

22 May 2018 (The Day Diego Quit)¹

¹ by [Giovan Alonzi](#) and [Diego Robles](#)

i. (my now favorite moment of then)

at the time, this was not my favorite moment. at the time, i was unsettled. at the time, the facilitator facilitating this professional development seminar asked us to use a template of interaction—to (1) state an observation in the present moment and (2) state the phrase “& that’s OK.” this exercise was meant to be a tool for unpacking _____ with students, a collective way to share and affirm together. I don’t remember what I said was OK. I only remember that the facilitator had briefly divulged that she was an actor (to which someone said “omg I was wondering, but I can’t place you,” to which she said, “I know what you’re thinking of; let’s talk after”) and then i remember what diego said was OK.

diego must have been [thinking something](#), his eyes were so very slanted with exhaustion. To the right of him, two or three others were one step away from sleeping. I wondered - where were we headed with this [actor](#)?

at the time of this exercise, a shared silence had spread between most of us that i can only best describe as “toleration.” at the end of the day, everyone in the room was getting paid to be there. at the beginning of this moment, the workshop felt like it was pressing us into ink for the words on a grant application for federal funding.

i was unsettled at the time because i don’t believe Matt would have been performatively reading a large book during the seminar if the facilitator had been a man. while the facilitator was explaining the exercise, she noticed him reading this large book. his attention to the book was unwavering; i watched him read a whole page and calmly turn to the next. he was totally quiet, but the whole thing about him was very loud. the facilitator, amidst her explanation of the exercise, broke her train of thought to address it. “are you reading a book right now?” “yes,” he said. she nodded and continued.

we went around observing things and stating that they were ok. “the a/c is very high, & that’s OK.” “i was super late today, & that’s OK.” “i don’t know how to dance, & that’s OK.” Matt didn’t do this; Matt was reading; i watched him calmly turn another page. our observations and affirmations winded around the room, zigzagging through the rows, finally getting to diego the day before he quit.

“Matt is reading,” he said, “& that is OK.”

I.

This is an account of the day I [quit](#).

Thanks to Gio here, I’ve been given a chance to express what happened, rather than a mummified version of the story of what happened. I appreciate that, I really do - I could have easily remained wrapped up in my own melodramatic shell, visible only through the eyes of others, and forever remembered as the dummy who quit his job. Stories, sooner or later, become versions of stories once told...and sooner or later that becomes gossip - - - - - > and gossip internalized becomes _____. My issue was not failing to follow instructions, but rather speaking up and asking to be heard. That didn’t happen. Our working space for some time had not been a welcoming space open to critique. It was a space where suddenly we would have ‘new superiors’ - usually rushing in - last minute, with very different views than us. “Who’s this new father-figure” - “Who’s this new big brother” - “Who’s this new mother-figure that doesn’t have our back” - “Who’s this new big sister who yells at us in front of everyone.”

I remember Matt reading his book - though I could have sworn he had another name... I remember him being engulfed in his handsome way, with very subtle - yet not so subtle - machismo. He didn’t like the speaker or the workshop, and he didn’t care what people thought. It was all somehow too reminiscent of Harry Potter. But who was Harry? At least that’s the way he performed it. His shoes were the giveaway: they were too nice looking.

I remember Matt and me exchanging notes in various workshops we had leading up to this one, each one slightly more ridiculous than the last. We drew up diagrams and pie-charts, arrows revolving around thought bubbles, and statements meant to cause one another to think about what was happening before our eyes, r-e-a-l-l-y. We covered the recession, the differences between private and public universities, the downfall of art schools, the rise of publicly-funded programs in the arts inside public institutions, the Millennial generation, the gap between rich and poor, income inequality, southern California demographics, national US demographics, possible futures of the region in 2055, possible utopias in the North American continent by 2095, possible dystopias happening now, in cinema, in writing, in poetry, in education theory, and [more](#).

