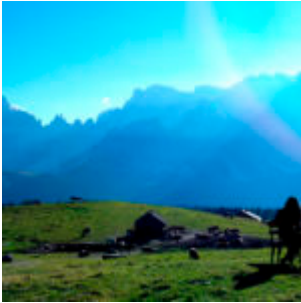


# The Opposite of Nothingness, Part II



*A quick addendum to yesterday's post made necessary because I am really out of practice at this so I forgot the main thing I wanted to share about Wu Fei.*

Around three weeks ago, Wu Fei announced that she would present a piece of music every day through a subscription service. There are two options: You can pay a little bit per month to receive a piece every day, or you can take the unpaid option that brings you a piece every Monday and Friday.

Like most artists, Wu Fei faces a real challenge: How to continue to create new work, engage with an audience, and earn some income. Her solution, in part, is this subscription series.

The twice-a-week-for-free option is a no brainer. Just do it. [Click here](#) to take a listen to today's piece, "Green Plums and a Bamboo Horse".

If you can throw in a little coin, "[y]ou'll also be supporting a new way of creating music as a livelihood, and motivating me to compose or improvise an original piece of music every single day," as Wu Fei explains at her project site.

It's a mere \$8.88 a month for the full ride, around 29 cents a pop for a new sliver of beauty in your life every day. You can also give gift subscriptions to your pals who may be a tad

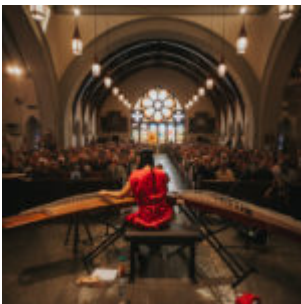
short on the dosh these days.

Most days Wu Fei's new piece is the first thing I listen to. Today's piece has run through three times so far.

Sign up. Just do it.

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## **The Opposite of Nothingness: My Favorite World #39 (COVID Series #1)**



I danced around this piece all last week. With everything so upheaved, I felt obligated to deliver something with heft, depth, and consequence. To offer something that might offset the grim reality that plagues our everyday.

Writing essays about how the world is fucked up and bullshit are easy enough in normal times. Now it's just shooting fish in a barrel. And really, what's the point? Don't even get me started on the futility of coming up with something fictional when we are living inside some Mary Shelley/Camus/Kafka fever dream. We are all sharing the same streams of information, more or less, and unless you are gamboling around the fringier fringes of the internet machine, the news is stark: This shit is real and it is not going away quickly. That first rush of "I can ride this out standing on my head" bravado has withered

and died. The long haul, we are in it, and sorry y'all, but it feels like so much nothingness I could just fucking scream.

Thus my bright idea to leaven the isolation by offering up some My Favorite World diversions. Share a few tidbits that might lively up yourself, shed light on some, perhaps, lesser noticed gems that make this My Favorite World.

But what a fraud! Who am I to suggest to anyone how to lighten the burden? Where does this Grumpy Gus get off chirping about MFW and cherishing the gems of culture as a shield against the darkness.

Because here's the the thing that I've been missing: Joy. It is staggeringly difficult for me to find true joy right now. Moments of contentment, perhaps, even moments where I almost fully forget the looming terror and disappear into a moment of – is that joy? – only to have it snatched away.

Oh the bitter irony of the person who forgets his own prevailing ethos! Because both the i2b / MFW sensibility comes down to one key verb: Choice. Always has done. Immunity to boredom is a choice along a continuum. Savoring the only world you have to choose from is damn near binary. But it remains: Make a choice. Doctor, heal thyself!

I turn then to an old Guitar Craft adage, the one that suggests when we feel we are not up to a task, or somehow unworthy, that we Assume the Virtue and go ahead anyway. In plain English: Fake it til ya make it.

So without further ado, here are a few gorgeous tidbits from this mixed up, muddled up, shook up world. It's my favorite, by the way. World, I mean.

First up, a master of the Chinese *guzheng*, a 21-string zithery thing that sounds like a room full of chiming twelve-string guitars.

Wu Fei means “opposite of nothingness”. And that, I reckon, ought to encompass everything, including the Joy that I seem to have misplaced somewhere.



I first heard Wu Fei at the Big Ears Festival in 2017. Her solo set summoned angels and devils and ghosts, and I’ve been a fan ever since. Her collaborations range from far edge new music improvisers like Fred Frith and Carla Kihlstedt to guitar virtuoso Gyan Riley (son of legendary composer Terry Riley).

