Animal metaphors: *Shit* linked with animal names means “I don’t believe a word of it,” as in *pig*, *buzzard*, *hen*, *owl*, *whale*, *turtle*, *rat*, *cat*, and *bat shit*, as well as the ever-popular *horseshit*. But *bullshit* remains the most favored, probably because of the prodigious quantity of functional droppings associated with the beast. On payday the *eagle shits*.

III. Insults

*Shit on you!*, *eat shit!*, *go shit in your hat!*, *full of shit*, *tough shit*, *shit-head* (recall Lieutenant Scheisskopf in *Catch-22*), *You shit*, *little shit*, *stupid shit*, *dumb shit*, *simple shit*, *shit-teel*, *he don’t know shit from Sbinola*, *shit or get off the pot*, *chickenshit*, *that shit don’t fetch*, to *be shit on*, *not worth diddyly (or doodly) shit*, *don’t know whether to shit or go blind*, *he thinks his shit don’t stink*, *he thinks he’s King Shit*, *shit-eating grin*.

IV. Fear

Scared shitless, *scare the shit out of*, *shit green (or blue)*, *shit bricks*, *shit bullets*, *shit little blue cookies*, *shit out of luck*, *almost shit in his pants* (or *britches*), on *someone’s shit-list*, *have a shit hemorrhage*.

V. Tangibles and Intangibles

**Drugs:** *Shit*, in reference to heroin and marijuana. **Cards:** *Who dealt this shit?* **Food:** *Shit on a shingle* (or *stick*), usually referring to chipped beef or ground meat on toast and often acronymed *SOS*. **Objects:** *Who put all this shit on my bed?* **Talk:** *Shoot the shit*, *shovel the shit*, *I shit you not*, *no shit*. **Stuffing:** *Beat*, *kick*, *stomp*, or *knock the shit out of*. **Mind:** *Get your shit together*.

VI. Grammatical Intensifiers and Interjections

Can’t swim (run, etc.) for *shit* (or *worth a shit*), who the *shit are you?*, let’s get the *shit out of here*, *holy shit!*, *no shit!*, *oh, shit!*, and the ever-reliable *shit!*

---

**ELEMENTARY RUSSIAN OBSCENITY**

*Boris Sukitch Razvratnikov*

This article will concern itself with the pedagogical problems encountered in attempting to introduce the basic concepts of Russian obscenity (*mat*) to English-speaking first-year students at the college level. The essential problem is the fact that Russian obscenity is primarily derivational while English (i.e., in this context, American) obscenity is analytic. Thus when Russians wish to express themselves obscenely they will derive the necessary words on the basis of obscene stems, usually *xuj- ‘prick’, pizd- ‘cunt’, or eb- ‘fuck.’ Americans, however, will insert an obscene word functioning virtually as a particle, usually *fuck* or *fucking*, but also sometimes *shit* as well as the milder *hell* and *damn*. Compare the following examples:

1. *Ja nixujá ne znaju. I don’t know a fucking thing. Or, I don’t know shit.*
2. *On ego spízdí. He fucking stole it.*
3. *Zakroj ebálo! Shut the fuck up! Shut your fucking mouth!*
4. *Otpízdít’ / oxujárit’ To beat the shit out of.*

In example (1), the obscenity in Russian is carried by *nixujá* ‘nothing’, which is derived from *xuj* ‘prick’, while in English the insertion of *fucking* before *thing* renders the sentence obscene. The same general explanation applies to the remaining examples.
Related to this difficulty is the fact that when English does employ derivational processes in the production of obscenity, the stems used generally differ from those used in Russian; cf. the alternative translation of (1):

(5) Xujnja / pizdē Bullshit
(6) Pizdovat'j Fucked up, in the sense of “strange, weird.”
(7) Xujevat'j Sort of crappy.

A third aspect of the lack of isomorphism between the two approaches to obscenity consists of the fact that the derivational nature of Russian obscenity permits the creation of obscene lexical items which cannot be translated into English without additional contextual explanation:

(8) Ebal'nik Face, nose; cf. mug, snout, also the epithet cuntmouth.
(9) Pizdobrat'ja A group of buddies; cf. a fine bunch of fuckers.
(10) Naxujat'sja To drink too much; cf. to get fucked up.

A conceptually related phenomenon in English is the insertion of fucking immediately before the stressed syllable in polysyllabic words, e.g. fan-fucking-tastic, il-fucking-literate, etc.

Thus the first difficulty to be faced in the teaching of Russian obscenity to American students is the fact that the two languages rely on significantly different processes for the rendition of obscenity, and the resultant lack of isomorphism is not readily grasped by the elementary student without a great deal of explanation.

The second problem which must be taken into account is that of active vs. passive mastery. In general, first-year Russian students are significantly more concerned with developing their own ability to express themselves obscenely in Russian than with learning to understand Russians expressing themselves obscenely. Thus while it is possible to explain the complexities of Russian obscene usage vis-à-vis English to such students, these explanations are of far less interest to them than basic equivalencies which do not require additional elucidation, e.g. pososi xuj ‘suck (my) cock.’

One other factor which must be noted is the need for more adequate dictionaries of Russian obscenity. It is unfortunate that the dictionaries currently available do not differentiate among archaisms (cf. Eng. swive, jazz ‘fuck’), regionalisms (cf. Eng. stump-sucker ‘faggot’, jake ‘fuck’), uncommon forms (cf. Eng. tube steak ‘cock’, furburger ‘cunt’), double entendres (cf. Eng. pole ‘prick’, box ‘cunt’), expressions which are possible but not fixed (cf. Eng. Go take a flying fuck at a rolling doughnut!), and standard, common usage (cf. Eng. prick, cunt, fuck you, eat shit). Admittedly, such a task is an extremely difficult one, especially due to the difficulty in obtaining concurring judgments from native speakers. Although the efforts which have been published to date are quite important, the beginning Russian student, and even the more advanced student, would have difficulties in attempting to use the currently available dictionaries for any but passive purposes.

The following annotated list, thematically organized, is intended to serve as the basis for a single introductory lecture on Russian obscenity. In view of the various problems elucidated above, it is primarily limited to those expressions which are relatively common in Russian while still being relatively isomorphic with their English equivalents. Certain phrases and proverbial expressions which do require more clarification than mere translation comprise a notable exception to this principle. They are included because they were quite popular with students. The current list has been tested repeatedly in the classroom and is intended to fill a single fifty-minute class period. While this list will certainly appear somewhat random and incomplete to native speakers of Russian, and while there may be some disagreement regarding translations, given the intent and limitations of the list, i.e. the introduction of Russian obscenity to American students with only one year of Russian in a single class period, it is hoped that it will prove useful in the advancement of knowledge. In a lecture based on this list, it is suggested that the instructor combine an attitude of dry pedantry with one of light-hearted prurience, as this has proven to be most effective in communicating the material to students.
THE LIST

I. Body Parts

Xúj Prick

Naxújnik Rubber

Pososí xuj! Suck (my) cock!

Xuesós Cock sucker. Used to mean "idiot."

Xuj na kolèsax! Prick on wheels! An abusive vocative.

Xuj moržóvýj! Walrus-prick! An abusive vocative for a dirty old man.

Xuj tebe v glaz / rot! A prick in your eye / mouth! Note dative pronoun and accusative of motion.


Xuem grèsu orkæjivaju. I'm whacking pears with my prick. Used to mean 'I'm not doing a fucking thing' or 'I'm doing something useless.'

Sto xuév v zópu - ne tésno? A hundred pricks up the ass - isn't it a bit tight? : "Aren't you overdoing it?"

Jajco (nom. pl. jajca, gen. pl. jate) Balls. Lit. 'eggs'; cf. also Eng. "nuts."

Emú tol'ko slonu jajca kačat'. All he 's good for is swinging an elephant's balls. Cf. Eng. "He's only fit for shoveling shit." Idi! 'Go!' can be substituted for emú tol'ko to give the expression a meaning like "Fuck off!"

Pizdá Cunt

Pizdènka Pussy

Pizdostradániè Horminess

Idi v pizdu! Go up a cunt! : "Fuck off!"

Pizdá vonjúčaja! Stinking cunt! An abusive vocative.

Pizdá mórkraja Wet / juicy cunt : "hot, horny."

Pizdá s utámi A cunt with ears : something ridiculous.

K pizdé rukáv A sleeve for a cunt : something unnecessary; cf. "Coal's to Newcastle."

Mandavóška Crab louse. From mandá 'cunt' and voš 'louse.'

Tít'ka Tit
him.' Note that in both these expressions the key word may be spelled with a double ss, viz., ssy and ssat'.

Písat' (3 pl. písajut) To pee. This verb is especially useful in demonstrating the importance of stress and conjugation, since those are the only two factors differentiating this verb from pisát' (3 pl. pisút) 'write.'

Núžnik Can, crapper. Cf. núžnyj 'necessary.'

Pípi; Káka Wee-wee and dōo-dōo (poo-poo), respectively. While not, strictly speaking, obscene, they do serve as the functional equivalent in nursery language. Pipí appears to have been borrowed from French.

2. Sexual

Dročít' (3 pl. dročát) To jack off
Dročila An epicoenal noun; when masc., it means "a jack-off"; when fem., it means "a prick-teaser."
Káždyj dročít Everyone jacks off as he pleases:
Kak on xočet "Different strokes for different folks."

Minět Blow job. From the French faire minette "to eat pussy."
(S)kalěť komú-to minět To give someone a blow job

Ebát' Fuck. The older forms of the infinitive are eti and et'. The 3 pl. is ebût. The past tense is ěb, eblá or ebál, ebála. The perfective can be formed with a wide variety of prefixes, such as the common ty- and ot'.

Ebát'rakom To fuck dog-fashion. Lit. 'crab fashion.'

Ebi tja v rot! Fuck you in the mouth!
Ej ty ěbanaja v rot bljad'! Hey you fucked-in-the-mouth whore! Note that the noun and participial phrase can be inverted for a heightened effect.

Končát' (3 pl. končajut; pf. kónčit', 3 pl. kónčat) To come. Lit. 'to finish.'

III. Social Institutions and Other Expressions

Kúrva Whore. This word is not as common as the following word, but it has been borrowed into so many East European languages that it is now understood by most people from Estonia to Albania. The Russian form was evidently borrowed from Polish.

Bljád' Whore. Also used as an interjection. It is frequently used to refer to a man or woman who cooperates with the Soviet system.

Bljadun' Whoremonger; pimp

Bardak' Whorehouse

Pour v bardake vo vremja zemletresenia. A fire in a whorehouse during an earthquake. A description of utter chaos.

Sůka Bitch. Also used as an interjection.
Sůkin syn Son of a bitch

Svóloč' This word is extremely difficult to translate, and is so abusive that it is worth including. The verb svolóč' means 'to drag.' The noun svóloč' implies someone who has been dragged through something extremely unpleasant, e.g., feces. One attempted definition runs "Lower than a duck’s feet."

U nego stoï. He has a bard-on. Lit. 'By him it stands', or 'he has one that stands.'
V rot brat'. To take it in the mouth
Sjad' na moj, da poezžáj domój! Sit on mine, and ride home!
Idí k čörtu! Go to the devil!
Idí v ad! Go to bell!
Prokljatyj Damned. Used as an interjection and adjective.

SOURCES

It would be impossible for the author to thank each of the numerous relatives and friends who have helped him in this and related endeavors over the past twenty years, but he wishes to acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to his father, who taught him his first abusive words in Russian, and to Professor Victor Raskin, who was most generous with his help and advice. The following works were consulted in the course of the preparation of this article and provided much of the material in it.

A Dictionary of Russian Obscenities. 1971. Cambridge. (Other data not supplied. This work appears to have been through a number of versions, but the author is not in a position to commit himself by specifying or speculating on details.)


† † †

How about buying your own copies of Maledicta, Cheapo!? May Shostakovich play a concerto grosso on your tympanum!

YOU HAVE ONLY YOUR ASTERISK

Laurence Urdang

Censorship is a form of struthious prudery: if you don't see it, it can't demoralize you. For years, there has been a tradition in writing, begun in Victorian times, no doubt, that disallowed the printing of "dirty" words. At first, words like D—! and H—! were written thus; later, writers resorted to the substitution of asterisks or dashes for key letters in a word that might be offensive. Thus, the more daring publishers printed D—n! and H—l!, but the words obscured never got very much rougher than that—at least works containing them were not openly published in America or England, and only G—d knows what was going on behind the paravents in France.

In 1936, Partridge's Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English appeared with entries like c*nt and f*ck and, curiously, oblique forms like in the sb**, go and eat coke and sb** cinders, sb**-bole, etc., but the base forms sbit, sbite were spelled out. I have always been of two minds about the use of asterisks and other devices to "obscure" the spellings of taboo words, but the practice seems preferable to the coinage fug (and its oblique forms) resorted to in The Naked and the Dead, written (but, I daresay, not bowdlerized) by Norman Mailer and published in the less outwritten mid-1940s.

