist, but 130 men were convicted in 1950; on statistics for sodomy, see Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 259–63.

[12] A post-1991 consensus based on archival scholarship and sophisticated comparative methodology has prevailed since the bitter disputes between "totalitarians" and "revisionists" in the 1980s; see the works by Siegelbaum, Field, and Fürst cited above and, for example, the multiauthor discussion "Historiography of the Soviet Period in Post-Soviet Perspective," *Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 1–51.

[13] The case file LOGAV, *fond* 3820, *opis'* 2, *delo* 3235. All further page (*list*, abbreviated to l., ll.) references to this file, named after the lead protagonist, are given thus: Grishin, l. 123.

to the police about her thirty-nine-year-old unregistered husband, Pavel Grishin. They had lived in his room in a barracks for two years, but soon after she moved in with him she realized that he had sex with men. Grishin often invited men back to their room for drinking parties or to sleep off the effects of drink, and he then committed sodomy or fellatio with them. Still worse, she said, Grishin forced her to have intercourse with some of these visitors, beating her and restraining her while visitors raped her. In her statements to the police, she named seven men and gave details of several others as Grishin's consenting sexual partners. She also described five incidents when she was raped by some of these visitors with her husband's collusion.

Grishin was immediately arrested, and within a week seven other men were in custody too. The investigation continued until early June, during which time these men were held in Leningrad Prison No. 1 and examined by expert psychiatrists and physicians. Police collected witness statements, and Grishin's snapshot collection (fifty-two images in all) was seized and studied. Prosecutors prepared a lengthy indictment in early June: Grishin was accused of sodomy and being an accessory to rape. Five others, between the ages of nineteen and forty-five, were charged with sodomy, and two men, thirty-two and forty-one years old, were charged with rape. The penalty for consensual sodomy was up to five years' imprisonment; for rape it was between ten and twenty years' deprivation of liberty.[14] Over four days in July 1951, in open sessions in Leningrad Provincial Court, the case was tried, and all these men were convicted. Grishin was sentenced to twenty years in a labor camp with five years' deprivation of rights, the two rapists received fifteen years each, and the five men convicted of simple sodomy got three years each. On appeal, these sentences were upheld by the Supreme Court of the Russian Republic.

Case 2: Sodomy and Murder in Rakhia, 1955–1959[15]

In Rakhia village, thirty kilometers northeast of Leningrad, on 14 December 1955, the thirty-seven-year-old bachelor Aleksei Kiselev was found dead, hanging in the communal bathhouse where he worked and lived. There were no signs of forced entry to his tiny room, no marks on the body, and no evidence of foul play; apparently, Kiselev had committed suicide. The

[14] On sodomy law, see Healey, *Homosexual Desire*, 184–86. According to the decree "On Strengthening Criminal Responsibility for Rape" (4 January 1949), the penalty for rape without aggravating circumstances was ten to fifteen years' imprisonment; for rape of a minor or by a group of persons, the penalty was fifteen to twenty years (D. S. Karev, *Ugolovnoe zakonodatel'stvo SSSR i soiuznykh respublik: Sbornik* [Moscow: Iuridicheskaia literatura, 1957], 23). Rape in the late Soviet period has not been studied, but for the foundations of Soviet legislation and its enforcement, see Dan Healey, *Bolshevik Sexual Forensics: Diagnosing Disorder in Clinic and Courtroom, 1917–1939* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 83–103.

[15] Morozov, d. 4471 and d. 4471a.

police reached this verdict and closed their investigation. They noted but did not judge as suspicious the fact that Kiselev's beloved gramophone was missing. Kiselev was known to carry the instrument around the village, visiting and playing music. Since he often made random calls and appeared to some to have "some peculiarities" of personality, it was thought the gramophone had been mislaid.

Three years later, the gramophone turned up—it had been stolen. Police raided a petty thief, twenty-seven-year-old David Morozov, and found the gramophone with a cache of stolen goods. The gramophone was quickly identified by the woman who had sold it to Kiselev. Morozov admitted murdering Kiselev and stealing his record player. He claimed that he had been enraged by Kiselev's homosexual advances, killed him, and then hanged him with his soldier's belt, intending to disguise the crime as a suicide.

Kiselev met Morozov the afternoon before his death at the railway station in Rakhia. The two men had known each other for about a year; they met at a party in the room of a young cleaner, Olga, who lived in Barrack No. 18, the dormitory for single women. The barrack had a reputation as a place where soldiers congregated to socialize with young women. After visiting the girls there, Kiselev invited Morozov back to his room in the bathhouse, and Morozov agreed. In Kiselev's small room, there were flowers on the windowsill and the gramophone sitting on a tiny table. They listened to some music, stepped out to get some food and drink, and returned to the room, where Kiselev fried up some potatoes as music played on the gramophone and Morozov smoked. Eventually, Kiselev asked Morozov to stay the night; the younger man took off his boots and shirt and lay down on the bed. He told police that it was at this point that Kiselev turned off the light and then began to embrace him and touch his penis. Kiselev's persistent sexual suggestions continued through the night, and Morozov said that, exasperated, he finally beat and strangled Kiselev with his belt. He hanged the body and left the room at five o'clock in the morning, taking the gramophone with him.

In March 1959 judges in Leningrad sentenced Morozov to fifteen years for murder, theft, and sodomy. They pointedly rejected Morozov's version of the "homosexual panic" defense but noted instead that "a personal relationship associated with the commission of sodomy" had existed for some time between the two men, substantiated by medical expertise, and there was therefore "nothing unexpected or perturbing" in Kiselev's sexual approaches.[16]

RURAL "SETTLEMENTS OF AN URBAN TYPE"

Both of these cases arose in rural villages, yet these were not remote peasant hamlets but what Soviet planners liked to call "settlements of an urban type." They were part of the quasi-industrial hinterland servicing Leningrad. The

[16] "Homosexual panic" was not a term used by the Soviets. On its use in English law, see Bartlett, "Killing Gay Men," 573–74.

inhabitants were not collective farmers but wage-earners in local industries and enterprises.[17] Nevdubstroi, founded in 1929 around a new hydroelectric generating station, added to this pivotal enterprise a construction-materials factory following the war. Demobilized soldiers formed a significant part of the workforce. The Stalin-era *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (Great Soviet encyclopedia) notes that Nevdubstroi had a secondary school and the hydro station had its own House of Culture.[18] In the older settlement of Rakhia, the key local employer was a peat-extraction trust; the encyclopedia boasts of the village's public baths, library, club, and school.[19] Close to Rakhia were several military bases where young men were housed and trained for their compulsory service in the Red Army, including nearby Vaganovo, where Morozov was stationed. Many soldiers found jobs upon demobilization in the local peat works. Both settlements had played their part in the drama of the 1941–43 Siege of Leningrad; Rakhia's and Vaganovo's mobile field hospitals served the Lake Ladoga "road of life," and near Nevdubstroi Soviet tanks first penetrated the Nazi encirclement.[20] After the war, the economic activity of both villages contributed to Leningrad's reconstruction.

