

Brian Ascalon Roley

## Apology

sometimes it is hard to drink  
orange juice when your throat muscles  
are weak, and to walk  
without hip strength or even  
to sit up and balance  
without mid-torso support  
when hot moist rooms  
can make your legs wobble  
and even simple sunlight, so cheering to others  
can make you wither  
on those legs  
but often what's worse is thinking  
about your caregiver  
pushing your wheelchair through crowds  
and you looking back up at her face  
as she strains to maneuver  
you down the awkward pebbled path  
between restaurant chairs your feet need  
to bump, through narrow  
aircraft aisles and all those protruding elbows  
purses, fingers  
she offers nervous smiles  
to people who need  
to move their knuckles or feet  
the bottlenecked crowd irritated  
behind her, whispers gathering and on her face  
a girlish blush  
you could only call beautiful  
she touches her hair  
your mother  
as if she heard something there  
she wants to hide.



Brian Ascalon Roley has received fellowships and awards from the University of Cambridge, Cornell University, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Ohio Arts Council, the Djerassi Foundation, Ragdale, and the VCCA. His books include *AMERICAN SON: A Novel* (W.W. Norton), which was a *Los Angeles Times* Best Book, *New York Times* Notable Book, Kiriyaama Pacific Rim Prize Finalist, and winner of the Association for Asian American Studies Prose Book Award, among other honors. His fiction, literary essays and poetry have appeared in numerous journals and in anthologies published by Norton, Penguin and elsewhere, including several bestselling books in the Philippines. His collection, *THE LAST MISTRESS OF JOSE RIZAL* (Northwestern University Press) appeared in April 2016. He is currently Professor of English at Miami University of Ohio. More info at [www.brianroleley.com](http://www.brianroleley.com)