Embracing the Wound of Contingency: Transcribing Reality in Supernatural Horror and Found Footage

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Embracing the Wound of Contingency:

Transcribing Reality in Supernatural Horror and Found Footage

A Thesis by

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ABSTRACT

Embracing the Wound of Contingency: Transcribing Reality in Supernatural Horror and Found Footage.

by Mason Dax Dickerson

To counter both the form of critical thought first outlined by Kant that dispels absolute knowledge, as well as the dogmatic necessitarianism that asserts the universe must be one way for an absolute originary reason, Quentin Meillassoux argues for the “non-facticity of facticity” to implicate an absolute contingency or unreason structuring reality: in effect, anything could happen for no reason at all. Meillassoux suggests the trauma of the contingent event and the sudden impossibility of inductive science in its wake may be explored in an “Extro-Science Fiction” text (XSF) – but limits his examples to science fiction literature. Framing the contingent rupture along Alain Badiou’s theory of the event, this paper argues Supernatural Horror media presents the possibility of an inhuman ethical attitude in the face of the contingent – an embrace of the insatiable wound of inductive skepticism (as outlined by David Hume) and the ulterior shock of the contingent event (as outlined by Meillassoux). These films generate a lucrative terrain to explore the contingent event and the ethical demands wrought therein, asking us – what does it mean to be in a world where positive (meta-)physical knowledge and inductive science become gratuitously and horrifically impossible? This embrace involves a decision between despair and quietism, or fidelity and scientific pursual.

Found Footage Horror will be analyzed as an urgent form of engagement with contingency through its continual re-inscription of the distance between image and unthought noumenal world, provoking an interest in contingency as a potentially cognizable real event.
Subsequently, three Found Footage Horror texts will be analyzed as they outline three respective ethical attitudes facing the contingent: primal despair/avoidance in *Grave Encounters* (dir. Colin Minihan and Stuart Ortiz, 2011), mystic quietism/ineffability in *Lake Mungo* (dir. Joel Anderson, 2008), and finally a scientific ethics of fidelity, knowledge, and courage as outlined by Alain Badiou, apparent in Koji Shiraishi’s *Senritsu Kaiki File Kowasugi* (2012-2023) franchise.
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“Verily, it is a blessing and not a blasphemy when I teach: ‘Over all things stand the heaven Accident, the heaven Innocence, the heaven Chance, the heaven Prankishness.’”

– Friedrich Nietzsche

Introduction

On March 11th, 2021, the YouTube channel Outdoor Xiaolong uploaded footage from one of his many livestreams exploring supposedly haunted abandoned urban spaces in China. The footage is shaky, dim, and miraged by digital artifacting, further obscured by interpolations of hardcoded Chinese/English subtitles, red circles, and instant replays. Xiaolong and his companion bicker with one another as they search for an entry point into an abandoned movie theater. Once inside, they discover a massive screening auditorium across the hall and dozens of rows of decrepit seats, illuminated by their flashlight beams. Nearby is a projection room, and the duo toy with the decaying equipment. By all visible accounts, the building has no electricity, and Xiaolong and his friend are alone. They wander around the theater stage aimlessly until Xiaolong points his flashlight at the screen to discover a silhouette directly where his flashlight beam points. The figure fades, then two silhouettes re-emerge. Xiaolong and his friend sprint toward the screen screaming, only to discover no one behind the thin veil; panicked, they realize there is no way their own bodies could have produced these shadows. Moments later, the entire front row of seats flaps down violently. They sprint toward what they believe to be a person around the corner fooling them, only to discover no one is there. Hallway doors slam on their own. A pale face peers from an upper-floor window and vanishes. A bucket rolls on its own across the floor; the two kick it violently in retaliation. Both flashlights die. Suddenly, the floodlights of the theater flick on. Xiaolong pans his phone down to reveal five shadowy figures
sitting just outside the reach of the light. The floodlights cut out. The two scramble out of the building in complete terror.

Xiaolong’s is but one of perhaps millions of videos, livestreams, and photographs that have been uploaded to the internet documenting supposedly paranormal events. Each video makes a direct claim toward having proved the reality of a paranormal event. At face value, they beg the recognition of the world behaving entirely ulterior to the way science proposes the world must behave. Can every instance, in this overwhelming set of visual information, be confidently and categorically dismissed as fake? To be rejected as fake, one would either have to assert the videos were staged, or that their indexed events are real but ultimately describable by science and physicalism. We may be justifiably inclined to dismiss images like Xiaolong’s as staged or faked because of this challenge to all dominant forms of empiric secular knowledge. Why is it, then, that we can even entertain the ambiguity of their position, the stinging what-if wound of their mere possibility? Before entering the general paradox of imaging, representation, and reality, the primary problem of the paranormal image can be reframed more specifically – what are the conditions of knowledge that render us seemingly incapable of proving or disproving the paranormal event as a real occurrence *a priori*?

One must first return, here, to David Hume and what is now formulated as the problem of induction. Hume, cutting against the dogmatic rationalism of his time, sought to turn the focus back to the faculties of human understanding which even allowed reason. One of his principal observations concerns the nature of causation – “The scenes of the universe are constantly shifting, and one object follows another in an uninterrupted succession; but the power or force, which actuates the whole machine, is entirely concealed from us, and never discovers itself in any of the sensible qualities of body.”  

Though we may naturally believe we know the inner-
workings of a substance which necessitate its causal movements (for example, if I were to drop a ball, it will bounce on the floor), knowledge of cause and effect is not founded on any *a priori* reasoning, “but arises entirely from experience, when we find, that any particular objects are constantly conjoined with each other.” Hume thus points out that our knowledge of cause and effect is based entirely on inferences of what has happened before with any given object: “In a word, then, every effect is a distinct event from its cause … In vain, therefore, should we pretend to determine any single event, or infer any cause or effect, without the assistance of observation and experience.” This observation uncovers a rather troubling skeptical premise. We now know that “From causes, which appear similar, we expect similar events,” and this is how we know how the world will behave. But how do we know this expectation is justified in the first place? I will quote Hume here at length:

> all inferences from experience suppose, as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past, and that similar powers will be conjoined with similar sensible qualities. If there be any suspicion, that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion. It is impossible, therefore, that any arguments from experience can prove this resemblance of the past to the future; since all these arguments are founded on the supposition of that resemblance.

No matter how many times an event has occurred prior under the same conditions, no sort of reasoning can possibly secure the inference that the same event will happen again. We know nothing of the supposed forces that animate nature, we know only what has already happened thus far: “While we cannot give a satisfactory reason, why we believe, after a thousand experiments, that a stone will fall, or fire burn; can we ever satisfy ourselves concerning any determination, which we may form, with regard to the origin of worlds, and the situation of nature, from, and to eternity?” For Hume, knowledge discovers itself detrimentally humbled and logically unjustifiable without recourse *ad infinitum.*
Our knowledge of the world and its laws, then, as Hume would frame it, are based not so much on reason but on “custom” or “habit” – that is, our inclination to assume something which has happened before will happen again.⁹ “Our idea, therefore, of necessity and causation arises entirely from the uniformity, observable in the operations of nature; where similar objects are constantly conjoined together, and the mind is determined by custom to infer the one from the appearance of the other.”¹⁰ Though this criticism is obviously aimed at the dogmatic metaphysics of his day, science, then, discovers itself in an unstable position, and the privilege of sapient reason collapses into “habit.” If empirical science is based entirely on the assumption that the same event will occur again in precisely the same conditions, the problem of induction renders the possibility of scientific¹¹ knowledge and the laws of the world problematized; we find ourselves rather akin in our induction to the habit a goat may make in assuming an electric fence will shock her again after it has shocked her once (Hume makes clear an inductive habit is visible across nature and has nothing to do with strictly hominoid reasoning).¹² The goat cannot know with certainty that the fence will cause it to be shocked, and neither can we.

Following the observation of Bertrand Russell, if Hume’s problem proves indissoluble within empiric knowledge, in effect “there is no intellectual difference between sanity and insanity.”¹³ Hume’s problem suggests causation or necessity is an impossible metaphysical category to justify with reason, veering toward the highly phenomenal.¹⁴ More disturbingly, as implied by Russell, Hume’s problem suggests reason is absolutely justified in assuming any event, no matter how absurd, could possibly take place, precisely because reason can never say why such an event could definitively not take place. The purpose of this thesis’s project is not to challenge natural science as a valid epistemic tool – quite the opposite. Quentin Meillassoux, in his unusual quest for a Continental re-investment in scientific realism, offers perhaps the most
radical and unusual re-appraisal of Hume’s problem. Rather than attempting to absolve or rationalize the traumatic gap between deduction and induction through a system of causation, Meillassoux pushes the problem to its final horizon: the only absolute from which all other thought and knowledge must be built is contingency itself. In effect, everything and anything can happen and could happen for absolutely no reason at all. Where Kant believes conditions of thought are immutable and transcendent, Meillassoux steps back and demonstrates the impossibility of asserting necessity into any category, taking this as the absolute principle of matter and being. In brief, Meillassoux could be thought to ontologize Hume’s problem. When we think a contingent event as the decimation of all systems of empiric or inductive science, we are thinking the absolute contingent event proposed by Meillassoux.

In an immediate and pressing way, the paranormal video uncovers the reality of Hume’s problem, and further the conceivability of a contingent event as outlined by Meillassoux. Xiaolong’s footage is troubling to us because we have no real reason to deny the contingent event’s mere possibility – the possibility of something happening for no available reason at all, entirely separated from our habit of inferring how the world and its objects have behaved prior. If Xiaolong’s footage were to be taken as authentic in this way, science and indeed all empiric knowledge is potentially decimated at a new ground zero, where we have no certain knowledge about how the world in-itself works.

The contingent event proposed by Xiaolong’s video presents us not only with a metaphysical and epistemic challenge but more importantly an ethical challenge. This textual challenge applies not just to literal ghost-sighting videos, but to any media that suggests the world could (or does) rupture into the ulterior for no reason at all. If an event renders science and empiric knowledge fruitless, what is left to do? To think the ethical import of an event,
contingent or otherwise, real or in media, demands a philosophical framework. Our ally on this front is Meillassoux’s own mentor and influence, Alain Badiou. Badiou theorizes events as “irreducible singularities, the ‘beyond the law’ of situations.”\(^{15}\) It is “something that cannot be reduced to its ordinary inscription in ‘what there is.’”\(^{16}\) A situation, for Badiou, is the unified presentation of inconsistent multiplicity – anything from “Eastern Europe, several platypus, a political demonstration, an atom.”\(^{17}\) We can think the event as a rupture with a given situation – something happening which no level of discourse or opinion could have accounted for prior. The supernatural event obviously fits this qualification, especially if we think the term supernatural on its literal terms – something exceeding or ulterior to what can be natural or expected. What are humans to do facing the event? Badiou disguises a radical program for facing the contingent within the language of what may appear to be antiquated humanism. In his brief polemic *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, considering the question of the human, Badiou may appear rather romantic and anthropocentric:

> To be sure, humanity is an animal species. It is mortal and predatory. But neither of these attributes can distinguish humanity within the world of the living … we are dealing with an animal whose resistance, unlike that of a horse, lies not in his fragile body but in his stubborn determination to remain what he is – that is to say, precisely something other than a victim, other than a being-for-death, and thus: something other than a mortal being.\(^{18}\)

What could Badiou mean in claiming humans have “the rights of the Immortal, affirmed in their own right, or the rights of the Infinite, exercised over the contingency of suffering and death”?\(^{19}\)

Badiou is seeking to reject an ethics predicated on rights and otherness, which he believes ultimately reduce humankind to mere victims of destruction. Rather than satiating the blow, Badiou actually embraces the animal reality of humans and believes no level of pragmatic, suffering-avoidant ethics can be anything but an extension of a total naturalist, necessitarian nihilism which sees humans in terms of those suffering and those with the privileged knowledge
of how to avoid it or stop it. These kinds of ethics, for Badiou, are always about avoiding Evil, and Good existing only in relation to this undeniable Evil.

