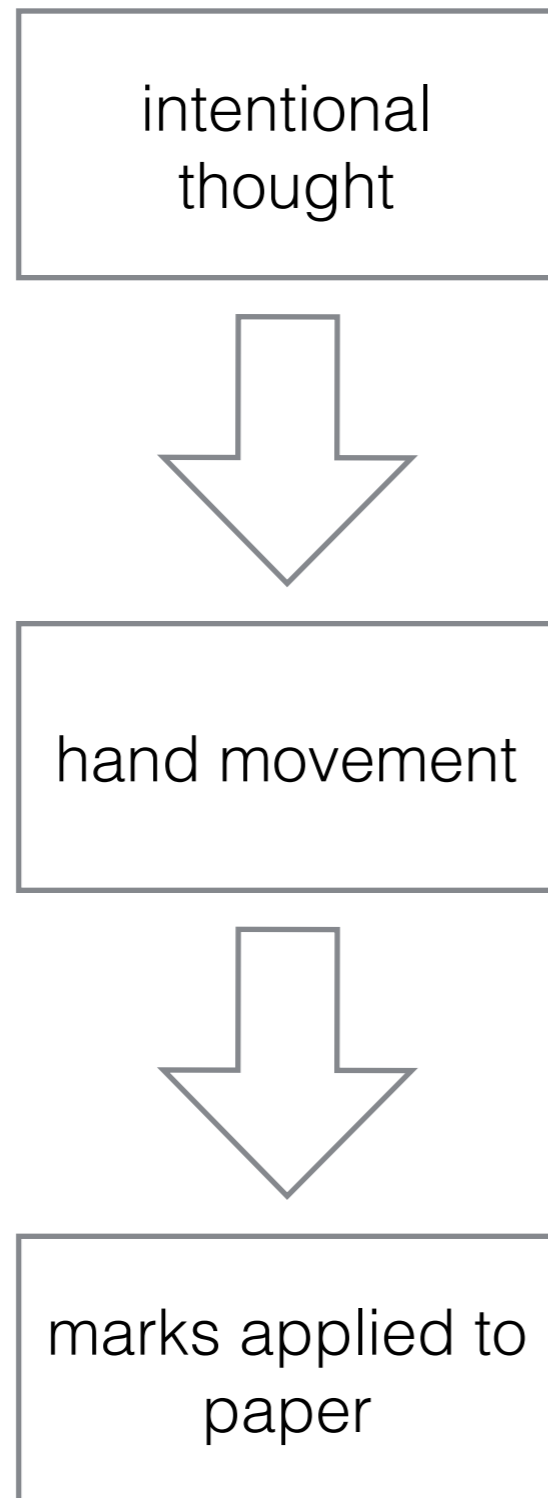


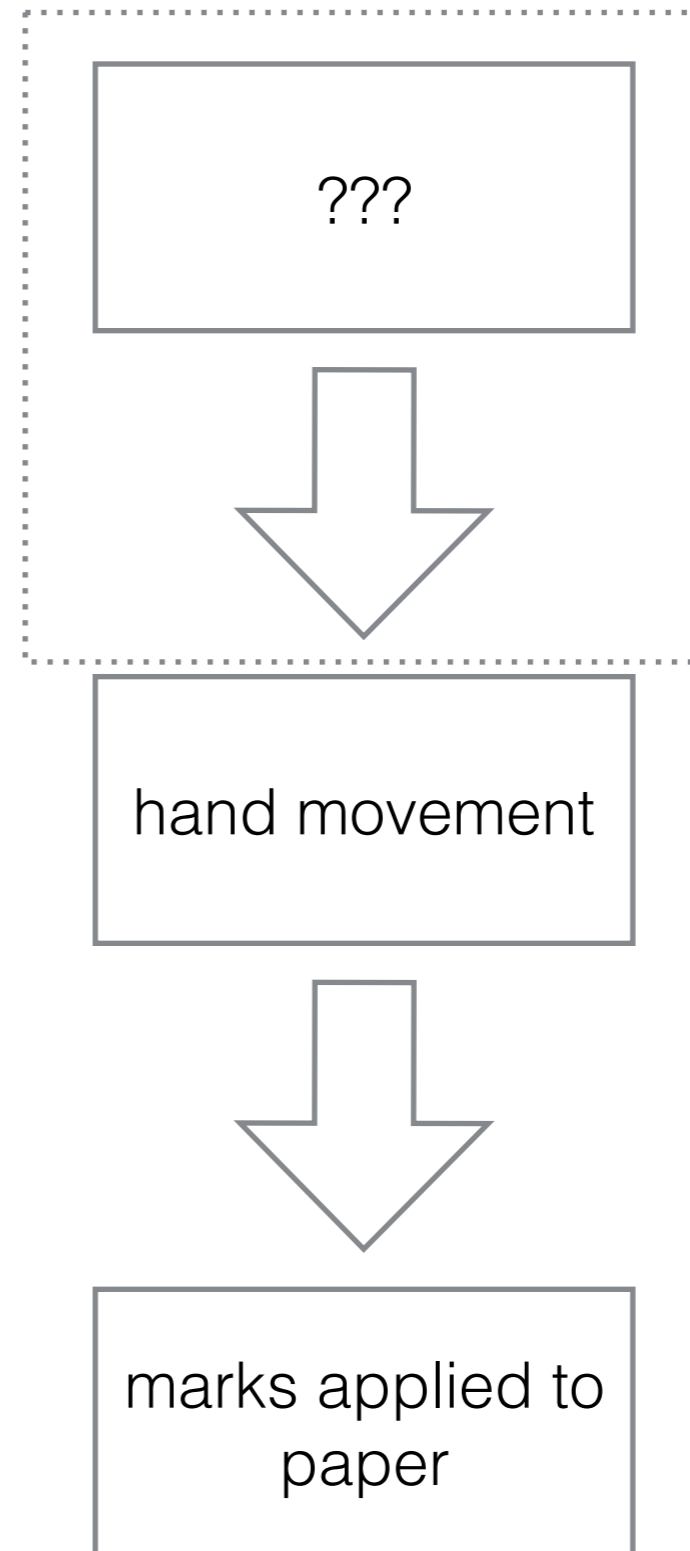
automatic writing 🙄✎

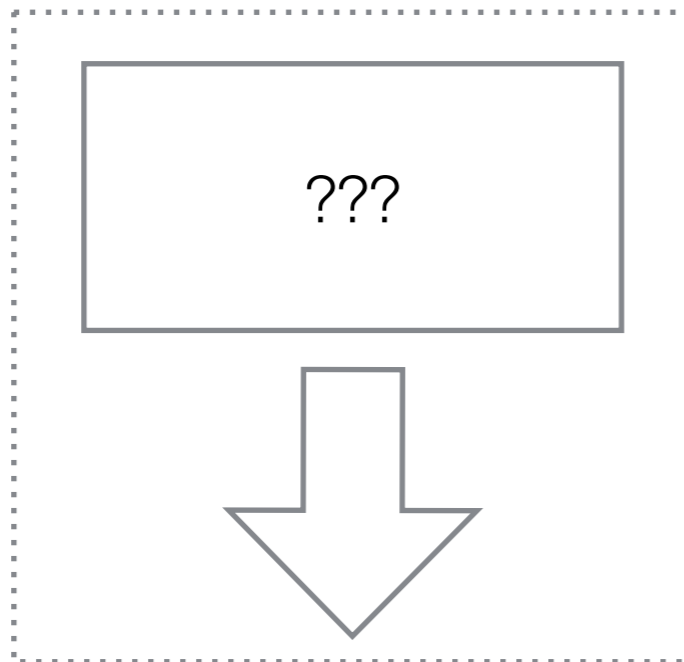
Allison Parrish

typical writing



automatic writing





- 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?”

Koutstaal, Wilma. “Skirting the Abyss: A History of Experimental Explorations of Automatic Writing in Psychology.” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1992, pp. 5–27.

'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'

Will, B. "Gertrude Stein, Automatic Writing and the Mechanics of Genius." *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, Apr. 2001, pp. 169–75. CrossRef, doi:10.1093/fmls/37.2.169.