Bowdler himself never employed such devices: he boldly rewrote Shakespeare and other classical authors to suit himself, often recasting entire scenes and circumstances to avoid a naughty situation, let alone an offensive word. Thus, a (literally) Bowdlerized text never admitted the reader to the ar-
— Try reacting to a psychiatrist.
— Try reacting to another human being.
— Try reacting to the question. I write when I want to react.
— There's so much ignorant graffiti around this place that it makes me want to.
— I like and respect good (witty, intelligent) graffiti, so I feel I should do my bit to contribute.
— Creative impulse.
— Usually I write on walls in stalls in places I don't frequent or places I probably won't be again like traveling to different places just to leave a saying & nickname, a date for people to read.
— KISS -108 that's all I see everywhere. [KISS 108 is a disco radio station in Boston]
— Graffiti has a tendency to be an outlet for aggression. Most graffiti I've read concerns conflicts that are sexual or drug oriented. Much though, relative to it's location, is an outlet for bad feelings towards aggression. It's fun to write and then go back to see others's comments. It often shows you that you're not alone with your problems.
— Gay forever and I love it!!!
— I fail to understand why anyone would want to be gay. Have you ever had sex with a guy? It's fantastic. Try it. [From a woman].
— Bi is the way.
— Try God.
— Are you in or out of the closet — I hope you are in.
— Write! Women — fight the fascist-mind games that heterosexual capitalist society uses to keep you weak & divided! FIGHT BACK!
— My mother made me a lesbian.
— I gave her the material — would she make me one too?
— The researchers ask you to tell why you write not what you write! I don't write it usually but it's very amusing to read it when you're just sitting here.
— Study shit! It's simpler.
— It's nice to leave more than just a stool behind!!
— Please place on side wall next time . . . the reach is too much!
— Who's we?
— What else can you do while your taking a dump.

A SURVEY OF RUSSIAN OBSCENITIES
AND INVENTIVE USAGE
Charles A. Kauffman

I. Why Study Russian Obscenities?
Imagine the frustration of a group of American students of the Russian language who, while touring the Soviet Union, were able to converse with ease in everyday situations but could not fully comprehend the spicy language of the local Russian youths in the popular hangout at the "Park of Culture' and Rest." After the exchange of customary pleasantries is made, most Soviet young people in informal situations (especially upon meeting Americans) tend to use a "cultural" terminology that few university students of Russian can comprehend. In such situations, thumbing madly through phraseological and/or slang dictionaries will only magnify the frustration. This is not to imply that all young Soviet citizens are hooligans engaged in mal parlance, nor that English-speaking students of Russian would fail in conversation with their counterparts. However, the likelihood is great that a Russian-language student may hear some previously unencountered four-letter nasties tossed about in both light and serious conversation with Soviet youths. How then do the non-native speakers of Russian ever learn about the Russian "birds and bees" without the usual ordeal of snickering comments and "out-of-the-corner-of-the-eye" glances? How do they prepare for understanding and enjoying Russian conversational nuances augmented by obscenities and unconventionalisms?

Imagine the frustration of graduate fellows engaged in serious research on some aspect of Soviet dissident literature. Because Soviet dissident works mainly are published outside the USSR, they are likely to contain numerous uncensored words which few dictionaries include. How do graduate students pursue such words in order to fully understand the author's intent?
Imagine the frustration of a U.S. diplomat, attaché or interpreter who is unable to fully understand the impact of an anecdote, a joke, or toast in which one or more “off-color” words were used. (Former Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev was famous for employing such language in anecdotes, toasts and statements like “We’ve got the American Imperialists by the balls — jaica — in Berlin.”) How do the official government representatives prepare themselves to avoid the possible diplomatic faux pas?

The answers to these questions certainly do not lie in the world of academia.

**A. КАКАДЕМИЯ — КАКАДЕМИЯ**

There is a lofty air held by many members of the academic world with regard to teaching or researching Russian language obscenities. These nose-up academic purists on one hand provide scholarly treatment of the discipline, but on the other, prudishly short-change the student pursuing proficiency in a language that is very much alive with nasty words. Limiting Russian language instruction to subjects deemed acceptable by academia while ignoring those considered unacceptable is paying a severe disservice to the student. Denying the existence of obscenities in Russian or any other language will not help the students when they eventually come face-to-face with one of “those” words.  

Perhaps academicians feel it is not their place to “enlighten” Russian language students on a subject that is not germane to their teachings. After all, why would a contemporary scholar of Russian linguistics, such as Dennis Ward, address the subject of obscenities, though he published an excellent linguistic description of present-day Russian (1965)? Certainly contemporary Russian is loaded with four-letter words. Why, then, is the subject avoided?

A classic example of academic prudery is manifested in Genevra Gerhart’s two-paragraph exposé of “Unprintable Words” in *The Russian’s World: Life and Language* (1974). This textbook, a remarkably comprehensive assemblage of essential vocabulary from a wide range of subjects, has a chapter devoted to “Speech”: styles, dialects, accents, peculiarities, and, ah! — even unprintable words! Not quite. The unprintables remained unprinted. The author of this fine reference and educational text strongly discourages the use of Russian obscenities. As Gerhart sees it: “For the Russian, these (four-letter words) are even stronger than their English equivalents are for us. If you manage to find out what these words are, under no circumstances should you use them. These words for you as a foreigner are mere collections of letters or sounds devoid of the redolent connotations they have for the native speaker. Even though you might know the literal translation of such a term, you cannot know its full strength. Using an obscenity in another language is like shooting a gun without knowing where the bullet comes out.”

The need to teach and research Russian obscenities should be stressed not for building an offensive arsenal with which the armed Russian-language student can tell his/her college roommate to _______ himself/herself in Russian or to curse out insolently obstinate taxi drivers in Moscow. On the contrary, what is important is that the students build a passive, cognitive vocabulary in order to recognize and understand obscenities in written and spoken forms whenever they encounter them.

**B. LITERATURE**

Long before the life of Catherine the Great of Russia supposedly ended when a hoist support broke in a sodomous act with a horse, foul language and spicy expressions have, in a peculiar way, added to the richness of the Russian language. Although most commonly encountered in everyday speech, obscenities are often found in Pre-Soviet literature and Soviet émigré and/or samizdat (underground, lit. “self-published”) literature. There are examples of neprilicnye slova (“indecent words”) in pre-19th-century Russian literature. These are found mainly in works of folklore or where peasant dialogue is depicted.

**18th Century**

According to V. Černyšev, in the foreword of his *Russ-
**kaja Ballada** (Russian Ballad), certain works of 18th-century Russian literature (e.g. Danilov and Culkov) were censored and the meanings of words used were slightly changed for the sake of decency. A. Flegon, in *Za peredelami russkix slovarej* (1973), points out that it is difficult to show the use of indecent words in the various stages of the historical development of Russian society mainly because each publisher strove to produce "as decent a book as possible." Flegon does add, however, that some indecent words appeared in 18th-century Russian literature in a disguised form, where only the first and last letters of the indecent word were printed. The blame for their appearance as such was placed not on the author, but on the publisher.

**19th Century**

Russian literature in the 19th century saw the major literary genres Romanticism and Realism. With the latter came certain indecent terms as found in works by N.V. Gogol, I.S. Turgenev, and F.M. Dostoevskij. Gogol frequently used the common mild invectives *cart'001. 'mej" ("[may] the devil take [you]": 'go to hell'), and *prokljatyj" ("damned"). In *Dead Souls* he masterfully depicted certain characters through the use of name word-play. For example, in the name Nikita Volokita "Nicky the Playboy", the word *volokita* can mean "playboy", "red-tape", or "genitalia-fondling." (Igrat' v volokite "to play in the genitalia": to get pussy; fool around.) The loss of masculinity, or the phallic symbol syndrome, provides the basis for Gogol's short story *The Nose*. In his short story *The Overcoat*, Gogol intentionally selected *Akakij Akakievic* for the first name and patronymic of his hard-luck hero. While the name *Akakij* is a genuine name of the Orthodox calendar (from the Greek akakós "without sin"), the intentional similarity to the children's word for shit, *kaka* ("poo-poo"), is all too striking.

Turgenev, a liberal thinker and "Man of the Forties" (1840s), influenced nineteenth-century Russian Realism not only by his famous novel *Fathers and Sons* but also by his short stories in which he vividly described the life of the country peasant in Russia. Turgenev was an author who braved charges of indecency by using certain terms deemed unacceptable in high society. Dostoevskij, in his short story *Notes from Underground* (Zapiski iz podpol'ja), expressed his feelings about cursing: "...he will let out a curse on the world, and as only a human being can curse (for it is his privilege, the main thing distinguishing him from the other animals)..." 3

**20th Century**

Early in the twentieth century there was a brief period of literary decadence during which M. Solugub's *Petty Demon* (Mel'kij Bes) shocked its fastidious readers with "indecency." The Bolshevik Party, having seized power in November 1917, immediately imposed strict censorship of the press of the newly-established Soviet state, and for more than forty years, rarely did obscenities appear in Soviet-published works. Finally, in 1962, Aleksandr Tvardovskij, editor of the literary journal *Novyj Mir*, defiantly published dissident writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Although Tvardovskij forewarned the reader in the foreword of that ice-breaking venture that the language might be offensive to some, the more objectionable words were prudishly disguised by the old "drop-the-letter" gimmick. Nevertheless, *One Day* saw a fair sprinkling of four-letter words. Solzhenitsyn continued to publish his works outside the USSR without censorship constraints on language or content. Much of his writing was dedicated to the inhuman life of Soviet prison camps. Naturally, many Russian obscenities appeared in his works such as *The Love-Girl and the Innocent* and *GULAG Archipelago*. Previously unacceptable words such as *govno* ("shit") were used by the poet Majakovskij in the 1960s, although less harsh terms such as *der'mo* ("dung": shit) were sometimes substituted. 4

Poetry, prose and political themes written by Soviet dissidents or émigrés began to appear in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although many such works released by publishing houses in Paris are totally devoid of obscene words, most works by Solzhenitsyn, however, include a considerable amount of unusual and indecent forms. An excellent example of obscenities appearing in publications outside the USSR is Aleksandr Zinov'ev's interesting collection of philosophical and socio-
logical essays entitled Zijajuče vysoty (Gaping Heights), published by L’âge d’Homme, Paris. These essays present a fair amount of words that would be considered too indecent for acceptance by the Soviet censorship authorities.

C. CENSORSHIP

The labyrinthine complexity of Soviet censorship of subject matter is, in contrast, simplified significantly with respect to indecent words appearing in Soviet publications. With some exceptions, prior to the 1960s, obscenities were completely censored by the publishing authorities. Flegon cites a simple rule followed by the Soviets in censoring obscenities: if the book is written by a known author/writer and is to be printed on fine expensive paper, then all indecent words are deleted. If the book is written by an unknown author/writer and is to be printed on poor quality paper, then certain indecent words, e.g. zádnica (“rear-end”; ass, asshole) may remain untouched. Stronger invectives and obscenities will be represented by the first letter followed by the correct number of dots for corresponding letters so that the reader can easily determine the word, e.g. ž... = žópa (“ass”; ‘asshole’). An amusing case of censoring obscenities is that of V. Majakovskij’s collection of poems Stixotvorenija, Poëmy published in 1965 by Lenizdat in which the word bljrad (‘whore’; ‘son-of-a-bitch’; ‘fuck’) appeared on one page with the first-letter-and-dots technique (b... ) but was fully printed (bljad’) on another page. If authors want a thought based on an obscenity to evade the censor’s pen, they will use plays on words, puns or similarly-sounding words as replacements, e.g. kúnu (“to the female organ”) can be disguised by komú (“to whom”). Censors dread oversights and typographical errors. There is a story about a certain censor who failed to notice the typographical omission of one letter in a word which was part of a headline. That word was glavnokomandjuščij (“commander-in-chief”). The letter omitted was l which consequently rendered gavno-komandjuščij (“shit-commander”). The word gavno is a homophonous representation of the word govnó (“shit”), actually pronounced gav-nó. The censor was fired from the position and he subsequently disappeared.

D. LEXICOGRAPHICAL SHORTCOMINGS

So long as Soviet publications are subjected to such prudish censorship, there will scarcely exist a need for the average Soviet citizen to consult a dictionary for the meaning of a given indecent word. However, since the average native Russian speaker is, from adolescence, most likely acquainted with the more common obscenities, e.g. žópa (“ass”), govnó (“shit”), xuj (“cock, prick”), pizdá (“cunt”), ebát’ (“to fuck”), and perdež (“farting”), it is the foreigner with knowledge of Russian who needs a dictionary listing such terms. To pose the question again, where do the student, the graduate fellow and the diplomat turn to learn the standard list of unconventional, indecent and obscene words? Certainly not to the world of respectable lexicography.

