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Moorish Mail-Order Mysticism

Hakim Bey

1994

“Mail-order mysticism” may sound like a joke to the serious, orthodox, traditional, or academic “expert” in religion – & to the professional gurus whose “Work” consists of personality-monopoly & psychological authoritarianism – but the Moorish Orthodox Church takes it seriously. There’s something magical about the mail – voices from the Unseen – *documents as amulets* – and something very american, democratic & self-reliant – mysterious urban folklore – old ad’s for AMORC in crumbling yellow magazines – HooDoo catalogues, dreambooks – ancient spirits-of-places intersecting with modern communications networks that are placeless, spooky, & abstract. And the mail itself now seems antique – a lost modernity, 19th century, sepia, violet ink – a fitting medium for the transmission of secrets.

Do-it-yourself Enlightenment? Why not? It may not be the best way or the only way but *it is a way*. A genuine vein of initiation runs through the “plane” where one finds Dr Bronner’s soap labels, the lost Books of Moses, the apocryphal grimoires of Marie Laveau, Hollow Earth Theory, old

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Theosophical journals in your grandmother's attic, "What Did These Great Men Have In Common?", Noble Drew Ali's Moorish health-products, the mail-order courses of Druids and occult Orders, millennial tracts, mysterious classified ads, Mexican lithography, & c., & c.

It all adds up to a "New World" religion, a translation of "Wild(er)ness" into the strange lost margins of commodification and "communication" – both a betrayal & an apotheosis (like *all* religion) – a playground for the Trickster – a *mundus imaginalis* of the postal system & the printing press & the poetics of Desire.

Literal belief in one or another of these mail-order revelations would destroy our ability to believe in all of them simultaneously, like a palimpsest of angelic alphabets, a *field* of magical "correspondence(s)", a conceptual transformation-space of mythic energies and mythopoesis. The *eros* of postal mysticism lies in the whole pattern it makes, rather than in one part or another, one "course" or another. Sometimes those who sneer the most ironically at this textual spiritism are secretly drawn by its imaginal sensuality, even while their rational brains reject it all as high weirdness & superstition. However, one can believe (or "believe") *both/and*, rather than *either/or*. One drifts in a world of reveries, and "rejoice, fellow creature! All is ours!" – Or, at least: – an *opening*.

Egyptomania – the imaginal "Islam" of old cigarette boxes & masonic bric-a-brac – the Hoodoo figure of the "Old Moor", author of almanacs, herb-doctor, Maroon – the northwest African element in American folklore – *plus* the Native American component of the great New World Hoodoo synthesis – the Sante-ria *orisha* called El Spirito Indio – psychic tribalism, animism, totemism, and the Nature-religion natural to our Wilderness-haunted collective (un?)conscious – *plus* the psychedelic heritage of the 1950s & 60s, which combined with Moorish Science & the "Wandering bishops" tradition, to produce the Moorish Orthodox Church: – Sabbatai Sevi & Jacob Frank the "False

Messiahs" – secrets of Canaanite paganism – Jewish magick & amulets – Protestant chiliasm, the revolutionary Anabaptists, Ranters, Antinomians – *plus*, Apostolic high-liturgical gnostic autocephalous Church ritual – magical Taoism, "Aimless Wandering", tatrik intoxicants, initiation through dreams & contacts with the spirit world – hemp use in ancient China – mail-order almanacs of chaos cults form the Seven Finger High Glist-ter of the Great Dismal Swamp – &c., &c.

All this can now be yours, as you "Send Away For A Split Second Of Eternity" by joining the MOORISH MAIL ORDER MYSTICISM movement.

Certain airwave preachers tell you to "put your hands on the radio!" to receive a blessing or healing. The modern media are by definition forces for alienation – *and yet* – they contain within them hidden & unplanned magical linkages which are IMMEDIATE – or at least far more direct than reason would allow. No technology can leach itself clean of the residue of magic which lies at its source – and communication tech is the most "spiritual" of them all. The mail is full of gnostic traces – even of love. Why not initiation?