

## How Upright is the Vertical? Ideological Norm Negotiation in Russian Media Discourse<sup>1</sup>

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IN 1991, in the minds of the late Soviet generation of liberals who went out to the barricades in order to defend the White House against the counter-democratic coup, the noun “vertical” (вертикаль) was most likely associated with the name of the cult film made in 1967 about courageous friendship among mountain climbers.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, even more so, the word was linked with Vladimir Vysotskii who wrote and in his trademark husky voice sang, in that film, his songs that later grew into symbols of yearning for natural human existence free from Soviet ideological prescriptions.<sup>3</sup> This article is about the afterlife of those “thaw”-inspired linguistic associations. Following Bakhtin’s basic tenet concerning language that has no “innocence,” I am going to focus on the semantic journey of the word вертикаль in post-Soviet public discourse, taking the media as an example.<sup>4</sup> In 2004, president Putin embarked on federal reforms

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2 The film “Vertical” was directed by Stanislav Govorukhin and Boris Durov.

3 In the film, Vysotskii performed the following songs: “Pesnia o druge” (“Song about a friend”), “Svoi obidy kazhdyi chelovek” (“Everybody hurts”), “Zdes’ vam ne ravnina” (“These aren’t the plains”), “Voennaia pesnia” (“A military song”), “Proshchanie s gorami” (“Saying good-bye to the mountains”).

4 In my approach to discourse I follow Norman Fairclough’s broad, Foucault-inspired definition of it as “language as social practice” (Norman Fairclough, 1989, *Language and Power*, London, p. 17). Cf. Jan Blommaert’s characterization of discourse as “language-in-action” (Jan Blommaert, 2005, *Discourse*, Cambridge, p. 2). I also find the definition suggested by Lazar and Lazar helpfully comprehensive: “discourse is understood as comprising a field of related statements—revealed in concrete content across time and space—which produces and structures a particular order of reality”

in the process of which a “vertical structure of authority” was created and, in particular, the system of electing regional leaders was replaced by presidential appointments.<sup>5</sup> The word *вертикаль* gained currency to refer to the reformed structure of authority.

My investigation includes, firstly, an examination of the dominant discourse of a mainstream governmental outlet and a mapping of the process of the establishment of the term as a marker of the emergent normative ideology. Secondly, a close exploration of a sample of the counter-discourse, that is the discourse of opposition which has taken a marginal position in the past decade, will reveal how it reacts to the normative use, engaging with the mainstream term in the process of ideological norm negotiation and alternative meaning construction.<sup>6</sup>

It has been observed that the Russian post-communist discursive scene has been rather complex and multifaceted. Looking at the construction of social meanings under Vladimir Putin’s rule, Andrei Okara commented that there is a lack of clear articulation within the contemporary Russian social and cultural order, while ideologies are transient and blurred. He writes:

[T]he absence of a grand systemic project for Russia’s modernization, as well as vagueness in the contours and inarticulate formulation of ‘the Putin course,’ meaning a lack of formalized goals and inmost notions in words, ideologemes and imagery, can be justly viewed as one of Russia’s major problems during Vladimir Putin’s presidency.<sup>7</sup>

This observation echoes Zygmunt Bauman’s notion of “liquid modernity,” characterized by a “diffuse,” “all-saturating” and “commodified” “collection of snapshots.”<sup>8</sup> Recent analysis of “glamour,” as a new Russian

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(Anita Lazar & Michelle Lazar, 2004, “The Discourse of the New World Order: ‘Out-casting’ the Double Face of Threat,” *Discourse and Society* 15, pp. 223–42; p. 224.)

- 5 For a thorough overview of these reforms, see James Alexander, 2004, “Federal Reforms in Russia: Putin’s Challenge to the Republics”, *Demokratizatsiia: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, <http://arapaho.nsuok.edu/~alexao01/Fedreformso3.pdf>.
- 6 Richard Terdman, 1985, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France*, Ithaca, N.Y. & London, 1985, p. 68.
- 7 Andrei Okara, 2007, “Sovereign Democracy: A New Russian Idea or a PR Project?,” *Russia in Global Affairs* 2, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/20/1124.html>.
- 8 Peter Beilharz, ed. 2001, *The Bauman Reader*, Malden, Mass., p. 339; Zygmunt Bauman, 2001, *The Individualized Society*, Cambridge, p. 86.

sociocultural phenomenon, exemplifies Okara and Bauman's view by suggesting that it has now superseded politics, rendering traditional ideological divisions of "right" and "left" obsolete.<sup>9</sup>

Yet I would argue that along with the postmodern vagueness and uncertainty, in many respects, contemporary Russian culture still fits Jan Blommaert's formula: "Discourse and power: combine the two terms and we think of ideology," and that, as ever, the practices of power produce discourses where ideologies are tested and shaped.<sup>10</sup> This means that vagueness does not prevent meanings from contestation for legitimacy and veracity as descriptions of the world and as a result, meanings may shift to clarity and sharpness. The competing, or opposing discourses strive to establish their own ideological knowledge, or doxa, to use the term elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>11</sup> Inherited from ancient Greece, the notion of doxa relates to common knowledge and shared opinions.<sup>12</sup> With regard to ideologies articulated in discourse, doxa denotes the status quo of established meanings, accepted without question and believed to have common-sensical transparency. Apart from Bourdieu, ideology has been connected with naturalized patterns of thought and behaviour by Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Raymond Williams, Michel Foucault and others.<sup>13</sup> Norman Fairclough attaches this idea of ideological transparency to the notion of the language norm and explicitly connects meanings that are contested and constructed in the competing discourses with the sets of different norms. Using the term ideological-discursive formations (IDF), he writes: "IDF is a sort of speech community with its own

9 Larissa Rudova, 2008, "Uniting Russia in Glamour," *Glamorous Russia*, eds. L. Rudova & B. Menzel, *kultura* 6, p. 2, [http://www.kultura-rus.de/kultura\\_dokumente/ausgaben/englisch/kultura\\_6\\_2008\\_EN.pdf](http://www.kultura-rus.de/kultura_dokumente/ausgaben/englisch/kultura_6_2008_EN.pdf).

10 Blommaert, 2005, p. 158.

11 Pierre Bourdieu, 1991, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. J.B. Thompson, trans. G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Cambridge.