It seems a paradox that specialized dictionaries and glossaries abound both in the Soviet Union and abroad for almost any conceivable subject or field of study; yet, there still exists one important gap — the neglected facet of Russian lexicography — the compilation of modern Russian obscenities. According to A. Flegon, the reason for the paucity of obscene words in Soviet publications and dictionaries is that “each editor/publisher has tried to publish as decent a book as possible.” Obviously, there are those lexicographers who believe that the mere exclusion of a word from a dictionary will contribute to its disappearance from the language. What they are perhaps forgetting is that before the existence of dictionaries, obscenities existed in the language despite any written reminder of such!

The rules of contemporary Russian language literature and lexicography defy logic. For example, in bilingual dictionaries, the Soviet lexicographer employs the illogical principle: “We should know all the indecent words of foreigners, but foreigners should not know our indecent words.” This principle is illustrated in the 1972 edition of Sovetskaja enciklopedija which gives indecent English words in the English-Russian dictionary, but does not render indecent Russian equivalents in the Russian-English dictionary. This principle is not uncommon.
Of those dictionaries barely scratching the surface of a deep, multilayered wealth of words unsuitable for print, one of the first Russian dictionaries to include standard Russian obscenities was Vladimir Dal' 's 1903-1909 edition of Tol­kovyj slovar' živogo velikorusskogo jazyka edited by Baudoin de Courtenay. Dal' 's later four-volume edition of the same dictionary also included some four-letter nasties. A. G. Preobraženskij's Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Lan­guage (assembled in 1949 by the Columbia University Press, New York), reproduced from Lissnera and Sabyko (Moscow, 1910-1914), includes only the archaic word for penis, ud, dating from 1143 and the word govno ("shit") with derivatives govennyj, govnečo, govnjat', govnjak', and Slavic prototypes and Slavic-family forms hovno (Czech), gówno (Polish), govno (Bulgarian), and bówno/gówno (Upper/Lower Lusatian). M. Golovinskij's A New Russian Dictionary (McKay Co., Philadelphia), published sometime around 1919, skirted the vulgar sense of obscenities with mild forms, for in the author's words, the aim of the dictionary was "to produce such a work that will meet with the approbation of all who are interested in the study of the Russian language." Again, respectability was in focus. Golovinskij's idea of printing obscenities in a dic­tionary is illustrated by such words as preljubodejstvovat' ("to make love": to fornicate), volokita ("playboy", "one who plays with female genitalia": fornicator), zad" ("rear­end": arse), israženiya/kal' ("bowel movement; dung": excre­ment), and izvergat'/vydeljat' ("to excrete"). The English-Russian edition allowed for exposing govno ("shit") as "dung." In other works, Russian obscenities can be found in Max Vas­mer's Russisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch (1953-1957). Louis Segal's 1959 edition of a New Complete Russian-English Dictionary (Praeger, New York) certainly wouldn't offend the fastidious with his two entries žopa ("ass": arse, buttocks) and govno ("shit": filth, dirt). Complete?? Of the more commonly used contemporary dictionaries, some obscenities can be found in: S. I. Ožegov's Slovar' russkogo jazyka (Sovetskaja enciklopedija), Moscow, 1968; Slovar' sovremennogo literaturnogo jazyka, of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad 1950-1965; and the Russian-English Dictionary of the Oxford University Press. The latter includes such words as govno ("shit"), žopa ("ass"), sukin sýn ("son-of-a-bitch"), xuj ("penis": cock), and ebát' ("to fuck"). Several dictionar­ies have no obscenities at all, e.g. Smirnitskij's Russian-English Dictionary and the U.S. Army Conversational Russian Dic­tionary. Although the basics found in a few Russian dictionaries certainly help in understanding derivatives based on the root, e.g. ebát' + ebátel' ("to fuck" + "fucker"), full understanding is not always readily discernible as is seen in the examples: ēbar', eblja, ebéc, and ebľivyj. One who knows that these words are derivatives of ebát' may still have difficulty understanding their precise meaning.

Enter the rogues ... dedicated to filling the language gap with under-the-counter glossaries. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the U.S. Army language schools compiled a number of glossaries of unconventional terms and obscenities. However, these were unavailable to the general public since classifications and confidential caveats were stamped all over each page. The major contributions to the world of Russian language study of obscenities came in 1963 when a student at the U.S. Army Institute of Advanced Russian Studies submitted as a thesis, the fruits of many hours talking with Russian émigrés about "Russian Taboo Words and Expressions." This work was later pirated by enterprising individuals interested in "spreading the good news." In 1971, a group of individuals in Cambridge, Massachusetts published an under-the-counter glossary entitled "A Dictionary of Russian Obscenities, or Everything You Have Wanted to Know About Russian But Were Afraid to Ask." [Now sold boldly over the counter by Schoenhof's Foreign Books, in Cambridge, Mass., without paying one cent in royalt­ies to the pirated author. — Ed.]

Also in 1971, Berkeley Slavic Specialties published A Short Dictionary of Russian Obscenities, compiled by D. A. Drum­mond and G. Perkins. This was to be followed by a serious lexi­cographical publication by M. Galler and H. Marquess entitled Soviet Prison Camp Speech: A Survivor's Glossary (1972). In 1973, A. Flegon published a highly comprehensive dictionary...
of Russian unconventionalisms in *Za peredelami russkix slovarej* ("Beyond the Limits of Russian Dictionaries"). Two individuals at the U.S. Army Institute for Advanced Russian and East European Studies presented as their thesis in 1975 *The Russian-Americanese "Blue Word" Dictionary*, intended to provide a comprehensive listing of obscenities gathered from several sources. In 1978, M. Galler added a *Survivor's Glossary Supplement* to his co-authored *Soviet Prison Camp Speech* (1972). Drummond and Perkins revised and expanded their Russian obscenities dictionary in 1979 and 1980.

The aforementioned lexicographers established the major milestones in exposing Russian language obscenities. To these individuals, the world of Russian studies is greatly indebted.

The world of respectable pedagogy saw a breakthrough in introducing Russian obscenities to first-year Russian-language students when Professor Boris Sukitch Razvratnikov [pseudonym] repeatedly offered a single fifty-minute introductory lecture on Russian obscenity during 1975-77 at "an American University." Razvratnikov discussed some pedagogical problems involved in teaching the basic concepts of Russian obscenity in *Maledicta* (vol. III, no. 2, pages 197-204). In that article, Razvratnikov gave a basic list of common Russian obscenities, some of which are included in the list which follows this narrative.

II. The Nature of Russian Obscenity

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It was Napoleón who said, "Scratch a Russian and you’ll find a Tatar." In the history of Russia, the so-called Mongol (Tatar) Yoke – 1240-1480 A.D. – saw a contrast of negative and positive influences. Along with the introduction of more efficient systems of taxation, law and military organization, according to popular belief, the Tatars (a major tribe of the Mongol horde) also gave the Russian Slavs a sound foundation in cursing by what has manifested itself into the *materscina* ("mother language") so prolific in contemporary Russian. In respect of the Tatar contributions, the Russians have coined the expression

*Mne nado dolg tatárinu otdát*’ ("I have to go pay back the debt to the Tatars"), which is used when one has to perform a bowel movement.

The Russian popular belief that obscenities are of Tatar origin from the Mongol period is so widespread that even highly educated people, including Russian linguists, believe it. An example of this is the word *pisád* ("cunt"), believed by some to be of Tatar origin. Most likely based on the root *sed-* "sit" (i.e., that which a woman sits on), the word *pisád* is almost certainly of Slavic origin (*peisád*). Although most of the basic obscenities in Russian existed in Common Slavic (e.g., *pamáštch → perdět* “to fart” existed in Common Slavic during the first millennium; cf. Sanskrit *pardate*; and *póblho → gównó*), none of these words is attested until later because there are no texts in Common Slavic and there are no obscenities in Old Church Slavonic. While most of the common basic obscenities in Russian are native in origin, there are a few Polish forms (e.g. *kúrva, mánda*) and some highly marked non-Slavic words (e.g. Yiddish *poc*).

There are those who think that cultured Russians simply do not use and have not used foul language. It is said that Peter the Great (1689-1725) — a rather cultured fellow who brought West European culture to Russia — was well known for his outbursts of rage in which he would use as many as 160 obscenities in one sentence!

B. GOVERNING FACTORS

Obscenities in any language certainly have their own *raison d'être*. For the most part, however, factors governing the usage of pejorative and obscene words in Russian depend upon, among others, the level of education, age, sex, occupation, social background, and to a certain degree, locale. As for sex, profanity is used predominantly by the male, although women who perform heavy labor are just as proficient as men in expectorating those four-letter *kaka*-phonous words. Recently-urbanized peasant workers, members of the armed services, taxi drivers, and housing project construction workers are "leaders" of those likely to engage in cursing. Naturally, ob-
scenities flourish in the large cities. Geographic areas particularly noted for their colorful language are the ports of Odessa and Rostov and the province of Orel.11

C. SOVIET PRISON CAMP SPEECH

The vernacular of Soviet prison camps provides an interesting source of obscenities and non-standard words in Russian. The co-authors Meyer Galler and Harlan E. Marquess give an informative account of the language used in Soviet prison camps in their work *Soviet Prison Camp Speech: A Survivor’s Glossary* (1972). In the literary genres of GULAGS (Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps) and Ivan Denisovitches, it is essential to have such a glossary as a “trump card” to the lexical twists that a given author might deal to his reader. As stressed by Galler and Marquess, a Solzhenitsyn can make such extensive use of prison camp speech as to pose a formidable obstacle to understanding, not only for the native speaker of Russian, but especially for the non-Soviet speaker of Russian. Solzhenitsyn makes use of obscenities, vulgarities, and invectives in nearly all of his major works, and particularly, in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

There are excellent English translations of this work, but in order to find the obscenities, it is necessary to read the original Russian version. The work *Cancer Ward* is another example of translation-filtering of obscenities. Not surprisingly, the sub-human life lead by the prisoners of Soviet camps compounds the use of profanity. It is interesting to note, however, that few prison camp obscenities are actual shibboleths. It would be a mistake to declare that obscenities are only a form of identity for the prisoner, since the guards and interrogators are users of obscenities, too. For the prisoner, such speech is a form of rebellion, whereas for the camp authorities it is apparently another means of dehumanizing the prisoners. As indicated by Galler and Marquess, abusive speech is sometimes deliberately employed by interrogators as a device for breaking the spirit of the prisoner and forcing him to confess to his “crimes.”

The use of obscenities by the prisoner is not only a form of rebellion, but a way to maintain sanity. Actually, many vulgarities used in the camps are jocular in nature. Among the various subjects associated with life in a prison camp, the derogatory terms used by the prisoners are concentrated mainly on sex, the guards (“screws”), interrogators, informers, fellow prisoners and the food. Some examples of obscenities attributed to fellow prisoners are:

- *xer moržovýj* “walrus cock”: a prisoner unable to adapt to camp life
- *celka*: “virgin”: one who pretends to be honest
- *žópočnik* “ass-kisser”: prisoner who plays up to the guards
- *ponósnik* “diarrhetic”: a goner, hopeless case (since diarrhea is a common symptom among goners).

Although sex plays a major part in obscenities of the prison camp, many terms are based on the more common obscenities or double entendre. On the sex theme, there are three commonplace terms used in double entendre to describe the respective stages of communicable diseases: *lejtenáň* “lieutenant”: first stage; *polkóvnik* “colonel”: second stage; and *generál* “general”: advanced and final stage. (For additional prison camp obscenities, the work of Galler and Marquess is highly recommended.)

D. THE GOLDEN ALPHABET

Fertile ground for the proliferation of vulgarity is *intra muros*—the lavatory. Expressions of wit based on sexual, deprecatory, or scatological terminology are frequently found on lavatory walls in the USSR. A novel example of Russian obscenities in lavatory graffiti is the famous *Zolotaja ázbuka*, “The Golden Alphabet.” It is this vehicle which conveys the Russian “birds and bees” to the minds of young people. A stable alphabet can be constructed from the rhyming graffiti comprising the *Zolotaja ázbuka*, with the exception of six letters of the Russian alphabet: Е, Н, Т, Ъ, Ь, Ь (Е, J, "", JU). Two lines are devoted to each letter. The ultimate words simply rhyme and often bear no logical relationship in meaning. The “Golden Alphabet” will appear in full in a future issue of
However, as an example, the first verse (letter A) of the "Golden Alphabet" is given here:

A .AP6Y3 HA COJIHUE m06HT 3PETb,
APMHUlKA B )KonY m06HT ETb.

Arbuz na sO/nee ljubit zret;
Armjaska v iopu ljubit et:
The watermelon likes to lie ("crawl") in the sun,
The Armenian likes to fuck up the ass.

