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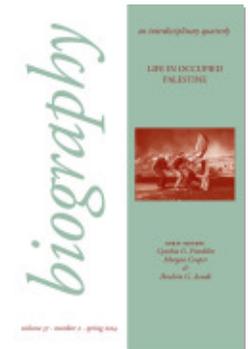
Write What You Know

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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.