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Authors

Qiji, Xin
Kelen, Christopher
Vong, Agnes

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Translators' Preface

Christopher Kelen and Agnes Vong

Xin Qiji (1140-1207) was a Song Dynasty poet who wrote in a range of genres and is famous for more than six hundred ci poems he composed to one hundred and one different tunes. We approached the task of translating Xin Qiji's poems by first producing a "gloss"; that is, a rough translation into English with notes. We then worked from the gloss to create a text we thought worked as a poem in English.

A compilation of our translations of Xin Qiji's poems entitled *Clear Echo in the Valley's Depths* is in press with The Association of Stories in Macao and is expected to appear in May 2007.

鷓鴣天

壯歲旌旗擁萬夫。
錦檐突騎渡江初。
燕兵夜娖銀胡轆，
漢箭朝飛金僕姑。

追往事，歎今吾。
春風不染白髭鬚。
卻將萬字平戎策，
換得東家種樹書。

"PARTRIDGE SKY" by Xin Qiji

Translated by Christopher Kelen and Agnes Vong Lai Ieng

when I was young
I waved a flag
to lead a thousand soldiers

horse too
how my men
fashioned arrows
of silver
at night

they brought
down the moon

now the enemy owns it
I come back
I'm nobody

now
thinking of the past
how one
sighs to be neglected

Spring won't bring back
the black to my beard

you can't imagine
the tracts I wrote
on tactics
for this country

in return I'm given
this poor field
bent mattock
and some weather-worn tome
titled 'how to grow tree'