12 Ruth Amossy, 2002, "Introduction to the Study of Doxa," *Poetics Today* 23 (3), pp. 369–94; p. 369.

13 Bourdieu, 1991; Louis Althusser, 1971, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, London; Roland Barthes, 1957, *Mythologies*, Paris; Raymond Williams, 1977, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford; Michel Foucault, 1982, "The Order of Discourse," *Language and Politics*, ed. M. Shapiro, London, pp. 108–38. For a good overview, see Jan Blommaert, 2005, *Discourse*, Cambridge, pp. 158–202.

discourse norms but also, embedded within and symbolized by the latter, its own ‘ideological norms’.”<sup>14</sup>

Because ideological discourse creates its own connotations or, in Olivier Reboul’s words, “meanings given to” “that of which we speak” and constructs concepts and words to name objects, discursive struggles over “naming” can provide a prominent display of the negotiation of ideological norms.<sup>15</sup> Agents of ideological-discursive formations strive to achieve the authority to name and to rename, or to stabilize and destabilize, normative meanings, to reformulate and to change their significations.<sup>16</sup>

In order to reveal the struggle for the norm, theoretically described above, I will proceed to the critical semantic analysis of the lexeme *вертикаль*, as it features in two corpora of discourse. The first corpus represents the dominant discourse associated with the voice of the ruling elites. It consists of texts from the government newspaper *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, from 1992 to September 2008. Sampling included all the material from the early post-Soviet years (1992–1994), that of three months of 1997 (January, September and October), and subsequently, a full month of newspaper texts for 2000, 2005, 2007 and 2008.<sup>17</sup>

The data for the counter-discursive use of *вертикаль* comes from the radio programme *Plavlennyi syrok*, written by Viktor Shenderovich and broadcast from 2003 to 2008. In Alexander Gronsky’s words, Shenderovich is “one of the most persistent critics of the Kremlin.”<sup>18</sup> It has also been observed that Shenderovich’s satire represents the diminished loci of alternative meaning-production, and the present analysis builds on this premise.<sup>19</sup>

14 Norman Fairclough, 1995, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, London, p. 27.

15 Olivier Reboul, 1980, *Langage et Idéologie*, Paris, p. 53. A follower of Barthes, Reboul saw ideology in the tension between denotation and connotation. Cf. also Winfried Nöth, 2004, “Semiotics of Ideology,” *Semiotica* 148, pp. 11–21.

16 See Chris Barker & Dariusz Galasinski, 2001, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: Dialogues on Language and Identity*. Sage, p. 56.

17 June 2000, September 2005, February 2007, September 2008.

18 Alexander Gronsky, 2009, “The Ghost of Glasnost,” *Financial Times*, January 17/18.

19 For a more detailed description of this programme and its place within the body of Shenderovich’s journalistic satirical writing, see Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, 2008, “On the Satirical Discourse of *Processed Cheese*,” *Russian Language Journal* 58, pp. 93–112. The programme which started on the radio channel *Ekho Moskvy* in 2003 and was broadcast for five years, came to an end in June 2008, ostensibly for non-

*Rossiiskaia gazeta as dominant discourse · 1992–1994*

Instances of the early post-Soviet use of the word вертикаль in *Rossiiskaia gazeta* suggest that although the word did sometimes relate to a hierarchy of responsibility between the state central and local bodies, occurrences of this meaning were rather infrequent and produced no stable context (1–4):

- (1) положения договора должны учитываться в работе исполнительных органов «по всей вертикали». (11.09.1992); (2) *Власть по вертикали, от президента до директора совхоза, с жесткой дисциплиной.* (19.06.1993); (3) Им [горсоветам] никто не мешает—ни президентская вертикаль, ни кто-либо еще, а скорее всего они сами себе мешают. (29.07.1993); (4) *Не может быть вертикали в федеративном государстве.* (26.06.1993)<sup>20</sup>

Discursive samples give an impression that in the early post-Soviet period, the preferred use of вертикаль was in the dative phrase по вертикали, with the adverbial meaning of “manner”, qualifying nouns that name power organisations or positions (1, 2, 5 and 6). That said, it is evident that the phrase lacks automatism and transparency when we consider that the discourse producer needs to use a gloss such as от президента до директора совхоза (“from the president down to the farm director”) to clarify the meaning of власть по вертикали (“power up the vertical”) (2). This is also indicated by the quotation marks surrounding the dative phrase (1), which further suggests that the figurative use was probably derived from the field of crosswords and board games: по вертикали means “down” and по горизонтали—“across.”

It can be said that from 1992 to 1994, вертикаль seems to have displayed little in the way of ideologically firm connotations or common

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ideological reasons. Since then, Shenderovich has become a regular commentator on the analytical radio programmes “Osoboe mnenie” (*Ekho Moskvy*) and “Vse svoobodny” (*Radio Liberty*) and is engaged in internet journalism and literature.

20 (1) “Provisions of the treaty must be taken into consideration in the work of executive bodies *along the whole vertical*.” (2) “*Power along the vertical*, with firm discipline, *from the president down to the farm director*.” (3) “Nothing obstructs their [city councils’] work, neither *the presidential vertical*, nor anything else. Most probably they are obstructing their own work.” (4) “*There can be no vertical* in a federal state.” Translations of all data examples and emphasis are mine.

sense attributed to the word, since, within the same dominant discourse, it enters with ease into a contradictory context in which the mere possibility of a вертикаль in the federation is rejected (4). As we can also see, the adjectival phrase президентская вертикаль (“the presidential vertical”), which became so familiar in the 2000s, had some currency in the early 1990s (3). However, this meaning of the phrase seems loose and somewhat unspecific compared with the one that gained stability later on. It can also be observed that, alongside the phrase по вертикали (“up/down the vertical”), the “symmetrical” по горизонтали (“along the horizontal”) has currency too (5–6):

(5) Регионы не хотят больше ждать милостей от центра; радикальная реформа федеральных отношений по вертикали и горизонтали; новое политическое самосознание регионов. (07.07.1993); (6) К объективным [причинам противоречий] можно отнести двойное подчинение органов юстиции: по вертикали—Министерству юстиции РФ, по горизонтали—местным органам власти. (23.03.1994)<sup>21</sup>

This contextual distribution shows that, at that time, the dominant discourse construed power relations within the federal state as existing equally in two dimensions: not only as a “vertical” hierarchy but also in terms of “horizontal” interactions among equal status agents, manifesting a less authoritative pattern.

To sum up, the usage of the early 1990s shows that the word вертикаль is integral to the dominant discourse, carrying bureaucratic senses with a potential for further connotational development, although at that stage, it was also evidently unstable in terms of the contexts in which it figured and unclear in its ideological qualities.

1997

In 1997, *Rossiiskaia gazeta* introduced the rubric Вертикаль власти, indicating that, by this point, the metaphorical construction had already

21 (5) “The regions do not want to wait for favours from the centre any longer; radical reform of federal relations *in the vertical and horizontal dimensions*, new political identity in the regions”; (6) “The double subordination of the judicial bodies: *in the vertical dimension* to the Ministry of Justice; *in the horizontal dimension*, to the local government,—can be seen as one of the objective [reasons for contradictions].”

been used sufficiently regularly to be recognized as meaningful and seems to appear conventionalized in this combination.<sup>22</sup> Instances of rephrasing also demonstrate that, firstly, “government from the top” has now been negotiated as the meaning of this set phrase, and secondly, it developed some new specific associations, in particular, “strong,” “firm” and “uncompromising,” which we find articulated in (7) by means of the adjective *твердое*: (7) Я убежден: должно существовать *твердое государственное управление, вертикаль*. (21.01.2007).<sup>23</sup>

This notwithstanding, other occurrences evince a more varied pattern. Some of them precipitate the emergence of an ideologeme. Some signs of this may be gleaned from the appearance of the word *вертикаль* in close proximity to the noun *власть* (“power”), or from the collocation that it forms with the adjective *властная*, meaning “of the power, related to power,” a new adjectival sense coined in the post-Soviet period (8–10).

