

Beyond Anthropocentric Futurism: Visualizing Air Pollution and Waste in Post-Olympic Beijing*

Alvin K. Wong
Asian Studies Division
UIC, Yonsei University, South Korea

Abstract

This paper argues for the centrality of gender, sexuality, and geopolitics to ecocritical studies of the Anthropocene. In particular, the genre of documentary filmmaking provides one crucial site for exploring how cultural representations of the city of Beijing and environmental pollutions often recenter human-centric narratives of planetary rescue through what I term “Anthropocentric futurism.” Anthropocentric futurism as a critical terminology names a double bind—while increasing numbers of cultural productions like literature, cinema, and the popular media explore human subjects as both the agents and passive “victims” under the Anthropocene, often such an ecological awareness automatically gives rise to a passionate human-centric discourse of planetary rescue. Specifically, I examine the widely popular 2015 documentary about air pollution, *Under the Dome*, directed by Chai Jing, as one that reproduces Anthropocentric futurism through the logic of maternal rescue, whereas Jiuliang Wang’s *Beijing Besieged by Waste* (2011) radically departs from such reproductive futurism by visualizing the violent coevalness between the human subjects, non-human animals, inanimate objects, and the environment as such. Thinking beyond Anthropocentric futurism suggests new possibilities for theorizing the relationship between China and the Anthropocene through the lens of affect theory, animal studies, and posthumanism.

Keywords

Anthropocene, affect theory, animal studies, Beijing, China, posthumanism, queer theory

* I want to acknowledge the constructive comments offered by Henry Em, Clara Hong, Astrid Lac, Dennis Lee, Helen Lee, and Tomoko Seto, who are participants in the East Asian Studies Workshop at Yonsei University. I thank the journal’s three anonymous readers for their valuable feedback.

Introduction

Within the humanities, the recent turn to the question of scale (Moretti), renewed interest in world-systems analysis (Palumbo-Liu, Robbins, and Tanoukhi), and longer duration of temporality (Dimock) in some peculiar ways parallels the emergence of such diverse fields as environmental humanities, object-oriented ontology, and affect theory. While these disciplinary formations each invent distinct new objects of studies, they converge in questioning the boundedness of the “thing” under examination, whether it is the nation-state, literature, inanimate objects, or non-human animals. Within literary studies for instance, Wai Chee Dimock’s work draws our attention to the deep time of literature across historical divides. Within affect theory and new materialism, objects and affect obtain their own autonomous force, what Jane Bennett terms “thing-power,” that charts a quite distinctive genealogy of movement and vitalism not dictated by human actions alone (Bennett 2). While these different fields all demonstrate the analytical limit of humanism, their convergence is also symptomatic of the complex assemblage through which the “human,” non-human animals, and inanimate objects share the same time and space that is late capitalist modernity. It is through this asymmetrical and stubborn attachment of the human and inanimate objects, as well as their perverse processes of becoming, that I would like to examine the concept of the Anthropocene and its geopolitical entanglement with China.

First, some elaborations on how the Anthropocene has been theorized across the sciences and the humanities are in order. The Anthropocene was first coined by atmospheric scientists to name “the geological epoch that the Earth entered with the industrial revolution, around 1800. It is characterized by the unprecedented fact that humanity has come to play a decisive, if still largely incalculable, role in the planet’s ecology and geology . . . in which human impacts on the entire biosphere have achieved an unprecedented and arguably dangerous intensity” (Clark 1; ellipsis added). Timothy Morton, in his book *Hyperobjects*, coins the term “hyperobject” to name the toxic late modernity in which the interobjectivity between humans and things become ever more complex: “The hyperobject is not a function of our knowledge: it’s *hyper* relative to worms, lemons, and ultraviolet rays, as well as humans” (2; emphasis in original). However, he finds the Anthropocene difficult to historicize as a temporal and spatial unit of analysis. The Anthropocene in his study can be dated to various epochal marks when human force becomes a recognizable geological force, traceable as far back as the Neolithic Age (around 10,000 years ago) and the introduction of agriculture, to the more modern benchmarks like the invention

