



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **How the caged bird sings: Educational background and poetic identity of China's obscure poets**

Wu, J.

### **Citation**

Wu, J. (2021, January 5). *How the caged bird sings: Educational background and poetic identity of China's obscure poets*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/139042>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/139042>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/139042> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Wu, J.

**Title:** How the caged bird sings: Educational background and poetic identity of China's obscure poets

**Issue Date:** 2021-01-05

# **HOW THE CAGED BIRD SINGS**

**Educational Background and Poetic  
Identity  
of China's Obscure Poets**

**Jinhua Wu**

Cover photo by Feng Yiying  
Cover design by Lam Ying Ying Lydia

Copyrights @ 2021 Jinhua Wu, Pijnacker, the Netherlands.  
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted,  
in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from the  
author.

How the Caged Bird Sings:  
Educational Background and Poetic Identity  
of China's Obscure Poets

**Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van  
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,  
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof.mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,  
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties  
te verdedigen op dinsdag 5 januari 2021  
klokke 13.45 uur

door

Jinhua Wu  
geboren te Suixi  
in 1985

**Promotores**

Prof. dr. Maghiel van Crevel

Prof. dr. Gabrielle van den Berg

**Promotiecommissie**

Prof. dr. Ivo Smits, Leiden University

Prof. dr. Oliver Moore, Groningen University

Dr. Tang Qiaoqiao, Southwest University for Nationalities

To Lingzhe, Jan-Peter and Avery





# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	iii
Conventions and a note on online sources .....	v
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Central Questions .....	1
1.2 Background .....	3
1.3 Literature Review .....	19
1.4 Theory and Methodology .....	27
1.5 Structure and Argument .....	37
2 From Future Masters to High School Dropouts: The Obscure Poets' Educational Trajectories .....	38
2.1 School Education in the PRC from 1949 to 1966 .....	38
2.2 The Obscure Poets' Family Education .....	45
2.3 Learning Webs .....	49
2.4 Two Sides of a Poetic Identity .....	54
2.5 Concluding Remarks .....	59
3 Shizhi: "Believe in the Future" .....	61
3.1 Introduction .....	61
3.2 Family Education .....	66
3.3 School Education.....	67
3.4 Mentor education.....	71
3.5 Poetic Identity: Political Lyricism.....	75
3.6 Concluding Remarks .....	88
4 Bei Dao: "The Wanderer Holding a Poppy" .....	89
4.1 Introduction .....	89
4.2 School Education.....	91
4.3 Family Education .....	97
4.4 Learning Webs .....	99
4.5 Poetic Identity: Christianity.....	102
4.6 Poetic Identity: A Variant of Political Lyricism.....	105
4.7 Poetic Identity: Revolt against Political Lyricism.....	110

4.8	Concluding Remarks .....	116
5	Gu Cheng: “Everything Bulin Wailed Was a Slogan” .....	118
5.1	Introduction .....	118
5.2	School Education.....	122
5.3	Family Education.....	126
5.4	Poetic Identity: Mixed Styles .....	129
5.5	Poetic Identity: A Reflection on School Education.....	137
5.6	Concluding Remarks .....	143
6	Wang Xiaoni: “Starting Anew as a Poet” .....	145
6.1	Introduction .....	145
6.2	Family Education.....	148
6.3	School Education.....	150
6.4	Poetic Identity: Starting Anew as a Poet .....	154
6.5	Concluding Remarks .....	172
7	Conclusion .....	174
	Works Cited.....	184
	Summary .....	205
	Samenvatting.....	208
	Curriculum Vitae.....	212
	Propositions .....	213

## Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation has been a long journey. I take this opportunity to thank different people at Leiden University and elsewhere for giving me beautiful memories.

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my supervisors, Prof. Maghiel van Crevel and Prof. Gabrielle van den Berg. It took a long time for me to get used to writing academic English. Maghiel was meticulous and patient, although at first it was a shock to see my writing return so full of comments. I have learned much from Maghiel that exceeds the scope of this thesis. Gabrielle was a patient and insightful reader. And her hard-working spirit inspires me.

My thanks also go to my MA thesis supervisor Prof. Zhang Qinghua of Beijing Normal University and visiting scholars at Leiden University such as Dr. Nikky Lin, Prof. Wu Sijing, Prof. Chen Aizhong and Prof. Yi Bin. Conversations with them are inspirational and fun. Also, I am grateful to my colleagues in China: Li Runxia, Liu Jiangkai, Chu Yunxia, Zhao Kun, Feng Qiang, Huo Junming, Liu Bo and Wang Shiqiang. I am impressed by their diligence and intelligence.

This thesis was financially supported by the Chinese Scholarship Council. I received first-rate assistance from the Leiden University library and the support of many colleagues in the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS). Dear Harold, I still remember your big smile when you instructed us on academic presentations in the first PhD Seminar session back in 2011. Maghiel, overloaded as academic director and working seven days a week, thanks for writing all those seminar announcements and LIAS newsletters with a combination of accuracy and humor. Wilma and José, I am grateful that you always came back to me with timely solutions to my questions. And I thank those working in office 119 in the Huizinga building for forming a wonderful and warm community: Bing, Joshua, Wenxin, Behrouz, Lan-yi, Mohammed, Maarietje, Xiaofei, Saeedeh, Xiao, Qiaoqi, Ruobing, Yujing and Meiwen. I am grateful to Feng Yiyong for permission to use his artwork “Long-Time Bird” (久鹏) for the cover of my thesis.

Aside from academic life, I appreciate that I have befriended so many wonderful persons in the adventure of settling down and raising children in a foreign country: Angela, Annie, Cheryl, Haifang, Janet, Jing, Juan, Kan, Ketty, Lijie, Lixin, Martho, Naresa, Tracy, Ting, Xin and Yoyo.

I thank my husband Lingzhe and my two lovely boys Jan-Peter (Qiyu) and Avery (Siyuan) for their companionship. Without them, I would have finished this thesis earlier . . . But there are two sides to every coin. After I kissed them good night, cleaned up the house and finally got back to my thesis late at night, I could't help saying, "Wow, I love my research."

My hometown Suixi is a seaside town in southern China. There live my parents, younger brother and many other beloved relatives and friends. I have been away since 2001, when I enrolled in the best high school in the city. And I kept moving further north for my studies: first to Nanjing, then to Beijing, then to Leiden. My warmest to my younger brother, for taking care of our parents while I am away for so long. Dear mama and papa, thank you for encouraging and supporting me from afar to pursue my dream. I know it was not easy for any of us.

Last, I would like to say something to myself. You are brave to hang in there and never give up. Goed Gedaan!

## **Conventions and a note on online sources**

Chinese characters are provided at first mention of personal and institutional names, important terms, and the titles of literary works. In transcribing personal names, I follow the Chinese custom to place family names before given names. I list life years for well-known poets. I use the Hanyu Pinyin 汉语拼音 system of Romanization, adding tone marks only where this is necessary for the analysis. Poems titles are marked by double angular brackets « . . . ».

All internet pages cited were last accessed in October 2019.

