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# Ec-Static Air: The Unseeable Sounds of Being Beside Oneself

Kristopher L. Cannon

Kore-eda Hirokazu's *Air Doll* (*Kûki ningyô*, 2009) begins by following the character Hideo as he travels by train toward his home. After arriving, he speaks to someone offscreen before the film cuts to a scene at the dinner table where an over-the-shoulder shot from Hideo's point of view reveals that he was and continues speaking to a blow-up sex doll he has named Nozomi. Spectators see the plastic surface of Nozomi's body, and despite how Hideo personifies her, she remains the silent recipient of his statements. The scene transitions to Hideo's bedroom, where he will use Nozomi as a sexual object. During this sexual encounter, sound begins to orientate spectators toward the surface of Nozomi's plastic exterior more explicitly than its visibility. Each thrust or movement Hideo makes is accompanied by the sound of air-filled plastic under pressure. These sounds reiterate and exaggerate Nozomi's properties as an object by *throwing* plasticity *toward* the spectator to exaggerate its frailty; these sounds situate her plasticity within what Steven Connor calls the "rhetoric of the inflatable," which aims to perpetuate perceptions about the frailty of air-filled objects by foregrounding their potential for "abject eruption and collapse."<sup>1</sup> In these contexts, the sound of strained plastic provides spectators with a sense of the weight any air doll must support and lures us toward the

looming possibility of plastic ready to pop at the seams were the force of these thrusts to become too great.

While this opening sequence in *Air Doll* positions Nozomi as an object, foreshadowing how several characters will perceive her purpose during other sexual encounters in the film,<sup>2</sup> the narrative quickly departs from this explicitly anthropocentric perspective. Nozomi is initially confined by audiovisual cues aiming to reiterate her status as a plastic object, but after the opening sequence, the audible properties of the film begin to undermine our reliance on humans as the interlocutors who make objects meaningful. Sounds of breathing accompany the film's transition to daytime, and we return to Hideo's home after brief scenic shots of his neighborhood in Tokyo. We watch Hideo dress and prepare to leave for work while Nozomi remains unclothed in bed. The sounds of breathing persist in the bedroom but, after Hideo is out of the frame, become attributed to Nozomi by the movement of a wind chime that jingles above her head. Spectators soon hear sounds of strained, stretching plastic return but, unlike the previous night, witness a visible shift from her state as an inanimate air doll: we see her legs begin to move before watching her translucent shadow on the wall while she walks from the bed toward the window (Figure 1).

This transformation situates spectators to grapple with normative orientations toward objects when they cannot or do not remain confined in an all-too-typical binary opposition to (human) subjects. Contemporary speculative realist philosophies provide various definitions for objects, and I remain intrigued by those with an orientation toward better understanding about the ontological configurations of objects, things, and entities (human or otherwise).<sup>3</sup> The aims of these writings have prompted me to pause and consider what circumstances might prompt anyone other than object-oriented philosophers to consider the lives of objects or reconsider and expand an anthropocentric ontology.<sup>4</sup>

In what follows, I examine how *Air Doll* positions spectators to follow the life of a thing by upsetting normative orientations toward inanimate objects or tools. To accomplish this, I interrogate how the film reframes subject-object relations and, in turn, reveals the autonomy of things. I continue this inquiry by addressing why spectators are not only encouraged to look at the life of things but also, more importantly, why the film encourages engagement with things beyond (visible) present-at-hand surfaces. Finally, I address why the framing of relationships, between things and humans as well as things with other things, encourages and requires us to expand our conceptualization of ontology to include ec-static forms of being.



Figure 1. Nozomi's translucent shadow. *Air Doll/Kûki ningyô* (Kore-eda Hirokazu, 2009).

