



Making mud beneath the lighthouse of unsaid island

di Derek White



[Continuing the thread](#) & still keeping within the constraint of not mentioning names nor proper nouns, we wake up on said unspecified island. It's the morning of the day, 2012 years ago, that after some guy was nailed to a cross he supposedly rose from the dead & became someone other than a mere mortal man. We are in this place where there are constant reminders of this guy that supposedly died for our us. After breaking the night's fast we refill our bellies out on a terrace even though it is cold out. Not as rainy as the day before, but colder, and on this island they don't have devices to heat the air inside dwellings, as most people come to this island only in warmer seasons.



We set out to climb the highest hill on the island to see what there is to see, zigzagging up alleys & roads, through the back of people's yards, until the houses peter out & a cobbled trail goes up along a stone fence. The sun would come out & we'd take off layers of our clothes & then the sun would go behind a cloud or we'd stop to set our eyes on something & we'd have to put a layer back on. Hot, cold, hot, cold & there are dog droppings everywhere on this trail as if the dogs are dropping their droppings on purpose, especially at select places on the trail that intersect other trails. There is a building on top of the hill that has been abandoned & is half in ruins but still there. There is also a man working on a farm who has a shiny black dog with white teeth that shows us around his hilltop & to a small church.



On the way down we find ourselves following a series of tiled plaques that like the ones mentioned in the beginning of the [last post](#) are here to honor this guy who was nailed to a cross 2012 years ago today, only in this series, these stations, there are 15, not 13. And we are following these stations backwards, so it's like he comes down off the cross, puts his clothes back on & carries this cross down a hill where people stop him to wash his feet or wipe the sweat off his brow.



In the early morning of this day i started to read a book. The «RE:» in the title of this post is to remind you that this is a reply or response to a book (but not necessarily a «review»), which is how it is most of the time here in this virtual space of words & images. These are responses to books i'm reading somewhere usually other than home. It's funny how you can respond to something but you can't «spond» something. You can «ply» something but it's not really the same kind of plying that is done in replying. You also can't «cord» something but you can «record» something, which is also how i think of this, a record of thought, documentation. I'd read some of this book & then we'd walk around & i'd think about what i read or something else & then write down here what i'd thought. Sometimes i'd find myself thinking about what i was going to say in this space or the photos i'd show, but then at the same time i'd be thinking this i didn't like thinking of things in this self-referential context, as if you're not living your life for yourself but living it for a brother or sister or a version of yourself that's dead, to read later in some other life.



I finished the book i responded to in the last post & luckily i had another one with me just in case (the weather forecast called for rain). This [other book](#) that i brought with me on a boat to this island was written by one who i call brother. This brother wrote a note to me & my girl on the inside & sent it to me through the air over a big sea, a sea much bigger than the sea that now surrounds this island, where it was delivered to me through a slot in our door. An alter ego side of myself that i call Cal published two other books by this one i call brother, so it was at first weird to see & read a new book by this brother published by someone else that wasn't brother to me, especially as these stories had a lot of the same words & wordings as the other two books. Words like brother, mud & fish. The stories seemed familiar to me, of the same

family of stories i'd read in this brother's other two books. A lot of the stories even had the same titles as stories in the two collections Cal published. The first story not only has the same title as a story in the first book of singing fishes, but it is also the very name of [this book](#) that was published almost ten years ago. And the second story was word for word the same as the fourth story in the [second book](#) by this brother that Cal had published. A part of me, this publisher Cal part, at first felt funny about this & had to stop myself from comparing this new book of mud with the other books by this brother that Cal had published, and pretend to read it as if it was the first thing i'd ever read by this brother.



