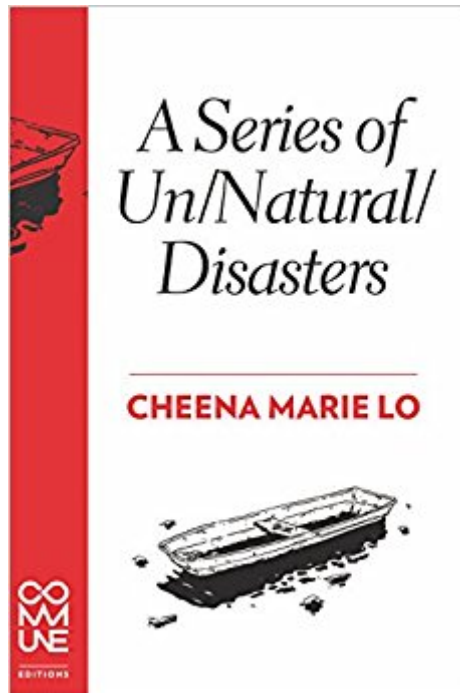




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A Series Of Un/Natural/Disasters



Synopsis

A Series of Un/Natural/Disasters explores the many forms of mutual aid and possibility that appear in moments of state failure. It maps long and complicated equations, taking us from Katrina to the prisoners at Riker's Island as they await Hurricane Sandy. It understands and explains disaster as a collective system, the state as precarious, and community as both fundamental and necessary. Cheena Marie Lo, born in Manapla, Philippines, is a genderqueer poet based in Oakland, California. They currently coordinate a youth art program at California College of the Arts and co-edit the literary journal HOLD.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lo contributes a forceful voice to the niche field of post-catastrophe narrative in their highly charged debut collection. Though Lo's considered tragedy is Hurricane Katrina, the poems evade specificity, insistently linking "and raging against" disaster preparedness and socioeconomic inequalities. Lines waft between accusation and empathy: "Poor planning on the part of our government/ poor people were not able to evacuate/ poor black residents." Enigmatic lists of numbers are interspersed among the poems; a postscript identifies the data as borrowed from post-Katrina publications and surveys. The facts without reference remind readers of the vast divide between destruction and humans' attempt to enumerate loss. As Lo writes, "Can a disaster be qualified by the number of lives lost? / how to quantify absence?" Lo's verse also relies on repetition that is reminiscent of such classic forms as the villanelle and sestina.

The structure suggests their attempt to assert control over misfortune—making form of formlessness. The collection, in its deeply moving entirety, seems motivated by this need: asserting questions ("q: Should we move to higher ground?/ q: What does disaster look like?") and answers ("because the sun was shining outside, but they were not allowed to go home") but also emphasizing that the scope of catastrophes, human-caused or not, eludes our grasp. (Apr.)\n

Born in Manapla, Philippines, Cheena Marie Lo is a genderqueer poet based in Oakland, CA. They co-curated the Manifest Reading Series, which featured mainly queer experimental artists and writers. They currently coordinate a youth art program at California College of the Arts, and co-edit the literary journal, HOLD. This is their first book.

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