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# Beit Shemesh

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## BEIT SHEMESH

*Groups of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish protesters have been picketing a new girls' school. They say their religious sense of modesty is offended by the sight of the girls . . .*  
—BBC

Sluts, they protest, as if  
the girls are monsters  
with serpents' tails, don't  
wear sleeves up to a fist's

length. Collarbones showing.  
Tramps, they say, with stones  
in their hands. The men  
buy homburg hats

with welfare checks.  
The girls wear skirts  
that rise to the knees. Tarts,  
they say, with eggs

in their pockets, shell  
kept by the silk lining  
from breaking. The men  
spend the 9-to-5 thinking scripture,

tasting the broth  
of the purchase gained from prayer.  
Are they out there?  
a girl asks. Her hand a microcosm

of a hand. The bearded men moan  
as if calling out the name  
of a son. The men, mouths  
open, almost sing.