Other people egg me on by saying «hey, isn't that illegal? To publish something already published, without asking first?». But i don't care much for laws or binding contracts, especially as they pertain to a word called «copyright». This word is an archaic word that needs to be removed from our vocabularies. It no longer means anything in this world we live in now. I don't respect the word copyright, but i do respect respect. And the fact that this same sequence of words & perhaps others was re-published in this new book & this publisher that did the re-publishing didn't respectfully ask or acknowledge where some of these stories or versions of these stories first appeared shows a lack of respect & common decency. This is a big-small publisher, or small-big publisher—there is a difference, just like there's a difference between a wolf in sheep's clothing & a sheep in wolf's clothing—that at first said no

to publishing this book of mud. So brother came to me with this muddy book & of course Cal said sure without even needing to read this book as Cal would publish any words coming from this brother. Cal's house is brother's house, is our house. It made sense for this book of mud to belong with its two brother books, to form a sort of trilogy, all under the same roof. But when this small-big publisher, whose name i'm not even sure how to pronounce if i wanted to, heard that Cal was willing to publish this book, this small-big publisher all of a sudden decided he wanted to publish this book of mud after all. When brother told me that this other brother that was not brother to me wanted to publish the book of mud after all, brother gave me that look. He gave the look that hurt the eyes of the one doing the looking. But in the real world brother is more than a brother, he is a father. He is a father with hungry mouths to feed. So this father-brother had to do the best thing for feeding these mouths that depended on him, as this brother Cal was not a brother that could float him currency in exchange for his words, unlike this other brother that is not brother to Cal—at least not currency that could then be exchanged for food to feed hungry mouths. And publishing with this small-big press meant meant more eyes, different sets of eyes, more brothers & sisters, would be exposed to this book of mud & the words of this brother of all brothers.



fishnets turning to mud for new growth to grow

This publisher Cal's petty bickering is not important in the scheme of things. What's important is that what brother Cal is squabbling about is worth squabbling over, for the words of this maker of mud brother are worthy. As a publisher, Cal of course

encourages readers to read the books in his house, the book of fish or the book of brothers that came first & second, if you haven't already. But if you are still yearning for more yarns from these two brothers on the river, there's this new [book of mud](#), which although might repeat stories or wordings from these first two books, has some of those & more.

Those that have read this brother know that repetition is a part of what makes his stories what they are. A while ago another brother, a big brother belonging to the brotherhood of mutilation, this brother sent me an essay in which he had counted the times that brother used certain words in some of his stories. This essay was eventually i think published in [a journal](#) whose name is intentionally unsaid. In this essay he determined that 41% of a certain story by brother consisted of the words: {fish, the, this, we, us, and, brothers, our, it, to} & this doesn't include variations of some of these words, like brother or muddy. This academic brother also points out that the word «he» never appears in this story & the word «I» appears only once, whereas words like «we» & «us» are sprinkled liberally, to emphasize the togetherness of this brotherhood. He ends the essay with a passage that is blurbed on the back of this new muddy book:

«If it's not clear by now, Markus's use of English is quite unique. In a way it's not really English at all, or not the English we've learned to be comfortable with. It is instead a sort of ritual speech, an almost religious invocation in which words themselves, through repetition, acquire a magic or power that in this case revives the simpler, blunter world of childhood. In that sense, things are less depicted or mimetically represented than they are invoked. In theoretical terms, this is what Gilles Deleuze calls minor literature, a major language put to a minor usage. With all the possibilities of standard English open to him, Markus opts instead for something slightly uncanny, and does so by refusal. By limiting his palette, by beating the drum of the same words over and over again, and by a deliberate paucity he transforms ordinary language into extraordinary ritual.»

Brother also rarely uses proper names except, for example, the real names of the brothers, Jimmy & John, which he reveals to us only once or twice. There is another boy & girl that aren't brother or sister to these brothers, but go by the names Boy & Girl. And he doesn't say out loud the names of places except to refer to the dirty river town as what it is. In not using proper names you give a certain place & time-lessness to the place & time. You don't pollute our language with impure specifics, things associated with a certain cultural time period, things that can become dated or tainted by the telling of other stories in these very same places. That's all fine in book objects, you say, but regarding this virtual place, this place where words are now being written in response, these words are supposed to be written to show up in search engines, otherwise people won't find these words to read. It might seem i'm shooting myself in the foot, you say. It might seem pointless to not use proper nouns, but that's the pointless point.



