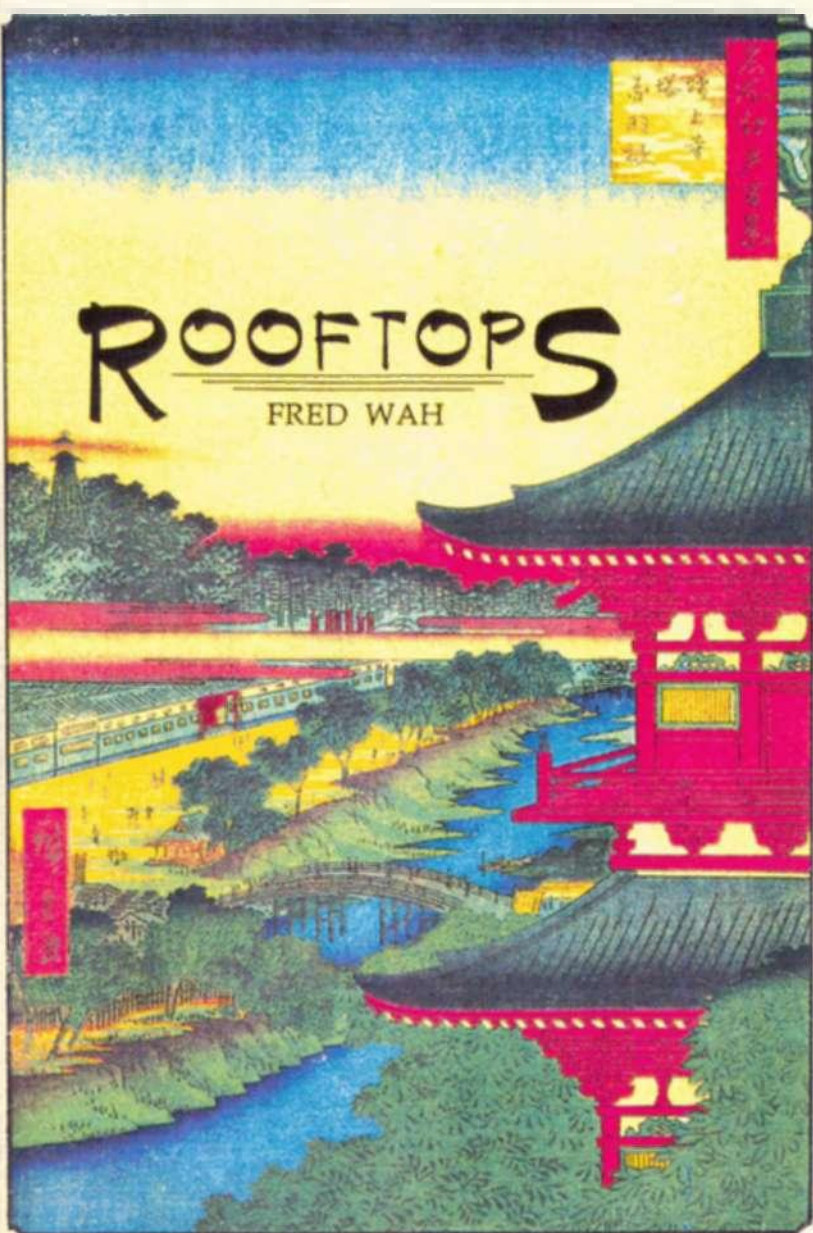


ROOFTOPS

FRED WAH



ROOFTOPS

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THESE POEMS were written after a few month's stay in Japan. I was trying to lend my writing some of the local aesthetic (*shiori* - tenderness; *hosomi* - slenderness; *sabi* - dry hardness; *sabishimi* - loneliness or solitariness; and *wabi* - quietness and homeliness.) Such senses were often encountered on warm autumn afternoon bicycle rides through the streets of Kyoto to the detachment of one of the temples.

- FRED WAH



ROOFTOPS



for Susan & Brian
"baby talk"
- Fred
Nov 89

ROOFTOPS

FRED WAH

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CONTENTS

ASIA / 7
NARA / 8
DECORATION / 9
JIDAI MATSURI FESTIVAL OF AGES / 10
IKEBANA / 11
HORUJI / 12
RYOGEN-IN / 13
THREE HAIKU ON 37 TH VIEW OF MOUNT FUJI / 14
SMELL / 16
SAME POEM OF KYOTO SUNSET POLLUTION / 17
KITANO SHRINE / 18
TODAI-JI / 19
TEMPLE ZOHONGUE / 20
NINNAJI / 21
KATSURA / 22
BYODO-IN / 23
FROM THE PLAINS OF SAGA TO NAGASAKI / 24
MATSUO SHRINE / 25
STATION/TRAIN/ROOF / 26
AMANOHASHIDATE / 27
HOMETHOUGHTS / 28

