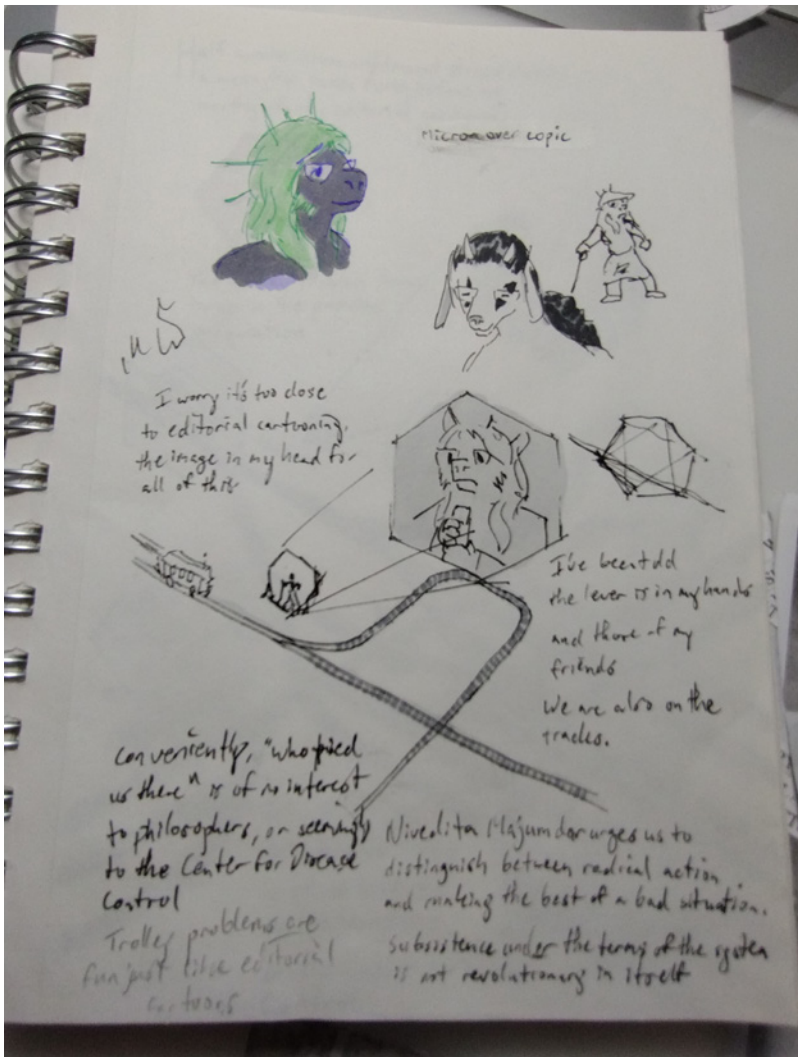




(making of)

