

Vltava

After Bedřich Smetana

You are the source, rising from a fractured space
to seep into a place where tenderness might grow.

In this particular moment I see you, my father, clear
as a Bohemian sky in summer, your smile still wide as its sun.

We're listening to your vinyl records as I dance in time
to the scratch and spin of a folk song – something about cherries –

in a chorus of voices that I, your *favourite daughter*,
do not understand. In this moment, you are still my father:

an orchard of sun-warmed notes, the strum of a guitar,
the thrill of *Twist & Shout* sung too loud, and *Tereza*

in her campfire glow. Today your absence flows steady
as the Vltava, its course penned in crotchets as two flutes begin:

a cold stream meets a warm one, their confluence as the strings
come in. Music becomes river, river becomes music, a force stirs

your spirit's bed, eddies a primal longing. And I see it:
the castles, nymphs, woods and fields of a fairy tale I long for, still.