ZINE / 1992



HERMES AT THE PHOTOCOPIER

Static Psalter Collective

APOCALYPSE CULT

READING COPY AC-0120

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THIRTEEN PROPOSITIONS ON THE COPYING MACHINE

1. Every magical tradition is a tradition of copying. The adept who boasts of an unbroken lineage is boasting of a long line of scribes, each of whom made mistakes.

1. A grimoire was never an original. It was a copy of a copy, credited to a king who could not have written it. The authority was always borrowed. We propose to stop pretending otherwise.

1. The photocopier is a machine for producing likenesses by means of light. The ancients would have recognised it at once and been afraid of it.

1. Observe the rite. The lid is raised. The sign is laid face down upon the glass. A light passes beneath it, from one side to the other, once. The sign is taken up unharmed, and its double emerges warm from the side of the machine. If this were described in a manuscript of the fifteenth century it would be called a conjuration.

1. The copy is not identical. It is a little darker, a little coarser. The edges have crept. Copy the copy and it is darker still. This is not a fault. This is the machine telling the truth about transmission.

1. All teaching degrades as it is handed on. The orders conceal this and call the result tradition. The photocopier displays it on every page. A text that has been through nine generations of copying wears its history as a fog. It is the only honest kind of scripture.

1. Therefore do not seek the original. There is no original. Somewhere there was a first sheet, and it has been lost, and nothing was lost with it. What you hold is what there is.

1. The priest's power was the power to say which copy was correct. A machine in every office, a key in every pocket, and the priest is out of work.

1. They will tell you that a thing easily multiplied is cheap. They said it of printing. They said it of the alphabet. What is multiplied is not cheapened. It is released.

1. A sign that has been copied ten thousand times and left in bus shelters does not belong to its maker. It has no maker. It is simply abroad, like weather. This is the condition all spells aspire to.

1. The grey that gathers in the corners of a much-copied page is not dirt. It is the visible residue of every hand the page has passed through. Some of us can no longer read a clean page with any confidence.

1. To publish is the only initiation. There are no grades. There is the person who has made a thing and left it where a stranger will find it, and there is everyone else.

1. Go to the machine after the office has closed. Make a hundred of something. Leave them. Tell nobody which ones were yours.

ON CONSECRATING A PHOTOCOPIER

The following is offered for those who require ceremony. Those who do not may skip it; the machine works either way, which is rather the point.

Choose a machine you do not own. An owned machine has a master, and you want one that answers to no one in particular.

Go at an hour when the building is empty. Bring your own paper. This is partly ritual purity and partly so that nobody counts the ream.

Before the first copy, lay your bare hand upon the glass and copy that. This is the offering. Keep it. It is a better self-portrait than you would have drawn, and it shows what the machine sees when it looks at you: an outline, some creases and a great deal of dark.

Copy your text. Then copy the copy, and use that as your master, so that the thing begins its life already at one remove. Nothing you send out should be closer to the source than a grandchild.

When you have finished, leave one copy in the tray for whoever arrives in the morning. They will read it or they will throw it away. Either is an acceptable result. You are not responsible for what a sign does once it is out.

AGAINST THE ORIGINAL

We are asked sometimes whether we are not sorry that the first sheets of our own publications are gone. We are asked this by collectors, who have a sickness.

The desire for the original is the desire for a centre: a place where the thing was true before it was spread about. There is no such place. A text is not a relic. It has no body to be buried in one spot. It exists in being read, and it is read wherever a copy is.

Those who must have the first, the signed, the authenticated, have mistaken the vessel for the fire. Let them have their vessels. We prefer the fire, and the fire is in the fortieth generation as much as in the first, and a good deal warmer for the journey.

It is objected that if everything is a copy then nothing is real. We reply that everything has always been a copy, and it was real enough to get us this far.

[Two lines illegible in all known copies.]

Pass this on. Do not improve it. It will get worse by itself, and that is how you will know it is alive.

ABOUT THIS TEXT

TITLE	Hermes at the Photocopier
AUTHOR	Static Psalter Collective
DATE	1992
TYPE	Zine
PUBLISHER	Self-published
EXTENT	20 pages, photocopied, hand-stapled, edition unknown
LANGUAGE	English
SOURCE	Transcribed from a fourth- or fifth-generation copy. Two lines on the final page are illegible in every copy we have seen and are marked as such.

The Static Psalter Collective was, as far as anyone can establish, three people with access to an office after six o'clock. They produced a handful of zines in the early 1990s, distributed them by post in exchange for stamps or other zines, and stopped without announcement. Hermes at the Photocopier is the one that traveled.

It is a manifesto in numbered propositions, in the manner of the period, and it should be read with an awareness that its authors were enjoying themselves. The argument is nevertheless a serious one. Western magic has always been a culture of the copied text: grimoires transcribed by hand, altered in the copying, and attributed to authors who never saw them. The Collective proposes that the photocopier completes this history by making the copy cheap, fast and beyond anybody's control.

The physical object makes the argument for itself. No original of this zine is known. Every surviving example is a copy of a copy, with the gray fog and

wandering margins that implies, and our transcription has been made from one of them.

For context see Chaos Magic and the Do-It-Yourself Occult and The Desert of the Copy.

COLOPHON

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