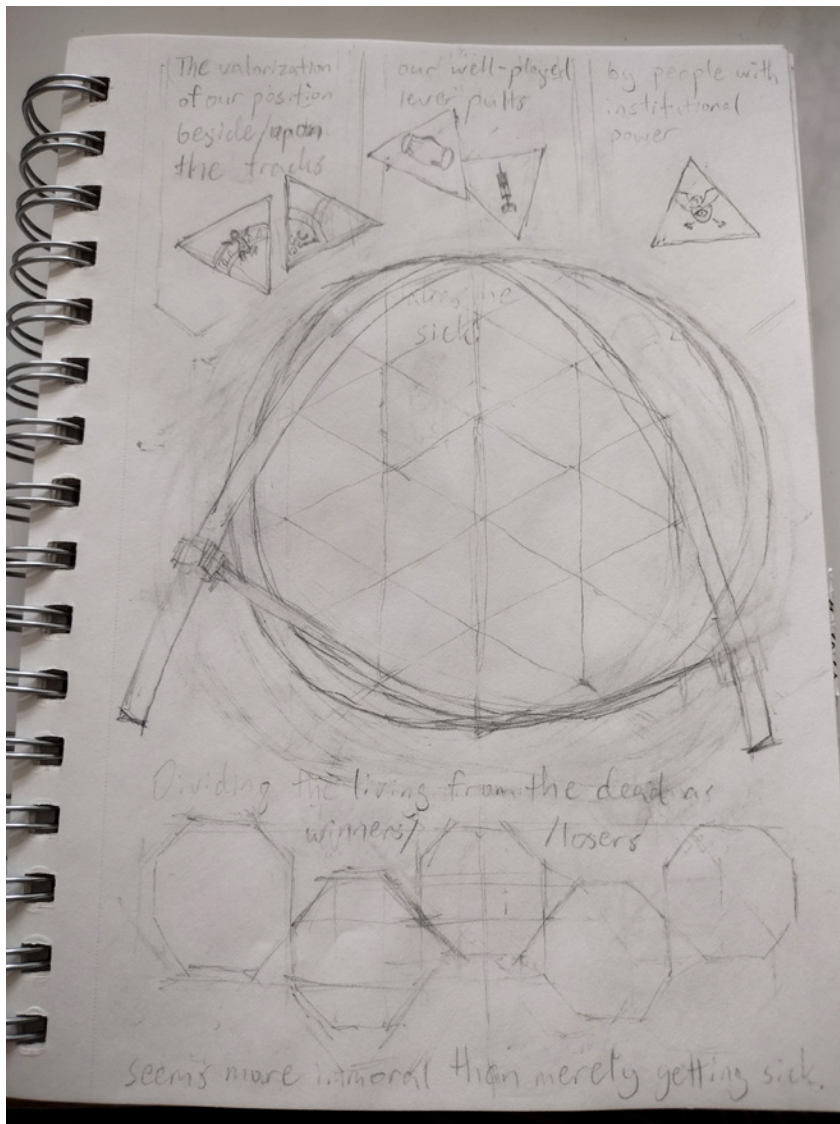
Sidings



tools used to create this comic, in idiosyncratic order as appearing on my desk: sketchbook, printer paper (printed on), printer paper (to prevent copic bleed), copic markers (greyscale), microns (various sizes), paper cutting scissors, x-acto knife, a light table my friends weren't using, mechanical pencils, ruler, some books i read for grad school, some stuff i read after grad school, ruler, tissues, water bottle, stapler, needle, thread, two brands double stick tape (one that kinda sucked and a better roll provided by my girlfriend), tracing paper, photo album inserts. i think that's basically it. the desk got pretty messy.

at first i thought this would be a two or four page comics, tops. i had never done anything longer than a page. i hadn't even done comics at all really until spring 2021. from the outset i was uncomfortable with how "editorial cartoon" it might become. that discomfort turned into a theme as i got more frustrated with the simplistic social response to a public health crisis. that increased the comic's length, too.

nivedita majumdar was there from the start, but i struggled for a while on how to get from the first image (the trolley problem cartoon) to her writing on the political follies of postcolonial studies (their tendency to valorize victimization while downplaying or even excluding acts of conscious political resistance). i worried a lot about this leap, but i wanted to dare to say "maybe this pandemic should be framed within a political and economic context" rather than just an act of "God".



originally i imagined drawing all the pieces by hand over and over. that would have been a drag, though. instead, i drew a series of initial tiles and photocopied them. cutting them out was a lot of work, but it was definitely less arduous than having to ink them all individually, and i think it adds to the deranged ransom note ambiance of the comic.

