

MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI'S

"Clip 4"

by

Realic S. Tarnen[†]

with notes by Caroline Weld^{††}

*Walk away now and you're
gonna start a war.*

— *The National*

*Before you get back:
quick, dashed off and
messy. In reel time.
haha Don't hold it
against me baby. xoxo*

???? ??????????: Links are broken.

?????? ?????: Links?

???? ??????????: All the links. Beyond repair. And forget relinking them. We tried. They go nowhere. They just left us the clips.

?????? ?????: Kid, are you okay?

???? ??????????: The clips, man. The clips. Source material without source. Do you have any idea what that means?

?????? ?????: Kid, what do you mean by links?

*Accurate # of ?s?
Links = web, right?
What am I missing?
Isn't this obvious?*

As is also true of the topic, this peculiar conversation — reproduced in its entirety here and known as either “Clip 4” or “C4” or for reasons presently untraceable, “6 Lynx” — arrives without explanation, without origin, the clip seemingly unlinked to the rest of Darc’s larger and more notorious project *The Zoo: Costruire Paradisi Di Buio*. And certainly the question in “Clip 4,” if contextualized by current times, merely suggests an ignorance on the part of the interlocutor about web interconnectivity. Unfortunately, he appears neither so old to have never navigated various URLs himself nor so naive to have not absorbed some of today’s online parlance.

*More history needed on
Darc? More on [Zoo](#)?*

*I know baby, it's that
old question: who's
your audience?*

*Not everyone's as
smart as me.*

: -)

That is, unless the time frame for this simply framed kitchen table, with four plates hanging on a back wall papered with pastoral designs, one darkly-lacquered timepiece fixed in the upper left corner, two evening-dim windows revealing scant about the neighborhood, has little bearing on our present day but on another era altogether. Though, if we are observing something shot decades ago, what can be made of the “links” ostinato? Or for that matter The Man, frame left, demanding definition? Mid-thirties. At most. The creases of his blue-jean collared shirt “white-visible” to the point of “a fetishistic compulsion to joint cotton” as Gottfried Balibar wrote in “Borderline Bombing: The Illegal Siege for Order” or “military routine” as Cassandra Hogsmill responded in “Duds.” Nor are

either alone in detecting a hint of the Marine in him. Jarhead cut. Something about that silver Timex with worn bevelled edges revealing no silver at all. Hand gestures minimal but sure, as if practiced in the handling of power. And always on display some great effort at control — to quell, as we will see later, a terrible mood . . . — only visible, if unjoined, in a churning knot of jaw muscle. No more explicable than his name, which like his moods also remains unknown, further effaced for purposes of analysis by monikers like Frame Left Questioner, Reporter, The Man and even Intense Dude.

Sitting opposite him, frame right, is The Kid who, despite such an appellation, is at most only a few years younger than The Man. He is neither intense nor contained, and despite the absence of other honorifics, really the only dude here. Long hair, blond handlebar moustache, faded apricot T-shirt, hemp friendship bracelets on both wrists. Nor — as is certainly true in the case of The Kid — do numerous facial tics provide our only access to the register of his feelings. The Kid is eminently readable: distraught, distracted, “appalled” as Melissa Alk suggests in “What Gives?: ‘Clip 4’ and the Absence of Context” not to mention, as pretty much everyone else has concluded, including this writer, “terrified.”

Not me! :-P

Mention Malabou's What Should We Do With Our Brain? Discuss analog records? Modalities of contact? Haraway?

Makes me think of your shortwave radio days. Talk about old fashioned. teehee

However, Cobin Caokrai from Claremont Graduate University in his “Time-Stamped *Plastique*: Conditional Ambiguities in C4” dwells on neither The Man nor The Kid, focusing instead on the “*enplastiqued* diaphragm and magnetic coil” repeatedly pushed forward into the frame as if some mechanical proximity to the subject could either clarify the meaning of “link” so voided by the dialogue or at least manifest said “coupling so desperately absent” and “thereby relink to the meaning of the word itself, the work, not to mention interrogator and subject, subjects even, to each other.” Few will dispute that the recorder is the greatest point of distress, and not due to any manner of handling by The Man, but rather the history of its manufacturing. This is neither a smartphone nor some dedicated digital recorder but a miniature 1965 Phono-Trix 88 reel-to-reel tethered by a grey coil of wire to a dynamic microphone, boxed in grey casing with gold mesh, one red stamp and a remote-activation switch.

Vintage Startle in a monogram entitled “Mechanized Historicity” rejects to the point of resentment Caokrai’s strategy of permanently positioning “Clip 4” at the start of U.S.

involvement in Vietnam. S/he (we are never clear about Startle's gender) calls the "film grain," "unevenly saturated colors," "cinch marks," and "frame flutter" not a sign of any Kodak stock from the mid-70s or even early 70s, but rather "obvious intentionality" to stage a 21st century interaction backgrounded by a 20th century cultural revolution, where war and paranoias once propagated off the heave of nuclear detonations and bad drugs. They/Us rhetoric resounds in the fourth line. Implications of a bad trip in the fifth. Vintage Startle argues that the Phono-Trix 88 does not time stamp the scene at all, as Cobin Caokrai so adamantly wants it to, but quite the contrary suggests merely "a bad prop." The same is said of the Bolex 18-5 Super projector, fuzzy and foregrounded frame right. Both rejections in the name of staging and theatricality are cruel stabs at Caokrai's labors to authenticate brief seconds and safely resituate them as merely a strange historical artifact of Youth's consternation over Vietnam, government oversight, and an emerging new syntax for human and civil rights. And the stabs prove seemingly fatal when Startle further reveals — and here is the apparent *coup de grâce* — that celluloid aberrations and inconsistencies are not indicative of celluloid imperfections — let alone another era — but instead are algorithmically and contemporaneously derived:

To the inexperienced eye it might appear a genuine snippet of 16-mm from over forty years ago. To the more experience [sic] eye, however, the patternings don't even measure up to the cheapest *Antique It* app available for your Droid Razr.

