FROM WOMEN’S PROBLEMS TO WOMEN AS IMAGES IN MODERN IRAQI POETRY

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Women’s problems were one of the main topics of modern Arabic literature almost since its very beginnings in the second half of the last century. At this time Arab intellectuals, especially those who had lived for some time in a (Western) European country had become aware of the European or better Western and Middle European, later North American, life-style and the different social habits and traditions, amongst them the male-female relations and the sexual roles, in the Arab world. In Egypt, the country with the strongest tendencies towards westernization, women from educated upperclass families like ʿĀʾisha Taymūr (1840–1902), sister of Ahmad Taymūr Pāshā, aunt of the well-known writers Muhammad and Maḥmūd Taymūr, demanded, beginning in the 1880s, a better education for girls as the mothers and educators of the coming generation. Zaynab Fawwāz (1860–1914), born in South Lebanon and raised there, underlined the cultural and educational attainments of Arab and, in general, Oriental women in former centuries with her biographical dictionary of famous women all over the world and over the centuries entitled in rhymed prose al-Durr al-Manthūr fi Ṭabaqāt Rabbāt al-Khudūr “Scattered (Prosaic) Pearls about the Generations/Classes of the Ladies of the Boudoirs”, published in Cairo in 1893/4. Her articles, stressing the necessity of women’s education and liberation, were published in Egyptian newspapers, especially in al-Muʿayyad, since at least 1891 and col-

1 Extended and revised version of a paper, which I have given during the 17th UEAI Congress as St. Petersburg in September 1994.
lected and published later under the title al-Rasā’il al-Zainabiyya “Zainab’s Essays”.


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3 Cf. to her life Kahhāla, Mu‘jam al-Nisā‘, V. 2, pp. 82ss; al-Zirikli, al-A‘lām, V. 3, p. 67; preface to the new edition of her novel Husn al-‘Awāqib, Beirut, 1984. I could not find any hint of the year of the first publication of al-Rasā’il al-Zainabiyya (I). C. Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur, Suppl. bd. 3, Leiden, 1942, p. 175, states that a 2nd volume never was published.


5 The year of his death, given in EF, V. 1, p. 425, is to be corrected.


10 Cf. his book A‘lām al-‘Irāq, Cairo, 1345 (1926/7), and his articles about famous members of the Ālūsī-family in the journal Lughat al-‘Arab. Until now I had no access to the monography by Hāmid al-Maṭbā‘ī, Muḥammad Bahjat al-Athari, Baghdad, 1988.