As an alternative to this nihilistic ethics of victimhood, Badiou proposes his own ethics of truths, a reverse formula where Evil may only exist in relation to something Good in itself. Truth, for Badiou, is what enters a given situation which no level of discourse or knowledge could have accounted for prior; it happens through an event, the rupture with what is given in a situation. Truth is “the real process of a fidelity to an event: that which this fidelity produces in the situation… what enables the truth-process – the event – meant nothing according to the prevailing language and established knowledge of the situation.” Thus, “Each faithful truth-process is an entirely invented immanent break with the situation … the ‘ethic of a truth’ is the principle that enables the continuation of a truth process.” Truth itself is universal and never relative – “whatever people’s opinions and customs, once gripped by a truth’s postevental work, their thought becomes capable of traversing and transcending those opinions and customs without having to give up the differences that allow them to recognize themselves in the world.” As articulated beautifully by Badiou, “Every name from which a truth proceeds is a name from before the Tower of Babel. But it has to circulate in the tower.” Alex Ling summarizes Badiou’s project for truth this way:

truths must be radically singular (they are wholly un-known), epistemologically affective (they disrupt economies of knowledge), constructed (they emerge ex post facto and require militant support), infinite (they are structurally incompletable), immanent (they are material constructions taking place in a world), and – fundamentally – universal (they are divorced from all particularity).

When Badiou speaks of the Immortal, he is speaking of this truth entering the situation, the decision of its subject (whether that subject constitutes a single person, multiple people, or even things that are not people) to embrace this superfluous rupture and act in a way that is faithful to
it and continues it beyond one’s own material transience, whether that be in a loving encounter, a political break, an artistic breakthrough, or a scientific discovery. Badiou is not at all affirming human exceptionalism – he is, in fact, affirming a profoundly discomforting anti-exceptionalism to humans on a baseline, but establishing an immanent condition of subjecthood which elevates the thinking human as something more than an animal “being-for-death” (35). In this way, truth is rendered materially Immortal by those who have the courage to constitute its persistence – or at least greater than the sum of its merely organic, mortal parts.

Already here there is an apparent congruency with the rupture produced by the contingent event, as outlined by Meillassoux. The metaphysical specifics of Badiou’s theory of event are not necessary to extract from it, reading Meillassoux, an ethical template – a possibility of remaining faithful to the reality and the truth of the rupture that is the event. Badiou’s conception of the event has an intrinsic positive value judgment; for Badiou, that truth is always good almost goes without saying (politics, love, art, science). What would it, instead, look like to remain faithful to an event that is, by all appearances, destructive or awful, perhaps even malicious toward the autonomy of human animals? This is what Xiaolong’s video (and Meillassoux’s absolute contingency) pushes us toward thinking – a rupture, however small, that seems to have only the power of the negative, an undoing of ontological security, a break with certainty: more specifically, an undoing of scientific cogency.

Of course, it may be foolish to believe the laws of nature could rupture at any moment, but this is far from a distant or merely speculative thought experiment. Rather, entering the logic of a contingent event presents an immediate opportunity to think through the very difference between despair and courage, between quietism and scientism, and the practical consequences of both positions. To illustrate, a unique parallel to inductive uncertainty can be drawn with
solipsistic anxiety. The advantages of thinking through the possibility of solipsism parallel the advantages of thinking inductive uncertainty. Solipsism asks, “does something exist besides me,” while inductive skepticism asks, “how can I be sure what I think will happen, happens?” Where solipsism is a problem of being, induction is a problem of knowing. We know solipsism is an important problem because it is the worst-case scenario for any system of ethics predicated on alterity (that is, something sentient existing besides me). Through an embrace of the *a priori* of Cartesian solipsism as a logically unbreachable limit, solipsistic media have an opportunity to ultimately emphasize the ethical significance of a social knowledge of others. Works along the line of David Foster Wallace’s essays and fiction and Charlie Kaufman’s films like *Synecdoche, New York* (2008) are recognizable examples on this front.

In the same way, media that embrace absolute contingency may be able to emphasize the ethical significance of a courageous or scientific attitude. A ruthless exploration of the uncertain facilitates the development of an ethical attitude that fully accounts for the worst-case scenario: literal solipsism, or in our case, the absolute contingent event. In the same way a full-bodied embrace of sentient others would account for the possibility, no matter how absurd, that I am the only thing that exists, so too might a full scientific attitude account for the possibility of inductive failure as realized in the contingent event. Otherwise, practical ethics collapses should the worst-case scenario be made actual: the solipsist, now knowing hers is the only world to exist, would despair at having ever cared for others; the scientist, knowing the same event will not repeat under the same conditions, would despair at the futility of certainty and knowledge. In both cases then, knowledge is predicated on an insatiable wound of uncertainty.

We know already that media thinks through the solipsistic wound. The question for this thesis is to identify where the wound of contingency is already being confronted through media:
to parse out the formal characteristics and ethical possibilities therein. We can extend the contingent terror presented by Xiaolong’s video to a wider genre-set that takes interest in events occurring for apparently no reason: Supernatural Horror. Supernatural Horror as a whole embraces the traumatic and superfluous contingent event – that is, the world rupturing into something empiric or inductive science can no longer account for. It is the abysmal and sudden impossibility of knowledge that gives way to the very “horror” of the medium. With an embrace of the ontological uncertainty proposed by Meillassoux, this thesis illustrates Supernatural Horror media as terrain for thinking the contingent event and the ethical demands wrought therein. This argument is situated within a film-philosophy praxis, which is the conviction, in David Sorfa’s words, that “cinema can do philosophy in a way that is unique to the medium. Therefore, film is not only capable of presenting extended thought experiments or illustrating philosophical concepts, but is philosophy itself.”

What does it mean to be in a world in which we can no longer induce events as we anticipated them because an event occurs which cannot be absolved by any empiric form of knowledge? What does it mean to be in a world where positive (meta-)physical knowledge and classical science is gratuitously and perhaps horrifically impossible? What would it look like to retain “fidelity,” in Badiou’s terms, to the truth of a contingent event? By begging these questions through its very form, Supernatural Horror does its own unique ethical and epistemic work, presenting the possibility of an inhuman ethical attitude in the face of the contingent, where inductive knowledge is rendered impossible. Supernatural Horror media, in this way, does philosophy – it thinks an evental rupture (without any necessary knowledge of Hume, Badiou, or Meillassoux) and, more importantly, outlines its own praxis of possible inhuman ethics; it can conceive of an unequivocal embrace of the wound of inductive
skepticism and the contingent event, and further, a necessary decision between despair, quietism, or courage/fidelity in its wake.

This argument will work in three broad movements. First, Meillassoux’s philosophy will be given a foundational treatment in order to clearly define contingency, specifically as it relates to thought and reality. Supernatural Horror will be justified as a media form that embraces the traumatic challenge of a contingent event as outlined by Meillassoux, and the sudden epistemic impossibility of natural science facing it. Second, Found Footage Horror, as a type of Supernatural Horror, will be analyzed as an urgent form of engagement with contingency through its continual re-inscription of the distance between image and unthought noumenal world. This stinging distance between image and object provokes an interest in contingency as a cognizable real event. Xiaolong’s video will be given empiric treatment on this front. Finally, three Found Footage Horror films are given textual analysis as they outline three possible ethical attitudes facing the contingent: primal despair/avoidance, mystic quietism/ineffability, and finally a scientific ethics of fidelity, truth, and courage as outlined by Alain Badiou.

**Positioning the Wound of Induction**

Embracing a film-philosophy praxis, we cannot begin to speak of contingency without first surveying and sketching a critical philosophical framework that approaches the problem. Meillassoux reframes the difficult question of epistemic access “correlationism” – in his words, “the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other.” In simple terms, this is the problem by which any independent being is only accessible through thought, thereby implicating thought as the only thing we are ever truly speaking of, not being-itself. The origin of this paradigm for Meillassoux is Kant’s classic transcendental distinction, where the noumenal in-
itself remains forever inaccessible to phenomenal thought: to think the object is, once again, to think, and because thought is not the object, the object remains unscathed. As Kant phrases, “There are things given to us as objects of our senses existing outside us, yet we know nothing of them as they may be in themselves, but are acquainted only with their appearances, that is, with the representations that they produce in us because they affect our senses.”

30 This means vanquishing any discussion of absolute knowledge about things as they are, since “our pure concepts of the understanding as well as our pure intuitions refer to nothing but objects of possible experience, hence to mere beings of sense.”

31 This is, in essence, the logic of correlationism which finds itself unable to access “the great outdoors, the absolute outside of pre-critical thinkers: that outside which was not relative to us, and which was given as indifferent to its own givenness to be what it is, existing in itself regardless of whether we are thinking of it or not.”

32 Meillassoux argues the post-critical paradigm implicitly refuses to recognize the world in the absolute, non-correlated way science consistently finds itself able to.

It is important to highlight that Meillassoux’s motivation in radicalizing Hume’s problem, as outlined in After Finitude, is to overcome correlationism’s incapacity to approach scientific statements on their own terms.

33 Taking Meillassoux’s criticism of subjectivism seriously and as integral to the very motivation of his radical argumentation, I will methodologically avoid embracing the numerous interpretations of his work through new materialism, Deleuzianism, and related fields of philosophical research. Though these interpretations are creative and worthwhile in their own right, this thesis seeks to answer its own research questions through an alternatively literal and non-vital reading of Meillassoux. However, in thinking media extensions of Meillassoux’s philosophy, and the general question of how we might react to the premise of contingency, affective interpretations of sensation will prove necessary.
There are two things Meillassoux absolutely wants to accomplish in his philosophical project. First, he no longer wants any cognition of the absolute to be banished to the realm of irrational religiosity; he wants philosophy and knowledge to be able to know something positive about the absolute. Second, he wants philosophy to be able to read the statements of science and mathematics on their own literal terms, and not as statements which are merely true for us and our conceptual inscriptions: in his phrasing, “how is mathematical discourse able to describe a world where humanity is absent … a world that is not the correlate of a relation to the world?”\textsuperscript{34}

The latter concern is grounded on the fact that Meillassoux takes science as making claims on the absolute, and this is how the two concerns are inexorably linked – if we seek to know how (mathematical) thought may access non-correlated being, one must “grasp how thought is able to access an absolute … whose separateness from thought is such that it presents itself as non-relative to us, and hence as capable of existing whether we exist or not.”\textsuperscript{35} He argues correlationism is incapable of confronting the statements science makes about prehistory – specifically, the capacity to date events entirely anterior to thought altogether (for instance, the formation of the planet), thus implying a being which is totally not-given to thought but nonetheless described in its pre-givenness by science. Even if one were to argue for science’s conception of the event from what he sketches as a Kantian intersubjective model of universal affirmation (someone could have been there to witness it and verify it, confirming its ultimate conceptual inscription), Meillassoux argues the scientific cognition of this event still poses a corrosive challenge, because to say an event prior to the emergence of thought on Earth could have been witnessed by thought simply means that this event is no longer anterior to thought (or non-correlated). Meillassoux coins this as the problem of ancestrality.\textsuperscript{36}
Dogmatic metaphysics in the immediate post-Cartesian line, meanwhile, is indeed capable of thinking the absolute proposed by science. But this absolute is ultimately predicated on a causal necessity which reaches all the way back to an originary cause-of-itself, God. Consider, perhaps most famously, Leibniz and the principle of “sufficient reason,” which begs “that the sufficient or ultimate reason is outside the sequence or series of this multiplicity of contingencies, however infinite it may be,” requiring room for an originary and infinite necessary being, God. The problem here, for Meillassoux, aside from the obviously pre-Critical epistemic strides taken by dogmatism, is that this position of necessity implies that the world is this way for a reason and could never truly be otherwise, an affirmation which parallels the self-affirming function of deceptive ideology. On the other hand, so-called correlationism, in the line of early Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger, and Emmanuel Levinas, vanquishes any discussion of the absolute to the outside of subjective finitude and facticity, ironically reinscribing the validity of any irrational discourse on the absolute, since reason itself cannot disprove or comment on its radical exteriority.

Meillassoux thus asks how the ancestral event could be cognized without the fideistic affirmation of correlationism or the dogmatic absolutes of classic metaphysics – Meillassoux seeks to find a necessary and absolute condition without the absolutization of a being: in his terms, “to re-discover in thought a modicum of absoluteness.” Meillassoux uses the term facticity as “those structural invariants that supposedly govern the world … if contingency consists in knowing that worldly things could be otherwise, facticity just consists in not knowing why the correlational structure has to be thus.” In other terms, these are the very limits of my world and its logic which I cannot justify and can find no reason for, but simply are – facticity is the ‘this is,’ devoid of a discovery of reason or necessity. Again, facticity is thus the very
epistemic principle that demotes the absolute to the ineffable outside of rationality and cognition (there’s no reason something like God should exist, but there’s no reason he shouldn’t exist, so philosophical discourse must leave the question unscathed). Meillassoux’s ultimate move, which results in radical contingency and indeed the radicalization of Hume’s problem, is to discover what he calls the “principle of factiality,” which is “the non-facticity of facticity” itself. This operation is as unusual and difficult as it is startling. Meillassoux’s chosen method to vanquish correlationism is to work within the logic of correlationism and discover an absolute it has already assumed. This absolute is facticity itself – the unreason of every fact and, thus, everything’s full possibility.

