

Her Children

Jennifer Jean

"What is it that changes when a poet becomes a mother?" ~ "The Other Sylvia Plath," Eavan Boland

That bell jar—we adored it! Peering in, peering out—

every coed doe
dutifully forgetting the suicide,
the way she let us see her bent like that
(our own mother!)

as if she were merely a man-eating
Sylla, as if she were one of those prolific women

writers without children
(Dickenson, Moore, Bishop)
who stormed up their careers
wielding time like a sword.

As if she were never really prolific,
teeming with offspring,
with artless labor pain
and its reverb through her pen,
through all our doltish pens.

No!

She was always our Athena,
who we say bore down
like Daddy—her own boy

or girl shunted through air from mind,
but mortified,
slick with plum placenta,
the eyes of these poems black like beetles.

Oh, essentially loveless Athena—in February,
in the delivery room, by candlelight,
divorced,
at war with perfection—you cannot help that

we never knew you.

We only adored like daughters do
when biting on a potent teat.