party-state repressing the bourgeoning civil society, the contributors of the book seek to offer a view of memory and history as ambivalent, contradictory, and multilayered. What emerges from all of this is a refreshingly critical perspective on the open-endedness and fluidity of China's postsocialist condition, in which a wide range of political, economic, and cultural possibilities are available for negotiation. This impressive volume is very likely to exert a long-lasting influence on future scholars in the China field.

Chen Jiru (1558–1639): The Background to, Development and Subsequent Uses of Literary Personae. By Jamie Greenbaum. Sinica Leidensia Series, 81. Leiden: Brill, 2007. Pp. 350.
ISBN 10: 9004163581; 13: 97890041635 84.
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doi:10.1017/S1479591409000345

Among the various personae that late imperial Chinese literati adopted for themselves, no metaphor is more suitable than the image of a crane soaring among the clouds (*yunjian he* 雲間鶴). This image, which has incurred praise, doubt, and ridicule, originated with Chen Jiru (1558–1639), a late Ming author who played an active role in the multiple arenas of politics, economy, society, and culture. Chinese literati often sought political power and moral authority, which usually came with fame and renown – and with the desire to inscribe their names into official histories. Chen, who once burnt his scholar's robes as a gesture meant to reject a political career, never held any official post, and throughout his life confined his activities to the Jiangnan region. However, taking advantage of the flourishing late Ming publishing industry, Chen became a rising literary celebrity through writing and editing. Importantly, instead of restricting himself to traditional ways of winning fame and renown, he crossed boundaries of class, reaching out to a wider, more lasting audience, which included officials, local gentry, merchants, literati, aboriginal leaders, restaurant and teahouse runners, bakers, and even the illiterate. Like a soaring crane, Chen roamed with ease in a social world that was largely a vanity fair. Author Jamie Greenbaum ponders the question of a Chinese literatus's literary reputation by drawing on Western revisionist scholarship on William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens. By focusing on Chen's identity as a professional writer striving to meet the needs of a commercial reading market, Greenbaum reexamines and offers a clear overview of the contesting critical interpretations of Chen from the past four centuries, and in the end successfully "reinvents" Chen Jiru.

Greenbaum's project is based on a solid study of the biographies of and criticisms on Chen that emerged from the late Ming through the present. The book consists of nine chapters. As the author points out, the first half of the book explores significant aspects of Chen's life. In Chapter 1, Greenbaum examines Chen's family and educational background, the social and cultural worlds of the late Ming elite, and Chen's burning of his scholar's robes as a gesture of eschewing the official career. Chapter 2 studies the genesis of Chen's public image, the reclusive life style he adopted, his immersion in Buddhism and Daoism, as well as the ways in which he participated in or shunned social life. Chapter 3 focuses on Chen's lifelong involvement with the print and publishing industry as well as his multiple roles as the producer and consumer of books. In Chapter 4, the author shifts his focus to the social position Chen achieved after he had obtained financial security and cultural celebrity, and explores others' accounts of his real death as well as his self-imagined death.

The next two chapters study in detail his two distinct literary personae and the literary markets he developed in association with these images. Chapter 5 covers over one hundred biographical writings

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Translated by the author and Jie Guo.

(e.g. epitaphs and elegiac essays) that Chen was commissioned to write, with the aim of examining the extent to which Chen aligned himself with orthodox notions of biography. Chapter 6 explores how Chen established himself as an idiosyncratic aesthetic authority on the commercial market by deliberately taking up an array of thematic cultural behaviors.

The last three chapters look at the uses of Chen's literary reputation and writings by different people and institutions from the late Ming period through the present. Chapter 7 discusses how Chen's name was variously – and often out of his own control – used during the late Ming and early Qing periods. Furthermore, this chapter also looks at the visual and theatrical representations of Chen by studying a number of portraits as well as plays that feature him. Chapter 8 concentrates on the mid- and late Qing periods, with an emphasis on the political polemics surrounding his and his works' place in official histories as well as in various lists of banned books. Chapter 9 focuses on Chen's image and the publication of his works in the 1930s and the 1990s, two periods that witnessed the emergence of heightened interest in late Ming essays (*xiaopin* 小品). This chapter also assesses various modern versions of *Clandestine Jottings from My Little Window* (*Xiaochuang youji* 小窗幽記), a collection of adages and other short pieces attributed to Chen.

Himself a product of late Ming material culture, Chen has become a commercialized idol broadly circulated. Among similar figures of renown, only persons such as Su Shi and Qin Gui are better known than he. "Chen Meigong," a brand name originating from him, has been widely used for various quotidian commodities such as cakes, coverlets, and even toilets. Compared with the famed Tang-dynasty poets Li Bai and Du Fu, who enjoy a tremendous cultural popularity, Chen is not as easy to identify; nor is he as renowned as the Olympic gold-medalist Li Ning. However, in a modern bookstore, *Clandestine Jottings*, famous but wrongly attributed to Chen, is often seen side by side with classics such as the *Book of the Way and Virtue* (*Dao De Jing*), *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), and *Analects* (*Lunyu*), offering non-literary insights about the world. For modern people, who have turned to texts from the past for solutions to their problems, his collections of nebulous and ambiguous adages have become a "balm for the ills of the world" (p. 258). Applying labels such as "*xiaopin*," "aesthetics of life," "philosophy of life," and "business and management" to Chen's works, and sometimes re-presenting them by adopting such visual forms as cartoon, contemporary publishers have successfully transformed Chen Jiru's image into a commodity that is still full of life four centuries after Chen's own time, and continues to exert and expand its influence. Books that once mainly appeared on the desks of the elite are now read widely. In this groundbreaking study, Greenbaum presses hard to excavate a hidden past; at the same time, he also explores later generations' selective and sometimes twisting use of this past in the service of their own needs. As Greenbaum's project reveals, Chen's is an elusive image, around which multiple voices are competing and conversing with one another. Over the past four centuries, Chen Jiru has been transformed from a soaring crane into a phantom. No doubt his career, marked by the creation of multiple identities, should be seen in an allegorical light; as a literatus, he has become a legend. The source materials Greenbaum uses include biographies, writings attributed to Chen, an assortment of historical documents (e.g. annals, local gazetteers, etc.), literary criticism, theoretical works, portraits of Chen, and contemporary scholars' research papers. As a case study, this book shuttles among the solemn Confucian tradition, in which political advancement is stressed, the nobleness of the Buddhist and Daoist reclusive atmosphere, and the flourishing commercial culture, in which product advertisement and promotion were critical. Tracing "the background to, development and subsequent uses of" Chen's literary personae in a subtle and meticulous fashion, this book offers the reader a vivid account of Chen Jiru's life and career, and portrays a literatus whose image has been enduring but inconsistent, complex, ever-changing, and even somewhat playful.