In the Aughts, I began to write an essay, the first line of which was: “The 90s were years of lost things.” As soon as I’d typed the line, I knew it wasn’t true.

So I typed, instead: “The Aughts were years of lost things.” But this line wasn’t true either. It was too early in the decade for anyone to know what the Aughts were about, though I had an inkling: Everything I typed was auto-saved and logged. Nearly every gesture, public and private, was captured on camera.

Despite my draft’s lack of precision, I saved the document in a folder on my desktop. I backed up the file on an external drive and emailed a copy to my Gmail. I saved the email and its attachment in a folder named “Drafts of Things.” In and after the Aughts, I was driven to Save.

* * *

When Google executive Vint Cerf warned that “bit rot” could lead to a “forgotten generation or even a forgotten century,” I became even more determined to publish a paper book.

There is no remembrance of former things,
Nor will there be any remembrance
of things that are to come
By those who will come after
—Ecclesiastes 1:11

I wanted to be the primary source document.

I wanted to be the original material, the alpha arcana, safeguarded, defended, deliv-
ered as a conservative recites the Old Testament, unaltered or distorted in any way
(of course, perfect preservation is impossible, but I speak of the desire to be—not the
archive—but archived.)

I wanted to become a writer, a diarist, a keeper of notebooks, out of a need to re-
member, but I became a poet out of a need to remember precisely. Writing poetry,
I became aware of memory’s imprecision, the obfuscation of self and world that
stems from imprecise language. For example: my early diaries’ vagueness of senti-
ment: frustrated and sad and alone.

Through poetry, I learned I had only my aloe plant in its clay pot to keep me com-
pany.

* * *

A primary source document also embodies a specific kind of preciousness: the pre-
ciousness of little girls. I became a writer out of a desire to be adored, cajoled, at-
tended to, recalled, as a complex, authentic darling.

After all: I am a girl: I am the subject and the object.

And like a girl, before and after and during the Aughts, I suffered a fear of being abducted.

An anecdote: Late night in the early Aughts, before GPS, Google Maps, and Mapquest, an unmarked car would roll to a corner somewhere near the Graham stop on the L and scroll down the window. The driver would ask a young woman for directions. The woman, most likely new to Brooklyn, most likely an artist (they had a type), was on her way home. If she paused to respond, three doors would unlatch and the men—they each took a limb—can you see her struggle?— Her body most frequently surfaced in Queens.

An anecdote: One night, walking a friend’s terrier, I hinged a corner and faced a Russian. I knew he was Russian: wide-boned, cropped hair, gold chain, black teeth. In the streetlight’s tangerine glaze, two more Russians looked exactly like him. One wore a burgundy pleather jacket. A sedan idle at the curb, windows sealed, the driv-
er’s cigarette a red pinprick beneath the sunshade. Rust acne inflamed a skin of blue paint (did someone detail the hood’s corrosion with cornflower acrylic?) No license plates.

I apprehended all of this in the time it took for the lucky screw I carried in my palm
to ping on the sidewalk and bounce out of sight.

“My friends, we need a light,” the man said.

The two men cut in front of the car and the terrier shrieked like a homeless man
who’d fallen into a manhole. They recoiled and the man with the cigarette spit and
said, “it’s a fucking dog, you pussies!”

I sprinted past him—all the way home—ten blocks, dog at my ankle, leash seared
into the flesh of my right hand. The welt curved like a lifeline.
Some Haircuts by Jamie Stewart

Blackened hummingbird charcoaled from the forest fire bill as a pencil

What God wants, He does eaten by insects and bugs a jangle of home

Whitest cowboy hat red cowboy shirt with diamonds bluest cowboy jeans

In giving up life Pluto falls out of orbit No one notices

You look down and smile with teeth like hummingbird eggs and after they hatch?

When the Band Started

John Thill

The set began with a rupture of sound, a shriek, broken glass and the sound of bodies hitting each other. It started when the fat man pushed the button. Then he was rolling through the piles of broken glass wearing a school girl's uniform while the woman beat him with a folding chair.

But you couldn't call that the beginning.

The set began with the woman screaming, pulling a man's hair from above. She perched on the mezzanine and spit vodka in his face.

But it would be somewhat inaccurate to say that.

The set began in the middle of our band's set when they began to scream and heckle us while I chanted into the microphone. She pulled the cord around my neck and I had my nose smashed against the warehouse floor.