Meillassoux demonstrates this through several hypothetical dialogues between a correlationist and a speculative philosopher. The correlationist would rightfully assert any dogmatic thesis about the in-itself as unknowable and thus equally possible. What the speculative philosopher points out, in turn, is that this indeterminacy itself can be thought because it is absolute: “one cannot think unreason – which is the equal and indifferent possibility of every eventuality – as merely relative to thought, since only by thinking it as an absolute can one de-absolutize every dogmatic thesis.” Unless one is prepared to take a dogmatic jump, the absolute principle which disqualifies any claim to the absolute is the absence of a reason for it to be necessary, and – this is key – it is precisely this operation of unreason or un-necessity which Meillassoux claims is the absolute (facticity itself), because to refute the principle itself already assumes its absolute validity in an infinite regress: “one cannot contest its absolute validity without thereby presupposing its absolute truth.” Phrased more clearly, the principle of unreason begs “that facticity is not just another fact in the world … I can doubt the permanence
of facts, but I cannot doubt the permanence of facticity without thereby reiterating it as an absolute.” 46 Thus, radical contingency is given space for development:

Only unreason can be thought as eternal, because only unreason can be thought as at once anhypothetical and absolute … The unequivocal relinquishment of the principle of reason requires us to insist that both the destruction and the perpetual preservation of a determinate entity must equally be able to occur for no reason. 47

Meillassoux urges the absolute be thought as the very void of a necessity for any being itself.

What is liberating about Meillassoux’s suggestion is that the immediate thought of absolute modal contingency is already the literal thought of the principal of being and the in-itself – in this way thought is no longer closed in on itself. In spite of the ingenuity and indeed the sincerity of Meillassoux’s reasoning, particularly in relation to the Continental tradition, several movements of his argument deserve critical attention for the purposes of this thesis. The first is Meillassoux’s conviction that scientists or even a realist conception of science necessitates the belief that scientific (and by extension mathematical) descriptions require some form of ontological absolutism to mean something non-correlated. 48 In fact, science and mathematics may be thought of as incredibly corrosive and indeed descriptive forms of cognizing the real without necessarily claiming these mathematical descriptions are metaphysically absolute. 49 Consider the critical observation of an evolutionary biologist like Stephen Jay Gould – “science must be understood as a social phenomenon, a gutsy, human enterprise, not the work of robots programmed to collect pure information … Much of its change through time does not record a closer approach to absolute truth, but the alteration of cultural contexts that influence it so strongly.” 50 Gould believes science can learn about an unthought reality, but he understands science as a historical and human process – this extends to how people assume number and quantitative claims to reality require no further justification or context. 51
This critical or processual attitude toward science is not to be confused with the wholly-other exteriority which foregrounds fideistic beliefs in irrational absolutes, as highlighted astutely by Meillassoux; critical realism asserts finitude as historical, processual, and situational given so-called transcendental conditions of subjecthood – it is not that what lies outside the limits could never be expressed, but simply that it cannot be expressed within a given situation. In Ray Brassier’s words, “rationality is simply the faculty of generating and being bound by rules. This is precisely the account of rationality set out by Kant. These rules are not fixed in advance, they are historically mutable. But this fact does not make them contingent in the same sense in which other historical phenomena are said to be contingent.”52 The general work of such a realist philosophy is to parse out this relationship between conception and being and to transcribe that very difference – whereas “correlationism” would reduce all knowledge to conceptual differences in an epistemic echo chamber, and dogmatism would naively claim privileged access to being in a blind metaphysical escapade.53 The work of this thesis, rather, is to take interest in what this representational situation immediately means for the human subject, and where media objects draw special attention toward the practical implications of these conditions. The thought of total contingency suggests that both concepts (thought) and objects (matter) may no longer have a necessary or stable causal connection to themselves or each other; as Meillassoux suggests, being may and can, in some evental capacity, rupture into the ulterior for no reason at all.54

The troubling irony is that by radicalizing contingency, the very thing Meillassoux sought to salvage – that is, the cogency of scientific claims – is called into question in perhaps an even more radical way than before, because science is entirely predicated on inductive reasoning and the belief that the world will not behave in some unforeseen way for no reason at all.
Meillassoux is quick to acknowledge this paradox, and to try to tame the chaos he has unleashed, attempts to demonstrate both how the in-itself could never be self-contradictory, as contradiction would bring about a stasis of modal necessity, and that there always must be something rather than nothing.\(^{55}\) As for the actual question of why our world has not changed abruptly, even frequently, Meillassoux makes an appeal to Georg Cantor (not unlike his mentor Badiou) and set theory’s implication of the transfinite. In brief terms, what Meillassoux points out is that refutations to contingency appeal to probabilistic reasoning; however, contingency itself is not probabilistic, but the very structuring capacity that would create the laws of our world and permit probabilistic reasoning.\(^{56}\) As suggested by Cantor, the possible could be untotallizable. It is difficult to conceive of this untotallizable possibility without again reverting to a simple probabilistic conception, but this is the essence of the solution Meillassoux believes should be further developed. In any case, the appeal to a contingency so radical and boundless that nothing noticeably or traumatically contingent could take place cannot help but still feel like a sophistical or preliminary conclusion, despite its logical cogency and the earnestness of its anti-essentialist argumentation.\(^{57}\)

Meillassoux is ultimately, and understandably, antagonistic toward any form of metaphysical necessity, not only because he believes it leaves room for fideistic musings and religiosity contrary to the project of science, but because it implies a certain determinism which is politically regressive.\(^{58}\) It is worth questioning whether the principle of factiality is truly an absolute or rather the discovery of a universal, categorical condition of having a mind (never being able to affirm in anything some sort of necessity, including the necessity of not being able to discover necessity, \textit{ad infinitum}). Meillassoux seems to grant that the decision toward the former is fundamentally an axiomatic decision rather than a logical necessity – speaking not of
certainty but of how we “must project unreason into things themselves” in order to break the correlationist trap.\(^5\)9 In reality, revolutionary politics and ethics must come to face the possibility that factiality is not an absolute principle, as Meillassoux may suggest, but a condition of finite minds puppeted by, as science may imply, a hardline physical determinism predicated on the brutal and ineffable facticity that the universe just is, and will do certain things – that knowledge can never definitively tell us to hope or fear the universe will radically change, whether in a transcendent post-mortem revelation or in an immanent contingent shift. To expect the contingent as a revolutionary \textit{deus ex machina}, or an implicitly political event, gives room for another form of tragic faith – and this is made quite clear in Meillassoux’s suggestion that contingency could quite literally produce the gracious God or gods of old, on condition they too are cognizable as factial material beings: “materialism is not an atheism, because it doesn’t consist in denying the gods, but in materialising [sic] them.”\(^6\)0 Pointing out this perhaps ironic tension in Meillassoux’s thought is not so much to place a definitively negative value judgment on faith as a possibly valuable pragmatic position (faith certainly can catalyze action, albeit on a potentially dubious premise). Rather, I want to re-assert the more urgent ethical question: that is, what we choose to do given the immediacy of any new, unforeseen event, whether metaphysically inscribed as contingent or otherwise – and this is precisely the way in which Badiou, prior to his impenetrable set-theoretical metaphysics, is easily equipped to think an ethics of ruptures or changes as event.

This brief foundational exploration of Meillassoux demonstrates why we are joining him at an epistemic juncture (factiality as \textit{a priori}) and at the hypothetical metaphysical import of what it would mean if absolute contingency were, in fact, noticeably or even traumatically the case – given that the principle of factiality and the problem of induction suggest we have no way
of ever definitively saying otherwise. This thesis is interested in entering the logic of chaos and contingency and outlining the more immediate pragmatics and ethics which follow this position. Following the line of Meillassoux’s radical contingency is useful primarily as a corrosive thought experiment that reveals the limits of scientific practice, certainty, and the metaphysical assumptions that secure both (in the same way there is value in conceiving literal metaphysical solipsism through thought experiment, as highlighted above). The task now is to delineate why this exploration of contingency is best realized through Supernatural Horror media.

**Extro-Science Fiction and Supernatural Horror**

Embracing the speculative implications of Meillassoux’s radical contingency, Reza Negarestani offers a useful re-framing in his brief essay “Contingency and Complicity,” by outlining a general approach through which art objects could be materially accessed by and enter relationship with the contingent. Contrary to the perhaps intuitive notion of “openness” and “interaction” which could be integrated into a work of art (as is often deliberately worked into interactive or haptic installation practices in the legacy of cybernetics), Negarestani suggests instead a practice of “closure” – turning the work into a site of being acted on by matter in unforeseen ways. In his rather sinister framing (indebted to his background in weird fiction):

> The ascesis of closure lures the contingent forces to play their role in plotting the work with utter tenacity; and in doing so, to reveal their twisted conspiracies … closure calls for a new philosophy of experimentation – for it is not merely a recipe for art-making or writing, but a vector toward an ethics of humiliation and a science of openness.⁶¹

What Negarestani is aiming at is of importance – the possibility for a scientific attitude and praxis in the face of the contingent (which, by definition, would render science impossible) and the role of media and art in accessing, or, rather, being accessed by contingency. Here we can think what it would mean for media to represent contingency or, far more importantly, to catch (or be caught by) metaphysical contingency itself, so to speak, in the act. The possibility therein
suggests a new, non-anthropocentric ethics and an epistemic program of scientific openness in line with Badiou – that is, an interest not only in science changing but in how new forms of knowledge (or, as Badiou would prefer, encounters with truth) may replace old regimes in order to continue a relentless cognition of the world.

Meillassoux usefully attempts to link his metaphysical ideas to narrative worlds in *Science Fiction and Extro-Science Fiction*. Meillassoux proposes Extro-Science Fiction (henceforth denoted XSF) as exactly the sort of narrative world where his radical contingency has taken foot in a traumatic way. Things happen for no reason whatsoever, and characters are hopelessly unable to explain why. This means that the XSF world is one in which “in principle, experimental science is impossible.” Avoiding generalization, genre media touches on induction and the possibility for knowledge; in genre narratives characters confront the unknown and seek to make it known or, better, controlled. By genre media I specifically mean science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other modes that simulate the possibility of another world or (meta)physical order. My intention here is not to forge a new genre theory but to simply highlight a tension inherent in science fiction. These films are spectacular by the very nature of their superfluous juxtaposition to our everyday “real” world – one could not reasonably induce their events to occur within the framework of any previously deducted (scientific/empiric) knowledge of nature and its mechanics. Science fiction and fantasy media tend to involve worlds in which a metaphysical order is already mastered and cognized by some of its subjects – a structure of science (or sorcery) exists and is well-equipped to account for unforeseen events within that narrative world. Oftentimes narrative trials in these sorts of genre films are overcome through gnostic mastery of this given structure of knowledge (think “the force” in *Star Wars* (dir. George Lucas, 1977), Eywa in *Avatar* (dir. James Cameron, 2009), magic in sword and sorcery
spectacles, quantitative gee-whiz topology in space operas). This, for Meillassoux, would be a science fiction world. Extro-Science Fiction, meanwhile, would be a world in which no system of science or positive inductive knowledge remains feasible – a world in which Meillassoux’s contingency has taken hold. Narratologically speaking, this means the work “does not have a coherence of change at its disposal and instead finds itself forced to tear the tissue of its own frames through ruptures that nothing justifies, while having to compose a story with such tears.” Meillassoux breaks these worlds down into three categories. The first type would be worlds in which contingency is present as an absolute but “does not affect science or consciousness” through traumatic shifts. The second would be worlds in which “irregularity is sufficient to abolish science, but not consciousness.” The third type would be “a universe in which disorderly modifications are so frequent that, following the example of chaos described by Kant in the objective deduction, the conditions of science as well as those of consciousness would be abolished.” For Meillassoux it is obvious, then, that this second category (type-2) is what media could hope to represent as a genuine exploration of contingency and the absence of science.