Post-1945 reconstruction in the Soviet Union was not merely economic but also demographic. The country lost 27 million citizens in the war, and, as Mie Nakachi shows, losses in the most marriageable age groups were staggering. After 1945 the average rural male–female sex ratio in the reproductive-age cohort (eighteen to forty-nine years of age) was 28:100.[21] The resulting gender imbalance was stark; as late as 1959, 55 percent of the Soviet population was female. Nakachi argues that the 1944 Soviet decree on families transformed sexual behavior by deliberately encouraging nonconjugal, casual heterosexual liaisons leading to pregnancy and childbirth. State child support was extended to unmarried mothers, and bachelor fathers were relieved of the duty to support their offspring as one means of boosting the depleted population. By 1954, the tenth year of this decree's operation and the last year of Stalin's abortion ban, 8.7 million "fatherless" children had been born.[22]

Some features of this demographic situation can be read in our cases. Setting the casual sexual activity aside momentarily, it is striking that for this era, both Nevdubstroi and Rakhia were unusually well supplied with

[17] By midcentury, many of the "rural" sodomy cases discussed by Rydström for Sweden were in settlements that increasingly resembled urban ones; Rydström, *Sinners and Citizens*, 211–12, 317–20.

[18] The settlement was renamed Kirova imeni poselok in 1936, but documents in the case file still use Nevdubstroi; see "Kirova imeni poselok," in *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1953), 21:115.

[19] "Rakh'ia," in *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1955), 36: 128.

[20] N. G. Ivanov, A. S. Georgievskii, and O. S. Lobastov, *Sovetskoe zdravookhranenie i voennaia meditsina v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine 1941–1945* (Leningrad: Meditsina, 1985), 67.

[21] Nakachi, "Population," 26.

[22] Ibid., 37.

able-bodied young men. There were also plenty of single women in both settlements, where a large number of young and often migrant workers of both sexes lived, mostly in communal, workplace-owned accommodation: dormitories and barracks rather than flats or houses. After demobilization in 1945, Grishin returned to Nevdubstroi and lived in a dormitory allocated to the construction factory; by 1949 his workplace had given him a room in a "barracks town" (*barachnyi gorodok*).[23] Similarly, in Rakhia, in 1955, the murder victim himself lived in a tiny room in the bathhouse where he worked, while many of the key witnesses lived in the "women's barrack."[24]

MASCULINITY, SODOMY, AND GENDER RELATIONS

In John Howard's study of post-1945 rural Mississippi and in Peter Boag's history of early twentieth-century Oregon, the patterns of male homosociability and the social attitudes that facilitated homosexual encounters were important factors distinguishing urban from rural queer existence. For Howard, men who liked sex together were "resourceful sexual beings" who circulated in a rural landscape and carved out opportunities in unlikely settings: the family home, the local church hall, the automobile, the swimming hole.[25] Boag's Oregon was a hive of itinerant male laborers servicing resource and construction enterprises. These homosocial settings, seasonal work camps, and "hobo jungles" on the edge of cities created sites for sexual relations: as Boag writes, "the men found that the hinterland itself was a sexual space."[26] This was the setting for age-stratified pairings between a mature "jocker" or "wolf" who mentored and protected a younger "punk." The youth performed menial and domestic tasks while learning the ropes at tougher work in logging camps. While observers believed they adopted fixed sexual postures (jocker as inserter and punk as receptor), evidence shows that many punks penetrated their partners and later became jockers with their own punks.[27] Rural Sweden in the early to mid-twentieth century was also a place where casual laborers and farmhands found homosocial workspaces that could be sexualized.[28] Here too the age-stratified relationship between a mature man and youths or younger men was widely observed. Both Boag and Rydström found for their respective societies that effeminate behavior in queer men and the gender-ordered sexual relations that were reputed to accompany it (masculine insertor, feminine receptor) were more typical of urban same-sex-desiring men. Both observe that effeminacy was relatively rare in the countryside, even among more urbanized migrant workers.

[23] Grishin, l. 329.
[24] Morozov, d. 4471, l. 245 *oborot* (hereafter abbreviated to ob.).
[25] Howard, *Men like That*, 64.
[26] Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 42.
[27] Ibid., 25–39.
[28] Rydström, *Sinners and Citizens*, 211–12, 317–20.

Rydström argues that this effeminacy was too indiscreet for the tenuous social networks of queers to tolerate in the rural setting; small-town networks disapproved of and suppressed it.[29]

For historians of early twentieth-century rural queer men, "quiet accommodationism" assisted in the creation of a space for unnamed sexual experience. Denial and deliberate ignorance of same-sex sexuality was a key building block for this space; people acted according to a "regime of silence" to evade acknowledgment of homosexuality, whether that of neighbors or indeed within the self.[30] The realities of rural life could disguise queer tastes from the casual onlooker: physically demanding labor and male homosociability, including mentorship of young men, were relatively ubiquitous. Perhaps in these historical contexts, rural realities tended to naturalize queer tastes for those who experienced them as part of ordinary masculinity. This was possible until the arrival of an urban discourse of "homosexuality" as medical and sociological category. It is difficult to say whether rural circumstances like these evoked homosexual desire or whether those who felt homosexual desire sought them out.[31]

At the same time, the distinctiveness of the rural queer world should not be overstated. Even before 1914, Boag's itinerant workers were frequent visitors to Portland and other cities between job contracts, and many were familiar with urban patterns of male–male relations, including the existence of the effeminate "fairy" who paraded his gender transgression in louche bars and queer haunts. Rydström too sees a quickening of traffic between rural and urban queer men in mid-twentieth century Sweden, with the impact of modern communications bringing urban tastes and ideas to the hinterland by midcentury. In both contexts, urban expert use of scientific concepts of "homosexuality" was also proliferating in legal and social work.[32] In other words, in modernizing societies the city and countryside were not separate spheres but worlds where urban patterns of experience and thought collided with and often challenged or overlapped with rural patterns. In Leningrad province of the 1950s, sodomy cases from "settlements of an urban type" offer examples of the blend and overlap of "urban" and "rural" forms of queer sexual behavior.

[29] Ibid., 217–21.

[30] For "quiet accommodationism," see Howard, *Men like That*, xix; Rydström, *Sinners and Citizens*, 317–20; Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 40–41; on the internalization of the closet, see, for example, Bech, *When Men Meet*; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 246–51.