But that's not quite putting it right.

The set began while we were all listening to scrambled free jazz by the water tank. The band sat on the couch across the room smoking drugs silently like dragons waiting provocation.

But when you consider what happened earlier that's probably not quite right.

The set began when the the woman took off her clothes on the mezzanine for everyone to see while the fat man stared shamelessly. She changed into a silver jumpsuit without unbuttoning her underwear.

But now that I think about it, I remembered something else.

The set began when they set up the giant banner that read “WE'RE SORRY,” which they literally hammered into the warehouse's naked drywall while gypsum sprang from the holes and into the air.

But then it's hard to say. By the time we drove into town off the highway they were already staggering around the floor of the building, throwing themselves across couches. Maybe they were already playing. The woman had a gash running down her leg and when I asked her what had happened, she seemed surprised I'd even noticed.

Maybe we were asking the wrong question.

Maybe we should have asked if the set had ever ended. While we were driving on an interstate to another city they were pulling a mattress out of a dumpster and fucking so loud they woke the whole building up.

The Fan

The first time I can recall experiencing sleep paralysis was when I was 26. My alarm went off on a particularly warm summer morning. I felt hot and tired and moody. I hit the snooze button. In my in-between dreaming state, I saw an extra large stainless steel fan, the kind that you'd see on the set of a studio instead of in your sardine can-sized apartment.

The fan blew warm, stagnant air onto my face. There was relief from the heat, but the force of the fan kept increasing. Nearly choking on air, I tried to lift my arms up to turn the fan away from me. But I couldn't. I tried to lift my body upright. But I couldn't.

I began to panic. The fan got louder. I couldn't breathe, I couldn't move. I gasped for air, I tried to yell with all my might, but I was mute. No sound could break through, as though an invisible man put his weight on top of me, pinning me down to my bed, halting my screams, and depriving me of air. A feeling of desperation washed over me.

And then the alarm went off again. I opened my eyes to the bright stillness of morning and scanned the room. As a bead of sweat crept down my forehead, I noticed the fan across the room. It sat there taunting me. It knew what it did.

The Shadow

I can't tell you what my dream about last night was, but it was a bad one. I want to articulate it to you. I want you to understand. But my memory has gone into defense mode, trying to protect me from visions that I don't want to see. Was it violent? Maybe. Was it about dying? No.

What I do know, is that it lingered. It's there when it's quiet and I feel alone. It's there, like a shadow, following my every step. It overwhelms me. It consumes me. It sticks to the back of my every thought. It makes me feel paranoid. It makes me feel self-conscious. Can you tell that I am uneasy? Does it show on my face that I am terrified?

I power through. I tell it to fuck off. But it stays and only gets stronger as the sun comes down and I am vulnerable to seeing it again. In my sleep. In a place where I feel defenseless.
Ron Regé, Jr. has been actively involved in the DIY community since he started self-publishing his comics in the early 1990s. He has since had his works published by Fantagraphics, McSweeney’s, Highwater Books, Buenaventura Press, and others, as well as having his work featured in publications such as The New York Times and Vice Magazine. His work tends to lack the traditional storytelling archetype and lives in a surreal world all it’s own. In addition to making art, Ron is also a musician. Pieces of some of his early home recordings can be found on releases by the Swirlies, and he currently plays drums in the LA-based band Lavender Diamond. He has given us the center spread for this issue of Fine Print and spoke with us a little about his work.

What artists did you admire when you were younger and did any of them influence your decision to make art yourself?

Richard Scarry is the first artist I remember being really interested in, and it certainly shows in the way I draw.

Your earliest work, as well as some of your current work, was self-published, what inspired you to release your work yourself? Did you try to get your work published before doing it yourself or was the idea of being published by someplace like Fantagraphics or McSweeney’s not something that occurred to you as a possibility at the time?

Yes, I’ve been self-publishing my comics since the early 1990s, when I was in my early 20s. It did seem impossible at the time that my comics might be published by a real comic company, but that wasn’t exactly what I was going for. Even independent comics tended to have regular plots and characters at that time, and that wasn’t really what my work was about. I was making little comic books as art and as experimentation. My work was for and part of the DIY scene. The zine underground was pretty small and easy to join. You just mailed your stuff to people, and they would mail stuff back to you. Strangers from all over the globe started ordering my comics pretty early on. It was pretty wild.