Though Meillassoux did not highlight it, there is a clear connection here between XSF and horror. The function of Supernatural Horror, unlike other genre narratives, is to re-introduce the difficulty of mastery and positive knowledge within a narrative, or its flat-out impossibility. In this sense, one can easily de-mystify the term “supernatural” to its rather literal taxonomy: something that is more than, or superfluous to, what we expect to be natural, scientifically measurable, and predictable. Characters in Supernatural Horror films often discover themselves subject to torments, forces, and contingencies which, though likely ripe with textual or thematic significance for the viewer, are often devoid of any structuring meaning or system of causation.
within the given diegetic film-world for its characters. Though some of these narratives may affirm an ultimate positive knowledge (like James Wan’s *The Conjuring* (2013) and its affirmation of a Christian cosmology), others refuse to affirm a cohesive system of knowledge and causation (take even, for instance, *The Exorcist* (dir. William Friedkin, 1973) and the relative inanity of the titular ritual, and the ambiguous causal relations between Regan’s (Linda Blair) possession and the Ouija board, the necklace, the excavation in Iraq, etc.). In other words, Supernatural Horror can present thought experiments of metaphysical contingency in line with XSF type-2.

Meillassoux suggests three possible ways an XSF world could be written through several examples: a singular catastrophe rupturing inductive/causal expectations, a multiplication of contingent events veering on absurdity, and a multiplication of these breaks rendering the world increasingly incomprehensible and antagonistic. After limiting himself to examples of literary science fiction, Meillassoux ultimately concludes the possibility of XSF must and can be pushed further. The absence of other mediums besides literature and the negligence toward Supernatural Horror is perhaps what prevents Meillassoux from seeing an ethical or even pragmatic value in his discovered notion of XSF. Discussing the feasibility of XSF, Meillassoux permits himself a momentary break from rationalism for a poetic formulation in the concluding sentences of the monograph, conceiving a narrative world pushing farther into the fringes of conscious and scientific cogency:

Life mentally experiences itself without science and, in this ever more accentuated divergence, perhaps discovers something unprecedented about itself or about science. An eidetic variation pushed to the point of suffocation, self-experience in a non-experienceable world. A precarious intensity would plunge infinitely into its pure solitude, with only an environment of rubble in which to explore the truth of a worldless existence.
What is the use of this seemingly absurd, even Lovecraftian XSF scenario, and what is it that mind or science could hope to learn about itself through an XSF media world? Meillassoux gets close with this initial categorizing claim of XSF: “we have to present a world where science … continues to haunt the universe in the manner of an absence that is intensely felt in its effects.”

If absence is the emphasis, it is indeed horror-tinged genre narratives which are the most interested and most frequent in their rejection of positive scientific or structured knowledge, in the what-if of a sudden absence of certainty. If well-being, ontological security, or even tranquility are correlated with the presence of science, knowledge, and mastery, the sensation of cosmic terror and despair fester in their absence.

This relationship between knowledge and well-being can be illustrated intuitively in affective or even bio-logical terms. The functionalist lesson, made clear even in pre-Darwinian thinkers like Spinoza, is that thought immediately fixates on what it must learn to avoid or overcome – life seeks to avoid pain and persevere in its being: “Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being,” and “We strive to further the occurrence of whatever we imagine will lead to joy, and to avert or destroy what we imagine is contrary to it, or will lead to sadness.” Supernatural Horror uniquely compels the thought of contingency because it suggests the contingent event would be harmful to our being. Panic, anxiety, and fear are precisely the sensations animals developed to motivate self-preserving behavior. But every material process of self-preservation that may be triggered in reaction to these feelings is predicated on an inductive habit (knowledge of how the world and my own body works, because it has worked this way prior). If there was suddenly no way to avoid or control the perceived source of any threat to our being, the feedback loop cannot close and fear replicates fear. The contingent situation is one in which a person may not have the power or knowledge to prevent
the world from hurting them because the world is no longer doing the things the person thought it was supposed to – the event of metaphysical contingency is, in other words, a potential situation of cosmic terror and a total abyss of agency, which are the very mechanics of horror.

In a critical and immediate sense, the position suggested by this contingency is the very crux of the decision between a continued pursuit of an absolute, or a humanist (and, as Meillassoux would suggest, “correlationist”) regression. Terror begs us to reinscribe the absolute or any form of truth to the exterior of reason – to give up on knowledge and to beg, plead, and pray to the ineffable. In this way Supernatural Horror inscribes the crux of the implicit ethical decision guiding Meillassoux’s metaphysics – to regress to the ineffable, or to relentlessly cognize the world: to never take it as necessary, immutable, or fated. In very simple terms, the implicit question of supernatural or XSF horror is: if science fails, and fails traumatically, does one give up? In Badiou’s framing, do we remain faithful to the truth of this rupture, or regress to a mystic or relativistic panic? Supernatural Horror as Extro-Science Fiction is the terrain to think, in even an immediate ethical sense, what can or should be done within the uncompromising negative space of the contingent event.

A Vector Toward the Noumenal: The Representational Challenge of Photographic Images

In effect, all Supernatural Horror XSF texts have the opportunity to explore the aforementioned ethical crux between knowledge or quietism. There is, however, a unique challenge that Found Footage Horror (henceforth denoted FFH) carries through the very nature of its form. As the following sections will demonstrate, FFH inscribes a drive to cognize and confront the reality of the contingent event not merely through its XSF content, but through the mechanics of its very form, which constantly draw attention to the representational (or
correlated) structure of thought itself. The incessant, stinging knowledge of this rift between image and reality generates a vector of engagement toward the real.

To understand how it is FFH can provoke this vector of thought, we must briefly diverge from Meillassoux’s explicit philosophy and XSF to read instead the history of correlationism in Continental theories of photographic and representational images. As such, we will investigate the positions of correlated thinkers of media and conceive of a way, within these frameworks, the cogency or necessity of the correlation between image and reality might be destabilized. Though we will not pursue (foolishly) the discovery of an absolute inherent to photographic media theories, we can attempt a parallel to Meillassoux’s methodology. If a challenge to the transcendent rift between photographic image and world is discoverable within the very frameworks which embrace this divorce, we may discover a media form that is not only XSF through its content but an extension of the work of Meillassoux’s philosophy through its form.

How did photographic images come to be perceived as lacking an essential referent? Following the historicization offered by Jacques Rancière in *The Emancipated Spectator*, after the disillusionment of May 1968, the earlier Marxist critiques of ideology, spectatorship, and media images, apparent with Brecht, the Frankfurt school, and later in the line of Guy Debord, proved incomplete in their conviction that a critique parsing out reality from appearance, “spectacle,” and “false consciousness” would catalyze class enlightenment and “self-emancipation.” As I will illustrate, a primary lesson of subsequent work in post-structuralism (including Rancière) was to acknowledge instead that media is always, in some capacity, a virtuality – an image, open to interpretation, separation, use, indifference: even in the immediacy of its encounter, or even if an image is meant to be seen as real (news footage, home videos, etc.). Without implicating any value judgment, this general position of abandoning the supposed
real referent behind the image and the self-contained sanctity of the virtual implies instead a sensorial self-satisfaction with what stories or images do or mean for me. In this way, it is obviously a “correlated” position, as Meillassoux would frame it. The familiar idea of escapism – that is, for the purposes of this paper, a general posture in which media sensory-scapes or narratives prove more comfortable or seductive than approaching daily lived experience – is based on a similar premise. Through escapism, we become not so much interested in how media measures up to the world (or a referent), but more interested instead in how well an image can make us forget about the world altogether. In this way media is thought to generate a world or sensory terrain we can evacuate to, a world which may not have a direct or even significant relationship to reality. This escape is fundamentally parallel to the regression to finitude inherent in Meillassoux’s critique: to give up on the absolute outside of any situation of knowledge, an escape into images paralleling the very denial of the real or absolute.

This general problem was caustically embraced by the current of post-modernism most clearly heralded by Jean Baudrillard. In Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, the question of representation is substituted for the immediate eros of appearances. As Baudrillard would frame it, the subject has no hope of navigating or stepping out of this world of appearance: “we are in a logic of simulation, which no longer has anything to do with a logic of facts and an order of reason. Simulation is characterized by a precession of the model … the models come first, their circulation, orbital like that of the bomb, constitutes the genuine magnetic field of the event.”

In this formulation, the real effectively vanishes; we find ourselves completely seduced by images as an end in themselves.

Accounting for both the perceived impossibility of the Debordian critical line and the pessimistic trap of the postmodern line which insists on total slavery to images, what Rancière
offers instead is an emphasis on the unpredictable work of the spectator over an objective inquisition into reality, indexicality, or representation immanent in any media text. Through this formulation, the very work of media engagement has room to be active or political and not merely escapist, reminding that the role of media was never to draw a clear path between enlightenment and action. Thus, for Rancière, the way to sidestep the mournful formulation of thinkers like Baudrillard is to reintegrate the reality of politics to this seemingly barren terrain of information and appearance. The more useful and possible path is to explore how we use images – how they produce, in Rancière’s words, “new configurations of what can be seen, what can be said and what can be thought and, consequently, a new landscape of the possible,” including how our relationships to the world change based on whether we take an image to be real or fabricated. Alex Ling, following Badiou and with implied affinity with Rancière, affirms a similar formulation – “cinema does not cut from what is, but from what appears (or is there).”

In these critical frameworks responding to the perceived shortcomings of Debord, the image is a question of use or meaning and not a question of reality, because this question is always too difficult and too elusive. Rancière is motivated instead to describe an image as “an element in a system that creates a certain sense of reality, a certain common sense … The point is not to counter-pose reality to its appearances. It is to construct different realities, different forms of common sense.” From this angle, the actual question of reality or indexicality is, properly, taken as a naïve stride. Activity is won again, but at the cost of reality and representation. This is a necessary sacrifice – there is of course no formula, no process of justification which could ever prove a photographic image was real or had a direct relationship to what it indexed. Empirically speaking, we get no closer to the noumenon through filming and photography, whether digital or celluloid, than through Kant’s categories of understanding. As
Rancière would suggest, what is important is how we take these moments or encounters and what they may make us think, do, or feel, and indeed how they reshape our very boundaries of feeling, doing, and thinking.

Yet again, this correlated form of thinking collapses representation (thought or image) into an equivalence or subsummation over unthought material reality in-itself. The highly discourse-driven or relational formulation of the image is still implicitly challenged by the circulation of the image with self-claims to some sort of realism – for example, the home video, the sports broadcast, the documentary interview. The forensic challenge of these media forms parallels the paradox of Meillassoux’s ancestral statement – theory begs our measured skepticism, but the discipline itself (science, or in this case, photography) begs naïve realism. Though media theories may properly insist we can never truly know the actual reality of what an image has represented, something like indexical media is implicitly re-essentialized as soon as reality is at stake – consider the conviction of a criminal in a courtroom from CCTV footage, or the ability to visualize the body during surgery. In these cases, the map (or image) is taken as a completely sufficient substitute for the territory. Within our structures of discourse, photographic images often must be taken as a literal “real” representation and empirically (even forensically) useful. Otherwise, one risks regressing to a conspiratorial delirium where the family video does not prove one ate lunch with her mother on Tuesday, the slow-motion replay does not prove one’s favorite athlete was safe on second base, and on-the-ground journalistic footage does not prove the Gulf War (or any war) ever took place. To opt otherwise is solipsistic sophistry. Prior to montage or any assemblage in sequence, some images alone beg they be taken as indexical, and further sufficiently representative to the reality they indexed. How do we approach cohering these two opposing threads (pure virtuality and real representation)?
The remaining work is not to identify in vain an absolute relationship between image and reality (as Meillassoux does for the correlation between thought and being). The work now is not, further, to turn back the clock to a dogmatic formulation wherein a direct relationship could be found between image and reality (or thought and being). What can be done instead is to acknowledge this correlated situation and the inaccessibility of the real from the perspective of the image, but simultaneously to acknowledge the realist attitude generated by photographs. What photographs present is not a subsummation of territory into map, but a persistent interest in the inaccessible territory behind the useable map. This is, in brief, the question of the photograph as representation – the very conceptual surface that implicates an interest in something that is not a surface or concept in-itself.

Hume, prior to the advent of any photography, hints toward this vector of thought, considering a (presumably painted) picture of a dead friend – “The influence of the picture supposes, that we believe our friend to have once existed.” Though Hume’s general analysis may appear reductive by today’s standards, and indeed circles presciently close to a Baudrillardian formulation, what is key is Hume’s emphasis that the mere presence of this image as an object, or any image of thought confronted with some sort of sensorial actuality rather than mere imagination, affirms the immediacy of the thought of its referent. In other words, I consider the reality of this lost friend more urgently in seeing a picture of him than in merely imagining him without the input of sensation (in this case, seeing him with my eyes). Applying photography to Hume’s empiric reasoning on this front, the moving photographic image would come close to an equivalence with the immediate sensations (vision and sound) wrought about by the actual presence of the friend in-himself. Thus, though Hume is not particularly worried about a representational problem here, it could be said Hume already understood that the acute
sensorial feedback generated by the realistic or indexical photographic image brings thought closer to interest in the reality of the being which supposedly generated it, the fact that I “believe” it to have once existed.

