

## LITERARY SECTION

### POEMS

**Allan Popa**  
**Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**  
***allancpopa@yahoo.com***

#### About the contributor

Allan Popa is the author of seven collections of poetry, the most recent being *Basta* (Ateneo de Manila UP, 2009). He has received the Philippines Free Press Literary Award and the Manila Critics Circle National Book Award. He earned his MFA in poetry at Washington University in Saint Louis, where he won the Norma Lowry Prize and the Academy of American Poets Graduate Prize. He teaches at the Ateneo de Manila University.

#### The Marvelous Bullet Catch

*To grab through air  
and close my fists around  
six gunshots. All at once  
three ladies in the crowd  
fall for me. In the smoke  
I gather eyes and drop  
lead bullets that clatter  
into a porcelain dish.  
The Opera House bursts  
into applause. I hold up  
my hands for silence.  
Adelaide, into my arms.*

\*

The need to hide yields  
deep rooms inside

a closet where I crawl  
  
and curl myself into  
a cannonball. I am kin  
  
to the backs of mirrors,  
  
wedded to secret doors  
like a mistress. I vanish  
  
half the time I am wife.  
  
No stranger to daggers  
I bite an apple and taste  
  
danger. Here in a chest  
  
of scarves I am crimson  
and knot myself.  
  
My listening grows  
  
rabbit ears. So I flower  
like an old trick, I bore  
  
holes, I pigeon, am small  
  
enough to be at home  
in the chamber of a gun.  
  
If I could only melt  
  
into wax like false bullets  
I would never rush back  
  
to reach his body again.

### **The Black Art**

In terror I wake. A shadow  
never to rise from the ground again.  
I peel your eyelids off my skin.  
My fingers ache to part  
midnight.

\*

I move without a trace. Toward you  
I thrust a mirrorball. You do not see yourself  
dazzled into pieces. With the other I raise  
my father's head: black silk gushing from the cut.  
Where are my hands.

\*

My hem overflows. I blindfold things.  
Through a dark mesh I see you.  
Why do you stare unblinking as if waiting  
to catch an opening in the air?  
Noiselessly I drag across the stage  
all the losses in my life.

\*

First, the porcelain angel in my dollhouse disappeared.  
I felt my father's palm move across my face  
as if to take me. I offer him a teacup. He pours  
a double inside the dollhouse.

**Tether**

A distance savored until

the ripest day your blade enters his skin and you  
stitch away to hem your hunger in

The numbers called out counting down gliding past

The numbers called out no one left hiding

Now you turn to face  
your face in a mirror looking away

through the thicket the leash strains to the scent you left for him

## Peepshow

We eye we mouth we tongue

fondle fist holes

never satisfy a wall

Oil on the hinge of doors swinging between rooms  
we keep dividing into smaller and smaller rooms

We crowd      we shadow      we TV-lit glow

*Look pale at pleasure, and then red*

the dry bed where we gnaw ourselves and off course

a river found us there