PLAYING GOLF IN APPALACHIA

MIKE MANIQUIZ

—for Darrell

I know what is a perfect swing.
I done it once at the muni in Allen, Kentucky.
Surprised it came out of me
Like the faultless come back
The time a neighbor complimented my car
And said, “What a nice John Deere.”
I said, *That’s not what your wife said.*

The backswing, the downswing, the transfer,
The follow through, the step-step-slow-slow
Of a two-step. *Dang brother, you finally showed up.*
A southern drawl I remember.

The fourth hole was elevated, a draw
To a green teasing from 170 yards back
Circled by pines, winter sun in an empty room,
The lace peeking out of a woman’s bosom.

It was calligraphy off the tee.
The ball didn’t land with a thump,
But a *Wait your turn, fuck face! from the group ahead.*
But fuck them in return. Clouds parted for me.
It’s not my fault they couldn’t see
That I was the son of God, Jesus with an H.
Hay-sus. If this is what they say keeps you coming back,
Wait for my resurrection baby!

What they do see is my dark skin,
And many times they wouldn’t let me forget,
And be comfortable in it.
I told him about that day at McDonald’s and he said
We’re just as ignorant as the next guy,
But not when we choose to be.
Just keep playing. Follow the ball

So you know where to look when you hit it bad.
Words my brother said is what keeps me coming back.
As I string these thoughts together, he must be home,
Drinking his Wal-Mart coffee,
Rubbing his swollen ankles with his coalminer hands.
He taught me the perfect shot ain’t worth what it’s advertised
If there is no one beside you to see it carve a line in the sky
And follow it with eyes so wide
It’s like seeing a brother after quite some time.

Mike Maniquiz started out his MFA at West Virginia University, later completing it at Fresno State where he received the Outstanding Thesis Award in 2006. His poems have been published in *Mid-American Review, Crab Orchard Review, Rattle*, among others. He was awarded the AWP Intro Award and a finalist in the WAGS-UMI Distinguished Master’s Thesis Award. His literary works have been published in national and international anthologies, such as *Pinoy Poetics* (Meritage Press, 2004), *One Hundred Love Poems* (U of the Philippines Press, 2005), *Love Gathers All*, (Ethos Books, Singapore, 2002). His book, *Revolver*, was published by the University of the Philippines Press (1997). He is a faculty member in the English Department at Fresno State. An avid vintage motorcycle and Vespa collector and enthusiast, he admits to having neglected poetry for endeavors much more mundane and carbureted. But he still writes, just doesn’t send them out for publication.

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