(8)—По многим причинам эта проблема не решается: [...] не создана полностью законодательная основа, есть пробелы во взаимоотношениях с *вертикалью государственной власти*. (29.01.1997); (9) для начала необходимо принять поправки к Конституции, которые бы помогли поставить деятельность Правительства и всей *властной вертикали* под контроль общества в лице законодательных органов власти. (30.01.1997); (10) Список можно продолжить, если *пройтись по вертикали законодательной власти*. Ситуации разные, суть одна—народный избранник не может быть замешанным в скандальных делах (25.09.1997)<sup>24</sup>

The discourse of 1997 resembles later use in its vagueness and impersonality as well as in the omission of agency, which became the linguistic characteristics of the “vertical.” The action in relation to *вертикаль* is

22 The rubric starts on 28.01.1997.

23 (7) “I am certain that there needs to be *firm state rule, a vertical*.”

24 (8) “There are many reasons why this problem is not being solved; the legislative base is incomplete, there are deficiencies in relations with *the vertical of state power*.” (9) “to start with, it is necessary to adopt amendments to the Constitution that would help to place government activity and the whole *power vertical* under the control of society as represented by the legislative authorities.” (10) “We can continue our list if we proceed along *the vertical of legislative power*. The situations are different but the essence is the same: a popularly elected representative must not be involved in scandal.”

sometimes described by the verb укреплять, or in a nominalized construction using the verbal noun укрепление (“to strengthen/strengthening”), both of which later grew in frequency, and also by their contextual synonyms of 1997 развивать/развитие (“develop/development”), which later lost currency (11–12). This state of synonymy and changeability of вертикаль is replaced by a more obligatory use once the ideogeme has become firmly established.

(11) Наряду с развитием вертикали по линии представительных органов нужна система мер, направленных на укрепление управленческой вертикали по линии органов исполнительной власти. Здесь вполне уместно было бы восстановление сильного общегосударственного органа государственного контроля в центре и на местах. (30.01.1997); (12) завершения в 1998 году полномасштабного перехода на казначейскую систему исполнения федерального бюджета, укрепление вертикали финансового контроля в системе исполнительной власти. (14.10.1997)<sup>25</sup>

That said, some occurrences of вертикаль in the dominant discourse of 1997 are not directly associated with the construction of the state and tend to relate to other aspects of the metaphor. For instance, they might instantiate the more general orientational metaphorical concept GOOD IS UP and relate, as in the case of (13), to the spirituality of the human soul:<sup>26</sup> (13) А подлинная русская песня—жанр удивительный. Она направлена на духовную вертикаль человека, на его возвышение...<sup>27</sup> (27.01.1997).

Thus, within the dominant discourse of the later period of the El'tsin presidency, the ideological meaning of вертикаль seems to be almost formed but not yet firmly rooted. The noun вертикаль syntactically

25 (11) “Alongside the development of the vertical in the sphere of representative bodies, it is necessary to have a system of measures aimed at strengthening the managerial vertical in the sphere of executive power. Here it would be perfectly appropriate to restore a strong federal body of state control in the centre and locally.” (12) “completion in 1998 of the full-scale transition to the treasury system of federal budget execution, the strengthening of the vertical of financial control in the executive power system.”

26 George Lakoff & Mark Johnson, 1980, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, p. 18.

27 (13) “Truly the genuine Russian song is an amazing genre. It is directed at the spiritual vertical of a person, at his elevation.”



moves closer to the notions of power, with the emergent collocations carrying sufficient connotations of “positive” and “necessary” to turn into a common-sense ideologeme when required. Examples (11–12) also demonstrate that in 1997, вертикаль is used to mark the dominant authoritative style in rather clumsy and cumbersome dative phrases, which, on the one hand, point to the developing version of post-Soviet newspeak and, on the other, are resonant of Soviet discursive forms.

### 1999–2008

The propelling of the rather low-key metaphorical collocate вертикаль власти (“the vertical of power”) to the prominence of everyday use and to the status of the central concept of the dominant ideological-discursive formation has much to do with the arrival in 1999 of a new political figure, Vladimir Putin, first as prime minister and later as president. On 17 August 1999, *Rossiiskaia gazeta* published Putin’s address to the Duma under the telling title Владимир Путин говорит о главном (“Vladimir Putin speaks about what’s most important”). The title was in effect a comment on the prime minister’s speech published by the paper in full. The adjectival noun, главное, changes the “attentional view” of the text, singularising and emphasizing the notion of “the power vertical” elaborated in the speech. Putin used the genitive collocate вертикаль власти, qualified in this case by the attribute исполнительной (executive). The semantic fusion of the components allows us to read the вертикаль as the prerogative of authoritarian control attributed to the top executive. In addition, Putin negotiates the normative meaning of the collocate by expanding on and normalizing the previously established senses of toughness, strength and the obligatory nature of the “vertical.” For the name of action towards the “vertical,” he uses the verbal noun укрепление (вертикали) (“strengthening (the vertical)”) as well as attributing to the phrase наведение (порядка) (“introducing (order)”) the role of its synonym. Notably, вертикаль is rephrased several times throughout the speech, extending it semantically as порядок, дисциплина and ответственность (“order,” “discipline” and “responsibility”). In a series of circular metalinguistic paraphrases and glosses, the speaker semantically connects power, order and the вертикаль (14):

(14) Уважаемые депутаты, в своем выступлении не могу охватить, конечно, все задачи, которые стоят перед Правительством. Но точно знаю, что ни одну из них не выполнить без *наведения элементарного порядка и дисциплины* в стране, без *укрепления исполнительной вертикали власти*. Порядок—это прежде всего ясная и четкая ответственность власти перед обществом. (17.08.1999)<sup>28</sup>

The data show that, since 2000, in the dominant discourse of *Rossiiskaia gazeta* the metaphorical phrase *укрепление вертикали власти/властной вертикали* (“strengthening of the vertical of power/power vertical”) began to behave in a fully conventionalized way. The first indication of this is that the frequency of its occurrence significantly increased. By comparison, in the 1997 corpus, the phrase occurred only once, in October, while the January and September issues made no mention of it at all. In contrast, in just one month, June 2000, *Rossiiskaia gazeta* used the expression eighteen times, and virtually every working day (cf. 15–19).

(15) удовлетворение по поводу одобрения Госдумой законопроектов об *укреплении вертикали власти* (02.06.2000); (16) законопроектов, цель которых—*укрепление федерализма и вертикали власти*, (03.06.2000); (17) Обрадовало и то, что пришло наконец понимание: без *укрепления властной вертикали* сильное государство немислимо. (09.06.2000); (18) А региональные структуры созданы исключительно для *укрепления вертикали государственной власти*, для удобства управления (10.6.2000); (19) Но не для того затевалось *укрепление вертикали власти*, чтобы карась в провинции дремал. (27.06.2000)<sup>29</sup>

28 (14) “Respected deputies, in my speech I cannot, of course, cover all the tasks that are facing our *Government*. But I know for sure that none of them can be fulfilled without *establishing basic order and discipline* in the country, without *strengthening* the executive *vertical of power*. Order, first and foremost, means the *authorities* having a clear and well-defined *responsibility* to society.”

29 (15) “satisfaction at the State Duma’s approval of the bill on *strengthening the vertical of power*”; (16) “bills aiming at *strengthening* federalism and *the vertical of power*”; (17) “I am also gladdened by the fact that, at last, it has been understood that a *strong state* is inconceivable without *strengthening the vertical of power*”; (18) “But the regional structures have been created solely for the purpose of *strengthening the vertical of power*, for convenience of administration”; (19) “*Strengthening of the vertical of power* was not initiated so that a little man in the provinces could be caught napping.”

