

YOKAI

GRACE MARKUSON

Oba-san tells me spirits are alive
on these hallowed grounds.

She tells me they whisper,
when the last whippoorwill calls,

when the golden hour ceases,
and the lotus-red skies fade to black–

like Oba-san's hair when she was young,
and she adorned her favorite yukata for Obon–

the color of springtime sakura, petal-pink to contrast
her cascades of silk, tied up in an immaculate topknot.

She tells me the yokai are always here.
They are just overshadowed by the excited chatter–

from pale lips and the pattering of loose change
being dropped on the concrete, left to be trampled like

my Oba-san and her family in '42
corralled like cattle–citizens

of one nation under God, indivisible–
a divide was made, fault lines fractured

across the Pacific, the sun sets
on the land of the rising sun.