of the steam engine by James Watt in 1784 and the Great Acceleration around 1945 (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 5). Scientists at the Stockholm Resilience Centre have come up with 24 variables on a “planetary dashboard” that indicate the dawn of the Anthropocene as the Earth becomes impacted by such factors as economic growth (GDP), population, energy consumption, telecommunications, nitrogen cycle, biodiversity, and so on (Steffen et al.). By contrast, humanities scholars like Morton tend to value the ethics of ecological ambiguity and inter- and intro-objectivity to name the shared crisis when human subjects pass through postmodernity into the brave new world of ecological uncertainty, and some might say, “the end of the world.” Thus, Morton defines hyperobjects and object-oriented ontology as “symptoms of a fundamental shaking of being, a *being-quake*. The ground of being is shaken” (*Hyperobjects* 19; emphasis in original).

In sketching how the Anthropocene has become a keyword of the twenty-first century across such diverse fields, it becomes clear that the term remains that which resists theoretical certainty. On the one hand, it operates as a historicizing impulse that tracks how human-induced activities and modernizations have become a geological force on the planet. Yet, by bypassing the familiar boundaries and geographies of the nation states, colonialism, and empires into that of geological deep time, the concept is held captive once again by the all-too-familiar histories of Euro-American modernization. In fact, under the temporal vastness of the Holocene epoch, the 11,700-year span of planetary history, categories like geopolitics, the nation, region, and the city seem extremely small, if not non-existent. In contradistinction to this view that eschews the centrality of geopolitical differences in favor of placing the human within longer geological time-span, this essay will demonstrate that nation state, locality, and the time-space of late capitalist modernity remain crucial in foregrounding the coeval existence of human, non-human animals, and planetary lifeworlds. Going beyond an understanding of the concept as an entry of the human effect in geological time, Jeremy Davies likewise approaches the birth of the Anthropocene as a world-historical temporality that “redistributes agencies, reconfigures systems, and reorders the loops of consequence and assimilation out of which the workings of the earth are made” (8).

In this essay, I reckon with the difficulty of historicizing the time-space of the Anthropocene, given its flexible, deep temporal, and planetary quality. However, the fact that human activities, capitalist modernity, and increasing human-induced environmental pollutions have rendered “us,” the human, a geological force in the world seems to call for a new mode of materialist critique that is transnational and global enough to make our analysis adequate for the critical task at hand. One such

global approach is undertaken by environmental historians who refer to early China as a moment similar to the Great Acceleration: “Ancient China, with its relatively large populations, remarkable technologies, and high levels of intensification through time, is one of the epicenters of the Early Anthropocene” (Zhuang and Kidder 1615).

My own transnationalizing of the Anthropocene shows how recent debates on environmental pollution (one significant area of man-made ecological force on the planet) revolve around the rise of Chinese capitalism and its attendant energy consumption and carbon footprint both locally and globally. I first sensed the centrality of Beijing to global environmental politics when I visited the city in 2010 to carry out research. Upon the second day of arrival, I went to the local grocery store near Suzhou Street in an old neighborhood of Haidian district. Like any environmentally conscious grocery shopper, I brought my own reusable bag. Upon checkout, I was pleasantly surprised to see that in fact almost all local Beijingers brought their own shopping bags to avoid the extra charge of purchasing plastic bags. When I went home, my host informed me that effective from June 1, 2008, to prepare for a Green Olympics in Beijing, “businesses will be prohibited from manufacturing, selling, or using bags less than 0.025 millimeters (0.00098 inches) thick, according to the order issued by the State Council” (Bodeen n. pag.). The compulsory banning of hard-to-recycle plastic bags in preparation for the arrival of a Green Olympics in 2008 Beijing focalizes the geopolitical friction of living in the age of the Anthropocene. Here, individual consumption choices are remolded into ecologically friendly “behaviors,” all biopolitically engineered in a global city that is in a rush to showcase its greenness to the global audience.