Did Startle really write that? heehee

Does this app exist?

I adore you.

Startle goes on to catalog the repetitions and list the patterned incursions on the film layers, symmetrical light leaks, symmetrical noise scatter, symmetrical scratch lines, methodical fps reduction, even the predictability of color smears from moment to moment, leaving no doubt that someone, perhaps the assembler of "Clip 4" (*one* of the assemblers), whether using Trapcode Particular, Magic Bullet or one of a dozen alternate software packages, digitally altered the source material to give the *appearance* of something worn, unique and aged. Similar to Steampunk or Junkyard Rock, where copper piping, hubcaps and helical gears frame stochastic clangery, data compression, and bit error ratios, Startle contends that "Clip 4" represents a new movement reframing present-day concerns by visually repositioning them in preceding states of time. Regrettably, Vintage Startle names her/his movement "Hippie Historicism."

Startle is soooooo the ass!!!

Should you mention that this is NOT the origin of "6 Lynx" referenced in paragraph one? Clarify?

Even your smarty-pants girlfriend needs help here: future? zoorobotics? cylon kitties?

Baby, why exclude your own papers? They're so good!!!

Fix this link?

I got 404.

Then 403 Forbidden:

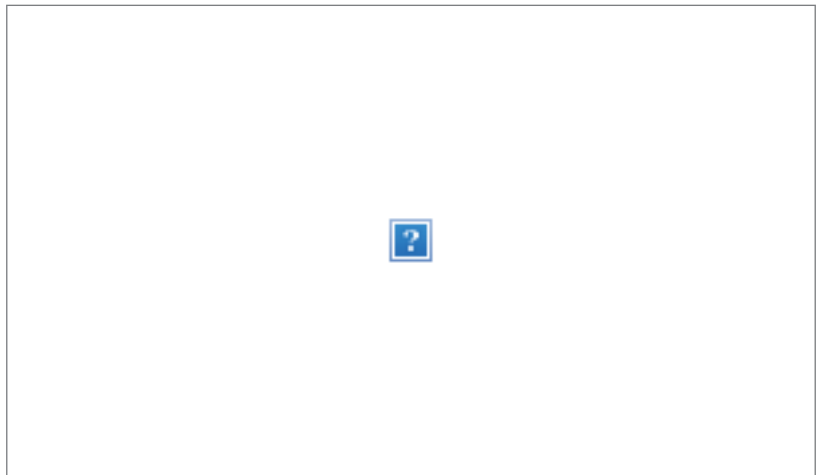
*THE SERVER
UNDERSTOOD
THE REQUEST
BUT IS REFUSING
TO FULFILL IT.*

oooh spooky!

Link material without a link!

hahaha

Let me quickly state that I do not wish to legitimize "Hippie Historicism" let alone suggest that "Clip 4" has in any way yielded an academic industry. For the record, less than a few dozen papers have emerged on the subject, most unpublished with easily a third of those deriving from Mia Millais' class taught one recent semester at CalArts in the Critical Studies program. And while it is true minds of flexuous imagination have teased out curious themes, consider how Jordan Emshwiller posits that "links" is in fact "lynx," which even if such feline implications reorient The Man/Kid exchange into one impossibly placed, not in the past or present but in the *future* where concerns for zoorobotics dominate, and disregarding how this at once occludes any relevance or meaning for "clips" (unless one is willing to accept Emshwiller's explanation of "battery clips") for all its amusements such reckless speculation still amounts to little more than an exegetical diversion in paronomasia (Emshwiller received a failing grade for her paper). Brandi Poll, on the other hand, works hard to move from the implication of URL pathways by claiming the exchange is about golf. Quan Ji's "Thinking Unthinking Thoughts: 'Clip 4' and the Implausibility of Motive" demonstrates more persuasively how "synaptic links" might very well be at the root of "that larger question of neural stability" while Juraj Kadisk in "'C4' or 'CX2X2'?" sidesteps the whole issue by documenting the recent surge of counterfeit "C4"s which have nearly succeeded in calling into question the veracity of the original "Clip 4" shown here:



There is no question Darc's *Zoo* first began this wave of counterfeiting and false-tagging/false-commenting/false-appropriation, circa 2012. More elaborate treatises have brought to light how a movement of intra-web claim-jumping, whether by viral intention or some collective contextualized impulse — what Sloane Xi labels as GIF or “Group Identity Formation” — initiated, by way of comments or tags or even hacking, the marking of clips with Z00, Z00, Z000, etc., etc., up through 27 zeros, or DarcsZ00, DarcsZ000, etc., etc., again up through 27 zeros, or other variants, hence searchable, on anything from fragments filmed at the turn of the 20th century to present-day Hello Kitty snippets as part and parcel of *Zoo*. There is little doubt the majority of these YouTube fragments derive mostly from the 20s, 30s and 40s, waning in the 50s, before experiencing a resurgence in the 60s, up through the early 90s. However, the hegemony of *Zoo*-claims has also expanded to other sites, message boards, amateur porn, archived forums, Tumblr and Flickr included, as well as off-site territories — recent graffiti in Singapore's Fort Canning Park, as one example.

