

afternoon of karma

Christopher Sales

(for lady murasaki)

in heian-ko
where the plum and cherry
blossoms always blossomed
and bored courtiers
send messages
folded
in crimson paper with spider stroke impressions—
it was always autumn and always rain-spattered
and the eaves of the shinden
the mansion's floors
echoed hollowly
the sound of scraping screens.

there were pillow books and memoirs
furiously scribbled
by women in colored silks and sleeves
and the sounds of boredom were audible
as they sat behind the shutters in a rainbow blur.