

Confederate Blues

Upon his return, mother felled
the family hound with one shot,
raising a straight arm over the heads
of mounted men, Home Guard,

Excuse me, she barked. Mad dog.

Father crouched below the porch
in deserter's grays. *No man
ever comes home from war the same,
mother once said, or to the same place.*

By then, I'd grown four inches above
the last notch in the barn post made
the day he left. We watched Blue fall.

A farmer shouldn't hold on to this,
no more than chickens beheaded,
calves born still or horses walked

into their graves. The unmatched
stubbornness of hounds, coming
when not called, over fields as fog
burned off. *You sure he ain't here?*
The guard say. *We been out for days.*

That easy lope, bluetick grin.

Forever thin-cheeked, wrist on the edge
of the armrest, with no thin ear to rub
his hand dangled open for years.