



# Women, Portraiture and the Crisis of Identity in Victorian England: My Lady Scandalous Reconsidered

*Colleen Denney*

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## **Women, Portraiture and the Crisis of Identity in Victorian England: My Lady Scandalous Reconsidered** Colleen Denney

Exploring the concept of portrait as memoir, *Women, Portraiture and the Crisis of Identity in Victorian England: My Lady Scandalous Reconsidered* examines the images and lives of four prominent Victorian women who steered their way through scandal to forge unique identities. The volume shows the effect of celebrity, and even notoriety, on the lives of Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Lady Dilke, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, and Sarah Grand. For these women, their portraits were more than speaking likenesses-whether painted or photographic, they became crucial tools the women used to negotiate their controversial identities. *Women, Portraiture and the Crisis of Identity in Victorian England* shows that the fascinating power of celebrity - and specifically its effects on women - was as much of a phenomenon in Victorian times as it is today. Colleen Denney explores how these women used their portraits as tools of persuasion, performing a domestic masquerade to secure privacy and acceptance, or sites of resistance, tearing down male constructions of female propriety and fighting Victorian stereotypes of intellectual women. Questioning the classic Victorian notions of "separate spheres," this volume celebrates women's search for self within the constraints of the nineteenth century, as well as within the world of present-day academia.

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