E. RUSSIAN TERMS FOR MALEDICTION

The Mother Tongue – Materščina

Most of the foul language in Russian is founded upon the mother language, mat, or materščina. The apogee of vulgarity in Russian is reached when a speaker employs abusive forms containing the word mat ("mother"). Pejoration of one’s mother is, the Russians claim, not a Slavic concept, but a "contribution" to the Russian language by the foulmouthed Tatars. There are numerous expressions in Russian that refer to the act of swearing using the word "mother" (mat'). Among the verbs used for "to swear or curse in the mother language" are the examples: materit; materisja, matjugat'sja, matju­katsja, maternut; matjugnut'sja, zagnut' matom, (po-) kryt' matom, zablažit, obložit/obkládyvat' mátom, kryčat/orat'/vopit' blagim mátom. A person who uses mother language: materština, mátuška, or máternaja bran' is referred to as either a materščinnik, materščinsčik, or blagūša. The verb “to tell someone to go to hell” employs the use of mat “mother” – poslat' matjukom (“to send [someone] off with the mother language”). An example of the latter is: Idi k ebēnoj mäteri! (“Go to your fucking mother!”). There are also ways in which one can euphemistically curse using the mother language: Mat' tvojù ad nogu! Literally, "Your mother by the leg!": Get a piece of your mother's leg! Go fuck your mother!

Perhaps the strongest, most frequently used form of mother cursing is manifested in the expression ēb tvojù mat’! The verb can be used in either the first person or third person singular in the past tense – "I" or "he/she/it fucked your mother.”

Some scholars believe that the word pes “dog” is understood and therefore the expression equates to “a dog fucked your mother.” When used in a sentence, ēb tvojù mat’ can assume various grammatical, morphological and/or syntactical roles, including those of adjectives and adverbs. For example, daj mne ēb tvojù mat' vódku! (“Give me the fucking vodka!” or “Give me the ‘I-fucked-your-mother’ vodka!”). The adjectival forms ēbanñyj, ebànoj, ebēnoj can also be used. Two excellent descriptions of the phrase ēb tvojù mat’ have appeared in previous issues of Maledicta,13

Cursing or Swearing

Simple cursing without using the term “mother” or the implication of the mother is rugatel'stvo, rugán; sipenie, bran: bljad' (“whore”; “fuck”) or prokljdtie (“damnation”). One who is prone to cursing is a rugatel'. Terms used for vulgarity are poshljátina (cf. pòšlost’ “commonplace”), xámstvo (cf. xam “crudeness”) and neprilieše “indecency.” In the sense of ribaldry or bawdiness, the poxâbstvo gives rise to: poxâbnnyj “ribald, obscene”, poxâbnčat’ “to speak obscenely”, poxâbščina/poxâbnost’ “obscenity/ribaldry”, and poxâbník “curs­er.” Skvernoslovit’ (“to use foul language”) is derived from skvernoslovie (“words gone astray”: ribaldry). A sentence composed of vulgar words is referred to as kljapóvina (cf. kljap “gag”). Vulgar books and rubbish literature are collectively called makulatura (“pulp literature”). Indecent or obscene literature can be referred to as zabornaja literatura (“fence literature”, i.e. graffiti; from zabór “fence”). The fastidious who do not even use the expression kryt’ mátom or rugat’ mátom (“to swear in the mother language”), will use the phrase vyrazat’sja trixet'dznymi slovами (“to express oneself in three­storied words”), This is because obscenities is Russian fall in­to three basic categories, or strata — first, second and third level — ranging from the rather mild forms (e.g. zad “rear-end”) in the first level, to the harshest, strongest obscenities (e.g. ēb tvojù mat’ “[I] fucked your mother”) in the third level, or top story. The speaker using third-level/story obscenities can go no further in severity. An expression used when speaking
of a room where people are using obscenities is *topór vešát* (mózno) ("one can hang the hatchet [in here]"). This expression is also used to describe a room where the air is saturated with hydrogen sulfide – flatulence.

### III. Building a Vocabulary

To include a thorough listing of Russian obscenities is an undertaking well beyond the scope of this survey. However, with a basic dirty half-dozen, plus related terms and expressions, the reader of Russian should feel reasonably well-equipped to begin reading Solzhenitsyn or similar obscenity-bearing literature with comfort. In Russian, many obscenities are associated with the words listed here: ass (žopa), cock (xuj), cunt (pizda), farting (perděž), fuck (ebat'), and shit (govno). As Razvratnikov indicated in his article *Maledicta* III/2, there may be alternative translations of certain terms and expressions.

#### A. ASS - Žopa

kurjdjúk "ass": fanny
podsráčnik "under the ass": commode, shit-pot
sráka "ass", "asshole"
  u nego morda i sráka odinákovy "He's got a face (snout) just like his ass."
  so sráka pesék sýpletsja "Sand is trickling out of his asshole." This expression is used to refer to a very old man.
tolstozádyj "fat ass"
xalúj : ass-kisser
xitožópyj "clever ass": smart-ass; intelligent one
zad "rear-end": ass
zádnica "rear-end": ass
žopa "ass"
  bez myla v žopu lezt' "To crawl into one's asshole without soap": to brown-nose
  u nego, čto žopa, čto róža, odnó i to že "He's got an ass and a face that look the same." Cf. U.S. "Got a match?"
  — "Yeah, your face and my ass!"
žopa s rúčkoj "ass with a handle": said of a clumsy oaf
žópnik : sodomite, homosexual
žópolíz "ass-licker": brown-noser

#### B. FARTING - Perděž

As the Eskimo has several ways to refer to snow, depending upon its consistency, so does the Russian for referring to "breaking wind", flatulence, or farting.

bdzét' "to fart without making noise"
bdzdjúxa "fart" (a person): a weak, helpless person
bdzun (same as bdzdjúxa except less emphatic)
nabzdét' "to stink", "to foul the air": to bullshit someone
perděž "to stink", "to fart with noise": to bullshit someone
perděž "the act of passing gas (farting)": to bullshit
pérdnut' "to fart with noise"
  Kto pérdnut? "Who farted?"
perdún "farter", "one who farts": 'you old fart' (endearing)
razbdzét' "to fart violently with noise"
razbdzét'sja: to shit one's pants while farting

#### C. SHIT - Govno

der'mó "dung", "manure": shit
drist "diarrhea", "the shits": the GI's, the squirts
dristát' "to have the shits": to chicken out, be afraid to do something
dristůn "one with the shits": cowardly person, a chicken
govno "shit"
govennyj "shitty", "shit" (adj.)
govnjánnýj "shitty", "shit" (adj.)
govnját' "to shit": to fuck something up
govnjúk "shithedhead"
govnočist "cleaner of shit": shithouse attendant, janitor
káká "poo-poo", "doo-doo": children's word for feces
kal "dung": shit
kizják "dried horseshit"
navóz "dung", "manure": shit
obosrat' / obisrat' "to shit all over something/someone": to bawl someone out; to slander
pomět "dung", "excrement", "rubbish"
ponós "dysentery": the shits
srané "act of shitting"
sráť(sja) “to defecate”: to shit
zasrát(sja) “to make shitty”: to fuck up

D. COCK/PRICK - Xuj
dělá / dělá “prick”
čěda “prick” (a form used in prison camps)
člen “member”: dick, prick, cock
kljap “stick”: cock, prick
kőžanyj remén “leather strap”: cock (used in prison camps)
mudó (singular) male genital; cf. mude, plural modi. Mudé (from mudé, Church Slavonic U kulA’s) was originally the dual and the form in -i was a generalization of the soft dual ending as in ochi “eyes” and uši “ears” (singular oko, úxo respectively). The term mudi can refer to male genitalia as a collective. Mudák is a noun referring to a person. Drummond and Perkins give ‘shits’; turd; simpleton; fool.’
naxúník “rubber, prophylactic”
šiška “cock” (used in prison camps)
ud Old Slavic “penis”
xer Slavonic name for the letter x (xuj): dick, cock
xer sobáčij “dog’s prick”: a mild form of xuj sobáčij “dog’s prick”: You rotten prick!
xer moržóvyj “walrus cock”: a weak person
xer močényj “wet cock”: hot, horny, sexually excited
xer zamšélyj “moss-covered cock”: one who does not fornicate often; also, a person who is an asshole
xer petišnyj play on the word petúx “rooster, cock”: cock fighting
xeróvina “cock”: bullshit; confusion
xuék / xuék “small cock”
xuesós “cock-sucker”: denotes ‘beggar’ in prison camps
xuévina “cockery”: rubbish, a bunch of shit, bullshit
xuéza “cockery”: rubbish, a bunch of shit, bullshit
xuež “small cock”
xuj “cock”, “prick”
pososát “to suck.” Pososí (moj) xuj! “Suck my cock!”
Idi na xuj! “Go to (the) cock!”: Go to hell!
Pošel na xuj! Same as Idi na xuj!

Pápa ljubit čaj gorjáčij, a máma ljubit xuj stojáčij: "Papa loves hot tea, but mama loves a hot (standing) cock."
Ne suj (sun’) xuj v čaj! This expression is a take-off on the name of the ancient Chinese philosopher Sun’ Hui Chai. It is said by a father to his son in a rural home prior to sonny’s leaving for “the big city.” Literally, “Don’t stick your prick in the tea!” Meaning, ‘Keep out of trouble! Don’t do anything stupid!’
Razmáx rublevyj, a udár xuévyj: “Ruble size, but prickish execution”: ‘Great joke... poor delivery’ or ‘Good intention... poor execution.’
Popútного xujá v sráku! “An incidental/passing cock in the ass!”: ‘parting words’
xujná “cockery”: bullshit; fouled-up/screwed-up mess
xujná-mujná (xuévina délo): shitty business; fucked-up
xujsčee “big cock”
zalúpa “prick” (used in prison camps)

E. CUNT - Pizdá

célka “membrane”: cherry; virgin
figa “fig”: cunt
kúna “female sex organ.” Used mainly in folklore literature.
mandá “female genitalia”
mandavóška bugs, lice or “crabs” in the female pubic hair
mandét / mandit: to bullshit. From mandá.
mátka anatomical word for “uterus”, “womb”
opizdenet: to go off on a tangent
opizdenelyj adjectival form of opizdenet “gone off on a tangent”
peredók “female sexual organ”
slabá na peredók: an easy lay. From slábo “weak”: weak-minded
pizdá “cunt”
pizdá vonjúčaja “smelly cunt”
pizdá mákraja “wet cunt”: hot, horny
pizděnka diminutive of pizdá
pizdorvánc “cunt ripper”: cunt chaser, fucker
pizdún / pizdzúk: a male pussy, a weakling
síkel: clitoris
F. FUCK - Ebát'

bljad' “whore”: ‘fucking’, ‘bloody’
blud “fornication”: ‘bloody’; mentally ill
ebán’e “fucking”
èbannyj/èbánnyj v rot! “Get fucked in the mouth!” : Get fucked!
èbannyj “fucked”(adj.)
ebanút’ “to fuck”
èbar’ “fucker”
ebát’ “to fuck”

ebát’ rákom “to fuck in a bent-over position.” From rak “crayfish”

èbát’sja ‘to fuck”, “to fuck oneself”
et’/étí pluder forms of the verb ebát’
ebatórja play on the word laboratórja “laboratory” : fucking difficult work

ebéc “fucker”
ebènoj “fucked”
ebi tvojú mat’! “Go fuck your mother!”
èb tvojú mat’ “— fucked your mother”: [I or a dog] fucked your mother. Used very often in obscene speech.
eblìvyj adjective meaning “liking to fuck”
eblja “fucking”

èbi koróvu! “(Go) fuck a cow!”: Get lost! Note the contrasting sense of comradery in the phrase Bud’ zdorov, èbi koróvu... teljáta búdet, nikogdá ne zabúdeš: “Be healthy, fuck a cow... there’ll be a calf, (but) you’ll never forget.” Said generally among friends as a toast or when one sneezes.
ebún “fucker”
eñëåéitch’ : to fuck. From eldák “prick”
jadrënaia mild form of èbanaja
jadrí tvojú mat’! “Screw your mother!”
mozgoebát’ “to brainfuck”: to bullshit
tykat’ “to use the familiar second person singular ty.” Compare to the German duzen “to use the du form”: to fuck, ‘to get chummy’
zaèba “fucking”: exhausting; annoying pain-in-the-ass