Secondly, a stable pattern of lexical re-enactments of *вертикаль* with a narrow choice of set collocates *вертикаль власти* or *властная вертикаль* seems to be established, as does its combination with the verb *укреплять* or, similarly, its derivative noun *укрепление* (15–21, 24).

(20) Ведь средства массовой информации [...] способствуют *укреплению вертикали власти* и *построению гражданского общества*. (02.09.2005); (21) Программа *укрепления вертикали власти* содержала также пакет экономических мер, ставила на место силовиков, создавала Общественную палату (13.09.2005); (22) Но РСПП не имеет никакого отношения к *вертикали власти* и вряд ли здесь можно говорить о каком-то *жестком кураторстве*, открытом бюрократическом давлении. (27.09.2005); (23) *Вертикаль власти* начинает уже системно работать. (30.09.2005); (24) Депутаты Госдумы будут сегодня *укреплять вертикаль власти* с помощью Уголовного и Уголовно-процессуального кодексов. (09.02.2007); (25) В том, что Таджикистан сегодня... *стабильное государство с жесткой вертикалью власти*—большая заслуга и российских пограничников (22.02.2007) (26) Центр начал политику централизации функций и ресурсов, стала *выстраиваться властная вертикаль*, регионам пришлось отказаться от былой “вольности” во взаимоотношениях с Москвой. (28.02.2007); (27) *Властная вертикаль*, безусловно, *укрепилась*. (28.02.2007); (28) По мере *встраивания* крупного бизнеса во «*властную вертикаль*» его социальная политика становится одним из видов проявления лояльности госчиновникам (28.02.2007); (29) Помимо руководства партии и непосредственного куратора *агитационной вертикали* в «Единой России» [...] Андрея Исаева совещание на Старой площади может посетить и первый замглавы президентской администрации Владислав Сурков. (10.09.2008); (30) [...] проверка имущественного положения и отставка высокого чиновника привели в движение всю *властную вертикаль*. (15.08.2008)<sup>30</sup>

30 (20) “It is indeed true that the mass media facilitate the *strengthening of the vertical of power and the building of a civil society*”; (21) “The programme to *strengthen the vertical of power* also contained a package of economic measures, restricted the power ministries and created the Public Chamber”; (22) “But РСПП [the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs] has nothing to do with the *vertical of power*, and

The third component of conventionalization is the meaning negotiation by the dominant discourse that seems to have reached the level of doxic normativity. Discourse stretching over eight years demonstrates semantic shifts in the meaning of the noun, incorporating extension, elaboration and particularization of certain senses as a departure from previous uses. Here, the contexts emphasize as salient the semantic elements of “order,” “strength” (17, 22, 25), “necessity, teleological orientation” (23, 27), “efficiency” (21, 23, 25), apart from the actualization of the more generic meaning that signifies the particular kind of power that was established during Putin’s presidential term (15–30). Some contexts also point to the connection of the meaning of *вертикаль* to an ideological doctrine (28, 29). Notably, *вертикаль* often occurs in proximity to words relating to democratic notions, for instance, *федерализм* (16), *гражданское общество* (20), or *Общественная палата* (21). Clauses containing references to democratic institutions and to the *вертикаль* are often connected with the particle *и*, which conveys the idea of parity among the linked elements. Such strategies legitimize and normalize the “vertical of power,” forming an impression that it is essential to and inevitable in a successful democracy. The occurrence of the phrase in contexts involving legal documents and the institutions that produce them provides further legitimization and normalization of the phrase. In many contexts of use, agency is omitted or backgrounded (cf. 15, 17–20, 26, 27). A lack of clarity in the signification of agency blurs the notion of responsibility for building or strengthening the vertical. Thus, the *вертикаль* can be construed as having its own impetus and inevitability;

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what we are talking about here is hardly some kind of *strong mentorship* or open bureaucratic pressure.”; (23) “*The vertical of power* is already beginning to work across the system”; (24) “Duma deputies will today *strengthen the vertical of power* with the help of the Criminal and Criminal Procedures Codes.”; (25) “Russian border guards can also take a great deal of credit for the fact that, today, Tajikistan is a *stable* state with a *firm vertical of power*”; (26) “The federal centre began a policy of centralising function and resources, *the vertical of power began to be constructed* and the regions had to stop taking ‘liberties’ in their relations with Moscow.”; (27) “*The power vertical* was undoubtedly *strengthened*”; (28) “As big business has incorporated itself into the ‘*power vertical*’, so its social policy has become one of the ways in which it displays loyalty to state officials”; (29) “As well as the party leadership and the direct coordinator of the United Russia *propaganda vertical* Andrei Isaev, Vladislav Surkov, first deputy head of the presidential administration, may also attend the meeting in Old Square.”; (30) “a check on the assets of the high-ranking official and his resignation propelled the entire *power vertical* into action.”

like some natural force, it works by itself, builds itself and reinforces itself (cf. 23, 26, 27). There is also a sense of omnipotence in relation to the vertical that can be deduced from another regular collocate, *встроиться* (or the derivative noun *встраивание*) в вертикаль “incorporate oneself into the vertical” (28, 31): the вертикаль is re-described as the state of authority that cannot be changed or negotiated, leading to integration on its terms as the one sensible solution.<sup>31</sup> The above semantic elements no doubt place the вертикаль in the field of ideology.

So, it can be concluded that вертикаль власти in the negotiated and stabilized meaning takes the role of a semantic core in the dominant discourse of 2000–2007, in other words, a key “authorized” term of the dominant ideological-discursive formation.<sup>32</sup> Multiply reproduced within and across discourses, the expression seems to have acquired common-sense naturalness and strong associations with the voice of the discursive authority. By multiplying the specific dominant meanings, the discourse was instrumental in downplaying or even cutting off other possible meanings and co-occurrences of the word вертикаль, thus creating what Umberto Eco has called “a ‘sclerotic’ message” that “ceases to be a living meaning” and becomes “a sign vehicle pertaining to a rhetorical code,” which in our case is the dominant ideological code.<sup>33</sup> The “sclerotic message” has an increased indexical function which enables the unit to absorb the established wider associations with the other aspects of the dominant worldview.<sup>34</sup>

### *The ideologeme*

Considering the normative ideological character of the “vertical of power” it would be pertinent to describe it as an ideologeme within the dominant ideological-discursive formation. According to the pansemiotic view of Mikhail Bakhtin, the creator of the term, an ideologeme may be any word of a text: “every word/discourse betrays the ideology of its

31 Here connotations of the building metaphor, as well as Soviet and army associations, are activated by the verb *построиться* ‘to line up, to toe the line.’

32 On authorized language see Pierre Bourdieu, 1977, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice, Cambridge, p. 170.

33 Umberto Eco, 1970, “Codes and Ideology,” *Linguaggi Nella Societa et Nella Technica*, Milan, pp. 545–57; pp. 553–54. Cf., also Augusto Ponzio, 1997, “Semiotics Between Pierce and Bachtin,” *Russian Literature* 41 (3), pp. 333–51; p. 342.