If Beijing in 2008 represents the desire of a global city to become an eco-city, by the end of 2015 this ecological dream seems much hazier. On December 7, 2015, Beijing issued its first ever code red air pollution alert, “which indicates more than three days of air pollution levels with an AQI greater than 300” (Newbern n. pag.). Aerial images of the city being suffocated with hazy smog thus replaced the image of the green city, as news reports around the world described the situation as “Airpocalypse.” Besides air pollution, concern was also raised two years before the Olympics whether the “greenery of Beijing and the new artificial lake located in the ‘Olympic Green’ will use up tremendous amounts of groundwater, further deplete aquifers and therefore very likely exacerbate the water shortage” (Beyer 436). Indeed, the global media’s coverage of Beijing “sinking by as much as four inches per year because of the overconsumption of groundwater” further undermines the state’s objective that the Olympics could improve, if not reverse, the ecological issues that have plagued the city for decades (Evans n. pag.). Beijing, as the political center that

signals the arrival of a “Chinese Dream” (中國夢 *Zhongguo meng*) era associated with Xi Jinping’s assumption of power in 2013, symbolizes at once the promise and nightmare of global ecology. Instead of championing Beijing as the next eco-city or foretelling its doomsday at the end of capitalism’s apotheosis, it would be more theoretically productive to study China, Beijing, and the Anthropocene in all their messy entanglements.

My approach here shares much affinity with the Marxist ecocritical framework of the Capitalocene, which “signifies capitalism as a way of organizing nature—as a multispecies, situated, capitalist world-ecology” (Moore 6). More specifically, the humanities and the cinematic medium in particular provide one crucial site for visualizing the Anthropocene, thing-power, and human-objects assemblage. Finally, while documentary Chinese films visualize the geological force of Chinese capitalism—air pollution, and waste increasingly—these visual overtures far too often recenter what I term Anthropocentric futurism. Anthropocentric futurism, as a critical term, names a double bind—while an increasing number of cultural productions like literature, cinema, and the popular media explore human subjects as both the agents and passive “victims” during the Anthropocene, often such an ecological awareness automatically gives rise to a passionate human-centric discourse of planetary rescue. This Anthropocentric rescue narrative further rests on the imaginary figure of the Child as both the greatest victim but possible future rescuer of ecological destruction. How contemporary Chinese documentary films both reproduce and disrupt the political desire of Anthropocentric futurism is the key subject of this essay.

Specifically, recent Chinese documentary films about the city of Beijing raise significant public awareness of ecological crisis on the one hand, while the very form and language of ecological realism and human-centered necropolitics paradoxically recenter the Anthropocentrism that these films seek to challenge in the first place. In what follows, I will examine the widely popular 2015 documentary about air pollution, *Under the Dome*, directed by Chai Jing, a former CCTV journalist. The documentary film, featuring Chai in a talk-show format, introduces the global audience to various data and “facts” on toxic air pollutants like PM2.5 and how the harmful effect of air pollution accounts for premature deaths in China every year. While Chai’s documentary relies on the logics of scientism and truth to narrate the dark crisis of urban modernity, *Under the Dome* ultimately reinforces a human-centric and even heteronormative vision of Anthropocentric futurism, which bespeaks the political desire that clean air, sustainability, and livable life *for humans* is what is worth fighting for. In contradistinction, Jiuliang Wang’s *Beijing Besieged*

by Waste (2011) relies on the narrative of what Rob Nixon terms slow violence—the incremental and accretive categories of “violence enacted slowly over time” (11). In particular, its visual attentions to the recycled and unending deposit of waste in the suburbs surrounding Beijing, the violent disregard for poor migrant scavengers, and how both Beijing residents and farmed pigs consume oil and food sources filtered from swill, point to the inextricability and violent coevalness between human subjects, non-human animals, and the environment as such. The documentary represents nature as no longer “natural,” leading us to rethink all the everyday and theoretical dilemmas embedded in what Morton terms “ecology without nature” (Morton, *Ecology*). Through a critical examination of recent documentary films that mark the “ecological turn” of Chinese cinema, I point to the underlying investment of the genre’s Anthropocentric futurism; at the same time, I suggest a new possibility for theorizing the relationship between China and the Anthropocene through the lens of affect theory, animal studies, and posthumanism.

