

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

Five 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

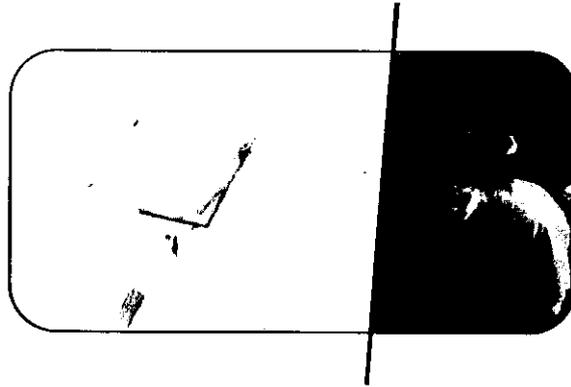
now think dry season  
no composition under canopy

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.