

Exemplar Poetry - The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter

Pound, Ezra. "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter." *Anthology of Modern American Poetry*. Edited by Cary Nelson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. (1917)

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse;
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.
At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.
At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever and forever.
Why should I climb the lookout?
At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-en, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden --
They hurt me.
I grow older.
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you
As far as Cho-fo-Sa.