



Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China

Shuyu Kong

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This book examines the changes taking place in literary writing and publishing in contemporary China under the influence of the emerging market economy. It focuses on the revival of literary best sellers in the Chinese book market and the establishment of a best-seller production machine.

The author examines how writers have become cultural entrepreneurs, how state publishing houses are now motivated by commercial incentives, and how “second-channel,” unofficial publishers and distributors both compete and cooperate with official publishing houses in a dual-track, socialist-capitalist economic system. Taken together, these changes demonstrate how economic development and culture interact in a postsocialist society, in contrast to the way they work in the mature capitalist economies of the West. That economic reforms have affected many aspects of Chinese society is well known, but this is the first comprehensive analysis of market influences in the literary field. This book thus offers a fresh perspective on the inner workings of contemporary Chinese society.

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