How China Entered the Anthropocene: From Socialism to Postsocialist Modernity

First, let me provide some historical contexts for theorizing the relationship between China, modernity, and the Anthropocene. If 1945 marks an important timeline for the third episode in the birth of the Anthropocene during the Great Acceleration, China under the Communist regime and Maoist socialism since 1949 provides a coeval, though often neglected, account of global human geological force. Specifically, China under Mao Zedong’s programs of permanent revolution, Five-Years Plans, Great Leap Forward, and human-centered notions of productivity all produced a vision of what Judith Shapiro terms “Mao’s war against nature” (*Mao’s*). Shapiro shows how the 1950s policy of overpopulation, huge hydropower projects without regard to regional diversity, and the Four Pests Campaign, all posit nature and the earth as the things to be triumphed over. Quoting Mao’s human-centered philosophy of class struggle, Shapiro writes, ““To struggle against the heavens is endless joy, to struggle against the earth is endless joy, to struggle against people is endless joy”” (9).

Consequently, “Mao’s voluntarist philosophy held that through concentrated exertion of human will and energy, material conditions could be altered and all difficulties overcome in the struggle to achieve a socialist utopia” (Shapiro 3). Specifically, the Four Pests Campaign, also known as the Kill a Sparrow Campaign, was a serious effort between 1958-62 by the Communist government to instill a sense

of hygiene among the peasants; it aimed at getting rid of flies, rats, mosquitoes, and sparrows. However, the extreme killing of sparrows also indicates the violent hatred of non-human animals. As one scholarly account describes, “Pots and pans were beaten continuously for days until the sparrows fell dead with exhaustion, and it was only some time later that the beneficial action of sparrows in the ecosystem was realized. Of course other bird species too would die” (Murray and Cook 42). While the extreme number of dead sparrows gave rise to the overpopulation of locusts in some areas, which led to a decline in crops and extreme famine in rural China, Mao’s war against nature would continue well into the end of the 1960s. An analysis of ecophobia, what Simon C. Estok calls “an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world,” is sorely needed here (30). As Sheldon H. Lu points out, an ecophobic rhetoric of “humanity’s determined triumph over nature” (人定勝天 *ren ding sheng tian*) was central to Mao’s human-driven politics of biopower to conquer over land, yield high grains, and increase coal production during the socialist era (4).

If Maoism represents a binary opposition between the Chinese human and the rural lands waiting to be conquered and modernized, China’s entry into postsocialist modernity since 1978 under the opening and reform policy of Deng Xiaoping inaugurated yet another form of human-centric modernization. It led to the transformation of both urban and rural landscapes at a scale never seen before. Postsocialist rupture of the Anthropocene, while no longer bent on the violent conquest of nature, takes a decisive oppositional turn through the imperative to develop China into a giant of global capitalism, or what Deng terms “socialism with Chinese characteristics” (中國特色社會主義 *Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi*). The rise of China since the postsocialist era has generated spectacular narratives of capitalist modernity, indicated by the annual GDP growth rate averaging 9.9% each year since 1979. Yet, this narrative of growth faces increasing criticism from global green NGOs and environmental activists in China alike.