The translucence of Nozomi's shadow provides an interesting representation to interrogate how the film situates her shift from (Hideo's) inanimate, inflatable object to autonomous thing. Bill Brown distinguishes these terms by describing how, "as they circulate through our lives, we look *through* objects" in an attempt to make them meaningful, whereas "we only catch a glimpse of things." Brown does not use the term "thing" as a neologism for "object" but instead uses it to designate an entity whose opacity has the potential to undermine "subject-object relation[s]." We can only ever apprehend things "partially or obliquely," Brown notes, and "by looking *at* things we render them as objects."<sup>5</sup> Shifting spectatorial focus to Nozomi's shadow stifles our ability to render her meaningful by looking *at* or *through* her (as an object). In this regard, *Air Doll* refigures our normative orientation toward objects by reorientating spectators toward the murkier mode of visibility that Brown attributes to thingness.

Brown suggests that we can encounter the thingness of objects when they no longer work as we anticipate. Here, Brown's argument resonates with Graham Harman's discussion about Martin Heidegger and the *ontic* properties of tools.<sup>6</sup> Heidegger describes how the hammer can be defined by its substantive qualities as a tool, which depends on its capacity to be ready-to-hand and facilitate the act of hammering smaller objects such as nails. In contrast, a broken hammer cannot be ready-to-hand because it disrupts human-oriented expectations about its use-value as a tool. Instead, the broken hammer reveals qualities once suppressed by

its designation as a tool and becomes present-at-hand as a thing by revealing its capacity to exceed our understanding.

Applying this conceptualization to *Air Doll* requires us to clarify if (and for whom) Nozomi fails to function as a tool. An important distinction emerges between Hideo's perception of Nozomi, as an inanimate ready-to-hand object meant for his sexual gratification, and the perception of spectators, who see her status change when she moves autonomously. While the narrative in *Air Doll* may require spectators to suspend some anthropocentric assumptions about objects, Nozomi's autonomous actions illustrate why a tool-oriented interpretation of objects limits our understanding about the lives of things. Hideo's assertions about Nozomi's failure to function in accordance with his social and sexual expectations could result in some spectators seeing her as a plastic doll failing to fulfill her function as a (sexual) object meant to be used by humans. Perceptions of Nozomi as a broken tool ultimately reveal why "[shaping] things into tools," as Steven Shaviro contends, undermines their "independent lives" by restricting them to our human-oriented desire "to serve our own purposes." Nozomi's *animacy* resists the ability to conflate being present-at-hand with being ready to serve the needs of humans; instead, her presence-at-hand flaunts its failure to conform to anthropocentric expectations and situates spectators to witness what Shaviro describes as the "strange autonomy and vitality" of things.<sup>7</sup>

Shaviro makes reference to strangeness in the context of his discussion about *tool-being*, but his arguments extend to the term "thing," which I prefer instead of the term "tool" for several reasons. First, as I previously noted, I value its capacity to undermine normative, often binary, formulations for subject-object relations. Second, while there are a range of definitions for this term—"thing" is not protected from its sedimentation within various sociohistorical and philosophical contexts—I prefer its patina of ambiguity over the (colloquial) polish of terms such as "object," which throws (meaning) toward (whomever or whatever it encounters), or "tool," which seems to take shape and tame the thingness of things (at least until they break). Finally, this terminological choice aids my aim to determine if or when we might reconsider our object-orientations by reiterating the ambiguity that spectators experience while watching *Air Doll*.

After Nozomi leaves Hideo's bed and walks across the room, we see her hand extend toward an open window, where sounds of water droplets plopping on plastic digits reiterate what spectators anticipate based on the visible form of her body (Figure 2). The camera briefly lingers on Nozomi's hand before panning back to



Figure 2. Water droplets, plopping on plastic digits. *Air Doll*/ *Kûki ningyô* (Kore-eda Hirokazu, 2009).

frame her face, where spectators encounter an overt visible transformation: the panning movement of the camera maintains continuity within the diegetic world but produces visual discontinuity because the visible plastic body of a sex doll is replaced by a flesh-bodied actor (Figure 3).

