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Green

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Green

Linda McCarriston

Barely done with growing but enough
done for use, big and brand-new
to themselves, and to us fresh-minted,

the bodies of boys on the last laps
toward manhood, by which we mean
humanness, are harvested. Shocks

of them are bound and sent
still green, to ripen
in the shipping like tropical

produce. They have achieved
size. They have produced mass —
arms and legs, the back's long

muscles, unlined quick strong hands.
It is as though we do not know
that they are boys still, that

they have souls, still boys', to which
the dander of the world clings
benign or malignant, irritant

or balm to the willow-green nap
of the soul. Barely have they
stopped being measured against

the doorframe, bringing the pencil
and tape to another and pressing
hard against the jamb up toward

adulthood. It is as though we do not
know they are our sons, and do not
know they are not done yet. It is

as though we did not see them stand
like that, so hard trying not
to cheat, to keep the heels flat and

the head level and yet to have grown
another inch. It is as though we
do not know that they don't know

they are not done yet. They are
so big they think so. Yet we know
they are not done and so will go

when we send them, bound in shocks
like brothers, to ripen or to rot
with their mothers' blessings.

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MILITARIZATION