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Iulie

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D.E. STEWARD

Iulie

When transmission lines came up the Shenandoah to Yancey at the end of the War, there was profound excitement watching the poles raised and strung

Boundless optimism

Jokes about having to go into town before dark to buy light bulbs

An episode of unalloyed progress

Its euphoria was like a dramatic weather change, it approached and then engulfed us

Most houses, and some barns and sheds, had been wired for months before the big day when the transmission line came up the road

The perceived main benefit was not lights at night but an electric pump on the well to push water inside the house to the sinks and tub and toilet, to finally obviate the outhouse

Cobalt blue, strong and greenish, bluer, lighter, and stronger than indigo carmine

And in the present era, performance poets in the boom economy lay claim to being starving artists and complain about having to work as tree surgeons instead of being diplomats “as poets in other countries are”

Goatees almost ensure silliness

A whole set of bogus credenda and miranda about the artistic life implanted from the proverbially conventional libretto of *La Bohème*

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with the graduate allowed a year or two to make it as a writer, under the gun of grow-up-and-settle-down limits

Quimper, a grayish blue, greener and stronger than copenhagen or old china, and redder than Gobelin

French assuredness revealed by capitalizing Quimper and even Gobelin (only a family dye works in Paris) while copenhagen as a color is relegated to lower case

Quimper is a small, hilly, white-walled and slate-roofed port in Finistère. Climbed a long coastal-bluff hill there one morning out of ocean fog into fitful sun

Hope one summer somewhere to live with blooming hollyhocks as they grow in Finistère

If intellectual formation is everything, mine in the crucial years had an attitude problem

Poverty, ignorance, and resultant exploitation

Without good luck and friendly, responsive adults, could well be a psychopath. And without a spotty Quaker education, could well be a moneycrafting shark or corporate drone

Cobalt blue is also called cobalt ultramarine

Landfill tractors with blunt-toothed sheepfoot roller compactor wheels instead of tracks, pitch and yaw together at the crest of the day's dump strip at Arthur Kill

Like the colorful ease of trawlers working through big swells, and rising over the pitching tractors there are even the gulls, even the gulls

The death smell in the concert hall like the odor from long-used pillows as though it is from somewhere nearby, realize that it could well be on my breath, might be my mephitic self

The all-woman Franciscan String Quartet, strong women, performing its Bartók stirringly and then slamming its Mendelssohn at us

On a foggy spring afternoon on rocks far out on a point near Pusan years ago, half a dozen jeering *haenyo*, women divers from off-shore Cheju-do, rose from their warming fires to overwhelm my sexist boyishness

Ch'ing is a vivid blue, redder and duller than Cleopatra and greener and duller than ultramarine. The Qing (Ch'ing or Manchu) Dynasty lasted from 1644 until 1911. The color and the dynasty are written with different characters

Remember North Dakota's wind birds and its ducks

Remember, remember, the blacktail jacks in the dawn on the firebreak approach to the Mayacamus. And the ground-feeding flock scintillations of lesser goldfinches, the Anna's hummingbirds, the California quail

July dusk lake calm, a couple dancing quietly to no audible music, their snapping fingers, the fireflies, clunk of an aluminum dory coming across like a temple barge, and a man in a cowboy hat, white knee socks and blue running shorts posed

For even as far as one can see, right-of-way, roadbed, ties, and tracks, are a processional image, environmental sculpture on continental scale

Set your awareness on the tracks where they swing out from the Bronx at Spuyten Duyvil and along the giant fiord of the Hudson,

look north, and then follow the nearly thousand miles to Chicago,
then all the way west

Tracks and ties across the High Plains, from the Red River of the
North to the foothills before Glacier's montane continuum

Plus everything else, the Texas breadth, the Santa Fe, Denver's
yards, San Pedro's and San Diego's track-laid wharfs

In infantry blue

Not Marine blue

Only Marines and recruits bother to wear their marksmanship
medals

In the way that most facial hair marks insecurity

She was twenty, had never been away from New York before, trav-
eled across Canada by rail and then to Kobe on Canadian Pacific.
One Bishop Bridal, Archbishop of Japan and Korea, married them
there, "a beautiful man"

She spent 1911 to 1931 living in the French Concession in Shanghai,
twelve servants, her husband worked for Standard Oil

Mussolini's daughter was a neighbor, her titled husband the ambas-
sador, "He was gorgeous. She was immensely ugly. Looked just like
her father"

Sun Yat-sen elected President in 1911, the last Qing emperor abdi-
cated early the next year, the Chinese Revolution was under way

Oil was the computer chip of that era, nothing moved without oil.
Oil an elixir, the panacea for backwardness, and those who dispense
oil have long been mighty

Peking blue is dark, is greener and stronger than Japan blue, Majolica blue, or Flemish blue

We speak of wanting to visit China, are drawn to it. Maybe China is everything to everyone, perhaps we are all hardwired to its cultural consensus

Before century's end the world's population passed six billion for the first time. If it ever drops below that again it will not be as a result of choice but of catastrophe

"What sort of mileage you getting?"

Ultramarine was once only a costly pigment made by powdering lapis lazuli

Now ultramarine is chiefly a brilliant blue pigment, prepared by reducing a mixture of kaolin, soda ash, sulfur and charcoal, similar to the original but having a reddish or greenish cast

The Episcopalian doxology loops back refreshingly, floating on its resplendent hues

The cyclical color changes of vestments and altar cloths connecting with the historical depth of the seasons

Probably, given Italy's lucid centrality, a few Roman continuities returned to the old Roman provinces north of the Alps with the legions of post-WWII *Gastarbeiter*

Through the Saarland last during a French rail strike, its winter stillness hung there from the day the last Roman left it in grape-must-gray barrel soak quiet, left, abandoning Colonia Agrippina for the South and the Rhone

As they left Trier, the birthplace of Karl Marx, that somnolently resigned old place that germinated the dreary central dogma of the last century and a half

Sadao Harada's Vivaldi sonata is like lacquer, Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* like Dresden dinnerware, then Harada galvanizes us to the César Franck (born in Liège almost next door to the Saar) A Major Sonata and strews Rachmaninoff's Sonata in G Minor across the evening so that we leave as drained and fulfilled as he seems to be himself

She brought it along from her childhood into her apartment life, now she pulls her push mower across the grass out to a far corner of the apartment house grounds and grimly mows strips for a while

Like brown cranes, they each go six feet tall by puberty, all five of them, and the youngest of the brothers sits at the window beginning the simmer of his hormones, quizzical, amazed at his own uniqueness

Strawberries for all of June, blueberries through much of July, and peaches, peaches