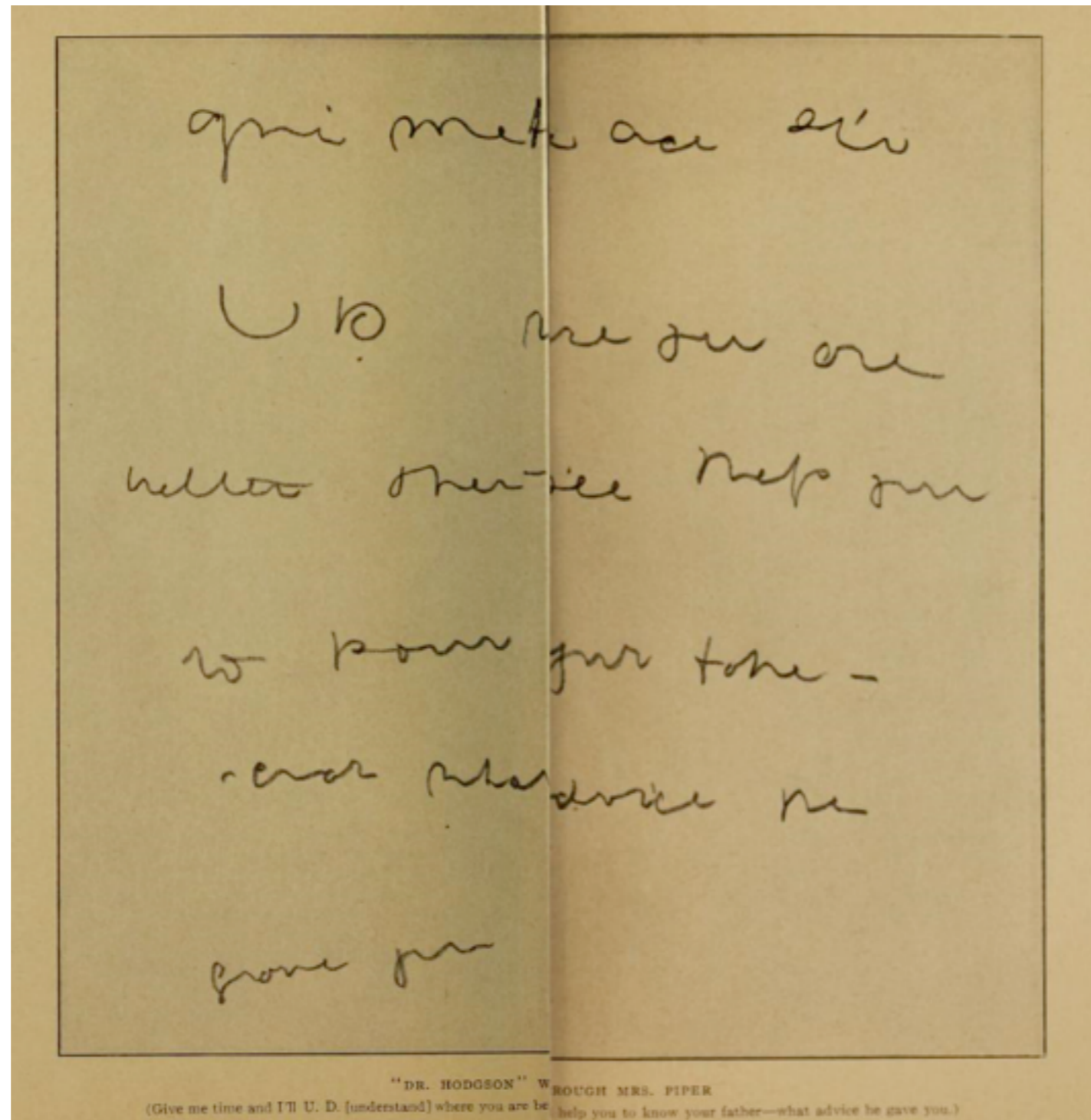
what does it look like?

Face One of
Gives May Thailin
Healer & where to go
One Has Not Found
Happiness yes so 1911
Gives Plant world
Melbourne Brother

And behold it came to pass that as He hasted walked
through the fields of Paradise - He saw there a woman
She sat alone, yet on her head was a crown with many
jewels - signifying a triumphant life of love & the
jewels emblematical of the souls she had led
into the Paths of Truth.

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



Hélène Smith

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"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."

Pearl Curran/Patience Worth, quoted in Braude, Stephen E. "Dissociation and Latent Abilities: The Strange Case of Patience Worth." *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, vol. 1, no. 2, June 2000, pp. 13–48.

"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 Magnetic Fields by André Breton and Philippe Soupault, translated and introduced by David Gascoyne: Atlas Press, London, 1985.

