

JAMES DOYLE
Civil War Photograph

Flesh and blood turn mathematic.
The limbs illustrate opaque angles,

the sky rotates three hundred sixty
degrees around eyes burning

black zeros into its center. The light
is solid geometry, testing the premises

of interlocking masses: rifle stocks
that won't be stripped of hands,

legs nesting among the salley branches,
brocades mounting bones, sheer

vests and their torsos intersecting
brambles, plains crawling forward

into the smoke. The scratched lens
is a blackboard solving equations,

each one for its elusive X: maybe
a single cell regrouping, maybe the tasteless

cleanup of an unrelenting sun, maybe a wild
animal tracking fresh scent into focus.