

Ba'albakī's Influence on 1950s and 1960s Lebanese Women Writers

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Abstract : While Ba'albakī ceased writing or publishing since 1964, it is considerable and significant to investigate Ba'albakī's influence on others. This paper examines her influence on three Lebanese women writers: Emily Nasrallah, Muná Jabbūr, and Hanan al-Shaykh. However, the aim is not simply to examine the influence of the writer on these three authors, but rather to note similarities and differences in the challenges they faced and the agendas they followed in their fiction writing. For each of these writers, this article will describe elements of their literature, and then sketch out the influence which Ba'albakī has had on them. This paper relies on material from Sidawi because it includes interviews with the female writers discussed that are relevant to the current discussion. Sidawi asked them about Ba'albakī and her influence on them, the challenges they faced, and how they coped with them. This paper points out their comments using their own words. To be clear, examining these writers' notes and works is beyond the scope of this paper. To sum up, there are significant parallels between the life and work of Ba'albakī, and other Lebanese women writers such as Nasrallah, Jabbūr and al-Shaykh. Like Ba'albakī, Nasrallah and al-Shaykh also suffered in their struggle against their families. Nasrallah and al-Shaykh, like Ba'albakī, suffered because their society did not trust in their abilities and creativity. Ba'albakī opted for isolation because of her conflict with patriarchal society including the Lebanese women's groups, while Nasrallah's isolation was because she preferred individualism and autonomy, and Jabbūr, as could be speculated, was not able to cope with the suffering caused by her role as a woman writer within Lebanese society. Whereas Ba'albakī isolated herself from the Lebanese women's groups, focusing instead on her feminist writing and joining the Shi'r group, Al-Shaykh and the Lebanese women's groups are able to cooperate in harmony. Furthermore, while Nasrallah and Al-Shaykh continued to publish fiction, Ba'albakī stopped publishing fiction in 1964. All of the above confirms not only that it is worthy to investigate deeply and academically both the biography and the works of Ba'albakī, but also that she deserves to include her throughout the top great Arab female writers, at the time, like Al-Shaykh and Nawal El Saadawi.

Keywords : feminist writing, Hanan Al-Shaykh, Laylá Ba'albakī, Lebanese women writers, Muná Jabbūr

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