Our notes went back and forth and the experience was one of having our views interrupt our own, followed by these 'new superiors' asking us to set our own conversations aside. It became for us about being asked to move our views aside - until ultimately it became about adapting the new views no one had agreed to in the first place, because it was our job to do so - and we were getting paid to do that, not to do what we wanted. Why were we somehow convinced that this was a job we had to work? Was it our context? Our lived experience somehow ran dry next to our own idea of what life should be.

All this to say that I guess the day 'I quit' is really in question for me now. I question how much it was really up to me to stay or quit that day. Somehow it all seemed like I was just a player in a simulation, in some kind of destiny-driven response given by unknown forces. The blocks of time had already served to whittle my way to this destination - now it was up to no one but myself to fall in line, or diverge.

So the day I quit - and this day in particular - makes me question how my simulation was only one scenario of many, [simultaneously occurring](#) all around the world - or maybe, all around the universe...or multiverse? I don't mean that in some kind of fantastical or

superstitious way. I mean that in some kind of scientific and arithmetic way; there were various versions of myself that carried out the 'quitting' that day - and many versions didn't 'quit.' In Southern California...I wonder if how I simulated this 'worker/boss' relationship was symbolic somehow? Did it mean anything more broadly, and socially? Maybe it was just expressive of a numeric condition the region finds itself in, where the gulf between the 'managers' and those 'being managed' reflect the privilege and structural inequities of the space Southern California is - where the gap between the demographics of K-12 students and teachers is [extreme](#) - or maybe it's about how the demographics of faculty and Graduate students so [radically](#) differ, for example. If this rift between students and teachers continues, what kind of a message are we sending young people? Maybe none of this was really important at the time, but it was in the background.

This is, by the way, the setting up and expansion of what 'me quitting' has meant to me. Consciously: like me now really looking at all this in retrospect...unconsciously: like me now linking together skydiving and this 'actor' who led our workshop to the ground...and subconsciously: memories of this all blend with frustration and anger, and of course shame about what I should have done that would have been more appropriate. As I repeatedly reinforce the memory of how I quit my job, I further blur the factors that led me to do so. Learning, schooling, and intellectually exploring the interconnection between all three of these somehow became what this was all about. This writing, and this recursive process - this listening internally to what happened back there, and to then extrapolate that, poeticize it, and lengthen it in time-space.

Now I don't remember all the details, but I remember enough. Enough to have these 2-dimensional writings converge with our 3-dimensional reality, at least through projection. I'll give you words, sentences, and paragraphs so you paint pictures, images, and sounds of what happened to me that day. Although - now that I think about it - I hope that what I say plays in your mind's eye more like a movie, rather than a

photograph. Our *mind's eye*...such an interesting concept...well, we'll get to that later, for now, let's just let that idea sit and sizzle in our collective psyche (and when I say 'our' I do mean that constellation of people found across time and space that are reading this in any particular point in the existence of our universe/multiverse).

Pictures...they frame out so much more of what happens than moving pictures do. In cinema for example, you always have the ability to move the camera back (to back up) and reveal a larger picture (you can even reveal a larger space by also 'ZOOMing out'). Could we do this with this incident? If we were to 'ZOOM out' and see that this not only occurred in Los Angeles and Southern California, but rather that it occurred in the United States of America and the Northern Hemisphere of planet Earth. This is already saying much more, about migration, human development, and history - at least in my psyche. I don't want to include the stars here and get into astrology, but just the astronomy of it is impressive - that this occurred out here in the solar system, on the edges of the Milky Way, in the cluster of galaxies we are in -----very, very, far apart (and relatively close by, when considering the clusters of clusters of galaxies in the known universe since the big bang - and we are barely considering [dark matter](#) here...)

If there was a way to compare dark energy with our subject matter here - so we don't spill into a labyrinthian clouding of factors to keep our story straight, but rather just dip our toes in it...I would add that if dark matter is virtually unrecognizable, and dark energy mostly undetectable, then what transpired that day was a melding of energies and matter that brought opposing viewpoints to a head. The dungeons of space were not on my side, they've only nurtured me in an afterthought, like a ghost in the after life. Is this somehow analogous to how we overlook and forget people as they die? Or as they leave our lives? Somehow for me there is a connection here between labor and death. We forget our laborers, and only death grants them a debtless strategy. This has less to do with the day I quit,

and more to do with the time I find myself writing this.

