

TORTOISE FAMILY CONNECTIONS

On he goes, the little one,
Bud of the universe,
Pediment of life.

Setting off somewhere, apparently.
Whither away, brisk egg?

His mother deposited him on the soil as if he were
no more than droppings,
And now he scuffles tinily past her as if she were
an old rusty tin.

A mere obstacle,
He veers round the slow great mound of her.

Tortoises always foresee obstacles.

It is no use my saying to him in an emotional
voice:
"This is your Mother, she laid you when you were
an egg."

He does not even trouble to answer: "Woman,

what have I to do with thee?"
He wearily looks the other way,
And she even more wearily looks another way
still,
Each with the utmost apathy,
Incognizant,
Unaware,
Nothing.

As for papa,
He snaps when I offer him his offspring,
Just as he snaps when I poke a bit of stick at him,
Because he is irascible this morning, an irascible
tortoise
Being touched with love, and devoid of
fatherliness.

Father and mother,
And three little brothers,
And all rambling aimless, like little perambulating
pebbles scattered in the garden,
Not knowing each other from bits of earth or old
tins.

Except that papa and mama are old acquaintances,
of course,

But family feeling there is none, not even the
beginnings.

Fatherless, motherless, brotherless, sisterless
Little tortoise.

Row on then, small pebble,
Over the clods of the autumn, wind-chilled
sunshine,
Young gayety.

Does he look for a companion?
No, no, don't think it.
He doesn't know he is alone;
Isolation is his birthright,
This atom.

To row forward, and reach himself tall on spiny
toes,
To travel, to burrow into a little loose earth,
afraid of the night,
To crop a little substance,
To move, and to be quite sure that he is moving:
Basta!

To be a tortoise!

Think of it, in a garden of inert clods
A brisk, brindled little tortoise, all to himself--
Croesus!

In a garden of pebbles and insects
To roam, and feel the slow heart beat
Tortoise-wise, the first bell sounding
From the warm blood, in the dark-creation
 morning.

Moving, and being himself,
Slow, and unquestioned,
And inordinately there, O stoic!
Wandering in the slow triumph of his own
 existence,
Ringing the soundless bell of his presence in
 chaos,
And biting the frail grass arrogantly,
Decidedly arrogantly.