

# The Feminine Letter

Source of Ecstasy

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## An Open Letter to Alphabets

This story begins in the middle of a long night. I had been reading a tale in which the noted storyteller Baal Shem Tov appears and this was a dream I had in response to this reading.

A Jewish orphan born in Poland in 1698, Baal Shem Tov was a legendary personality of the heretical, Hassidim movement who sublimated in acts and words the aspirations of the medleant and wandering Jews.

He lived in a period of particularly devastating pogroms. The remnants of the Polish Jewish community were overcome with sadness and despair. But Baal Shem Tov didn't feel the despair. His tales and parables were filled with joy. He was convinced that by changing oneself using dreams and poetry, a human being was certainly able to change the world.

One of his tales recounts how he found himself exiled, a prisoner on an unknown distant island, where for company he had just one other person. This individual seemed to be both a scribe and a disciple. But Baal Shem Tov no longer had anything to talk about or anything to teach. He was weighed down, defeated. He couldn't even remember his own name. His scribe-disciple was in the same condition. Everything had disappeared: all knowledge, every memory. And Baal Shem Tov pleaded with his companion (about whom he knew nothing) to tell him who they were and why they were there; but the companion broke out in a frightening laugh and insisted that he could remember only one thing. If Baal Shem Tov wanted him to, he could recite the alphabet like a young schoolboy.

"We're saved!" cried Baal Shem Tov, "This is the happiest day of my life!" Painfully, the former scribe-disciple abandoned himself to the most profound despair. Half unconscious, he started to chant the beginning of the alphabet. Baal Shem Tov, in raptures, begged him to continue. Gradually, the two crazy men started playing with the alphabet and little by little they put together a new and extraordinary language: including whatever they considered remarkable and putting the rest aside. This is how they broke all chains and recreated the world according to their desires.

One night in a dream, like the storyteller, I found myself exiled on a deserted island, a total prisoner, without any memory. Unlike Baal Shem Tov, I was completely alone. The only thing I remembered was my female sexual organ. I vaguely recalled a few letters of a language that was not at all my mother tongue. My family knew only Latino and Turkish—plus a little French and Italian. But I set about constructing an alphabet that, to me, seemed to resemble the Hebrew alphabet, the one I used to write my first texts as an adult.

But unlike Baal Shem Tov's ecstasy, an enormous anguish came over me. In this alphabet that I was reciting, I stumbled upon an absurd, shadowy, solitary letter. This was "ZAYIN" a letter when pronounced in Hebrew or Arabic signifies the male sexual organ. (This is similar to English when pronouncing the letter "c" you refer to a large body of water.)

Suddenly, I too experienced a marvelous ecstasy and I retained this ecstasy when I awoke. I had just dreamed that my sterile and sorrowful alphabet was missing one puny letter, but this letter was one I was able to invent.

Coming from a Muslim country and part of a Jewish minority, I was delighted by my impulsive revision of the Hebrew and Arabic alphabets. In the mist, I traced this letter which had never signified anything. After this, everything followed directly. To this symbol I had drawn, I gave the name "KOUS". This is an Arabic word which has been adopted by modern Hebrew. In both languages it means the female sexual organ and it is the object of ridicule as well as gross insults. Thus "motherfucker" comes from "KOUSSMEK." Nevertheless, KOUS and ZAYN curiously arouse a great deal of passion one for the other.

In the mist, I began painting in black and white, but then a canvas appeared and was placed in front of me, colors next to me, and I found brushes in my hand. The "visible content" of these paintings is simple. In one of them, to the right of the letter KOUS there is a loving couple with a baby in the woman's arms. Beneath the letter KOUS is the letter LAMED (to study); to the right of LAMED is the letter SAMEH (joy). The visible content of the principal motif of this painting is simultaneously written and painted and they are easy to understand: "Study KOUS and experience ecstasy."

For now, KOUS is unpronounceable. Where will we place it in our words? KOUS has no specific sound. But now it exists in an alphabet. It incorporates words of love, rebellious cries, poetic songs. KOUS is able to link them inextricably.

Where should we place KOUS in the literal world? Let chance determine where. In any case, it is always different from itself and moves around all the time like Baal Shem Tov when he recreates the world.

Without eliminating ZAYIN to which it is linked, this new letter destroys the tyranny of ZAYIN's ghostly shadow. KOUS is able to undermine all languages. In every alphabet, even in an ideographic one, KOUS introduces the principles of gratuitousness and inexpressibility.

Possessed of all these powers, let this letter now make its way in the world. My dream can continue.

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