

Mimi, '72

What if I had gone when you wanted me to?
 Drawn one last look across your face,
 Level as a ruled line,
 Smiled,
 And closed the door?

And twitched my bag-strap up onto my shoulder
 And switched my hair across my duchess back
 And pressed my cameo-face into the gritty wind –
 All smooth and blank for the eyes that are on me,
 Breasts swelling against their eyes –
 Moving along in four/four time
 With a syncopated jiggle for the boys in the bar.
 Because here she comes, Miss America,
 And if one is down, there are still a few to go.

Would your eyes have been on me?
 Would you have watched and willed me back,
 And chewed for yours a buttermilk cud of regret?

Would it have been better?

Better than the shit-tears-spit-smear'd hours –
 The right fist to the left breast –

The foot aimed for the crotch?
 We turned our shredded union into whips,
 And all the while, under all that thumping and blaring,
 A piccolo trill of wonder –
 “It was such a frail little thing we had –
 So tentative a blossom – how did it grow such thorns?”

And now this weariness, this numbness that passeth pain,
 Drawing my stockings over my styrofoam legs.
 Should I have gone while I still had something left?
 Or is nothing the beginning of something?

– Sybil Korff Vincent