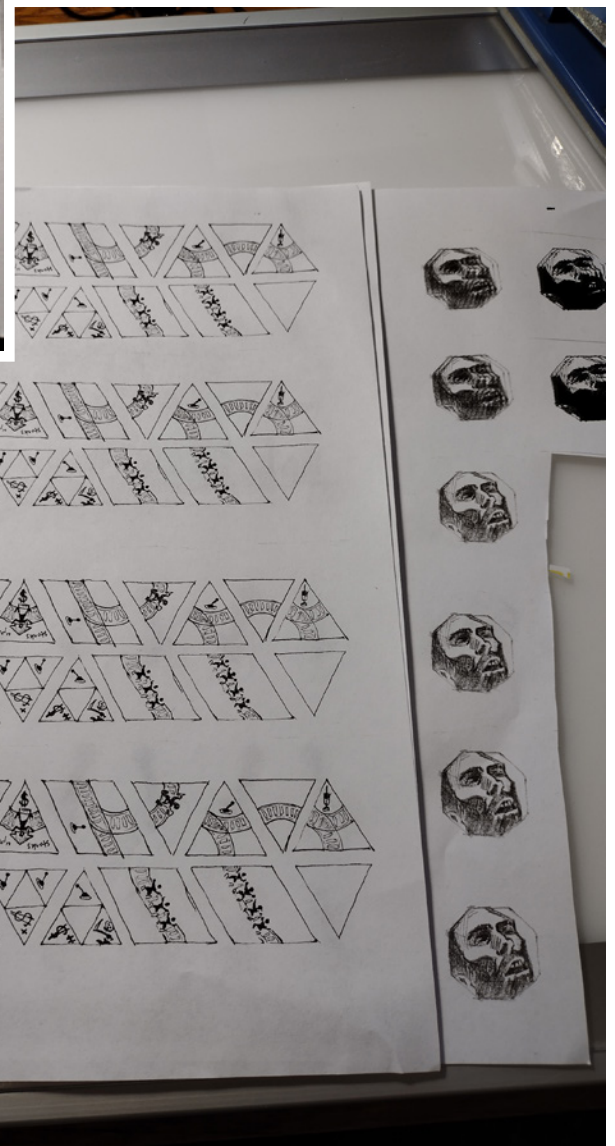
i struggled for a while with the question of what to put in the octagons acting as the frame for this page--portraits of some sort? hand drawn probably? they ended up being photocopies of an ink drawing of the artist peter hujar, dead, as photographed by david wojnarowicz. i'm still on the fence about having used this, given the subject matter. but ultimately i felt connecting my outrage at institutional failure for one pandemic to another queer artist's outrage at the institutional failure during the AIDS crisis both felt ethically reasonable, and artistically/rhetorically important.

