



# Falling Sickness

*for Sylvia Plath*

That woman wore her insecurity  
Like a cape, in length equal to her need  
For concealments, other women wearing  
Vanity like a fig leaf.

The bed on which she was born  
Being, from birth-mark on, a sick-bed,  
Depression was a communicable disease  
Though, lit inward, the billions of blemishes

On her moon and mouth, a hell  
Of cells — inoperable. In each letter  
A festering. Home-keeping, poetry, children  
No oil on her troubled lake

Though to little hands she held on  
Tight, she could not hold her own.  
It was a sort of falling sickness, first  
Ankle-deep, but keeling fast, eye-deep

To a plumbed depth, she was  
Over her head, touching bottom with no  
Solid sole and sand to build on, she dug  
Her toes in mud and drowned her teddy bear.

*Catherine Ahearn*