While subject to the vast and still ongoing seizure of *Zoo*, “Clip 4” nonetheless manages to separate itself from such blunt-prospecting-*cum*-digital-*placas* by also inspiring a myriad of reenactments of that ridiculously inconsequential spate of moments between two men of like age and vastly different dispositions. Just recently, I overheard several students claiming that both Michael Shannon and James Franco had produced versions of the segment. As we have seen, the original still flickers across the webs, but with more and more remade copies appearing, the more that originality is doubted and, except for its textual content, finally replaced.

Only because it is true, and implausibly true at that, and as a last note concerning any academic interest in “Clip 4,” do I now mention the fact that Cobin Caokrai took Vintage Startle's critical stabbing seriously enough to drive his car through his/her carport into her/his living room, which Caokrai mistakenly assumed was his/her bedroom. The crime bears mention because it illustrates how any meaning behind some odd moments spent around a kitchen table disappeared into an even odder battle of razing. Despite substantial structural damage and the totalling of two vehicles, Vintage Startle informed police it was an accident carried out by “an emotional farm animal” and pressed no charges nor sought any remunerations. The reason became plain three weeks later when s/he veered a D4H Cat

Might want to have a looksie at Yi-Fu Tuan's [Topophilia](#), Randy Malamud's [Reading Zoos](#) and Cary Wolfe's [Animal Rites](#). Matthew Calarco's [Zoographies](#) too. Top of my head. We can revisit.

Incredible picture. Why not include it? BTW: is that cat on the wall related to [Zoo](#)?

Is this really true?

I've heard those stories! No one believes them but everyone repeats them. :-D

Everyone believes CowCry and Startle were hooking up but no one repeats that.

Except me. FYI.

*Would Tom Lutz give
you a quote?*

*FLASH! RST not down
with the blogs!!! x*

Baby, we met on FB!

*You're way ahead of
me, aren't you?*

Good job!

That's my Relic!

;-)

*Super Navidson Recordy.
Don't you think?*

Dozer over the sidewalk and sheared off the porch of Caokrai's craftsman cottage. Likewise, Cobin Caokrai informed police it was an accident and refused to press charges or seek damages. Both are writing longer defenses for academic journals, including *The Los Angeles* and *New York Review of Books*, all of whom have sworn not to publish their efforts should they fall below expected scholarly standards. One blog reports that each still lives in the wreckage. Another blog states that they see one another regularly across the aisles of a local grocery market. That being said, with the blogosphere dead, it remains unclear whether anyone other than historians and the undead read such cemetery ramblings. Maybe detectives. One Twitter devotee claims that both flew down on separate occasions to Mexico City to hire an assassin. Perhaps a joke. Perhaps not. Facebook lurkers state that each of their profiles lists the other as a friend, giving further proof to Void's famous quip to Justin Veach during a Library Foundation of Los Angeles gala at the Annenberg Community Beach House: "Facebook — where friendships go to die."

N.B.: my purpose here is not to promote or validate any of these ludicrous anecdotes but to illustrate, as is all too common on university campuses here and abroad, how a troubling cinematic instance of near-indefensible logic, but perhaps of great importance to the phenomenon known as Darc's Zoo, whether validly a part or not, has nearly been lost in the carrying out of ideological campaigns and a feudal defense of abstruse theories.

Curiously, even after looking beyond the bizarre stakes and counterclaims within such academic squabbling — and in the Caokrai/Startle case *extreme* squabbling — neither a clear victor nor a resolving perspective emerges, let alone a dominant constellation of positions which achieves anything other than to further destabilize an increasingly disturbing encounter between a young man frustrated by the unattainable qualities of his strange resources, not to mention vocabulary, situated opposite a slightly older man persistent in his desire for definition, authentication and — as we will see . . . — origin.

For one thing, careful examination of "Clip 4" ratifies Startle's position and makes any claim against post-digital effects unlikely. For another, the scene itself speaks by cadence, costume and performance of something just a little too beyond performance, which Caokrai suspects but cannot prove, which if Startle suspects, s/he too must also know goes beyond Caokrai's abilities to prove.

Of course, an easier insight if not resolution might have been achieved if either Caokrai or Startle, or both of them together, instead of trying to tear down their respective domiciles had instead set out to locate even one of the participants in “Clip 4,” which everyone thus far has deemed an impossible task.

Which it was until it wasn't: I found them. Both of them. The Man and The Kid. And not through research or a P.I. but by blind luck. You might say. Or someone already did say. Though regardless of what's already said, an answer did come my way. Out of the violet. You might also say. I sure did. I was tipped off, though not by anyone I knew. I assume. In the same way Evelyn Mulwray randomly enters the office of Jake Gittes, an unsolicited message breached my ISP and randomly framed me as the P.I., though in my case, except for the signature “Violet Blind Luck,” there is no brooding beauty nor blade-wielding cameo intoning: “You're a very nosy fellow, kitty cat.”

Eventually I confirmed the e-mail had sprung out of Iceland, though further investigation revealed it had passed through an anonymizer, maybe several anonymizers, stripping it of all traces of origin. The message came late one night without attachment. A single link led to something called parcelthoughts, a directNIC This-Domain-Is-Under-Construction page. There were no introductions or explanations. Aside from the signature, just two names. And two addresses.