The Wu Fei / Gyan Riley 2011 album *Pluck* is available over at Fei’s Bandcamp page for a mere seven beans. Go. Buy.

Until recently, my favorite Wu Fei collaboration was this monstrous Duo for Guzheng and Freight Train. Chaos. Roaring Chaos, at that. And in the middle of it all a stillness, filled with Joy.

Here’s the key thing about Wu Fei: Her music brings Joy. Even in the sad or dark pieces, there is joy in the suffering. And

nowhere does the Joy shine more brightly than in her recent recording with banjo wizard Abigail Washburn on the Smithsonian Folkways label.

I caught this pair at Big Ears a couple years ago. Because I was ducking in out of the rain for "a song or two" before I moved on to something more something or other-ish. I mean, c'mon. On paper, the matchup has all the appeal of something cooked up for NPR fundraising week by a bunch of market driven pencil pushers, yet another in a long march of pedestrian world music mashups. I, I sniffed, am above such RiverDance-esque manipulations.

An hour later I was still in my seat, my coat still on, tears of sorrow and laughter streaking my cheeks. This was no bit of clever, audience-tested oatmeal. Fei and Washburn have been friends for years, ever since Washburn studied in China, and more recently as Fei has relocated to Nashville. And in the best tradition of pure folk music, they cooked up their stew jamming on the front porch while they tried to keep their young'uns in line.

The resulting album, produced by Washburn's husband Bela Fleck, is one of my favorites in recent years. It is soulful and authentic and virtuosic and just so damned full of Joy I could just fucking scream. Happy scream.

So Much Joy

Go buy it. And while you're at it, check out the cover story on Fei and Abigail in the new issue of Songlines, penned by my fine old buddy DD.

And while we're talking about good old pals, there is nothing like hearing the voice of an old friend, even if he's telling you stories you've heard a million times. Hell, these days, that might be the best medicine of all.

So here's a kicking little Tiny Desk Concert from John Fogerty and his kids rocking a few old favorites. I especially love

the actual baseball bat guitar he uses on 'Centerfield'. There's an old joke about Stratocaster just being baseball bats with strings. This one looks really uncomfortable to play, but it sounds great.

And finally, just because this naughty little ear worm has been deviling me for days, a happy little ditty from 1970 by the Kinks. I was maybe ten or eleven when this came out, and while it took me years to realize what was really going on, I loved it right off. And that's the way that I want it to stay.

Pronoun Confusion is nothing new  
Y'all be well and holler if the spirit moves ya. And as always...

LOVE EACH OTHER MOTHERFUCKERS!

It matters a difference.

PS – Click here for Part 2 of this post, because I forgot something really important that I remembered at 3 a.m. Mea culpa.

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## Live and Let Die



*"Tut, tut, child!" said the Duchess. "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it."*

*– Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

A few days ago, our more-or-less president paid a visit to an Arizona factory where they manufacture Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), in this case the N95 masks that are essential for health care workers and are pretty damn great for the rest of us who are trying not to die of the COVID monster. As the Great Pumpkin toured the site – without wearing a mask himself, at one point spraying his putrid drool directly onto a bin of newly-made product – a curious song blared over the loudspeakers.

Indeed, it was the James Bond theme written and made famous by Sir Paul McCartney. He was in a band called The Beatles for a minute back in the dark ages. You can look it up. and redone by the fleetingly popular 80s hair band Guns'n'Roses; it was their anticly screeching version accompanying the president. Late night comics had a blast, as did the twitterati, hailing the anonymous jokester who slipped this past the gatekeepers. Others japed that the hopelessly incompetent boobs on the WH staff were to blame; they just did not realize what the song actually says, yet another in a long-running GOP quirk of using songs that mean the opposite of what they think it means. *Born in the USA*, anyone?

All bullshit, sez me. I assert that the song was chosen with great deliberation and malice aforethought. This is the message the White House wants you to hear and internalize. "Live and Let Die" is as succinct and honest a policy statement as the Trump gang has presented in the three dark years they have been looting our national patrimony. It is the exquisitely logical culmination of disaster capitalism. These mafioso are damned if they are going to let this good crisis go to waste. And in a rare moment, they decided to not even pretend any more that there was so much as a passing interest in ameliorating the human consequences of the pandemic.

