

Cherry-Blossom Time

Sounds travel further now.

Your laughter hovers
over the orchard grass,
crisp and luminous.

It is flower-watching time.

In one another's arms,
the trees of the poets
open their tight parcels
of petal poems,

their branches spread
against the new space,
in a rich brocade of
red, green, and purple.

This is a parasol
planted by the shogun
and by our poets,
for all lovers to come
in their own time,
their shining springtime.

We could be in the snow
or stuck in the clouds.

There's nowhere else to go
and no sense of home.

From booths and tea-stalls
the young carry blushes
and the memory
of their kissings
like blossoms.

On one elegant limb
a lover or an old man
(impossible now to tell
in such thin light)
has tied what looks like
a charm, or toy, or hairpin
which catches in the breeze
and makes the music,
the late evening music,
of autumn insects,
the mushi-kiki, mushi-kiki.

John Whale