[31] Boag argues that "some men sought transient society as a refuge and did not merely perceive it as a closet" (*Same-Sex Affairs*, 41). Rydström sees both actors in the rural Swedish age-stratified pairing "taking the initiative" in his data, and he concludes that before 1930 sex between men in the countryside was "to a large extent situational" (*Sinners and Citizens*, 319). Rydström charts the arrival of urban discourses of homosexuality from the 1930s in rural Sweden, calling it "a changing paradigm" (219–21).

[32] Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 45–86; Rydström, *Sinners and Citizens*, 254–65.

Like any other persons, resourceful queer men circulating through a hinterland that they perceived as a sexualized environment were also capable of ambiguous or morally repugnant acts. The indulgence of male privilege with "quiet accommodationism" could also facilitate the exploitation of youths, of effeminized men, and of women. Grishin's repeated offering of his wife, Babenko, to male friends for sex was an abusive ploy with only two plausible motives: either he was prostituting his wife, or he used her as bait to attract men into sexual scenarios with himself. (Prosecutors found no evidence of prostitution, although defense advocates suggested it unsuccessfully in appeals to the Supreme Court.) Morozov's murder of the overtly effeminized Kiselev was perhaps an act of self-loathing, of internalized homophobia, to use anachronistic language, and the failure to detect it for three years was a sign that quiet accommodationism could facilitate violent homophobia and misogyny.

The violence of these cases suggests that a feminist as well as a queer language of gender relations and masculine power is required to analyze them satisfactorily. Life between the sexes in post-1945 Soviet Russia was a dynamic and troubled negotiation as men and women sought to find work and housing and establish a private family life. At the same time, the militarization of this corner of Russia created homosocial space that concentrated men together and permitted a high degree of mobility and circulation through these communities. Military service was a common masculine experience, and demobilization was a longed-for release, but it was also a stage bringing new anxieties. Life between men was nevertheless an arena where differences of age, class, war service, and experience with women were as significant as commonalities. Men's sexuality, including sex with other men, occurred within these contexts and had disturbing features. To understand men's same-sex affairs in this setting, we must examine how these same men ordered their affairs with women.

BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Pavel Grishin's relationship with his common-law wife, Lidia Babenko, began in 1949, apparently, after his workplace had allocated him a room in Nevdubstroi's barracks town. Babenko was an invalid, blind in one eye and poorly sighted in the other.[33] From the sources it is difficult to fathom why Grishin started this relationship, since he told psychiatrists that from childhood he had been strongly attracted only to men; but a psychiatric report indicates that he did have sex with Babenko, although he seldom achieved satisfaction with her unless other men were present.[34]

[33] Grishin, ll. 397–98. After a decree in 1936, "unregistered" de facto marriages lost much legal status, yet the housing shortage discouraged many from formally registering their union.

[34] "Did not experience arousal with women; in his cohabitation with Babenko after the sex act he often felt no satisfaction but only achieved a state of sexual arousal when Babenko was sexually intimate with his partners [male]" (Grishin, l. 233).

Neither husband nor wife was a person with prospects, and they had few assets beyond Grishin's room. Babenko, a peasant from Tula province, had never been married, was childless, and had some schooling but no job. Grishin, an orphan, lived with foster parents, had not finished primary school, and worked as a cleaner through the war for the army; he became a factory caretaker (*dvornik*) after demobilization. Their conjugal life began conventionally enough, with Babenko preparing meals and even bringing them to Grishin at his workplace—it was during one such delivery, not long after they began cohabiting, that she discovered her husband engaged in sex with another man.[35] Perhaps Grishin settled down with Babenko for the convenience of having a homemaker and to make an attempt to suppress what he called in his trial "my illness"—his attraction to men.[36] Babenko depended heavily on Grishin, lacking any alternative income and place to live, and in any case, scarce marriageable men had their pick of younger and more able-bodied women. Her "quiet accommodation" of Grishin's taste for men appears to have been a tragic compromise born of desperate circumstances.

About a year after they began life together, Grishin started to bring men to their room, suggesting that these men have sex with his wife; from the psychiatric reports it seems he did this to initiate scenarios leading to homosexual sex. In the summer of 1950, Grishin's "bait and switch" tactic worked with two men with whom Babenko first refused to have sex. After one such refusal, a well-paid worker with a criminal record, Aleksander Kononov, thirty-nine years of age, a demobilized soldier said to be happily married with children, committed sodomy and fellatio with Grishin. Dmitry Gusev, a nineteen-year-old bachelor, likewise engaged in sodomy with Grishin after his wife turned him down. With two other men that same summer, Grishin used force to overcome his wife's denial of consent to sex, assisting them to rape her on two occasions. One of these men, Viktor Belousov, was a demobilized semi-invalid, married and employed as a stove fitter, and the other, Vladimir Biryukov, was an unmarried metalworker, well paid, with a previous prison stretch for quitting a job without permission during the war. Biryukov had also let Grishin attempt sodomy and commit fellatio repeatedly on him. In all of these incidents, Babenko served as a means of exchange between men. In the cases when her refusal was respected, the fact of Grishin's offer of his wife was a pretext, a fig leaf of "normal" sexuality that allowed these men to engage in same-sex sex as an ostensible "substitute." Their supposed interest in Babenko gave them a measure of sexual conformity. In the cases when she was raped, Grishin apparently hoped to profit by persuading the rapists to indulge his desire, and with certain men like Biryukov he achieved

[35] Grishin, ll. 4–4 ob.

[36] In court, Grishin denied sodomy but admitted to fellatio (*minet*): "Fellatio has been my illness since childhood" (l. 373).

this result.[37] In the scenarios Grishin fashioned in collaboration with these men, sex with a woman could be accompanied with considerable physical and psychological violence, but when sex happened between men, consent was carefully constructed. In testimony recorded in the stilted language of the police, a married work comrade, twenty-six-year-old Nikita Pashchenko, described the process of forging consent to homosexual sex: "In a conversation with Grishin he told me that he satisfied sexual desire by means of sucking the penis, and he began trying to incline me to this; at first I would not allow it, but later he started to convince me, and I agreed and allowed him to do it. That was on the steamboat in the stoke-hold."[38] Later, Grishin invited Pashchenko to his room, and he had apparently consensual intercourse with Babenko (according to his testimony; Babenko did not name Pashchenko as one of the rapists). Grishin was unable to persuade Pashchenko to have oral sex again. The case file says little about the nature of the negotiations between men who opted to have sex with each other, except for one striking commonality: they often used the prospect of sex with a woman as a pretext to broach the possibility of homosexual sex.