IV. Double Entendre

In Russian, as in English, there exist many words which have double entendre and euphemistic meaning which are employed so as to “water down” the concentrated strength of a literal obscenity in conformity to the guidelines of polite society. Such forms are used to de-emphasize an innocent invective between friends or to elude the stroke of the censor’s pen while still bearing the intended meaning. In jest, one friend might say to another, Tvojú mat’ zá nogu! “Your mother by the leg!” This approximates the English, “Go screw your mother!” or “Hey, buddy, up yours!” Because the creation and usage of double entendre is a highly prolific and boundless art, it would be impossible to present a thorough cross-section of examples of contemporary Russian double entendre. What may be the “in” word to disguise pizdá (“cunt”) in a certain age group in Leningrad may not exist at all in Moscow. Nevertheless, there are many words with standard dictionary meanings which, when used in a certain context, assume derogatory, indecent meanings, thereby adding again to the richness of the language. Examples:

akúla “shark”: a person with rapacious tendencies
al’fons “Alphonso”: pimp
balalájka “balalaika”, a stringed instrument
igrát’ na balalájke “to play on the balalaika” is a play on words to mean igrát’ na volosjánke “to play in the pubic area”
cáca (pronounced tsá-tsa) “toy, plaything”: cock, prick
davát’ “to give” : to fuck, to put out
dyrá “hole”: cunt
dyrá médà “honey hole”: cunt
figa “fig”: cunt
galóši “galoshes, rubbers”: rubbers, prophylactics
ispól’zovat’ “to use; employ”: to fuck
jajcé “egg” (pl. jajcà): testicles, balls
slonu jajca kácat’ “to swing an elephant’s balls”: to do nothing, to fuck off
juboenik “skirt”: cunt chaser, petticoat dangler. From jubka “skirt”
kišků “large intestine”: big cock, large penis
kljap “stick”: cock, prick
klubnika “strawberry; strawberry patch”: Peeping Tom. In pre-Revolutionary days, klubnika was used to denote a whoresou, “a house full of ripe berries.” Now used obliquely to mean ‘Peeping Tom’ or ‘fruit’
kolbasá “sausage”: penis
kot “cat”: pimp
kou “goat”: promiscuous female
najarivat’ “to strum”: to jerk off, masturbate
nasmork “head cold”: gonorrhea

V. What’s in a Name?
In Russian, there is a wealth of humorous surnames such as Krivonosov ("hook-nose"), Svinouxof ("pig’s ears"), and Uzkogldzov ("slant eyes"). Few, if any, however, are formed by pure obscenities. Such is the case for given names, although, devoid of obscenities, they can be used sardonically if certain stresses or endings are affixed. The suffix -ka is familiar but often derogatory. For example, Ninka (Nina) in the sentence On menjà k Ninke peremétnuilsja (“He left me for [that slut] Nina”) implies that Nina is some sort of debauche. The suffixes -úška and -júška are also derogatory. The familiar form for the given name Věra is Věruška. But if the stress is placed on the -ú-, familiarity becomes somewhat less endearing: Verúška (the slut). A sometimes derogatory suffix on given names is -ura or -jüra. The given name Vásja with this suffix becomes Vasjúra, which is not really hypocoristical (a pet name).

There are several contrived names used not in an invective sense but for amusement or euphemism among friends. The names Ván’ka Perdún (“Johnny Farty”) and Stáryj Perdún (“[You] ol’ Fart”) are used among close friends or student groups as a term of approval or as a nickname.

The use of the names Dun’ka Kulákova (“Dun’ka Fist”), Man’ka Pjastóčkina (“Man’ka Palm”) and Marija Ladón (“Mary Palm”) refer in jest to masturbation. Old men are called Stáryj Xren (“Old Horseradish”), Stáryj Syč (“Old Owl”), and Stáryj Xryč (“Old Grumbler”) to imply “old prick.”

VI. Ethnic Slurs
The Russian language is rich in terms employed contemptuously in reference to particular ethnic groups. Although such words are considered pejorative in nature, most are not based on pure obscenities or “dirty words.” There are a few exceptions to this, such as the ethnic slurs describing a Kazakhistan native—eldáš—which is a derivative of elddák (“prick”, “cock”). Some epithets are used to describe collectively more than one ethnic group. For example, čucmex might be an Uzbek, a Turkoman, or a Tadzhik native. To call a person a member of an inferior race, regardless of ethnic background, the word üntermens (borrowed from the German Untermensch “subhuman”) is used. Although most ethnic slurs in Russian stem from double meaning without association to an obscenity, us-
age of such terms qualifies them as being pejorative or insulting.

Abram “Abraham”: Jew
Albion “Albion (England)”: Brit; British
Aráp “Arab”: Blackie, Blackamoor; Negro; thief
Armajika “Armenian.” The ending -dka denotes pejoration
Axmétka “Tatar.” From the typical Moslem proper name
Axmet (Ahmed)
bab “old woman”: Tatar
Bul’ba “potato”, “potato eater”: White Russian. From the Polish bulba
Cygan “gypsy”: Hungarian, Romanian
Černomarzýj “black grease”: black man, Negro
Černožádnýj “black ass”: Soviet Turkic Nationalities such as Tadziks, Uzbekis, Azerbaijanis, and Turkomen
Černožópye “black asses”: Soviet Turkic Nationalities
Čópornyje synov’ja “proper sons”, ‘prim-and-proper boys’: British
Čučméx Soviet Turkic Nationalities. Probably of Turkic origin (cf. root čuç-). Compare the Russian čučeló “scarecrow” with Kazan Tatar čučč “be frightened, shake” (Ta­ranči čuçč). It is interesting to note that a shift of stress gives čuçč ‘cunt’ (dialectal), cognate with Slovenian cuca.
Čuxnja / Ćuxónee Nationalities of Finnish or Baltic origin such as Estonians, Karelians, Mordvinians. From Čud’ (name of a Finnic tribe)
Èfióp “Ethiopian”: stupid person
eldąs “prick”, “cock”: Kazakh native or other Central Asian peoples
faštist “fascist”: German
fazán “pheasant”: Chinese. Because pre-Mao Chinese wore very colorful plumage in formal dress, they were called “pheasants” by the Russians much in the way that some present-day Germans call Americans Pápagei “parrot” for their clothing mixtures and color combinations.
fólksojoč German. From German Volksdeutscher, a person of German origin who lived outside Austria and the German empire of 1937.

frícy “Fritz”: German, ‘Kraut.’ From first name Fritz “Fred”
Galičánin “Galician”: Western Ukrainians (usually belonging to the Uniat Church)
grečkosej Ukrainian. From grečka “buckwheat”
Jánki “Yankee”: American
Japóški Japanese. Exhibits derogatory play on the adjective japonskij “Japanese”
kačap Great Russian. Used by Ukrainians to mock the Great Russians (‘goats’). From ka- and ač “goat.” Ukrainian, from Romanian ač “goat.” There are many pastoral terms of Romanian origin due to the nomadic life of Romanian-speaking shepherds. The term has its origins in the Ukrainian ridicule of Russian beards, as the Ukrainians had the custom of shaving.
kaćo Georgian word for “man” used by the Russians to mean a Georgian
kagál “kahal” (a meeting of Jewish elders on general affairs of Jews): a noisy assembly
kapitalist “capitalist”; Westerner; American
Kitaéza “Chinaman”: Chinese
kosoglázye “squint-eyed”, “cross-eyed”: Oriental; Chinese
lápotnik “one who wears bast sandals”: White Russian
ljagúšatnik “frog”: Frenchman
ljak “Pole”: Polish. From polják ‘Polack.’ Also ljax, variant Polish pronunciation.
makáka “monkey”: Japanese
makarónnik “macaroni-man’, ‘spaghetti bender’: Italian
makarónščik same as makarónnik
Mamályžník Romanian. From Romanian word mâmâliga ‘corn meal mush,’ the Romanian national dish
malšyj “homosexual”: Armenian
malorós “Little Russian”: Ukrainian
Moskáľ Ukrainian word for “Muscovite”: Great Russian
mýtar “worry-wart”: Jew
nacmén “a National”: member of the Soviet National minorities
parxátýj “mangey, scabby”: Jew
próżem pana (Polish) “Excuse me, sir” : ‘Polack’, Polish
psja krew (a Polish curse) “dog’s blood” : ‘Polack’, Polish
rusak Great Russian. Derived from Rus’, the old name for
Russia and the often pejorative suffix -ak
samoédy Soviet Minorities in the far north, West Siberia and
the northern Russian coastal areas. From Finnic Säme-
dämn “Lapland”
šmul Jew. From the Jewish name
tumannýj albion “foggy Albion (England)” : British
turk (türkí nekrešénye) “unchristened Turks”: Moslems
úntermenš “subhuman”: a person of an inferior race. From
German Untermensch
urús pejorative use of rus for “Russian”
uzkogłązye “slant-eyes” : Chinese
Votják a city in the Udmurtskaja ASSR; refers to national mi-
norities in the northern USSR
xódja “walking” : Chinese. In Russia, before the Great Octo-
er Revolution (1917), most street vendors seen walking
about selling their wares were Chinese
xoxól “topnot”, characteristic of the Cossacks : Ukrainian
xuj gollandskij “Dutch prick”: used invectively to curse anyone
žabóéd “frog eater” : Frenchman
žértokóže “yellow-skin” : Chinese
žid Jew. From Judaeus (Jud)
žópočnik “ass-man”, “ass-fucker”, “queer” : Caucasian; Ar-
menian
zver “wild beast, animal” : Asiatic nationalities

VII. Common Exclamations
Bud’ ty proklját! “Damn you!”
Čort voz’mí! “May the devil take (you/me)! ” : Damn it!
Ex, ty...! “Hey, you...!” “Why, you...!” Ex is made with a
guttural spitting sound followed by a cussword or simply
the implication of a cussword
Ex, ty, stáryj syc/xyře/xeřen! “Hey, you old owl/grumbler/
horseradish!” : swearing at an old man to imply ‘Why, you
old prick, you!’

Idí k čortu! “Go to the devil!” : Go to hell!
Idí na xuj! “Go to the cock!” : Go to hell!
Idí v žópu! “Go to the ass!” : Go to hell!
Idí v pizdu! “Go to the cunt!” : Go to hell!
Jadréna voš! “Fucked lice!” Exclamation of lust; cf. U.S. ut-
terance “I’m so fuckin’ horny!”
Jadréna mat! “Fucked mother!”
Kúkiš “fist.” An offensive gesture commonly known as “The
Fig.” It is made by placing the thumb between the fore-
and midfinger or mid- and ringfinger.
Pososí mne! “Suck me!”
Xer tebě v rot! “A cock in your mouth!” : Get fucked!

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION
Numerous standardized schemes exist for transliterating Cyril-
lic characters into the Latin alphabet. Outside of specialized
fields, there is no totally satisfactory system that accommo-
dates the needs of many diverse readers. The correct pronuncia-
tion of Russian is too complex to be rendered accurately by one
single transliteration scheme. Because the system used in this
article is that which is used by Slavic linguists, a few pronuncia-
tion tips are listed here for the benefit of readers with no
knowledge of Russian: e = ye (yet), ê = eh (echo), ê = yo (coyote),
ž = zh (Zbivago), x = kh (loch), c = ts (marts), č = ch (cbip), š = sh (ship), šc = shch (fresh cheese), y = i (as in it,
but pronounced in the back of the mouth), ja = ya (yacht), ju = yu (yule), ' = softens the preceding consonant,” hardens it.
-ego/-ogo are normally pronounced -yevo/-ovo. Unaccented
o is pronounced [ə] immediately before the stress, elsewhere
unaccented o and a are pronounced ub [ø], e.g. govnó = gav-nó,
figa = fi-gub.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
The author wishes to thank the following for their highly valu-
able suggestions and additions to this survey of Russian ob-
scenities: Dr. Jury Azarenko, Dr. J. Wm. Frey, Dr. Victor Fried­
man (who also provided the Church Slavonic typeface), Dr. Leo K. Winston, The U.S. Army Institute of Advanced Rus­

scenies: Dr. Jury Azarenko, Dr. J. Wm. Frey, Dr. Victor Fried­
man (who also provided the Church Slavonic typeface), Dr. Leo K. Winston, The U.S. Army Institute of Advanced Rus­

FOOTNOTES
1. Genevra Gerhart, p. 163.
2. A. Flegon, p. 6.
5. Ibid., p. 7.
6. Ibid., p. 9.
7. Ibid., p. 6.
12. Ibid., p. 13.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Anon. *A Dictionary of Russian Obscenities or Everything You Have
Wanted to Know About Russian But Were Afraid to Ask.* Cambridge, Mass.: 1971.
Benson, Morton. *A Dictionary of Russian Personal Names.* Philadelphia:
tionary.* Garmisch, West Germany: U.S. Army Institute of Advanced
Russian Studies, 1975.
Carpenter, Lawrence M. *A Dictionary of Russian Taboo Words and
Expressions.* Garmisch, West Germany: U.S. Army Institute of Ad­
vanced Russian Studies, 1963.
Drummond, D.A. and Perkins, G. *A Short Dictionary of Russian Ob­
scenities.* Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1973. Revised and
Friedman, Victor. “Dostoevsky on the Meaning of Humanity,” Male­
dicta 1/1 (Summer 1977), p. 40.

