

ELIZABETH T. GRAY, JR.

Wearing Thin

Even James had had it with shrines.
If he had to take off those shoes one more time
there would be, he averred, more than just three hells to pay
so we checked into a high-end hotel:
yes absolutely you are from where.
Two Japanese kept taking photos of Shiva's
mossy *lingam* in the lobby without
first offering the requisite marigolds,
doubtless the blunt stump took notice
and the road back to Kyushu would be strewn
with untended consequences. Nadia
ripped off bits of her gray scarf and wrote out
prayers for something (we were tired of asking)
and went off in search of a banyan.
She's really going to tie one on this time,
Jack said, and we collapsed in laughter as fraught
as the route we saw home in those moments
when you dare to look, when the rains
go into week three and have ceased
to be novel or foreign.