

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.