As someone who has been involved in the DIY scene for such a long time, how have you seen change throughout the years and do you feel there is a difference to how relevant it is now versus when you first started putting out your own work?

The idea of DIY might seem irrelevant when everyone has the ability to create and broadcast to the entire world in their pocket, but the true spirit behind the independent media culture of the 80s and 90s is more important now than ever. The things that we were creating back then were completely invisible to mainstream culture. We were free to create whatever we wanted without the need or desire for approval from anyone. The idea of competition didn’t make any sense. It wasn’t a popularity contest. No one was better than anyone else. I couldn’t imagine getting jealous of someone for making a zine or cassette. Not only were we free, but the things we were making were also real and valid. Your zine wasn’t a real book waiting to be published, and your band wasn’t waiting for anyone to notice them. It was a wonderful way to come of age as an artist, and I fear that a lot of that spirit has been lost. In many of my conversations with younger artists, I sense an anxiety around them that stems from popularity on the Internet. It seems sad that artists notice them. It was a wonderful way to come of age as an artist, and I fear that a lot of that spirit has been lost. In many of my conversations with younger artists, I sense an anxiety around them that stems from popularity on the Internet. It seems sad that artists notice them.

If someone were to take something away from your work, what would you like that to be?

Yes, in certain instances from time to time. It’s not a big part of what I do, and I almost never create comics that are directly inspired by another work. If someone were to take something away from your work, what would you like that to be?

In addition to making art, you also play music. Do you feel like those two things influence each other in any way?

They satisfy different sides of my creative and social life, and create a healthy cycle. Creating comics is completely private and insular, while making music and performing is outgoing and social. I’m a casual musician. I save most of my ambition for my visual work.

Do you ever collaborate with other artists?

Yes, I’ve done a bit of that as well. Collaborating with people is a great way to learn from each other and to push yourself outside of your comfort zone.

If someone were to take something away from your work, what would you like that to be?

That’s a mystery to me, I suppose: knowing what others might see and experience from my work. The ways in which art affects people are subtle. The longer I make things, the more it seems people understand what I am doing. What I do isn’t for everyone, it was never meant to be.

Why do you feel that the comic format is the best way to get your message across?

Comics are one of the most direct and intimate forms of communication. When you get lost in a book, you become absorbed in the language of the author, which is abstract. When someone reads my comics, they are looking directly at the marks that I made with my own hand. The idea comes straight from my arrangement of lines to create a world inside the person’s head. It’s pretty magical, and no other medium seems to come close.

You have published several comics that re-create work by others, such as Diana, your recreation of the Wonder Woman origin story, and Cosmogenesis, which contains selections from the secret doctrine of Madame Blavatsky, what inspires you to do this? Do you feel there is a benefit to releasing this material into the world in a new light?

I’m pretty deep into this phase of adaptation—it’s true. My big book from 2012, The Cartoon Utopia is almost all illustrations of esoteric texts and lectures by Maja D’Aoust. Besides the things you mentioned, I’m working on a more graphic novel that interpret the work of others, which should take the next 3-5 years. I’ve been reading and discovering a lot of new things in my life recently, so it makes sense that my work might reflect that. I tend to just be reading something and am struck by a desire to illustrate it. I’m also feeling a bit conflicted about creating fiction. I feel that the structure and forms of fiction have too many constraints and expectations. It seems like a lot of these expectations come from the medium of film affecting everything else in culture. Real life doesn’t have any of these things, I don’t want to put them in my work. I want to help people up from the hypnotic effect of the motion picture. I want to give them something that is a bit of a challenge to understand.

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See more work by Ron Regé, Jr. online at: http://ronregejr.tumblr.com/
I believed my tongue purred like spiked hair muscle-shirt cunnilingus. On the phone, in the daytime, I asked, “Will you be my lady friend?”

I thought my double L (side-by-side stony penises) double penetrated Morgans’ spread-eagle ears when I purchased her a cabinet and antique comb set for our second anniversary.

Even when I thought I was nailing it, I was dull.

Somehow, we dated through 3 years, when I fully pulled back the foreskin of my brain, revealing my pink yellow belly—my soul’s smegma.

When I sat at the computer I said to her, “I hate my computer.”