34 Augusto Ponzio, 1993, *Signs, Dialogue and Ideology*. Amsterdam, pp. 63–62.

speaker [...] Every speaker therefore is an ideologue, and every utterance an ideologue.”<sup>35</sup> Following and reinterpreting Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva used the term to indicate an intertextual function and the unit that develops in the process of reading a text and provides its socio-historical background.<sup>36</sup> Elucidating the term ideologeme (*ideologema*) for socio-political discursive domains, Gasan Guseinov emphasized its relation to the social norm and its semiotic stability, coming close to Norman Fairclough’s view of the ideological-discursive formation and ideological norm. Guseinov defines ideologeme as “a sign or a stable group of signs referring the participants of communication to the sphere of the ‘proper’—the correct way of thinking and the right behaviour—or [on the contrary], warning them from the forbidden in the wide sense of the word.”<sup>37</sup> These characteristics also compound Jef Verschueren’s interpretation of language ideology as “more or less coherent patterns of meaning which are felt to be so commonsensical that they are no longer questioned, thus feeding into taken-for-granted interpretations of activities and events.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, the Fairclough-Guseinov-Verschueren approach provides a further theoretical underpinning for вертикаль.

Emblematically, the earliest example of the socio-political meaning of вертикаль provided by the Russian National Corpus dates from 2002. This can be interpreted as a metapragmatic gesture attesting to the awareness that the word has achieved a coherent pattern of commonsensical transparency, cf.: (31) Правда, что между лидерами СПС серьёзные разногласия: часть из них за уход в оппозицию, другая—за создание партии, встроеной во властную вертикаль?<sup>39</sup> It also appears that once the doxic ideologeme has become established, its further

35 Mikhail Bakhtin, 1981, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Austin, p. 429.

36 Julia Kristeva, 1980, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Columbia.

37 Gasan Guseinov, 2003, *D.S.P. Sovetskie ideologemy v russkom diskurse 1990-x godov*, Moscow, p. 12. My translation.

38 Jef Verschueren, 2004, “Notes on the Role of Metapragmatic Awareness in Language Use,” *Metalanguage: Social and Ideological Perspectives*, eds. A. Jaworski et al., Berlin & New York, pp. 53–73; p. 65.

39 (31) “It is true that there are serious disagreements between the leaders of the СПС [the Union of Right Forces]: some of them support joining the opposition while others support the creation of a party that would be incorporated into the *power vertical*,” (*Kommersant-Vlast*, No. 8, 05.03.2002); <http://ruscorpora.ru>.

elaboration tends to be confined within the same normative code: its lexical combinations mainly support the salient semantic elements of the ideological “sclerotic message.” In this respect, consider the collocates: вертикаль заработала, начинает работать, не шатается, жесткая, региональная, экспертная, властная, стройная, политическая, организационная, агитационная, командная, исполкомов партии, отечественного спорта and others.<sup>40</sup> Another corollary of the “vertical’s” ideological normativity is its susceptibility to metonymical reduction, whereby the two component phrase вертикаль власти is represented by the single noun вертикаль (32–33):

(32) Пока во главе страны сильный и авторитетный президент, любая региональная фронда обречена на провал, и вертикаль не шатается. (13.09.2005) (33) Отношения натянулись лишь тогда, когда заработала «вертикаль» и центр велел регионам привести свои законы в соответствие с федеральными. (16.09.2005)<sup>41</sup>

Finally, the dominant semantic elements of вертикаль as an ideogeme reinforce it as a metaphor with two conceptual domains, one of a path (turned upwards), the other of a building/structure.<sup>42</sup> The normative collocate укрепление (“strengthening”) describes the process of strengthening and fortification (consider that it has the same root as крепость (“fortress”)), both of which highlight the senses of stability and impenetrable firmness. A fortified building is also intended to protect from outside adversaries, which leads to the feeling that the presence of an enemy forms an explicit part of the meaning.

40 “The vertical began to work; started to work; is not wobbling; (Adj.) firm; regional; expert; power; graceful; political; organizational; propaganda; command; of the party executive committees; of the sport of the fatherland.”

41 (32) “While the country is being run by a strong and authoritative president, any regional dissent is doomed to failure and *the vertical will not wobble*”; (33) “Relations strained only when *the vertical began to work* and the centre told the regions to align their laws with federal legislation.”

42 Nelya Koteyko & Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, 2009, “The Path and Building Metaphors in the Speeches of Vladimir Putin: Back to the Future?” *Slavonica* (in press).

*Meaning negotiation in the counter-discourse: the case of Plavlennyi syrok* Ideologemes, like the ideologies they are part of, are not only produced but also reproduced, reinforced and, conversely, resisted in discourse. Laughter, irony and satire have been used for resistance and for denouncing political opponents since ancient times.<sup>43</sup> The discourse of political satire is one of the most prominent fields of cultural production where the status quo of the doxical meanings are contested, resulting in a production of alternative meanings. As Linda Hutcheon notes, oppositional satire is characterized by a communicative dynamic which “comes into being in the relations between meanings.”<sup>44</sup> Richard Terdiman sees these relations as radical semantic negotiations between the dominant and the counter-discourses: he argues that in the latter, “their [the producers’] work is driven by a negative passion, to displace and annihilate dominant depiction of the world.”<sup>45</sup>

Satirical counter-discourse is thus deeply dialogical: indeed, it consists of two parts, the *prime*, which echoes the satirized source text, and the *dialectic*, which contains the discursive twist of counter-expectations.<sup>46</sup> This structure may explain the mechanism of meaning manipulation that the dominant ideologeme undergoes in Viktor Shenderovich’s texts. A close look at the instances of use of the word вертикаль in the *Plavlennyi Syrok* programme will bring us to the conclusion that all occurrences can be read at a metalinguistic level. To draw on Roman Jakobson’s distinction between the speech event and the narrated event, or between “use” and “mention,”<sup>47</sup> вертикаль in Shenderovich’s texts tends to be “mentioned” rather than “used.” In Jakobson’s words, the official term acquires the representational sense, which combines the borrowed “code,” that is, the rhetoric of “the other,” with the satirist’s “message” about it.

Like the ideologeme itself, the counter-discursive use of вертикаль involves indexality, although here it is of a different kind: it points to the dominant ideological-discursive formation from outside the normative

43 Anthony Corbeill, 1996, *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic*, Princeton.

44 Linda Hutcheon, 1994, *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, London, p. 13.

45 Terdiman, 1985, p. 12.

46 Paul Simpson, 2003, *On the Discourse of Satire*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, p. 88.

47 Roman Jakobson, 1971, “Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb,” R. Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, The Hague, pp. 130–47.



code system, not from within. The author therefore does not subscribe to the same language as the ideological “insiders” or produce the same meanings. As early as 1935, Bakhtin described this language process as the work of centrifugal forces, which oppose the centripetal, or the centralized, normative forces. He argued that:

Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted process of decentralization and disunification go forward [...] The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance.<sup>48</sup>

Imbued with centrifugal force and positioned outside the dominant ideological norm, Shenderovich’s discourse “colonizes” the dominant key word *вертикаль*, and, fighting for its re-signification, imparts a semantic shift to its “sclerotic” meaning. What we get is the word as “a double-sided act,” a “bridge thrown between me and the other,”<sup>49</sup> and to explain this further in Bakhtinian terms, a “dialogical word,” a “hybrid,” “that belongs to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two “languages,” two semantic and axiological belief systems,”<sup>50</sup> which in our case are the dominant and the oppositional visions of the word.

