



The Thunder Perfect Mind

Anonymous—revelation, translated from the Coptic by Tara Yule and George W. MacRae
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Tara Yule—conversation, translation

[More and more, I want to give exfoliating forms to each of the things that I write, which corresponds to the desire that I always have to tear what has gone before to pieces. *The Thunder Perfect Mind*, the text of *Thunder*, is a fragmented piece from the essayistic point of view. I don't think there are any sentences left in it. I had no idea of a poem or essay, but I did have the idea of a conversation—how can I say this?—of a conversation that could be either read or performed or filmed or, I must add, simply thrown away. It can't really be called "writing." I found myself in conversation with a revelation text from the Nag Hammadi Library, discovered in 1945 buried in a jar in the Egyptian desert and written in the voice of a female figure who is not identifiable. A friend offered paintings for the first and last pages of this conversation, entitled "Permission." At the same time, soon after the Fukushima nuclear reactor disaster, I found myself in conversation with Michihiko Hachiya's *Hiroshima Diary*, and in another conversation simultaneously with another friend, one who is currently undergoing the between state of medical transition from being a woman to being a man. Coincidentally, xe was engaged in translating the original Coptic text of this same Nag Hammadi revelation into English. We began to collaborate by reading the revelation together aloud for several hours at a time, during which we entered a state of trance and began to improvise lines and embody movements in and between the passages of text. Xir voice is changing, and during the course of our readings xir voice would suddenly drop and another voice or voices would enter. Our voices together became multiple, fractured, unidentifiable; our harmonies and discords changed the voices we recognized as our own. Reading the text aloud felt vulnerable and so we held hands as if to protect ourselves from what we were saying. We continued these recitations in public / private spaces that were also 'between'—on a public stairway, in a cemetery, in states of intoxication at a local bar, on a traffic island, in the labyrinth. I found myself in these pages confronted with an enormous chaos of thought and feeling that I couldn't bring myself to tamper with, and beside which literature was something of which I felt ashamed.]

--KH

THE THUNDER PERFECT MIND

I was sent forth from [the power]
and I have come to those who reflect upon me
and I have been found among those who seek after me.
Look upon me, you who reflect upon me
and you hearers, hear me.
Do not be ignorant of me anywhere or at any time. Be on your guard!

*

What is it you tear off and hold up, hanging—skin
with a face in the folds of it—then
burn it!
Here is the skin of days I have been born into, over my eyes and my mouth,
drooping, running like ink in rain.

And the birds, the sound of them, the light and the birds at that moment before
dawn.

Before the existence of the world.
The skin of days. Tear it off and burn it!

*

For I am the first and the last.
I am the honored one and the scorned one.
I am the whore and the holy one.
I am the wife and the virgin.
I am the mother and the daughter.
I am the torn parts of my mother.
I am the barren one
and many are her sons.
I am she whose wedding is great
and I have not taken a husband.
I am the bride and the bridegroom
and it is my husband who begot me.
I am the mother of my father
and the sister of my husband

and he is my offspring.

I am the silence that is incomprehensible
and the idea whose remembrance is frequent.
I am the voice whose sound is manifold
and the word whose appearance is multiple.
I am the utterance of my name.

*

(my lips did not move)

*

Garden shadows disappeared. The view where a moment before all had been so bright and sunny was now dark and hazy. Through swirling dust I could barely discern a wooden column that had supported one corner of my-- I heard nothing like an explosion when...nor did I remember any sound during my walk to the hospital when houses collapsed around me. It was as though I walked through a gloomy, silent motion picture...

*

The inner feminine of me has receded but is simultaneously coming forward, inside the mask. I don't need to hide anymore by becoming as masculine as possible, I don't need the mask. I think about all the times I have been the honored one or the scorned one and how both of those have seemed in some way empty...there's some secret part in us that's always saying, "Ha! This doesn't mean anything! The world is smaller than a blade of grass."

What I am not, is a positive statement, accumulations, knots, not knots, all these paradoxes stop my mind, break it open to some other possibility...where who is speaking and who is spoken to changes....veers...

*

Fires sprang up and began to spread...I discovered that I was completely naked...Gradually things around me came into focus. There were the shadowy forms of people, some of whom looked like walking ghosts. Others moved as though in pain, like scarecrows, their arms held out from their bodies with forearms and hands dangling. The shortest path to the street lay through the house next door so through the house we went—running, stumbling, falling, and then running again until in headlong flight we tripped over something and fell sprawling into the street. Getting to my feet, I discovered that I had tripped over a man's head. "Excuse me! Excuse me, please!" I cried hysterically.