Galler, Meyer and Marquess, Harlan E. *Soviet Prison Camp Speech: A
Survivor’s Glossary.* Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin
Gerhart, Genevra. *The Russian’s World: Life and Language.* New York:
Razvratnikov, Boris Sukitch. [pseud.]. “Elementary Russian Obscenity,”
Maledicta III/2 (Winter 1979), pp. 197-204.
Ward, Dennis. *The Russian Language Today.* Chicago: University of
(Contact with students during summer study, 1969, at the University of
Leningrad and Moscow State University through the ACUIUS pro­
gram)
(Discussions with Russian-language natives and professors through 1980)


*Superanskaja, A. V.: 1965, 'Rod zaimstvovannyx susCestvitel'nyx v sovremennom russkom jazyke', Voprosy kul'tury rečii, 6, 44–58.


Vinogradov, V. V.: 1972, Russkij jazyk (grammatičeskoe učenije o slave), izdanie vtoroe, Vysšaja škola, Moskva (pp. 55–124).

Vinogradov, V. V., Istrina, E. S., and Barxudarov, S. G. (eds.): 1952, Grammatika russkogo jazyka 1: Fonetika i morfologija, AN SSSR, Moskva.


This article concerns that field of the Russian language, about which one outstanding
linguist once wrote: "что кажется 'неприличным' слов, то идея их 'непечатности' в силу
очень старой культурной традиции столь укоренина в сознании носителей русского
языка, что лингвист, пожалуй, и не очень стремится их включать в свое произведение,
если он не хочет, чтобы 90% реакций не были обусловлены ровно этим".

With all this in mind, we also had some hesitations concerning not so much "печатность",
but rather the reality of a part of the facts described. Since, however, several educated
Russian native speakers confirmed that such or similar texts are indeed imaginable in
extreme situations, we have decided to publish this article as appropriate for the scope of
our journal ("Russian linguistics in its manifold diversity"); the counterindicating cultural
tradition notwithstanding.

THE EDITORS

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary research into Russian obscene language is best represented
by (and, indeed, essentially limited to) dictionaries and other word-lists:
see in particular, as examples of the former, Anon. (1971), Flegon (1973),
and Drummond and Perkins (1980); and the latter, Razvratnikov (1979)
and Kauffman (1980). The impression one gains from these works is that
scholars perceive the description of mat to be predominantly, or even
exclusively, a lexicographic problem. In our view, mat should be viewed
rather as a linguistic system in its own right: an exceptionally rich system,
whose description involves problems of derivation and syntax much more
than problems of lexicography. Razvratnikov, for example, is in our
opinion incorrect to lament "the need for more adequate dictionaries of
Russian obscenity" (1979, 199): what are needed are more concise
dictionaries of mat, together with adequate grammars of this system.1

Mat is a shadow-image of the Russian language as a whole. From a
semantic point of view, what interests us is the means of communication,
via mat, of common everyday meanings which transcend the limits of direct
abuse and of sex. We see in mat a particular form of expressive, substandard
language - one that is essentially neutral vis-à-vis the communicated refer-
rential meaning. Трёхста́ндио мат 2 is, then, not simply an accumulation of
obscenities, but a set of refined, complex structures. Mat is a potentially
limitless quantity of expressions; and it is the failure to grasp this fact that
has been the basis of the errors in descriptions made hitherto.

Mat is characterized by a sharp contrast between the narrow boundedness
of its basic units (those units which are excluded from 'decent' dictionaries, and which can be listed very simply) and the rich semantic possibilities of its application. These possibilities are created by the fact that mat takes over from the standard language the latter's word-derivational mechanisms, applies a versatile system of interpretations, and uses certain special mechanisms in the sphere of syntax and poetics.

This contrast generates in mat an aesthetic function: namely, the 'acquisition of reality' through the transcendence of the limits of the basic obscene lexicon. This function raises mat to the level of a special genre of folk-art, in which millions of Russians are, more or less effectively, proficient.

In this article we attempt to embody the above ideas in a concrete investigation into the word-derivation, syntax, and poetics of mat. Our conclusion is that mat is a kind of parody of non-obscene language and of non-obscene folklore.

2. LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS

Some mat nouns, verbs and adjectives designate specific referents in the normal 'obscene' manner. These are listed in the available dictionaries.

A much more important, and more problematical, manner of using mat nouns and verbs (but not adjectives!), however, involves very general meanings which are specified by the context. These meanings and contextual mechanisms are presented below.

When used in this way, mat nouns and verbs act as what can be linguistically termed PRO-nouns and PRO-verbs. PRO-nouns are substituted for nouns, and PRO-verbs are substitutes for verbs; and it is the scope of this substitution that interests us. 3

<p>| TABLE I |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mat PRO-nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xuf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>govnol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>govnob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>žopa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bljad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pizda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pislovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xuvina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gavna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xujna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xujcija</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xuetá</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1. Mat PRO-Nouns

The correspondence between some important mat nouns and some general nominal meanings is given in Table I. This should be considered as representative of the ranges of substitutability of the mat nouns listed.

A number of comments are required.
(a) Both male and female persons can be designated by пизда́, бляда́, жопа и говно́. They are not, however, of ‘common gender’ (as is e.g. ху́й “hypocrite”, which requires that determiners agree with the sex of the referent: этот ху́й “this hypocrite (m.)”, эта ху́й “this hypocrite (f.)”). Rather, their (syntactic) gender is independent of the referent, and can be given once and for all in the dictionary.4 Thus:

(1) Вчера я видел эту пиздю. – “I saw this cunt yesterday”: ‘I saw this person yesterday’.

In Russian (and English), пизда́ “cunt” may refer to either a male or a female person. The same is true for это говно́ “this shit”, эта жопа “this asshole”, and эта бляда́ “this whore” (in the last case, English usage is not quite the same). On the other hand, хуй и хера́ “prick” refer only to male persons (and are, incidentally, animate):

(2) Вчера я видел этого хуйя. – “I saw this prick yesterday”: ‘I saw this person yesterday’,
which contrasts with the inanimate use of the same noun:

(3) Вчера я видел этот хуй. – “I saw this prick yesterday”,
where a person is not referred to: here, хуй is used in its basic, ‘technical’, non-PRO-nominal sense. As for говноед “shit-eater” and говноеб “shit-fucker”, both refer to males, but have feminine derivatives говноедка and говноебка.

(b) At least five of the nouns in the left-hand column can be used without any pejorative attitude to the referent – namely, all those with the root хуй.
For example,

(4) Присоединился ко мне один хуй. – “A prick came to see me”: ‘Somebody (specific) came to see me’.

(5) Дай мне вон ту-xьедину. – “Give me that crap over there”: ‘Give me that thing over there’.

In all such cases, the person or thing is referred to without any necessary negative connotations.

(c) Nearly all of the nouns may have, derived from them according to the rules of Russian word-formation, diminutive, augmentative and other forms: хуй → хуё́чка “large prick, person (emph.)”, ху́шко “small prick, person (disdainfully)”, бляда́ → бляди́шка, говно́ → говнечо, говни́шко,
The words xujná, xujácija and xuetá (which are normally substituted for mass and abstract nouns) do not have these derived forms.5

(d) In contrast to nouns in Standard Russian, all the nouns in the left-hand column (when used as PRO-nouns in this way) can only be used with overt, explicit determinative adjectives (see however exceptions given below). The four derivatives of xuj: xuëvina, xujná, xujácija and xuetá can never be used without determinative adjectives (and, as a corollary, are only used as PRO-nouns). The other words on the list, if used without a determinative adjective, have only their pure, 'technical' meaning. For example, instead of the noun dénušku "girl" in the sentence

(6) Včera ja videl dénušku. – “I saw a girl yesterday.”

the PRO-noun bljád' may be substituted, with e.g. the determinative adjective étu “this”:

(7) Včera ja videl étu bljád’. – “I saw this whore yesterday”: ‘I saw this person yesterday’.

The phrase étu bljád’ will mean either (technically) “this whore”, or (PRO-nominally) “this person”: the actual meaning will emerge from the context of the utterance. If however there is no determinative adjective:

(8) Včera ja videl bljád’. – “I saw a whore yesterday”,

the technical meaning is the only possible one. Similarly,

(9) Na mostú stoít milicionér. – “There is a policeman standing on the bridge”

may have the PRO-noun xuj substituted for milicionér, but again only with a determinative adjective, e.g.

(10) Na mostú stoít kakój-to xuj. – “There is some prick standing on the bridge”: ‘There is somebody standing on the bridge’.

With no determinative adjective,

(11) Na mostú stoít xuj. – “There is a prick standing on the bridge” only makes sense if, for example, a statue is referred to. In the same way, if one requests

(12) Dáj mne ètogo govná. – “Give me some of that shit”

one may be given some soup (or whatever mass-noun is referred to); but if the request is

(13) Dáj mne govná. – “Give me some of the shit”

one risks receiving a bowl of excrement.6

In some cases, however, when mass-nouns are involved, the rule may be violated. For example,

(14) V lágerë kormili govnóm. – “They served up shit in the (labour) camp”

may (as in English) be understood in the non-technical sense. A sure way of avoiding ambiguity is to insert a determinative adjective:

(15)
(15) *V lâgere kormîlî vsjâkim govnîm.* – “They served up all kinds of shit in the (labour) camp.”

(c) The animate nouns (i.e., those used as PRO-nouns for persons) in the left-hand column may be used without determinative adjectives, but only in instances of direct abuse, in dialogue:

(16) *Pizdâ! Jâ i bez tebjâ èto znâju!* – “You cunt! I know that already without you (having to tell me)!”

(17) *Èj, xûj!* – “Hey, (you) prick!”

(18) *Èj, xûj s ğâlcami!* – “Hey, prick with balls!”

(f) The noun *govnô* may also occur without any determinative adjective, but in predicative position; here, it carries a straightforward pejorative meaning:

(19) *Ètot karandâs – govnô.* – “This pencil is shit.”

(g) It should also be pointed out that there are a few nouns with obscene meanings which are typically not used PRO-nominally, e.g. *eldá* and *sâxna* normally mean, respectively, “prick” and “cunt” in the direct technical sense; they are seldom substituted for “person” in the way that *xûj* and *pizdá* can.

(h) Some of the parallels with English PRO-nominal usage have been mentioned in passing. Others await further study. It may be pointed out that the system of co-occurrence with determinative adjectives has a parallel in English. In, e.g.,

(20) *I’ve lost the bugger*

the context will supply the identity of the referent for which the PRO-noun *bugger* is substituted: a pocket-book, perhaps, or a small child. On the other hand,

(21) *I’ve lost a bugger*

with the indefinite article can not have the same PRO-nominal reference: an actual bugger is normally implied.7

2.2. *Mat PRO-Verbs*

It is not feasible to set up a simple table of correspondences between *mat* PRO-verbs and general verbal meanings, as was done for nouns in 2.1., because of the extreme complexity of the Russian verbal system: a very long table would be required. Rather, we present the formation and interpretation of these PRO-verbs in the form of a generative mechanism.

A distinction must be made between three verb-types. There are, first, verbs which are only used PRO-verbally, such as *pizdît*; second, those which have both direct (‘technical’) and PRO-verbal uses, e.g. *ebût*; and third, those which have only direct meanings, and are not used PRO-verbally, e.g. *pizdît* “to prattle, complain”. We omit all verbs of the third type.
2.2.1. Verb-formation. We present, first, a list of basic verbs. Note that all occur with and without the reflexive particle -sja, and that a prefixed hyphen means that the verb does not occur without a prefix.  

**ROOT<sup>9</sup> OCCURRENT FORMS**

| -bar-   | barát'       |
| -bdz-  | bzdét', bzdnut' |
| -eb-   | ebát', ebácit', ebáčivat', ebunút', ebénit', ebistósit', ebnut', -ebnut', ebúrít', ebývat' |
| -jab-  | jábivat' |
| -perd- | perdét', perdnut', přeživat' |
| -xer-  | xerácit', xerácivat', xeráčivat' |
| -xuj-  | xujácit', xujácivat', xujákut', xujáknut', xujářit', xujářivat', xujnút' |

Second, we list a number of standard Russian prefixes with their variant orthographic forms:

- do-, is-/iz-/izo-, na-, nad-/nado-, nedo-, o-/ob-/obo-, ot-/oto-, pere-, pri-, pro-, po-, pod-/podo-, ras-/raz-, s-/so-, u-, v-/vo-, vy-, vs-/vz-, za-.

Given these two short lists, the following basic statement for the formation of *mat* PRO-verbs can be made:

The concatenation of a basic *mat* verb with any of the listed prefixes produces a verbal form that can be used in a given relevant context. Verbs listed without the hyphen also occur, in their unprefixed form, given a relevant context.