Every photographic image, in its mechanical urgency, posits itself as representational because it can supposedly only be formed through passive input from the world (light touching a lens). In ontological terms, this is what separates a photograph (and, by extension, film) from an image made in something like a painting. André Bazin and later Roland Barthes paid attention to the materiality of the process to keep this representational or indexical vector intact. Famously, in “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” Bazin argues photography dispelled the human obsession with likeness first sought in Western painting, as a form of countering death and decay, because the photographic plate mechanically reproduces and immortalizes the objects of its process in a way the subjective interference of an artist never could. The historicization Bazin sketches briefly demonstrates how the propagation of photography freed painting from this obsession with likeness. What Bazin is interested in is not metaphysical speculation which would assert an image could have a being autonomous to thought, but pointing out how photography finally satisfies a human drive for preservation through optical equivalence, a sort of manufacturing of Plato’s eternal realm of ideas, where the photographic image “shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model … The photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being, after the fashion of a fingerprint.” Though we cannot join Bazin in affirming an essential “fingerprint” trace between image and object, it is significant that Bazin retains the immediate representational function of the photographic image as a process between something which was not an image, the
mechanical interference of a camera, and the generation of an image which is accessible to thought.

Undoubtedly the photographer chooses what to show and where to point her lens, for reasons aesthetic and sensorial. Nonetheless, we are stunned by the photograph’s mechanical objectivity: “For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. … All the arts are based on the presence of man, only photography derives advantage from his absence.” Bazin suggests the indifference of the asubjective mechanical process is key to the photograph’s play with reality. Though Bazin emphasizes how this image suffices as the model made supposedly eternal, the key to his argument is the drive to take what was once an object in-itself, subject to change and decay, and turning it into something seemingly impermanent – an image. Indeed, for Bazin, the whole issue of whether or not an image accurately captures the reality of being is totally subsidiary to the very fact that we think it does. This is of course a correlated position, but a representational one – a position which salvages a vector of engagement toward the object which is not an image in-itself. This very attitude, and the constant reminder of something existing that is not conceptual or thought in-itself, is scientific and realist. Bazin’s ingenuity is in highlighting the photograph as a substitute, but more importantly, the most satisfying guarantee that something was once there, behind the image and in front of the lens. On this front, as Bazin makes clear, the images of other plastic arts and mediums falter.

Barthes, similarly, highlights the materiality of celluloid in a series of deeply phenomenological accounts in *Camera Lucida*, paying special attention to this representational problem. For Barthes, not all too dissimilar from Hume and even Bazin, the photographic image is a constant stinging reminder that the mortal subject was there in the moment the camera
transcribed their image – in his very explicit terms, “in Photography I can never deny that the thing has been there.”86 Granted, Barthes argues moving images require a different phenomenological investigation, but nonetheless clearly indicates cinema, which is photography in motion, still carries the referent, the “this-has-been” of its subject.87

What Bazin and Barthes (and perhaps Hume) remind us is that the photographic image is a representational material process, actualized by something in the world that is not itself an image. This general conception remains obviously antiquated and incomplete insofar as the digital has increasingly proved the ability of images to pass as real without an index – the rapid acceleration of deepfakes and AI imaging technologies will only further affirm the general non-necessity of a material referent. This is what renders the strong-correlated positions of theorists like Rancière so prescient: to remove the entanglement of the virtual from the actual. The importance of what Bazin and Barthes formulate is that, confronted with the photographic image, thought reaches out toward what is perceives as the unthought in-itself. Thought does not actually know the absolute real through the image, but it takes a forensic interest in it, and this interest is significant as a first step. Even with the advent of special effects, CGI, deepfakes, AI, and all the other ways, analog and digital, that photographic images can be made more painterly, impressionistic, unworldly, or deceiving, we may recognize and recall in the base characteristics or form of the photographic image the inferred material/representational process of its production. The difference achieved here from other correlated positions is that, by reinstating this representational emphasis, the “information” (in Rancière’s terms) present in an image is not merely information, but material that generates an immediate interest in parsing out what in the image might be said to practically (if not essentially) carry the “fingerprint,” as Bazin puts it, of an un-imaged referent, and what in it represents nothing (a mere image without referent). This is
already the attitude immediately obvious in populist approaches to AI-deepfakes, which are interested not so much in what the image is and more so in figuring out if the image is fake and how we can tell it is fake. Again, the point is not that there will ever be a clear answer to this forensic investigation. The key point is the very fact that the photographic image will always demand this very investigation and the scientific/realist ethos underpinning it.

The limit of finitude implies an intermediary process or boundary between the exterior “out there” and the interior “for me.” A photograph does just this by subtracting a frame from the visible. In the photographic image, it is easily available to thought that a camera (supposedly) made the image, took something about the world and made it into something imaged. This, then, is key: the very supposed “real-ness” of the photographic image is produced precisely by this reflexive gesturing toward an image’s own mechanical process of production, the boundary between the object and the image as a necessary step. For photographic images, the limit that generates finitude is the camera. For us, the limit is found in the very facticity of our categories of understanding (even the simple knowledge that it is an eye that allows the looking, and an ear that allows the hearing). When this intermediary process between being and image is removed, that is, the very step that makes the image a representational problem, an image quickly loses its entanglement with reality, limits, or our thought of them. It is precisely this limit between world and image that reinstates the image’s representational nature and, thus, its potential vector toward the “great outdoors.” The re-inscription of distance between image and world implicates a drive to know the noumenal world which is not given in the image, the very territory behind the models and maps.

In this way, we join Rancière in affirming the image as just that – an image – which does something to us and our senses. At the same time, we can affirm a Bazinian line within this
framework, since what the photographic image does to us is generate an interest in its own finitude, the real non-imaged object which we believe made the image itself.

**Found Footage Horror as Extro-Science Fiction and the Threat of Annihilation**

With the representational problem generated by photographic images in mind, and indeed the forensic or scientific drive this problem predicates, we are now equipped to theorize the unique situation of FFH as XSF – that is, as a media form entering the logic of contingent events. Like other Supernatural Horror, FFH may be equipped with the XSF impetus of metaphysical contingency. But what is unique about FFH is that the aforementioned middle step – that is, the camera – is fully integrated as an object in its diegetic world. By constantly drawing attention to the thought that what we are seeing is an image of a reality that is not an image in-itself, FFH reinscribes the critical vector outlined above.

FFH does not in any way present a program for absolving the distance between world and image into a synthesized cognizable real (this is the job of philosophy, not horror movies) – but it catalyzes and plays with this very pursuit. If XSF does philosophical work by proposing the ethical challenge of the contingent event, FFH extends it by challenging the implied necessity of the correlation between world and image. This extension is implicitly ethical, insofar as the choice between truth or relativism facing the event is, following Badiou, a fundamentally ethical one.

Recall the video uploaded by Outdoor Xiaolong, as described in the introduction. Although we may certainly prefer to assume there is some metaphysically cohesive explanation behind this illusive or unexplainable photographic image (and doubtless the video is likely staged), the mere thought begged by the video enters fully into the logic of contingency. By watching Xiaolong’s or any paranormal video, the reflexive form generates interest in the reality
(or artifice) of its indexed contingent event. Where the paranormal video presents an impasse of representation and being, narrative FFH films carry this impasse through the same form. It ultimately matters little whether the paranormal video is, in fact, authentic or “real” as it claims – obviously, FFH films are not authentic documents of paranormal events. But, if successful, they have already reconfigured our regimes of possibility (following Rancière) in a perhaps devastating way, pushing thought toward the immediate cognition of the contingent rupture as a possible real event. Xiaolong’s video suggests not only that there is an un-imaged reality behind his camera, but that Xiaolong must confront the contingent event because its reality may threaten not only Xiaolong’s inscription of the event but Xiaolong’s very existence. In Xiaolong’s video, we think the real possibility, the horrific open wound of something incredible happening for no reason at all. Xiaolong’s video is not just an aesthetic object, but a general call to understand the world itself. FFH extends this call.

It may rightfully be introjected at this point that FFH is not the only medium to reinstate the representational status of photographic images or even the finitude of images; in many ways, FFH is the least obvious contender. Earlier films inspired by a Brechtian theory of distanciation, such as the works of Straub-Huillet and the films of Jean-Luc Godard, are a few examples that constantly reinscribe a reflexive recognition of the image as a material process of making and mediation, which may or may not have a faithful relationship to what it represents. These artists take on this question of access and exteriority toward more or less different ends and through more or less didactic or associative formal means. These images indeed present perhaps pre-sensate questions of access, being, and reality. The primary function of FFH, however, lies in its direct challenge to being and form – the question is no longer of emancipation or action (with Brecht in general), historical interrogation (with Straub-Huillet), or regimes of political futures
(with Godard), because these questions remain deeply correlated with humanist and therefore conceptual dialectics. FFH demands a visceral, personal, urgent recognition which prepends thought by recognizing the outside or the real, the very material real which structures it and could liquidate it altogether. Where other reflexive media practices often take a critical or cynical look at what mediation as a process means for us, by embracing contingent events and reflexively reinscribing the significance of their mediation FFH suggests that reality itself is not only exterior to thought/image, but that it could be terribly harmful toward our being and antagonistic to thought or positive knowledge writ large.

Put another way, contingency in XSF as Supernatural Horror threatens the annihilation of mind; the representational form of FFH prevents the XSF text from reducing this thought of the contingent to a merely escapist hypothetical, because the re-inscription of representational dualisms demands we consider and parse out our own mind’s difficult access to being, and indeed this re-inscription suggests the potential urgency of doing so, insofar as the supposed contingency of being may threaten the very existence of secure knowledge and thought in the first place. There is of course great value in the aforementioned reflexive-humanist media practices in the line of Brecht, even if we (with Rancière) reject their implicit call to suddenly act and learn something new about the world. But FFH demands a unique and perhaps disturbing thought of contingent reality and access, a thought unprovoked in other reflexive media that either maintain a general metaphysical stability (in the Straub-Huillet line, the world itself won’t abruptly hurt me or change without cause), or an implicitly idealist or at least correlated affirmation of images as the final construction of the world (in the Godard line, the world remains perhaps tragically ineffable beyond our images). In FFH the work toward cognizing the “great outdoors” takes on an essential and immediate significance – one potentially more
ethically demanding, and more invigorating, while simultaneously more ordinary, and far more accessible, than the Brechtian line as outlined by Rancière.

If classic Supernatural Horror challenges thought and induction, its ephemeral formal omniscience prevents the immediate and personal question of my own embodied mind’s access to being and ontological certainty, instead inviting a space for escapism or potential indifference. FFH brings us closer to the abyss of initial uncertainty, a complete lack of agency, access, or knowledge through its form – it reinscribes the distance between world and image, thereby implicating a possible drive to understand the noumenal world behind phenomenal image. FFH may never provide an answer, and certainly not an epistemic program, but it provokes a pivotal and unique decision between rationalism or regression facing the contingent event, and therein lies its ethical significance. It is here, as FFH media thinks the ground-zero of the contingent, that a wider possible scientific attitude can be sketched. If an old regime of science or knowledge has failed, or if our assumptions about how the world functions collapse, what is left to do? This is the ethical and practical question FFH is uniquely situated to demand in its vector toward facing the real – this situation is important because it is pragmatic. As noted by Sorfa, “Film-philosophy is also the way in which normal, non-academic film viewers think about film – people don’t think about apparatus theory or the male gaze,” but think about what they enjoyed, how they felt, or what was true in the film (and this very posture, again, recalls Rancière’s emancipated spectator).

The very significance of FFH as XSF is that, through its form, it brings us right to the thought of contingency without Meillassoux, Hume, or even a necessary knowledge of what finitude, induction, or contingency is. The genius of Meillassoux’s XSF is that it can bring anyone to his philosophy without a literal articulation of his philosophy. FFH media presents the contingent event with no clutter, leaving space for immediate what-if ethical
speculation. Supernatural Horror has an opportunity to not only think metaphysics, but perhaps more practically, to do ethics.

The remaining work of this thesis, then, is to sketch these possible ethical attitudes presented in the XSF scenario, and a range of work that can proceed or already has proceeded along this line. As illustrated, the ethical problem of XSF primarily hinges on whether a new lack of knowledge is taken as an opportunity to seek new cognition, or a banishment of total (or, as Meillassoux would urge, “absolute”) knowledge, justifying a religious regression back into fear, terror, asceticism, or awe. The ethical crux of Supernatural Horror XSF can thus be framed with the following question: caught in the contingent situation, in which events harmful to my being render me unable to positively act in or know the world, what is left to do, and what ought to be done? Do I pursue what I see as the new, contingent real behind the image, run from it, or let it be? This challenge is apparent in all Supernatural Horror XSF, but as will soon be demonstrated through case study, the realist and representational challenge of FFH renders a more lucrative terrain for analysis on the ethical front – a challenge, as described above, that other XSF texts may fail to reach through the non-representational and correlated escapism of their very form.

