

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.