So said another way, in filmmaking you could always pick up the camera, turn it around, move it closer to the opposing person in the scene, and reveal what the opposing perspective had been seeing all along. We would call that changing the "set up," "turning the camera around"...there are many terms in cinema that express this, and many are so very self-explanatory because it has so much to do with how we actually see, stand, sit, bend down, kneel, turn our heads, our eyes, focus our ears, see others, and move --- all around --- and doing all of those things simultaneously in a choreographed every-day-fashion. So if I were to tell you how I quit, the steps I took that day I quit, I could walk you through a story visually and through movements, and tell it in a way to invoke images, the framing of images, and sounds...and even the world and environment to wrap those all inside of a knest-like hallucination. Maybe this is one way Gio and I can be measured, in a discursive way, the telling of which is a dialogue - or conversation - via *palabras*.

I really love that word in spanish, *palabras*. It sounds like 'parabola', which in mathematics is a u-shaped curve that is symmetrical, and if cut in half, is a mirrored image. It is part of a [family](#) of conic sections, and greek in its word root. The meaning of its roots is 'an application' and 'comparison.' 'Parabola' also sounds like 'parable,' like all those great book titles of Octavia Butler (on a side note, the day I quit I was living not too far from where Octavia lived a good portion of her life. I thought of whether or not I would need to find a job immediately - which I did - to prevent from being unable to pay rent.)

Another way to cover this difference in perspective is by using a 'shot/reverse shot' sequence. Narrativizing starts becoming real here, in the role-reversal and sequential-shooting of contrary perspectives, where dialoguing through setups - where a series of sequences strung together create a mega-sequence versed in cinematic language. You can even have this kind of shot be 'dirty,' by leaving some portion of a

person's shoulder, or hair, or body - overlapping in the frame. Traditionally this is referred to as an 'Over-the-Shoulder' shot (abbreviated as OTS). Imagine if we could do this 'OTS' shot onto cultural matters, like those reading against the grain in social issues like race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class/socio-economic status, and more. How would this look, if we were to really look?

Actually - and I'm just speculating here - the shortcut to do this would be to just hire and nurture filmmakers, artists, educators who have been marginalized, minoritized, and dis-invested in. But again, let me not take my own bait and venture too far into this topic either. This shortcut, however, of hiring a much more diverse workforce, could be more easily done. All it takes is some deliberate editing and directing in society. In cinema people edit films, or videos, into timelines by compiling together bits of footage from various shots. Eventually there is an assembly cut, which is still part of a rough cut, where shots and sequences have been organized in a preliminary way to create some kind of general, and roughly organized, big picture of a complete story. In this assembly cut, many aspects of a story are more visibly seen than the final edit a particular story will eventually have. The assembly cut is interesting to me because it is here after all that the filmmaker and editors must choose which rabbit hole to go into. One, or maybe two versions out of the many, many, versions parallel one another. The assembly cut displays the narrative without having entered a particular chiseled reality, like a universe without the [splitting of timelines](#). Oftentimes, the narratives not taken are as worthwhile as the ones that are chosen. It's like the assembly cut is the multiverse, which is much too ZOOMed out to really grasp visually and with much detail (maybe a storyboard could convey this at least) the in-and-out of plotlines for example.

I don't want to get too much into the narratology and cinematics of this either, but I really question what this *age of information* is doing to our mind's eye -- remember I did say I would come back this -- (I also wonder what this *postmodern condition* is doing to our human condition?) -- are we beyond the postmodern

episteme yet? Maybe we have had pockets of earlier (or later) epistemes all along? During *modernist times*, and really all throughout the 20th century especially, cinema as a techno-biological phenomenon so clearly sculpted into our species-mind's eye. It did this through washing over our eyes with images, and our ears with sounds that composed, heard, showed, and told us about the seeming reality unfolding before our lives...using that language of close-ups, inserts, long-shots, medium-shots, background sounds, voice over speaking, etc. It refined and distorted how we thought about the world, and it filtered us to see in our mind's eye the representation of people via actors and characters.

