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The Military-Industrial Complex

Robley Wilson Jr.

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THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

On his free weekends he took
from its patent holster
the black sidearm, clicked
off the safety half-way
across the back lot, and sat
—we could see him, his legs
dangling over the edge of
the roof—sat on the hencoop.

After the first round or two
the chickens stayed inside
and gossiped the thunder
above their witless heads;
he would shoot, and the hens
echo, and another shellcase
shine in the hot sun—the yard
a litter of brass and dung.

Flies. Green flies were what
he murdered from his perch,
brushing them from his face,
scowling them down to earth,
taking aim. He hammered them
into the dirt, into the wood
frame the wire was nailed to.
Hours this lasted—weekends.

At the start we had thought
it was the rats that raided
the coop from time to time—
and it all made sense: noise,
and the panic of the fowls,
the killer in his khaki shirt
sitting at ease on the roof,
waving the sun from his eyes.

When it was not rats, we saw
this was none of our affair
and got used to it—weekdays

called him *Sir* and envied him
ribbons and rank. So what if
the chickens choked to death
on the spent casings, and men
working nights got no sleep?

A PASTORAL FOR INSTITUTIONS

The pleasures of being mad
are common knowledge; right off
the top of your head, you

could name fifteen or twenty:
the high sense of yourself
is one—every madman his own

Voodoo doll, every lunatic
his own gleeful inquisitor.
Or the utter deep privacy

of the shuttered mind—that's
two—where the only visitor
is the devil possessing you.

Or the world's attentiveness
—clinicians, barbers, wives—
that's three through seven,

though the numbers matter
less than you might have thought,
and the order not at all.