

Masthead Logo

The Iowa Review

Volume 29
Issue 1 *Spring*

Article 42

1999

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Recommended Citation

Terrill, Richard. "The Moldau." *The Iowa Review* 29.1 (1999): 136-137. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.S172>

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Richard Terrill

THE MOLDAU

Smetana's piece is about a river, but all here is field
and shallow lake that spring through fall
I fish for bass,
swearing at the carp that take my bait.

It was called "program music," the idea
that music should mean, could suggest something paraphrasable—
a flowing, sparkling and blue in a Czech landscape
through the last century. In the rear view mirror

I see only enough to wonder why I've made meaning
on Blue Earth County 12, which is wholly without loveliness
and wholly without my affection, which is not to say
that I am more lovely than stalks and drifts
or that I make any sound
good enough for what they do.
(One car speaker is shot,
and the tape is crinkled where the brass come in.)

What used to be prairie is torn up
to feed us and pigs. Snowmobiles
that grind through winter, the portable
radios thudding city streets all summer
are drowned out only by the whine of my travel,
the airplane hum of Toyota pistons.
The road into snow is questions with white answers,
my vow to leave as empty as the static between radio stations
once "The Moldau" has finished flowing
and I can't take the tape out while driving an icy patch.

So I have to listen to myself blow on about southern Minnesota
while the sun sets inoffensively through a marsh of winter clouds
over the field next to the lake
or over the lake next to the field,
the field next to the field.