For me, being represented by characters, visuals, and storylines always sucked. When were Mexican-Americans ever represented in movies? Almost never, and when they were, [god-awful stereotypes](#) often took command. This mechanism of how we all became to be represented (or not) allowed us all to think that much more fully (or naively) - as if 'thinking' in surround sound had been there all along inside our internal clock and cognition. The cinema beckoned us to lift our ear out of our heads and toward the stratosphere, via telecommunications of course, .but it never asked us to question the images and sounds that were along for the ride to 'help' us do this...it never asked us to really look - in that way that we now ask ourselves to do in regard to our consciousness, and in regard to that limit we place on ourselves that distinguished between thoughts and real thinking, the thinking of original thoughts. Nowadays, our cybernetic eyes and ears are far beyond the stratosphere, they have descended far beyond our earth's curve and spiraled out somewhere into the solar system's oceans of dark matter, and so if we were misrepresented, or completely ignored by movies and other forms of media, we'll have a lot of reeducation to do with those non-earthlings once they show up.

Today we have no choice: our mind's eye is clearly tear-jerked by algorithms, [our consciousness is ignored](#) rather than perturbed, and our being is pulled up and down - and all around - like the bodies of animated figures from

Saturday morning cartoons of the late 1980's. This is in addition to seeing ourselves reflected in our mind's eye as distorted representations of ourselves represented as characters, actors, storylines, while living in these performed plotlines to begin with. We still can't see ourselves as humans being human. The world wide web didn't change a thing.

Does our mind's eye even perceive itself as an eye anymore, or is our mind's eye today really more like saying...our mind's *head*?²

² INT. DESK - DAY - JUNE 18th, 2020

GIO, a white man in his early 30's, is picking his NOSE and staring at a COMPUTER. He's wearing a VIOLET HAT, BURNT-ORANGE TORTOISE-SHELL GLASSES, GREEN PANTS, a BLACK SHIRT with the word "SUBLEVEL" in PINK on it, and SOCKS. On the wall above the computer is a framed print of page A6 of a WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th, 2001 NEW YORK TIMES showing two articles: one called "A Tough City Is Swept by Anger, Despair and Helplessness" by Jim Dwyer and Susan Sachs, the other is called "City Turns, Temporarily, [____] a Small Town" by Joyce Purnick. The ____ is due to an opaque BLUE ARCH painted on by DOUG ASHFORD, starting in the BOTTOM MOST MARGIN OF THE PAGE at a RAZOR THIN POINT, creating a CHOICE from the very SIGHT of it to either follow this PALABORA IN RELIEF to the right or up a STRAIGHT LINE to a TRANSPARENT SALMON RECTANGLE smothering FOUR COLUMNS OF WRITING and a PHOTOGRAPH of a PERSON caked in DUST.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - EARLY 2019

WILLIE, a white man in his 60's wearing a LOS LOBOS T-SHIRT, sitting at an ORANGE TABLE, petting a DOG. The NYT print is on the WALL above the orange table.

WILLIE
Is that 9/11?

GIO

Yes.

LINDSEY, a Black woman in her late 20's, wearing JEANS, a BLACK T-SHIRT, and a DARK BLUE BASEBALL HAT with the words "MAKE AMERICA PAY REPARATIONS" embroidered in WHITE, enters the kitchen.

LINDSEY

Hey Dad.

WILLIE

What's it mean? What's it trying to say?

LINDSEY

It was a gift from my boss. She's friends with the artist. Supposedly, it could be worth a lot of money.

Beat.

EXT. SOUTH PASADENA - EVENING - LATE 2018

Gio, Lindsey and her almost-3-year-old niece, NIKKI, meet DIEGO, BERTHA and their daughter, ITZEL, at VIDEOTHEQUE. As soon as they all meet, Nikki wakes up, quiet and overcome with the world. She finds Bertha for the first time in her life. They embrace as if it were one of many times before this moment. The group is still. We are together. The TREES are a DEEP GREEN; a CREPUSCULAR BLANKET is an INCREMENTAL DIVISION OF HEAT; the only thing moving is THE SUN.