6000 Santa Monica Boulevard is the address for Hollywood Forever Cemetery where I located the headstone for Zeke Rilvergaile (name changed at the request of his family). Thanks to the Central Library downtown and an afternoon with a sheaf of microfilms not yet digitized, I eventually discovered a snapshot of Zeke taken during a Malibu surf contest circa 1964. The face is the same: roguish blond hair, handlebar mustache, teeth as fat as Chiclets, with a front one significantly chipped. The image is in black and white and while further compromised by the exaggerated if expected halftone pattern of newsprint, The Kid is still easily identifiable. Sadly, this microfilmed expression of elation, on borders of salt and sand, flattened by a high afternoon sun, further mellowed by girls in bikinis beside waxed Dewey Webers, only serves to make more somber the cramped quarters of the kitchen area defining “Clip 4,” with those black windows in the background, which only deepen the space, making the absence of any smile more

If I didn't know better I'd say you're allegorizing a (hearsay) feud to politically dislocate and position globally your (hearsay) subject on national rupture or schism. Talking heads beware! Esp. echo chambers! (Extremists of course.)

Big tonal change here. Is that what you want?

Maybe this is why you kept warning me OVER AND OVER that this is only a draft. I love you.

Do you mean Ida Sessions?

So here's your big secret!

Must discuss this more. Kinda scares me.

Yes, I know I just left you a message saying the same thing.

Yes, I know this is an academic paper. Sorry.

You said you'd be back by now.

Like I said: real time, quick and messy.

We saw Chinatown there. Third date, fourth date? Remember?

Is that why you included this reference? And the ones above? If it is: Awwwww!

Or maybe I'm just a narcissist.

Bite your tongue.

Such the gumshoe.

unsettling in light of the subsequent and plentiful Polaroids his parents eventually thrust my way when I finally knocked on their door in the Palisades.

Call me!!!

*I just left you the
same message.
Another message.*

Seriously crept out.

Apparently Zeke was always smiling. He loved to surf. He loved adventure and even looked at Vietnam as the next great adventure. Not that he ever got to go let alone make it to basic training. “He got mixed up in something,” his father admitted to me. “We thought it was drugs at first,” his mother added. “At first. But it wasn’t. We never did get to the bottom of it.” “Worse than drugs.” “Worse than any peacenik movement.” The remains of Zeke’s body were found shortly after he enlisted. Initial reports suggested that he had doused himself with gasoline and — like Buddhist monks in Saigon — had uttered a plea to end national and ideological aggression before lighting the match. However, the subsequent discovery by police and coroners that barbed wire had bound his wrists and ankles as well as his throat and nearly cut off his tongue, not to mention his nose, with more yards still of the rusting metal found weaving through the latticeworks of his rib cage turned this death into a homicide which even today remains unsolved.

Don’t make fun of me.

The remains of Zeke Rilvergaile were laid to rest on January 12, 1966. A date that vindicates Caokrai’s claims of historicity and lays to waste Startle’s notion that “Clip 4” was a theatrical setpiece shot with actors in the present day. Nonetheless — and here counter to expectations — such evidence only further disrupts the nature of “Clip 4” because there is still no contesting Startle’s discovery that saturation infelicities and image noise owe their particular rhythms to computational design carried out in post production (underlined for emphasis). Leaving us then with this question: what could have possibly necessitated such an action if to begin with the scene was shot no later than the night the charred remains of Zeke Rilvergaile were found in downtown Los Angeles not far from College and Yale? Why distort what would have come distorted to begin with? Or as Saya Weaäve (below) wrote: “Why muddy the mud?”

Saya Weaäve, an undergraduate at UC Santa Barbara, and only a sophomore too, points out something even stranger: the filming of “Clip 4” seems remarkably close to the Bob Dylan *Time* magazine interview in D.A. Pennebaker’s *Don’t Look Back*. Not that the similarities are obvious. Zeke Rilvergaile a.k.a. The Kid is not backgrounded by the brunette smoking

a cigarette. ?????? a.k.a. The Man is neither foregrounding nor occluding others as had been the case for Horace Freeland Judson. However, starting from around the moment when Dylan declares “They just got too much to lose by printing the truth. You know that.” an eerie resemblance to “Clip 4” begins to install itself within the segment. Words let alone tempo and intonation are nowhere close to the same. There are long fumbling pauses in “Clip 4” where there are few between Dylan and Judson. Zeke repeatedly frets with his hemp friendship bands, his profile sometimes merging with or emerging from behind the Bolex 18-5 Super. The Man does not seem nearly as chastened as the reporter from *Time*. And yet the camera zooms in and out in the exact same manner as *Don’t Look Back*, pans left at the exact same speed, lingers on Zeke’s inquisitor for the exact same duration as Pennebaker’s film lingers on Hudson’s blinking and furrowed visage [“Kid, are you okay?” matching “What is really the truth?”] before sliding right again. The portrait is not merely intimate but duplicate. An exact duplicate in fact. Which introduces another destabilizing question: how could something filmed in 1966 be modeled on a scene which while shot in 1965 wasn’t released until 1967?

Weaäve asserts, and I think correctly, that even if the scene had somehow been viewed and the respective scenes purposefully matched, there is no way technology could have provided the veridicality present in both. It would have required a technology unavailable that decade. Unavailable, in fact, for decades.

Like the use of post-production vintage effects, replicating the Pennebaker camera movements further perverts any meaningful logic of chronology. Time is not merely “out of joint,” it is incoherent. Not an idle reference to the old Bard either, as Zeke’s auditor a.k.a. The Man declares himself: “Something sure is rotten in the state of . . . of things.”

