The Moldau

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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.