

# Four Poems

Kevin Bowen

## Poem for Aphasia

I hear the voices sing but I think  
they have no words for me. I think  
I can't find words to sing for me.  
I am bereft of words,  
haunted by this illness  
that doesn't let me sleep.  
I have no compensation though I think it must  
be some way I can overcome.  
No reason to think this except saying "I hope"  
can make it true. I have no other way  
to say this, but I'll make do  
to make sense if I don't make my way.  
This is my conundrum, and my thought,  
to leave off meaning where I cannot.

## Trigger

I can't think,

that's what it is.

I can't stop the images of my brain shattering

from coming, lost in confusion, I can't think.

I can't hold a single breath.

It takes too long to start again.

I'm beside myself.

I'm not myself.

I'm some other person

who thinks he'll make it to the other side.

Is it time?

I'm trying to hold onto something from the past

but it slips away from me.

## Some Fragments

How is it I'm able to write

words like this?

My problem is

I'm bereft of words

and I can't understand

a word from my mouth

even as it just opened

and I feel

I can never say

what I mean.

## The Dutiful Ant

The black ant has somewhere to be.

He goes about his business with such determination.

His body is a skeleton that never rests,

His bones, his fate, already determined.

But still, at home, a family waits for him.

**Kevin Bowen** was drafted and served in the First Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969. A former Danforth Fellow and Fulbright Fellow at New College, Oxford, he earned his PhD in English literature from the State University of New York at Buffalo. *Playing Basketball with the Viet Cong*, his first collection of poetry, was published by Curbstone Press in 1994. His poems have appeared in *Agni*, *American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Prairie Schooner*, *TriQuarterly*, *Witness*, and other places. He has edited a special feature on contemporary Vietnamese poetry in the winter 1996 issue of *Mānoa*. With Bruce Weigl he is coeditor of *Writing Between the Lines: Writings on War and Its Consequences* published by the University of Massachusetts Press in February 1997. He was appointed codirector of the Joiner Center in 1984 and was named director of the center in 1993.