At least finally meeting The Man a.k.a. Toland Ouse — the second name and address in that e-mail without origin; thanks to Violet Blind Luck — renders obsolete once and for all any doubt about the date of the encounter between The Man and The Kid, circa the fall of 1965, by virtue of the testimony I approach now.

[N.B.-This-Note-to-Self-re-This-Particular-Draft: I have yet to provide any examination of what fallows. TK.]

*Add comma, lose period?
Though I like the way
your quote keeps RAZ’s
comment intact.*

!!!!!!

This is incredible.

*(Couldn’t care less about
any tonal shifts now.)*

How is this even possible?

I’M REALLY CONFUSED.

*And upset. You should have at
least called me back by now.*

Maybe I should stop reading?

*I’m so impressed
you found out all
this stuff!*

This is real research.

*And here I was expecting just
analysis and the repetitive
use of words like “situate”,
“authenticate” and “resuscitate.”*

Fallows — cute.

*You've started using
contractions: he's,
it's, wasn't, etc.
Appropriate?*

Not that I care baby.

*Just that age-old
(audience) question—*

:-/

"I have a very good memory" were the first words Toland said to me one early evening in October when we sat down together at his kitchen table. There was no doubt he was same man though older, a lot older. Nor did it escape me that this was the same table in the same confines as those revealed, or rather shadowed, in "Clip 4." The same wallpaper too, the same windows, even the same four dishes along with that darkly-lacquered timepiece. Only the light was different. Toland Ouse lives in Huntington Beach near Fairview Park. He's lived there for over fifty years and in the same apartment. His gestures haven't changed much nor has the fastidiousness of his dress, but despite appearances and much conjecture, it turns out he was never a Marine nor did he ever serve in the armed forces. He sold drugs to pay bills and he threw parties to make friends. A lot of parties.

"Now I just have a nurse who brings me drugs and sometimes makes me breakfast."

By his recollection, more than a few people have sat at (t)his nonagon table. The names rattled easily off his lips. From professional surfers and photographers, bikers and hot rod painters to "grass dealers, glass junkies and assholes." "I never forget no face. Yours, a gardener, delivery schlub. Infamous or famous." Joan Didion supposedly dropped by once. Erica Jong too. One evening Gloria Steinem and Allen Ginsberg said hello over "this exact table." "I had a lot of shindigs back then. Ever heard of Pynchon? He sat here with Greg Benford and some guy I remember calling Kindred. They drank my beer, smoked my weed. Told me stories to make me feel better. Stories can do that when you've suffered a loss too awful to see."

Pynchon?

*Did he really say all
this?*

What a night you had!

I'm jealous. ;-)

And when I showed him "Clip 4" on my laptop, there was no question Toland remembered Zeke Rilvergaile, though his mood darkened considerably. Even that semi-famous (or at least much commented upon) churn of jaw muscle came into view.

"Same place. As you can see for yourself. Only the projector is missing. The kid took that with him. Where's he at now?"

News of his death provoked no surprise nor did its violent nature.

"Kid was into something mean."

"Did you know him well?"

“Only time I met him.”

“Just once?”

“Once was enough. He came here like you came here: unannounced. Both of you with something to show me. You came with your computer, your *clip*. He came with his film, his *clip*. And then I never saw him again. Didn’t take no savant to see he was, what?, some imperilled?, messenger as appalled by what he had to show me as I was to see it. ‘I gotta confirm it,’ he kept mumbling. And sweating. Sweating a lot. Like he was high. Really high. But he wasn’t high. Just scared. *Terrified*. ‘Tell me if it’s true,’ he kept wanting to know like he was saying sorry. But I didn’t know if it was true, only that it was her.”

“Her?”

“Audra. My daughter. My little Willow Rue.”

:-(

Toland excused himself then.

“You look like someone who drinks but this here isn’t about drinking,” he said when he returned with two waters and a shoebox. “I learned that the bad way too many years ago.”

The water was warm and the photos aged. Kodachrome and Polaroids nearly matched the saturation levels of “Clip 4” except instead of two men these edges framed a young girl with hair the color of SoCal sand and eyes as variant as the Pacific. Here she was a newborn. There as a nine year old. The one Toland kept his eyes fixed on while he told me the story of the rest of her life was Audra at sixteen emerging from the foam of Manhattan Beach.

“Music. She loved music. Enough to dedicate her life to it. Danced to it, sang to it, cried to it. Did everything to it. When she left home, I thought she joined up with some hippie drug, I mean drum, circle. And maybe she did. But only for a while. Eventually she got into writing. Journalist stuff. Though hard to follow, because she only published in these one-offs, zines, later on webpages, sure, and blogs, and even more confusing never stopped changing her name. Pacifica was one. Layer was another. Also Norma Desmond. Anne Carson. Norman Mailer. Gertrude Stein. Selina Kyle — she called herself that

!!! ???

too. And Tao Lin. James Kirkwood. Junot Díaz. Diane Ladd. Marcus, Mitchell and Murakami. Morrison. On Twitter once as Salman Rushdie. Twice as Bret Easton Ellis. Kim Kardashian even. Kanye West. Fury. Then Furry. Laurie Anderson. dream hampton. Patti Smith. Even Emily Dickinson for a bit. I kept lists. Here's one."

But he showed me a few:

Okay, I see, he's nuts.

Did you remember all this or did you take pictures?

Can I see them?

Include if possible.

I want to see his handwriting. I bet it's WHACK-EEEE!