Getting back to the story from which i'm virtually & vicariously retelling this story within, after we come down off the highest hill on the island—an island with no mud or rivers but rather a rocky island in the middle of a sea—we decide we haven't had enough of walking. There is a fallen-over sign that says lighthouse in the language of those that live on this island, next to one of these plaques showing the guy carrying the cross. So we decide to continue on to see this lighthouse. Not the same lighthouse that brother says is a moon, or that the moon is a lighthouse, but a lighthouse nevertheless. A beacon. The clouds are darkening overhead & we are not prepared for more than a quick jaunt up the highest hill that at the time we left was sunny, but we continue, attracted to this lighthouse, to this siren. By the time we get there it is downright blustery, which perhaps makes this lighthouse seem more medieval than it is, like a castled rookery on an exposed jagged crag of spires—straight out of another famous book about two dwarf brothers that go looking for a ring. We are disappointed to discover that at a certain point we can go no further for they have installed a gate in a tunnel going through a cliff & we have no key. We huddle in a

cave to see if the squall will pass but it appears it's here to stay. And rain is rain, it never killed anyone.



We spend the rest of the day trying to get dry & stay that way, which means taking a dryer meant for hair & using it on our clothes & shoes. Then we put more edible animals from the ocean into our bellies to try to generate heat from within & then we get under blankets until it is light again & we then fill our bellies more & walk around more to cliffs above the beach named for the moon. We're searching for the real cave that is in the mother of all books, the cave that was home to the witch that seduced the guy that was on the mother of all odysseys, the vixen-witch that turned his men into swine. It's so windy you can't hear yourself think. I surprise a

woodpecker on the path which surprises me as there are no trees on this island for this woodpecker to peck. It's not the first time i've had a serendipitous encounter with a woodpecker—another time when i was living in a home on wheels in a forest with giant trees i stepped out of my home on wheels into the darkness of night & felt something soft & squishy under my foot & when i got a light to see it was a woodpecker, though like that cat in the box with a vial of poison & a hammer, i wasn't sure if the woodpecker was dead or alive before or whether it was dead on account of me stepping on it. Sometimes the natural world is like this—in your eager curiosity to see things you often take a bit of the life out of them. I'm thinking about what this woodpecker means & if it is sent to me as a sign when i come across a series of a few caves up on top of this cliff overlooking the beach named for a moon. If you look carefully you can see the 3 caves in the middle of this photo below, that by virtue of me taking this photo caused some of this cliff to erode (besides being named for the moon, this beach is also now closed because humans were laying on it to collect the sun, when part of the mountain fell on them & brought darkness to their eyes).





After walking around the island more, we walk back into town & there's a woman who has a few of these 2-wheeled vehicles that are popular here so we rent one between the two of us & put hard shells on our heads to protect our brains & we speed around this island that we already walked the length of on foot. It is cold & verging on rain & the faster we go the colder it gets. Here's what it looks like from the back of this 2-wheeled stylish transportation vehicle.

When we get back to town i can't stretch my fingers back out straight because they are frozen shut in a grip shape, until we fill our bellies with hot things & this heat spreads through our bodies. At this point i stopped writing things down in this notebook as i was spending more time reading than writing, so the days started to blend into each other, which is how it should be when you are seeing a new place just for the hell of it. The next morning we were again walking, i know that much. We had checked out of our home away from home so carried what things we had on our back & were walking across the island to go to a beach that seemed nice to lie on as this day was sunny & the sky blue when i heard a ringing from my pocket, which sounded out of place because we weren't really near anywhere where humans lived. I answered this ringing object & there was a voice talking fast in the language used by the people in this place that i still have a hard time understanding depending on who's doing the talking—but from what i could figure out it seemed the boat that we were planning on going back to the mainland on had been cancelled on account of the high

seas. So we turned ourselves around & walked back to the town to sort things out & find another boat more capable of floating us across the waves of the high seas.



