

BRUCE BOND
Semper Fidelis

In a far room a child is listening to music
from the fabric on the hi-fi console

twice his size, no, three times, more now
that there is music in it, and inside that,

the leafy crackle of vinyl beneath the needle
as if some beast were rummaging the trees.

If I tell you the child is me, it is me
as an enigma now, a speechless witness

just inches from the black fabric that is,
in turn, inches from a distant parade.

My father is away on business, and so
he takes the shape of records that he bought us,

or rather the family before I came
into the world a stranger, though I must have

felt less of one, somewhere, far away.
The trombones are serious about getting

from here to there, and since I know them
as funny in cartoons, I hear their laughter

in a military number scored for horns.
It is November 1957,

and armies with their morning glories of brass
march our streets every Veterans Day,

me the glad hat on my father's head
and shoulders, bouncing in time because he bounced.

I still hear the trumpets' high sentence,
how they walk in time a flowered street

to reach their full crescendo as they pass.
Always America in songs and pledges

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whose gratitude is too powerful
to be clear, like a boy's shadow

small inside his father's as it grows.
I do not quite know what people love

when they love their country, but for me
the music of affection begins with one

room, one face, one patriot, say, who
served on a warship in the Sea of Japan.

Mostly his stories go so far and then
trail off when things turn dreadful or boring.

Hard to tell. All I see is my father
before a photo of his destroyer drawn

across the shadow of the Golden Gate.
How patient his stare, a long time now

entering the ash-white fog in silence.
How small his body inside the visual

music of the harbor, the great wet chill
that flags the mast, the pallor of surrender.