Meanwhile, rapid urbanization and development of coastal special economic zones come at a high price. To put this into numerical perspective, about 20 years after China adopted the policy of opening up its economic market, in 1997 the World Bank estimated that the annual cost of air and water pollution in China was around US\$54 billion, about 8% of China’s GNP that year (Murray and Cook 8). Another major area of criticism against China’s energy consumption has been its over-reliance on fossil fuels and coal combustion. As of January 2014, one study states that “fossil fuels account for 87 percent of all energy used in China” (Larson n. pag.). The study also found that “China burns more than 4 billion tons of coal each year in power plants, homes, and factories. By comparison, the US burns less than 1 billion, and the

entire European Union burns 600 million. China surpassed the US to become the largest global CO₂ emitter in 2007, and it is on track to double annual US emissions by 2017” (Larson n. pag.). China’s own Environmental Protection Ministry published a report in November 2010, which showed that one third of 113 cities in the study failed to meet national air standards; meanwhile, the World Bank estimated that 16 of the top 20 cities in the world with the most polluted air are located in China (Hays n. pag.). “Air pollution data from 367 cities across China shows [sic] that PM2.5 levels worsened in close to 30% of cities in the second quarter of 2016 compared to the second quarter of 2015” (Greenpeace East Asia n. pag.).

Air pollution in China was made particularly famous under the global eye of environmentalists in 2008 when Beijing was hosting the Olympics. China officially declared “war on smog” in Beijing by ordering “work stoppages at construction sites, chemical plants, cement manufacturers and mines . . . Two dozen polluting factories will be required to reduce emission by 30%” in the summer of 2008 alone (Ramzy n. pag.; ellipsis added). Simply put, China’s energy consumption, rate of economic growth, carbon emission, and continual role as the “global factory” of the world economy all render it as a major, if not the leading, force in geological terms. Under global pressure and the slogan of sustainable development, leaders such as Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and the current President Xi Jinping have all included environmental protection and a “green China” as the top priority for China’s political vision. Xi in particular expresses the vexed relationship between China and the fate of the planet in terms which I have diagnosed as Anthropocentric futurism. Xi states: “We should be fully aware of the urgency and difficulty of protecting the environment and reducing pollution as well as the significance and necessity of improving the environment . . . We should take the responsibility for the sake of our people and our children” (China Council n. pag.; ellipsis added).

And for the children indeed, if the recent signing of the Paris Climate Agreement in April 2016 endorsed by the UN is any indication. At the meeting, China and the US, the two biggest carbon polluters, mobilized some 170 countries to sign the treaty, while China itself pledged to peak its carbon emission “around 2030.” The meeting was attended by schoolchildren, with John Kerry, the Secretary of State of the US, holding his granddaughter while signing the treaty (Konstantinides n. pag.). As evident from my brief sketch of China’s role in global environmental discourse, China is positioned as both the biggest violator of pollution and the new leader in saving the planet for the next generation. The fate of the planet, the geological force of the human, and the Anthropocene are inextricably framed by a heavy dose of reproductive futurism. Now, I will turn to Chai Jing’s documentary *Under the Dome*

in order to further excavate how Chinese filmmakers come to terms with the inextricability between China and the Anthropocene. Specifically, I zoom in on the film's investment in producing scientism and truth about the toxic assemblage between the human and the non-human PM2.5 particle, which contains various carcinogens. At the same time, the film also reproduces the very human-centric approach of "saving the planet" (which reads "saving China") by centering the humans in general and the fantasmatic Child in particular as the only subjects worth fighting for.

The Ascendency of Anthropocentric Futurism: To Breathe or Not to Breathe in Beijing?

Chai's documentary is probably the most powerful film I have seen about pollution in China. It strikes the right balance between documentary realism, factual statements, and dramatic visual effects. Delivered as a TED talk, Chai relies heavily on graphs, statistics, and video interviews with state officials and environmentalists in order to ensure that her concerns about air pollution in China, and specifically in Beijing, are conveyed to the audience in a comprehensible way rid of scientific jargon. Due to the exposé style of Chai's direct confrontations with many powerful figures in the environmental organs of the state, the documentary became an instant hit and garnered more than 100 million views within 48 hours of its release online. While the film was initially praised by the environmental protection minister Chen Jining as a work that can "encourage efforts by individuals to improve air quality," the documentary was eventually removed by the state censors from all social media sites several days later due to its "sensitive" nature ("China Takes" n. pag.).

