

Two Poems · *Mary Clark*

BREASTS

Eggplants is what
I would say
if I had to
say what
mine are most like.
Eggplants
on a bough
and hassle-free
for the most part
by now.

Problem is
they grew
too fast, grew
too early.
Such a young girl
I was, always
bending backwards
sticking out
my stomach
to exceed them.

They had, as you
know, advantages.
Sure they got me
picked
for couple-skate.
Guided by them
and a boy
I glided
around the rink
holding hands.

And always I was
the first
girl to go
when the best
boys, the captains
they were called,
chose-up sides
and we went
to stand
behind them.

It went on
for years,
my hatred
of them. And people
were better off
not to tell me
they were lovely.
Every blouse, every
garment I owned, chosen
to lessen them.

They were a part
of me, yet not
a part of me.
Not like the arms,
not other,
but simply more
body. A fatness
in the chest.
A curvature
up high.

They were something
of my own.
They needed
my blessing.

My constant desire
to eliminate them —
I hope that caused
no damage.
I apologize
to my own breasts.

Just when you begin
an apology
it's too late.
It can be too late.
It may be.
I've seen it happen
over and over
in my — just now
I'm believing it —
my gracious life.

THE GUINEA HEN

Think of old Victorian women
gliding in dresses with bustles,
the tips of their shoes showing.
Now, think only of the bustle.
Imagine a bustle of feathers
and a bird head stuck on top,
a most hideous bird head,
a head not far from a vulture's
but less exaggerated, more
like a normal bird's, plucked.
All skin, pink and bluish
and shriveled and dry, flaking,
the head makes even the young
bird look ancient and frail.
The eyes close like a lizard's.
At the top of the head,