

be)(adonna*
36

Winter 2002



IPHIGENIA

by
Alice Notley



deadly nightshade, a cardiac and respiratory stimulant, having purplish-red flowers and black berries

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who dares me out turn the

profits (poems) from burning but am the victim. I counsel you to listen for irrational connection (undergrowth): I myself can't listen to a one unless it cries nonsense in my ear, for I've a capacity to transmigrate and be a shapeless thing, the hole of images itself I am Iphigenia, forced to consecrate the humans sacrificed to Artemis on Tauris, though there are no deities except as torn from the hole by kings nervous of their power blood buying it without the least sacred presence I am sacred, un-Iphigenia, and I've got a barrel in my lip crying someone's dead, another death overseen, death of a lover, I'm waiting for my brother whom my voices said would help me, yes, my, voices, my, dreams, I am a poet, and I have been sacrificed in order. As if I could only become this if. If I watched their deaths consigned to deity a fetishy little effigy. If in all image I could enter the image of the image, the hole the very one that controls the godlike entities we discern with our senses as outlines we name and worship, consecrating them to our interactions. Our ones. Our reasons. And so if I could become Iphigenia, I could unbecome her, and destroy this need for her – but being her now, babe of the contagion, (centuries, the money which requires our allegiance to our gods)

she who consecrates deaths:

my brother not quite Orestes will save me from carrying the contagion. He will do this in my imagination, being dead: I will be saved by the dead. REPRISE: I was removed from the altar as victim to the convention carried away in sequence by an image will abolish the cult it's everyone's business to preserve

on the money linger pressing their learned desires, rest against
a box, placating. No image will be worshipped after my rescue,
have become older than your deaths upon the altar of
chronology's ivory inlaid brochure. But the dead are looking
after me as if only they really love me, because they are love
and because I am that old, the image Iphigenia was torn from
my own body-country, if someone cared to see, but care is
capacity for schedules not love, which I find as I keep it:
because I'm weaker

not

'Losing it.'

The voices, that is
the Dead are really with me –
because they
love me.

Because I'm weaker
the dead find me
and teach me more.

Use me to destroy the gods.

I FOR

the premise that the brother like a terminator, broken by war,
has tornout face, but he's supposed to. He looks like that to
keep him. And I for Iphigenia whose motions are few,
the touching of the hair before the sacrifice, my brother will
save me because he killed,
that's how he comes to find me is it,
poised on my pain, so like his?
I still don't understand the story I'm caught in
the whim of the wind
to obligate one to story or act

REPRISE she didn't die but yet was sacrificed yet lives on
metalically. My brother doesn't owe me. He searches for
connection, in the wind the breath of the afterlife. Will he put
his face back together to come see me?

No, I am invisible but you can hear me

Tell me what you know

What can I know?

But you're transparent you must know

I'm down on parent. I'm own parent,

I'm transmuted by the love I cast down

on the ground where the parent eye

closed, and love for him glistens in my,

own destroyed eye, I still

love him in guilt...Iphigenia...is it, guilt, an

effigy? (To come to you I become that again)

It is becoming illusory, the

sky is a web of fine grey pieces it's breaking:

He isn't someone you killed

But I felt I didn't I kill everyone? .

But didn't I? I watched

Why are we still in this one

story?

Because there's a clause in it, a legality

the talons of the stale order.

You endured, I was endured.

When you died you were just going to tell me...

You endured, I was endured...

I got the talents, you got you, oh lucky. But take me down into

the glass so it can cut me so bad I don't care

Where is the glass?

Anywhere. I don't know the difference between anything,
anyone. I whirl in the hole of images, the dead mixed in as
they should, and I awake as I should. And I stood in front of
the hospital again where my love had died, but the pain can be
felt anywhere, and coursing through words. We will command
it to enter these words, a frightening potential. We will
command the pain to enter my words, sufficient time forever
in the cut-glass era oh exquisite object ambulance out there
breathing the was breath I am cut, or was I burned, or is it
portray me, name me. Fold it into the snakelength scarlet air,
any portrait, fast to the corrupting dispersal...

Let me accuse: I gave you, my, to say.

It is too painful.

I give you my.

You give me your. I don't know if these words are the name for
what happened. No one would read your childish poems, if no
one will read another's poems -- then the president will not
read another country. And you were such another country.
Now I tell your story, though it is mine too, and I give you
mine.

We command the pain to remain in the words. not in us.

And now we change the order. how we your reconstruct face.

Mine it shouldn't, no face

Then not a god it, no. will the pain find, if order not in, the
words.

It is nearly a god, order. destroy it.

Order the now we destroy.

born red sound can plentiful scope it along

it slides glass in, cut and bleed I.

Iphigenia will I say I'm dead, because no order's on,

a fact broken
dark start down the hillside the ship and brought us
when.

In the play.

Out of it?

Destroy the cult

president, your need unsusposed they take, dine.

I killed in war

I watched

others die and another –

the

pain is entered, and words hold it.