M. Ventura	L. Tillman	D. Adams	S. Hartter	A. Bender
M. Angelou	S. Bynum	G. Saunders	M. July	U. Le Guin
M. Atwood	E. Hardy	H. Andersen	E. Adnan	D. Wallace
J. Cortázar	D. Alighieri	T. Carson	M. Proust	R. Bolaño
R. Akutagawa	A. Dumas	R. Anaya	S. Jackson	A. Miller
C. Roberts	L. McCaffery	J. Ellroy	A. Frank	R. Raley
K. Dunn	R. Moody	G. Deledda	C. Odets	D. DeLillo
J. Updike	R. Ludlum	A. Proulx	R. Kurzweil	U. Eco
J. Austen	A. Monaghan	U. Sinclair	H. Hampton	A. Berger

"Always like she was outrunning the name her mom in the end would never let her outrun. I always tried to detect the girl beyond the words, heart behind the hand, storm before the eye. Maybe you read some of her pieces? The Sinatra/Beefheart sessions? Or on 'Bang Bang, Shoot Shoot'? What she did with 'Damballah Rising' and 'This Wheel's on Fire' still helps me get to sleep. Not a lot of words, but the girl, she got Miles and Hendrix, she knew Dylan backwards and forwards, and so young too.

"At only twenty-seven or twenty-eight she got this syndicated thing going on Zappa's 'Fear of God.' I wasn't much for Zappa but she made me turn the corner with that one. Same too with Bowie's 'Cheap Funk Ocean.' Any man who at any time dresses like some goddamn woman isn't a man at all. Not to me. I thought. Maybe I still think that." Toland Ouse had finished his water. "Difference is I don't care anymore. Did you like 'O, My Little Droogies'? How about 'Green Grace of Home'? Al Green and Grace Jones? She got me to care about that. Recorded in 1981. Released in 2004. Audra, around fifty-four then and still going strong. Made quite a name for herself. Even if Audra wasn't exactly her name. Not always. Actually not never. Made these worn bones of mine settle fine though. I bet I'm not the first old guy you've heard nursing an absence with pictures. I suppose when you pass eighty nursing is what you do. Pictures or not."

But Toland had stopped studying the photograph by then. He was studying me. I was double-checking the digital recorder. With an admittedly shallow knowledge of music, I wanted to make sure I had a clear file to double-check his references later.

“Nirvana’s ‘I Can’t Live,’ she wrote about that.” That distracted me from my fussing. I know Nirvana pretty well but the title rang no familiar bells. He had started to smile a little. It was a little smile, and while mocking wouldn’t be an unfair description, I considered it tender and weary. “Tender and weary” he had already told me in a different context were two things you need when the world becomes something “too awful to see.”

“See, music has always been my thing too. Never stopped listening, never stopped thinking about it. Folk to [House](#). Bebop to Dubstep. Love it all. Because of her. Forgive me for thinking Audra would have been the same. After she disappeared. You have kids?”

“Just a brother.”

“Loss like that, it does things to you. Strange things. Changing things. Until things are no longer things. And grace is only what grief taught to lie still.”

“You never heard from her?”

He shook his head.

“Phone call? Postcard?”

Again he shook his head. “This Polaroid is the last of her that I have and that clip of yours is the last I remember of her. Of seeing her. Me, after seeing her. Or seeing one version of her. One projection. If it was even true.”

“You mean the Super 8 projector?”

He nodded.

Except for brief mentions, neither Caokrai nor Startle address the Bolex 18-5 Super set in the foreground of “Clip 4,” lens following Zeke Rilvergaile’s worried gaze, front spool empty, rear spool out of view, just beyond the right edge of the frame.

Okay, I see he has a reason to be nuts.

And all of it sitting in an inert haze of soft focus. Either unused or spent.

“Spent,” Toland Ouse confirmed. And then went on to inform me that Audra not only wrote about music under different pen names but also about movies. I asked if he had ever heard of Darc’s *The Zoo: Costruire Paradisi Di Buio*. He had not.

“I’m sure she would have though. Loved going into all the crazy, and I mean *crazy*, details. Like ‘Les Chats de Maldoror.’ Einstein’s ‘Unterwelt.’ Stroheim’s ‘Queen Kelly.’ Or von Göll’s ‘Alpdrücken.’ Bewildering Brooks in ‘Public Enemy.’ Who can forget ‘Giraffes on Horseback Salad’? Or Warren Beatty’s ‘Harry Five’? I liked her thing on Buster Keaton’s ‘Read.’ Or was it Warhol? I can’t remember. Didn’t Warhol produce something that Solanas wrote? Something like ‘Invisible Woman’? Audra would have had something to say about that. I’m pretty sure. Under the name Susan Richards. I think. I remember a little batch of paragraphs on Robert Redford’s ‘Maximum Dogbreath.’ Also on Hopper’s ‘The Last Movie.’ And mustn’t forget ‘Who Killed Bambi?’ Rivette’s ‘Life: A User’s Manual’? that was Audra at her happiest. ‘The Life of the Party’? that was Audra at her severest. She didn’t forget composers either: Ryder Fremont, Harry Partch, the score for ‘Pee-wee’s Big Adventure’ by John Williams. She wrote plenty on foreign too: Suzuki directing a biopic on the life of a seagull, Kurosawa directing an epic on old marathoners. What about her piece on Richard Kelly’s ‘Southland Tales’? I bet you read that. Everyone read that.”

Not italicizing?
Because he’s
speaking?

??????????????

!!!!!!!

