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.
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.

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

b.*Maša polučala žurnal.
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 žurnal.
Masha-NOM NEG received magazine-GEN
'Masha didn't receive a newspaper'

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 order¹/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]

¹For 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 otkryvalos' 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 rastet 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.'