I'm over,

so my no body

holds it, the effigy.

face? that part is dead

Dead part that is

order now the destroy

spell

Destroy order the effigy

the effigy order destroy

destroy effigy the

gods and their order (he repeats it while

she speaks:)

The effigy must be shattered or I'll live this yet another
kitchen forever, not mice in the walls, children, a dirty
boy, for scraps. You? Runs away so shatter the effigy
now. The spirit can no longer support what her object
asks. Taking me to free in ship of torn sail shadows
blackened, escape protector the fortified reasonable

patina face. The spirit cannot support. Why not? If I
Iphigenia never happened. Why this pain then? The
spirit can no longer, this is yours or how much is mine?
Iphigenia never happened, this island never was, there is
no goddess. The spirit can no longer, support what her
object asks. That object, must be destroyed. A squat
vicious statue. But all the gods alive with their
maddening demands are the object. Sail the boat through
glass, the harbor is full of cut body. The spirit can no
longer support.

I have said the spell. Sister, we will protect you, the dead, not
the gods. Soon the boat will leave the harbor
She still mars me but don't founder, I am inviting a lower body,
more and more internal

I am crawling inside towards my
woman orange light flame

soul ostracized by an idea. Such as a superior power

lower body that is, soul I consciously become...

I stand here to forget godly themes, names.

Every effigy collapses if you find the lower place,
the primitive body undetectable,

lower than remonstrance

I automatic.

Killing of the victim usage prescribed as impunity itself,
the holy massacre of the real and made time by not
knowing how to fly.

Lower body is untaught and isn't precisely talking now it
gets a whistle or then because I am like the phoebe bird or
any winged forensic evidence, a blade that cuts through
nouns, so damning. I'm dead I'm

often dead. I don't even woo the outward it's too nar-row.
I am low and I fly in no order. You I will become, as
leaves the ship, wherefor, no for. The free to be mind, as
it finds its own way, past all the dead gods. Cast away,
across the water, with one whose primitive body is in
death, another soul. Is he,

are you calling?

It's ready. The object is sinking, as we leave.....

HOW DID I COME TO BE IPIIIGENIA THEN?

(Rational voice speaks)

Faced a certain internal construction no one approaches. It is
of whatever story applied to the weight, lifts it. That is a
simple. What is a feeling? It is all this matter I am not,
pressing in, but never as low (or flying high) as I. Matter is
emotion, time is emotion, death is emotion, frozen, by the
rational system invented from exactly within that miasma,
where did emotion come from, where and echo it nothing, so
the question designs its answer, emotion moved.

I called him and he wasn't there, my love. he becomes the
reasonable dead who love without effigy.

If the good one is stronger than sound, we can update

You are the good one and you can update, brother
but what does that mean?

That now I can be meaningless: and END IT!

in the growth waves spark the

fortunate – that is no word – strength to change the order.

The cut blood burns and I am still on fire a sort of new order

the one low she no effigy I am signalling

with sparks, that's all

Inside care as a

bitter talent still but towards no wanting

I dreamed myself tattooed with all the history I had been, those stories, and the worst displayed where my vagina was torn and deformed, the worst story told, was where my sex was mangled, and I watched her then turned away. I couldn't bear to see the unveiling of the lower part of her torso; not precisely Iphigenia, she was more native to me

CHANGE THE ORDER NOW

of her unhealed
body.

She I was revealing herself so END IT AND CHANGE ORDER. All because in sex, you tattooed of Iphigenia the story. Was written on myself. Intuition but burning body is more, the low soul who knows no order. The soul, in you it:

Into it. Listen only for the irrational

So is there an ending?

As you and I who know, are
equals. Finally, and that, is, the final disorder
Equality is disorder?

Our bodies are both, You didn't kill him. Is that their name?

The name of our bodies?

father who died of his excess and

why not?

I told you the last time I saw you, that if you needed someone to forgive you, for the war, I did. But you wanted him to forgive you, who was already dead, who approved of the war and whose excesses you thought you'd caused. Always a man, now not. But now would you let me forgive you?

In the play, it would be a god.
Because I've always forgiven you, before I even knew
The effigy's pieces are shouting that they are betrayed
The order is out. If I can forgi
But with no god
forgiveness is
destroyed, is meaningless too
you are trying to
tie things together that have been freed
as I am now freed of the fathers.
I am try for the audience
never requested, this story, poem
who ever asked for it?
THIS WILL NEVER END.

It is
ending, has ended, is not in
order.
So we broke
every rule except.
That one must kill in time of war
Primary rules we broke:
That one must not know more
That one must not be amid an actuality of
repeated death. if not in war.
My love died in the poison blue of spring. The flowers were
all a polluted blue in my dreams, and you have been dead for
so long that to tell you is
Meaningless?
Contrariwise, you are that one. It was nearly a year ago
ravage, all that drama out of order. Contaminate changes to

a sacrificial body, tatoed with blue
so one would know where to fire the radiation
Sacrificial to?

Labor, the work of men

it won't be sense now I know

a benjamin of dust, a private referral to sweet james infinity,
the cooling board. I saw him on it last year, is this part in its
disorder? Are you really here? I am telling you because it
was a year ago, I'm telling you, to appease the Furies who
sang to me your coordinates, but the Furies are shattered.

and I keep going on and that's
mine. You are fading and will never speak enough. And I am
the one

And I

(To the audience) Do you know this story?



Alice Notley grew up in Needles, California and is the author of many books of poetry including *The Descent of Alette*, *Mysteries of Small Houses*, and most recently, *Disobedience* (Penguin 2001). She has won awards including the LA Times Book Prize for *Mysteries of Small Houses*, the Griffin Prize for *Disobedience*, the Academy Award of the American Academy of Arts and Literature, and the Shelly Award of the Poetry Society of America. She lives in Paris, France.



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