



Mother Water Ash

Poems

NICOLE COOLEY

PRAISE FOR MOTHER WASH ASH:

“In *Mother Water Ash*, Nicole Cooley mourns the death of her mother from the familiar and doomed landscape of New Orleans. These poems overflow with an essential truth: beloved people will change and disappear, while slightly more permanent cities, rivers, and levees have the audacity to go on without us. Read these haunting poems and weep.”—*Alison Pelegrin*

“A mother’s body dies, disappears, is burned, but other bodies remain: daughters, granddaughters, a widower—bodies of water that run through and around New Orleans, both touching down and moving on. This book too is a body, a flood, a torrential downpour enough to alter a landscape and any sense of home, reminding us that all memories erode.”—*Timothy Liu*

“The remarkable poems in this collection linger in remaking the world after the known world is lost. This is powerful poetry that attends to what we pass on in what seem to be unbearable aftermaths. The book, in all its grief, is paean to life somehow someday.”—*Tonya M. Foster*

Mother Water Ash, a wrenching new collection of poems by Nicole Cooley, explores the personal grief of a mother’s sudden death alongside the environmental crises of the storms, fires, and floods that now dominate our world. Examining the landscapes of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, these poems ponder what it means to mourn in the face of ecological catastrophe, and traipse the terrains left by loss.

NICOLE COOLEY is the author of six books of poems, including *Of Marriage* and *Girl after Girl after Girl*. Her first book, *Resurrection*, won the Walt Whitman Award. Raised in New Orleans, Cooley is professor of English in the MFA Program for Creative Writing and Literary Translation at Queens College, CUNY, and lives outside of New York City with her family.

New Orleans is the place

around which I uselessly orbit after Katrina typing
my mother’s name Missing Person Jacki Cooley

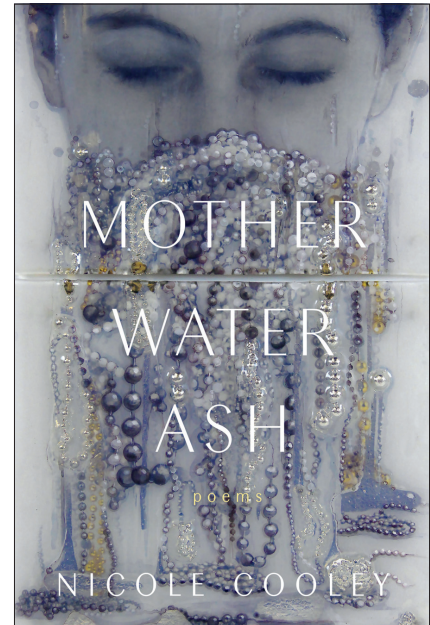
into search engines sixteen years ago my daughters asked
what is a hurricane’s eye what can it see

then my mother was alive refusing to leave the city
now I text my father how high is the water are there tornadoes

phone and electric out I wish for a slick of river
to spare our house while in a new dream about my mother

she thrashes to the Gulf’s sand floor where she can’t
burn or come apart

—from “Sixteen Years to the Day Another
Hurricane Reverses”



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