



LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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BOOK NEWS

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Marilyn Nelson Explores African American Experiences in *Faster Than Light*

New and Selected Poems from Poetry Society of America Frost Medalist Available in November

Baton Rouge—Conjuring numerous voices and characters across oceans and centuries, *Faster Than Light* explores widely disparate experiences through the lens of traditional poetic forms. This volume contains a selection of Marilyn Nelson's new and uncollected poems as well as work from each of her lyric histories of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century African American individuals and communities, and *The Cachoeira Tales*, a long riff on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Poems include the stories of historical figures like Emmett Till, the fourteen-year-old boy lynched in 1955, and the inhabitants of Seneca Village, an African American community razed in 1857 for the creation of Central Park. "Bivouac in a Storm" tells the story of a group of young soldiers, later to become known as the Tuskegee Airmen, as they trained near Biloxi, Mississippi, "marching in summer heat / thick as blackstrap molasses, under trees / haunted by whippings." Later pieces range from the poet's travels in Africa, Europe, and Polynesia, to poems written in collaboration with Father Jacques de Foiard Brown, a former Benedictine monk who becomes the subject of Nelson's playful fictional fantasy sequence, "Adventure-Monk!" Both personal and historical, these poems are grounded in quotidian detail but reach toward spiritual and moral truths.

Marilyn Nelson is the author of numerous books, including *The Cachoeira Tales and Other Poems*, *The Fields of Praise*, and *Magnificat*. Her honors include three National Book Award Finalist medals, the Frost Medal, the Poets' Prize, and the Boston Globe/Hornbook Award.

November 2012

176 pages, 6 x 9

Cloth 978-0-8071-4733-7

Paper 978-0-8071-4734-4

Cloth \$55.00s

Paper \$19.95

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