

The Aftermath

—for *The Act of Judith*, 1979-1980, (narrative painting) by Jerome Witkin

She pierces with her eyes,  
 mouth unmoved, as you squirm  
 and beg  
 and say  
 sorry!  
 Sorry for wearing that mask  
 to trick you,  
 you tell her. She grips  
 the gory mask in a fist, it was only a joke,  
 you say, and you ask,  
 isn't it time  
 you release me now? Though,  
 you know it will be a painful walk,  
 a runny mess of a walk  
 but you would do it.  
 You would stumble out  
 clutching your neck, crawl  
 if you had to.  
 You look up  
 to the black window cover  
 with its holes punched out like stars  
 but the slash in it  
 flashes daylight, and she still  
 says  
 nothing –  
 holding your artificial face  
 in her fist,  
 the heel of her other hand leaning back  
 on the handle of her relaxed  
 weapon, and there is light  
 in that, too –  
 a sharp, blue-white sky  
 reflecting off its metal,  
 but there is no light  
 in her eyes. Just blood,  
 smeared red  
 past her knuckle, and of course  
 it is too late.  
 She has already  
 swiped the blade clean.