But I hadn’t. I hadn’t even seen the film, though the title seemed vaguely familiar. I could tell Toland liked to take refuge in his rambling filmography: Wilder’s *A Day at the U.N.*, Shrager’s *The Dance of Life*, *The Day the Clown Cried*, *N*I*L*E*, *Ubik*, Gilliam’s *Watchmen*. So many titles I couldn’t keep up with. But the more Toland avoided the film he had seen projected on his own wall, the more delight gave way to something thicker and tireless and even relentless, until eventually it resumed its place again in the cup of his vowels and the click of his velar consonants.

This is all so sad.
A saddest history of
all we will never see.
Or hear.
Or believe.

“He called it ‘Clip 4’ too. Kid put it right there.” And I realized, however unintentionally, I had positioned myself exactly where Zeke Rilvergaile would have sat, my laptop occupying the same position as the Bolex, my laptop screen at the same angle as

the SOM Berthiot 17-28mm f/1.3 zoom lens, pointing at the wall to Toland's right, to my left. I grew uneasy then, thinking of all that Zeke Rilvergaile's headstone did not say, still does not say, thinking of all that had befallen him, the awful things that had befallen him not long after a similar encounter. And with Toland Ouse no less. Not that this old man was someone to fear. Nothing in his gestures suggested any kind of malice. Yet I still could not succeed in staunching a sensation of intensifying dread. Toland, however, never acknowledged, in any manner, how recreating the bygone geometries of this room, of that scene, that night fifty years ago, might hold any special significance.

"Splashed his black and white up on that wall. I keep it blank, to this day, as you can see." He pointed to where the Bolex would have projected its frames, to where the 16-mm camera that shot "Clip 4" must have also loomed, facing back. Lens on lens. It dawned on me then that the sequence Toland was about to describe was projected on the very same spot where the camera must have stood to record the subsequent conversation between The Man a.k.a. Toland Ouse and The Kid a.k.a. Zeke Rilvergaile, together known as "Clip 4."

Was it also a Bolex? I wondered. Hand crank? Who then was winding that crank? Handling the focus? The tripod? The light meter?

Of course the wall didn't answer. How could it? There was nothing there.

"You probably just see egg-shelling paint. I don't. I see her. I see Audra."

And the way Toland looked at nothing, I believed him.

"I don't think the kid believed it either. He just said he'd been sent by them. 'Who them?' I kept asking. 'Not *them*,' he kept answering. 'Vem.' That meant about as little to me as it apparently did to him as it probably does to you. His clip though was something else."

Toland Ouse paused then. He meant to get up but he appeared too tired to even move.

"How did you find me?" he sighed suddenly. It was an exasperated sound.

*I have to keep
reminding myself
that you already
interviewed this guy.*

*You're not there now.
You went out for ice
cream. You're fine.*

*See how your paper is
getting to me?*

*That should make you
smile.*

Need a phone call baby.

At least a text.

Yes it's troubling me now.

A LOT!!!

:-O

Horrible!!!

I can't believe you've kept all this to yourself. For months now.

I told him the truth. I told him about the e-mail, about Violet Blind Luck, and then about his name and address and Zeke Rilvergaile's name and address. Or rather the address of the cemetery. Being someone who had spoken and written extensively about "Clip 4" it didn't strike me as so unusual to receive such a note. The sender's anonymity only troubled me up until I had confirmed the validity of the lead. Perhaps it should have troubled me more.

"Do you want a refill?" Toland's glass was empty. I had barely touched mine. He accepted my offer and finished my water in four long gulps.

"I never told no one this." And then he wiped his mouth and heaved loose a big breath and told me everything. It was a creepy thing to watch. As if he were narrating an event replaying right then in real time. He kept his eyes fixed on the wall which was indeed yellowing or "egg-shelling" as he kept on describing it, relating something I couldn't see but seem to see now. At the expense of blankness. Maybe even at the expense of thought.

Water like squid ink. A polka dot of light, probably the moon shattering and reshattering on the rolling surface. Audra swims in the middle of it. She is sixteen. No more. According to Toland this is 1965. Has to be. She is in trouble. She keeps gasping for something. For someone. For anyone except for whomever is filming her. Even when she looks where the camera is she can't see it. In her eyes she is alone. And she is failing. Her limbs tire. Cramp. Under the water her fingers are spread wide and clawing. Her feet kick erratically. Her head keeps dipping beneath the surface. She digs her way up for another gulp. Her expression accuses something of dragging her below. But various angles reveal nothing tangles her calves or waist. Her back is unencumbered. She wears a simple one piece. It is impossible to divine the color. The next time her head goes down it looks like she will vanish. But she reappears one more time, splashing the water, beating at it. "Daddy" she cries, only once, and then slips below.

"Daddy. Can you imagine that? Seeing that? Hearing that? Though I didn't hear that. There was no sound. Just saw what she had mouthed. Too awful to see. My little girl. Drowning in the sea. This sea right out there, I guess. At night. And those waters can get downright dark at night. Though the film's black

and white made it worse I'm sure. Audra was a good swimmer. Bodysurfing, all that. I wouldn't put it past her to go out there on some crazy impulse. For kicks. Her mother was like that too. Crazy impulsive all over the place. But what got me and what I know will get you is the crew. That wasn't one shot. There were shots of her all over. From above. Close up. Underneath. And they followed her down too. I don't know that stuff so well, but I can take a good guess it isn't easy to shoot underwater at night and light it. But that's what I saw."

Why DID you keep this all to yourself?

What could have possessed you?

Did you even tell Griff?