*Air Doll* does not make the replacement of the plastic prop visible or acknowledge the presence of a flesh-bodied actor diegetically. In this regard, the transition from doll to human becomes recognizable as such only from our position as spectators outside the profilmic event. Doona Bae, the actor who portrays Nozomi, might interact with other cast members more easily than her plastic predecessor, but the choice for her to replace the plastic sex doll forces spectators to follow a human in a narrative about the life of a thing without fully interrogating their (visible) differences.<sup>8</sup> Attempting to reconcile these differences reveals why taking time for the transition from plastic to flesh is not without theoretical implications, especially if the replacement of the plastic prop intends to provide a sense of verisimilitude for spectators watching the (animated) life of an air doll.

Replacing the plastic prop with a human body will complicate how spectators understand Nozomi's presence-at-hand. Graham Harman clarifies Heidegger's point about presence by noting that "what exists outside of human contexts *does not have the mode of being of presence-at-hand*" because "an entity becomes present-at-hand when we relate to it, *not* when it is independent of us."<sup>9</sup> The *absence* of the plastic doll is what becomes visible when Bae



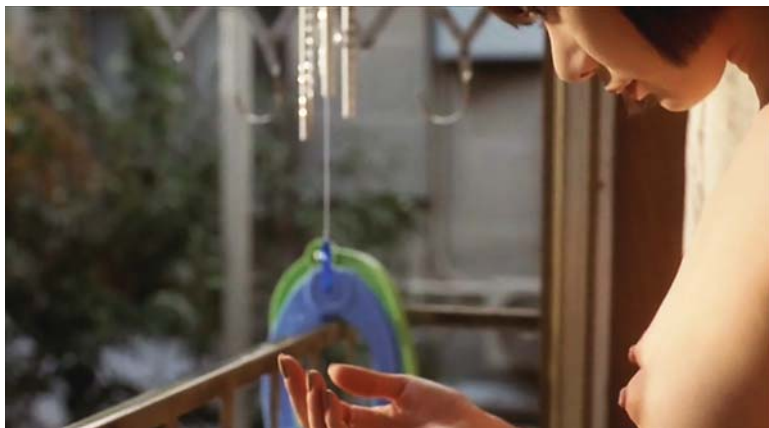


Figure 3. Plastic becomes flesh. *Air Doll/ Kûki ningyô* (Kore-eda Hirokazu, 2009).

perhaps most troubling, is she speaking about the beauty of the flesh that now covers the contours of her body as a signifier for a human form of embodiment?

Nozomi's one-word declaration about beauty adds a level of complexity to our understanding about her transition from inanimate object to thing because, as Steven Shaviro explains, "a subject does not cognize the beauty of an object. Rather, the object lures the subject while remaining indifferent to it; and the subject feels the object, without knowing it or possessing it or even caring about it."<sup>13</sup> Nozomi has not been positioned or defined as a subject within the narrative, but some-*thing* lures her to aestheticize and (st)utter the word "beautiful." To put this differently, Nozomi's statement is a manifestation of her autonomy during an *aesthetic* encounter whereby spectators witness the life of a thing and how things are affected by their experiences. Nozomi's statement foregrounds what Shaviro describes as an aesthetic mode of relation, which "involves feeling an object *for its own sake*, beyond those aspects of it that can be understood or used," and in this context allows us to witness how a thing interacts with other entities without the need for human interlocutors.<sup>14</sup>

As the film proceeds, Nozomi becomes increasingly invested in the visible properties of her body because of their potential to put her in proximity to human relations or acknowledgment.<sup>15</sup> Her surface orientations are motivated, at least in part, by a desire to become more like humans rather than remaining relegated to her previous status as a tool, ready-to-hand for Hideo's sexual



gratification. As an air doll, Nozomi understands why the visibility of her plastic body can result in her becoming relegated to the status of an object: at two different points in the film, she reiterates the potential for humanist perspectives about her plastic body to reposition her as an object with specific use-value (“I am an air doll. A substitute for handling sexual desire.”) and exchange-value (“I am an air doll. A late model, cheap one . . .”). Nozomi’s inability to alter the properties of her plastic exterior fuels her desire to alter how others see this visible surface. This desire is evidenced, for example, by her use of cosmetic concealer in an effort to render a cover for the seams on her body, and this fixation on visible surfaces complicates Nozomi’s ability to understand the matter *contained* by the surface of her plastic exterior.