The clouds above them glide. Leaves rustle to their left, in a lined corridor of New England shrubbery.

DIEGO

Where am I?

GIO

Also, maybe - just maybe - those moving pictures playing in your mind's eye could be remembered by the ears of your body...I know that sounds odd, and I apologize about that. And I am so sorry if any of this is starting to swirl into a large gulp of gibberish, but please, don't listen to it that way. Just keep staring at your computer screen, it will all make sense toward the end. Keep listening to this all - as if I was already ordained brilliant just by being who I am, and needing nothing to prove it.

I know we may never meet, whoever you are, reading this, but if we did meet...we may automatically speak about this whole bookcase of

What was that?

A couple ants crawl up Bertha's right calf. About a dozen ants follow suit, straggling due to a cluster of grassy knots hindering their ascension.

DIEGO

I was just noticing this place.
It still looks like Teen Wolf.

Gio strikes a conversation with Diego.

Itzel smiles at Nikki, and then at Lindsey. Her socks squeeze the blood too tightly on one of her toes.

The ants are now crawling up Bertha's skirt. Diego notices Bertha's squirt reflecting the rays of the sun.

A drone crashes on the grass behind them all. Itzel jumps up with excitement and runs toward it. Girls playing in a playground, opposite side of us and the drone, dash toward the fence separating them and us.

Girl

Did you see that?

Four of the five young girls begin climbing the fence.

issues more simply (maybe by just speaking directly, or orally, the framing of what we would be saying would frame out even less than what is framed out by moving pictures-----> compared to still photographs). Anyway, sorry again, this all leads me to another story, but let's keep this story and it's telling, one narrative at a time, 'brick by brick' as they say.

So, without more of a delay - let's begin the expedition into that day I was about to be fired for no reasonable reason.

II.

The facilitator says, "just let your vagina have some air." 50 teachers sit in a circle and stare at each other walking in turns. Then we shake the eggs filled with (fake?) sand. Funny music that feels constantly like the chicken dance. It's "fun." Planning for "_____." Theoretically, planning for "_____" is pedagogically responsible. The circle settles into itself, biding time, waiting this out, 'cause of a stipend.

(Writing this means I am and, somehow, am not forgetting this.)

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(Is this workshop the drain of remedial survival?)

(“Irrigation” is so much older than Jesus.)

III.

dear diego,

Is this workshop counter-intuitive for processing “_____”? It could seem that way, and it is not because there is anything counter-intuitive about “_____.” Is “_____” about taking formative events seriously or making lite of them? According to this workshop, “_____” is always stagnation. And here I was [thinking that stagnation](#) was something that happens more in our 40's and 50's (that age that right now symbolizes Generation-X in the United States).

Questions withstanding, I thought it was all a waste of time too.

xo g

III.

Time wasted indeed, but let's open that up a bit - if time is made up layers or strings, and maybe these layers or strings are folded or 'played' in space through the perception of those observing time itself - then that which was wasted was the act of perception unfolding in space. Time was simulated rather than performed. Perhaps I could have explored the constellation of stars that sat looming far above in the sky during those moments, probing creatively beyond the bright lights and mirage of that enchanting black-blueness that swims in our eye sockets as an optical navigator existing even if only by mere *screen projection*...like those parabolas inside cones (our eye cones that is); perhaps I could have delved into my own mind and searched for the ticking of language within my own body sensations, a ticking not of temporality, of course, but of my heart beating. I missed those possibilities, the hearing or sensing of my own ear hearing - the connecting of it with consciousness, and the contemplation or perceptual seeing of the cosmos through carnal dreaming of the beyond and _____ but wait, let me be frank, I was perturbed by the way this individual leading the workshop was treating the issue of *trauma* ---- that issue merits care, understanding, safety, and a sincerity that blasts abrasive superficiality out of the water...reality therapy was not even the issue, the issue was one that is hard to explain...at least that is what a part of me wants to say, that subconscious part, that space between my living and breathing day to day - and that reality deeply planted inside memories and the imagination repressed in that fading phenomenon we call dreams...dreams and *trauma*...it would be interesting if made into a solid...or liquid even...it is just so gaseous...and if turned into a liquid or solid, if it then could be frozen to be observed further under a microscope...or at least heated

thoroughly if it were to be a gas...so it could become steam and therefore then collected into tubes by droplets...and then...frozen...into little, itty bitty, icebergs³...once it's a solid we could give it a name, a timestamp, a label, a date, and place of origin...we could store it and come back to it...and let it sizzle in our psyche...so we can dream on it...