### *Construction of hybridity*

The recontextualization of the word *вертикаль* as a hybrid allows the second layer of the dialogical meaning to be interpreted as a comment on and readjustment of signification of the sign in question. In layering his comments, Shenderovich regularly chooses strategies of destruction and delegitimization towards the contested semantic elements. For example, the counter-discourse expands the range of collocations in which the ideologeme may occur, re-connoting its semantics from the posi-

48 Mikhail Bakhtin, 1981 [1935] “Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Austin, pp. 259–422; p. 272.

49 V.N. Voloshinov, 2000 [1930], “Marksizm i filosofii iazyka”, ed. I.V. Peshkov, *Bakhtin pod maskoi*, Moscow, pp. 349–486; pp. 420–21.

50 Bakhtin, 1981 [1935], p. 304.

tive to the negative, as in: жесточайшая, феодальная, экономической зависимости, faraonская (“the most cruel; feudal; of economic dependency; pharaoh’s”), or breaking the established taboo and qualifying the вертикаль by reference to the source of its conception, expressing agency undercommunicated in official discourse: путинская (“Putin’s”).

Lewis Sego commented that the semantic expansion and construction of contrasts are usual mechanisms in the conceptualization of political “otherness.”<sup>51</sup> Both techniques can be noticed in Shenderovich’s production of what aims to be the alternative, contrasting ideological norm while distancing and “othering” the doxic meanings of the “vertical.” While the dominant ideogeme occurs as an abstract noun relating to the hierarchy and type of power and command in the social world, Shenderovich expands its semantics to the concrete domain too. The metaphorical capacity of the lexeme вертикаль is explored and utilized to a much higher degree than in the dominant discourse, thus further expanding the noun’s semantic scope.

Counter-meanings often arrive from engaging with the dominant senses in order to reveal their unspoken, underlying assumptions. For instance, drawing on the dominant metonymical semantics and stretching it further, the author uses “the vertical” as a stand-in for the contemporary Russian regime as a whole. This allows him to particularize the meaning: his linguistic manipulation of “the vertical” amounts to a re-description of the regime.

This linguistic manipulation involves a wide range of additional domains that help in re-conceptualizing the dominant use. For instance, in (34), the utilization of a medical metaphor in the phrase диагноз путинской вертикали recasts the ideogeme as a diseased patient in need of treatment, an aberration from the norm usually represented by health:

(34) В благонадежном доводе волгоградского активиста спрятан нечаянный, отчего еще более ценный, диагноз всей путинской вертикали. (20.01.2007)<sup>52</sup>

51 Lewis Sego, 2001, “Philistines, Barbarians, Aliens *et alii*: Cognitive Semantics in Political ‘Otherness,’” *Language and Ideology*, vol. 2: *Descriptive Cognitive Approaches*, eds. D. Dirven, et al., Amsterdam & Philadelphia, pp. 107–16.

52 (34) “Lying hidden in the Volgograd activist’s loyal reasoning is an inadvertent and therefore even more valuable *diagnosis of the whole of Putin’s vertical.*”

In Shenderovich's texts, the *вертикаль* acquires a temporal dimension: in the author's view, the regime symbolized by the *вертикаль* is similar to, if not an exact replica of, the Soviet past. In order to establish a semantic connection between the present represented by *вертикаль* and authoritarian Soviet practices, instead of the ideologically normalized *укреплять*, or *устанавливать* ("to strengthen, to establish"), he combines the ideologeme with the verbal form of the same root and the derivative noun, but with the prefix *вос-* which marks the semantics of "doing the named action again": *восстановление*, *не восстановлена* (to be understood here as the ironical opposite) (35–36).

(35) Так в борьбе за *восстановление властной вертикали* мы получили новое издание советского и насквозь лживого телевидения и вообще прессы (06.06.2004); (36) *Не восстановлена у нас еще по-настоящему вертикаль власти*, вот что я вам скажу. В старое доброе время поговорил бы ты с прессой без ведома начальства и очнулся бы без партбилета и в психушке. (23.04.2004)<sup>53</sup>

Lazar and Lazar describe criminalization among the strategies of out-casting, and in Shenderovich's discourse, the contexts in which *вертикаль* occur are characterized by senses of the lawless, the illegal and the criminal, leading to delegitimization of the dominant worldview it represents (37–39).<sup>54</sup>

(37) К черту закон!... Винти агитатора, мент! Набей ему лицо! Ангел небесный, анонимное существо в форме сотрудника министерства внутренних дел,—*защити вертикаль и ничего не бойся!* (24.11.2007); (38) Первый губернатор, назначенный Путиным, *образец правильной вертикали*, глава Приморья Сергей Дарькин, в прошлом известный правоохранительным органам как *браток* по кличке Сергея Шепелявый (24.05.2008); (39) До-

53 (35) "Thus in the struggle for the *restoration of the power vertical* we have received a new edition of utterly deceitful Soviet television and the press as a whole." (36) "This is what I'll say here: in our state, *the vertical of power has not yet been fully restored*. In the good old days, if you had spoken to the press without sanction from the bosses you would have woken up in the nut house and without your party membership card."

54 Lazar & Lazar, 2004, p. 230.

рогой шведский министр! Если вы уже подписали «бегунок» и свободны, — айда к нам! *За небольшие деньги построим вас в нашу вертикаль*—будет у вас и «Бентли» в гараже, и «котлеты» денег по карманам, и никто слова не скажет! (27.01.2007)<sup>55</sup>

The mock advice to an anonymous policeman manhandling and hitting protesters in the face not to be afraid of anything while protecting the вертикаль (37) points to the oppositional view that, under the present regime, the police are permitted to act against the written rules, and, as long as loyalty is displayed, this will be left unnoticed by the authorities. The sense that the state power represented by the вертикаль protects and favours its own can be also detected in (39): here the verb *встроить(ся)* borrowed from the dominant discourse undergoes a semantic shift to mean “to gain from accepting the rules of the regime’s game.” The verb seems semantically linked with another verb with which it rhymes—*устроить(ся)*—“to arrange perks or favours,” especially taking into consideration the mention of a bribe. In (38), the thrust of delegitimization is achieved through the connection of the domain of the state actualized in вертикаль with the criminal world. The connector is the gangster term *браток* used to signify the governor of the Far East Maritime Region, Dar’kin, and is ironically synonymous with the expression *образец правильной вертикали* (“A model of the correct vertical”).

Shenderovich explores widely the metaphorical potential of the doxic term to derive much of the semantic negotiation. His counter-discourse plays with the tension between the word’s abstract and concrete dimensions, occasionally stripping вертикаль of its dominant abstract sense, constructing it as a tangible vertical object. The associations with the building and construction site pertaining to the dominant view, are found in abundance in Shenderovich’s texts, but instead of the positive connotations of stability and fortress-like protection, the satirist’s

55 (37) “To hell with the law! Nick the agitator, cop! Hit him in the face! Angel of heaven, the anonymous creature in the uniform of the Ministry of the Interior, *protect the vertical and be afraid of nothing*.”; (38) “The first governor appointed by Putin, *the model of the correct vertical*, the leader of Maritime Territory, Sergei Dar’kin, known in the past to the law-enforcement agencies as *the gangster* Lising Serge.”; (39) “Dear Swedish minister, if you have already signed out and are free, come to our country! *For a small sum we will incorporate you into our vertical*—you’ll have a Bentley in your garage and hamburger-thick wads of cash in your pocket, and no one will say a word!”

use foregrounds the fragility and unsteadiness of a vertically positioned structure lacking in support and purpose. This elaboration leads to the construction of a more generic sense of danger in (40): the vertical may be looked at and admired only from a distant, secure shelter, while in (41) it is synonymous with the Sovietism *долгострой*, the word related to inefficient and low quality buildings that took a painfully long time to complete.

