24.902 Homework #8

Part 1: Oh no, not again!

Using everything you know about the topic from class and problem sets, explain the following contrast.

(1) a.   *__Kodomo__-ga [kono kagi]-de **2-ri**   doa-o   aketa
          child-NOM   this key-by   2-cl   door-ACC   opened
          'Two children opened the door with this key.'

   b. **Doa**-ga   [kono kagi]-de **2-tu**   aita.
          door-NOM   this key -by   2-cl   opened
          'Two doors opened with this key.'

Part 2: British crudeness

In a short paper by the Irish syntactician James McCloskey of UC Santa Cruz, certain interesting observations are made about a set of expressions that are common in cruder varieties of English spoken in the British Isles. The most common form of the idiom is *fuck-all* (the dash is mine), which means something like 'absolutely nothing'. Thus, (1a) can be paraphrased as *They wrote absolutely nothing this year*.

In Britain (according to McCloskey) *bugger-all* and *sod-all* are synonyms of *fuck-all*, and have the same distribution. If you can't bring yourself to write *fuck-all* in your answer, you may pick one of these other forms, or use some appropriate abbreviation.

What makes this construction interesting for our purposes is a syntactic restriction on its use (needless to say). The following examples, taken from McCloskey's paper (with a few minor adaptations) illustrate this restriction. You task: to discover what the restriction is. Your answer can be quite short, so long as it is explicit and *includes an illustrative tree or tree fragment for at least one example from each group of sentences*.

Hints: We did not deal with adjectives like those in (5)-(6) in class, but your analysis of (1)-(4) should be easily extendable to them. Feel free to add extra data to your discussion, if you have intuitions about the construction or feel like asking a British or Irish friend.

(1)   a. They wrote fuck-all this year.
         b. They've done fuck-all about this.
         c. I know fuck-all about connectionism.

(2)   a. Fuck-all has been done about this problem.
         b. Absolutely fuck-all was achieved by this action.
         c. Fuck-all has been said about unemployment in the campaign so far.
         d. Fuck-all has been written about this so far.

(3)   a. Fuck-all ever happens around here.
        b. Fuck-all else grows in my garden but dandelions.
        c. Fuck-all emerged from those discussions that would make a body optimistic.
        d. Fuck-all ever changes around here.
        e. Fuck-all lasts around here.
        f. Fuck-all else came my way, so I took the job as a lavatory cleaner.
        g. Fuck-all ever starts on time around here.

(4)   a. *Fuck-all would make us turn back now.
        b. *Fuck-all supports this roof but a couple of planks.
        c. *Fuck-all could destroy these walls.
        d. *Fuck-all would control this mob.
        e. *Fuck-all could refute that argument.
        f. *Fuck-all could ever make me trust this government.

(5)   a. Fuck-all is certain anymore about funding.
        b. Fuck-all is clear anymore about the budget.
        c. Fuck-all is sure in this life.

(6)   a. *Fuck-all is good anymore.
        b. *Fuck-all is relevant to this question.
        c. *Fuck-all is dangerous here.

Part 3: The "Genitive of Negation" in Russian

The Russian negative morpheme *ne* can optionally assign "genitive" case.

Genitive case is marked in a variety of ways on the Russian noun -- sometimes by a suffix, sometimes by the absence of a suffix. You should not worry about the morphology here. To make genitive NPs easier to identify, they are boldfaced in this problem.

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(1)a. Maša       polučala žurnal.
      Masha-NOM received magazine-ACC
      'Masha received the magazine.'

   b.*Maša       polučala žurnala
      Masha-NOM received magazine-GEN


(2)a. Maša      ne  polučala  žurnal.
      Masha-NOM NEG received  magazine-ACC
      'Masha didn't receive the magazine'

   b. Maša      ne  polučala  žurnala.
      Masha-NOM NEG received  magazine-GEN
      'Masha didn't receive a newspaper'
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The following remarks and suggestions will be useful:

- Genitive case is available for the object of any transitive verb in a negative sentence. As you will see below, the situation with single-argument verbs is somewhat more complex.

- Assume that negation in Russian (the word *ne*), when it occurs in a sentence, is a sister to V' (i.e. an adjunct).

- Russian is a "pro-drop" language. In particular, it allows unpronounced expletive subjects. An unpronounced expletive subject triggers third-person neuter singular verb agreement. If you draw trees with such subjects, include an NP in Spec,IP position labelled "pro" (lower-case letters).

- Russian has no (overt) articles (i.e. no *the* or *a*). The genitive assigned by negation usually gives the NP the meaning that in English would be expressed by *a* or *any* -- but this detail should be ignored in your solution. Assume there is an unpronounced D in every NP.

Question 1: Why is the genitive bad in the (b) examples of (3)-(6), but good in (7)-(10)? Explain, drawing trees and explicitly stating a rule for genitive case assignment. You should make quite clear how your genitive rule interacts with the structure of these examples. Make sure your rules can account for *every* example!

Question 2: Explain in what way Russian genitive case appears to differ from Icelandic quirky case with respect to principles of "Case theory".

(3)a. Studenty   ne smotrjat televizor.
     students-NOM NEG watch-PL television
      'The students don't watch television.'

  b. *Ne smotrit   televizor   **studentov.**
      NEG watch-SG television-ACC students-GEN
         [bad with any word order[1]/also bad if verb is plural]

(4) a. Deti   ne prygnuli.
       children-NOM NEG jumped
        'The children didn't jump.'

  b. *Ne prygnulo **detej**
       NEG jumped-SG children-GEN
          [bad with any word order/also bad if verb is plural]

(5) a. Na zavode ženščiny ne rabotajut
       at factory women-NOM NEG work-PL
        'At the factory, the women don't work.'

  b. *Na zavode ne rabotaet **ženščin.**
        at factory NEG works-SG women-GEN
           [bad with any word order/also bad if verb is plural]

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[1]For example, the order *Studentov ne smotrit televizor* is also impossible.

(6) a. Aspiranty   ne orali.
        grad students NEG shouted-PL

    b. *Ne oralo   **aspirantov.**
        NEG shouted-SG grad students-GEN
          [bad with any word order/also bad if verb is plural]

(7)a. žurnaly   byli polučeny.
      magazines-NOM were   received
      'The magazines were received.'

    b. Ne bylo polučeno **žurnalov.**
        NEG was received magazines-GEN
            [assume that the auxiliary verb is a V, not an I, and assume
            that its complement is another VP]

(8) a. Dveri   ne otkryvalis',
        doors-NOM NEG opened-PL
         'The doors didn't open.'

    b. Ne   otrkyvalos' **dverej.**
        NEG opened-SG   doors-GEN
         'Doors didn't open.'

(9) a. Zdes' problemy   ne suščestvujut
        here problems-NOM NEG exist-PL
         'Here problems don't exist.'

    b. Zdes' ne   suščestvuet **problem.**
        here NEG exist-SG   problems-GEN

(10)a. Griby   zdes' ne rastut.
        mushrooms-NOM here NEG grow-PL
         'Mushrooms don't grow here.'

    b. Zdes' ne rastët   **gribov.**
        here NEG grow-SG mushrooms-GEN

(11) a. V bassejne deti   ne plavajut.
         in pool   children-NOM NEG float/swim-PL
 'Children are not floating/swimming in the pool'

    b. V bassejne ne plavaet   **detej.**
        in pool   NEG floats/*swims children-GEN
        'Children are not floating in the pool'
      NOT: 'No child is swimming in the pool'

(12)   V supe ne plavalo   **nikakogo mjasa**
        in soup NEG floated-SG any   meat-GEN
         'No meat was floating in the soup.'