For the sake of simplicity in this analysis, Supernatural Horror can be categorized into four ethical permutations. The negligible category is all Supernatural Horror which cannot be seen as XSF. These are films in which positive knowledge is ultimately reinstated, and the paranormal or contingent events are ultimately cognized or mastered under some system of knowledge, neutering their very inscription as contingent. Although these films may explore the unique representational paradox of thought and image (and thus the importance of dealing with reality), these films lie outside the interest of this thesis because they fail to confront contingency and the full possibility of reality’s harm or knowledge’s sudden brutal insufficiency. The
remaining three categories all pertain to Supernatural Horror as XSF and present a situation where characters are ultimately unable to account for what happens and why it is happening, in an immediate metaphysical sense. The first is a scenario where despair, as an experience and attitude embodied by the film-world’s subjects, is affirmed with finality. This is the situation where the contingent event is taken as a cause for absolute terror and regression – it is a fatalistic or pious ethical position. The second is a scenario where despair is rejected. This is a scenario where the contingent event is, in some capacity, made peace with and accepted, though with a certain mystic or religious quietism. The third possibility – and, as I will argue, the most lucrative, though underutilized – is one in which a new scientific attitude may be shaped, where despair is not only rejected, but the contingent event is circumscribed as knowable or worth trying to know, even as it may constantly elude forms of inductive knowledge and indeed prove hazardous to the wellbeing of characters’ bodies and minds. A FFH example will be analyzed for each category – Colin Minihan and Stuart Ortiz’s Grave Encounters (2011), Joel Anderson’s Lake Mungo (2008), and Koji Shiraishi’s Senritosu Kaiki File Kowasugi franchise (2012-2023), respectively. Shiraishi’s films will be given special attention as an example of a new possible ethical and scientific attitude facing the contingent.

Ethical Attitudes in Grave Encounters: Badiou and “Being-for-Death”

The main draw of Grave Encounters is its imitation of popular ghost-hunting television series. In Blood on the Lens, Shellie McMurdo argues the film “critiques and unpicks the reality claims of ghost hunting shows by underlining their performative aspects,” upheld by the subjects of the reality TV program. This tension between reality, performance and artifice is clear from the start. The film opens with an interviewer speaking off-camera to a reality television producer, sitting in what looks like a video editing suite. The producer describes the footage about to be
shown as totally authentic and untampered with, edited only down for consideration of time. The rest of the film consists of this supposedly authentic footage shot by the “Grave Encounters” show team on their sixth episode of ghost hunting, at an abandoned American mental hospital active in the early 20th century. The crew and their charismatic host, Lance, direct-address the camera in a series of sensationalistic interviews – at one point, he is seen paying a nearby gardener to pretend like he too had seen a ghost. It is made clear from the start that the whole team is highly skeptical about the real existence of the paranormal, and more than eager to embellish for the sake of producing profitable images. The psychic supposedly brought in to examine the building, Houston, hams up the mystical speculation for the show but is mild-mannered in other ordinary interactions with the crew. In this way, the first act of the film plays like something of a parody of ghost hunting programs and the “performativity” which affirms their ambiguity or realism.

The immediacy of this ghost-hunting satire granted, there is nonetheless a more immediate challenge presented by the film. As made clear by the film’s opening, where the show’s producer presents the very footage of the film, a unique emphasis on the materiality of the medium is presented and, thus, an immediate reflexive awareness of the footage existing only as a process within this (hypothetical) environment, as relational to something which is not itself an image. At one point, Lance asks one of the camera operators to get a time lapse, and shortly after we see this very time lapse. The camera operators are seen cleaning the lens while filming, adjusting focal lengths, and later setting up night vision cameras across the hospital, all from the perspective of the cameras in question. Of course, the whole time we know what we are watching is a fiction – but this play with the embodied finitude of each camera image reinscribes thought’s materially embodied and uncertain access to the world, whether mediated through eyes
and ears or secondarily through the camera and microphone. In this way the viewer is immediately interested in parsing out, even investigating, the reality presented by this film world; investigation is reinscribed as an embodied and material process, not ephemeral or comfortably thought without matter or body. To know anything about this environment, something (a camera) or someone had to be there to transcribe it.92

The traumatic contingent event of Grave Encounters borrows a bit from all three of Meillassoux’s suggested narratological categories – in many ways, it can be conceived as one singular rupture which reveals itself gradually and more traumatically over the course of the film. The crew locks themselves inside the hospital and are told by the groundskeeper they will be let out at 6 AM. After some disinterested investigation, several strange events occur – a window opens, a door slams, and a wheelchair moves on its own. Crew member Sasha’s hair is pulled up by an invisible force. Tensions rise and the crew eventually decides to pack up and get ready to leave as soon as the groundskeeper returns – but as the clock approaches 7 A.M. he is a no-show at the front door. Lance and cameraman T.C. bust the lock open only to discover what was once the exit outside is now another decrepit hallway. Befuddled, they wander down the hall to eventually discover another door labeled exit, only to open onto another seemingly endless labyrinth of hallways. Windows are bolted or too high to exit from. The roof is discovered to be sealed off by an inexplicable wall. To make matters more disorienting, the exterior visible from the windows reveals the sun never came up – the crew is locked in a perpetual night inside an endlessly labyrinthian mental hospital with seemingly no way out. More typical paranormal events ensue in a gradual ramp-up over the course of several days, including a scratched message reading “HELLO” on Sasha’s back, disappearances of crew members, and asylum-patient demons sprinting toward the camera with black pits for eyes (thanks to generous CGI
enhancement). Eventually, the surviving crew discovers their wrists to be bound with what looks like patient-identifying tags, suggesting they are slowly being turned into asylum victims themselves. Despite the arguably gratuitous silliness of many of the scenarios presented in *Grave Encounters*, what is interesting about this wrist-tag detail is that it can in no way be dismissed as symptomatic of a textually implicit psychological delusion in characters, as in a film like *Shutter Island* (dir. Martin Scorsese, 2010), and this is again because of the FFH form. When the camera in the environment reveals wristband tags, we immediately discard the possibility that the entire crew were, say, always asylum patients temporarily hallucinating they were ordinary people in a ghost-hunting show, because, as emphasized above, the camera reflexively, immediately, and indifferently gestures toward the unthought reality of its imaged index, resisting the typical narrative form which easily equivalates reality and thought into a fully correlated and arbitrary distinction.

The reality of these contingent events is indeed resisted by crew members earlier on; pragmatic or common-sense solutions are initially offered to cope. What is clear from the start (and the end) is that no clear path of knowledge or science can explain what is happening, and this is why the film is secured as XSF. At one point Houston offers a desperate attempt to make sense of the infinite night: “Let’s just try and be rational here,” and he stumbles through some pseudo-scientific language about energy fields moving their clocks faster. T.C. retaliates at his perceived stupidity, to which Houston responds, “There’s nothing else that’s rational here, okay? It’s as rational as anything else!” If the choice facing the contingent is between a pursuit of reason and a regression to not-knowing, this brief moment between T.C. and Houston is key. The contingent event here presents a profound threat to the well-being of the crewmembers, and despair would be the naturalist or human response. As soon as no form of pre-existing reason is
discovered capable of accounting for the asylum’s events, the project of knowledge is dropped altogether in favor of a panicked escape plan which, unsurprisingly, ends in the decimation of every crew member, ending with Lance, who is lobotomized by the demonic doctors who once ran the asylum.

Again, following Badiou, the truth of this event may have nothing to do with art, politics, or love, but it would invite a scientific transcription of its alterity – potentially a new conception of science altogether. Facing the contingent event, once it has been accepted that reality itself is no longer the way it was supposed to be, and can no longer be measured or interacted with the way it was before, the subject of this event (unless its members have also been corroded by contingency) has a choice between a fidelity to truth or a base, animalistic regression to despair and its functional charms: a scrambling to avoid, beg, plea with suffering; anything to survive. In Badiou’s terms, it is a choice “Between Man as the possible basis for the uncertainty [aléa] of truths, or Man as being-for-death.” The work of a specific truth-process this thesis has looked toward – that is, scientific fidelity to the contingent event – may appear unusual, inhuman, uncanny, “asocial,” militant, and perhaps sometimes only thinkable in fantastical genre fiction scenarios: unusual, because it is no longer an ethics predicated on surviving, waving off death a little longer, or avoiding something Evil, but courageously embracing something superfluous to an individual’s being itself. Badiou sums up his ethic of truths in this way: “Do all that you can to persevere in that which exceeds your perseverance. Persevere in the interruption. Seize in your being that which has seized and broken you.” Grave Encounters, meanwhile, presents a scenario where none of this ethical terrain is excavated. It ends, for all involved, in totalizing despair and ineffable mystery. This is not at all to suggest the crew members should have magically discovered some new form of science that could account for the paranormal events,
nor is it at all to suggest embracing some insensate hyper-rationalism would suddenly solve all of the genuine problems facing them. It is not even to say this position and the call to a fidelity to truth could ever be reasonably expected of any human person. It is instead to point out again that the fundamental crux of XSF is a choice between despair and courage – it is an extreme challenge, and even a profoundly inhuman or demanding one, one that is not reasonable by all current accounts. But once reason has encountered the truth of factiality in an event, it too must rise to the task of imagining new possible ways of doing and being.

**Quietism and Ineffability in *Lake Mungo***

*Lake Mungo* takes a step closer toward the ethical possibility of fidelity to truth, but in doing so it actually challenges the supposedly contingent status of its events. *Lake Mungo* presents itself as a faux documentary, comprising talking head interviews and assemblages of supposedly authentic found footage from within the diegesis. Adopting a true-crime or forensic style, the film recounts the drowning of Australian teenager Alice Palmer in December 2005 and the family’s gradual attempts at both coping with the grief of her sudden disappearance and, soon after, her apparent haunting of their family home. Photographs and videos taken around the house reveal Alice’s shadowy figure lurking in the background. *Lake Mungo* plays with the authenticity of its images: in a pivotal plot shift, Alice’s brother, Matthew, is discovered to have been faking the Alice ghost videos. Prior to this reveal, Alice is seen looming undeniably in the background of a family séance session’s footage. The father is keen to comment on this new footage – “for one, it was significantly more data, so it was less ambiguous, and uh, it was impossible to dismiss it as a coincidence of shadow play and digital noise. There was something inexplicable in our house, that was beyond a doubt.”

It is revealed shortly after, however, that
Matthew faked this among other videos by manipulating old footage of Alice and integrating it into this new footage.

The film progresses on this general line of disenchantment, uncovering new supposedly paranormal evidence only for it to reveal a more immediate material reality and the brutal truth of the finality of Alice’s death – until a limit is hit where footage is discovered that remains actually inexplicable within any known boundary of causality or scientific knowledge. Alice’s old boyfriend reveals to the family footage of Alice burying something at nearby Lake Mungo at night during a school trip, while her friends frolic carefree in the foreground. The family flies out to Lake Mungo to uncover these buried objects, one of which turns out to be Alice’s phone. Reviewing the phone footage, they see Alice, carrying the phone, wandering out into the barren desert. Out of the black mess of pixels, a figure materializes in the distance and grows closer. It is what looks like Alice herself, bloated and rotting – exactly as she would look after drowning a few months in the future. In a talking heads interview, Alice’s mother makes clear there is no rational explanation for what Alice saw. Every family member shares their thoughts, all verging on something like a mystic premonition of her death. Regardless, the family expresses the clear sensation that they had uncovered some truth, that they could return to the house with a sense of peace and closure, if not also the necessary melancholy that always follows loss. Shortly after, they move out of the house.