*

Here is the skin of waiting. I tie the blindfolds over my eyes and my mouth,
Hands still on the long
strips of skin; eyeholes.

Here is the skin of having been touched.

Where the fingers of others ran—stitch-marks, bleeding.

The soles of the feet bare

where the earth rushed up to lean on them, vertigo, where it forced them
to fall down.

Where the fingers of others have been; rips,

blood even though it's empty, spinning, fall down get up.

The skin made of the looks of others held up at the end of a long blindfold,

then cast into the fire, the open eye of

whoever will watch...what will they burn into,

hundreds of pieces lifted up at a glance, burning, ash drifting up, the nasty
yellow chemical smell of the fabric,

the fires like ripped up writing, wanting to see Desire begin,

what shapes what new forms new letters—begin—an elbow, one mouth—

*

Why, you who hate me, do you love me

and hate those who love me?

You who deny me, confess me

and you who confess me, deny me.

You who tell the truth about me, lie about me

and you who have lied about me, tell the truth about me.

You who know me, be ignorant of me,

and those who have not known me, let them know me.

For I am knowledge and ignorance.

I am shame and boldness.

I am shameless; I am ashamed.

I am strength and I am fear.

I am war and peace.

Give heed to me.

I am the one who is disgraced and the great one.

Give heed to my poverty and my wealth.

*

Part of shame for me...my personal history from 10-16... I went through an extremely sexual self-destructive phase, not drugs but self destructive sex, and I was extremely dominant with everyone I was with, so there was something about being shameless and ashamed...It protects you from anything real about your desire by the act of humiliating yourself, it's a self-negating self-destructive form of survival... I didn't act out in exactly that sexualized way but I did a lot of criminal activity and there is this way in which I felt that I could do whatever I wanted and it didn't matter, wasn't real. Because of extreme physical

abuse my body wasn't real to me, I fled from my body, and so in doing these criminal activities in the world I was trying to test whether or not the world was actually real...because I felt like *I* wasn't real, *I* wasn't in my body at all and I couldn't feel anything, so rather than cut myself or commit suicide I wanted to see if anything I could do to the world would matter... I mean, by cutting open the structures I saw in the world itself...

*

The video cameras hiding their eyes but watching.
The dawn entering, the Finishing Beginning now,
the blindfold which is nothing now
which is a pile of ash,
by which the world is begun, earth vertigo,

can you hear it, beginning? And the thing still inside you, the new thing,

still there inside you, awake,
wearing it tight all around you like this,
your mouth unsealed, breathing,
it inside you now, inside the minutes, inside them.

*

Thunder comes out of the sky and speaks to people on earth as a disturbance, a rupture, speaks to those who reflect on me, those who seek after me, as that state where words are performative, are doing what they are saying and thus have power. Thunder resonates when we speak it, lightning flashes through us...these words feel like weather, like a kind of visionary weather...you cannot grasp what is being said, the I that speaks, shifting, atmospheric weather, Desire veering as the person being spoken to changes the person speaking and the situation changes, a doubling and tripling, the seeress not speaking, the thunder coming—

*

The voice wants others to speak the voice, to inhabit it. Calling yourself a whore and a holy one encompasses and dislodges your emotional and conceptual reactions to these words. I can say right now that I am a woman and I am a man. It's both allowing—I've been thinking a lot about desire—in all the senses, what you desire, the direction, stuff you're not even consciously aware of as you walk through your day—sometimes I'm shocked by my subconscious and what appears...

*

Embedded in my neck was a sizable fragment of glass which I matter-of-factly dislodged, and with the detachment of one stunned I studied it in my blood-stained hand... unhealing burns, radiation poisoning, cancers, and a score of other illnesses...suddenly a strong flash of light startled me—and then another. So well does one recall little things that I remember

vividly how a stone lantern in the garden became brilliantly lit and I debated whether this light was caused by a magnesium flare or sparks from a passing...

