

# **The Anti-Marriage Sentiment in Selected Late Victorian Novels**

By

**Yasmeen Mohammad Ahmad Othman**

Supervision

**Prof. Taher Badinjki**

**Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, 2021**

## **Abstract**

The last two decades of the Victorian age witnessed a questioning of many social attitudes including the relation between men and women. Feminist writers and supporters of women liberation criticized the traditional understanding of a husband-wife relationship, rejected marriage and called for a deinstitutionalized free relationship. This study focuses on the works of four prominent novelists of the period whose works caused a fuss among readers and critics. Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1894), and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895) are representative literary works of a trend of novels that appeared at that period, which shattered the traditional image of the angel in the house and called for emancipation, equality, and free union. The heroines' attitudes will be studied, scrutinized and compared in their rejection of the traditional concept of marriage and calls for its reformation or even abolishment, and granting women equal rights. The marriage question became public and feminists and supporters of women emancipation considered it humiliating and a vexatious failure, which served man's ego and called for articulating tense perceptions of a new

womanhood. Despite the protest of conservative literary critics and moralists like Lynn Linton and Mrs. Oliphant who condemned these works and considered them immoral; The heroines of these novels let the door open and paved the way, not only for the emergence of the “New Woman”, but also for the rise of liberated feminists at the beginning of the twentieth century.

**Keywords:** Free Union, Feminism, New Woman, anti-marriage, nineteenth century