

Four Poems · *Albert Goldbarth*

HOW FAST

*Many soldiers had been found dead,
with no external marks on their
bodies. It was thought that this was
due to the wind of a passing bullet
drawing out all their breath and
causing them to suffocate.*

—James Burke

this is how fast:
you place the speed of a bullet
near the speed of a man and he dies
by close comparison

there are living trees we know they were alive
in the time of Jesus
stand by one you're a blur
a little gassy wiffle in the continuum

this is how fast:
you set your night against a mayfly's night
your bones against your greatgrandparents' bones
your speed of joy against your speed of pain

if the light from a star is light from something
dead or dying the whole sky is
a kind of foxfire brilliantly
ticking the rate of decay and recombination

I'm going to sleep in a darkness like gneiss
I'm going to wake like an oyster shucked open
and hold a stone the size of a sponge to my brow
and let time trickle over me