(40) Отойдемте подальше, господа, сюда, сюда, в укрытие, полюбуемся этой вертикалью издалека (19.04.2008); (41) путинской вертикали... весь этот вавилонский долгострой с грохотом навернется в мелкую пыль... Отличное, видать, было качество строительства! (20.01.2007)<sup>56</sup>

The metaphor of building also underlies the phrase *сосед по вертикали* (“a neighbour along the vertical”) in relation to members of the power elites (42–43) and in the contrasting images of unrepaired burst pipes lying strewn about the country and the excellent state of repair of the “vertical,” also construed as a pipe-like object (44).

(42) Крайними депутаты быть не хотели, и накануне голосования вице-спикер Слиска напрямую обратилась к одному *соседу по вертикали* с просьбой войти в положение. (11.02.2005); (43) Не сомневаюсь, что успех в раскрытии этих дел обеспечит г-ну Бастрыкину наградные дырочки в мундире,—если, конечно, *соседи по вертикали* не сделают ему раньше дырочку в голове. (28.06.2008); (44) невозможно одновременно обеспечивать «медвежий» процент на выборах—и ремонтировать подстанции к зиме. Что-нибудь одно непременно не получится, так что лучше не рисковать: люди проживут при *прорванных трубах*, не впервой, зато *вертикаль как новенькая!* (19.01.2008)<sup>57</sup>

56 (40) “Let us move a little further away, gentlemen, here, here into *the shelter*, let us admire this *vertical from a distance*”; (41) “of *Putin’s vertical*... the whole of this *long hard slog*, of Babylonian proportions will collapse and crumble into fine dust... You can see just how splendid quality was *the quality of the building!*”

57 (42) “The deputies had no wish to stick their neck out and before the vote, Deputy Speaker Sliska appealed directly to one *neighbour on the vertical* and asked him to put himself in her shoes.”; (43) “I have no doubt that his success in solving all those

In addition, Shenderovich interprets the doxic meaning of “stability” ascribed by dominant discourse to the вертикаль as “rigidity” (45). The metaphor of a rigid, vertically positioned object also represents the idea of national stupor that the imposition of unelected authority has induced in people. The author warns us that the other side of this rigidity is fragility: the unwanted “verticals” forced on people do not last, as can be read from his meaning negotiation:

(45) Пару лет назад президент Российской Федерации Путин В.В. — своим царским указом отменил выборы губернаторов в регионах. Народ, мол, дурак, навывбирал кого ни попадя, — будем исправлять. Ну, и начал он исправлять, и всех самолично переназначил... Мы, конечно, страшно обрадовались такому повороту дел, потому что раньше надо же было самим мозгами ворочать, а потом душой мучаться: ответственность! А с 2004 года — милое дело... Царь самолично лучшего из бояр тебе выбрал и в подарок прислал: праздник! И *вертикаль стоит, как вкопанная*, глазу приятно. Мы, признаться полагали, что проблемы качества власти с тех пор решены навсегда, потому что — раз царь сам боярина выбрал, то уж лучше этого боярина ничего и быть не может, но оказалось — *вертикаль долго сама по себе не стоит...* (30.09.2006)<sup>58</sup>

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cases will ensure that Mr Bastrykin has holes for the medals in his uniform, that is of course as long as, *his neighbours along the vertical* don't put a hole in his head before then.”; (44) “It is impossible to produce the necessary share of votes at the elections from the god forgotten holes and at the same time to repair electricity substations for winter. Either one or the other will certainly fail, so it would be better not to take the risk: people will carry on living fine with *burst pipes*, they are used to that, but at least, *the vertical is looking brand new.*”

- 58 (45) “A couple of years ago, V.V. Putin, president of the Russian Federation, issued his tsarist decree cancelling governors' elections in the regions. It's, like, he says, the people are fools, they've elected some random folks, we'll put this right. So he started to put this right and applied himself to placing his own appointees. Naturally we were terribly happy about this turn of events, because before, you had to use your own brain and be tormented in your soul, which meant responsibility! But from 2004 — things only got better... The Tsar himself would choose for you the best of the boyars and send them to you as a gift, so start celebrating! And *the vertical stands firm*, easy on the eye. I must admit, we assumed that at that stage, the problems with the quality of the authorities had been solved forever, because once the Tsar chose the boyar himself, then there could not possibly be anything better than this boyar. But it turned out that *the vertical does not stand by itself for long...*”

In Shenderovich's world of counter-meanings, rigidity is also connected with the enforced subservience, as his innovation *вытянуться в вертикаль* demonstrates (46). He arrives at the semantic shift by blending the ideologeme with the phrase *вытянуться в струнку* ("to stand tall, to stand to attention"), associated with military language.

(46) А то и подскажут из Кремля налоговику, который именно грешник, [...] человека, который не *вытянулся в вертикаль*, пустят по миру, а его имущество—святой церкви... То бишь, государству. (04.02.2005)<sup>59</sup>

The authoritarian tendency associated with the ideologeme is represented by a further metaphorical extension of *вертикаль* that can be construed as an object symbolic of authoritarian power, a sceptre, thus the counter-discourse co-positions *вертикаль* and the "sceptre" as negotiated synonyms (47).

(47) Те, которые поближе к *скипетру* (*то бишь, к вертикали*), бьют мировые рекорды благосостояния, а остальные чешут репу и ждут пугачевщины.<sup>60</sup> (05.04.2008)

As an object whose purpose is to facilitate wealth and prosperity for the few, the "vertical of power" seems to form one of the key alternative semantic elements of the counter-discourse. To convey this, Shenderovich adds to the metaphor the specific semantic element of divisibility (48): the *вертикаль* can now be cut into pieces, each of which offers the possibility of gain. The choice of the verbal phrase *толкнуть налево* ("to flog illegally"), usually applied to the contexts of speculation in stolen goods, adds the negatively connoted implication that the gain is clandestine and illicit.

59 (46) "And it is quite probable that the tax inspector would be prompted by the Kremlin as to which exactly of them specifically is a sinner, [...] a person who has not *stretched himself into a vertical* would be made to take a bath, while his assets would go to the Holy Church... that is, to the state."

60 (47) "Those who are closer to *the sceptre* (*that is, to the vertical*) set new world records for wealth, while the rest scratch their head and wait for riots."

(48) Вертикаль власти—она ж на то и дана, чтобы ее порезать на кусочки и толкнуть налево! (19.05.2007).<sup>61</sup>

Some more disturbing extensions of the vertical object metaphor are connected with images of punishment, torture, execution, and even cannibalism of the nation by the authorities, amounting to a strong and emotionally charged associative field. Typically for much of Shenderovich's satire, some of this imagery has temporal overtones of the medieval world. In the context of the "vertical," the author's favourite medieval theme creates an impression that the contemporary Russian society that the вертикаль is expanded to signify has a brutal streak and is historically regressing. In the discourse examples, the population is beaten by the "vertical," a bolt of the size of the вертикаль is driven through it by the authorities, and people are impaled on the вертикаль like on a spike, or a skewer. The phrase about the bolt comes from youth slang, has sexual connotations and actually means "cannot care less, ignore"—this complicates the threat and adds a flavour of youthful cheerfulness to the satirical grotesque in the images of the nation's violated body.

