

# THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 8 | 1999

**Durga\***  
Robert Lunday

© Providence College

The author(s) permits users to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: (1) the original author(s) must be given proper attribution; (2) this work may not be used for commercial purposes; (3) the users may not alter, transform, or build upon this work; (4) users must make the license terms of this work clearly known for any reuse or distribution of this work. Upon request, as holder of this work's copyright, the author(s) may waive any or all of these conditions.

*The Prose Poem: An International Journal* is produced by  
The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress)  
for the Providence College Digital Commons.  
<http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/prosepoems/>

## Robert Lunday

DURGA\*

"103E or 104E Fahrenheit might be a much more favorable temperature for truths to germinate and sprout in, than the more ordinary blood-heat of 97 or 98 degrees."

—William James,  
*Varieties of Religious Experience*

Come into the temple. Stay out of the temple. The most sacred place in the temple is just outside the temple. No, in the threshold.

Stand in the threshold and let me anoint you: this is the font of flames, that one, of water. Rather, that one is flames, and this one, water: flesh, flames, water, all are the same. Extinguish yourself.

Get out, then return, get out.

Come in, come into the temple; now get out and wait for a sign, wait for my eyes to signal you, then return.

That wasn't the signal. Stand in the threshold and let me anoint you:

this is the fire, and this, the water. Water, fire, flesh: one substance. Stop howling; put yourself out, and then return.

Come in; get out. Return with a candle, put out your candle and go in darkness; go by the light of my eyes, which call you, which don't.

Flames, water, flesh, words. Extinguish yourself: I must have devotees of a tempered faith. Flesh, water, flames, words.

These are my eyes, this is your sign. Let me anoint you:

words, fire, flesh, water, each becoming the other:

this is the font of flames, that one, of flames.

—*after a painting by Bikash Bhattacharjee*

\*"difficult to penetrate": one name for the wife of Shiva