*

I'm sure it started with my mother who was beautiful when she was young. I was her favorite person everywhere except in the world-- because I appeared strange, more masculine. I was always smart and weird and big, and I didn't become social until much later. Even while confessing my desires I was in the process of ridding myself of the dialogue, simultaneously stripping away something that has been blocking me in order to come to something more authentic. This text and these words, sound like Desire itself, as a force, a goddess, Eros in the Platonic sense of the energy that veers in relation to different people and situations, and and and, the accumulation, the and's, are the voice of Desire, of wanting. By blasting these social categories, there's no resting place if you're merely responding to Desire... as soon as it is embodied it becomes mortal, capable of dying. It's constantly in flux, shifting changing, the exhaustion human beings experience overflowing the container the cracked cup that keeps leaking even as it's filling its container...When the noise in my head is ridiculous I dance myself into this state, and all this time I've felt like it's really similar to how people when they meditate access more parts of the brain. There's no color because I can't see anymore, my eyes are open but the music is not registering. I can't hear it but that waterfall-- I have this sensation like water flowing out and in at the same time-- I don't know how to describe it, it also allows a moment of solace. I don't know. I'm scared that my intuition or ability to dance might go away, that it might be connected to the feminine, yet I feel like I have so many years as a woman that that won't be possible....the exterior I am is just changing, is just changing because I'm tired, I'm tired of these confusions...

*

Do not be arrogant to me when I am cast out upon the earth
and you will find me in those that are to come.
And do not look upon me when I am cast out among those who
are disgraced and in the least places,
nor laugh at me.
And do not cast me out among those who are slain in violence.
For I, I am compassionate and I am cruel.

Be on your guard!

In my weakness, do not forsake me
and do not be afraid of my power.
For why do you despise my fear
and curse my pride?
For I am she who exists in all fears
and finds strength in trembling.

I am she who is weak,
and I am well in a pleasant place.
I am senseless and I am wise.
Why have you hated me in your counsels?
For I shall be silent among those who are silent,
and I shall appear and speak.
Why then have you hated me, you Greeks?
Because I am a barbarian among the barbarians?

*

Her look pouring out from her, nothing going back in

Because the hole that opens in her is the edge of matter, the very edge...
The sensation of there not being enough—that rip—and then the squinting to see—what is
it out there?—out of which the new skin begins to grow

*

...I'm actually sad about my breasts being removed because I like that part of me, the
mother part...I get to become a woman who looks like a man, to be a woman in a more real
way than I have ever been...

*

Desire is how we communicate with the divine. And the daimon is the intermediary between
the human and divine....all this talk of the subconscious is really the daimon, like Teresa of
Avila with her seven castles-- she gives a plan to orient yourself so desire can take you to a
place without poverty or wealth. Like the shadow side of Desire, which is it's own absence
or a mirror held up to the world, which is a path...because ultimately the form of Desire is
its own annihilation...

*

For I am the wisdom of the Greeks
and the knowledge of the barbarians.
I am the judgment of the Greeks and of the barbarians.
I am the one whose image is great in Egypt
and the one who has no image among the barbarians.
I am the one who has been hated everywhere
and who has been loved everywhere.
I am the one whom they call Life,
and you have called Death.
I am the one whom they call Law,
and you have called Lawlessness.
I am the one whom you have pursued,
and I am the one whom you have seized.

I am the one whom you have scattered,
and you have gathered me together.
I am the one before whom you have been ashamed,
and you have been shameless to me.
I am she who does not keep festival,
and I am she whose festivals are many.
I, I am godless,
and I am the one whose God is great.
I am the one whom you have reflected upon,
and you have scorned me.
I am unlearned,
and they learn from me.
I am the one that you have despised,
and you reflect upon me.
I am the one whom you have hidden from,
and you appear to me.
But whenever you hide yourselves,
I myself will appear.
For whenever you appear,
I myself will hide from you.

Take me [... understanding] from grief.
And take me to yourselves from places that are ugly and in ruin,
and rob from those which are good even though in ugliness.
Out of shame, take me to yourselves shamelessly;
and out of shamelessness and shame,
rebuke what is mine (not mine!) in yourselves.

*

...lately, I've been "sir"ed a lot and there have been more instances of straight white men responding in really simple ways, like the way they shake my hand or the way they pass each other on the sidewalk. A woman will almost always move out of a man's way but men move out of each others way...it's heady when you notice it because you pick up on things that you didn't notice before...I can see how mens' chivalrousness evolved, because if men don't constantly monitor how much space they take up in the world...Women will smash themselves up against the wall in a subway to give men more space...

*

These people puzzled me until I suddenly realized that they had been burned and were holding their arms out to prevent the painful friction of raw surfaces rubbing together. ...an old woman lay near me with an expression of suffering on her face; but she made no sound. Indeed, one thing was common to everyone I saw—complete silence...

