

EMILY CROMPTON

IPHIGENIA

Absolve me that I bore one thousand ships
upon my breath. They stole my lungs to fill
their sails and shaped their hulls with adam-ribs;
unseamed my wrists and from my veins they built
their tangled maps. The way the moon hangs high
at midnight makes me think my only vice
was your thin voice—the strangest rhyme that I
misheard: a wife instead of sacrifice.

My blood is shed upon the beaten ground:
the dust is silent, still. My blood spills red
into the waves: no steed springs from the spray.
My blood is brushed on every door, around
each frame: the people rising from their beds
find every first born son is saved.