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

fondlefist 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