In the opening segment, Chai initiates the show with a graph of the PM2.5 level in January 2013 in Beijing, showing how in 25 days out of the whole month the sky was covered with black smog. She then connects the situation in Beijing with four other regions in China like Shaanxi, Henan, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang. She comments that "it seems like China at that time was immersed in smog, blanketing 25 provinces and 600 million people" (00:00:31-00:00:36). What drives home the message of protecting the environment in China and fighting against air pollution is the unfortunate situation of her newborn daughter. About one minute into the documentary, the audience is greeted with the ultrasound picture of her then yet-to-be born daughter back in 2013, only to meet with the horrifying message that Chai's daughter was diagnosed with a benign tumor, which would require surgery immediately after birth. The opening segment then ends with a rhetoric of fear,

claustrophobia, and self-chosen physical containment. Chai narrates: “After the successful surgery of my daughter and on the way back home, the smell of black smoke and burning fire was everywhere. I covered her nose with my handkerchief” (00:02:15-00:02:24). The projected screen then shifts to a coal burning factory in Shanxi ten years ago, when Chai was living in the Northern region about 500 miles away from the capital city. At the last moment of that retrospective look at Shanxi, Chai is heard interviewing a six-year-old girl, Wang Huiqing. Chai asks, “Have you ever seen the star? Have you ever seen a day of blue sky?” To which the innocent young girl replies, “No, I haven’t” (00:03:45-00:03:58). The introductory section ends with Chai confessing that she would have never imagined that her daughter would share the same fate as the little girl she interviewed in 2004. She states that due to the high level of PM2.5 that violates the standard of safe air established by the World Health Organization (WHO), she would only take her daughter outside when the air quality was good. Because 175 days were reported as the harmful level in Beijing in 2014, she “had no choice but to keep her daughter at home like a prisoner” (00:04:26-00:04:30).

While the brief synopsis of the opening segment of *Under the Dome* sounds quite factual and at times personal, the documentary also reveals the multi-perspectival aspects of China, the biosphere of pollution, and the audience’s complex viewing positions. First, by subjecting the audience with the ultrasound scan of her baby, Chai implies that these otherwise unfathomable toxins are causing immeasurable harm to the future generation of China. Second, by traveling between the 10-year gap and regional differences between Shanxi, a less developed region of North China, and Beijing, the global city, Chai sets up an imaginary identification and smooth translation between the struggle for sustainability for the poor and the relatively well-to-do middle class in the global city. In fact, her own social position as a former CCTV leading news reporter and the fact that she was able to give up her job full time in order to protect her newborn daughter from air pollution spell out the drastic social difference between the six-year-old girl Wang Huiqing and her child. Yet, within the tone of documentary realism and sentimentalism, the audience are in fact positioned to see both children as equally vulnerable victims of China’s cost of modernization, which forces all of those living in China to suffocate “under the dome.” Through this powerful and sentimental register, the film casts the audience at the talk show and the viewers at home watching on YouTube intersubjectively under the spell of Anthropocentric futurism, in which “the fantasy subtending the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought” (Edelman 2).

Beyond the mere ideological appeal to the figure of the Child as the fantasmatic investment of China's environmental future, which connects to the future of global sustainability, the documentary also vilifies and in fact personifies pollutants and toxins as things to be absolutely conquered over. In this binary construction of human versus the world outside, is not the human being framed as the ultimate victim who must be shielded from the outside world that is becoming increasingly "unnatural?" Specifically, the documentary frames the fight against air pollution as a human-centered effort that can be won on a teleological and civilizational scale of history. About 25 minutes into the film, Chai informs her audience that China has already burned 3.6 billion tons of coal in 2013, which is higher than the rest of the world combined. She then compares the current situation of China with England in 1860, which was a country with an intense rate of industrial modernization that culminated in the Smog Menace of 1952. In this segment, historical footages of London covered in black smog, children wearing masks, and adults kissing with masks are juxtaposed with Chai as she is narrating in present day London, with clear sky and seemingly clean air. Chai draws on the statistics of London's concentration of sulfur dioxide exceeding 190 times of the WHO standard during the Great Smog in order to frame present day Beijing and China in a comparative environmental perspective.