We fool ourselves when we fall into the trap of assuming the *capos* and *subcapos* in the White House are bungling doofuses. I believe they are, in fact, quite capable at the mission they

have undertaken. They are there to hasten the dismantling of the commons. They are there to reaffirm White Supremacy as the dominant paradigm of the American social contract. They are there to convert public assets into private holdings. They are there to ensure their friends are allowed to conduct business unfettered by inconveniences like environmental and labor protections, barriers to monopoly, and pesky annoyances like restrictions on abuse of power and foreign financial entanglements.

And certainly our betters do not deserve to be hampered by concerns over whether a few hundred or a few hundred thousand Americans get sick and die from a novel pandemic. Especially when such concerns might keep the hoi palloi from going about their designated roles as widget producers and consumers. The engines of democracy, what what.

America was built on the backs of expendables. From the beginning there has always been a surplus population that the sober-minded Captains of Industry and Capital have been hair-trigger ready to sacrifice to their own enrichment. Use them as one would any natural resource: Extract the value and cast the remains aside.

This is the mission of the Trump kakistocracy. It's a time honored strategy beloved by organized crime and hedge fund titans (though I repeat myself): Take over an institution and through concentrated malfeasance drive it into perilous instability. Then the looters are free to pilfer and sell off the pieces for personal enrichment. Fans of the Sopranos recognize this as the Bust Out.



The Trump family – so accurately described by writer Sarah Kendzior as “a *transnational crime* syndicate masquerading as a government” – has been systematic in its efforts to undermine governance. This has been apparent from the jump, and while Trump is indeed half-an-imbecile at best, efforts to dismiss this rampage as the product of stupidity leaves us helpless in the face of a harsh reality: The destruction of American governance and the evisceration of the rule of law are at the heart of the Trump project.

But wait. There's more!

Because the evangelical core of the MAGA movement is so inextricably wedded to theological White supremacy, there exists a huge swath of our fellow citizens who are actively and enthusiastically rooting for an apocalypse of any kind, just so long as it does the salutary work of ridding the world of apostates, degenerates, liberals, mud people, and pretty much anyone who does not buy into their christo-fascist revelations.

This sets us up nicely for a maker-taker / saved-damned parsing of the citizenry. The makers are happy to see the

decimation and further impoverishment of the takers, the better to more thoroughly control the resources that are – obviously! – the makers’ natural due. The saved are happy to see the damned scourged by hellfire, or virus, or whatever sword of god is close to hand. And anyone who falls to the sword – even those who thought they were in the maker/saved camp – has only gotten the comeuppance they so richly deserve. So how dare you tell me to take precautions on behalf of my or my neighbor’s health? Survival of the fittest!



We live in a reality where the federal government has made the utilitarian calculation that letting this pandemic “run its course” is more cost efficient than trying to fight it, that re-opening the economy is worth whatever death and suffering among the commoners might result. That this is both morally and economically insane is beside the point, because none of us matters in their accounting. They want you to know they feel that way. They want you to feel that way about yourself. Because once we believe it, we are done.

*Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and*

*murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.*

*John Adams, 1814*

Are we done for? Maybe not, but as long as this syndicate runs the show, we are well advised to not expect any substantial aid – or even reasonable guidance – from our governmental institutions. We are being urged to get our economy rolling again – much as we were told to just go shopping after 9/11 – not because medical science suggests it is time but because the people who can force the issue are tired of not raking the profits to which they are accustomed. Even worse! The proles are getting money for nothing, just for sitting around and watching teevee.

Who the fuck do they think they are? Rentiers? Stockholders? Money lenders?



No. Not you.

I am depressed beyond measure as people rush to fill reopened public spaces, as people squander the gains made against viral spread over the past two months. Or has it been four? Or six? I lost track of the month this morning as I woke from yet another anxiety dream. I was sure it had to still be April. Maybe I'm wrong, but it seems likely that this hasty 'return to normal' – whatever the hell *normal* might even mean any more – is going to trigger another wave of infection. I hope I'm wrong, but any cursory study of the great pandemics of history

suggest it is inevitable. I will take no satisfaction in being proved right.



They keep coming back. They don't know why.

People like me are accused of wanting the shutdown to go on forever, and judging by social media comments, anyone foolish enough to want to protect their own health – by wearing a mask, practicing distancing & isolation, etc. – is some wretched combination of homosexual, commie, and victim of marital betrayal. We are One World, Soros/Gates controlled puppets, a flock of sheeple being led astray by “crisis actor” doctors and nurses conspiring to use the pandemic to make their Cheeto Jesus look bad.



A bunch of haters trying to make Trump look bad.