Audra descends and keeps descending. Twitching at first, then quieting before two final kicks deliver her to a falling stillness, eyes still wide, colorless eyes, bubbles like silver insects crawling out of her lips. She gently bounces off the bottom and hovers above, inches above, like a fallen angel too uncertain to walk, toes lazily dragging up sand rippled by waves somewhere far above. There are no new angles or additional cuts, just one uninterrupted shot of Audra dangling in the depths of the Pacific. Over twenty minutes long. Bathed in a light Toland still can't understand let alone describe let alone deny.

!!!!!!!

"Now how do you fake that? My daughter died. Right there before my eyes. But it didn't upset me as much as you'd think, as much as the long years of missing her would upset me, when I got to them, or they came to get me, because I was convinced it had to be a fake. There had to be other people there. There just had to be a crew. It was too elaborate to be anything but my daughter's entry into the film world. Or maybe it was some sick snuff shit. Maybe some psychos filmed her drowning. Except she would have reached out to them. As a last resort? Hell yes, she would. She sure would have seen them. But she didn't. I don't know what I didn't see either. That was some dark light that entered my home that night. Kid knew it too."

Toland put away the Polaroid of Audra but he wasn't done with the shoebox.

"I haven't played this for a long time." He held between his fingers a small reel of magnetic tape. He still had the same machine: 1965 Phono-Trix 88 with that dynamic microphone, encased in grey plastic, gold mesh on the face with one red stamp, plus a remote-activation switch on top. I had to help Toland manage the maze of rods and tape heads, but when he punched the blue play button the voices were unmistakable. More than unmistakable: they were identical.

WOW!

*Guess the ?s are accurate.
What difference a name
makes.*

*Names to people I kinda
get now. Kinda.*

*Though now the web/
link connection isn't so
obvious.*

*Especially since this is
in 1965?*

Huh.

Zeke Rilvergaile: *Links are broken.*

Toland Ouse: *Links?*

Zeke Rilvergaile: *All the links. Beyond repair. And forget relinking them. We tried. They go nowhere. They just left us the clips.*

Toland Ouse: *Kid, are you okay?*

Zeke Rilvergaile: *The clips, man. The clips. Source material without source. Do you have any idea what that means?*

Toland Ouse: *Kid, what do you mean by links?*

Toland had started to cry by then.

“I always thought it was some damned movie. Something sure is rotten in the state of . . . of things. Sure is. The kid was going to go to the police then. I was going to meet him at the station. Help identify her. I guess. But you can already guess he never showed up at no police station. Any of the stations. And I checked too. Checked them all. Called them all too.”

He closed his eyes.

“As I know you already know I know kid, this place we live in, L.A., our sweet-home sweet-Cali, has more unseen movies than dreams. And now you bring me your clip number four. You bring me more dark light. I can see you don't know what's going on. I don't know what's going on either. Except that Audra's gone. Still gone. I know she didn't go on to write nothing. She didn't go on to hear lots of music or write about lots of movies. Everything I believed she might have done, she didn't do. She drowned that night. Alone. Calling out for me. Her lost— last call. Unheard. And yet somehow still witnessed.”

Toland sobbed for a long time. I sat with him. I found him a dishrag. I brought him more water but I didn't touch him. What struck me most then was that the aggression and terrible mood we had read into him all these years, for all those pages, we had

all misread. Whatever power we thought The Man had grown accustomed to handling was only the power we each will have to handle when inevitably the world shows us what little it takes to take it all away.

“You see kid,” Toland Ouse finally sputtered, “like you’ve seen already, here’s the same table, same wallpaper, same plates. And right where your computer sits now sat his projector. Right where this recorder sits now sat the same damned recorder. I can vouch for all of it. You can too. Hell, you can see it in your clip. Pretty much match it all up, right? You can see me. Where me was, am, now. Where he was, you are, now. You can even see the wall where he lit up her final cry. Right there. But let me tell you what you can’t see. Let me tell you what I didn’t see either. Him neither. Because it was never there.”

The look of my own confusion must have got to him.

“Don’t you think I would have noticed?” Toland Ouse asked, shaking his head then, and pretty violently too, and even though that little smile eventually struggled back into view, this time it hid nothing tender or weary. “Kid, no one else joined us that night. We were alone. Like you and I are alone now. Dammit, you tell me where this clip of yours comes from!” he suddenly exploded. “You tell me this instant! Because there—” and he pointed an accusatory finger at his blank if egg-shelling wall, as if he were pointing from the page you now read this on, as if he were pointing at *you*. “There, where it should have stood, had to have stood, to record your ‘Clip 4,’ to do all that panning and zooming, close-upping and such, there, right there, there never stood no one, and there sure never was no camera.”

— March 2014
Draft #4

[Caroline Weld admits to overreacting when moments after finishing “Clip 4” Realic S. Tarnen returned home.

[Handwritten notes by Caroline Weld.
—B.C.]

*Call me!!!!
Call me!!!!*

Don’t you see what’s going on?

Please!!!!

In early April, however, a hit-and-run accident near the corner of New High and Ord left Realic S. Tarnen severed in four distinct pieces.

Since then a number of versions recreating the dialogue between Realic S. Tarnen and Toland Ouse have appeared on the web. Some clips claim they are the original. All are called “Clip 5.”

The whereabouts of Toland Ouse remain unknown.

— B.C.]

[†]Font Notes: Dante, Carré Noir,
Humanist & Requiem.

^{††}Pantone Notes: 185 U, 3268 U,
146 U, 356 U, 2602 U
& 287 U.