Men who had sex together in the 1955 Rakhia murder case similarly used relations with women to conceal nonconforming sexuality. David Morozov served in the Red Army from 1952 until his demobilization on 29 September 1955, that is, barely ten weeks before Kiselev's murder. The twenty-two-year-old soldier first met thirty-six-year-old Aleksei Kiselev in the winter of 1954–55 while still in uniform. A sergeant took Morozov to Rakhia to visit Barrack No. 18, the women's dormitory. The girls of Barrack No. 18 had a reputation in Rakhia; it was well known that soldiers called on them, and perhaps some supplemented their meagre incomes with exchanges of small presents—"treating"—for sex.[39] They were young women like twenty-one-year-old Olga Gurova, a cleaner for the peat-cutting trust who told police how Kiselev often dropped by with his gramophone "to sit for a while, talk a bit, and play the gramophone. Nobody invited him; he just dropped in on his own." Morozov recalled that he first met Kiselev at a party in Olga's room; Kiselev noticed Morozov and said, "Introduce me to that red-haired fellow." They shook hands, and Kiselev said, "Let's become friends." Kiselev said he had a sister and that Morozov should come to Rakhia again to visit him in his bathhouse room.[40]

[37] Babenko named two more rapists who also had sexual contact with Grishin before or during the sexual assault (Grishin, l. 4 ob.).

[38] Grishin, l. 135.

[39] For sexual "exchanges" by Soviet women migrants living in similar situations in the prewar years, see Elena Shulman, "Soviet Maidens for the Socialist Fortress: The Khetagurovite Campaign to Settle the Far East, 1937–1939," *Russian Review* 62, no. 3 (2003): 387–410. On "treating" more generally, see Kathy Peiss, "'Charity Girls' and City Pleasures: Historical Notes on Working-Class Sexuality, 1880–1920," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review, 1983), 57–69.

[40] Morozov, d. 4471, l. 302 ob.

Morozov did not go to the bathhouse on that occasion. He told police, "Later I heard from our soldiers and from the girls in Barrack No. 18 that [Kiselev] didn't really have a sister and that he did not love women but was friendly only with soldiers and supposedly entered into a sexual connection with them." Such warnings could also provide useful queer intelligence. Morozov claimed to police interrogators that in the ten months between this meeting and his demobilization, he saw Kiselev five times in Rakhia at the women's barracks, but he always refused his invitations to visit him at the bathhouse. The judges at Morozov's trial clearly found it incredible that the two would not have met during this time to "engage in sodomy," and Morozov's own admission in court that he had received a letter from the older man while he was still in the army gave them some reason to think so.[41] Kiselev apparently admitted Morozov freely to his room; there was no evidence of a struggle there or on Kiselev's body. A rectal examination supposedly confirmed Morozov's long career as a passive sodomite.[42] Circumstantial evidence hinted at a more intimate connection between murderer and victim. Kiselev's bathhouse room offered an ideal location for him to entertain visitors discreetly after hours. Statements to police from soldiers, colleagues, and neighbors indicated that he was notorious for having sex with men in uniform. Finally, it was difficult to understand why, after having supposedly refused repeatedly to visit Kiselev, Morozov would suddenly accept Kiselev's invitation on 13 December 1955 and agree to stay the night with him when he was relatively sober and lived less than a mile away. Even more curious was the fact that Morozov had only just married a woman ten years his senior on 31 October 1955; he had gone from a soldiers' barracks to live in his wife's house within four weeks of demobilization. On the night of the murder, he had a new bride to go home to. Morozov embraced married life for reasons we cannot know; but in 1950s Russia the eagerness of many single and widowed women to find an able-bodied husband and perhaps Morozov's anxiety about finding a place to live upon release from the army and determination to conceal his same-sex inclinations were among the motives for this alliance.[43]

Here men engaged in homosexual relations again instrumentalized ties with women to find and attract male partners and to mask their sexual nonconformity. Barrack No. 18 was not only a notorious place where local soldiers gathered for parties with young women. Kiselev also enjoyed meeting these men in uniform, some of whom responded to his attentions; the girls apparently judged Kiselev as sexually nonthreatening and even

[41] Morozov, d. 4471a, l. 110 ob.

[42] On Soviet forensic techniques to detect sodomy, see Healey, *Homosexual Desire*, 212–13, 239–40.

[43] Morozov's wife told police that she was unaware of her husband's homosexual activities; their sex life was "normal," and "he never tried to commit unnatural sex acts with me" (d. 4471a, l. 25 ob.). By 1959 the couple had two children.

intriguing for his adventures with men. Kiselev made himself indispensable to the barracks girls with his gramophone, one of only a handful owned privately in the whole village. His presence at these parties allowed him to court partners to invite back to his room. The barracks girls paid attention to these games: in court, Morozov said that "the girls told me that Kiselev was attracted to me because I'm a redhead."[44] During the initial suicide inquiry in 1955, Mikhail Yermolaev, the twenty-year-old soldier mentioned at the start of this article, testified that he met the "queer" (*pidarast*) Kiselev while visiting the "girls" in Rakhia with a group of soldiers from his base.[45] Despite his harsh language, Yermolaev's statement to police lacks any self-justifying or fear of taint by association: he even admitted that he was sexually aroused during Kiselev's seduction and that later he gave Kiselev his address, suggesting this liaison might continue.

In Morozov's statement to the police, he said that Kiselev invented a nonexistent "sister" to lure him to pay a visit to his room at the bathhouse. Whether or not Kiselev actually used this ploy is difficult to establish; what is clear is that as a pretext, the prospect of meeting a young woman was an intelligible motive for further contact between the two men. Finally, Morozov's sudden marriage so soon after demobilization, seen in conjunction with his liaison with and eventual murder of Kiselev, suggests a concerted internal struggle against persistent same-sex desire. The newly demobbed soldier needed not just a woman to house him and care for him but a fig leaf of masculine respectability to deflect attention from that shameful desire, which, if the medical expertise is to be believed, was for men to penetrate him.[46]

BETWEEN MEN IN PRIVATE

Men's homosocial relations worked to exclude women, to build solidarities between men, and in some cases to facilitate homosexual contacts. Homosociability took various forms; in these cases all-male drinking parties (*popoiki*), workplace fraternization, mentoring, and comradeship all figure significantly as primarily private sites where male bonds were made.

Alcohol consumption had long been part of the rituals of friendship, status construction, and courtship between men in Russia.[47] Drinking together relaxed men's routine emotional reserve, created intimacy between them, and cloaked sallies into homosexual territory. Despite the efforts of

[44] Morozov, d. 4471a, l. 111.

[45] Morozov, d. 4471, l. 224 ob.

[46] In Russian masculine culture, serving as the "passive" partner in anal intercourse had long been considered shameful; see Dan Healey, "The Disappearance of the Russian Queen, or How the Soviet Closet Was Born," in *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture*, ed. Barbara Evans Clements, Rebecca Friedman, and Dan Healey (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2001), 152–71.

