automatic writing 😑✍️

Allison Parrish
typical writing

intentional thought

hand movement

marks applied to paper

automatic writing

???

hand movement

marks applied to paper
- spirits
- ideomotor effect ("normal motor automatism")
- dissociation
- subconscious/unconscious/psyche
- brain hemispheres
“Are mental habits acquired, and enacted, in the same way as motor habits? How much of symbolic activity—generation, production, reproduction—occurs within the purview of awareness?”

For the Surrealists, automatic writing was a "vehicle [...] of revelation", giving access to the "subjective treasury" of the psyche normally repressed by convention and "civilization"; only by listening to what lay beneath conscious or rational communication could the subject recover an originary, primal consciousness lost to everyday life.

what does it look like?
Face one of them

yes may thank

Heaven & where to be

one has next found

Happiness yes so long

yes come around

Melbourne Broken
A specimen of automatic writing. This is a mere fragment, taken from a long allegory, written in rather archaic language. There is a veritable library of works of this kind in existence, many of them printed and published in book form. Their writers claim that they are communications from the spirit-world: all their internal evidence, however, goes to prove that they are produced entirely in the subconscious mind of the human writer.
Leonora Piper

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leonora_Piper_automatic_writing_2.png
Hélène Smith

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:H%C3%A9l%C3%A8neSmith_martien01.jpg
"A-drip, and drops a-slide 'pon stone walls to pool aneath. A-chill the moon air and mist doth hang 'bout hill like white smock 'bout the shoulders of a wench. Smudge-scant upon the air, and brown fat reeking from crack o’ door. A grunt, a shuffle, and door doth ope, and Telka wriggleth bare toes in pool-drip."

"It was the end of sorrow lies. The rail stations were dead, flowing like bees stung from honeysuckle. The people hung back and watched the ocean, animals flew in and out of focus. The time had come. Yet king dogs never grow old – they stay young and fit, and someday they might come to the beach and have a few drinks, a few laughs, and get on with it. But not now. The time had come; we all knew it. But who would go first?"

the "control"
Leonora Piper

Martin Luther, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, Henry Longfellow, Abraham Lincoln, and George Washington...
messages from the "second self"
"[W]e have learned to see things in terms of words: we name things.... The dominant left verbal hemisphere doesn’t want much information about things it perceives—just enough to recognize and categorize. The left-brain... learns to take a quick look and says “Right, that’s a chair....” [...] The left-brain has no patience with this detailed perception and says..., “It's a chair, I tell you. ... [D]on’t bother to look at it, because I’ve got a ready made symbol for you.” . . . When confronted with a drawing task, the left hemisphere comes rushing in with all its verbally linked symbols...."

what the conscious mind does

(1) It narratizes. It carries on a narrative, an abstracted and ongoing account of what happens to the thinker. Narratives often incorporate memories of the past and expectations of the future.

(2) It assigns causes and effects in its stories. Consequently, it often blames. It also helps produce affectively connected self-talk that worries, criticizes, and even obsesses. But in all fairness, this same process produces the planfulness and insightfulness that permits more effective action based on prior experience.

(3) It provides a sense of time.

(4) It builds a sense of self. Without narratization, evidently, there would be no “I” or “me” who stars in adventures.

I think it is possible that our left hemisphere, having been more constantly used than our right hemispheres, may be more crowded and blocked (so to say) with our own already fixed ideas. An external intelligence wishing to use my brain, might find it convenient to leave alone those more educated but also more preoccupied tracts, and to use the less elaborated, but less engrossed, mechanisms of my right hemisphere.

how does it happen?
"[T]he table we surrounded soon began to oscillate rapidly. My right arm was seized with a convulsive tremor, and then in a ‘positive condition’ it refused obedience to my will.... A pencil and paper were lying on the table. The pencil came into my hand: my fingers were clenched on it! An unseen iron grasp compressed the tendons of my arm: my hand was flung violently forward on the paper, and I wrote meaning[ful] sentences, without any intention, or knowing what they were to be . . . my hand rested on a cloud, while my guardian-spirit ... dictated to me."

psychologists
"To induce the first stages of automatic writing the same conditions are requisite as those of normal suggestibility. The subject starting his first lesson in automatic writing must strongly concentrate his attention on some letter, figure, or word; he must distract his attention from what is going on in his hand; he must be in a monotonous environment; he must not be disturbed by a variety of incoming sense impressions; he must keep quiet, thus limiting his voluntary movements; his field of consciousness must be contracted; no other ideas but the requisite ones should be present in the mind; and if other ideas and images do enter his mind, they must be inhibited."

surrealists
"Attain the most passive or receptive state of mind possible. Forget your genius, your talents, and those of everyone else.... Write quickly with no preconceived subject, so quickly that you retain nothing and are not tempted to reread. Continue as long as you like."

creative writers?
• Give yourself a time limit. Write for one or ten or twenty minutes, and then stop.

• **Keep your hand moving** until the time is up. Do not pause to stare into space or to read what you've written. Write quickly but not in a hurry.

• **Pay no attention** to grammar, spelling, punctuation, neatness, or style. Nobody else needs to read what you produce here. The correctness and quality of what you write do not matter; **the act of writing** does.

• If you get off the topic or run out of ideas, keep writing anyway. If necessary, **write nonsense or whatever comes into your head, or simply scribble**: anything to **keep the hand moving**.

• If you feel bored or uncomfortable as you're writing, ask yourself what's bothering you and write about that.

• When the time is up, look over what you've written, and mark passages that contain ideas or phrases that might be worth keeping or elaborating on in a subsequent free-writing session.