In the previous chapter I noted that after the Ming dynasty fell some scholar-officials were critical of Chen Jiru. These scholar-officials attacked Chen for what they perceived as his reluctance to engage politically, by serving in office or taking an active role, above the local level, in a time of political crisis. They saw Chen’s political disengagement as symptomatic of the weakening of the dynasty, a weakening that culminated in what they regarded as the shameful overthrow of the Ming by the Manchus. I also noted that in addition to these criticisms there were descriptions of Chen that portrayed him in a positive light, often emphasising his learning and literary talent. However, at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, individual comments about Chen tended to be overtly and overwhelmingly hostile. The unrelentingly negative tenor of these comments had much to do with an ongoing discussion among the elite about the causes that brought about the collapse of the Ming.1 The most reactionary comment of this type came with Gu Yanwu’s 顧炎武 (1613–1682) philosophical attack on Wang Yangming, in which he blamed the latter almost exclusively for the dynastic downfall.2 It is important to note that most of these comments appeared at a time when anyone who had, as an adult, personally witnessed the changing of the dynasties, or had known Chen, was already deceased. Having not directly had to negotiate the complex and difficult moral questions of the 1630s and 1640s, or met Chen, these critics were able to draw a direct line from

1 This discussion about the collapse of the Ming and how to deal with the consequences took place at many levels, from Huang Zongxi’s profoundly conservative examination of the structure of the empire in Mingyi dafang lu 明夷待訪錄 [Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince], through Gu Yanwu’s polemics against Wang Yangming’s philosophy, to the development of the genre of correspondence [chidu] that David Pattinson has argued provided a space for Han Chinese to write outside the demands attached to serving a foreign occupier (See David Pattinson, “Zhou Lianggong and Chidu Xinchao: Genre and Political Marginalisation in the Ming-Qing Transition” East Asian History, 20, 2000, pp. 61–82).

Chen’s literary persona to some of the causes or malaise that they saw as contributing to the fall of the Ming dynasty.\(^3\)

In contrast to this, the representations of Chen in official publications during this period, such as the biography in the *History of the Ming*, are much less negative in summing up his life. Official historiography, guided by the Manchus, was not directly aimed at excoriating Chen merely on account of his literary persona. But the Manchus had to win over the Han elite, and unreservedly praising a figure then viewed by some of the scholar-official elite as little better than a parasite was a complicated matter. Furthermore, the Manchus had no desire to inspire contemporary elites to emulate Chen’s lifestyle. From their point of view, scholar-officials were better occupied when they were serving the government in one way or another.\(^4\) Large historiographical projects that absorbed the energies of scholars were preferable to having those same scholars sit around with monks, discussing matters that could lead to social or political actions hostile to Manchu rule. A middle ground had to be found for the official attitude to Chen, and it was found in the separation of Chen’s life from his publications. Chen’s cultural life and its authenticity were acknowledged, but at the same time many of his books were banned. This chapter discusses these issues, and then examines the *Clandestine Jottings*, the work that brings Chen into our times.

**Private Criticism of Chen**

A work that clearly signals the hardening attitude of many scholar-officials to Chen that occurred during the eighteenth century is the *Survey of Ming Poetry*, an anthology compiled by Zhu Yizun in 1705.\(^5\) In this work Zhu gives his assessment of Ming dynasty poets. The assessment is not just literary but draws attention to the moral quali-

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\(^3\) The importance of biology, of coming to adulthood under the Qing, is also given as a major reason for why the project of writing the history of the Ming became quite feasible in the 1680s. See Lynn A. Struve, “The Hsu Brothers and Semiofficial Patronage of Scholars in the K’ang-hsi Period” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 42:1, p. 244.

\(^4\) For a summary of the reintegration of scholars to government service during the early and mid Qing periods see Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984), pp. 100–112.