[47] On drinking in masculine culture, see Christine D. Worobec, "Masculinity in Late Imperial Russian Society," 76–93, and Steven A. Smith, "Masculinity in Transition: Peasant

the Soviet state to reduce men's alcohol consumption, these cases show that drinking was a fixed ritual of masculine culture, one that authorities felt they could do little to alter by intervening directly in the private spaces men created. Psychiatrists assessing eight defendants in the 1951 Grishin case quizzed each man about his drinking habits. Significant consumption "on payday" (*s poluchki*) was a common practice: some men admitted to consuming a third- to a half-liter of vodka on the day they got paid, and one senses that they might have been underreporting their consumption. Nineteen-year-old Ivan Lopukhin said he "definitely drank on payday and on other occasions and more often 300 grams and sometimes even more"; he reported that he drank with company and when alone. Anton Baskov, thirty-three years old and married, had been drinking since the age of eighteen and got through as much as a liter of vodka a day alone and in company. Payday drinking was part of worker life. Grishin said to psychiatrists that he "does not abuse alcohol," but they noted that his liver was enlarged and his general health was poor. This evidence seemed to confirm the consequences of the drinking parties he organized in his barracks room.

In this case, the rituals of drinking together were sufficiently significant to commemorate in snapshots taken and offered as presents "for remembrance, as a keepsake" (*na pamiat'*). Police removed at least three such photographs from Grishin's collection (see fig. 1). One showed a party of five men seated around a small table, set with some black bread, in a cramped room, with one young man raising one shot glass to another, held by a figure whose back is to the camera. It was inscribed on the reverse: "To my friend Pavel from Vanya, a keepsake. Remember how we met. A photograph of 5 April. Mikheev, Iv[an] Vas[ilevich]." Perhaps Grishin is himself in this photograph, but there is no other image of him in the case file with which to compare it. Snapshots like these fixed a moment of masculine solidarity in the personal histories of these men and signified deeper intimacies for some men in the frame.[48] Police too recognized the power of drink to create dangerous masculine intimacy. In 1959, during the investigation into Kiselev's murder, a police photographer reconstructed the day Morozov killed Kiselev in 1955 (see fig. 2). The murderer was posed pointing to the canteen where he and Kiselev bought vodka and snacks; after drinking some there, they returned with a half-liter of vodka to Kiselev's room in the bathhouse to drink privately.

Friendship, work comradeship, and mentoring younger men and youths were another arena for homosocial bonds that could shade into homosexual relations. Grishin's large collection of photographs hints at a wide

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Migrants to Late Imperial St. Petersburg," 94–112, both in Clements, Friedman, and Healey, *Russian Masculinities*; on courtship and sexuality between men facilitated by drink, see Healey, "Moscow"; Healey, *Homosexual Desire*, 23–26, 43, 94–95.

[48] Two other photos from Grishin's collection bore the drinking motif, but neither had inscriptions.

Figure 1. Snapshot of a drinking party, from Pavel Grishin's collection of photographs. Grishin case file.

acquaintance with men; most of the photos lack inscriptions and cannot be characterized beyond the banal observation that most of these men were under thirty and generally of pleasant appearance. Some with inscriptions hint at significant ties between Grishin and youths of a mentoring or friendly character. An image of two young men sitting in an affectionate proximity bears the dedication: "Nevdubstroi. For remembrance to Pavel Viktorovich Grishin from Zorin Kolya M. 4.XI.48." Another portrait of a clear-faced young man is inscribed: "26.VI.48. For remembrance to Pavel Viktorovich Grishin from your friend Fyodor. A keepsake of working days at Dubrovka." Dubrovka was a neighboring village, and evidently Fyodor and Grishin shared a work assignment there. Another photo, of a trio of schoolboys, was inscribed in a sentimental vein: "For remembrance to Pavel Viktorovich from Sasha, 17 years old. Remember me. Nevdubstroi." Sasha had crossed out an earlier, 1949 dedication of this same snapshot to his mother in order to give Grishin this image; he also gave another portrait of himself in his winter coat, with his "Sasha" written in a schoolboy hand on the margin.

The desire on the part of many men to be remembered, audible in these inscriptions, forms one side, possibly an entirely positive one, of the story of same-sex relations between working men and Grishin. These tokens of memory also remind us that homosexual relations between these men were desired and consensual. Another photo from the collection projects the

Figure 2. "Morozov points out the cafeteria that he visited with Kiselev," police photograph. Morozov case file.

ideal of male friendship but also reminds us of the sinister sexual histories that friendship masks (see fig. 3). Two men in civilian outfits and workers' flat caps are turned to smile at each other; on the left is Sergei Denisov, named as having had oral sex with Grishin in January 1951. The other is thirty-two-year-old Vladimir Biryukov, who twice raped Babenko and also had consensual relations with her husband. The friendship of Denisov (charges against him were dropped because he only engaged in fellatio) and Biryukov (sentenced to fifteen years for rape) looks "normal" despite the careful tearing of the snapshot in two and the policeman's scrawl noting the names of each likeness.[49]

[49] The status of fellatio in Soviet law was ambiguous and variable. Investigators in Leningrad in 1951 decided it was not punishable as "sodomy." On 1930s legal constructions of sodomy, see Healey, *Homosexual Desire*, 217–19. Elsewhere in Grishin's collection of pictures, the same policeman annotated one photograph of a fellator and another indicating the subject was in a psychiatric hospital.

Figure 3. Snapshot of Sergei Denisov and Vladimir Biryukov, with names inscribed by a police investigator. Grishin case file.

MEANINGS FOR MEN'S SAME-SEX RELATIONS

Given the character of official documents, the voices of same-sex-desiring subjects are distorted; access to an authentic key to the meanings for homosexuality held by these men and those who observed them is not easily gained. Yet some plausible notions can be proposed based on these documents and the historical context in which they were produced. Homosexual relations in these cases had emotional and gendered dimensions that charged them with significance for our understanding of sexuality and of the private and the public in post-1945 Soviet Russia.

