

Consuming Silences



How we
read
authors
who
don't
publish



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著者:Weber, Myles

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J. D. Salinger was an author in 1951 when he published "The Catcher in the Rye." Is he one now? Was Henry Roth an author during the sixty years that separated "Call It Sleep," his literary debut, from his second novel, "Mercy of a Rude Stream?" To show us how silence can be produced and consumed as a literary text, Myles Weber takes a provocative look at four revered authors who battled writer's block or simply ceased publishing. The careers of Tillie Olsen, Henry Roth, J. D. Salinger, and Ralph Ellison suggest that an unproductive twentieth-century author could command serious critical attention and remain a literary celebrity by offering the public volumes of silence, which became read and admired like any other text. Weber sees periods of nonpublication as texts that are consumed by the literary public--and sometimes produced deliberately by inactive writers and their handlers. However, his aim is not to criticize individual authors but to reveal connections between literature as a commodity and authorship as a profession. As Weber looks at the particular circumstances of each author's silence, he brings to them an understanding of such topics as the cult of celebrity, intellectual property law, the complicity of the media and the academy in engendering and then maintaining an author's silence, and mass production and distribution. By helping us to look in new ways at authorial silence not just as a biographical fact or a creative problem but also as a marketing opportunity, "Consuming Silences" injects energy into debates about the nature of literary production and the cultural place of authors who do not publish.

作者介绍:

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