

### Four Translations from the Japanese

by Graeme McD. Wilson

*The following four translations are from the poetry in the Manyoshu, that first anthology of Japanese poetry on which Otomo no Yakamochi ended his labour of compilation some time in 759. The vast majority of the poems in that anthology is "poetry of the morning of the world," some of it probably dating back in oral tradition to at least the fourth century. The Japanese themselves regard the Manyoshu as the expression of that "spirit of Yamato," the true source of Japanese energy and vitality, which, however deeply buried by subsequent overlays of Chinese and Western Culture, remains the quintessential ingredient in the national character.*

#### House Above the Imizu

Late in bed this morning  
I lie and listen to  
The sounds of river-traffic,  
The faint far hullabaloo  
Of boatmen at their businesses  
Along the Imizu.

—Otomo no Yakamochi (718 - 785)

#### Spectre

Of the three things from which there's no relief,  
The last, the worst, is this: a raining night  
Through which, unbodied, ghastly, greeny-white,  
Your face, that lonely ghost, drifts dripping wet  
To stain my heart with so much hate and grief  
No later love can bring me to forget.

—Anonymous (early 8th century)