There was a huge boat, a ferry ship, capable of transporting more than people, it could even carry the big things people made like the land-boats people brought with them to move themselves around the island, like turtles traveling with their shells. This ferrying ship was leaving earlier so it meant there wasn't time to swim in the waters under the sun, which we never got a chance to do & that's what most people come to this island to do. But we had time to walk back to that lighthouse that we couldn't appreciate so well the day before on account of the rain.



After going back to the lighthouse & laying on a flat rock for some time like seals, we found another trail that said it was going down to some ancient pools but nobody had been taking care of the trail & it was blocked off with a gate & otherwise seemed like it had fallen into the sea & if we tried to go down it we'd also fall in. We found another trail that went to these grottoes that people evidently lived in thousands of years ago, in another time. We walked back on the same trail we were on on the day we decided to walk to the highest point on the island—the trail that had plaques of that guy that carried a cross up a hill so he could be nailed to it.



We filled our bellies with food from this island for the last time then walked onto this big ferrying ship, entering through its mouth & through its belly like it was a giant whale. This ship took longer than the boat we took to get us to the island & it was going to another town on the mainland that we had never heard of. While the ship motored along we walked around & sat in the sun or fell asleep & looked at the water & horizon from different perspectives & at one point we looked into the water & saw a turtle swimming beneath the surface trying to get out of the way of the ship.



These images i know don't coincide with the story i'm telling, but happened, were snapshotted, from before. That's how it is when you leave a place—as it disappears in your wake you are still left with the images that get etched somewhere in the gray matter of your head. Here's the image i «took» of the image of the guy getting naked before being nailed to the cross.



I didn't read much on the ferrying ship as the waves were rocking the ship around some & if i look at something when on boats & not outside on the horizon my ears say to my brain that something is not right & my brains only solution is to purge the contents of what's in my belly thinking something in there must be the culprit. It didn't happen this time, but it's happened before so i know better. I don't have the ears & stomach for boats like the brother that wrote the book of mud has. I didn't read this brother's book much on the boat but i read some more of it back while things were drying off or when we were trying to get warm or when i woke up before anyone else was awake.



As in the first two books, half the stories have a scene where these brothers nail one or the other to a telephone pole. Besides the repetition of words that i talked about before, there's repetition of clusters of words—wordings & sentences. There's «the look that hurts the eyes of the one looking». There's the «back of the backyard». And beyond just the word clusters, it's the image objects that these clustering of words form that stick into the gray matter of your brain, etched there through the ritual repetition of these words. There's the moon that shatters into a billion pieces. There's the boy with no tongue, Boy, who has a hole where his tongue should be. There's the girl the brothers make of mud, Girl, spelled with twenty thousand l's. And after the requisite warning that it might sting, there's the lining up of the rusty nail. These sayings are like mantras, word strings that get wrapped up into a giant ball of yarn that keeps picking up momentum with each iteration, rolling rhythmically like music, like a rolling stone, gathering no moss, like a canonical fugue, like one of those carbon-copy spinning drums. Each time the muddy juggernaut spins in your head you might see the same words wrapped to the outside, to the page, but if you look again, deep into the lumbering drum, if you relax your eyes, like looking into one of those dream machines, you discover that it picks up more with each spin cycle, ever-gathering carbon-based lint & debris, stringy mutations, rearranged wordings, that are

reborn, regenerating new code that arises & sticks & stays true to the muddy core of this rivering machine.



When you see these words & these arrangement of words you know which brother wrote them. In fact, brother doesn't even need to put his name on the book—his muddy fingerprints are on every page. You can read any single sentence from the book & see brother's signature. Brother owns these words. Or these words own brother. These words & strings of words are baked deep into brother's genetic code.