ASIA

rooftops
ridgepoles

NARA

buddha thought, buddha nature
the window in the temple he looks out of

the eye of heaven
the roof, horizon

the incense and water-trough
something beautiful called hunger

the deer everywhere, us
the stone lamps, words we need to know

mountain, memory
the serpents, circles

birdtails on rooftops, fish in our minds
everything here, everything there

DECORATION

Pots - shards - very red
horses - just a touch of legs
 highlight royalty
gold-plated fish fights bird for serving dish
jade and turquoise bird on top of her
 head, the border
of the house
those ends of roof beams - ceramic
face or imago imprint
rediscover a *use*
just for decoration.

JIDAI MATSURI FESTIVAL OF AGES

Go to war
without animal signs?

Make a parade
without music?

IKEBANA

don't make it up
just find it

dead brown pods
a few shiny green leaves period

HORUJI

we didn't see the hall of dreams
closing time, late afternoon
a light dust under the branches
cool air settles around the pond

old roots, old trees, as we leave
I show my daughter the most beautiful
bronze serpent at the water trough
tail still coiled under the wooden lid

RYOGEN-IN

A - LIN

stone words for breathing in and out
breathes in and out, in and out
shadows lengthen, someone
planes wood on the other side of the wall

beneath my feet, river stones
no river
legs dangle over the warm cedar porchboard
no question

THREE HAIKU ON 37TH VIEW OF MOUNT FUJI

Nothing, but nothing
over misty fields, blue roof-
tops, a few smokestacks.

A black Shinkansen
tunnel out of sight, mountain
into mind's eye now.

Dark clouds, I think of
first quiet snow now covering
Kokanee Glacier.

SMELL

empty streets at dusk
suddenly an incense shop
even though it's closed

SAME POEM OF KYOTO SUNSET
POLLUTION

fresh smell of burning rubber clutches *or*
burning rubber
sunset in the western hills *or* sunset
streets full now with slowly moving
headlights *or* headlights

KITANO SHRINE

clap twice

ring the bell-rope

clap twice

rub cowness onto yourself from the stone

clap twice with lots of feeling

TODAI-JI

cathedral space, cathedral buddha
incense hangs in clouds around huge bronze
lotus petals
even the crowds are silenced
by the size of the thought

TEMPLE ZOHONGUE

Dao

Caged words

fish (later, birds)

on the ends of the ridge-pole

tile

NINNAJI

late afternoon in October
cool pine odour on the hillside air
day empties out
cedar porchboard surface still warm
in the long shadows

KATSURA

Too perfect thought
too beautiful twilight
of expectation
all of the time even rain
intentional pond pool
rough bark water trough
not far enough away
my thing of the paths, posts
too much itself thinking
structural clearly
be done w/ the roofs the bridges
the trees dedicate spring
thinks itself...(even the carp
swim

BYODO-IN

I look out with Amitabha through the temple
window
grey sky, rain has stopped
looking, looking.

Far from here
a light chop on the alpine lakes
a few flakes in the first winter wind.

FROM THE PLAINS OF SAGA TO
NAGASKI

You can hear the scenery
out of the mountains
rice farms to the coast
Peace Park skims
the sadness

Nagasaki pointed
(not painted)
hard to locate
that lapis
in our lives

MATSUO SHRINE

Shinto simple
turtle fountain architecture
shakuhachi soft beyond the gate
tin bell bell-rope
or paper tied to trees

STATION/TRAIN/ROOF

House barn cathedral temple and sky
sit in Toba station for train to Taki
or on the Hankyu line home tonight

AMANOHASHIDATE

heaven's bridge
horizontal bifrost
memory of each single name
hung on wood or paper
written under roof tile, copper
lucky shape for true ideas
sign to carry place or person
incense into trees outside
image to remind the mind

*H*OMETHOUGHTS

wet leaves on the ground
a roof and a house



FRED WAH was born in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and grew up in the Kootenay region of British Columbia. He studied music and English literature at the University of British Columbia and did graduate work in literature and linguistics at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and at the State University of New York in Buffalo. He was the founding coordinator of the writing program at David Thompson University Centre and at present teaches in the Professional Writing Program at Selkirk College and for the Kootenay School of Writing in Nelson and Vancouver. He is a contributing editor to *Open Letter* and a managing editor of *SwiftCurrent*, an electronic literary magazine. The author of a dozen books, Fred Wah received the 1985 Governor-General's Award for *Waiting for Saskatchewan*.

