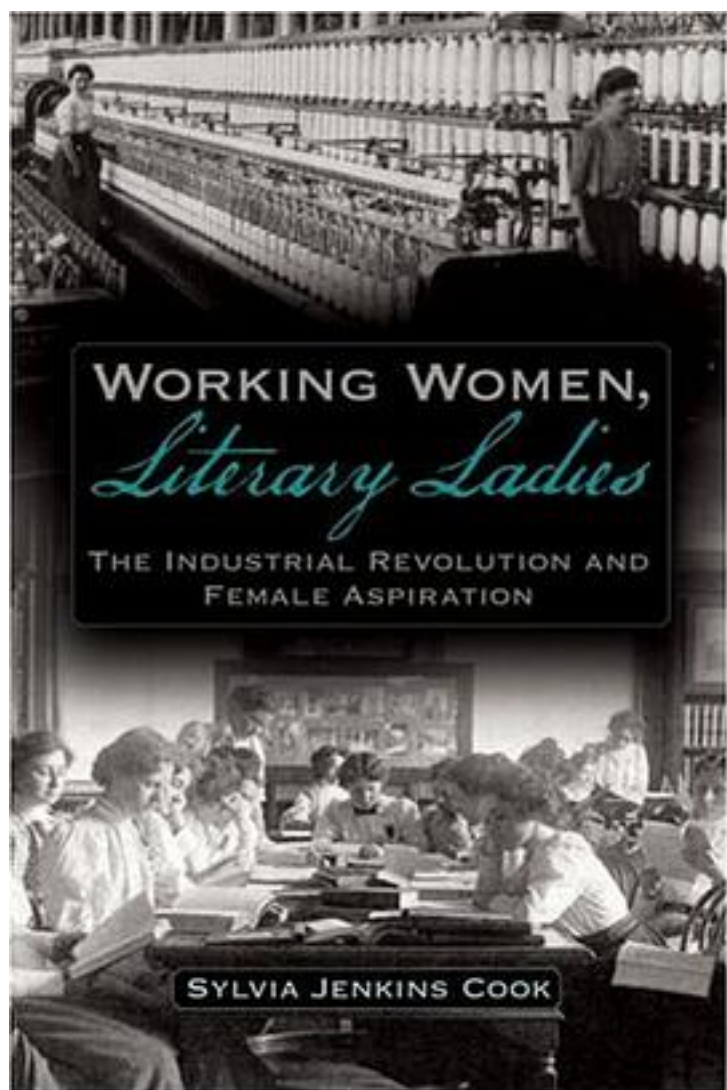


Working Women, Literary Ladies



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This book explores the mental and literary awakening that many working-class women in the United States experienced when they left the home and began to work in factories early in the nineteenth century. Cook also examines many of the literary productions from this group of women ranging from their first New England magazine of belles lettres, *The Lowell Offering*, to Emma Goldman's periodical, *Mother Earth*; from Lucy Larcom's epic poem of women factory workers, *An Idyl of Work*, to Theresa Malkiel's fictional account of sweatshop workers in New York, *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*. Working women's avid interests in books and writing evolved in the context of an American romanticism that encouraged ideals of self-reliance that were not formulated with factory girls in mind. Their efforts to pursue a life of the mind while engaged in arduous bodily labour also coincided with the emergence of middle-class women writers from private and domestic lives into the literary marketplace. However, while middle-class women risked forfeiting their status as ladies by trying to earn money by becoming writers, factory women were accused of selling out their class credentials by trying to be literary. Cook traces the romantic literariness of several generations of working-class women in their own writing and the broader literary responses of those who shared some, though by no means all, of their interests. The most significant literary interaction, however, is with middle-class women writers. Some of these, like Margaret Fuller, envisioned ideals of female self-development that inspired, without always including, working women. Others, like novelists Davis, Phelps, Alcott, and Scudder, created compassionate fictions of their economic and social inequities but balked at promoting their artistic and intellectual equality.

作者介绍:

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