*

Rising up out of the end of night like a name being called

out of the spinning darks rising and wafting over the still darks,
until folds appear,
and folds in those folds,
and tucks where darkness stays, holds,

And large loose cloths of it which the wind sees and drops
down to—

*

Come forward to me, you who know me
Come forward to childhood,
and do not despise it because it is small and it is little.
And do not turn away greatnesses in some parts from the smallnesses,
for the smallnesses are known from the greatnesses.
Why do you curse me and honor me?
You have wounded and you have had mercy.
Do not separate me from the first ones whom you have known.
And do not cast anyone out nor turn anyone away
[...] turn you away and [... know] him not.
[...].
What is mine [...].

*

Resilience can even be the soul abandoning the body...

*

I always feel like I'm lying whenever I try to tell someone about my life. I could tell 300 stories about my life and they're all true from a certain perspective. When you try to tell the truth about desire it's always a lie, because in the act of speaking to whomever, you're being controlled by desire, or a desire to tell someone, or to quell that desire, which replaces the original desire, even when you're talking to yourself, or writing in a journal.

*

I had Graves disease as a child...it's an autoimmune disorder where the body starts to attack itself through the thyroid. Mine was 400 times as active as it was supposed to be. It made me really big, but then when you get older it starts to metabolize your entire body, it literally eats you alive. They usually just take the thyroid out...but they treated me with drugs, they basically just beat the crap out of my thyroid until it got smaller.
It gave me a strange relationship with my body.
So what happens when you look into a mirror.
I keep wondering what it looks like....do I--
It's such a weird conglomeration of male female. I'm curvy but I have big broad shoulders, facial hair but a girl face...

I don't know what other people see.
I don't recognize what I'm looking at and I sit there tripping out on my reflection.
I feel like you have to be a mirror in order to look into a mirror.

*

Until some shadows are hidden (and underneath begin)
Until some cast up twisting (greens?)
 Until some fall back after being used, thinner now—dusts,
silts—
 And the new skins spinning in the parking lot rise out of the very end of night.
The earth turns.
 The earth spits them forth.

*

The voice is strong because it's speaking from the weakest position. It's claiming this expansive moving power ...the way water works as an element and as a power, just days ago causing nuclear disaster. Its' role is to enter the lowest places and to fill them like the Japanese tsunami which uproots things from the lowest level, in the footage all the villages rivers and buildings were simply swept up and began to move ...

But the strong thing about this speaker who may be Desire itself... she is claiming weakness as a gift, moving into these vulnerable spots that shift and move and these are the powerful places....everything in us that is strong protects us from our desire because desire is chaotic and overpowers us...

Yes, both are methods of ripping the self from the self...

She is speaking to an audience but her voice is speaking as Other than itself, as if it knows us better than we know ourselves--

*

Once I was involved with a Japanese man who was in the process of applying for his American citizenship. He asked if I would accompany him to the courthouse and be his supporter. So we went to the courthouse where he was made to give over his Japanese passport and enter a room like a fishbowl filled with other stateless non-legal entities.... there was an unexpected moment ... we were looking at each other through the glass...an indescribably tender point of desire and longing and vulnerability and not knowing who or where one was. It was Eros on his face and on mine. A moment of distance, of betweenness...I saw into him deeply and it was like seeing into my own life, where I was that person without a passport to be human... it was a "between" but it was also an "and" at the same time, a multiplicity of identity but also a nothingness because the other side of this is "where am I," this deep vulnerability between all the "and's," a time where certain veils get lifted and he was naked and I was naked and yet we were in this institutional setting and in the ritual of citizenship that helped to bring us to this consciousness.

I think I want you there right as I go into surgery to have my breasts removed...terrifying but important and something you want to do, though you're still attached to the last identities you've had...something more than symbolic, switching nationalities or having a surgery that will bring about—

*

I know the first ones and those after them know me.

But I am the mind of [...] and the rest of [...].

I am the knowledge of my inquiry,
and the finding of those who seek after me,
and the command of those who ask of me,
and the power of the powers in my knowledge
of the angels, who have been sent at my word,
and of gods in their seasons by my counsel,
and of spirits of every man who exists with me,
and of women who dwell within me.

I am the one who is honored, and who is praised,
and who is despised scornfully.

I am peace,
and war has come because of me.

And I am an alien and a citizen.

I am the substance and the one who has no substance.

Those who are without association with me are ignorant of me,
and those who are in my substance are the ones who know me.

Those who are close to me have been ignorant of me,
and those who are far away from me are the ones who have known me.

On the day when I am close to you, you are far away from me,
and on the day when I am far away from you, I am close to you.

*

There's the woman who locked herself in the tower, there's the
one cast out into the hissing open,
the white blindfold and the red.

Until the whole thing steps out, opening and shuddering, thousands of wings,
into the early morning, into late April of 2011,
I stand there.

*

There's a question here about the You and the I.

