

Discovering Girdles

I don't know what to do with this contraption
of polyester & cotton, troublesome lace. Black,
white, another woman's nude—whatever the color—
its trick is to hide flesh, to constrict the skin
like a bit of truth, a secret buried in the garden
of women's undergarments. A prepubescent girl
signals her mother to quiet, to lower what must be
her first bra, & yes, it's fine & can she go now?
My mother's concerns for me were body odor &
virginity—how to smell like a flower without being plucked.
Robust women filled her church, their stomachs
suffusing the linen of long dresses doused with perfume.
I do not know how to behave, publicly
contemplating these hip huggers that wouldn't matter
to those women, reaching beyond the fitting rooms of Earth.

—from *Hemming the Water*