Whatever happened to reusable prophylactics?

EARNSHAW, Steven <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1048-8022>

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Whatever Happened to Reusable Prophylactics?

Three nonagenarians, giddy
with tea and Sapphire Gin,
stare at Humphrey Spender’s famous picture
of all their washing blowing up Bolton
midst monochrome back-to-backs.
With nigh on three hundred years between them
to sift through, they agree on
nineteen thirty-seven for the year
when snooty Spender from the south
did his best to mass-observe them.
‘That’s my line,’ Doris declares,
pointing at sheets three rows back,
‘whiter than white than white than white…’
‘That’s shee-ite’ says Gloria, new to swearing,
and glamorous with it.
Edna swallows and speaks and points,
in her noted declamatory style,
at the world-famous photograph displayed without a frame,
on the red formica table, curling in on itself.
‘There.’ ‘Where?’ ‘There. And there.’
She indicates spots either side of the washing,
beyond the side-edges of official memory,
where the backyards’ insides would be.
‘They’re sponge-cake crumbs, Edna darling,’
mooitening a forefinger to gather them in.