*Lake Mungo* does not truly reveal itself to be XSF until Alice’s phone footage is seen at the end of the last act. Prior, almost every paranormal event captured by a camera had been reinscribed within the boundaries of causation and science. But this final event, captured by Alice’s phone, is one of true traumatic contingency and rupture. There is nothing in this document that can gesture to its own artifice, and nothing in knowledge that can situate it within
a larger narrative of time, causation, and even death. But what is unique about *Lake Mungo* is that it finds a way to reinscribe this absolute contingency into the ineffability of mysticism or another system of causation. For the family (and indeed as heavily suggested by the film itself), Alice’s encounter as revealed in the footage may be inexplicable, but it is not without some transcendent cause or reason – it is implicated as some ineffable realization which made itself known to Alice at that moment, specifically for her or caused by her. Science is felt in its abysmal lack facing this event, and there is indeed an openness here, but the family finds a way to reassert the contingent event into the exterior of finitude, within a mystic system of causation which no sapient reason could ever seek to discover, reasserting an anthropocentric self-satisfaction with the universe’s mysterious ways. The traumatic confrontation with the footage does not in any way leave ambiguity for the viewer (whether that viewer is us or the footage-bearers within the diegesis) that there has been a real contingent event that must be confronted and understood. Again, the video cannot and could never tell us what is real in absolute terms, but it provokes the first critical engagement and encounter toward pursuing the real which it points toward. The image beckons a vector toward its indexical, unimaged reality, and the family has no trouble accepting this. The difference is that the family chooses to stop there, to leave this footage as is – to ignore its call, to betray the evental rupture, to let alone, and to drop the project of knowing more about what has just shown itself to be real and, possibly, knowable, or worth knowing.

Undoubtedly this is entangled in motivations of grief, perhaps even in not wanting Alice’s encounter to have a deflating or disenchanting meaning outside the mystic ineffability the family had inscribed to it. Though the family’s moving away from the home is meant to be seen as an acceptance of this contingent event, it is in many ways an extension of an
abandonment of both Alice and the radical reality that has presented itself to them. Following our ethical line of truths, then, Lake Mungo presents a situation where despair is by no means embraced, but the new reality introduced to the situation in the contingent event is dropped and ignored by Alice’s family; the event is rendered not worth pursuing, inscribing, and remaining faithful to through action. It is worth mentioning Badiou, perhaps harshly, would frame this betrayal as one of the acts of Evil – a return back to the comfortable “continuity of the situation and continuity of opinions.” In his words, “the defeat of the ethic of a truth, at the undecidable point of a crisis, presents itself as betrayal.”98 In the end credits, Alice is seen lingering in the background of other family videos, including the last photo taken at the house – Alice will remain in the home whether or not the family chooses to acknowledge the contingency which is her perpetual existence, in the same way the truth of the event continues on whether or not its subjects remain faithful to it.99 Again, it is not to suggest anything else could be realistically expected of a person, and the family’s ultimate acceptance of Alice’s death is by any account socially appropriate – but contingency is anything but realistic in an ordinary sense, and the film does not rise to the possibly asocial challenge which is an ethic of truths.

Inhuman Ethics and a “Science of Openness” in Senritsu Kaiki File Kowasugi

FFH as XSF presents an extra-ordinary ethical opportunity that both of these types of films, though excellent thought experiments in their own right, do not meet. The found footage films of J-horror director Koji Shiraishi, meanwhile, offer a compelling and unusual embrace of the real-image vector and its challenge, a rejection of this seeming dead-lock between despair and mysticism. The specific site of investigation for this thesis is Shiraishi’s Senritsu Kaiki File Kowasugi series. As of writing, the unassuming low-budget FFH franchise has expanded into something of its own cinematic universe containing ten feature films and at least ten short films,
starting in 2012 with *Senritsu Kaiki File Kowasugi! File 01 - Operation Capture the Slit-Mouthed Woman* and (presumably) concluding after an 8-year hiatus with *Senritsu Kaiki World Kowasugi!* in 2023. In *Found Footage Horror Films: Fear and the Appearance of Reality*, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas makes note of Shiraishi’s forays into FFH and the prolific presence of FFH in J-horror, even though more popular exports like the *Ringu* (1998-2000) and *Ju-On* (2003-2009) franchises have overshadowed their existence. Nonetheless, though the *Senritsu Kaiki* series has not been released in the West or officially translated, Shiraishi’s films have developed a strong cult following in the Anglophone world thanks to the illegitimate subtitle-translation work of “SOTAR,” frequent uploads of Shiraishi’s films to websites like YouTube and Internet Archive, and enthused engagement on social database platforms like Letterboxd. An English-speaking Discord server dedicated entirely to Shiraishi’s films, called “Shiracord,” has over three thousand members at the time of writing. Though Japanese Found Footage Horror franchises may never reach as large of an audience as other FFH films, the undoubtedly enthusiastic Anglophone internet community which has discovered *Senritsu Kaiki* signals something unique about these films which other FFH lacks. Aside from their Lovecraftian spectacle, Shiraishi’s films outline a desire to know and transcribe the contingent event facing even absurd potentials of suffering – in all their asocial and grotesque absurdity, they inspire and provoke an ethic of fidelity to the event, an effort to relentlessly pursue knowledge of the contingent.

Heller-Nicholas notes Shiraishi’s films could deserve “a book in their own right” – as such, an examination of the developments of the *Senritsu Kaiki* franchise could constitute its own thesis. Each entry follows the exploits of a paranormal investigation crew, helmed by Kudo, Ichikawa, and Tashiro the cameraman (played by Koji Shiraishi himself). In each film, the
team seeks to investigate paranormal footage sent to them. More often than not, this ends with the concerned paranormal victims fairing worse off than prior, contracting terrible curses, or even dying, with the Kaiki team scraping by the hair of their chin. Kudo, further, employs methods of interrogation and interference with clients and his coworkers alike through hyper-masculine physical abuse, including incessant misogyny against Ichikawa, who begrudgingly tolerates it. These mishaps are frequently played for laughs (and a form of camp detachment that fans have embraced) but are often equally distressing and shocking in their own right.

By all practical accounts, the Kaiki team (particularly Kudo) is not ethical. They disregard the well-being of others, and Kudo bullies others into entering terrifying situations all for the sake of his DVD sales. To even begin to say the Kaiki team abides by some higher ethical principle that renders the suffering they leave in their wake inconsequential borders an indefensible hyper-individualist or potentially fascistic ethics. Rather, the singular ethical merit of the team is their fidelity to the absurd contingent events which they find themselves the subject to – a relentless desire to record, cognize, and know these events by filming them, a rejection of the petty animal conditions which make up human bodies, and most importantly a rejection of any necessitarian fatalism which says the world must be the way it is. In spite of all their debauchery and destruction, the team remains faithful to that which has seized them, that which they must pursue as an unknown reality superfluous to them, a relentless drive to cognize reality and to never accept it as stagnant, necessary, fated (even if this drive is superficially, for Kudo, motivated by DVD sales). This drive ultimately leads the team not only to defy fate, but to (quite hysterically) save the world through this fidelity to contingency.

In the seventh entry of the series, deceivingly titled Senritsu Kaiki File Kowasugi! Final Chapter, the significance of the logic of contingency makes itself clear. Throughout the entire
franchise, classic science as a form of measurement is rendered comedically incompetent (in entry six, for example, a prudish scientist is brought along only to be flabbergasted by his sudden inability to explain the paranormal events occurring). General frameworks of superstition and the psychics who assist the team across the series are portrayed as indeed carrying a certain knowledge or openness to the real truth of the events – but what keeps Senritsu Kaiki within the boundaries of XSF is the insistence with which any episteme (religious or scientific) is rendered arbitrary or subject to sudden absurd ruptures or change, as the stakes increase across each entry. The relentless and even arrogant attempts of the Kaiki team to transcribe this supposedly mystic reality only repeatedly re-asserts its own absurd arbitration and ultimate factiality, in spite of the perhaps temporary cogency of superstitious practices facing contingent appearances of ghouls.

The team in this way embraces what Negarestani called a “science of openness,” an openness to the given facticity of deductive science or spirituality to rupture into epistemic impossibility, whilst still relentlessly seeking a new transcription and comprehension of this very rupture.

The seventh entry presents a pivotal choice between necessity and contingency. To be brief, Kudo (who, for reasons themselves arbitrary, has now accidentally swapped bodies with Ichikawa), realizes he must go back in time and convince his parents before his own birth to halt research on occultist projects to prevent the destruction of the world. He asks the team, “Hey, is this my destiny?” to which he is told, “No. It’s not your destiny. This is your will. Fate is the current situation … Gather your will and defy fate as many times as you need!”107 The team ultimately does just that, filming the absurdities108 all the while, even unto the literal end of the world and the shrugged realization on the part of Kudo that nobody could buy their DVDs or watch their films anymore since the world has ended. Shiraishi’s franchise is an unusual and grotesque series, but it is remarkable insofar as it takes steps toward wedding the FFH form with
the elevated ethical possibility latent in XSF and indeed brought to full fruition through FFH – the drive to cognize and in turn change the world, to embrace its reality and face it for what it is, to pragmatically “defy fate” – indeed the supposed necessity of pain, destruction, suffering, regression, quietude – as many times as it takes, so long as it is possible: which, as contingency may beg, it always is. This movement begs an inhuman vector away from despair and quietism, and toward the real, the real which predicates and actualizes the very existence of any ethical concerns in the first place.

**Conclusion**

The work of this thesis was an investigation of media’s ability to not only represent contingency but to provoke a scientific ethics in the face of an incognizable or destructive reality. This investigation operated in three movements. First, Meillassoux’s principle of factiality was examined, predicing a wound of inductive uncertainty in line with Hume, and further the conceivability of the contingent event, wherein we can never maintain ontological security about reality. Meillassoux’s Extro-Science Fiction, a fictional narrative world that has been noticeably taken over by contingency, was extended along terms of Supernatural Horror – in this way, Supernatural Horror as XSF offers room to think through the trauma of a metaphysically contingent event and its possibility. Second, FFH was identified as a corrosive and confrontational form of XSF, precisely because it reinstates the reflexive or mediated boundary between phenomenal image and un-imaged, unthought, noumenal world. The reinstatement of this correlated but representational dualism, and the very distance between image and world, provokes a vector of thought toward reality; in this sense, FFH demands a recognition of contingency as a genuine occurrence that is worth cognizing and transcribing. This attitude generated is scientific and ethical – there is therefore in the reflexive photographic image a call
to pursue transcription of reality, regardless of its possibility, as opposed to a mystic regression to quietism. Finally, three possible ethical endpoints were identified in Supernatural Horror XSF: the first two result in a regression to despair or quietism. The last category reveals, sketched along terms of Badiou’s ethic of truths, a fidelity to the real and an inhuman pursual of cognizing a reality which may even forever elude cognization. This pursuit eludes any sort of fatalism or determinism that essentializes embodied suffering or epistemic oblivion; in this sense, it is possible for FFH to present a challenge of courage and enlightenment against all odds.

Though the highly spectacular and hypothetical register of this theorization may appear unrelated to any immediate pragmatics, this ethical challenge fundamentally heightens the register of a militant politics of action: to never take the world as fated, but to relentlessly pursue, even in inhuman terms, a world which may be made to be better. Badiou sums his ethics of truths with the following maxim: “Keep going!” In no small way, Supernatural Horror is a potential terrain for a personal and political pragmatics of courage: a courage to face reality, to chase it, even as it may elude us.

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6 Ibid., 23.
7 Ibid., 24.
8 Ibid., 112.
9 Ibid., 25, 28.
10 Ibid., 55.
11 It should be noted that the generalization “science,” as used throughout this paper, refers specifically to this kind of practicing empirical science, which requires inductive inference.
12 Ibid., 69-70.
Shaviro lies in the former camp; movement veered toward panpsychism and vitalism, and the other toward eliminativist materialism and new materialism angles, see Steven Shaviro. The development of Speculative Realism as a movement methodology and professed antagonism toward vitalism as merely another form of correlationism.

Though Land is often accredited as an early precursor to thinkers like Meillassoux and others associated with Speculative Realism, I am not, it must be emphasized, investigating any tenets of Land’s late philosophy, which took a notoriously hateful, right-wing, and often incoherent turn across the last decade. For a history of Land, his prior association with Marxism at Warwick University, and his shift to the right-wing, see Andy Beckett, “Accelerationism: how a fringe philosophy predicted the future we live in,” The Guardian, May 11, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/11/accelerationism-how-a-fringe-philosophy-predicted-the-future-we-live-in.

I am joining in an extension of this wound-picking by fleshing out the implications of a troubling foundational premise. Though Land is often accredited as an early precursor to thinkers like Meillassoux and others associated with Speculative Realism, I am not, it must be emphasized, investigating any tenets of Land’s late philosophy, which took a notoriously hateful, right-wing, and often incoherent turn across the last decade. For a history of Land, his prior association with Marxism at Warwick University, and his shift to the right-wing, see Andy Beckett, “Accelerationism: how a fringe philosophy predicted the future we live in,” The Guardian, May 11, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/11/accelerationism-how-a-fringe-philosophy-predicted-the-future-we-live-in.

