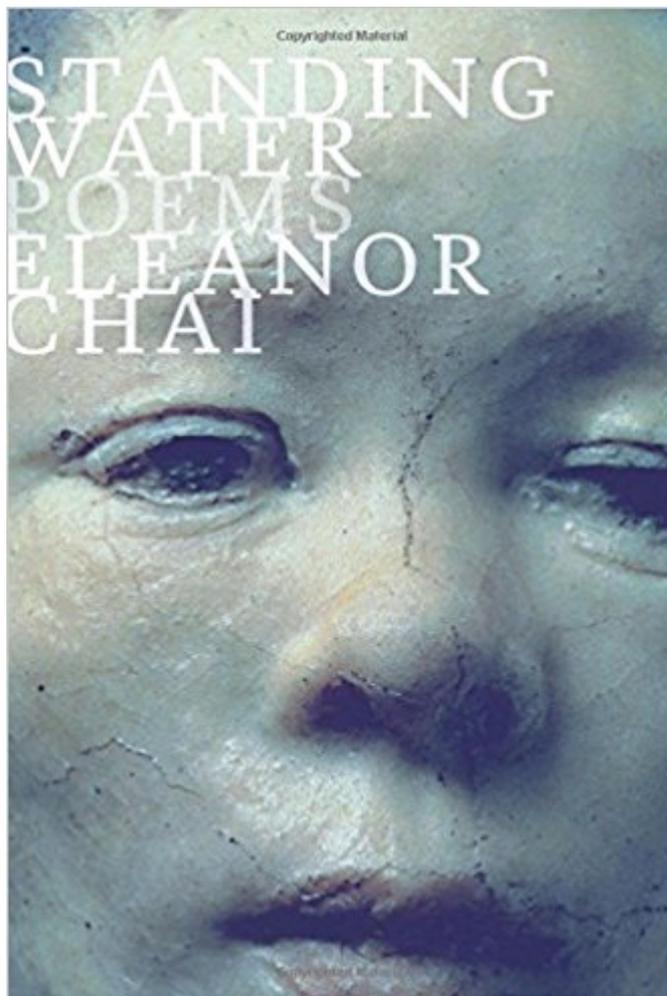


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Standing Water: Poems



Synopsis

A profound literary debut that recounts a child's singular story. Since I made you, you may imagine I set myself on fire • or better, say: you lit the funeral pyre from ten thousand days away. A young woman in Paris encounters an uncanny presence on a tour of a small museum. A study by Rodin of the dancer Little Hanako • titled Head of Sorrow • triggers in the young woman recognition of her mother, a mother erased from her life since childhood. Thus begins Eleanor Chai's Standing Water, one of the most remarkable first books of poetry in recent years. It is a journey into the past as well as the present • into the narrative hidden from the poet since birth, as well as the strategies that she has adopted to survive. It is a journey about how we learn to cope with, to perceive and describe, the world. It is a story about savage privilege and deprivation. Haunting the whole is the figure of the real Little Hanako • Rodin's model, a Japanese artist displaced in Europe, the medium through which other artists dream and discover the world.

Book Information

Hardcover: 112 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (April 12, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0374269483

ISBN-13: 978-0374269487

Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 0.7 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars • See all reviews • (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #154,787 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > United States > Asian American #25510 in Books > Literature & Fiction > United States

Customer Reviews

The story stayed with me long after I put down the book. In the title poem, after viewing the bust by Rodin of Hanako, the father tells Chai that her mother developed permanent postpartum madness after her birth. The mother was taken away as if she never existed. Her mother's adolescent into madness upon my appearance was the context • "no, the reason improvised for my rape." • We go back and forth to Hanako and various myths. If this were a conventional memoir, there would be extraneous details. I felt like every word and image had a reason for being there. Poetry is the ideal form to depict the strategies that a child, in great psychic distress, uses to survive and to try to

understand the world. Her perspective is shifting. She wonders if her mother - was she actually frightening, or was she scary because she was unspeakable, broken, fringe and the beginning of me? • Some wounds can never be healed and some things can never be known. However, a clarity and even catharsis is achieved by stating the losses, by precisely defining the damage that was done, and naming those who inflicted it. There is controlled rage running through the book, but also some implied forgiveness, as they were damaged as well. This is powerful writing.

Wonderfully written! I love it!

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