Who is the you? Is it the garment; is it herself? Is it the moment? She's speaking to people who accept her and do not accept her...maybe desire is too limited an idea.

Desire is a relationship, but always a between-- the I and the You is separated by desire itself speaking out of the I and bleeding into the you, so on the day when I am far away from you I am close to you.

*

It was always so frustrating for me to be confronted with physical limitations. Now I go to the gym and I can lift exponentially more. The only fight I ever lost was subdued by superior masculine physical strength and in some way that created the death of the woman inside me. It's interesting how violence between men kills the woman inside them. I know, but weren't you a woman on the outside then too?

I always perform drag on the day of the dead,
The male in me was created to protect the female in me.
I am like you were. I think certain aspects of your performance were formed to protect your body, to protect yourself. The girl in me has always been the strong one, the one that can endure. But I don't believe you are yourself.

*

[I am ...] within.
[I am ...] of the natures.
I am [...] of the creation of the spirits.
[...] request of the souls.
I am control and the uncontrollable.
I am the union and the dissolution.
I am the abiding and I am the dissolution.
I am the one below

*

There was a hole in my head where the thing stepped in.
The hole grew wider.
Limbs on all sides pushed away from the center.
Depth started to throb.

*

I prepare the bread and my mind within.
I am the knowledge of my name.
I am the one who cries out,
and I listen.
I appear and [...] walk in [...] seal of my [...].
I am [...] the defense [...].
I am the one who is called Truth
and iniquity [...].

*

The hole in my head ripped a bit wider.

Now there were acrid smells. Greens. Degrees.
Something all round stepping back, away.

The parking lot rose into sight . Stayed.

The question of the beginning of the world is not true, too slow.
Reverence pushed out into the watching brain.

*

...when the relationships disintegrate and you don't experience desire as intermediary but as the direct experience of "I am within" that it speaks out of you...

Calling on a response

within you—that spacial metaphor —yet to locate desire or power either within you or without you seems limiting

The times when I get myself into a dance trance the feeling that strikes me is one of simultaneous opposite forces existing in a non-contradictory way, like something is coming outside me and within me at the same time

So the spacial metaphors, the "what you see outside...", the binary—disintegrates, but you can't do that in language because we need separations to understand the world. Yet taking language and morphing it into a water-like substance, filling cavities, moving between the I and You, dissolving, doing this shifting thing...

*

You honor me [...] and you whisper against me.

If you are condemned by this one, who will acquit you?

Or, if you are acquitted by him, who will be able to detain you?

For what is inside of you is what is outside of you,

and the one who fashions you on the outside

is the one who shaped the inside of you.

And what you see outside of you, you see inside of you;

it is visible and it is your garment.

*

Everything changed, stilled.

The shape took hold.

Stepped free.

And, yes, there was something terrible about it too. Sad.

Birds everywhere. Chatter in the upper branches.

*

There's no hierarchy evoked here—direct contact—those words are in contact with the reality they're describing and adhered to that consciousness of the world as desire in multifarious layered evocations, like a time lapse photograph of a many-petaled flower opening and every petal is distinct but you can't say that any one of the petals is desire because the flower is constantly unfurling and she's taking the negative and positive values we associate with desire out of it as well as the implicit binaries—removing from the language the forms we associate with language itself and she's doing it with accretions rather than negatives...

By performing it we are putting ourselves in the place of that I as a direct conduit of relationship with divinity by saying that we don't need an intermediary (only text as vehicle?). I feel like this conversation can never end unless we alter our state of understanding. It does put me in an altered state. We are sitting in this labyrinth, we are a little drunk and you are smoking a cigarette. When R passed by and waved it was clear he was in a different world....

It's a promise, if you understand this you will never die, "many are the signs that exist..."

*

Hear me, you hearers
and learn of my words, you who know me.
I am the hearing that is attainable to everything;
I am the speech that cannot be grasped.
I am the name of the sound
and the sound of the name.
I am the sign of the letter
and the designation of the division.
And I [...].
[...] light [...].
[...] hearers [...] to you
[...] the great power.
And [...] will not move the name.

Look then at the words
and all the writings which have been completed.
Give heed then, you hearers
and you also, the angels and those who have been sent,
and you spirits who have arisen from the dead.
For I am the one who alone exists,
and I have no one who will judge me.
For many are the pleasant forms which exist in numerous sins,
and incontinencies,
and disgraceful passions,

and fleeting pleasures,
which (you) embrace until (you) become sober
and go up to (your) resting place.

And you will find me there,
and you will live,
and you will not die again.

