

Barbara Adams

UNDER WEAR

They say it can make a man sterile
if it's too tight though the macho bulge
almost makes it worthwhile.

Mother worried that she might be struck
by a car or truck and lie exposed
on the street until the ambulance
attendant, tsk-tsking at her ragged panties,
covered her up.

And then she would die.
On a slab in the morgue with a tag
on her toe, her mortal garments sealed
in a plastic bag, she would know
that heaven was not her destination.

The death certificate would do her in
whereon it was written:
cause of death irrelevant,
but Mrs. Green's underwear is a sin,
a disgrace to her sex and religion.

I just have trouble buying a bra
that fits without those deadly wires
and tricky hooks,
and a pair of panties with a cotton crotch
and elastic that doesn't stretch in a week.

Had I been born an Elizabethan,
would I have fit into a corset
and petticoats any neater
than my poem would in a sonnet?

It took Whitman to strip off the codpiece
so the rest of us could wear nothing at all.