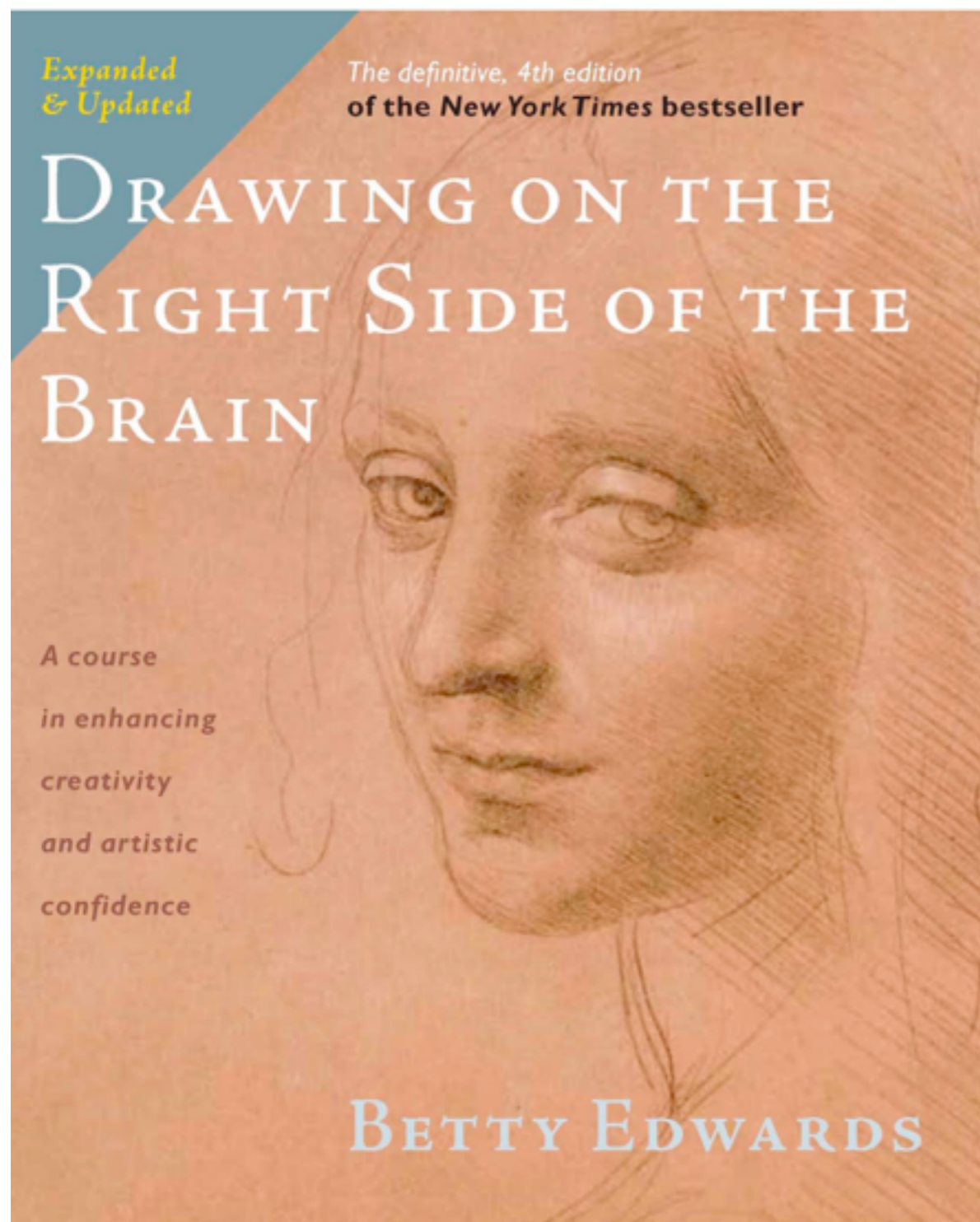
the "control"

Leonora Piper



Martin Luther, Commodore
Cornelius Vanderbilt, Henry
Longfellow, Abraham
Lincoln, and George
Washington...

messages from the
"second self"



