

This End of History: Day 94

by David Ackley

A Journal of the Plague Year
Day 94

Last night: A bad day, for private and public reasons.
Just before bed at ten, hope-bereft, I step out into the backyard.
Light and dark are layered: overhead, moonlit, an open center,
fringed around by pale clouds with Venus the one visible source, a
glinting in the slate blue skylight.

Around the yard, the ring of trees, forest in back, our line of
mature arbor vitae to my left, makes a second layer, darker, cupping
a dense black that conceals even the white picket fence a few yards
ahead.

Within the cup of black, a benediction of fireflies blinks little
messages of yearning, bouncing back and forth across the yard. For
a moment they all seem to sense something and begin to flock
towards me, blinking on, winking out, over and over...

So ends my day, with a rush of sparks and longing.

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A few years ago, Francis Fukuyama risibly proclaimed “the end of
history,” (a notion he later recanted) in the realized world
hegemony—as he saw it—of liberal, capitalist electoral democracies.

Behind its grim, and seeming lifeless mask, history grinned and mined away.

The statues of Confederate heroes, I saw first as looming sentinels of the auditorium stage of the opulent Blackstone, Virginia white elementary school I attended in 1947—Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis, I believe—with miles away from the school, a rickety shack on cinder blocks down a rutted, dirt road, where my black army brat friends from Camp Pickett had been dropped in shock that morning—this in the days of the myth of “separate but equal schools—” those same statues which had stood until now proudly in city squares, in their stony supremacist obduracy—now being defaced, thrown into the dirt, smashed and drowned in rivers.

“The destruction of representational images is the destruction of a hierarchy which is no longer recognized...The solidity of the images was the expression of their permanence. They seem to have existed forever, upright and immovable; never before had it been possible to approach them with hostile intent. Now they are hauled down and broken to pieces...”

And behind these acts, history —that specter of specters, that old mole, grins and mines away.

