

It is said that a medium, in the throes of possession, can expel a substance seemingly made of cheesecloth and safety pins and magazine scraps, but actually foamy or fibrous or near-invisible to the naked eye.

In certain photographs from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, this 'ectoplasm' could be seen peeking out the folds of a dress and flapping around, or unfurling from the mouth like a bundle of telegraph cables in search of a living receiver.



The early years of the Spiritualist movement resounded with knocks and rappings, as if the ghosts, sequestered in the afterlife, were clamoring for attention.

Once heard, their communiqués took a graphical turn: a crayon, strapped to the bottom of a table leg, would wobble out inscriptions; a planchette, atop a pencil and wheels, could sketch otherworldly designs.

Of all technologies of the psychic arts, none was more powerful than the hand. The languages of Mars and Ultra-Mars could, through the transcripts of Héléne Smith, first reach earthly readers. When Emma Hardinge Britten took spiritual dictation, struggles of women and the working class stirred the conscience of those present. Surely, these tracts would have caused concern if they were voiced by Britten herself, not the medium of another.



Spiritualism had a second coming, as it were, in the years following The Great War, when those lost and those left had no other means of contact.

Even so, the missives most remembered from this time came not from the possessed, but the Surrealists—not from the supernatural, but the realm of the unconscious.

The *femininity*, the expressivity of mediumship had little place in this new movement, which turned men into "modest recording instruments" that logged psychic data.

The inquiry into automatic writing began in 1919, five years before the manifestos of Surrealism. By 1933, André Breton concluded that its history had been one of "continual misfortune." Even when every effort was made—*short of amputation!*—to free the hand from its host, it proved too slow, too human, too inadequate a tool to trace the full force of the unconscious.



Still, the hand continued to move.

Upton Sinclair was convinced that his second wife Mary had telepathic abilities, which manifest in a kind of vibration. He titled his 1930 book on the topic *Mental Radio*.

To test his theory, Sinclair conducted an experiment that went something like this: First, a person would make a drawing, then mentally focus on it for five, ten, twenty minutes. Mary—

sometimes as many as forty miles away—would receive the broadcast and try to replicate the original.

On the verso of one drawing, Mary wrote: “This came in fragments, as if I saw it being drawn by an invisible pencil.”

Sinclair’s experiment didn’t gain much traction in the scientific community. Of the 290 drawings that Mary made, only 65 were considered successful duplicates. Still, something was in the air. J.B. Rhine published the book *Extra-Sensory Perception* four years after *Mental Radio*, and university laboratories began to run experiments in the field, with subjects receiving drawings at a distance and recreating them by hand, just as Mary had.



Like many technologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, psionics found its way into warcraft.

During the Cold War, the Russians were rumored to be training psychic spies. The U.S. government responded by funding two units where agents mentally travelled to covert enemy sites, then logged their findings in writing, drawing, and even clay sculpture.

These ‘remote viewers’—the flesh-and-blood prototypes of drones—flew the psychic airstreams in search of nuclear missiles, secret submarines, and tanks. They located pilots downed behind enemy lines and shadowed hostiles to extract sensitive intel.

There’s a long history of psychics being deployed in warfare. John Dee, an Elizabethan spy, questioned angels through a crystal ball. Wolf Messing was a Soviet psychic of such renown that Hitler put a price on his head. It would seem that anything, even the lesser-known recesses of the mind, can be colonized and weaponized.

In the mid-1990s, these units came to a close. Despite every effort to pry open the black box of the psyche, there was too little signal and too much noise.

Nowadays, one can learn this technique in parapsychology circles—even from the former viewers themselves. If you doubt the faithfulness of your partner, or want to game the races, the markets, the lottery, then remote viewing may be for you.



The remote viewer is an inveterate paranoid, for his ability to view anyone and anything anywhere *at any time* also means that he, anywhere and at any time, can be remotely viewed.

Indeed, so concerned were some about this possibility that a recommendation was once made for U.S. officials to festoon “sensitive sites” with objects like Mickey Mouse balloons. Should Soviet agents remote view these sites, they’d likely conclude that they were at the wrong target—in the wrong place.

Imagine a world of decoy balloons: When every day looks like a party, yet feels like certain disaster; when we hide behind smiles for fear of whom (or what) is looking ... what can the hand do but continue to move?