

3 Pieces from Geoffrey Gatza

## **Hortense Hippopotamus**

*For Jim Carney*

*A great many things may happen between the cup and the upper lip.*

At 2PM she rises up from her armchair and cable News network and places a kettle on the stove. She imagines that she can balance an egg on her nose, tries three times then bends down to clean up the sticky mess. The 3 yolks in the white blob made a face at her,

well a squished face as the eyes we're a bit out of sorts, but the egg

man did make for an interesting bit of afternoon company and so she poured tea for two and then set out a red gingham dish towel and a plate of cookies on the floor next to her new friend and then began to tell Mr. Eggs of her two sons off in the Army, a daughter

who lives in a large pond at the park and has an excellent supply

of food and friendly neighbors. Mr. Eggs hadn't touched her tea or any of her special raisin cookies that, at one time was the toast of Elmwood elementary, but no matter she thought, he looks not well and maybe he won't mind if I eat the last cookie on the plate.

She could always get more but didn't want him to think she didn't

watch her figure. But how silly she was being, Mr. Eggs is a kind man and would never entertain such a foolish opinion of her. And so she warmed their cups and then, getting herself off of the floor, tipped her hand to her head to say ta, and then using a kitchen rag cleaned up Mr. Eggs, then placed the dishes into the sink, cleaned

and then walked back to her armchair, television and her live news.

## Ursula Orangutan

It is good to be orangutan, not because every orangutan can be great, but because a few orangutan have and without the shining achievements of these few orangutans, what manner of apples would we be eating today?

To some, that thought seems humiliating,  
threatening and must not even be endured.

We would tell tales of great builders, doctors and farmers, of the generosity of the old, wisdoms of great leaders, and awe over the strength of those few exceptional apes who shown us the heights to which we occasionally ascend.

To some, that thought seems humiliating,  
threatening and should not be overheard.

Most orangutans are not extraordinary and only a very few are extremely gifted. But it is to these exceptionally talented orangutans that the rest of us owe many of the great achievements of our ten thousand years of society throughout South Asia ranging from right here in this kitchen all the way into southeastern China.

It is my recognition of their greatness, my admission of the immeasurable superiority of their talent, that redeems, liberates, and inspires my own, unenviable mediocrity. On the ancient islands of Borneo and Sumatra we expected our heroes to be different.

To some, that thought seems humiliating,  
threatening and to never be countenanced.

## Fredric Squirrel

Soon the sun will set in such a way to declare  
the great gathering is presently drawing near.

Black and white photos of ginger torqued maple trees;  
one can really feel the flight crashing all around them

conveying the gray swaying spirit of autumn.

The end is always drawing near. You can feel it in the bones,

In new shoes. In a small room cats on open window sills  
watching birds and neighbors argue over twigs and trash

Someone sitting across the way  
handling a tarnished steel guitar  
in their old body with old ideas,

waiting  
to die.

I wish to dance through evergreens eating well and  
never dwell on what might come, only on what does.