When I brushed my teeth I said to her, “I hate my teeth.”

When I shuffled on the bed I said to her, “I hate my bed.”

No exciting demons bursted from my chest like confetti. Dad’s shaken can didn’t spray beer at my wet and remembering eyes. I had no beer, no party, no excitement (dramatic or otherwise.)

I had the stillness of the self in love: sitting at the computer.

Twisting my back to hear it pop.

Brushing my teeth for her, not hygiene.

Cumming into an old sweatshirt.

Kissing her hello, but rarely goodnight.

Smiling to the ordering customers.

Bringing them a box to take their steak home.

Filling their water.

Looking into their eyes.

Hoping a spontaneous connection would provide me a scrap of paper with their sexy phone number scribbled on it.

Showing the penned numbers to Morgan.

Proving to her that I was still vital, and a man.

I learned to fear boredom more than loneliness—a simple trick for evading sex.

To cum quick when you masturbate, so as to get back to business.

To be selfish, excited, and alone.

Shuffling on the bed.

Reaching for her beneath the covers.

My grope shivering when brushed away by her tired hand.

My dick shrinking, embarrassed and horny, like a beaten puppy’s tail.

Trotting buckless toward a boringly infinite horizon, eyes closed until she would turn the TV back on.

She taught me to leave the TV on while I slept, as to beat the quiet—a simple trick for not being lonely.

To let someone pet your loneliness and call it love.

To pet them back, sometimes, when they let you.

I learned to fear boredom more than loneliness—a simple trick for evading sex.

To cum quick when you masturbate, so as to get back to business.

To be selfish, excited, and alone.
Things had become clear. My eyes adjusted as the early afternoon sun spilled into the room, causing everything to glow a diluted orange color. Lying among a heap of disheveled sheets, I turned my head to watch a small black ant making its way up my arm, pushing onward through a maze of hair. I could picture you, coercing it onto your finger with that light sense of gentleness you always wore, and placing it safely onto the wall. But in the bitterness of your absence, I let the palm of my hand fall swiftly down onto the ant. I watched its stunned body twitch, several of its small legs flailing, holding on to hope. Again, I let my hand fall upon it, the sting of skin hitting skin ringing out into the room. And then, stillness, silence.

**The Sound of Furniture**

Fredy Ruppert

Dad explains he is mostly uninterested in the sound of furniture dragging. His daughter takes a chance at not saying anything. Gummy blue spots of toothpaste have no future living out a crisis on sink edges.

However, I find the couch has been forced east to west! The chairs are vested in the wrong room! The coffee table is angled!

A filthy eye him from the floor.

The daughter doesn’t have enough fresh air for this. She has her own morning worries such as lowering herself at a desk on time. Didn’t dad always exaggerate how one must turn on and off the light switch before leaving a room?

He fails to drink a whole pot of coffee at six in the evening and nothing happens.

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**My Wife wants me to Quit Smoking Herb**

Himal Omar Al Jamal

I smoke like a fucking chimney. Like it was in style, went out of style, and came back for blood. Like breathing.

—Gasp—

And I inhale like a motherfucker, like a motherfucker gasping, because I smoke like I don’t want to die but like I live like I do.

—Gasp—

And if you were to ask me why I smoke, I wouldn’t know what to tell you. This is me not knowing what to tell you —Gasp—

about so many things: about so many promises that I’m breaking always, about so many intrusive thoughts about how I desire to tell you so many awful things and abuse you.

—Gasp—

That’s why I’m clearing my throat and gasping as I’m gasping: like I’m spilling my guts into myself for you, like I’m stoning you or drowning myself in the tar pits, pulled under a little more —Gasp—

with each drag.
VEGAN CARROT PESTO
PATRICK BUTTERWORTH

1 bunch yellow carrots (reserve 1/4 carrot top herbs)
half red onion (large)
3-5 cloves garlic (medium)
walnut oil
v butter
salt/pepper
bay leaves

pulse garlic and onions til mush
saute in olive oil, season and add bay leaves
cook moisture out til just pasty and dry
add julienne carrots with v butter, toss til gloss
add 1/2 cup water and reduce (do this twice)
once fragrance is apparent, take off heat
puree carrots with carrot top herbs (chopped) add 1/4 cup water
add walnut oil til desired texture is reached
season to taste, eat with roasted walnut pieces