

John sings slowly

while the first cannot be forced into

\*John sings possibly.

The best we can do is this:

John, possibly, sings.

If the difference is still not clear enough, think of the possibility of hearing slow singing and the impossibility of hearing possible singing. But this is to anticipate. Note, incidentally, that not all perfect nominals can take all  $A_3$ 's. There are some co-occurrence restrictions here, which, however, do not change the grammatical situation. The collapse of the Germans can be slow, fast, sudden, or gradual; the singing of a song, however, can be slow or fast, perhaps even sudden, but hardly gradual.

There are a few nouns that can be predicated of perfect nominals; for example, *event*, *process*, and *action*:

The collapse of the Germans was a gradual process.

The murder of Caesar was a bloody event.

Johns' kicking of the cat was a deliberate action.

The class of container verbs is the most characteristic here. Among the prenominal ones we find *see*, *watch*, *bear*, *feel*, *observe*, and so on. For instance:

I heard the singing of the Marseillaise.

I felt the trembling of the earth.

I watched the execution of the criminal.

I observed the passage of Venus.

Postnominal verbs are not less revealing. Here we have *occur*, *take place*, *begin*, *last*, *end*, and so forth:

The running of the race took place at Belmont.

The uprising began in May, lasted for two months, and ended in July.

John's singing of the Marseillaise occurred after midnight.

Here I add that certain temporal prepositions fit perfect nominals, but not the other kind. *Before*, *after*, *since*, and *until* are such. While

Everything was quiet until his singing of the Marseillaise

The trouble started after the singing

pass all right,

\* Everything was quiet until his singing the Marseillaise

\* The trouble started after his singing the Marseillaise

do not.

5.9. I claimed above that while container contexts suited for imperfect nominals are fairly tolerant towards perfect nominals, the reverse is certainly not the case. I do not have to belabor this point; a few examples will suffice:

\* John's singing the Marseillaise was slow.

\* The Germans' having collapsed was a gradual process.

\* I heard his having sung the Marseillaise.

\* John's kicking the cat occurred at noon.

As for loose or tolerant contexts, the device of paraphrastic transforms is needed to clarify the confusion they create. Consider the ambiguity in