

2. "Masked Woman"

—unidentified artist, no date

Behind the mask
lies a face.

A bonnet covers the head,
its curves cupping, beside each ear,

coiled dark curls, dense orbs.
There are frills, but the mask,

though pink, is plain, smooth
as imagined skin. Holes

show the eyes, the eyes,
you think, of a woman.

But what if the face
is only a scaffold

for the mask? Or
itself a mask? Or

what if the mask masks
the face of a man

masked as a woman
masked? Dark coils,

eyes that tell you
you can't imagine.

Background: *Swimming*, Thomas Eakins (1885)

Call it green-beyond-the-bodies
of men naked one gilded afternoon
at Dove Lake, at the foundation
of this abandoned mill, call it

green not imagining green,
forest that is no forest,
green whose edges articulate
eidetic forms of branch and leaf,

green whose first body burned,
born ultra-basic in magma's
coolings, hardest crystals,
aspectral green, unseen as mined

until purged from not-green,
worked free from coarse metal,
call it viridian, oxide of chromium,
dark matter against which these bodies

stand, recline or dive in time
into bearable elements, bodies
of weight or light or mind,
or not bodies, paint layered

as light as flesh, layer
bearing layer into light,
of course labored, not the work
of these nudes who study green

leisure reflected in the image
of water they reach toward, water
pushing forth their images, shades
at the bare stone base of this mill.

Waterlines

I tried and failed to read the flood's trace data,
to track its shifting levels, sinking mostly,
scumming walls, trees, a bread truck, fences,
striae of engine oil, lake muck, waste and rust,

like flatlines like cross-cut strata like shear
of mountainside freeway-gouged, no, like nothing
but neighborhoods' bulldozer-mounded strew
of gutted things slopped, toxic, hauled to landfill,

oh memory, fuck if I know
what I came home to, expecting what
ransack, salvage, matter to claim, name
for isn't and everywhere.

The Raft of the Medusa: after Théodore Géricault; *aux naufragés*

i. Unmooring

Step over the corpse

and onto our raft,

past the cameras

and onto the raft—

wherever you step, the raft

tilts toward you, tilts you toward

the corpse-colored sea keeling over

the sides, fumbling through the gaps,

swallowing its body back,

heaving you inward: it reeks

sliding over you, whatever you hold

to mean *not-yet-drowned*,

the way you know the *raft*

is snapped masts lashed too late,

and a *mast* is a stripped tree,

a big stick, so a broken mast goes

stick stick stick stick stick it clacks

sidewalk-wise across picket-fence gaps

until the raft heaves and we slide

clinging to shit-smear'd slats and thighs

—oh body made stranger than water—
and you think you are home in the city

which is crowds unhoused in a Dome,
city this raft unmoored from the ship

that towed it, human weight a drag,
adrift for days past the cameras.