(49) [...] а чеченцы совсем обнаглели—повадились ходить в Страсбург толпами и требовать компенсации за пытки и убийства. А мы их там, слава богу, *наколотили своей вертикалью* тысячами... (29.12.2007); (50) Теперь—пара пейзажей *гражданского общества, насаженного на вертикаль* (21.10.2006); (51) Сразу после выборов начальство все это прекращает, *забывает на народ болт размером с федеральную вертикаль* и возвращается к своему привычному куршвелю, в котором легко обходится без ветеранов и трудящихся села. (19.05.2007); (52) Челябинские рестораны в этот день угощали посетителей *шашлыками «Вертикаль власти»*... А кто у нас на вертикаль-то насажен? А как обычно: бараны. (26.05.2007)<sup>62</sup>

61 (48) "The vertical of power has been given to us so that it can be cut into pieces and flogged off."

62 (49) "[...] the Chechens, you see, they are showing utter cheek—they have got into the habit of going to Strasbourg in big numbers and demanding compensation for torture and murders. Good job *we had beaten them in the thousands with our vertical.*"; (50) "Now a couple of landscapes from *the civil society impaled on the vertical.*"; (51) "After elections the powers that be put a stop to it all, *show the nation the gesture of a*



*Grammatical manipulation*

Finally, the ideological normativity of the вертикаль is also negotiated through manipulation of the ideologeme's grammatical characteristics. For example, the counter-discourse relativizes the category of number: as opposed to the dominant use, where вертикаль normally occurs in the singular, in Shenderovich's texts, the plural form вертикали also has currency. Conveying the idea that the Russian regime is not unique, the plural form is employed to signify its replicability, and also to draw a parallel with certain African regimes construed as backward and barbaric (52). The sense of barbarism associated with the вертикаль is reinforced by a contrast: the earlier social sense of the noun горизонталь is borrowed to signify democracy and juxtaposed to the вертикаль as a declared normative alternative (55).

(53) Он, стало быть, по Африке гуляет, фиго-финики срывает... Под ручку с *ихними строителями вертикалей*, президентами Йовери Мусевени, Кеннетом Каундой и Мамаду Танджа. Вот такая компания братьев по разуму. (30.12.2006); (54) Правозащитники требовали тогда наказания виновных и отставки главы башкирского МВД—хотели, гады, *обескровить вертикаль!*—но прокурор Коновалов, око муртазаево, между законом и начальством безошибочно выбрал последнее, и вместо ментовского руководства были разогнаны участники митинга протеста. (17.05.2008); (55) вдруг небеса с громом разверзлись, оттуда высунулся *кусок вертикали с указующим перстом*, и ткнул вниз в конкретные места, и разом открылась правда про зловещих грузин... (30.09.2006); (56) Просто *вертикаль без горизонтали*—очень *неустойчивая* штука. (30.12.2006)<sup>63</sup>

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*dick the size of the vertical* and go back to the Courchevel to which they have grown so accustomed and in which they can happily make do without veterans and labourers in the fields.”; (52) “That day, restaurants in Cheliabinsk treated their customers to kebabs ‘*Vertical of power.*’ *And who in our country has been pierced by the vertical? Sheep, as usual.*”

63 (53) “He walks as he does about Africa, picking figs and dates while walking arm in arm with *their vertical builders* Presidents Yoweri Museveni, Kenneth Kaunda and Mamadou Tandja. A band of likeminded brothers, so to speak.” (54) “Then, human rights activists demanded the guilty be punished and the head of the Bashkirian Interior Ministry resign— they, the arseholes, wanted *to drain the blood of the vertical!* But faced with the choice between the law and his own boss, the prosecutor Konova-

In addition, the counter-discourse may conceive вертикаль as animate, in the trope of personification, which again is a form that does not usually occur in the dominant use. Invested with animacy, вертикаль is linked to domains with anthropomorphic qualities and is construed as having blood and body parts (53–54). This permits plenty of satirical euphemisms that Shenderovich utilizes for apportioning responsibility without resorting to names.

Thus, the counter-discursive shifts in the “vertical’s” grammar and lexical semantics reveal the ideologeme’s double-sided hybridity when used in Shenderovich’s texts. Pointing indexically to the dominant discourse, his counter-use of вертикаль results in the devaluation of the stable, positive and taken-for-granted meanings associated with the truths and values of Putin’s administration. The word’s evaluative sense shifts from positive to negative, meanings are expanded and re-signified and additional domains explored through metaphorical links. Finally, the re-negotiated semantic fields attributed to the вертикаль actualize the senses of danger, social malaise and regress.

### *Conclusion*

Sixteen years of discursive behaviour of the lexeme вертикаль in two types of discourse, the dominant discourse of the Kremlin newspaper and a satirical radio show, demonstrate a complex world of meaning negotiation, proving Valentin Voloshinov’s statement that

the word is that medium in which all the slow quantitative growth takes place, the growth of all those changes that have not yet transcended into new ideological quality, that have not yet managed to produce a new and completed form.<sup>64</sup>

At times subtle, at times demonstrative and loud, discourses in present day Russia are performing ideological fencing with the joyful noun from

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lov, Murtaza’s lookout, unerringly chose the latter and, instead of the police authorities, it was the participants of the protest rally that were dispersed.”; (55) “suddenly the skies opened with a crack of thunder and a chunk of the vertical poked through, pointing its finger towards some specific locations and immediately the truth about the vicious Georgians became apparent.”; (56) “To put it simply: a vertical without a horizontal is a very unstable thing.”

64 Voloshinov 2000 [1930], p. 362.

Vysotskii's song, turning it into a lexical tool for contestation between different knowledge patterns within and between value systems and ideological norms. In the dominant discourse, we have witnessed an increase in the stability and ideological normalization of "the vertical" and the gradual emergence of the ideologeme. We have also observed a firework display of satirical semantic manipulations of the dominant meaning of the *вертикаль* by Viktor Shenderovich, who achieves destabilization and delegitimization of the existing ideologically-grounded norm associated with the word's transparent currency. The negotiated hybrid meaning of the *вертикаль* facilitated the construction of an alternative ideological-discursive formation which represented a norm opposed to what the author sees as the aberrant "other" of the doxic normativity. The texts by Shenderovich do not seem to create ideologemes as defined above. Perhaps the term sociogram coined by Claude Duchet would be more appropriate to describe the satirist's fluid and flexible, dialogical use of the dominant code. Amossy comments that the sociogram defines a stereotype "not as a frozen collective representation, but, on the contrary, as an unstable and dynamic constellation of partial and conflictual representations, [...] producing meanings and insights that transgress the boundaries of the doxa."<sup>65</sup> So, is it a case of the "horizontal" sociogram versus the *вертикаль* ideologeme? For the fluid post-communist world with unarticulated ideologies, the *вертикаль* ideologeme has held up well so far, but how much more discursive mileage does it have until it is negotiated into another sociogram? This is a matter for another project to assess.

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65 Amossy, 2002, p. 379.