

## Roundtable

Multilingual Literature in Conflict Zones 25 February 2025

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### *Language in Movement: Exile, Displacement and Dialects in Yousif Qasmiyeh's Writing the Camp*

In the mid-1950, Beddawi Refugee Camp was established in Lebanon to host Palestinian refugees who were displaced during the Nakba (mass displacement of Palestinians) in 1948. The camp has remained in existence over time, becoming a shelter for refugees displaced by other conflicts such as the Syrian war. Yousif Qasmiyeh's *Writing the Camp* (2021) merges the linguistic dynamism of dialects with classical Arabic poetic traditions to articulate the fractured realities of the camp.

Classical Arabic poetry, renowned for its themes of exile and displacement, is reimagined in Qasmiyeh's work through the incorporation of the multilingual voices of refugee camps. However, his work innovates within these frameworks. The author bridges the poetic past with the camp as a multilingual space, reflecting the dissonance of displacement. In *Writing the Camp*, dialects act as markers of identity and memory, while their erosion and silence mirror the loss inherent in exile.

Dialects become tools of resistance, narrating the memory of refugees. Qasmiyeh reflects the hybridity and tension inherent in the camp. While his poetry collection is written in English and is deeply shaped by reflections on Arabic varieties, his work reveals that neither language is complete on its own. This approach highlights how languages reflect the experience of exile, positioning *Writing the Camp* as a dialogue between past and present literary responses to displacement.