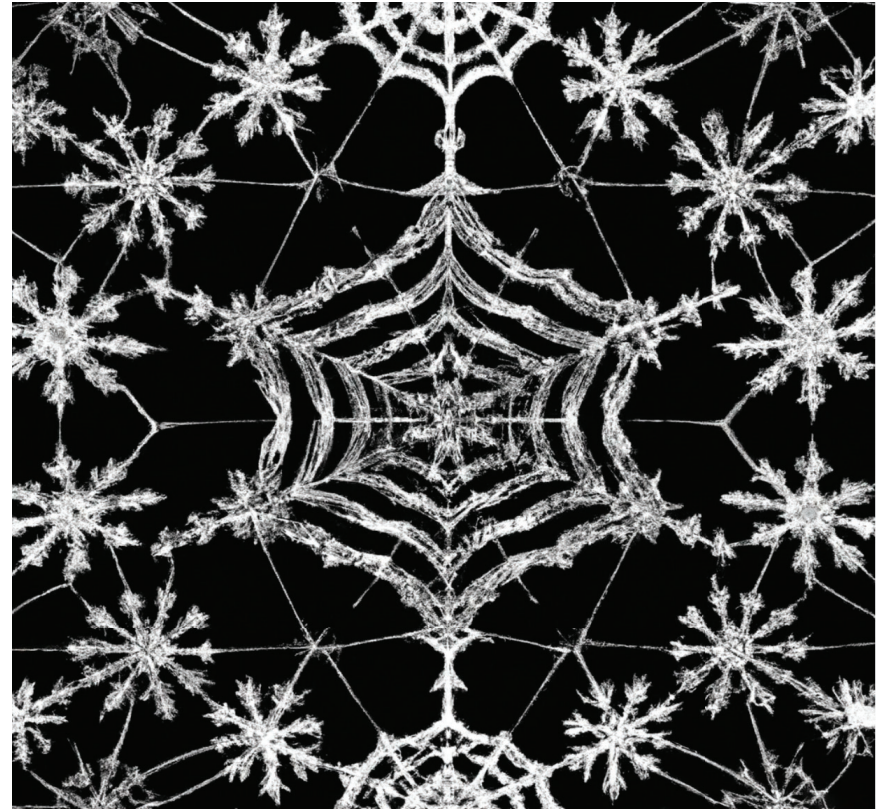


experience of both memory and presence, the people who read this, and the world as I am describing it will have changed

It gets better: All of this writing takes place in time. I write only when it is absolutely necessary. Today I wrote nothing. I inhale wood smoke with the smell of ripe passion fruit. It's ambient at night. I find joy in moirés, multiphonics, iridescence, polyrhythms, and other readily sensible metaphors for holding or sensing more than one position. Metaphors break down under mindful analysis: a moiré falls under the umbrella term 'z-fighting,' as a struggle in the dimension that moves from eye to horizon. Multiphonics, like all harmonic series, imply a fundamental frequency as their basis. Iridescence is a structural trait. Polyrhythms depend on an eventual closure, a unit of common repetition. I was smiling at you and then I realized you were a stranger. I catch a glimpse of the skull clamp and take note of these blunt waves which pass through my lower abdomen, and across the edge of my hairline. Behind my eyes. It is a taut fact that the skull clamp clamps skulls. For the reason of slicing skin, peeling it back to bone. Drilling precise holes, clamping again, then cutting with a saw made especially for the purpose. By precise intent, through repetitive use, everything and everyone has its purpose. This hardware, this sensation, this body. I search for the brand name printed in silver on the edge of its white metallic arm. Search results return images of even more abject products from the same manufacturer. Their spinal surgery bed which bends and twists the unconscious body in order to give access to the points of incision. The articulated arm with alligator clips for pinning folds of flesh in place. There is an inhuman economy to their directness: all body. I only get the feeling from images of the skull clamp, also found under the sterilized term 'cranial stabilizer.' When a royal blue, athletic-looking foam support is added, the feeling is gone. I'm not interested in a headrest. Not resting. What is a head? Walking down the stairs from the projection booth to the screening room, I am made aware of a cone of blue light projecting outwards a meter or so from the back of my head. On the narrow end, the diameter of my carefully sewn scar. On the wide end, a fringe of pale yellow-white and magenta light, a spectrum that swings as I move my head from side to side. The cone holds its unshakeable, orthogonal orientation to my skull. I love scars. I was dead. My pride in showing you is too much. I watch an IMAX movie of brain surgery: close images of a port being drilled into a shaved section of scalp, a tear in the sac that surrounds the brain, pulling back inner layers that resemble spider webs, tumor tissue that looks like crystals of mold or fat. Every frame is multiple stories tall. I don't feel anything while watching, or immediately after. Days later, I am obsessed by how every plane of my body is oriented, so pungently aware of having a front, back, and sides as if I were made of boxes.