V.

Shaking the eggs

+

breathing in the room moving

³ I've been running into icebergs a lot lately. One I'm still floating beside is in Rebecca Solnit's *A Paradise Built In Hell* where she cites J.K. Gibson-Graham's portrayal of "society as an iceberg, with competitive capitalist practices visible above the waterline and below all kinds of relations of aid and cooperation by families, friends, neighbors, churches, cooperatives, volunteers, and voluntary organizations from softball leagues to labor unions, along with activities outside the market, under the table, bartered labor and goods, and more, a bustling network of uncommercial enterprise." This type of visibility is also always its invisibility, connoting the deeply layered wetness that is reality, that inevitability of melting always testing our superstructures. What is cut & dry, in this way, serves a vision's bare minimum of livability (an IKEA-coming-of-age), so the potential maximalism of our lives—the thick, cold heart of the iceberg collectivizing & circulating us—too easily becomes deeply metaphorical, deeply mythic: meaning, a deep divinity in unescapable terms. I remain thankful for such unforgiveness, and it persists—it does not go away—by melting; our cold hard cash is the shape of tickets for a reason. I traded these tickets for this *Paradise Built In Hell*; so Gibson-Graham's metaphor now floats under this line too; some damage for some life, I guess.

thinking about my dad; memories of his now mine turned to breath; wide berths within the circle veering into inquiry, only because of his gut repudiation of “difficult” or “disturbing”⁴ fictions of dysfunctional families and intimacies.

VI.

But I didn't grow up with that the way he did—maybe my old/young curiosity of his “_____” has made an aesthetic proximity to these experiences my whole wheat bread, that bottom line, that sense of responsible sustenance.

—NOTE: Story about 50 people clustered in a roomlikevoid together; the tension and waiting being the key to the lock; the tension being the lack of keys; the tension being the fluidities (like biles) of narratives; the complaints and acquiescence of the group; the stagnation of the room; the necessity of stagnating to imagine movement & balance.⁵

“Locks lead us to doors.” (Sara Ahmed, “Complaint as Diversity Work.” *YouTube*, uploaded by CRASSH Cambridge. 12 March 2018.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ_1kFwkvE. Accessed this video shortly after Diego asks his questions, offers his complaints, and publicly quits his position. He recommends it to me after I help him put something super heavy in the trunk of his car.)⁶

VII.

**What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* + *Beasts of the Southern Wild* + *Breaking Bad*: to name a few.

⁵ This story is called “The Equation.” The circle is trying to solve a problem together. The problem is (1) the punishment for a crime and (2) the crime of punishment itself. Thanks, Kafka.

⁶ formal complaint as process designed to exhaust the complainer, to make them too tired to address what makes them too tired.

Everyone may be wondering what the blank space is that you've set up to ponder. Well let's just say it's 'trauma.' Let's say this facilitator was leading a workshop on 'trauma.' I don't know if stagnation was what they were pointing at - for me, and this is just a speculative moment here - what the facilitator was pointing at was that 'trauma' could be dealt with through play and fun. I totally would agree, however, there was no foundation in which this very challenging premise was standing on. How could 'trauma' even be played-around-with if there isn't a legitimate treatment for it with the respect it deserves. It's like when my wife tells me to focus on foreplay, kissing, hugging, etc, before opening the waters to sex. The facilitator just went right into playing with 'trauma' anachronistically, without setting up a tempo, beat, or rhythm. To me it was too much, too quick, and not guided with ease.

