



7th ANNUAL
POEM
TOWN
BRADFORD

where we come from is more than war
(after viewing emily jacir's photographs, dartmouth college, 2019)

emily jacir, an artist born in the west bank who holds a u.s. passport,
asked fellow palestinians living in exile the following question:

If I could do anything for you, anywhere in Palestine, what would it be?

they told her:

play soccer in haifa with the first little boy you meet
go to gaza and water a tree eat *sayadiyeh* from a street vendor
place flowers on my mother's grave

as she carried out each wish, she took a photograph.

::

in english we have no word to describe the feeling of longing for someone or some place
that we love, which has been lost. no word for our haunting desire for what is gone:

the pacific ocean without a garbage patch greenland before it caught fire
catamounts roaming vermont forests

in a friend's tiny handmade book, I read the portuguese have a word for this longing.

they call it *saudade* (*sou' dādō*)

::

If I could not return to my homeland, what would I ask you to do?

:: pour golden nuggets of last year's corn seeds into your hand, then close your palm
around them like soil so they begin to know darkness

:: buy a bouquet of yellow tulips in winter from the white plastic bucket
just inside the greenhouse door at talking well farm pry up the rusty hasp on the lid
of the dented tin box slide a crinkly ten from your parka pocket inside

:: stand in the back of my pick-up truck beneath the gnarled apple tree on backway road
gently rustling her branches dodge nobby russets raining down on you

:: admire blush hellebore blossoms under the birch tree in may
petals supple as kitten ears

:: feel winter loosening its fingers from around your neck

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