In one of the most fascinating scenes in the film, Nozomi will experience her body failing to maintain the human shape she desires. Nozomi and her coworker Junichi (whom she also finds attractive) put up Christmas decorations at the video rental shop where they work. Nozomi’s aim to maintain a human-shaped body is obliterated when she slips on a ladder and punctures her hand on the corner of a metal shelf. When we see Nozomi puncture her hand, the overwhelming sound of an airstream provides audiovisual synchronicity by becoming “louder than the rest of the soundtrack” through the physicality of “visual fortissimo.”<sup>16</sup> In this context, the sound of air leaving Nozomi’s body resonates with the sounds of breathing I previously mentioned. In Hideo’s apartment, the emphatic sounds of exhalation are indexically attributed to Nozomi by the jostling movement of a wind chime hanging above her head. The air leaving Nozomi’s body in the video shop is visibly indexed in a similar way. She falls out of the frame after puncturing her hand, but the camera lingers on the slightly frantic sway of Christmas ornaments hanging from the ceiling above her head.

In both of these scenes, the connection between sound and source exposes how the film imbues air with meaning. While the sound of Nozomi’s breath (leaving her body) prefaces how spectators see her becoming animated at the start of the film, the sound of air (also leaving her body) after being punctured becomes a threat about her potential return to a previous state of immobility if she was left to deflate on the floor of the video store (Figure 4). Although air is everywhere in *Air Doll*, our inability to optically register its omnipresence from a spectatorial position reveals why, as Davina Quinlivan argues about breath, it encourages us to “contemplate beyond the visible.”<sup>17</sup> *Air Doll* facilitates this mode of contemplation when the emphatic sound of air escaping Nozomi’s body becomes acousmatic, prompting her thingness to return to



Figure 4. Palpable plastic returns after Nozomi punctures her hand. *Air Doll/Kûki ningyô* (Kore-eda Hirokazu, 2009).



Figure 5. Bae's body juxtaposed with the visibility of the plastic prop. *Air Doll/Kûki ningyô* (Kore-eda Hirokazu, 2009).

the surface of our attention. Spectators are situated to contemplate how Nozomi's punctured hand affects her plastic body when its impact can "shimmer in the image" or become visible before we see her on the floor, arms and legs partially deflated (Figure 5).<sup>18</sup>

Nozomi is forced to acknowledge the visible properties of her body when the fact of her plasticity returns. Junichi rushes to help her, but Nozomi reveals her desire to be seen as something other than an air doll by avoiding eye contact and asking him to look away. Junichi ignores this request and finds tape to patch the

hole in her hand before he proceeds to blow her back up (Figure 6). We see Nozomi's plastic legs and arms begin to inflate when Junichi breathes air into her plug. After a quick cut from her face to her legs, the visibly plastic appendages of a prop are replaced by Bae's body again. At this point in the film, it is not surprising for Bae's body to return in its entirety when Nozomi becomes refilled with air. As the camera pans from Nozomi's legs to her face, her expressions change from a look of pain to one of pleasure. Nozomi's changing emotional expressions occur as her body swells to its capacity with air, but from the extradiegetic standpoint of spectators, the sight of Nozomi's pleasure becomes associated with the visibility of Bae's body rather than the plastic prop.

While the air was sealed within plastic, Nozomi was able to rely on surface visibility as the standard by which she measures her ideal bodily form. The inability for Nozomi's plastic to retain the air that was previously sealed within her body results in circumstances she could perceive as failures: a palpable plastic body fails to fulfill her efforts or aims to signify as human, and, by extension, she fails to function as an autonomous being because she cannot fill her body with the air it requires for mobility. The sound of leaking air moves in multiple directions but also seems to *provide* direction to Nozomi by reminding *her* to acknowledge her thingness.