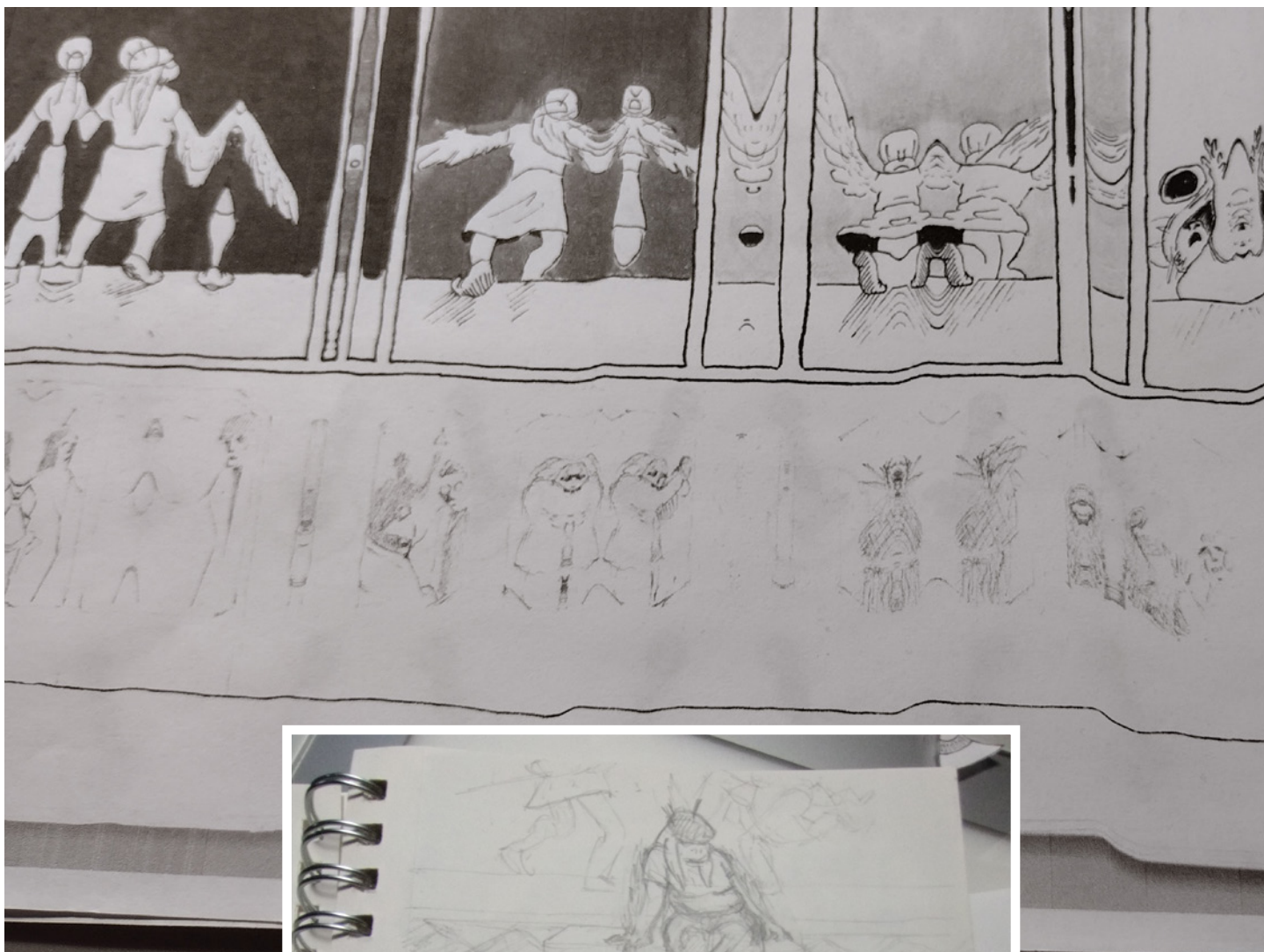
i wonder how many of my friends have "long covid".

this page sucked to design. the paper in this sketchbook is pretty good for inks because it doesn't have much tooth, so it doesn't shred the brush tips of my copics or tombows (r.i.p. my brush tip black micron, though the roughness of it let me do the ragged looking text on the cover). it's less good for drawing, scarring easily from my preferred mechanical pencils and sorta crumpling if i erase too hard. the text on this page eluded me, and i kept trying ot make something work with two zip ties as the border of the "game board". (it didn't work--the final piece just uses one)

