

Two Poems

Frank McGuinness

Aeneas

I
When my father came
From his grave
In the story of Oedipus
To tell me
I would marry
My mad sister
Should I not leave Carthage,
I took this
As sound warning,
He being expert
At incest,
Oedipus that is,
Not my father –
There and then I upped anchor

The widow Dido
Caressed my shadow
As if it were panthers
Bred to do her bidding
Ridding the house of rats
Feeding on my hair
Delighting in its lice,
She siring a son,
Creating daughters,

Making me a promise
That I would believe
Were she not past child bearing,
Were I not at her beck,
Were I not at her call.

II

When my father came
From his grave
In the story of Oedipus
To ask me
Why was it she cursed you
Should you stay in Carthage,
My mad sister,
I took this
As sound warning,
Me being expert
At departing
From burning cities,
From burning temples,
From burning fathers.

The widow Dido
Caressed my backbone
As if we were sisters
Bred to do the bidding
Of our dying father,
Worshipping the panthers
Licking our hair,
Cleansing it of lice.

He filled us with sons,
Identical daughters,
Each making a promise
That we would believe
Were we not burning
In my father's temple.

Other Men

I know a man, he used to ask
Why do you sleep with other men?
He'd pop that question as he basked
In the eyes of other men.

Coward to the last, I must confess
I am fearful when other men
Shelter behind their girlfriend's dress
In company with other men.

I know of men, they need to ask
Why do you sleep with other men?
Theirs is the Sisyphian task
To be men among other men.