The return of Nozomi's plasticity could be read as another indication of her presence-at-hand, but things cannot be confined by the limitations of their ontic, present-at-hand properties because, as Shaviri explains, "to reduce a thing to its presence-at-hand—which is to say to the sum of its delineable properties—is precisely to regard this thing as only the correlate of a consciousness perceiving it. But a thing is always more than its qualities; it always exists and acts independently of, and in excess of, the particular ways that we grasp and comprehend it." In this context, while Nozomi's plasticity is both visible and present, the sound of air indicates why she is "irreducible to simple presence" and requires different ontological consideration.<sup>19</sup>

In *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, Luce Irigaray addresses Heidegger's notion of ontology as incomplete because his analysis devoted to earth led him to overlook (or neglect) the presence of air in his conceptualization of *Being*. I do not share all of Irigaray's ideological investments, but our arguments align in their aim to understand Being beyond present-at-hand properties and, more important, to understand how air operates within un(for)seeable experiences or encounters between beings.<sup>20</sup> However, and potentially contrary to Irigaray's assertions, Heidegger does address nonrepresentational forms of things as part of their



Figure 6. Bae's body returns. *Air Doll/Kûki ningyô* (Kore-eda Hirokazu, 2009).

ontology. “The thingly character of the thing,” Heidegger explains, “does not consist in its being a represented object”<sup>21</sup> because “‘Thing-in-itself,’ thought in a rigorously Kantian way, means an object that is no object for us.”<sup>22</sup> Instead, Heidegger questions when or how things appear *as* things—in/on their own terms, we might say—and concludes that “they do not appear *by means of* human making. But neither do they appear without the vigilance of mortals. The first step toward such vigilance is the step back from the thinking that merely represents—that is, explains—to the thinking that responds and recalls.”<sup>23</sup> In short, just as our ability to explore the omnipresent, avisual properties of air requires us to look beyond surfaces of visibility, our ability to contemplate Nozomi’s thingness requires us to think beyond visible or representational forms for things.<sup>24</sup>

To this end, we should consider how the air that is loosed from Nozomi’s body carries with it the “excess” of her being, a “*more-than-present*” thingness not rendered into visible form.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, the sound of air leaking indicates that something from inside Nozomi’s body is, quite literally, expanding around and beside her and, as a result, is an experience I would describe as becoming *ec-static*. “To be ec-static means, literally, to be outside oneself,” Judith Butler explains, “and this can have several meanings: to be transported beyond oneself by a passion, but also to be *beside oneself* with rage or grief.”<sup>26</sup> Nozomi likely experiences this moment as being positioned beside herself (with grief or pain or terror) because of inappropriate orientations toward the

properties of her plastic body. Her aim to hide the visible signs of her plastic exterior did not and could not protect her from being punctured. As a result, Nozomi's aim to "wipe away" her seams with cosmetic concealer could only mask their visibility, which immediately bulged through the concealed cover when the air was let loose from beneath.

Nozomi's ecstatic experience—and, more broadly, the ecstatic properties of air—complicates how we can define ontology based on discreet, "en-static" beings. One solution is to consider how *Air Doll* positions spectators to watch encounters between characters while they negotiate modes of relation and connection. Breathing is one example for this type of encounter or engagement with air and, due to the "nature of breathing," as Davina Quinlivan notes while discussing Irigaray, facilitates the possibility for bodies to commingle when "[air] weaves a proximity, *between*."<sup>27</sup> *Air Doll* foregrounds breath as a powerful avial force with the ability to turn Hideo's inanimate object into an autonomous thing, to impact the shape and size of bodies, and to facilitate intimate and pleasurable encounters between beings.

The experience of being filled by (the breath of) another is an intimate and pleasurable encounter for Nozomi.<sup>28</sup> More specifically, her experience of ecstasis during deflation gives way to more overt signs of ecstasy. Nozomi experiences ecstasy from the fullness of an air-filled body, which she perceives as a necessary condition for her participation in the "social life" of humans. Nozomi will have another ecstatic experience when Junichi asks to deflate her body during a different sexual encounter. Nozomi questions Junichi's intentions when he asks to let her air out, but after he tells her not to worry ("I'll breathe into you like before," he says), she grants Junichi access to her plug. Junichi's desire to deflate Nozomi positions both characters to experience an intimate exchange between bodies through the act of breathing. Nozomi continues to experience pleasure while Junichi refills her body with his breath, and while Junichi sleeps on the bed afterward, we see Nozomi look for his plug to fill him with her breath.

