To the Color

Having discovered the old combat boots that I had tried to hide
my toddler strides across the room, feet engulfed in them, he clomps
across the floor, his footfalls call back to other eras, other wars

When Johnny comes marching home again, hurrah, hurrah

Fluttering guidons, snapping in the wind, fifes, bugle calls, siren songs

We’ll give him a hearty welcome then, hurrah, hurrah

Recruiting slogans, jingo, jangling of stirrups
Going to whip us some Rebs (or Yanks or… just fill in the blanks…)
Helicopter rotors brings the target objective closer
and somewhere in the night, the motifs of wrong or right
are drowned out by the ardor of the battle song: hurrah, hurrah—

“That? That?” my kid has caught me in the act of taking my war
photos off the wall. Images from long ago, helicopters, flags,
me standing beside the best friends I ever had
M4s by our sides (am I selfish that I would deny him this kind of life?)

“Gee-tar? Gee-tar?” My little guy, his eyes still full of stars
He thinks our rifles are guitars—I tell him that, in fact, they are
And they make the most beautiful music in the world