Witness and suspect statements taken by Soviet police were reported in an official language that obscures how men in these cases actually explained and described their sexual encounters with other men. In legal discourse, these encounters were often reduced to physiological acts of a "mutual" character. I have argued elsewhere that to consign Soviet male homosexuality to the mere sex act is to adopt the "policeman's lens" for what are in fact complex phenomena with emotional and social dimensions.[50] Recall the stilted phrase used by the court in sentencing Morozov in 1959: "a personal relationship associated with the commission of sodomy." Behind the awkward language lay an unspeakable emotional dimension to men's homosexual encounters, a personal psychological realm that was censored

[50] Dan Healey, "Sexual and Gender Dissent: Homosexuality as Resistance in Stalin's Russia," in *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s*, ed. Lynne Viola (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 139–69.

out of all public discourse during the Soviet era and that remains difficult to explore in post–Soviet Russia culture to this day.[51]

In the 1951 Nevdubstroi case, without idealizing Grishin or the men who raped his wife, Babenko, it is possible to propose that beneath the homosexual acts bluntly described were emotional ties that mattered to these men. These ties were built on existing comradeship and strengthened by the "conspiratorial" process of forging consent to gay sex. Friendship or masculine honor constrained these men from raping each other; here was an important gendered distinction when contrasted with their violent abuse of Babenko.[52] Anton Baskov had known Grishin since 1940 and had been having voluntary sexual relations with him since 1946. In court Baskov described Grishin as "a great dancer, a merry fellow who would sing and play and dance in any gathering."[53] Ivan Lopukhin repeatedly had oral sex with Grishin over two years and finally consented to sodomy with him in 1951, suggesting a progression to deeper intimacy between the nineteen-year-old and the older man. Grishin's photographs demonstrate that whatever we might think of the object they were addressed to, he was capable of inspiring strong feelings in young men. Similarly, if we accept that Morozov's liaison with Kiselev in Rakhia in 1954–55 was more than a one-night stand, we see again the traces of an emotional tie between a younger and an older man, in this case between a soldier in the tricky liminal state of demobilization and an older man with resources and comforts to offer. The age- and status-related distinctions between friends could charge these relationships with erotic power. As David Halperin argues, the pattern of erotically charged differences of age, stage, and gender performance between men is an age-old continuity in homosexual history.[54]

How conventionally gendered were these homosexual relations? Did they mimic heterosexual roles and conform to a stereotype of masculine, insertive, "active" partner, coupled with an effeminized receptive, "passive" partner? In early twentieth-century urban Russia, such stereotypes circulated in the homosexual underground and in the expert world that observed it, distinguishing between the usually older man said to enjoy being penetrated and perceived as effeminate (in Russian, the *tetka*, or "auntie," analagous to the French *tante* or German *Tante*) and younger "pederasts for money" who

[51] On post-Soviet culture, see Brian James Baer, *Other Russias: Homosexuality and the Crisis of Post-Soviet Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[52] Men did rape each other in Soviet Russia, of course, often in the Gulag. See Healey, *Homosexual Desire*, 230–35.

[53] Grishin, l. 373 ob.

[54] Here I make a leap from sexual "discourse" to sexual practice that Halperin eschews in his carefully argued essay, "How to Do the History of Homosexuality," in *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 104–37. In rural Sweden, by comparison with urban cases, homosexual practice was "more charged with power" based on disparities of class, age, and gender roles (Rydström, *Sinners and Citizens*, 215).

were their supposed masculine "active" and sexually "normal" counterparts. Such stereotypes persisted in the underground well into the Soviet 1930s and 1940s, albeit in concealed form. The various stereotypes of Russia's urban homosexual subculture seem outwardly similar to George Chauncey's wolves, punks, and fairies for early twentieth-century New York, the city cousins of Boag's jockers and punks in the Oregon hinterland.[55]

Of the protagonists in the first case, only Grishin's psychiatric assessments (commissioned and conducted in the city of Leningrad) pointed to an effeminate character: he was described as "mannered," he flinched from the doctor's tiny reflex hammer, he gesticulated and cried out affectedly, he carried himself submissively, and he was incapable of standing up to criticism. Grishin walked projecting his buttocks, and he "eagerly and nakedly" described his desire for men and the ways in which he realized it. From the age of eight he was particularly devoted to fellatio, but he also had anal intercourse in both active and passive forms.[56] No such characterizations tarnished the psychiatric assessments of the various workers and soldiers found to have had sex with Grishin. It appears that experts sought to cast him alone as the effeminate homosexual, to distinguish him from the men with whom he had sex. Grishin's war service as a cleaner in the army, normally "women's work," probably also contributed to official perceptions of effeminacy surrounding him. How he performed his gender in private with men is harder to discern. In contrast to several witness statements about Aleksei Kiselev's effeminacy, bystanders said little about any unmanly mannerisms in Grishin. This silence may have been more than mere quiet accommodationism. Perhaps witnesses were reluctant to describe such nonconformism in the earlier case, conducted before Stalin's death during a period of heightened but selective terror campaigns. Ultimately, urban experts emphasized unmanly characteristics in their forensic assessment, and it set Grishin apart from the other defendants as a source of contamination.

In the later case, murder victim Aleksei Kiselev's openly nonconforming, effeminate personality emerges as a striking feature of his character, something that achieved the status of an open secret around Rakhia village. In the relaxed post-Stalin atmosphere, it likely seemed easier to admit one had tolerated "odd" behavior in a comrade. The day after his death, police questioned twenty-three-year-old Nikolai Voronin, a metalworker who had known Kiselev for five years. The young man told police: "For some time now Kiselev would come to my place of residence completely without any

[55] Russia's "pederast for money" was not always a prostitute; the term was used by psychiatrists and lawyers to describe men who serviced the *tetka*. These men did not have their own subcultural label, apparently preserving their masculine credentials behind a mask of silence. See Healey, "The Disappearance," 155–60; and George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 47–97.

[56] Grishin, l. 178 ob., 233 ob.

purpose, when he would sit down, have a laugh, and then go off. In conversation Kiselev constantly referred to himself as a woman. Thus sometimes, instead of saying *ya poshel* or *ya pogulial* ["I went" or "I went out" in the masculine gender], he said *ya poshla*, *ya poguliala* [feminine gender]. I was aware that Kiselev loved soldiers, and he often spent time with them."[57]

Kiselev's use of feminine grammatical inflections to speak about himself was a flagrant violation of masculine norms. Such queeny outrageousness had been part of Russian gay speech since the end of the nineteenth century, when the male homosexual subculture that exploited the rich gender inflections of the Russian language flourished in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. These linguistic arabesques did not disappear under Lenin and Stalin, but terror against homosexuals in the 1930s—after Stalin's criminalization of sodomy in 1934—did suppress flagrant effeminacy.[58] Kiselev was known to make frequent forays into Leningrad; he was probably in contact with that underground subculture of gendered, "active-passive" homosexuality. What is extraordinary was his failure to confine this feminizing language to a circle of initiates. It is difficult to know how widely he used it; a laundress Loginova, who lived under the same roof in the bathhouse with him for two years and knew him well, denied "any strange activities by Kiselev," and implicit in this response to police questions was an awareness of his unorthodox reputation.[59]

Loginova's statement mentioned a different kind of gender anxiety, Kiselev's, that was peculiar to the bathhouse work environment: "While I was working in the bath I noticed that Kiselev never washed in the bath when the bath was serving men [that is, during men's hours], and I know that he never even washed with the other male bathhouse employees but always tried to wash alone."[60] Fearing exposure before those by whom one is sexually aroused was not an unusual anxiety found in psychiatric case histories of homosexuality.[61] This shyness too was a kind of gender transgression, a reluctance to participate in the insouciant display of one's

[57] Morozov, d. 4471, l. 220.

