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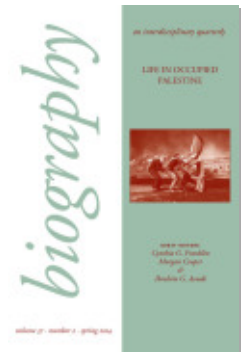
## Write What You Know

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Biography, Volume 37, Number 2, Spring 2014, pp. 538-539 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2014.0015>



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## WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW

LINA HESHAM ALSHARIF

Write what you know . . .  
I know that I am a Palestinian  
I know that clichés reside in my rhetoric  
that olive tree, that dove of peace  
that Gandhi they preach  
all the talk about the steadfastness of refugees,  
this steadfastness is imposed on me  
like a curfew . . .  
And that rock that I threw  
it was because I was angry  
about that young blue-eyed soldier  
who told me in his American accent: “No entry!”

This refugee camp is like a swamp.  
Don’t want you to fix the water tap  
don’t want you to fix the electricity grid  
I want this to end.  
And I don’t want you to use me as your slogan  
in the next conference you attend.

I don’t want to be a symbol  
nor consider a short visit to my besieged city symbolic  
nor cherish the key of my grandma for its symbolism . . .  
I don’t want to live in a memory  
A story of a great tragedy  
A memory eroding by apathy,

I don't want your bubble  
Don't throw your NGO money on the problem  
It won't go . . .  
You are safe  
save your dignity  
save your ingenuity.  
Don't talk to me about a featureless state,  
Look at my state.  
There's a country I want to retake . . .

I don't want to keep writing poetry  
inspired by dispossessed, imprisoned, oppressed muses  
who shed words to heal my bruises.

I want to see the sea for what it is  
and marvel the sunset  
without a permit,  
without a time limit,  
without feeling that I am fulfilling a promise.