

P O E T R Y

MAYA MARSHALL



POEM ABOUT THE TIME WE WENT TO SEE *BELLE*
EVEN THOUGH WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS ABOUT,
AND WE WATCHED OUR POST-COLONIAL
INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIP
PLAY OUT IN THE WEIRDEST FUCKING WAY POSSIBLE.

OR

I NEVER KNEW THERE WERE SO MANY
WAYS TO BE HAUNTED.

me and my sweetheart went to the movies
and we were talking about how beauty is
a standard that I knew, eventually,
I wasn't—that I'm not the prize. Like
when people come for the American dream
it includes a blonde white woman, a small one.
Like how I'm a friend or a sister or some
exotic someone a white man can slum
home or how I'm an exception.
Like how I can't take it from behind
or stay on the bottom without thinking
about some foremother of mine being forced
because she was so free or near or beautiful.
Like, when tomboy me would go shopping with
flamingo jointed white girls, and I'd feel like
the mammy from *Corrina, Corrina*,
even though I was more like a cross between
the city and the country
girls in Crooklyn.

FAMILY PHOTO

On my bookshelf there is a picture
of my grandfathers on my parents'
wedding day. The Georges face
each other, stare off in different directions.
Ceramic elephants in front of the frame
trumpet toward each other, see nothing.
Praise the Lord for all dead things;
they cannot speak for themselves.

I speak to my grandfathers in the photo
What's your favorite color?

George:

George:

What does your voice sound like?

George:

George:

How old were you when you died?

George:

George:

Did you ever say no to a white man?

George:

George:

Did you ever hit your wife?

George:

George:

How many times?

George:

George: