My Favorite World #12



There Is No Joy in Mudville

So by now, everybody has heard that Stewart is leaving the Daily Show. The Daily Show has been a huge factor in My Favorite World for years.

I am inconsolable.

But he was 'just' a comedian, a joker who made up stories to make people look foolish.

That this happens in the same week when an overpaid Wigstand was sacked from his Respectable Anchorman Desk for making up stories to make himself seem cool…well, the bullshit piles up so fast you need wings to stay above it all.

Even more better: I read the news of his departure as I watched him deliver a right rogering to the self aggrandizing Wigstand from last night's ep, a man who happens to have been his college roommate and one of his oldest friends – neither of which fact saved the Wigstand from a savage kick in the junk, satire-wise – all of which serves to unleash a cascade of multivalence that reminds me of my absolute favoriteness of this world of ours that is so bitterly saddening me right now.

And I really thought I would cry.<fn>Jury's out. It could still happen.</fn>

Stewart is one of the most effective critical operators facing the machine of our modern corporate media, perhaps the single most salient and effective critic we've seen of that frothy mix of ego and insiderism and fecal matter and rank commerce we've gorged upon as a staple of our diet of manufactured consent for the past 30, 50, 75, 150, however many years. Period. Say what you will about McLuhan and Chomsky (and others): no matter how sharp their insights, Stewart managed to tap the lode vein of bullshit running through our public discourse and present it in way that the powerful – and their media enablers – could not afford to ignore. For all the intellectual power of McLuhan or Chomsky, they were easy to ignore. Not Stewart. He pulled peoples' pants down and spanked them, in public, and dared them to ignore it.

They couldn't.

Even the Foxbots – who tried their damndest to ignore the power of The Daily Show<fn>And the parade of spinoffs and imitators who followed in its wake.</fn> could not escape the impact of Daily Show's critical stance. It's pretty simple…Jon Stewart and his writers fundamentally altered the way major media reports the news now. Even – especially – when they pretend it hasn't.

Time moves. Colbert is the new Letterman. Stewart has been at this gig for fifteen years. It's a long time for any gig, but you have to imagine that the pressure that the DS crew put on themselves – and the pressure of knowing that so many were waiting to pounce on any actionable misstep<fn>see, e.g., Dan Rather or Brian Wigstand</fn> – well that has got to wear a body down. Who can blame the guy for wanting something different?

I can't blame, but I can mourn. We need someone like this to keep the heat on those vapid performers with serious mein, the Wolf Beard of CNN, the shoutyfacers of MSNBC<fn>The Good Doc Maddow excepted, may she stay forever.</fn>, the horse's asses

of the Faux fools. John Oliver is doing good work. Colbert will be around, though I fear he will be more of an everyman host than has been his legacy. (You won't see him savaging the White House Correspondents from his new gig, I'll wager.)

And that leaves me bereft, thinking about a cable landscape that will be missing the sanest voice it has had for the past fifteen years. The ancient tradition of the jester, the fool, the one voice with the license to say what really needs to be said, to declare the Emperor naked, to afflict the pompous, &c. — there looms a gaping maw that Stewart filled for years. Shtfkgdmn.

It's still My Favorite World, and I'm raising a glass to the great fifteen years of work Stewart has delivered. We are a better society than we would have been without him. Salute, Stewart. Salute.

But joy? Not in Mudville. Not tonight.