

TORTOISE GALLANTRY

Making his advances

He does not look at her, nor sniff at her,

No, not even sniff at her, his nose is blank.

Only he senses the vulnerable folds of skin

That work beneath her while she sprawls along

In her ungainly pace,

Her folds of skin that work and row

Beneath the earth-soiled hovel in which she
moves.

And so he strains beneath her housey walls

And catches her trouser-legs in his beak

Suddenly, or her skinny limb,

And strange and grimly drags at her

Like a dog,

Only agelessly silent, with a reptile's awful
persistence.

Grim, gruesome gallantry, to which he is doomed.

Dragged out of an eternity of silent isolation

And doomed to partiality, partial being,

Ache, and want of being,

Want,
Self-exposure, hard humiliation, need to add
 himself on to her.

Born to walk alone,
Forerunner,
Now suddenly distracted into this mazy
 sidetrack,
This awkward, harrowing pursuit,
This grim necessity from within.

Does she know
As she moves eternally slowly away?
Or is he driven against her with a bang, like a bird
 flying in the dark against a window,
All knowledgeable?

The awful concussion,
And the still more awful need to persist, to follow,
 follow, continue,
Driven, after aeons of pristine, fore-god-like
 singleness and oneness,
At the end of some mysterious, red-hot iron,
Driven away from himself into her tracks,
Forced to crash against her.

Stiff, gallant, irascible, crook-legged reptile,

Little gentleman,

Sorry plight,

We ought to look the other way.

Save that, having come with you so far,

We will go on to the end.

J