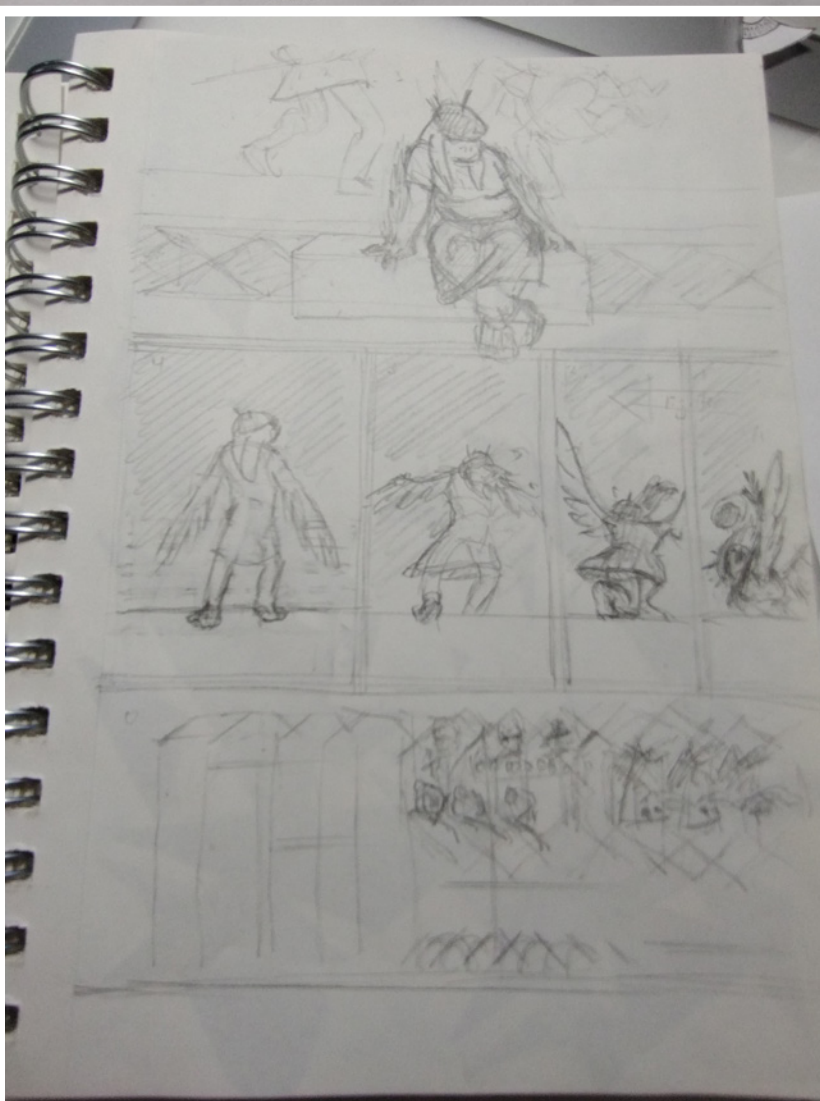
the shape of the final composition is here, but it needed a second pass on another page before it started to really fit together for me

i knew i wanted to do this game board thing, since i already had introduced a regular equilateral triangle/hexagon grid and wanted to explore that design element further rhetorically. it made the process messy, but developing the pages sequentially let me explore and develop the visual rhetoric along with the reader, i think, maybe.





the last three pages came to me all in a rush when i wasn't even really thinking about it, after maybe a week of being completely stuck on how to finish the comic, despairing, vowing to give up because i wasn't a real artist, &c &c. i rushed to get sketches for each of them drawn and the final page for 4 ended up being pretty much perfect. the physical page ended up somewhat messy, though, and i was scared i'd fuck the inks up and be left without an original of those nice two falling panels, so i scanned and retraced the pencils onto a new page. this decision to add a separate step between pencils and inks let me digitally create a grid of tiles for the stand mosaic in the background



(which i then spent a day dabbling onto the page meticulously, rivaling the woven headlines for most deranged time consuming part of this project).

i tried a few different photocopy techniques to get the strobe effect of the train coming in and running me over (a look borrowed from bernard krigstein's classic ec story "master race"). the experiments with pulling the page while the scanner was running and photocopying over the same page multiple times in different positions ended up giving me surreal images for the cover and credits pages.



this and the final page were all drawn in that last big rush of inspiration and while i needed to fiddle with the wording quite a bit i knew 5 was where nivedita majumdar's insights could finally fit into the project. this also gave me a chance to tie back together a number of other symbols: the game board pieces, the levers, the octagon vs triangles... though originally i planned to cover the entire page in board game pieces. a fellow comic creator pointed out that in the sketch just having a couple of the tiles actually was an interesting effect, letting the callback work without being overwhelming.

similarly, the final page was originally gonna explicitly have a bunch of game pieces and was gonna have way more triangles. i didn't bother to scan and redraw that one, for whatever reason i decided to just damn the consequences and go for it, and at a certain point i just took a look at it and said you know what if i take this further it's gonna overwork it. so, i stopped. learning to let things just sit and be what they are is still hard for me but i'm learning.

