

First Prize

Cylinda Neidenbach

To Bear Arms

Lightest olive,

veiny, lean, muscular,

not an ounce of anything

that doesn't spell hard labor.

Thick, knotty purple scar

lazing under his elbow like

a drowsy purple caterpillar.

V-shaped for violence,

and the broken bottle that carved it.

There are others—

strange, bruise-like,

tokens of methamphetamine

or a life waged in the wooly outdoors.

Each I kiss like fresh wounds,

monuments etched to say:

Look how much he knows.