As I have done forever, I have been consuming a bunch of apocalypse narratives lately, and I really need to stop. Some of them, like the latest William Gibson novel *Agency* and Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*, are terrific page-turners that left me feeling hopeless. *Ducks, Newburyport* is a thousand page stream of anxiousness story about a woman who is certain global catastrophe is just around the corner. Thanks anyway, and it is indeed written superbly, but I'm more than capable of generating my own running commentary on the end times.

HBO's *Westworld* started off spiffy enough, but devolved into dreary slaughter and a bleak pile of body parts. The nod at redemption for Dolores was a nice touch, but not enough to counterbalance the grim nihilism. And however cool the exploding skyscrapers at the end of *Fight Club* might have seemed in 1999, *Westworld's* invocation of this image is at once lazy and pretty god damned tone deaf post-9/11.

It felt like I was chewing nails. I needed something light, a

little pick me up as 'twere. So I pulled down *The Plague* by Albert Camus. Yeah, I am a weirdo.

Amazingly enough, it was just the ticket back into hopefulness. First off, the writing is remarkably sharp. The tone steers clear of the dark spectacle that is common currency in dystopia tales. In its place is a heartfelt humaneness, a depth of feeling that refuses to hide its suffering behind narrative fireworks.

On the last page, the narrator explains that he wrote his account because he wished to...

*...bear witness in favor of those plague-stricken people; so that some memorial of the injustice and outrage done them might endure; and to state quite simply what we learn in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise.*

– *The Plague*, Albert Camus

We find a similar tone in Rebecca Solnit's *A Paradise Built in Hell*. This examination of community responses to five epic social calamities – from the great San Francisco fire to Katrina – paints a picture of how we might find our best selves in the face of crisis, how we might rise above our habitual indifferences to achieve something greater than the sum of our parts. We need look no farther than the front line medical workers for an example of what that might look like.

One post-dystopic book I'd like to read again soon Will he never learn???? is Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. It paints a grueling struggle, but it is suffused with hope for a better future. No matter how dark, our heroes refuse to give up.

*"That's all anybody can do right now. Live. Hold out. Survive. I don't know whether good times are coming back*

*again. But I know that won't matter if we don't survive these times."*

*Octavia Butler, Parable of the Sower*

That pretty well sums up where I am right now. I despair for the choices and challenges facing my kids and their generation, and I grieve for the thousands who have and will die from the indifference the Trump syndicate has shown towards medical science and human decency.

My optimism is pretty much spent. But I remain too stubborn to surrender hope, no matter how unreasonable that may seem.

Top of the page, yo. Blog motto. It matters a difference.

*Also, too: I'm going to bring back the My Favorite World series next week. Because there is still so much astonishingly wonderful stuff to celebrate.*

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## Put Out More Flags



*As part of "Operation America Strong," the Blue Angels and Thunderbirds announced they will fly joint operations over Washington, Baltimore, New York, Newark, Trenton, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Dallas, Houston and Austin, sources told USA TODAY.*

It was inevitable that vocabulary and concepts around COVID19 would come to lean heavily on militarized bafflegab. We are "at war" with an "Invisible Enemy" that threatens to "destroy the economy and the lives of millions of Americans." We "deploy strike forces" to conduct tests in elder living facilities. Perhaps the term 'care team' was deemed too twee and weak for the National Guard carrying out the "mission." Screw it; let's scare Granny to death. We are exhorted to "activate the arsenal of democracy" to defeat this threat.

Not as easy to predict was the invocation of one of our most overused symbols of military prowess, the roaring squall and vapor trails of the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels and the Thunderbirds of the U.S. Air Force air demonstration squadrons.

It is customary to have the victory parades after the victory is won, but if the COVID episode has proved anything it is that our government's sense of sequence and priority is somewhat addled. And hey, who can resist a tight marketing pitch? Operation America Strong. Fuck yeah.

As with most things military, the actual cost of these mighty flexes are damnably difficult to pin down. The most common figure is \$35M-ish per annum per squadron, but estimates range as high as \$200M when costs of maintenance and aircraft replacement are figured in. Each plane burns approximately 1300 gallons of jet fuel per hour, an extravagance that is expensive fiscally and environmentally. That is a lot of overhead up there for something that will be done with in a few seconds.

But hey, what's a little dosh when it comes to putting on a circus, no matter how quick? Sure, we could pay the rent or buy Momma's insulin, but fuck it, let's drive up to Dothan instead and buy us a bunch of fireworks.