I'm not even sure brother knows what he is writing when he writes, or if it's his genetic code traveling through his fingertips into a pen & transcribing itself on paper, into words, to get itself out from underneath his skin onto the pages of an immortal book object. Or beyond just the book object, it gets embedded into this giant muddy ball of word strings that is brother. Even if you are not brother you become brother to this brother by witnessing for yourself the brilliant spectacle of the muddy juggernaut of words, until you yourself see the beauty of brother's words in the world outside of these books (yes, that's a fish above the door).



Once we get rolling, embedded with brother in this ball of word-strings, once our eyes gloss over these themes & variations of themes that might be familiar to us that are already brothers, we discover more in this new book of mud than meets the eye.

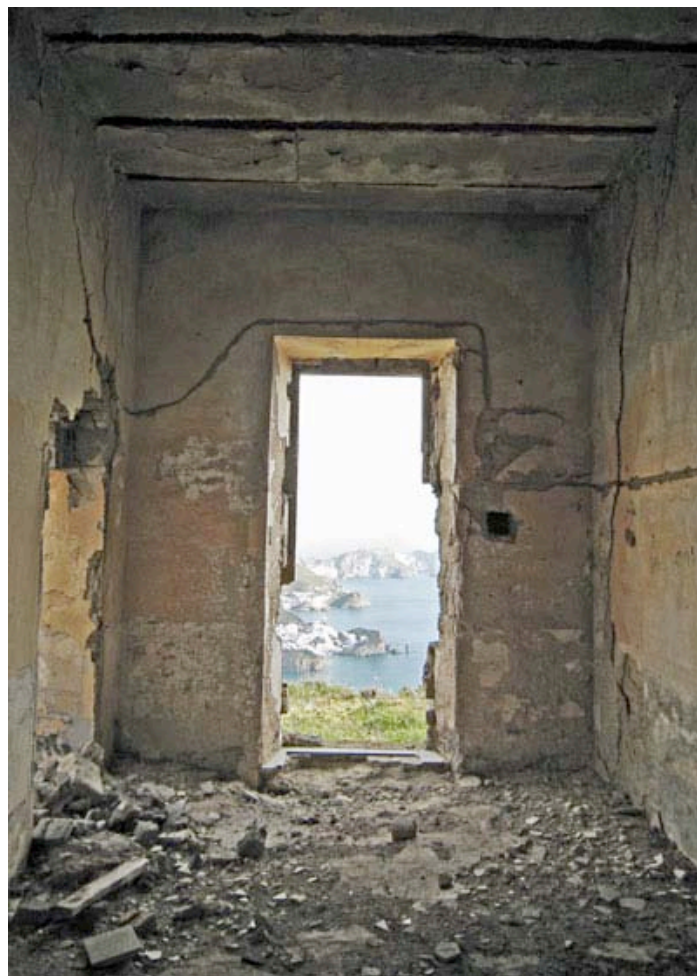
Not only do the brothers nail themselves & fish heads to the telephone pole in the back of their backyard, but they nail their mother. The brothers discover a new species of fish, though in their world there is only one word for fish. They meet a man, Man, that teaches them to fish. They create a new form of mud that has never

been seen before. In another story they burn mud. In another of these new tales they follow a river upstream, backwards, back to the source. In another they gather all the rope & bits of string they can possibly find & tie it to this girl, Girl. They don't just tie it to a girl, these are the words brother would use to say this: «Here, then, us brothers, we made us a loop in the rope and we looped it over the top of Girl: we knotted it tight, not not too tight, up around Girl's belly. Girl's belly button, let me tell you this, it is a hole with its own story to tell, but tell it, I won't.» Then they lower Girl down into a bottomless hole in the river & ten thousand years later they pull her up. This is a story of brother's i read on an island that is also famous as the place where certain real people that call themselves aquanauts [broke the world record](#) for spending the longest time underwater without coming up. But unlike the brothers in the book of mud, these aquanauts did this by bringing the comforts of land underwater, which isn't really the same. This is how the mud brothers learn to live under water:

And so, us brothers, out into the muddy river, out across the river's water, we walked, and walked, and kept on walking, walking through muddy water, walking out to where this boat, it was floating and floating away. When the river reached up above our boy eyes, above our fish heads, that's when the both of us brothers took in a deep breath. Like this, like fish, us brothers, with the river's muddy water covering us brothers up, us brothers, our mouths opening up, like this we began to sing.