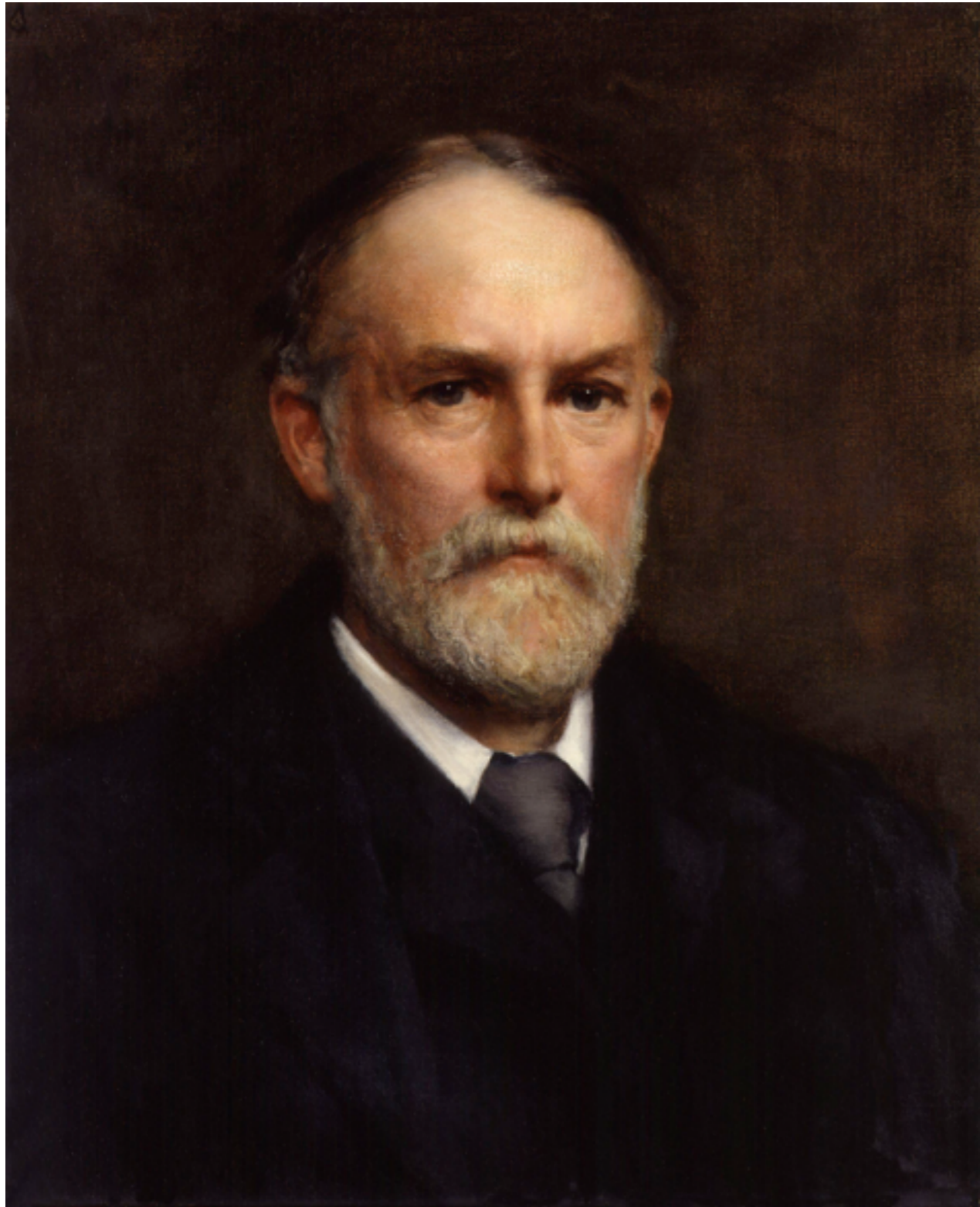
"[W]e have learned to see things in terms of words: we name things.... The dominant left verbal hemisphere doesn't want much information about things it perceives—just enough to recognize and categorize. The left-brain... learns to take a quick look and says "Right, that's a chair...." [...] The left-brain 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...."

Betty Edwards, quoted in Boice, Robert, and Patricia E. Meyers. "Two Parallel Traditions: Automatic Writing and Free Writing." *Written Communication*, vol. 3, no. 4, Oct. 1986, pp. 471–90..

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.

Julian Jaynes quoted in Boice, Robert, and Patricia E. Meyers. “Two Parallel Traditions: Automatic Writing and Free Writing.” *Written Communication*, vol. 3, no. 4, Oct. 1986, pp. 471–90.



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.

Frederic William Henry Myers (1843–1901), quoted in Alvarado, Carlos S. “Psychic Phenomena and the Brain Hemispheres: Some Nineteenth-Century Publications.” *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, vol. 30, no. 4, Dec. 2016, pp. 559–85.

how does it happen?

spiritualists

"[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.**"

Quoted in Thompson, Rachel Leah. "The Automatic Hand: Spiritualism, Psychoanalysis, Surrealism." *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, no. 7, Spring 2004, p. 14. (my emphasis)

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."

Boris Sidis quoted in Koutstaal, Wilma. "Skirting the Abyss: A History of Experimental Explorations of Automatic Writing in Psychology." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1992, pp. 5–27. (my emphasis)

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."

André Breton, quoted in Boice, Robert, and Patricia E. Meyers. "Two Parallel Traditions: Automatic Writing and Free Writing." *Written Communication*, vol. 3, no. 4, Oct. 1986, pp. 471–90.

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.

Natalie Goldberg's "Rules for Free Writing," quoted in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_writing