This statement automatically generates, for example:

- doebát', doebért'sja, dopizdit', dopizdít'sja, doxujnút', doxujáčit', doxujáčit'sja, iz"ebát', iz"ebért'sja, ispizdit', isxujnút'sja, izobzdét'sťa, nabzdét'sťa, naebát'sťa, naebnút'sťa, napizdýkat', napizdýkat'sťa, naaxujnút'sťa, naaxeráčit'sťa, nad"ebát', nadobzdét'sťa, nedoebát'sťa, nedeperdét', nedoxujáčit', v"ebát', v"ebért'sja, vopizdit', vopizdit'sja, vvxujáčit', vvxujáčit'sja, vvxujnút'sja, vvxujnút'sja, výbdéť'sja, vyebnút'sja, zaebát', zaebért'sja, zaxujáčit', zaxujáčit'sja, zapizdýkat', zaxujáčit'sja, zabit'... ...

A total of 1596 verbs can be produced in this way. Note that Drummond and Perkins (1980) has only about 1000 lemmata all told, and lists only some 140 verbal forms!
The *mal* verbal grammar presented above is an idealization. It may be both too narrow, and too wide.

It is too narrow, because further forms may be added: (a) verbs formed with two or more prefixes (e.g., *nedootpizdit*’, *poraspizdit*, *ponad’ebat’*); and (b) verbs with Church Slavonic prefixes, e.g. *vos-/voz-* (vos*pizdit*, *vozobzdet*, etc.) and *nis-/niz-* (nis’*ebnut’sja, nispizdit*, *snizobzdet*, etc.). The stylistic flavour of *mal* combined with bookish or ecclesiastical overtones is not allowed for in the above model.

It may be too wide, because some of the generated forms may be considered clumsy and difficult to interpret. Even native speakers who reject some of the forms on these grounds should however realize that the problem may be reduced to finding the appropriate context for each form that they reject; once a suitable context has been found, the ‘clumsy’ form becomes a normal part of *mal*.

2.2.2. Semantic interpretation. The semantic interpretation of *mal* verbs is determined by four kinds of contextual information: internally, by (a) the morphological patterning of the prefixes and suffixes concerned; and externally, by (b) co-occurrence with certain types of grammatical complements, (c) the lexical material occurring in these complements, and (d) the broader general context. Given all this information – which, of course, is given in the context of conversation – the particular meaning of any *mal* PRO-verb can be, and is, understood. From this information, also, it will be clear whether it is indeed the PRO-verbal use that is intended, or whether the primary, ‘technical’ sense (if there is one) is implied. – We now consider each of these four points in turn.

(a) Morphological pattern: prefixes and suffixes in *mal* verbs function in the same way as they do for non-*mal* verbs. This can be exemplified with the root *eb* in its primary meaning “fuck”; these remarks apply equally to PRO-verbal use. The prefixed *proebat’* stands in the same relation to the unprefixed *ebat’* as does *procitat’* “to finish reading” to *citat’* “to read”: in both cases, the perfective form with the prefix includes the idea of the achievement of the action, while the unprefixed imperfective form is non-committal in this regard. In the same way, *pereebat’* can mean “to fuck many X” in the same way that *perecitat’* can mean “to read many X”, where X is the natural object of the verb in question. The same verb, *pereebat’*, may have other meanings, since the prefix *pere-* is used in a variety of ways: on the model of *igrat’* “to play” vs. *pereigrat’* “to re-play; to overplay; to supersede in playing”, *pereebat’* may mean “to re-fuck; to fuck to excess; to supersede in fucking”. The specific meaning of the verb will be determined by the external context.
The pattern of the semantic content of suffixes can be exemplified as follows. First, in the derivation of secondary imperfectives: the forms proebyvat' and pereebat' are the secondary imperfectives for, respectively, proebat' and pereebat', just as prochtyvat' and pereigrvat' are the secondary imperfectives for prochtytat' and pereigrat'. Second, in semelfactives: the -nu-in xujniut' and ebnut' has the same semelfactive meaning (i.e., of a single punctual or momentary action) that this prefix has in non-mat Russian.10

(b) Pattern of verbal complements: The semantic interpretation of mat verbs is determined to a very great extent by their syntactic government. (Here, we use N to stand for any noun-phrase, with subscript abbreviations for the cases in which the noun-phrase stands: NACC is thus a noun-phrase in the accusative, and so on.) The pattern of complementation can be exemplified with the verb zaxujacit', used PRO-verbally. For example, zaxujacit' NACC NINST po NDAT means “to strike (someone with something on a part of his/her body)”: (22) On zaxujacit Ivana kirpičom po golove

is virtually identical in meaning to (23) On udārīl Ivana kirpičom po golove. – “He hit Ivan over the head with a brick”.

In contrast to this, zaxujacit' NACC u NGEN has the meaning “to take something from someone”, so that sentences (24) and (25) are virtually identical in meaning: (24) On zaxujacit knigu u Ivana.

(25) On vzjāl knigu u Ivana. – “He took the book from Ivan.”

A third example with the same verb: zaxujacit' NACC iz NGEN will mean “to take something from some place”, so that (26) On zaxujacit škaf iz kanceljarii

and (27) On výnes škaf iz kanceljarii

both mean “He took the cupboard from the office”. In each of these cases – which can be multiplied extensively – the sentence with zaxujacit has the same general meaning as the sentence quoted with the non-mat verb; the use of the mat verb adds particular overtones (for zaxujacit’: force, cunning, effort, etc.) to the general meaning. In all cases, the verbal complements specify the general meaning of the mat verb. The fact that a mat verb is being used adds the extra information that something expressive is intended: (22) is thus to be translated “He bashed Ivan over the head with a brick”, (24) “He ripped off Ivan’s book”, and (26) “He swiped the cupboard from the office”.11

(c) Lexical material occurring in complements: The lexical material will, again, often determine exactly what is meant. Thus the verb
RUSSIAN OBSCENE LANGUAGE

*pizdnut’* can be said to have verbal meanings of all kinds, depending on the complement (and thus, can be said to be semantically void in itself; and thus be a PRO-verb). With the complement *po NDAT* for example it may mean "to strike" as in

(28)  

> Oni podošli tudá i pizdnuli po oknú. – “They went over there and hit the window.”

It may also mean "to move quickly", as in

(29)  

> On pizdnul po šossé “He drove quickly along the highway”,

where it is equivalent (but adds an expressive sense) to

(30)  

> On póéxal po šossé “He drove along the highway”.

Another example: the verb *proebát’* clearly has a ‘technical’ meaning in

(31)  

> On proebál Mášu v podvále. – “He thoroughly fucked Mary in the cellar.”

Equally clearly, it has a PRO-verbal use in

(32)  

> On proebál Fránciju v mašine. – “He drove all over France in a car” (cf. non-mat póéxal "drove").

In all these instances, the lexical identity of the complements determine the entire meaning of the verbs.

(d) General context: In some instances, the broader context must be known for the *mat* verb to be understood. The sentence

(33)  

> Da, pizdíl. – “Yes, I did...”

can only have its meaning inferred from the context: if, for example, it is spoken in answer to the question

(34)  

> Tý u níx pizdíl xléb? – “Did you steal their bread?”

then its meaning is clear.

We therefore prefer to state that *mat* verbs are PRO-verbs, and are semantically void, acquiring their meanings from their internal shape and from the context in which they are used. Since, however, they belong to *mat*, they are not totally void: they inevitably carry the feature of expressivity; but their general meanings can be inferred from their contexts. To this extent, therefore, the following formulation holds:

A *mat* verb may mean *any* intensive action from the total set of actions, and will acquire a specific meaning from this total set according to its morphological pattern and according to the contextual pattern of verbal complements, the lexical items occurring in these complements, and the whole context.

In the same way that the grammar of word-formation for *mat* verbs follows the grammar of word-formation for non-*mat* verbs, we see that the syntax of *mat* verbs works in the same way, and uses the same system, as the syntax of non-*mat* verbs.
It can thus be said that a mat verb is in one sense transparent: when it is used PRO-verbally, a more “normal” Russian verb may be discerned behind it; or, since we are dealing with expressive conversational Russian, what may be discerned is a more “normal” verb from Russian popular, colloquial speech (prostorečie). Thus, "ebát'" replaces the colloquial verb "vrézat'" "to strike"; "ispizdit'" is substituted for "izbit'" "to beat up"; and "spizdit'" masks "stasCit'" "to steal, rip off". So also, "vyébyvat'sja" stands for "vypéndrivat'sja" "to show off", and "iz"ebat'sja" replaces "izrabótat'sja" "to be worn out from work".

It should be mentioned (cf. Note 3) that there is at least one non-obscene colloquial Russian verb which acts as a PRO-verb in the same way as mat verbs, namely, "sobañt'"(sja). Thus, "prisobañt'" may be used instead of "prišit'" "to sew on", or instead of "príbit'" "to nail on", indeed instead of the more general verb "prídělat'" "to attach to"; "otsobañt'" replaces "otkryt'" "to open"; "otporot'" "to tear off", indeed the more general verb "otdelit'" "to detach"; and so on. As with mat verbs, these examples may be multiplied with various prefixes and with various kinds of contextual complements.

2.3. Mat Syntax

We would like to add a short excursus on mat syntax. For exemplification, we will confine our remarks to two points.

We begin with one very common expression and consider the ways in which it can be extended. The expression, "eb tvoju mat'" (literally: "...fucked your mother") has the general meaning of "Goddamn it/you!") It expresses as one of its primary meanings a highly negative attitude towards the hearer, or a third person, or to a known object in the context of the utterance. We begin by designating the person or object N, which stands for a noun in non-mat Russian. The expression "eb tvoju mat’" is extended as follows: (a) N is placed in the accusative, thus N; (b) this noun-phrase is positioned between tvoju and mat'; (c) the resulting extended expression has the meaning of conveying a very negative attitude towards the person or thing concerned.

As an example, suppose a man finds a fly in his soup. He fishes it from the bowl and (as was recorded by one of the authors in Kazakhstan in 1957) says

(35)  "eb tvoju múxu mat'! (múxa "fly")

In the same way, one could say, referring to a dirty plate,

(36)  "eb tvoju tarelku mat'! (tarelka "plate")

or, concerning a table against which one has barked one’s shin,
(37)  Éb tuoju stól mat'! (stól "table")
    – note that stól shows none of the standard Russian syntactic links with
    the rest of the sentence.

    As a variation on the above construction, v NACC may be used instead
    of NACC, giving:
    (35a)  Éb tuoju v múxi mat'!
    (36a)  Éb tuoju v tarel'ku mat'!
    (37a)  Éb tuoju v stól mat'!

    A third variation uses NGEN. In this case, the genitive noun-phrase is
    perceived as a preposed complement of mat' (nesoglasovannoe opre-
    delenie):
    (35b)  Éb tuoju múxi mat'!
    (36b)  Éb tuoju tarel'ki mat'!
    (37b)  Éb tuoju stól mat'!

    Further, the noun-phrase N may, in turn, be an (obscene or non-
    obscene) imprecation. If, for example, a male person is referred to, this
    can be by using xuj, mudak "fool" (from mudé "balls"), or kozel "queer"
    (literally "goat"). Thus, with NACC (here the words are considered animate,
    since a male person is referred to),
    (38)  Éb tuoju xuja mat'!
    (39)  Éb tuoju mudaka mat'!
    (40)  Éb tuoju kozla mat'!

    In each case, the sentence means, simultaneously, "Goddamn you!" and
    "You are a bloody prick/fool/queer!"

    The other syntactic point concerns the use of xuj and its derived forms
    xúlja/xúle/xúli.

    The word xuj acts as a negative particle: the sentence
    (41)  Egó xuj pojměš. – "You can't understand him",
    has the same meaning (albeit with more expressive force) as
    (42)  Egó ne pojměš;

    and in the same way, the next two sentences are virtually identical in
    meaning:
    (43)  On xuj pridět
    (44)  On ne pridět. – "He won't come".

    Thus xuj (and also the non-obscene čěrta s dva "two devils") parallels
    English "the hell" in e.g. "The hell he'll come". In contrast to the non-
    obscene negative particle ne, xuj can be inserted in different positions in
    the sentence, without any change in meaning:
    (45)  Xuj on pridět. – "He won't come".
    (46)  Xuj on kogó-nibud' tam vstrětit
    shows the indefinite pronoun, in contrast to
(47) *On nikogó tam ne vstrētit* – “He’ll meet no-one there”.
The word *xúľa* (also spelled *xúľe, xúľi, xúľ f*) acts as a typical interro-
gative *mat* (PRO)-word, replacing a number of interrogative pronouns.
Thus,

(48) *Xúľa ty zdes’ dělaš?* – “What are you doing here?”

has the same meaning as

(49) Čto ty zdes’ dělaš? (čto “what”)

and

(50) *Xúľa ty tuda idëš?*

is identical in meaning to

(51) *Počemû ty tuda idëš?* (počemû “why”) or *Na koj čërt ty...?*

In (50), *ná xuľ* or *na xuľá* may be substituted for *xúľa*; in both (48) and (50),
*kakogo xuľa* may be substituted for *xúľa*.

