

Dear Taien,

Bayern Feb 9/99

As promised, here are a few pieces written for yr "Place, Travel vs Anti-Travel and Identity" issue of *Matrix*. I've been in Thailand for a month now and I've considered your proposition of intervention into a more conventional and naively constructed "tourist" writing. I've also been reading Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist*, recommended to me as a classic 70's critique of the modern leisure class. MacCannell argues that "sightseeing is a ritual performed to the differentiations of society" and that much of our activity as tourists is really an "effort of the international middle calss to coordinate the differentiations of the world into a single ideology... linked to its capacity to subordinate others to its values, industry and future designs/" Our inclination, as voyeuristic ethnographers, is to seek authenticity, to authenticate, as an important means of ordering the differentiations (contradictions, conflicts, discontinuities, alienations) into manageable and containable experience and perception.

The "beach bungalow," for example, as a symbol for an accumulative experience, is produced and located in some of the following language: "what... must have been like 20 years ago"; "uncrowded"; "great food... cheap rates... remote... pretty.. and peaceful"; "overdeveloped"; "crowds"; "accessible (only by boat)"; basic... great character"; "old city gates"; "renovated"; "real brewed coffee"; etc. The values expressed by such language (authenticity, space, economy, quiet, utility, accessibility, familiarity) are all-too familiar extensions of an historically-constructed sensibility.

As a poet, I've been looking at ways I might reveal the dynamics and language both of what MacCannell sees as a hegemonic synthesizing and the literal hybridity (EuroAsianNorthAmericano) I construct and am constructed by. What I've been trying to do in the following "notes" is locate a language that does not contain nor manage (manipulate) so much as it reifies difference as a potent and generative matrix, albeit playful.



Poems by Fred Wah

Four horizontal lines for writing.

Sunday Jan 10 Bangkok +28

Bones bound matrix
where did Brian Kim
Stefans really come
from between organic now
humid air close
to soul-stuff
some courier animal
William Blake parent
of jumbo jet fact
chosen the body
chooses such as
saying "from within"
that parabola "ph"
wanting street-wise words
metal roof shimmers
across from Hotel Comfort
sweet trucks sit
in the warehouse courtyard
nothing, especially poetry,
will get in the way, don't
want the neck to know
its own massage.

(was) Monday Jan 11 Samui +26

Stomach censing
search for lost twin
split intestinal
marrow reading channel
tractor stuck some
furrow lurched day
outside (expect
the cramp, pain
and potent typical
assemblage so-called
"overwhelmed"



Tuesday Jan 12 Samui +30

"The Beach" Leonard di
something boy film
as children do, grains
that sandpaper feet bottom
sun circles shadow
as a series of strategies
for skin not clear
about goodness

walked down sentenceless
to the end and back
plastic and shell struggle
rope debris what if
this beach is the hospital
footprint, toes sink
bound the child's capacity
to rust.

Wed Jan 20 sunny

On boat to Ang-Thon Marine park. Young man holds up Grundig video camera – so I guess German. Thai/farang gay couple – Thai guy holds up Sony video. I take photo of fisherman working in boat. Thus I take his work. Does colour have a social value, I ask P. Of course, she says.

Sunday Jan 24 sunny/breeze

Fist to close the breadth
of new streets Na Thon
and its circling cycles
breath revved and spitting
through this attic of
tourist shops people in
and out of some America
of curios and cotton

Thurs night Jan 28

European touch of tropic-
real rainforest raining

undrowned sounds of
cicadas frog fronds

order is last up
things like leafs lap

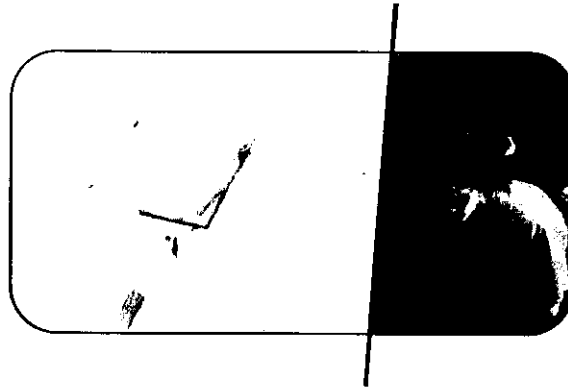
now think dry season
no composition under canopy

but order in the precepts
how hollow or how full

Sunday Jan 31 Khao Lak sunny

The Brit family leaves
the beach. Long-tail
boats far away. The reef
arrives / from morning tide.
The size of the sand matters.
That's the navy – they
don't like you and you
can't see them. Boy
with plastic bottle runs
to the shore. Bamboo
as driftwood. UV rays

under the skin. Hot coffee
equals "café lawn"
Young girl wears jeans and
long t-shirt swimming.
More broken Nike sandals
litter the beach than...Tropic
vs. topic. 34 C equals
what. Like a breath
of hot air.



Tuesday Feb 2 Khao Lak hot and sunny

German – maybe Swede then my Honda's
beauty if UV skin deep in the climate machine's
dream down at 125 cc a piece of rebar w/ two
loops welded near the top the beach umbrella
bobs the word "boat" w/ its long-tailed diesel
I want one and I want it on Kootenay Lake
or pick up one of those "Ethno G" Casios across
the table she says are you Chinese or Japanese?
My story just won't end.

Thurs Feb 4 Bangkok cool (clear?)

She's eating the durian w/ nose puckered
papain! papain! from the plastic bag no
chopsticks gratis south of Bangkok but
if we could only grow bamboo at lake
level it's morning and her eyes lilt (from
"slit") when they talk politely almost dart
across one of my race oceans there! my
white she covers her mouth when she laughs
"Workaholic since 1967 – Gray Zone" I shoot
maybe 2 or 3 rolls a week is that ice safe
to drink (or ski on) something about "life"
on the t-shirt that doesn't seem to be a sentence.

Sat Feb 6 Bangkok clear

Where's that skin from if not hide to cover shade of brown complex.

Dark enough to still the translocal islands of your people my people.

That arm's white enough to be on the bus burning.

Gold works best as a complement in this part of the world.

Black hair tan face no fantasy.

Blond dreadlocks and a Thai sarong.