[58] The diaries of Mikhail Kuzmin, gay poet, composer, and author of the coming-out novel *Kryl'ia* (Wings, 1906), display examples of this linguistic queerness. See M. A. Kuzmin, *Dnevnik 1905–1907* (Saint Petersburg: Ivan Limbakh, 2002); M. A. Kuzmin, *Dnevnik 1908–1915* (Saint Petersburg: Ivan Limbakh, 2005); M. A. Kuzmin, *Dnevnik 1934 goda* (Saint Petersburg: Ivan Limbakh, 1998). On Kuzmin, see also John E. Malmstad and Nikolay Bogomolov, *Mikhail Kuzmin: A Life in Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); John E. Malmstad, "Bathhouses, Hustlers, and a Sex Club: The Reception of Mikhail Kuzmin's *Wings*," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, nos. 1/2 (2000): 85–104. For gay subcultural argot from the 1920s to the 1980s, see Vladimir Kozlovskii, *Argo russkoi gomoseksual'noi subkul'tury: Materialy k izucheniiu* (Benson, VT: Chalidze, 1986).

[59] Morozov, d. 4471, ll. 252 ob., 258.

[60] Morozov, d. 4471, ll. 252 ob.–53.

[61] For Soviet examples, see V. M. Bekhterev, "Polovye ukloneniia i izvrashcheniia v svete refleksologii," *Voprosy izucheniia i vospitaniia lichnosti*, nos. 4/5 (1922): 644–746 (case history at 734–35); and A. K. Sudomir, "K kazuistike i sushchnosti gomoseksual'nost'" *Sovremennaia psikhonevrologiia* 5, no. 11 (1927): 371–77 (case history at 375).

body among comrades for whom no desire was meant to exist. Kiselev in his feminized persona evidently found the male gaze too arousing and therefore disturbing to bear.

That Kiselev's squeamishness about being naked around men could be noticed and described says something about its queerness, about its violation of unwritten norms of gender and the public-private border in Russian bathhouse culture. Officials began segregating bathhouses by sex from the seventeenth century. Sexual impropriety was meant to be avoided by preventing men and women from mixing. Some baths built permanently separated men's and women's spaces; others, like Rakhia's communal bath, operated to a schedule of men's and women's hours. The effect was to produce a homosocial environment and one that before 1917 was also often a homosexual one (on the men's side at least). Yet in all respectable discourse, precisely because of the increasingly well-enforced sex segregation of modern facilities, Soviet bathhouses were presented as a desexualized, health-giving, and, increasingly, public realm.[62] Kiselev's discomfort in the washing chamber and the steam room was a token of illicit desire that contradicted these cultural norms by sexualizing a space that was supposed to be public and asexual.

The meanings ascribed to homosexuality by nonparticipants also offer some insights into quiet accommodationism in this time and place. The degree to which sex between men could be tolerated in rural Soviet life illustrates a boundary between the public and private. The strenuous denials of knowledge that witnesses repeated in the Kiselev investigation, while simultaneously admitting that Kiselev was not like other men, display a tension over knowledge designated as "public" and things viewed as private, personal affairs. Witnesses generally turned a blind eye to Kiselev's pecularities, sometimes burying them in euphemisms and jokes. One neighbor called him "kind of an oddball" (*kakoi-to chudakovatyi*).[63] Voronin the young metalworker was exceptionally frank; he was "aware that Kiselev loved soldiers" and constantly used feminine grammatical forms, yet Voronin made no comment on these extraordinary facts. The witness Mikhailova observed that "Aleksei himself sometimes said that he'd had a lieutenant over to stay, and then he would laugh, and I never knew if he was serious or not."[64] Bystrova, a stoker who arrived first at the bathhouse on the morning the body was found, admitted that Kiselev told her that "he found some soldiers very beautiful," but "why he said this I do not know." She admitted she knew that some of the soldiers who visited the girls at Barrack No. 18 also visited Kiselev, "but I myself know nothing about it. I don't know who he was friends with or who came to visit him."

[62] On these points, see Healey, *Homosexual Desire*, 26–29; and Tricia Starks, *The Body Soviet: Propaganda, Hygiene, and the Revolutionary State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 171, 177.

[63] Morozov, d. 4471, l. 297 ob.

[64] Morozov, d. 4471, ll. 285 ob.–286.

She ended her long witness statement with the words, "I repeat that I know nothing about Kiselev's friends."[65] Olga the barracks girl denied all knowledge of Kiselev's friends and said she barely knew Kiselev at all.[66] The laundress Loginova was even more adamant in denial. Kiselev "did not like any conversations about women. . . . He was always under my eye, and I never saw a single woman come and visit him, and he never visited anyone nor had close relations with anyone." No one in the bathhouse, she said, was a close friend of his, and she repeated that she knew nothing of his friends or visitors. "I cannot even imagine," she declared, "why Kiselev committed suicide."[67] Only Kiselev's boss, the manager of the bathhouse, a woman named Irina Vaganova, found it impossible to avoid passing some comment on his way of life, for she was the only Communist Party member who was interviewed about him. "Kiselev . . . was a very nervous person. Kiselev made friends with soldiers. I even criticized him for this, for the fact that he invited them to come and stay with him," she reassured police—and then swiftly changed the subject.[68]

Such phrases echo with confused embarrassment before police investigators: these witnesses were caught in a double bind. How could they have ignored, or tolerated, such an "oddball" in their midst? Yet the embarrassment is accompanied by a determination to mark out realms of knowledge and unknowing that constituted boundaries between public reputation, on the one hand, and private life (friendship, intimate relationships, motives for love or suicide), on the other.[69] In the postwar era, popular notions of domestic privacy and accepted official intrusion were in flux, and these Russians' quiet accommodationism of men's same-sex relations was only one aspect of a wider negotiation over the private realm in Soviet society.[70]

Russia after 1945 was a society marked by war, as Juliane Fürst reminds us.[71] These cases bear the scars of that experience and suggest ways in which gender relations between men and women and between men radically shifted after 1945. Between the sexes, the 1944 family law changes that yielded casual and disorderly heterosexual affairs and the demographic sex-ratio imbalance grossly tilted the postwar scales in favor of men. The aftershocks of total war

[65] Morozov, d. 4471, l. 247 ob.–248 ob.

[66] Morozov, d. 4471, l. 249 ob.

[67] Morozov, d. 4471, ll. 252 ob.–253 ob.

[68] Morozov, d. 4471, ll. 294 ob.

