

Alloy

An Apostrophe for Isamu Noguchi

by Kimiko Hahn

Is stone the opposite of dust? And if so, are we then stone before dust? And before that, some
kind of betwixt? The mush inside
a translucent chrysalis turning cellophane-clear when, of a sudden, you can see the Monarch
throbbing and scratching its way into air--

unlike a centipede that lays eggs, even curls around them with her hundred feet. You said that
living in Japan our house was filled with centipedes.

*I became rather fond of them; I lost my fear. You know, when you kill one, the two halves just
walk off.*

Surely they played in your mind all the way to your piece "Even the Centipede,"

molded from Ibaraki clay--though you felt *in a medium like clay anything can be done*; and
stated, *I think that's dangerous. It's too fluid. Too facile.*

Under your instruction, I'll find what is too fluid for me and turn my scratching away from facile
to fossil

using hammer, chisel, and drill if lucky enough to come across the right quarry and ask nice
enough or pay enough

for a crew to blast out the marble--unless the material is residue from something else. *Glacial
pain?*

I mean, *glacial moraine*

*

from my home near the Sound where a glacier once aborted boulders onto these lean beaches.
I pick up a rock rounded and chipped in the surf, then, back home, like those who set Jizo on
 boulevard altars in Kyoto,
I tie a bib around its belly then place it on our mantel. Like those women, I, too, remember my
 baby unborn from betwixt and

Japanese. Japanese like those on the land where dust storms blew farm families to smithereens,
 then, blew desert
through rows of barracks surrounded by barbed wire and gunner watch-towers. Even orphan
 babies
with one drop of *Jap blood* were seized from whatever charity for bowls of dust. And you,
 Noguchi-sensei, volunteered yourself

into this incarceration limbo with the goal to build a baseball diamond, swimming pool, and
 cemetery;
you entered Poston Internment where you knew yourself a Nisei, that is, without the rights of a
 citizen: *request*, of course, *denied*.

(Not for nothing, you were despised on both sides.) And as for centipedes

I'm not so much afraid as squeamish, which is different, and I've never killed one by cutting it in
 half
so I don't know about the two alive sides. The split selves not seeing eye-to-eye, I know only too
 well.

*

You knew and I know differently from parents who realized alloy only from without, whereas
the *coywolf*, say,
realizes coyote and wolf even if the composite isn't brought to light--

maybe light is the opposite of stone, say, lightning that cracks inside a cloud? or coral that glows
below the surface of the sea?
or the full moon that illuminates the shoji of the falling-asleep boy? I love the firefly's
serenading signals, patterned according to kind. Kind—
something our parents did not essentially heed.

In my mind, stone, water, light, etcetera all come down to dust on a moth's wing
that's evolved to keep her patterns cued for a mate and to keep her blanketed in the stunning
night.

In my mind, an alloy is ultimately practical *because*, as you commented, *to be hybrid anticipates
the future*.

You also admitted: if you only have clay on hand, then from clay even the centipede is cast.

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