Further, the notion of absolute contingency tempts an “anything goes” premise which Meillassoux is directed by Christopher Roth (2015), 60.

The choice of “wound” here may seem unusual, as it invokes a process of healing and indeed something that happens to someone, not a traumatic condition of all happening and experience itself. By using “wound” I am alluding to an anecdote from Robin Mackay about Nick Land in his earlier days as a scholar – “Nick was this kind of person who would say something like, um, philosophy is just like having a wound and scratching it with a stick” Hyperstition, directed by Christopher Roth (2015), 1:25:06, https://vimeo.com/ondemand/hyperstition. Meillassoux, in this way, identifies the wound of contingency and, through careful reasoning, picks at it to its bare fruition. In this thesis, I am joining in an extension of this wound-picking by fleshing out the implications of a troubling foundational premise. Though Land is often accredited as an early precursor to thinkers like Meillassoux and others associated with Speculative Realism, I am not, it must be emphasized, investigating any tenets of Land’s late philosophy, which took a notoriously hateful, right-wing, and often incoherent turn across the last decade. For a history of Land, his prior association with Marxism at Warwick University, and his shift to the right-wing, see Andy Beckett, “Accelerationism: how a fringe philosophy predicted the future we live in,” The Guardian, May 11, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/11/accelerationism-how-a-fringe-philosophy-predicted-the-future-we-live-in.

For a concise summary of Meillassoux without losing nuance because he employs a variety of specialist terms in specific contexts as a way of totalizing seemingly disparate philosophical trends; thus, the minor movements of his argument hinge on a radical reframing of the specific historical-philosophical trends he seeks to criticize – in other words, the reasoning he takes on appears unusual not because it is especially caustic or polemical but because the consequences of the argument happen to stand against practically every prior current of Continental philosophy. Further, the notion of absolute contingency tempts an “anything goes” premise which Meillassoux is careful to avoid with the nuance of his argument. Ironically, the supposedly “speculative” current of new materialisms which are often credited back to Meillassoux’s influence share little resemblance to his rationalist methodology and professed antagonism toward vitalism as merely another form of correlationism. For an account of the development of Speculative Realism as a movement and a survey of thinkers and arguments from the affective and new materialism angles, see Steven Shaviro, The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). Following Shaviro’s suggested historicization, one side of the supposed movement veered toward panpsychism and vitalism, and the other toward eliminativist materialism and scientism. Shaviro lies in the former camp; Meillassoux finds himself better suited to the latter camp, as do the methods of this thesis. Shaviro, The Universe of Things, 108-133.

For the full articulation of this problem, see Meillassoux, After Finitude, 9-27.

Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 32-34. Though Meillassoux does not identify him by name, it is worth noting how Spinoza generates the same problem as Leibniz. Spinoza’s more austere necessity, which makes no attempts at preserving freedom, modality, or contingency like Leibniz, builds from a similar starting point, with a more classic ontological argument in favor of an infinite singular God substance as cause-of-itself. See Benedictus De Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Stuart Hampshire (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), ID1, ID3, IP11, IP29. To honor Spinoza’s geometric method and for ease of access, I am using the standard abbreviations of propositions instead of page numbers.


Ibid., 49.

Ibid., 39.

Ibid., 79.

Ibid., 56-59.

Ibid., 59.

Ibid., 61.

Ibid., 73.

Ibid., 62, 63.

It is important to highlight that Meillassoux does not actually justify this absolutization of the scope of mathematics, instead instigating a call to action for more work from the newfound terrain of factiality. In other words, the useful absolutes (absolutes to secure math and science) that would supposedly spring forth from the discovery of absolute contingency as the in-itself are described as preliminary research projects, and not already justifiable theses. See Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 126-128. Whether or not Meillassoux himself accomplishes this feat has yet to be seen.

In the essay “Concepts and Objects,” Ray Brassier is keen on emphasizing that the supposed correlationist trap is not as impermeable as it may appear and that the transcendental or critical paradigm is by no means wedded to correlationism in thinking science, contrary to what Meillassoux may suggest. In his words (and taking influence from Wilfrid Sellars),

Independence is not inaccessibility. The claim that something exists mind-independently does not commit one to the claim that it is conceptually inaccessible. By implying that mind-independence requires conceptual inaccessibility, [correlationism and idealism] saddles transcendental realism with an exorbitant burden. But it is a burden which there is no good reason to accept. Ray Brassier, “Concepts and Objects,” in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi R. Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: Re.Press, 2010), 58.

In other words, the transcendental paradigm is never required to say the conceptual or phenomenal has no relationship to objects in-themselves. To collapse the concept/object dichotomy into pure metaphysical idealism is not logically necessitated; conceivability does not liquidate asubjective existence through the very act of conception. The problem of correlationism and a return to realism (at least within the Continental tradition), as Brassier would argue, necessitates a resurrection of the distinction between metaphysics and epistemology. In Brassier’s terms: “just as epistemology without metaphysics is empty, metaphysics without epistemology is blind.” Brassier, “Concepts,” 49. What Brassier arguably suggests is that a commitment to realism predicates a minimum critical-representational theory of thought (a split between my model of things and the things-in-themselves). This does not mean we must assert that concepts or objects are either necessarily the originary or privileged step in an epistemic process, though correlationism may beg we recognize concepts as the ineffable and given. Again, Brassier notes, “To assume privileged access to the structure of conception is to assume intellectual intuition. But this is to make a metaphysical claim about the essential nature of conception; an assumption every bit as dogmatic as any allegedly metaphysical assertion about the essential nature of objects.” Brassier, “Concepts,” 56. To adopt critical representational thought is to be constantly confronted with an exteriority thought may or may not have a direct or parallel relationship with, and vice versa.


Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 22, 26-27. The usage of Gould here is not incidental, as *The Mismeasure of Man* seeks precisely to show how taking the claims of mathematics as ontological without further critical awareness is precisely the sort of reasoning that allowed IQ tests and psychometric pseudoscience to flourish and affirm racist attitudes. A large part of Gould’s point is that intelligence cannot be reified as some singular entity and quantified under number, in the same way we could with something like height. Quantifying something like a human’s intelligence and an ancestral quality from prehistory are of course hardly comparable, and it could be rightfully assumed Meillassoux would criticize any attempt at reifying something like intelligence. But it is worth noting the

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This situation is no more comforting, nor desirable. – push us fully into the type
Science Fiction to Karl Popper's falsification solution to Hume's problem and Kant's transcendental solution, refer to Popper and Immanuel Kant. In brief, i
XSF. As he would frame it, its mere conceivability challenges the rebuttals to Hume's problem formulated by Karl

Peirce even argued science already transcribed contingency through the supposed inexactitude of its measurements: “Try to verify any laws of nature, and you will find that the more precise your observations, the more certain they will be to show irregular departures from the law … Trace their causes back far enough and you will be forced to admit they are always due to arbitrary determination, or chance.” Peirce, Philosophical Writings of Peirce, 331. Peirce’s appeals are probabilistic in their equivalence of chance with contingency and infer a sort of agency in nature; in this sense his system would be disqualified by Meillassoux, perhaps justifiably so. However, the merit of Peirce here is to simply note one of many possible ways modality can be salvaged within premises of baseline necessity – if the concern is with total necessity or determinism, and the possible religiosity these positions imply, it is crucial that absolute contingency is not accepted as the only conceivable alternative path for thought.

Peirce proposes is not many degrees separated from this sort of topological reductionism that is, in practice, both intellectually short-sighted and socially destructive.

Meillassoux proposes is not many degrees separated from this sort of topological reductionism that is, in practice, both intellectually short-sighted and socially destructive.


Brassier, “Concepts and Objects,” 64.

Meillassoux, After Finitude, 63-64.

Ibid., 64-71.

Ibid., 103-106.

Meillassoux is also unconvinced by what could be viewed as a minor approach to contingency – that is, a mixed solution in which finitude is instated and contingency persists in the world but is not boundless. The either/or of Leibnizian causal necessity down to an originary self-constituting absolute, or a total hyperchaotic contingency, is perhaps needlessly totalizing. Scientists and philosophers as early as Charles Sanders Peirce, prior even to the revelations of quantum mechanics, formulated causation as never metaphysically necessary or direct, but contingent within a sort of finitude, margin, or parameter of “spontaneity” – in his words,

By thus admitting pure spontaneity or life as a character of the universe, acting always and everywhere though restrained within narrow bounds by law, producing infinitesimal departures from law continually, and great ones with infinite infrequency, I account for all the variety and diversity of the universe. Charles Sanders Peirce, Philosophical Writings of Peirce, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 2011), 334-335.

That is, so long as contingency has not also ruptured this material and experiential feedback process, which would push us fully into the type-3 XSF world, and this reasoning about pain and functionalism is no longer possible at all – a boundless wasteland of unfathomable chaos, beyond the reach of every current form of cognition and facticity. This situation is no more comforting, nor desirable.
if a difference can be made); more importantly, this encounter may carry ethical problems and threats to the mind’s
must be transcribed in an encounter with something
Grave Encounters
encounter with it; it is still thought which
mathematical information, whether considered absolute or not, does not or cannot persist prior to thought’s very
Finitude,
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Danièle Huillet
quiz.html.
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Baudrillard
place, no images, nothing but filler. Not much took place in all our heads either, and that too is in order
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emphasizing his caustic insistence that the event in any phenomenal terms is rendered practically non-existant: “At
the desired place (the Gulf), nothing took place, non-war. At the desired place (TV, information), nothing took
place, no images, nothing but filler. Not much took place in all our heads either, and that too is in order.” Jean
82.
Hume,
Enquiry, 35.
Hume,
Enquiry, 36.
Bazin, “The Ontology,” 8.
Ibid., 7.
1982), 76.
Barthes, Camera Lucida, 79.
See, for example, “Test Yourself: Which Faces Were Made by A.I.?” The New York Times, accessed April 1,
2024, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/01/19/technology/artificial-intelligence-image-generators-faces-
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For an example from Straub-Huillet, see From the Clouds to the Resistance, directed by Jean-Marie Straub and
Danièle Huillet (Rai 2: 1979), 1hr., 44min. For an example from Godard, see De l’origine du XXle siècle, directed
by Jean-Luc Godard (Vega Film: 2000), 16min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2qXLxRD6CY.
Sorfa, “What is Film Philosophy?” 4.
Shellie McMurdo, Blood on the Lens: Trauma and Anxiety in American Found Footage Horror Cinema
This is perhaps a weak point in Meillassoux’s ancestral statement. Of course, it must be granted matter persists
beyond thought, but to hope to discover anything about this not-thought being-in-itself, thought must be prepared to
actually confront it and the supposedly absolute information it may inscribe to thought – whether that be in a
laboratory, an archeological dig or, in this case, the halls of an abandoned mental hospital. Meillassoux resists
Pythagoreanism, which would suggest an idealistic equivalence between number and being. See Meillassoux, After
Finitude, 12. However, it seems he cannot totally escape this equivalence without accepting that scientific or
mathematical information, whether considered absolute or not, does not or cannot persist prior to thought’s very
encounter with it; it is still thought which must do the work of coming to know it in an evental encounter or rupture.
Grave Encounters and similar FFH films remind us of this very fact – to know anything at all about an environment,
it must be transcribed in an encounter with something that can inscribe this information (whether mind or machine,
if a difference can be made); more importantly, this encounter may carry ethical problems and threats to the mind’s
general drive to avoid pain.
Grave Encounters, directed by Colin Minihan and Stuart Ortiz (Tribeca Film, 2011), 50:12.
Badiou, Ethics, 35.
Badiou, Ethics, 54.
Ibid., 47.
Lake Mungo, directed by Joel Anderson (Arclight Films, 2008), 37:05.
Badiou, Ethics, 80.
Badiou, Ethics, 78.
Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, Found Footage Horror Films: Fear and the Appearance of Reality (Jefferson, North
notwithstanding a meager budget. Effectively (though perhaps accidentally) through its imaged? This is an extension of the logic of the contingent, an extension the is or how it even is transcribed by image. In short, what if the unthought real just happened to look artificial when

dialectical collision between highly artificial-looking effects work and the insistent realism or vector-toward-the-noumenal of FFH, is a consideration that what we expect reality to look like may have little to do with what reality is or how it even is transcribed by image. In short, what if the unthought real just happened to look artificial when imaged? This is an extension of the logic of the contingent, an extension the Senritsu Kaiki franchise introduces effectively (though perhaps accidentally) through its insistence on visualizing Lovecraftian spectacles notwithstanding a meager budget.

109 Badiou, Ethics, 91.
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