This comes after the brothers find a dead man's boat. Outside of the book of mud, in my thinkings in my own mind, i've been thinking some about boats, arks, with no people on it—ghost ships, first spurned i think by reading an article about how they found an unmanned ship that was swept out to see when that giant wave hit that island after shaking the ground of that island far out east & from there i [started reading](#) about other ghost ships in the history of time. And at the same we were on this island, on another island north of here in this same sea, sister, the sister who wrote [the book](#) of a sister that stops breathing, this sister was herself on an another island where a ship, a ship not unlike the ship we are on except this ship was only used for cruising for the sake of cruising & not ferrying, this ship ran aground on this island. This ship ran into the rocks off this island where sister was & remains there along with the remains of some people cruising for the sake of cruising on this ship, so in a sense it is a different kind of ghost ship, not a floating ship without people or a captain, but a sunk ship with dead people still in it, more like brother's dead man's boat, except the boats in brother's books are used for fishing, not for luxury or commercial cruising. Unlike sister, i've never seen this dead ship with my own eyes, but reading about it back when it sunk stirred enough anxiety in me to perhaps contribute to my [recent vertigo](#).



Like this, with brother's muddy words ringing in my ears, we watched this island that was home to us for a few days fade onto the horizon, into the wake of our ferry ship.

We turned our eyes in the other direction & watched the land where our home is get closer & closer until the boat merged with the land & we could walk off with a mass of other passengers into this unknown town that we never even learned the name of. We walked with the other passengers until we came to a place with some platforms & a few parallel pairs of steel rails on the ground. People wanting to be passengers gathered & gathered & then on the horizon we saw what looked like a lighthouse approach. This light came to us on these parallel rails & then it stopped & doors opened & we pushed & shoved our way into this moving lighthouse. We made airspaces for ourselves & stood in the same place for a long time as some of the other passengers grumbled & yelled at each other in this language they speak here, fighting for space. One woman turned white & looked like a fish out of water as she gasped for air & was quickly rushed to the only open window to suck what little air came in through this cracked window. A man sitting on my feet spoke a language that didn't even resemble the main language of this country, but of another place further south. Like this we rode, occasionally shifting our weight, like flamingoes, until finally we arrived at the final station & everyone unpeeled themselves from the inside of this train & rushed out onto a platform. We were spit out into the streets of our home city & walked through these zigzagging alleys trying to find a place to fill our bellies with something other than the fruits of the sea we'd been eating. As we usually do after being away for the sake of being away, we didn't go home first & change our clothes, but with our bags still on our backs we went to a place to fill our bellies as if we were people not from this city, but only visiting for the sake of visiting, or stopping off on the way to somewhere else. I'm not sure why we do this, but this is what we always do—it has become our ritual.

After filling our bellies we found our way home through the dark streets, over a bridge over a big muddy river & onto an island that has a place that in the language of the people here means «place of good brothers». It's the place at the beginning of this [moving image clip](#) where this funny brother drives around in circles before picking up the father, though in reality it's not a place they allow you to drive. There's also a hospital on this river island—the island named for the river that surrounds it, the river island where the founding brothers of this city were born & raised by a she-wolf—there's a hospital on this island called «the hospital of good brothers». We walked through the place of good brothers & across another 2000 year old bridge, over the muddy river, to the place we call home. I have a few more stories left to read in this [book of mud](#), but even i had read them, i wouldn't tell you how it ends with these 2 brothers, this is something you should discover for yourself.

