

imagined pilgrimage to an unspoken land

after Julie Otsuka

by Lili Raynaud

i trace his name, engraved in cold black marble.

i close my eyes
i feel the desert air
that desert air that lives
in me, somewhere

i close my eyes a little harder
hold the book between my index and my thumb
i see
the barbed wire fences
i hear the siren, its call
i see the families
the little girl peeling oranges wondering
when she'll see her dad again
the mother who knows and says nothing
she buried the family dog under the maple tree
& left the laughing buddha face down
in the yard
that doesn't belong to them anymore

i understand why he never spoke about it
i understand why he left it in the dust

what does it mean
to carry history?
what does it mean to try and take it in your hand
and understand it?

to commit to memory
what was so long forgotten

the tar, the dust, the waiting, the waiting, the waiting

my elders fought for a country that was keeping their families behind bars
and they never spoke of it again

(what next?) (we live) (we try to remember)