

Queen Dido's Gift

Toni Barca

Shadows scatter leaves upon my soul's memory
I long for the Punic language to launch itself from the rooftop of my mouth
Carthage
Buried now beneath Roman ruins
One could only admire the tenacity of their revenge
I dream of Carthage, she comes to me as Queen Dido
She speaks softly.
I stand before her nude.
I am man again
"Do you remember the campaigns you launched and
when you failed the rage that propelled you to self destruction?"
I weep for what could have been.
She embraces me, a lover
With a short blade
She takes my staff and cuts it off
Disregarding it like an overripe fruit
"Women have power," she whispers.
I am left with testicles
They rise within me to become ovaries
Her body and face veiled by the shrouds of time
She disappears
My breasts emerge
My belly grows
I will bear a son
She is right
Women have more power.