

A Kitchen Poem¹

The farmer to his wife

Now the land shawls itself in gloom.
The mountain puts enchantment on.
I sit in this plain-spoken room,
and soon the cares of day are gone:

crows, starlings, eelworm, codlin moth,
all nature's murderous hosts are sweeping
from thought upon night's tide like froth.
Now tired with light my son is sleeping.

Too great with child to sit at ease
beside the window stands my wife
dreaming herself away from these
four walls to scintillating life,

where brats and all their fierce demands
don't happen. Brains are put to use.
Where tongues are cool with wit, and hands
unstained by work or walnut-juice.

Dear wife, let keen bluestockings grieve
over their academic wrongs;
astringent lady poets leave
the real world for unreal songs;

career-mad women reaffirm
their stand against male dominance;
elegant busybodies worm
scandal from every careless glance.

Used to each other as to air
we do not speak. But over all
my ripening fields and orchards where
Orion leads a waterfall

of stars, and dying summer's led
to fruitfulness, your beauty lies.
Children and work and daily bread
are rich beneath your royal skies.