3. THE POETICS OF MAT

A number of *mat* expressions, many of them exquisite, are plays on words.
One isolates, in a non-*mat* expression, a syllable or a longer phonetic string
which has some phonetic similarity with a known *mat* parallel; and one
substitutes the latter for the former. Some of these derived expressions have
become very well-known; some have achieved the status of clichés:

*svežepovâto*, derived from *svéžo* “it is cool” and *ţopa* “ass”, parallel to
the non-*mat* *sveževâto* “it is rather cool”, and with the same basic meaning;

*bljadoxôd*, from *ledoxôd* “the downstream movement of ice after a thaw”
and *bljad* “whore”, and meaning “a group of women who stroll streets
and parks, seeking sexual adventures” (Drummond and Perkins 1980, 13);

*bzditeľnost’,* from *bditeľnost* “vigilance” and the root *bzd-* “fart,
coward”, meaning the same as *bditeľnost* but with humorous con-
notations;

*bledi*, from *ledi* “lady” and *bljäd*;

*der’mokât*, from *demokrât* “democrat” and *der’mó* “shit”;

*govnjâdina*, from *govjâdina* “beef” and *govno* “shit”.

The inclusion of all these formations – which are essentially occasional,
although some have attained the status of clichés – in a dictionary is,
quite obviously, a waste of time.

Flegon (1973) attempts precisely this impossible task. He gives, for
example, the lemma *xujâsľice* (which occurs in Solženitsyn’s *One Day in
the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in the euphemistic form *fujâsľice*), glossed
“*vsjâkaja vsjâçina*” (“all sorts of things”) (1973, 383). This is however a
‘nonce-term’, constructed (using the mechanism given above) in the
phonetic image of a neighbouring noun, *mdsľice* “butter (dim.)”. Any
translation of this word must relate to the context in which it is used; a dictionary entry is totally worthless.

In the same way, Flegon cites Solzhenitsyn again:

Fuimetsja! Podnimetsja... ne vlijaet and explains fuimetsja (in its non-euphemistic form xuimetsja) simply as bran’ (‘abuse, bad language’; 1973, 383). Here again we have a nonce-word whose form can only be explained by reference to the whole context. No dictionary entry should even be attempted.14

This mechanism (“contamination” or “blending”) is of course well-known in its use in non-obscene language and in other languages than Russian; and has been well-described.15

In the same way that individual words can have substituted for them mat words, so also can phrases – popular sayings and the like, be reformulated in mat. Generally speaking, an obscene variant of a non-obscene saying is produced by substituting morphologically-similar mat words in context.16 This rough approximation of the process will work in many cases. In more sophisticated instances, however, the procedure is controlled by the possibility of semantically interpreting the resulting mat saying; this interpretation should be essentially the same as the original.

The saying Vyše golovy ne prj’gres “You can’t jump higher than your own head” (Zukov 1966, 98), for example, has its obscene equivalents in Efremov’s collection of obscene proverbs: Vyše gůzna ne perdl “Don’t fart higher than your own ass”, Vyše žópy ne pěrdneš “You can’t fart higher than your own ass” (Carey 1972, 65), and Ne mudri: výše xůja ne podskóčiti “Don’t be clever: you can’t jump higher than your own prick” (Carey 1972, 73).

So also the saying Kâšu máslom ne ispůrtiš “You can’t spoil kasha with too much butter” has the obscene parallel Pizdu xuem ne ispůrtiš “You can’t spoil a cunt with too much prick” (Carey 1972, 49).

Further parallels are not difficult to find. Compare the following: nabit’ ruku (rukâ “hand”) “to become an expert” and nabit’ xuj “to become an expert fucker”; ná ruku ne čist (lit. “dirty-handed”) “corrupt, bribe-taking” and ne čist na xuj “a great womanizer” (Carey 1972, 74); lomanogo grośa ne stoji “It’s not worth a broken penny” and perelomlennogo xǔja ne stoji “It’s not worth a broken prick” (Carey 1972, 54).

In the same way, one can form any number of new sayings. Given, for example, the non-obscene Ne v svoi sǎni ne sadis’ “Don’t sit in someone else’s sledge”, one can devise Na čužǔju žòpu ne sadis’ “Don’t sit on someone else’s ass”, or even Čužim xuem ne ssy! “Don’t piss with someone else’s prick!” – In the most articulate cases, the substituted word will resemble the original not only morphologically but also phonologically.
The popular saying *ne sólono xlebávši* (lit. "not having supped salted food") "with no personal profit" prompts the obscene parallel *ne sólono ebávši* "with no sexual profit", with a very close phonological similarity between the words.

*Mat* belongs to poetics not only by virtue of the devices described in this section, but also through the achievement of expressing sophisticated meanings by overcoming the limitations of the strict vocabulary listing of the basic dictionary. These limits are transcended derivationally, cf. 2.2. above.

4. A MEANINGS-TO-WORDS APPROACH

By now it will be apparent that *mat* exhibits much more systematicity and regularity than can be figured out from any of the available dictionaries or word-lists. Of course, just as in the standard language, there will be unsystematic features and irregularities; the traditional dictionary approach will however be unable to reveal them.

What we have presented is, to be sure, an idealization. Its value – its usefulness – can only be tested by turning the approach around and devising a questionnaire for fieldwork with native informants that will start with the stock of primary roots and explore the limits on their PRO-nominal and PRO-verbal usage.

From the above it can be seen that *mat* covers an extremely broad semantic field: in fact, it covers, potentially, nearly all of "reality". For the field-worker, this opens up the possibility of starting with a list of semantic headings (as in a thesaurus) and trying to collect as many expressions as possible within each semantic field.

For example, starting with the heading "approximation", the field-worker will collect *mat* PRO-verbs with the prefix *pri-* , such as *prixujacit’*, *prixerdacit’*, *pripizdit’*, *pripizdycit’*, *prixujarit’*, *pribcbit’*, *pribzdet’sja*, and so on. For each one, what must be determined includes both patterns of grammatical complements (one example: is it transitive – a verb of "bringing" – or intransitive – a verb of "coming"?) and the limits on the lexical items which co-occur with it.

The result will be what we state in Section 1 to be required: concise dictionaries of *mat*, together with adequate grammars of its system.

5. A SHORT STORY IN *MAT*

To exemplify the scope of *mat*, we now present a short narrative. It uses *mat* to its maximal extent; by no means, though, would the meaning of the story, in context, be incomprehensible to the native speaker.
To demonstrate the use of *mat* in its primary, "technical" sense as opposed to its PRO-nominal and PRO-verbal use, we mark words and expressions in the text as follows. Instances where obscene words are used figuratively, as clichés and in other (non-PRO-word) ways are in bold italics *not* spaced; PRO-nominal and PRO-verbal use is shown in bold italics, spaced.

5.1. "A Scene on a Bus"^{18}

**Mat version:**


**Non-mat version:**


English translation:

*The bus was going along, and almost falling over, there were so many passengers. And then one young man (his head held up on God knows what) pushed his way on, like a madman, so that everyone gaped. He pushed through the passengers and with a thump took the only vacant seat, as much as to say: you, old women, can travel standing up till your end comes (till you’re finished).*

University of Alberta

NOTES

1. Razvratnikov does perceive the basis for this dichotomy, cf. "The essential problem is the fact that Russian obscenity is primarily derivational while English obscenity is analytic.... The derivational nature of Russian obscenity permits the creation of obscene lexical items which cannot be translated into English without additional contextual explanation" (1979, 197, 198). He does not take this to what we argue is its logical conclusion. We do not cite Kunitskaya-Peterson (1981), which is, basically, a distillation of Drummond and Perkins (1980) as far as its Russian section is concerned.

2. Flegon (1973, 355) translates this phrase, incorrectly, as "rugatel’stvo s tremja nepriûčnûmi slovami (abuse with three indecent words)". A better gloss would be "strukturno slojnoe
rugatel'stvo (structurally complex abuse)", or, as Kaufman explains it, literally, "third storey obscenities" (1980, 275).

3 Note that "substitution" works on two quite distinct planes. On the lexico-stylistic plane, instead of a mat word (e.g. a verb with the root -eb: "fuck"), what may be termed a "pro-mat" word (e.g. a verb with the root -dolb-: "chisel"; a semi-euphemism) or a non-mat word (e.g. a verb with the root -sobai-: "dog") may be used. On the grammatical plane, any of these three word-types may be substituted for a normal verb of Standard Russian.

4 This is an over-simplification of the problem of gender reference: cf. Rothstein (1980). The way in which mat PRO-nouns fit into this scheme has yet to be worked out.

5 Note that the derivation of diminutive, augmentative and other mat PRO-nouns in Russian follows the rules of non-mat derivation. This contrasts sharply with the situation in Italian as described by Radtke (1977).

6 Cf. Fleming (1977) on the use of the word shit in English.

7 It is instructive to attempt to distinguish between PRO-usage and metaphor. The latter has been defined as applying "principles that do not so much violate the... rules of the language-system as creatively extend or transcend them" (Lyons 1977, II, 548). Mat PRO-words also involve the extension and transcension of the rules of the language-system, and are also creative. However, metaphors are much more limited. In English, he is a live wire involves the metaphorical use of wire – an inanimate noun being substituted for an animate one - but the usage is limited to this one phrase. I saw this wire yesterday, with reference to a human, is not possible. PRO-words differ from metaphors, we assume, by being permanent and open-ended substitutes for other word-classes.

8 It is clear that many of these verbal forms are derived from simplex forms by means of suffixes (in particular, -ač-). Further study is required to explain the derivational processes; why, for example, does picoljatič' show palatalization of the d before -ač-, while the b in ebatič' and the r in xeratič' are not palatalized?

9 The primary meanings of the roots listed are as follows: bar "fuck", bcd "fart", eb "fuck", jah "fuck", perd "fart", pizd "cunt", xer "prick", xuj "prick".

10 The restrictions on the meaning of certain perfective PRO-verbs that is inherent in particular prefixes, remain to be explored.

11 Another grammatical problem that awaits analysis is the transitive vs intransitive use of PRO-verbs. It appears that although most or all PRO-verbs can be either transitive or intransitive, depending on context, usage dictates that some are usually used transitively while others are normally used intransitively. The importance of the prefix must not be overlooked: PRO-verbs with the prefix pro- will normally be transitive, like non-mat verbs with this prefix.


14 In this instance, the scene involves a group of camp inmates gathered round a post. One of them clims up to read the thermometer, and the others down below shout: Ty toľko v stóromu dýši, a to podnimetsja "Breathe to one side, or it'll go up". He replies: Fulimetsja! – Podnimetsja! ...ne vžiť: "Go up... the hell it will... it won't make a fucking bit of difference anyway" in Hayward and Hingley's translation (1963, 10). – Again, what is needed for an accurate translation is, first, an English obscene word (or a word with an obscene phonetic segment) that rhymes with, or otherwise parallels "go up", and, second, an euphemistic version of this. Hayward and Hingley make the best of a bad job. – Flegon misquotes the form phonetically (fulimetsja instead of fulimetsja).

15 "Blends" abound in everyday facetious usage, cf. the headline "Viewing the obscenery" in the Edmonton Sun, February 27, 1981, p. 40. In fact, "blending" is a particular instance of contrast, the description of which in Russian poetics goes back to Lomonosov's sopraženije dalekovodnych ljudij ("the conjunction of rather distant concepts"); see for example Jespersen (1922, 281–282, 312–313).

16 We do not suggest that all non-obscene popular sayings are the historical antecedents of their obscene versions – in some cases the reverse may be the case! – only that the derivation of the one from the other can be formulated in the way that we describe.

17 Note that the derivations described here are the reverse of euphemisms, which remove the phonetic immediacy of obscene words while retaining their general phonological and morphological structure (fulimetsja instead of xulimetsja, fugging for fucking, and so on).

18 This is one more version of the narrative, given in seven Russian and seven, English stylistic variants by O'Toole (1976, 286–292).
After this article went to the printers, the authors learned of Viktor Raskin's article 'On some peculiarities of the Russian lexicon', in D. Farkas, W. M. Jakobsen and K. W. Todrys (eds.), Papers from the Parasession on the Lexicon, Chicago Linguistic Society, Chicago, 1978, pp. 312–325, and of a discussion of mat by V. V. Nalimov in his book: In the Labyrinth of Language: A Mathematician's Journey, ISI Press, Philadelphia, 1981. Raskin's work is an exception to the one-sided scholarship on the subject. He does, indeed, treat mat as a self-contained system; he does note the importance of derivational mechanisms and of discourse syntax. However, in our view he falls short of allowing for the unboundedness of the system that we perceive, and he overestimates the gaps suggested by his informants. Nalimov, also, summarizes many of our basic points.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anon.: 1971, A Dictionary of Russian Obscenities or Everything You Have Always Wanted to Know About Russian But Were Afraid to Ask, Cambridge, Mass.
Žukov, V. P.: 1966, Slovar' ruskix poslovic i pogovorok, Sovetskaja encklepdija, Moskva.