Four Translations from the Japanese
By Graeme Wilson

Woman
That girl I took into an empty house
And loved a fortnight there
Is now grown up. Like other women,
Demure and debonair,
She glories in the glossiness
Of once dishevelled hair.

Anonymous (6th century)
Manyoshu No. 3822

Wife
Though all night long you sat and span
Whole bucketfuls of thread,
You’d still not have, so help me God,
Before this night has fled
Sufficient cloth to clothe a cat.
So why not come to bed?

Anonymous (6th century)
Manyoshu No. 3484
Pillow Talk

O yes, she says, we’re married:
Very much so, says she
Wedging the bedclothes under her hip,
Turning her back on me.

Anonymous (6th century)
Manyoshu No. 3543

Remembrance

On winter evenings when the mist hangs low
Over the reed-beds and the reeds look blue
And chill, chill, chill
the wild ducks call each other,
I shall remember you.

Anonymous (6th century)
Manyoshu No. 3570