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Reading Against the Grain of Orientalism:

Bint al – Shāṭi’s Revision of the Classical Arabic Literary Canon

The Arab cultural awakening (*Nahḍah*) saw a swathe of revisionary scholarship on literary history: Jurjī Zaydān’s (d. 1914) *Tārīkh Ādāb al – Lughah al – ‘Arabiyyah*, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s (d. 1973) *Fī al – shi’r al – Jāhilī* (1926), and al – Khūlī’s (d. 1966) *Fann al – Qawl* (1947). These works represent a variety of perspectives reflecting changes in the understanding of Arabic literary heritage. While Zaydān and Ḥusayn’s works were informed by orientalists, al – Khūlī and his students – who were also Ḥusayn’s students: Bint al – Shāṭi’ (d. 1998), Shawqī Ḍayf (d. 2005), Muḥammad Mandūr (d. 1965) and Maḥmūd Shākīr (d. 1997) chafed against oriental scholarship. They proposed instead a thorough revision of traditional paradigms based on a thorough study of heritage (*Awwal al – tajdīd qatl al – qadīm fahman*).

My paper sets out to examine Bint al – Shāṭi’s revisionary reading of the Arabic literary canon (selection criteria, selection process, and classification) in her *Qiyam Jadīdah lil – Adab al – ‘Arabī al – Qadīm* and her leading role in the recovery of neglected women such as *Umm al – Rasūl, Nisā’ al – Nabīyy, Banāt al – Nabīyy, Sukaynah Bint al – Ḥusayn, al – Sayyidah Zaynab*, and *al – Khansā’ al – Shā’irah al – Ulā*, and their inclusion in university curriculum.