Maybe this relates to your view of 'trauma' being something the facilitator was hinting at being a whole messy field that stagnizes an individual. Whether it does or doesn't, stagnation can also be seen in many ways, you can do a whole 'Rashomon Effect' on how one personally has related to 'stagnation' in one's own life, for example. But again, I think this is just a bit beyond us generationally - but it is coming...I know I thought it was something to avoid when I was much younger, something to really be oblivious to and keep being oblivious to - I must have had 'ants in my pants'. I now have a daughter that has 'ants in her pants,' ahahahha.

I think when I was a bit older I saw stagnation as something to be careful about. Like something that was intimidating. Something that had to be walked around 'on eggshells' as they say. Why would person X be so stuck in life, etc, but if you have any ounce of decency and humility in you, you quickly let go of that one. You see the eggshells for what they are, 'crackable objects that stick to your feet'. We are a species that has acted in such a similar way for so very long.

A bit after those years, around my mid to late 20's, 'stagnation' started to become

something that was much more defining of everything. Still a bit out of reach to really sink my teeth into, but every year, the scent of it was nearing - like the smell of my grandma's kitchen the few years she had one, between her alluring imagery I still love coming back internally, and the hurricane of a migration-immigration story that is much too involved to enter now. Somehow this all contrasted with how much I was accomplishing in life...and also not accomplishing...somehow it was also about my generation, and how much we were not accomplishing in life (yet also accomplishing nonetheless); and so anyone experiencing 'stagnation' - whether through trauma or something else - became very, very, human. Mars had to wait.

VIII.

You
know,
memory
is
such
a
mysterious
and
adventurous
space.
I don't
remember
putting anything
into my trunk with
Gio that day.

If I were to really look though,
and get lost in the ministry of my
memory, which is like a building with
many rooms and floors...and if I'm in the
elevator of that building - I would wonder
to myself and say:

"what floor is this memory in?"
"I don't know?!" "I don't know!" "I don't
know?"

"Is there a directory in here?!!!"
"There must be a phone or security
camera I can wave at for help?!!"

"What room am I supposed to go
to anyway!!!?"

"Maybe that
super-heavy thing was my body, full of
planets."

A part of
me had retired
that day.

It
had
had enough.

It died. My doppelganger was
finished. When was my life going to start
- right then and there!

When was I going to surrender my fight
to sculpt my surroundings - right then and
there!

It was just
the world out there now.
The world and the cosmos.

And my daughter and wife
of course too - the planets and I moving
about our way around the sun and black
hole.

IX.

Diego,

<3 your missives. I am very interested in the
possibility that I may not have actually helped
you put anything in your trunk. I, indeed, am
again living in the wake of a complete fabrication.

I recently rewatched *Inception*. It occurred to me,
amidst the pandemic, that it is a kind of plague
movie; Cobb (DiCaprio), at the beginning, is like
"ideas are the virus." Except it is not a movie
about saving people from this plague—it is a
movie where the goal is to infect someone. I
suppose if we believe in the cause of this
mostly-white-guy-squad-of-tactical-dreamers, we
decide that infecting someone intentionally can
be, in all of its baroque & bourgeois dream-logic,
honorable. When it comes down to it, we can
really only believe in their cause because the
attempt to infect their target is difficult. The

troubling bandwidth of the concept is ultimately responsible for preserving them as heroes (villains move through the world too easily—this is part of why we despise them, right?).

Anyway, there's a hotel-elevator-of-memories trope in that movie too.

X.

I once thought I had a memory I didn't. Well, maybe I did this more than once. Maybe we do this all the time? I don't know, I'm still getting to know who this 'I' is.

In any case - inside that heavy object we put in my trunk, was a metaphysical 'I'...but what it really was, was a bunch of books. I remember every now and then I would lug an IKEA blue bag filled to the brim - (and more) - with books. Books I checked out with a madness I disguised as research. I mean, it was research - but research into what? I don't know exactly. I research endlessly, sometimes knowing where I am going, sometimes not having a clue, sometimes guided by intuition, but most of the time by names of authors I write down on little stickies, or on my phone, or on 'saved' books I will never buy on my AMAZON account. I never outgrew being a collector of comic cards, baseball cards, and basketball cards. I never had the collection I wanted, but I picked up this classical tick of collecting. All this, to follow a trail of names that lead to concepts, ideas, stories, imagery...infections. More and more infections. More and more imagery and soundscapes. The research led to dead-ends, and yet they led to the bumping up against the wall of comfort, of known knowledge to me...in the age of information, wisdom had a particular kind of bite. It's sexual and ludicrous at the same time.