After her search for Junichi's plug is unsuccessful, Nozomi locates a pair of scissors to create a hole she can patch. But unlike her experience from becoming punctured, an internal monologue reveals her nervous realization: "I couldn't exhale my breath into Junichi." While the properties of Nozomi's body raise questions about her ability to *literally* breathe, her aim to fill Junichi with air suggests a desire to provide him with an experience resulting in the same feelings she had during their previous encounters. Spectators are not privy to Junichi's perspective during this encounter, but it

is possible to imagine his final breaths as an indication an ecstatic temporal fluctuation while commingling between life and death.<sup>29</sup> However, it remains unclear how Nozomi could confuse the properties of Junichi's flesh body with the plasticity of hers.

Not only did Nozomi see the seams of her plastic as signs of her difference from human bodies, but she also acknowledges the properties of Junichi's body when she places it in a bag atop a pile of burnable trash. Nozomi "trashes" Junichi's body because her creator taught her about the fate of humans after death ("After all," he says, "once we die, we're 'burnable garbage'"). This contrasts what her creator explains as the fate of air dolls, who are relegated to reside in landfills with other nonburnable things. *Air Doll* provides spectators with various insights about alternative modes of relation between beings, but Nozomi's decision to trash Junichi's body is followed by her decision to resign from a social life with humans.

Nozomi's choice to be sent to a landfill not only becomes significant within the context of the narrative but also reveals how she has come to understand (or, perhaps, resign to) thingness. While things cannot be reduced to their present-at-hand surfaces, *Air Doll* ends by repositioning spectators to imagine interactions between things we will never see and to consider the lives of things persisting beyond and without our involvement. In the final moments of the film, the camera frames the trash area where Nozomi is surrounded by the things she collected from this Tokyo neighborhood. Nozomi did not arbitrarily collect these things—mostly glass bottles in different colors—but, based on interactions spectators see, collected things she could connect with because of their properties she saw in herself. While spectators can assume that she was affected by the beauty of these things—such as the sound produced when air streams across the neck of a bottle—her collection is much larger than the few we saw her acquire and, thus, reiterates the ability for things to live beyond our sight. Perhaps we could say, in the words of Heidegger, that she was affected and "called by the thing as the thing." For spectators, however, this becomes a moment to acknowledge the lives of things persisting beyond our sight. It is, in other words, an encounter with a truly ecstatic form of thing-being—the being of things, "each thinging from time to time in its own way"—an encounter with the potential to result in ontology expanding beyond ourselves, an ontology becoming ecstatic.<sup>30</sup>



## Notes

1. Steven Connor, "Next-to-Nothing," *Tate Etc.* 12 (January 1, 2008), <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/next-nothing>.

2. This is perhaps most visible when postcoital close-ups frame her vaginal cup being washed outside of her body.

3. See, as examples, Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology: Or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, eds., *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne, Australia: re.press, 2011); Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002); Steven Shavero, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); and Steven Shavero, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).

4. This is followed by an additional question I do not address here: how (or to what extent) does object-oriented ontology address the need to divest from ideological frameworks that otherwise occlude ethical considerations of nonhuman objects (or beings)? Michelle Cho's recent publication on *Air Doll* aims to address how ethical dilemmas emerge in this film based on the conditions of possibility for subjects/objects. While Cho addresses how this film disrupts binaries between subject/object and human/nonhuman, my arguments depart from her focus on subjects toward more explicit engagement with the form and function of objects and, in particular, things. See Michelle Cho, "A Disenchanted Fantastic: The Pathos of Objects in Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Air Doll*," in *Simultaneous Worlds: Global Science Fiction Cinema*, edited by Jennifer L. Feeley and Sarah Ann Wells, 223–39 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

5. Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 4, 4n11 (emphasis in original). See also Bill Brown, "The Tyranny of Things (Trivia in Karl Marx and Mark Twain)," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 2 (2002): 442–69, and W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 156–58.

