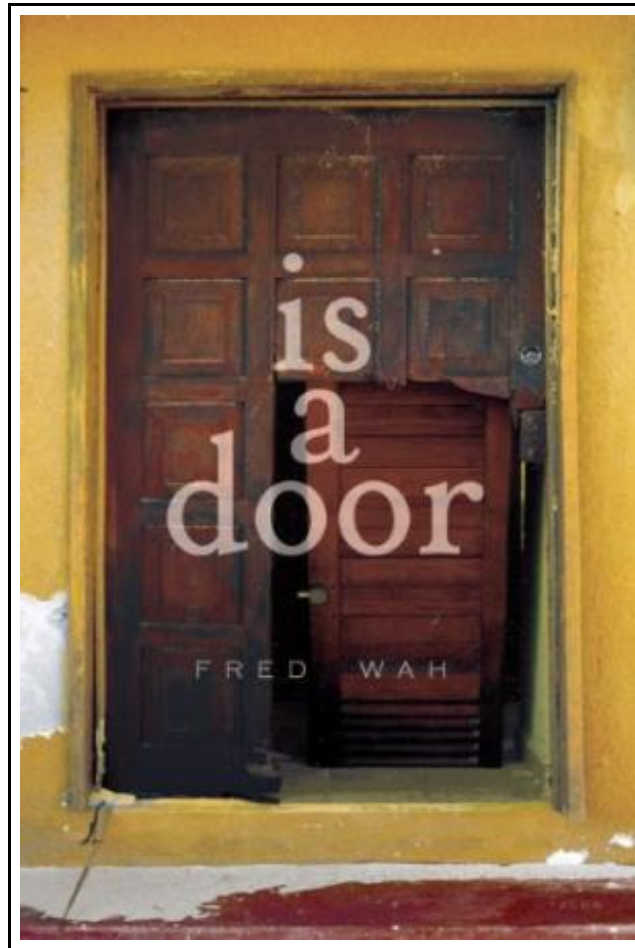


is a Door



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Reviews

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IS A DOOR

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Talon Books, Canada. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, *is a Door*, Fred Wah, Including poetry projects, a chapbook and incidental poems previously published in magazines and by small presses, *is a door* makes use of the poem's ability for "suddenness" to subvert closure: the sudden question, the sudden turn, the sudden opening--writing that is generated from linguistic mindfulness, improvisation, compositional problem-solving, collaborative events, travel, investigation and documentary--in short, poetry as practice. Part one, "Isadora Blue," is grounded in the author's encounter with the smashed and broken doors along the hurricane-devastated waterfront of Telchac Puerto, a small village on the north coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. It resonates throughout the other three sections of the book, with its attention to hybridity and "between-ness"--a poetic investigation of racialized otherness--and the composition of "citizen" and "foreigner" through history and language. Part two of this series of poems, "Ethnogy Journal," written during a trip to Thailand and Laos in 1999, hinges around aspects of "tourist" and "native." Here the poems play in the interstices of spectacle, food and social sightseeing. Much of this poetry is framed by Wah's acute sense of the marginalized non-urban local "place" and coloured by his attempt to articulate senses of otherness and resistance, or writing the "public self," particularly in the book's third section, "Discount Me In"--a series of sixteen poems from his discursive poetic essay "Count Me In." The fourth section, "Hinges," is tinted with portraits of the social subject mired in a diasporic mix, a metanarrative trope in Fred Wah's work that began with *Breathin' My Name With a Sigh*. Characteristically playful and compositionally musical, this is poetry that watches both sides of the doorway: unsettled, unpredictable, closed and open. Sometimes the door swings and can be kicked. Sometimes it's simply missing. Sometimes it's a sliding door.

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