



The Fields of Praise: New and Selected Poems

Marilyn Nelson

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In *The Fields of Praise*, Marilyn Nelson claims as subjects the life of the spirit, the vicissitudes of love, and the African American experience and arranges them as white pebbles marking our common journey toward a "monstrous love / that wants to make the world right." Nelson is a poet of stunning power, able to bring alive the most rarified and subtle of experiences. A slave destined to become a minister preaches sermons of heartrending eloquence and wisdom to a mule. An old woman scrubbing over a washtub receives a personal revelation of what Emancipation means: "So this is freedom: the peace of hours like these." Memories of the heroism of the Tuskegee Airmen in the face of aerial combat abroad and virulent racism at home bring a speaker to the sudden awareness of herself as the daughter "of a thousand proud fathers."

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