

## CLARTY-IN-THE-KITCHEN

Now as she was young and angry over the apple cores,  
About the house and through the rubbish lane,  
With this and that there was no room for dancing,  
But wreck and spillage mainly in her mind.

For she was short and mean as ever our kind have been--  
We beg, no blandishments--succinct as rock,  
Singing in grief and madness only prouder songs  
At the proud grave,  
(Save us from wrath on a Good God Sunday)  
Due for a tumbledown from a low place.

And surely there was nothing seemly in the loose  
Suds of her spirit ravaging the North,  
Windy and blowing from the inside;  
Deluging the table with an icy flood.  
Clarting it was called, a sport above her.

For always the humble must be ranked as neat  
As nothing, whilst the mucky-mucks,  
Like you and me in secret, slip their greasy palms  
Into blood soup--out, out damned clot--  
Seen from the scullery.

*Note: "Clarty" is a word used in the north of England, meaning dirty, with overtones of messy, sticky, greasy or wet; there is also a verb, "to clart." The word was passed down in my family from my great-grandmother (my mother's mother's mother--a matrilineal ancestor) who was part of the vast army of domestic servants in Victorian England.*

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