

Fly on the wall ...

So, “we” have done it again. Thirty-five chaps in green, to be exact, and, on the day, twenty-three. But we say we did it. And we were happy. So many of us. So irrationally. About a game.

Fly just had to dig up his ruminations from the last time – inflicted on the December 2019 edition. What platitude applies in exactly the same way, and what is perhaps different now?

In 2019 Fly was thinking about how mass collective hatred differed from mass collective feel-good, and why the former bit into our daily reality in a way the latter did not:

“Collective feel-good somehow floats around daily reality, for as long as it lasts, which is usually distressingly short, without actually seeming to interfere with it. The battle lines of daily reality are often re-drawn or at least entrenched by collective hatred. They usually remain pretty much unaffected in the glow of collective feel-good.

Part of the reason for this is that collective feel-good celebrates some or other over-arching affiliation or association that is removed from the affiliations and associations that animate daily reality, whereas collective hatred tends to fuel, feed on, and even drive affiliations and associations that animate daily reality. Collective feel-good binds us together in some unreal time-space dimension without threatening to bring us together in the very real daily time-space reality, allowing us to “leave aside” that reality for as long as the sentiment lasts.

Of course one cannot bottle it. Nor can one turn it into something that upends daily reality. But one can try to identify its unifying elements and nurture these. One can use it as a salve and a sop to remind ourselves of what the opposite of ugly factionalism looks and feels like, and try to make it manifest itself more often. One can hope that in some way, at some level, it may enter daily reality and stay for a bit.”



Insaan Harfejee

Any different this time around? Our Captain Courageous really seemed to hope so, to appeal to all of us somehow to make the feel-good enter daily reality in a way it maybe did not do last time round. It’s almost as if we are more desperate now than we were four years ago to hope there can be some lingering rubbing off, as we seem to need it so much more this time.

We will no doubt be disappointed again. Some of us were very quick to be indignant that the head of state, for example, dared to “steal” or “appropriate” some of the feel-good “for political purposes”. Leave our feel-good in fantasy-land, they seemed to say. Don’t touch it with your grubby real-life hands. Let it die its own glorious innocent fantasy death.

Something that *does* seem different this time round is the sheer violence of feeling. Enveloping the whole event was a tidal-wave of vitriol, the main characteristic, or smell, of the “talk” that engulfs all those who, like Fly, allow themselves to be engulfed by a cacophony of thousands of voices, the overwhelming majority of which are singularly nasty, pointedly personal and, frankly, violent. This was inevitable, given that it has gradually become clear that nothing fuels the kind of engagement that sells well quite like

vitriol does. Hence everything big, like this tournament too, like any massive event, becomes clickbait for vitriol. If money makes the world go round, vitriol seems to oil it. This is how we roll in 2023.

So we have the “wit kant” saga, the “cheaters”, the “corruption”, the “robberies”, the vitriol, the vitriol, the vitriol ... repeated after all three play-off matches, which then ultimately affected the lack of grace with which our euphoria exploded in a paroxysm of self-defence as much as celebration. This was certainly different from last time round. Fly does not remember a whiff of nastiness hanging around the whole thing in quite the same way it did this time round. This time round the feel-good at times felt uncannily close to the ugly factionalism of the feel-bad, even if it entailed some moving around of the usual “us” and “them” groups. It almost felt good that the whole business was done and we could settle down again to daily *real* hatred, as the fantasy hatred just became too tiring.

So, yes, like last time round, of course there’s a part of Fly’s heart that says please, can we take some of this stuff and spread it into the sad daily reality around us? But this time round, unlike last time round, Fly also wants to say to the world: ag please man, just leave my game alone, let it just be my game, my lovely game. **A**