Maybe to some degree our lazy reversion to illness-as-

military-metaphor makes sense. It is likely that as I write this post the total number of deaths in the U.S. from COVID19 will surpass the number of U.S. troops killed during the entire Vietnam War. (We surpassed the Korean War tally over the weekend.) This makes COVID19 the fourth most deadly war in our history. CW, WWII, and WWI for those keeping score.

This assumes that we have been counting more or less accurately. "Some experts" believe we are missing a huge batch of COVID casualties, while "other sources" disagree, asserting that the COVID numbers being deliberately inflated by nefarious forces who are trying to use the pandemic to subjugate the "sheeple" who refuse to see that our essential Liberty is under attack by a tyrannical one-world-government cabal.



Perhaps you would like to try our two for one special?

Both sides. You say potato...

Somewhat less paranoically, we are exhorted to "activate the

great arsenal of democracy” in order to “protect our precious freedoms” and “kick start our economy” so that we might enjoy the “liberty” that fuels the “American Dream”. We are in an “arms race” to develop a vaccine, a race in which victory is “critical” so that we are not left at the mercy of *pick-your-villainous-other*. You know, Those People, the ones who started this virus in the first place. You know who I mean, amirite? Nudge wink...

*“When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer.” – George Orwell Politics and the English Language (1946)*

Never mind that. We are “winning the war” with our “Invisible Enemy”.

Today, the White House proudly announced that the U.S. has conducted 5.4M COVID tests, “more than any other country in the world”. This boast gently elides the fact that 5.4M represents about 1.5% of our total population.

Here in Florida, Gov. DeSantis touts that Florida has conducted the third highest number of tests in the nation. Again, the elision: Florida also has the third highest population in the nation, putting our percentage a little below the national figure. Yesterday, our Governor Mini Trump declared that he sees a “light at the end of the tunnel”. Victory! Open the beaches.

It is astonishing how successful our man Ron has been, given the impossible obstacles. Just yesterday he blamed “the media” for ignoring the dangers of CV for too long. But our Speaker of the House today asserted that “journalists continue to sustain the pandemic narrative” and that “the measures we have taken in the last few weeks have been both harmful – with freedoms lost, money spent, livelihoods destroyed – and pointless.”

It’s a dessert topping! It’s a floor wax! Both sides!

The bafflegab comes strong and fast, one degraded word and metaphor after another. 'Freedom' and 'Liberty' have taken a solid thrashing over the past 40 years, denuded of any real meaning by relentless *deployment* in service of selling cars and trucks and sundry other shiny objects, not to mention their use as cudgel to differentiate "patriots" from "libtards" &c. The sight of literally tens and twenties of outraged protesters demanding their Constitutionally protected right to get a haircut – in the name of Freedom! and Liberty! – could only attain greater comic amplitude if they painted their faces blue like Mel Gibson.

Freedom isn't free! It's a bumper sticker.

But the word that has taken the worst body blows of late is 'essential'. Who has to show up to work? The essential workers. What businesses have to stay open? Essential ones.

That the people who do the work deemed 'essential' are overwhelmingly the lowest paid among us is more than a tad discomfiting, as is the free slinging application of the word 'hero' as a token of appreciation in lieu of actual support and compensation. This is a word that has long served as a lever to encourage people to sacrifice themselves for the greater good, which all too cleanly equates to what is good for their betters. *Dulcē et decōrum est prō patriā mōrī*, yo. You're a hero, maybe even an essential one.

The word takes on water fast when we start to see enterprises like WWE pro wrestling declared an "essential business" in Florida. That this happened within 24 hours of the ownership of WWE donating \$18.5M to the Florida GOP is either a happy coincidence or a disturbing demonstration of the power of a specific kind of *essence* that lies behind the unsubtle drive to Reopen America. Nail salons. Barbers. Tattoo artists. Waiters. Not many people leaving the gated communities for those essential tasks.

On the brighter side, the present viral moment affords an opportunity for us to closely examine what 'essential' truly means as we adapt to a life style that is, to put it mildly, constrained. While there may be a long list of things we might really, really, really want to do or buy – beyond the life-sustaining basics of food, shelter, and medical care – much of what we took for granted as necessary is just...not.

Being cooped up at home for weeks (months? experts differ) on end sucks. Shit gets old under the best circumstances. I can rarely tell you what day of the week it is without checking first. Sleep is hard to achieve and riddled with the most cinematically disturbing dreams. There is nothing grand about it.

But shelter in place (itself a term more closely related to mass shootings that are often carried out in a militarist fantasy) is quite evidently the most effective means of curbing the spread of the virus until a vaccine comes along. Contrary to the assault rifle toting mini-mobs demanding their right to a mani-pedi, self-isolating does not equate to cowering in fear. It is an act of love and affirmation.