The search for new knowledge however isn't just any kind of bite nowadays - from the outside the bite to 'look things up obsessively' looks harmless, like it's merely an irritable desire one keeps picking like a scab. Beneath the surface, a world of geographies

present themselves, closing in on one's consciousness like parallel lines that unite from all sides - just kidding. It's more like coffee in the morning after a late night surfing the web and investigating what I'm researching. Wisdom dichotomizes with this in such a sensual way, rubbing itself like a lover you have not seen for some time.

It's just a habit-turned-passion-turned-obsession-turned-annoyance-turned-routine-turned-numb - this research-practice.

XI.

Diego I have some very important questions for you just a couple first I'd like to apologize for indirectly baiting you into filling the blank space with 'trauma' the choice to leave it blank was not one I agreed with though I suppose it was a decision I made that just disagreed with me and that was cool since I feel there are ways I shouldn't be forcing myself to line up with my ability to shed because to shed isn't quite a choice so I don't pretend it is so it is important for me to announce that we are two cis men performing for each other right now and it feels good and it feels fun I'm excited about it and not necessarily because we're cis but also saying that two cis men are playing for each other while cis doesn't strike me by the political situation of announcing such a thing as a typically cis announcement even though facebook and twitter and ig are arguably cis innovations designed to make announcements they weren't designed at the outset to announce with any serious awareness of how cis they all were and look at them look at that type of credit I suspect would seem totally irrelevant to cis CEO billionaires least of all because announcing privilege is too easily out-announced by its god money and its priests advertisements and the mythology that they'll save us from ourselves nope nope nope and since I have no genuine truck with this version of a trinity I am compelled to announce that we found each other initially in our

cis presentations and the limits of our cisness seem less about rejoicing in this fact why would we do that and more about announcing this quality about us that a larger system depends on us to not announce and this defiling is the part that I like to celebrate by virtue of simply announcing and why I need to try to make things that I disagree with because what about my initial certainties are so trustworthy anyway if I've spent more than less of my life accustomed to confidently omitting this cis place of me like some ancient unpronounceable surname on the page because isn't one of the first blank spaces about us our cisness? The _____ providing its own absence? A lot of 'trauma' in the world justified by the years and years and years of cis people omitting this positionality often depending on these large _____

_____ and by the way I've been meaning to say that whatever this is that we're doing here reminds me of the way I've seen you encourage students to address _____ in their creative process when we taught that class together in the hauser & wirth education loft those steps you laid out stuck with me I think it was something like find your earliest memory of being punished and share as much of this memory with someone else in the room as you'd like then find a medium since we had musical instruments sharpies pens paper paint props ipads to make videos and animations and explore that issue by using these tools in a circuit and by the end everyone had aggregated so many fragments of themselves and we all shared them and read them and performed them and played them and was them again for a moment beyond ulterior motives academic obligations and cultural capital just there to express and combine and live and was it like that for you too? I think finding some of these moments together was another way to quit.

XII.

It was kind of like that for me. I know I remember it another way too, but yes it was like that. I don't know how the pedagogy I pursue is working, I - and again, for many in our generation it's the same, and for many marginalized groups in society as well - lack an institute or laboratory or organization to really fund the research we have collectively engaged in now. For me, it has been years of putting together Foucault and Freire, often with little to no one even to share it with - at least not in such an integrated way. And yes, I have that loner streak, but really, sharing about this - like really sharing it...forget having monetary compensation to reinforce and expand it, and forget being able to support others in also being able to serve people, our times, and knowledge in this way...with the exceptions of projects here and there, some jobs here and there...I am honored that you saw in it what you did.. I'd have to run the clock back and see it all again, to say more - and that my friend would...be very fucking cool.