[69] For very similar distinctions made by family members to police and social workers investigating family breakdown, see Field, *Private Life*.

[70] On transitions in the popular view of the sanctity of private life after 1945, see Figes, *The Whisperers*, 455–596; and Brian LaPierre, "Private Matters or Public Crimes: The Emergence of Domestic Hooliganism in the Soviet Union, 1939–1966," in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 191–209.

[71] Juliane Fürst, "Introduction: Late Stalinist Society: History, Policies and People," in Fürst, *Late Stalinist Russia*, 1–20, at 5.

also generated rising criminal violence, including a significant increase in reported rapes. Women faced bleak and perilous prospects on a diminished sex and marriage market, and some, like Lidia Babenko, might feel that they had little choice but to endure a violent and loveless partnership.

Despite their advantages, men's lives were also fraught with war-related anxieties. The 1951 Grishin file records the war service of four out of six eligible defendants, and none had a "good war." Grishin was invalided and did "unmanly" work as an army cleaner; two more, Kononov and Belousov, were seriously wounded in combat; and the last, Kuzmin, had lost his wife and children in the Siege of Leningrad. The war damaged their bodies, minds, and families. Transition to postwar life was evidently stressful. Moreover, for younger men like Gusev and Lopukhin, the two nineteen-year-olds convicted of sodomy with Grishin, conscription loomed. In the later Kiselev case, the Cold War threat of new conflict still structured men's anxieties. In the 1950s, when renewed war seemed imminent, the transitions between army and civilian life (in both directions) by cohorts of young men doing compulsory military service were stressful rites of passage.[72] The Red Army pressed its claims on the young, healthy, postwar man, and, as Rebecca Kay has demonstrated for a later period, military service was likely an unwanted hiatus before earning a living sufficient to set up a household.[73] Yet even for the most economically successful men in these cases, dissatisfaction with the male condition found its expression in a flight from officially approved forms of recreation. Rakhia's club and library and Nevdubstroi's House of Culture, touted by the *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, figure nowhere in these cases. Instead, these men constructed private space for illicit pleasures and sexual activity. Grishin transformed his barracks room into a "den of vice"; it was a place of vodka-fueled and often violent escape. The masculine antiutopia of the payday drinking bout was a means of asserting control over a bleakly regimented world. Even if, as in the Rakhia case, the drinking parties in the women's barrack were mixed-sex affairs, it was still a private space in which men held most of the best cards, and the young women who played hostess occupied a subordinate and distinctly disreputable role.

[72] Rituals of young men's transition to military service (song, dance, and drinking on the eve of conscription) are cataloged in Zh. V. Kormina, *Provody v armiiu v poreformennoi Rossii: Opyt etnograficheskogo analiza* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2005); masculine culture inside the contemporary army is extensively described in K. L. Bannikov, *Antropologiia ekstremal'nykh grupp: Dominantnye otnosheniia sredi voennosluzhashchikh srochnoi sluzhby Rossiiskoi Armii* (Moscow: RAN Institut etnologii i antropologii, 2002); the return to civilian life is less researched, but see Rebecca Kay, *Men in Contemporary Russia: The Fallen Heroes of Post-Soviet Change?* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006).

[73] Kay, *Men in Contemporary Russia*, 47–72. In the Grishin case, the older skilled defendants earned between 800 and 1,000 rubles a month, while younger workers—and Kiselev, a disadvantaged unskilled worker—earned between 300 and 350 rubles. Kirsanov, a nineteen-year-old plasterer earning 300 rubles a month, told the psychiatrists he could not afford to drink on payday (Grishin, l. 183).

Disorderly heterosexual relations, based on overwhelming male privilege, marked the sexual culture of these villages. Grishin's use of his wife as "bait" for male companionship and his neighbors living behind a plywood partition who made little complaint at what they heard suggest that sexual probity counted for little. Similarly, in Rakhia a little later in the 1950s, the barracks women frequently entertained soldiers even if they flatly denied having soldier-visitors to police. No case was raised against these young women, whose activities might have been judged, in a more ideologically charged era, as "systematic prostitution" meriting re-education if not harsh punishment.[74] The relaxation of heterosexual relations implicitly encouraged in the 1944 decree was realized in a crude microcosm here. Soldiers and officers admitted visiting the women's barrack without particular embarrassment (an officer introduced Morozov to the girls), and their activities were indulged by the village.

If silent indulgence, disorder, and sometimes violence structured heterosexual sex life, as illustrated in these rural cases, it should come as little surprise that disorder and violence accompanied homosexual liaisons there too. Quiet accommodationism facilitated exploitation and misogynist violence, as Babenko and Kiselev found to their cost. The commonplace notion of gay men's "shared cultural history," that violence is something done to us by straight men, requires reconsideration by historians as well as by those who study contemporary antigay violence.[75] In many societies, there is plenty of cultural and historical evidence suggesting that violence structured and structures desire between men.[76] By insistently denying same-sex affairs and desires, observers partitioned them off, constructing a sexuality in the shadows of what reluctant onlookers and furtive participants were willing to say. If in these cases a "regime of silence" operated at the popular level in these villages, urban investigators such as forensic psychiatrists were nevertheless determined to expose the dangerous, unmanly, "passive" homosexual and distinguish him from others who engaged less systematically and more "actively" in same-sex sexual acts. They brought an urban medical discourse to bear on such subjects to make a concealed sexuality legible in modern terms.

Whatever the violence and misogyny that apparently surrounded them, the sexual and emotional ties between many of these men were ardently desired and realized through elaborate rituals of consent. Their same-sex

[74] On the ideological approaches to female prostitution in the 1920s and 1930s, see N. B. Lebina and M. B. Shkarovskii, *Prostitutsiia v Peterburge* (Moscow: Progress-Akademiia, 1994); Elizabeth Waters, "Victim or Villain: Prostitution in Post-revolutionary Russia," in *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Linda Edmondson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 160–77.

[75] Bartlett, "Killing Gay Men," 582.

[76] For an analysis of modern homosexuality as deeply implicated by masculine violence, see Bech, *When Men Meet*, 32, 77–82.

affairs displayed overlapping features of both the rural (age-structured, mentoring) and urban (gender-structured, active-passive) patterns of sexual practice noted in other societies. In Grishin's world some, but by no means all, relations between men were rooted in workplace friendships and in the mentoring of young conscripts. At the same time, Grishin's effeminacy may have structured some of his sexual relations with more mature men. In Kiselev's case, this overtly effeminate village queer apparently frequented Leningrad's urban homosexual subculture. Yet, at the same time, if the statements of his bedmates and the experts who examined them are true, he could be more sexually "active" than any simple reading of his femininity implies. A Russian man who could publicly utter *ya poshla* in 1955 was a complex amalgam of active and passive, of courage and abasement.