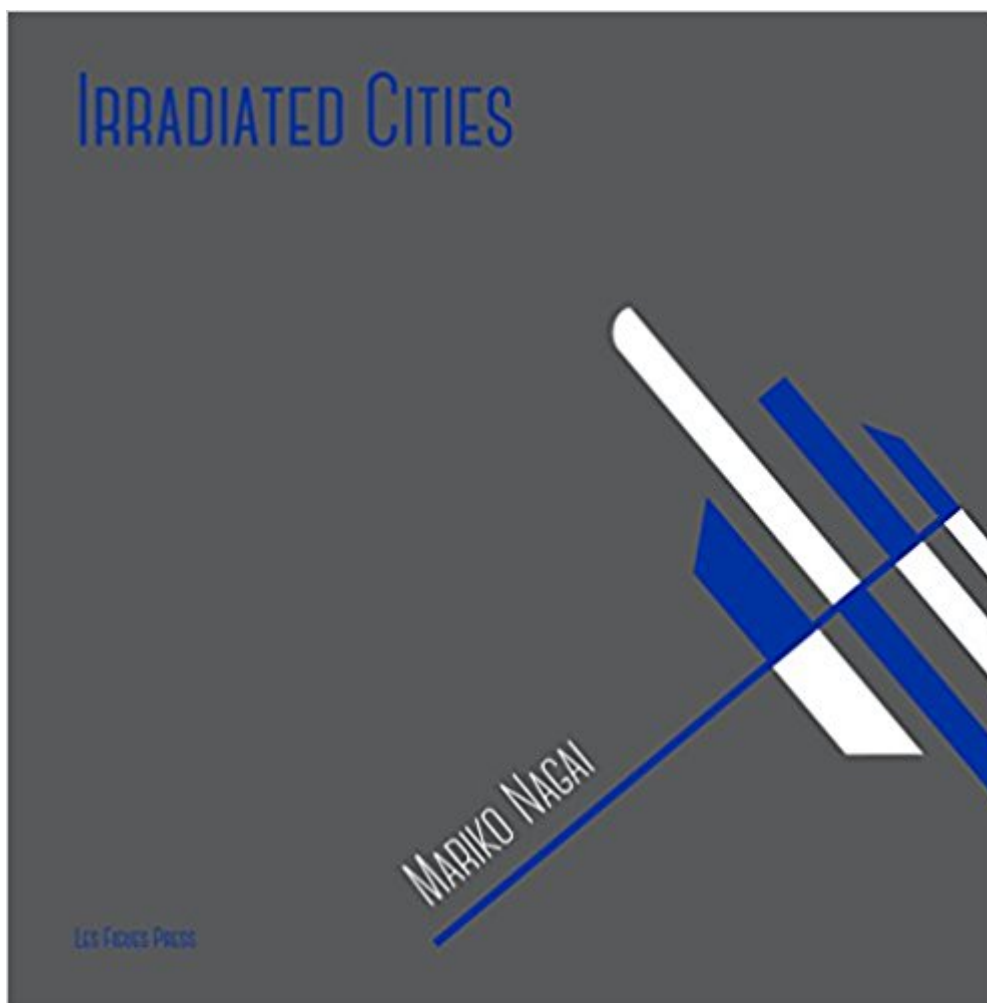


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# Irradiated Cities



## Synopsis

Poetry. Literary Nonfiction. Art. Hybrid Genre. Asian & Asian American Studies. Winner of the 2015 NOS Book Contest, as selected by guest judge Lê Thị Diễm Thúy. *The before, the after, and the event that divides*. In *IRRADIATED CITIES*, Mariko Nagai seeks the dividing events of nuclear catastrophe in Japan, exploring the aftermath of the bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima. Nagai's lyric textual fragments and stark black and white photographs act as a guide through these spaces of loss, silence, echo, devastation, and memory. And haunting each shard and each page an enduring irradiation, the deadly residue of catastrophe that leaks into our DNA. "Early on in *IRRADIATED CITIES* we encounter this sentence, tucked in a parenthetical: '(it always seems to be clear on catastrophic days).' Catastrophe wipes away certainty and tips us all into a state of 'seems,' of looking at one thing in the changed light of another, of seeing a landscape in relation to what it no longer holds, of recognizing the human face within the seemingly limitless horror of what humans are capable of inflicting on ourselves and our environment. This book, a sifting and circling, a calm and masterful layering of voices and vantage points, a slowly emerging portrait of four different Japanese cities and their inhabitants, resists any effort at arrivals or conclusions. By doing so, it shows us that while we may have an accumulation of facts for what happened on a particular day in a particular place, perhaps even the names and words and pictures of the people to whom catastrophe struck, and would not let go, it is within the dark sedimentation and the feather-light drift of history that we might glean what yet remains, and gives off light, to summon and trouble us still." *Atomic fallout fills this latest from poet and fiction writer Nagai (Dust of Eden: A Novel), a tenacious composition of personal narratives, researched details, and the author's own photographs of Japan. The story moves chronologically through four cities affected by radiation: Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Tokyo, and Fukushima. Nagai's descriptions capture something deeper than history books do. By meshing small moments 'organs float in jars with wooden number tags' and the overarching history in which they occur, Nagai speaks to both the individual and to the unifying social trauma...The book wobbles brilliantly on the border between the known and unknown.* *Publishers Weekly, starred review*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Atomic fallout fills this latest from poet and fiction writer Nagai (*Dust of Eden: A Novel*), a tenacious composition of personal narratives, researched details, and the author's own photographs of Japan. The story moves chronologically through four cities affected by radiation: Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Tokyo, and Fukushima. Nagai's descriptions capture something deeper than history books do. By meshing small moments--"organs float in jars with wooden number tags"--and the overarching history in which they occur, Nagai speaks to both the individual and to the unifying social trauma...The book wobbles brilliantly on the border between the known and unknown." - (Starred Review) Publishers Weekly

Having grown up in Europe and America, Mariko Nagai studied English with a concentration in poetry at New York University where she was the Erich Maria Remarque Fellow. She has received Pushcart Prizes both in poetry and fiction (nominated five times in total) and has received fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center, UNESCO-Aschberg Bursaries for the Arts, Akademie Schloss Solitude, Yaddo, and Hawthornden International Writers Retreat, to name a few. She is the author of *Histories of Bodies: Poems* (2007), *GEORGIC: STORIES* (2010), *Instructions for the Living* (2012) and *Dust of Eden: A Novel* (2014). Romanian translation of *Georgic: Stories* was published in 2015. She currently lives in Tokyo and is an Associate Professor of Creative Writing and Japanese Literature at Temple University Japan Campus.

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