I don't need a drone to see what a drone sees. Its vertical perspective is always available to me, irreversibly stamped on my imaginary version of the big picture. I compose a grid of flat, scrolling frames to make sense of the dilated surface far below me. I face a world of distorted connections. A coalition-builder, an activist from my parents' generation, described this pattern of movement, the ground shifting and exchanging beneath her, as the playful act of traveling between worlds: an exchange of loving perceptions, an open embrace of her multiple selves. It's also the perspective of free fall. Moving towards Earth against the friction of wind. New feelings manufacture new expressions, my face moves and holds in unfamiliar ways that make me more or less recognizable depending on the day. When I am less recognizable I join with other off-screen voices, outside of citation, in demonic grounds. I was dead once, and there are definitely moments when I am not sure I'm no longer dead.

A, B, C, D, E, F, L, M, N, O, P

Why does the alphabet have the sequence that it does? I know there are letters missing. Every word is a fossil. Whom can I trust? Would I recognize trust if

I felt it? I am beginning to think that all connections are necessarily, normally, naturally distorted. Which is to say, feelings are relationships. The once-abundant time I have spent conjuring links between thoughts, images, and emotions collapses into scarcity. Each act of searching, seeking, inquiring, and probing is imbued with a preciousness. It fits an ephemeral pattern. I change tabs to check the grammar of “whom can I trust” vs. “who can I trust?” and I am delivered *6 Subtle Signs That You Can Tell Someone is Trustworthy*:

1. They don't share others' secrets
2. They never say “I'm not supposed to be telling you this...”
3. They show consistency
4. You can count on them when needed
5. They tell you things straight up
6. They respect peoples' time

I'm not supposed to be telling you this, but traveling between worlds without love is arrogant. Arrogant perception is failure of identification, where all others exist by virtue of their usefulness. It is the systematic disintegration of whole persons by the perceiver, grafting the substance of their servants to themselves. The smell of ripe passion fruit becomes overwhelming. Those who spoke the local language called it *the fruit that serves itself*. Five hundred years ago, passion fruit was a pedagogical tool: each lobe of the flower representing a wound in the passionate death of G_d. I am afraid that synthetic odors and flavors manipulate my senses so completely I have fallen out of touch with the real fruit. This is a shallow dread. I am not that into technology but I get it. I prefer a caveat, I don't trust the seamless continuity required to make predictions. I am in the midst of a thicket of dependencies, I am discrete; interdependent and alone. My favorite medicine is chimeric, semisynthetic: Rituximab, like any other monoclonal antibody, is a large, Y-shaped protein that binds itself to foreign bodies and marks them for elimination. Grown by a transgenic mouse who has been given a talent for cancer, the protein is humanized to cross back into my species, where it marks my own B-cells as other. Those mutated murine eyes give me my ethnographic point of view. Writing myself into a place, a field, a persona, I look up and down and from side to side. The sun is warm, the air is fragrant. In the grammar above, the open question “whom?” is the object of trust. In this case, trust requires an object, even if it is a gap to be filled, a warning. Something required is missing. Still, a notion of completeness is required before we can say “missing.” I write about the changes I had observed when death became my guide: learning to speak my pieces, to inject into the living world my convictions of what is necessary and what I think is important, without concern for whether or not it is understood, tolerated, correct or heard before. The

world will not stop if I make a mistake. To be clear, world-stopping is a flavor of world-building. World-traveling is another. In the late afternoon, decaying light bleaches the curtain a distribution of miniature suns. I hear that free-swimming larvae of tropical corals move toward reef sounds when they return from the open ocean. They listen to know where to settle, pulled from far away by noise. They seek a louder world. Again at a distance, plants respond to the sound of leaves being chewed, secreting particular chemicals. They do not respond in the same way to songs or wind. We segregate our fruits and vegetables depending on whether they emit, or are sensitive to, ethylene gas. Apples and bananas go in bags so they won't speak to each other, so they won't listen: *Let's get ripe*. Passion fruit, too, emits measurably large quantities of ethylene gas. The oracle at Delphi once sat on a three-legged stool, inhaling ethylene vapor from an open pit. Reasons are ridiculous: beavers build dams because the sound of running water makes them lose their minds. Raccoons wash hands because their extra-sensitive fingers feel like they are on fire. At the café by my house, I'm reading about stochastic parrots, a silly name for synthetic language models. These models produce seemingly coherent conversations, but they do not, as we might say, communicate. True coherence requires mutual recognition, which the parrots lack. I look up from the article, recognizing a friend, who reminds me that our flickering attempts at mutual recognition block what we might think of as totalizing coherence. When she and I communicate with each other we are both aware that we are sharing, and we can know the limits of our sharing. Communication is a jointly-constructed activity of modeling each other's mental state. All technology is for communication. Even if what you say doesn't make sense to me I will interpret it. Language gives my senses shape. Words help me feel. At this point my friend cautions me to be mindful of the slippage between categories. What is at stake? A failure to recognize where our mutual thresholds lie means the one category has become the other: false alarms cause real harms. We make an outline of the consequences together: *6 Subtle Signs That You Can Tell Representations Are Unstable*:

1. The world as I am describing it, both as memory and as presence, will have changed
2. People I don't know will read this, and the people I do know will have changed
3. The meaning of the language I have used, however carefully, will have changed
4. The relationships between the readers of this text and the world as I am describing it will have changed
5. The relationships between myself, the language I have used, and my experience of both memory and presence, will have changed
6. The relationships between myself, the language I have used, my