

John's singing of the Marseillaise surprised me.

Since *surprise* is a loose container verb, the sentence can be taken in the sense of

That he sang the Marseillaise surprised me.

But it need not be taken in this way. It may be that it was something about his singing that surprised me; his pleasant voice perhaps. So we might say:

That he did it in a pleasant voice surprised me.

What is important here is that the verb *surprise* pushes us, as it were, toward an imperfect nominal. Sometimes we have to recover the nominal. Take:

John surprised me.

John caused the trouble.

In both cases we sense an invitation to complete the sentences: he surprised me or caused the trouble by doing something. (Not, incidentally, by the doing of something.) In the case of, say,

John ate an apple

one does not feel the push; the sentence is complete. One more example: if we say

The abominable snowman is a fact.

what we mean is this: the existence of that monster (that it exists) is a fact. On the other hand, the sentence

The abominable snowman lives in caves

is complete. It is not its existence (life or presence) that lives in caves. These are cases of suppressed nominals. To complete the picture, I want to say a few words about disguised nominals. There are certain nouns that are not verb deriva-

tives, yet behave like nominalized verbs; that is, they can enter container contexts without suggesting suppressed nominals. Fires and blizzards, unlike tables, crystals, or cows, can occur, begin, and end, can be sudden or prolonged, can be watched and observed—they are, in a word, events and not objects.

5.10. We come now to our second indirect proof: container elements that fit perfect nominals are suited to each other as well. It is events, processes, and actions, and not facts or results, that occur, take place, begin, last, and end. The former, and not the latter, can be watched, heard, followed, and observed; they can be sudden gradual, violent, or prolonged. The converse, due to the looseness of the containers, is not so obvious on the surface. Yet, even if we speak of mentioning, though not of denying, events, processes, or actions, even if we call them unlikely or probable, even if we allow them to cause things or surprise us, we at once feel the push toward saying that it is really something *about* them—their occurrence or some quality—that we refer to.

I add a nice point that confirms our main result.⁹ If a sentence is not nominalized at all, it still shows an affinity toward contexts that are suited to imperfect nominals, but not to those fitted for the other sort. The nominal *John's death* may figure in both kinds of context: John's death may surprise us, and John's death may be slow. If we do not nominalize, we still can have

John died, which surprised me
but not

* John died, which was slow.

⁹ This point I owe to H. Hiž.