6. See Harman, *Tool-Being*, and Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by Joseph Stambaugh, revised ed. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010).

7. Shavero, *Universe of Things*, 47–48. For a precise and provocative discussion about animacy, see Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

8. This transition/replacement is also notable in contrast to how, two years earlier, the film *Lars and the Real Girl* (Craig Gillespie, 2007) lent visible form to the life of a sex doll. However, unlike the shift after the opening sequence in *Air Doll*, *Lars* restricts its sex doll to a life based on human projections about an inanimate and inaudible thing. Other examples of plastic inflatables could include *The Red Balloon* (Albert Lamorisse, 1956) and, to a lesser degree, *Flight of the Red Balloon* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 2007), but I do not feel that either of these films allow spectators to witness the life of a thing as I describe here.

9. Harman, *Tool-Being*, 22, 126 (emphasis in original).

10. I use the term "tactile" here to draw attention to the intimate, phenomenological experience inspired by couplings of sounds and images. For more in-depth

discussions about our sensorial and phenomenological cinematic experiences, see Jennifer Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009); Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2002), and Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

11. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 135.

12. I am not able to provide insight about the ideological implications of the choice to use katakana characters for the Japanese subtitles in *Air Doll*, but I recognize why the analysis of dialogue can be limited if translation is not addressed. These katakana characters are commonly used to signify “beautiful,” “pretty,” and “clean.” To this end, I utilize the term “beautiful” in my analysis while not aiming to foreclose the possibility for alternative interpretations. For additional insights about translation and cinema, see Nataša Durovičová, “Vector, Flow, Zone: Towards a History of Cinematic Translation,” in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, edited by Nataša Durovičová and Kathleen Newman, 90–120 (New York: Routledge, 2010).

13. Shaviri, *Without Criteria*, 4.

14. Shaviri, *Universe of Things*, 53.

15. In different words, to aestheticize is to orientate toward and place relations within *proximity* whereby it becomes possible to refigure oblique or opaque connections between different types of beings. For more insight about aesthetics and the proximity of relations, see Leo Bersani and Ulysses Dutoit, *Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, and Subjectivity* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 67–68.

16. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 58–59.

17. Davina Quinlivan, *The Place of Breath in Cinema* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 62–64.

18. Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 32, 58–60.

19. Shaviri, *Universe of Things*, 49–50. Correlationism is discussed more explicitly in Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008).

20. Luce Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 2–5, 62. Graham Harman briefly mentions Irigaray’s critique of Heidegger at the beginning of his book but does not find her arguments compatible with his “military campaign driving back toward the *surface* of reality.” In contrast to Harman, I find Irigaray’s work useful because, among other things, she addresses how Being can emerge beyond our ocular perceptions. See Harman, *Tool-Being*, 6 (emphasis in original).

21. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001 [1971]), 165.

22. *Ibid.*, 174.

23. *Ibid.*, 179 (emphasis in original).

24. My use of the term “avizual” is based on what Akira Lippit describes as “impossible, unimaginable viscosity” rather than “absent or negated visibility.” See Akira



Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 32. I also address this concept more directly in my discussion about ec-static queer images as a critique to the ontology of the photograph. See Kristopher L. Cannon, "Ec-statically Queer Images: Queering the Photographic through Fetal Photography," *Photography & Culture* 7, no. 3 (2014): 269–84.

25. Shaviro, *Universe of Things*, 50–51. See also Harman, *Tool-Being*, 47.

26. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 20 (emphasis in original).

27. Quinlivan, *Place of Breath in Cinema*, 62–64 (emphasis in original).

28. Air, as Kevin Ferguson notes, is an "intimate medium, breathing life into our notions of embodiment and our relationships with others." See Kevin L. Ferguson, "Panting in the Dark: The Ambivalence of Air in Cinema," *Camera Obscura* 26, no. 2 (2011): 34.

29. This signals how Junichi's ecstatic experience could occur within a temporal framework similar to what Heidegger calls "ecstatic temporality" in his discussions about *Dasein*. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 402.

30. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 178–80.