

Fly on the wall



In 1994, Fly was twenty-four years old. He was in the United States on that incredible day, when Democracy was born in South Africa. Not for him the queues of goodwill snaking through towns. No, his queue was three people long, in an embassy, with an airhead asking where Cape Town was on a map, 'as, like, that's my constituency'. On his way home he had to kill time and decided to watch *Schindler's List* at the Empire Cinema in London. His accent caused the ticket attendant to say 'Oh, so you're from where all the fuss is about?' Fly had felt really good about the fuss. It was good fuss and it was his fuss. He was from where all the fuss was about. It was different from seven years earlier, when a Swiss border guard had thrown his passport past his seventeen-year old face, to the back of the train compartment, snarling 'fetch, South African.' Then he did not like the fuss so much.

What happened with the new fuss was that, in terms Fly could understand, we had moved from bad to good. We had moved from Something Else to Democracy. That was the fuss. But the fuss was more than that. It was also how we did it. We did so *democratically*. Our government was now democratic, and it was the product of *democracy*.

Fly has never quite been able to grasp the difference firmly in his mind's eye and to keep it there: A democratic government. A government elected democratically. He has read learned tomes on the difference. Most of them say there is one. And they say so in a way that sounds persuasive to Fly. But when Fly puts down the books, the difference starts nagging.

Hitler was not very democratic. More or less, he was elected democratically. His government was, and don't spoil it with details, the product of Democracy. Democracy in action. Morsi, apparently, was (or

is – as at going to press he has not been lynched yet) not very democratic.

He too, more or less, was elected democratically. In fact, he was the first Democracy in Egypt, speaking as an adverb, rather than a noun.

Neither Hitler nor Morsi was removed democratically. Hitler was among the tail-end of some 50 million deaths of which his more or less democratically elected government was largely the *causa causans*. If the BBC is to be believed, a twelve year old Egyptian boy says that Morsi established fascist theocracy by imposing in the guise of religion that which religion did not demand. Some more familiar with Arabic say the boy said something to the effect that he liked ice-cream and that Morsi was bad for taking away his ice-cream, and yet others say a proper translation was somewhere in between.

The Egyptian military say they imposed the will of the people of Egypt in getting rid of Morsi. If the will of the people of Egypt is to be measured by numbers in the streets clamouring against Morsi, then the generals made out some sort of a case for their theory of Democracy. Some are saying the coup brought Egypt closer to *democracy*. Some are saying 'what coup?' Some are saying the coup was real democracy in action – real democracy, Bastille style. Very few can bring themselves to say 'what massacres?' Presumably they think of omelettes and eggs, echoing Robespierre and Lenin. Perhaps they recall Bomber Harris, frying the children of Dresden, or the necklaces worn by impimpis.

Fly has no idea. He doesn't even know whether the Egyptians have good ice cream. He knows that there is an important

difference between the adverb and the noun. There is a difference between that brought about by the process of *democracy* and that which is itself inherently *democratic*. This difference straddles a large semantic and ideological field occupied by the term. There are, at least as logically coherent moral concepts, good coups and bad coups, good revolutions and bad revolutions.

There are democratic democracies, Fly supposes, and undemocratic ones. That means there can be democratic coups, perhaps, in some twisted sense of the term.

But when Fly thinks back to The Empire Theatre, to the admiration in the ticketman's voice, to the pride in his own heart, about the fuss, he knows how important the adverb was for us, how important the adverb remains for us, for Fly and his fuss. Our election was not just a transition from bad to good. It was itself good. It was not just a move from Something Else to Democracy. It was itself Democracy.

As Fly thinks these thoughts there is an old man lying in a hospital bed somewhere whose importance for history is much enhanced by the fact that our fuss, his fuss, Fly's fuss, was infinitely different from the fuss now attending the gushing of a precocious twelve year old.

The adverb is precious. There may be cases where it may be better not to have it. But that does not mean we should ever decline to mourn its death. **A**

Legal Crossword Number 20 Answers

- Down** (in order from left to right)
- 1 Time kills a claim (PRESCRIPTION)
 - 2 Short hand principle of natural justice (AUDI)
 - 3 Some rights more equal than others (FUNDAMENTAL)
 - 4 Grows up to be an act (BILL)
 - 5 Plaintiff in crime (STATE)

- Across** (in order from top to bottom)
- 1 Thief (FUR)
 - 2 What security wants to do to a claim (STIFLE)
 - 3 Difficult to value (OPPORTUNITY)
 - 4 Piece of payment (INSTALLMENT)
 - 5 Advocate (PROponent)
 - 6 Assertion of right (CLAIM)