

# Blaze VOX 2k9

Late Spring 2009

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## TETRAMORPH

Tonight,  
through moonlit soot,  
ex-Catholic American eyes,

the temple-complex towers at Madurai  
become a Martian Notre Dame barnacled  
in stucco deities,

a thousand of the most forgotten, flat Earth's edge-  
stumbled saints, shaken  
upside down in impossible paints, their heads

sucked through their own  
stigmata, until, reemerging  
movie monster-hued in gargoyle asanas,

a scimitar for each new arm, their eyes cross  
with a sweat-laced, quaking  
gratitude ...

Tonight their tongues will throb  
insomnia, still blue  
wary of the garam masala,

of the moonlight's  
intentions for the Golden Lotus Tank  
where actual gods once judged poems

by a simple floating test,  
and where the sunken verses  
continue disintegrating their rejection from

even the apocrypha. On the map a lotus shape,

this city attaches smoky roots of incense  
and rubbish fire to the sagging sky's bottom

swirl of bats,  
sonar cloud that the saints'  
newly Hindu ears hear as a mantra; a low,

black swooping that taunts  
a patchy mutt to limp in ever constricting  
circles, her hunger eventually

squealing  
ripples through  
every alley of Madurai.

No dropped chapatti, not one thrown chapatti, no handful of rice.

By morning this town's small  
gas stove heart will diffuse in a mud-shot mist,  
a murky sputter,

a new obscurity  
slurring up the intersections, ashes,  
tangles of charred hair—

even those traffic wardens softened and torn,  
become straw piles darkening like motor oil, black drool  
of dazed Luke, his brain wobbling

the dizzying gravity of a new winglessness,  
the worshipful honking,  
the devotional switch.

“BEFORE CROSSING THE ROAD...”

*Children's traffic park; Pondicherry, India*

*If you don't look left and right  
there will be nothing left to be right*

*for you.* Crushed under a demon's foot. The traffic  
such that left and right blur into

wanting furs with your prayers, steak for your eyes  
blackened from prostrations to Nandi.

Asked to leave Auroville for hushed laughter at the oppressive uptightness,  
at the budget for that still incomplete dome,

for giggles that were actually mostly the spillover of awe  
at the world's largest crystal, they left, but it didn't seem right.

Prohibitions usually fail, clearing what's wrong  
so that what's left

is right. Hulking Indian nightstick security guards  
sweep the beach of Indians.

Only foreigners left, some ashamed and  
aware of their blessing: It is a nice beach.

## A SORT OF MARRIAGE

They started off laughing their own mantra from the name, a new *Om Mani Padme Hum*.

But after just two days  
in Mamallapuram,  
the Tibetan Buddhist couple from Krakow aren't speaking.  
He's back at the buggy guesthouse, stretching out  
last night's argument-sparking high  
while she's off with their American travel companion  
at a crocodile farm on the outskirts.

Despite the pond's  
locked-down stillness, body across green body,  
the American's childhood biology  
cold-bloodedness notions  
imagine the creatures in some constant Fahrenheit  
flux, clashing negotiations  
for degrees between cold vein, the sweating air.

A Green Tara pendant  
to represent  
transformed jealousy glints  
low on her neck. The caretaker doesn't  
apologize bumping into her, swinging his  
rusty bucket of offal. To the American she states it plainly:  
She has considered leaving her man. "People

who get attached to objects  
are stupid. Attached to  
other people, well,  
it is sad but understandable."  
Another possibility:  
A sort of marriage, a Tibetan  
ceremonial pledging to play a major role

in each other's next thousand lives. "Some lives  
lovers, not necessarily; sometimes best friends. Or maybe  
mother and son. Sometimes  
me the son." Earlier, touring a cramped orphanage that handed over  
most of their donation to their rickshaw driver for bringing them there,  
watching children whose amniotic fluid  
smelled of arrack, who are now  
sucking their thumbs beyond their thumbs' ability to help,  
six years old and leg wrestling on mouse-chewed jute mats,  
he remembered two days ago, his sweat, the Madurai train station,  
buying idli for breakfast while the Poles, still holding glowing hands,  
bowed with those secret smiles and said, "trust us,"  
bought his ticket for this

town he'd never heard of, now— map  
to mantra to bricks—  
solid all around him: Mamallapuram: This heat. He bets  
Green Tara would appreciate the farm's other venture,  
milking cobra venom for antidote.  
They stop to watch. He keeps his hands pocketed  
as she snaps a photo of him in front of the sign:

*Do not  
sit on walls!  
Keep hands out!  
Crocodiles  
can jump!*

"Scary," he mutters.  
"Yes," she nods.

"But I'd have to admit,  
I'd like to see it."

## HAMPI

Dingo, the jovial  
Scouser roofer,  
on holiday to lose  
his pub gut  
to yoga  
and dhal, to try  
the love drugs,  
the mind drugs,  
down by the coracles  
approaches  
this tall,  
thin,  
black  
American with  
a boldly  
shaved-head, "Hello,  
brother."  
"I don't like being  
called 'brother,'"  
she replies. "Oh,"  
he says,

recovering, "I call  
everybody 'brother'."