The pandemic catastrophes of history share two salient features that suggest our near future: First, there will be a premature declaration of all-clear, with an attendant resurgence of the disease that matches or exceeds the first wave. Second, there will be a reflexive move to blame *anybody else* for the catastrophe, especially among those whose job it was to manage the crisis.



"It was on fire when I got here."

In a twist that would be ironic if it were not so poignantly tragic, the U.S. State Department until recently was actively recruiting immigrants in the health care field. Somewhere between a sixth and a quarter of the health care work force is currently comprised of immigrants. If history is any guide, these good people are as likely to face rage as they are appreciation. Thank you for your service, hero. Now kindly leave before we show you out the hard way.

Wielding the same kind of demented alchemy that saw a pig virus from a Kansas farm end up with the name Spanish Flu, we already see a small but visible contingent of yahoos determined to hang this virus around the neck of China, which is handy since these same deep thinkers can't quite tell the difference between Chinese and Japanese and the rest of Asia's children.

So let's gear up for some traditional scapegoating to let the

steam off. And if you count your blessings that somebody else is the target, remember it wouldn't take much to set the hounds off on a different hunt. It's as much a part of the American Way as the damn air shows.





American as apple pie.

The worst of it is that we have not seen the worst of it. Even if the virus miraculously mutated itself out of existence tomorrow, there would be massive upheaval to sort out. Jobs have disappeared. The gap between haves and have nots has been

quite explicitly demonstrated. This pandemic is not and never will be the 'great equalizer'. (The phrase "we're all in this together" is yet another trope tossed around in hopes that we won't notice the differences.)

But the disruption represents an opportunity to reconfigure at least some aspects of our social contract into something more equitable, more in keeping with the vaunted American ideals of fair play and justice for all that have never quite managed to manifest in our destiny.

Unfortunately, this opportunity cuts both ways. There are powerful actors already at work taking advantage of the crisis to consolidate wealth and power. The hasty reopening in Georgia of the businesses deemed *essential* are as much about coercing people back to work and off of unemployment as it is anything to do with liberty or rights of assembly. When government makes these kinds of inexplicable decisions, the best explanation comes with following the money. Cui bono? I guarantee it ain't the waiter working for tips at Applebee's.

Along the same lines, it is instructive to witness the panic expressed by Our Betters (people like Jamie Dimon and Jeff Bezos and Rick Scott) as they clutch their pearls at the idea that people hardest hit by the virus might actually receive some kind of support that makes their lives better, even if just for a minute. "They'll never want to work again," cry our pampered overlords. Perhaps if the jobs and compensation were not such pitiful crumbs in the first place, they might find their labor widgets more amenable to return.

The dignity of work is another one of those denatured bits of language that exists solely to make it easier for the top to extract labor from the bottom. Nobody who is earning a low wage cleaning bedpans or fast food grease traps needs to hear anything about the dignity of work from these soft-handed swells. People like to work, to have a purpose, a task. But they like to be appreciated for that work and compensated

fairly. It's an *essential* part of the dignity touted but that is never remitted. Moral hazard, my ass.

Essential. Non-essential. Unskilled. Entry level. We have been sold a pig in a poke. The work that is keeping us propped up right now is largely 'unskilled' and 'entry level' work. The work that so many of us have done for years is part of a deck chair shuffling choreography that serves to keep us, and each other, busy. Think of all the oh-so-essential office jobs that are going undone right now. fwiw, I have done every job I am about to mention at one time or another. My apologies to anyone who does this work and finds it ennobling. The world keeps turning even without a flood of instruction manuals and press releases and such. Advertising has devolved into a computer-generatable stream of "We are all in this together and we value you, our customer, as one of our family, and by the way, we are not in the car/pharma/travel/entertainment business: We are in the people business."

Do you miss compiling network usage statistics, analyzing cash flow deviations, or dissecting work flow charts to find someone who can be fired? Do you miss developing power point presentations and proofing spreadsheets over a holiday weekend to help your company extract a one-tenth of one percent increase in efficiency? Do you miss hustling insurance titans into buying software that will "enhance their enterprise productivity while allowing them to right size their work force"? Do you really miss coming up with catchy phrases like Operation America Strong?

Do we miss measuring out our days by the thimbleful? I don't think so.

I think we miss each other.

Please refer to the top of this page for the ever-applicable closing line. oxoxox