The Dune Walk

In May we lived inside a roseate bubble world,
And sat on balconies in the sun.
You whistled tunes from Wagnerian overtures as
You scrubbed my kitchen sink.
Sometimes you sang lullabies,
And I would go to sleep.
I would dream of boats and
Soldiers in the forest.

One time you told me
You hated Jews,
Their houses smell like fish.
Then you would laugh and say
I lived like a Jew with my
Bagels and tarot cards.
You will change, you said,
And I remember not to
Feed you lox on rye bread.

One day I heard the voices whispering
For me to walk.
Still I clung to your violent, bleeding shore,
Crab-like my body in the water,
My arms straying in the wind.
You watched and waited in the dunes.
You picked barnacles off my skin.
You asked me to join you
Under your rock in the dunes.
"Walk, they whispered, before you die."

I cannot fly south this winter,
I told the albatross.
The albatross flies.
A woman dies when
Living
Lies.
Lies.

We arrived at broken borders,
Grasping one another,
Crushing mouths into tense bodies,
And rolled on the floor,
Telling lies.
I held my heart with both hands,
Kneed on scabby knees and
Screamed into the
Beaten face of the moon,
Envisioning Nazis in an Italian town.

You were Teutonic,
I became your Italian sow
Grunting and heaving
At the gate of your
Oven door,
Preparing poisoned pots
Of flaccid pasta,
Plotting my escape.

In June I read Dante in a faded
Beach chair, browning my skin even
Darker.
I saw a man climb the dunes.
I followed, merram grass staining
My feet.
Steel mill smoke,
Yellow-orange projectiles,
Lit the night sky behind us.
Later,
In an air-conditioned
Motel room,
This man told me
He was
Jewish.
"I know I should walk before
he makes me run."

In September we closed the house
For the last time.
The old dog on brown leaves licked
A seeping sore.
I left you raw in the biting
Lake wind.
You did not wave, but
Smoke rose from
Burning leaves.
"And I began to walk from the burning town."

It's been one year,
I unpeel crusty, yellow bandages,
I have no scars.
In my room my slippered feet
Pace quiet steps across the
Squeaky floor.
No screams.
No slamming doors.
I say:
I do not regret anything I've done
In my life.
They say nothing.
Their tongues rolled flat by a
Steamroller.
"Now I can walk to the line.
Hold the light, hold the light . . . ."

Susan McMinn