

神戸市外国語大学 学術情報リポジトリ

Three portraits and a theory

メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2006-06-01 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Farrah, David メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://kobe-cufs.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/621

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Three Portraits and a Theory

David Farrah

Borobudur

Waiting just beyond the reassembled gates
of heaven, a woman in green and gold

folds herself, thin as hope, into the laboring
world. She makes her way among the tourists,

images of double meanings she extends
by offering to them the polished wooden

puppets that have risen from the ruins
of her life. So much could be said about

that, the overwhelming lack of a collective
relief, but it is her fabulous mouth that breaks

my heart, so painstakingly, lovingly painted
on, as if in an effort to make herself pretty.

Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window (After Vermeer)

In the language of light, an alphabet
begins off the page, in a letter
unwritten but being read, an illumination
of thoughts from two points of view:
We can see her twice. First in the still-
ness of inexpressiveness expressed.
Then in the glass, her face broken
by the panes. Both sides of her
can now be seen, and it is in such
reflection that a vocabulary begins:
Red apple drapes turn to green, and
light, like fruit spilling from its basket,
overflows the form by which it is
contained.

Homage to Alfred Russel Wallace

The malarial dream
a snail of thoughts
that won't let go
carbuncular
in color, shades
of gray, meat
of brain, food
for thought
a whelk

making its way

across a desert
filled with water

an evolution
of being
and the implausible
mind attaching itself
to the synchronous
manifestation
of lives

of a life

of ideas
that have collected

themselves
into the interstices
of the eternal

soul, the unspeakable
language
of god and science
distributed through
time

along a line

where meaning
emerges momentous

A Theory of Everything: Pteroptyx Tener*

Disparate at first, small particles of light
barely visible to the eye, white flashes
of one, then two, then two paired
and paired again until the dark spaces
between them in the trees connect
a string of thousands, entangled
in their attraction, as we float quietly
in a boat making waves that meet
the starry river's edge.

* *A species of firefly native to Southeast Asia,
noted for its synchronized flashing.*

*These particular fireflies were seen in the
berembang trees along the Sungai Selangor
River in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia.*