

*the arrival of John*. Confusion may arise from the fact that the genitive also serves to include the object of a transitive verb: *the execution of the criminal* or *the criminal's execution*. Hence the ambiguity in *the shooting of the soldiers*. The ambiguity is resolved if both subject and object are present: *His shooting of the soldiers* or *the shooting of the soldiers by the prisoners*. Compare *the shooting of him*, *his shooting*, and *the shooting of his*. In *the shooting of him* he has to be the victim, in *the shooting of his* he has to be the agent, and in *his shooting* he may be either. But this is to digress. What is more important for us is the fact that the *that*-clause cannot and the *-ing* form need not resort to the genitive to keep the object; they can, so to say, keep it straight: *that he sings the Marseillaise* and *his singing the Marseillaise*. Notice that the object must be kept straight whenever tenses, auxiliaries and adverbs are present. This, of course, rules out constructions like

- \*John's quickly cooking of the dinner
- \*John's having cooked of the dinner
- \*John's being able to cook of the dinner.

Negation, incidentally, shows the same restriction: while

John's not revealing the secret

is all right,

\*John's not revealing of the secret

is not.

There is an important rule governing the omission of the subject noun. If the object is kept straight, or if tenses, auxiliaries, or adverbs are present, then the subjectless nominal cannot take articles or prenominal adjectives; if, on the other hand, there are no tenses, auxiliaries or adverbs, and

if the object (if any) is in the genitive, then the subjectless nominal can take both. Thus while we have, for example, *singing the Marseillaise* or *singing beautifully*, we do not have \**the singing the Marseillaise* or \**the singing beautifully*; *the singing of the Marseillaise*, however, and *the beautiful singing* are again acceptable.

Not much ingenuity is needed to make sense of this welter of data. The salient fact seems to be the incompatibility of tenses, auxiliaries, and adverbs with articles, prenominal adjectives, and the objective genitive. Now since the former set of possibilities characterize verbs and the second nouns, we can safely conclude that the nominals under consideration fall into two categories, one in which the verb is still alive as a verb, and the other in which the verb is dead as a verb, having become a noun. The former is a case of arrested development; to use a previous analogy, the packaging process is incomplete; the verb still kicks within the nominalized sentence. In the latter case the packaging process reaches the verb itself and turns it into a noun. Harris uses another simile: he speaks of half-domesticated and fully domesticated nominalizations. I shall call the one with the live verb in it an "imperfect" nominal and the other, in which the verb acts like a noun, a "perfect" nominal.

5.6. The time has come to turn to our main task, that of determining the kinds of container sentence that are suited to receive these nominals. I suggested above that containers are selective: we shall find that the main principle of selection corresponds to the distinction just made between imperfect and perfect nominals. Unfortunately, this selectivity does not amount to mutual exclusiveness. Our work would be easy indeed if we could show a clear-cut distinction among containers in this respect. But then, probably, there