Chai further reports that out of the 3.6 billion tons of coal combusted in China in 2013, 380 million was burnt in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the national capital region of China. Through this comparative and transnational comparison of air pollution, Chai locates the culprit of China's current crisis, namely the ironic existence of numerous environmental laws hamstrung by the lack of implementation and ambiguous regulation. This is further impacted by corrupt dominance of environmental committees headed by executives from state-owned oil companies themselves. One particularly memorable scene shows Chai testing the limit of environmental law by inspecting with traffic officers CO₂ emissions from heavy diesel vehicles passing by a checkpoint late at night in the Yanqing district of Beijing. Most of the vehicles passing by did not meet the level 4 requirement considered safe by the national standard. Even though diesel cars only make up 17% of all vehicles in Beijing, their emissions of nitrogen oxides constitute 70% of all vehicle emissions. Here, Chai turns to the force of the law in implementing international standards on these diesel vehicles that do not install proper emission technology. She was struck by the disappointing news that while China has legislated the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act, the law has been enforced "zero times" because it can only be enforced by departments with "the legal right of supervision" (00:46:28-00:46:56). Unfortunately, neither the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Ministry of

Industry and Information Technology, nor the General Administration of Quality Supervision is willing to implement it.

By comparing the advancement made by European countries after the nightmare of black smog in the 1950s to present day China, which lacks legal protection for its citizens and proper regulation of oil enterprises, Chai positions China on an evolutionary scale that is relatively “backward” in relation to the “success” made by the rest of the Western world. In addition, the focus on the uncontrollable emission of toxic pollutants at night by largely unregulated vehicles on the outskirts of Beijing illustrates what Sara Ahmed terms the “affective economies” of fear. Ahmed locates this affective mode in the aftermath of 9/11 when non-white Middle Eastern and South Asian subjects are imagined as “objects” to be feared, when “the presence of these others is imagined as a threat to the object of love” (117). Here, I am more interested in Ahmed’s alignment of affect with the economic, the structural, and social space. Ahmed writes: “In such affective economies, emotions *do things*, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments” (119; emphasis in original).

Indeed, *Under the Dome*, in specifying the intense level of PM2.5 toxicity (which is estimated to account for 500,000 premature deaths in China every year), also discursively identifies the toxin and air pollutant as absolutely incompatible with the human sphere. Furthermore, it isolates the capitalists, irresponsible enterprises, and even powerful politicians as fighting on the side of the pollutant. In this binary framing of affective economies, emotions do things. The ghost of the old Maoist conception of the human struggle against nature returns here in repressed form, albeit in a mutated fashion. This time around, the outside world is substituted by the toxic smog, and the capitalists collude shamelessly with the state. Affective economies bind the home viewer, Chai herself, and her audience within the larger presentation room in Beijing as commonly linked in a shared fate of environmental battle. The whole documentary then can be read as a studied exercise in affective pedagogy, schooling the viewer on becoming a responsible global citizen so that “we,” the Chinese, can eventually catch up with the European world by turning China into a responsible carbon emission country. Here, affective economies become enmeshed with a vision of an environmental friendly China, one that will make a positive contribution to the planet and to the Anthropocene. In other words, environmental sustainability is tied to the very survival of China, and which side are you on? Will you fight on the side of the Child?

The documentary ends with a peculiar sense of uplifting optimism, which

hinges on a gendered logic that the Anthropocentric awareness of human geological damage requires an urgent maternal protection and rescue. Chai takes us through a walk in her neighborhood in Beijing. Along her brief tour, she instructs a nearby construction site worker to cover up the dirty dust, advises a Chinese restaurant owner to install a new soot purifier (which blocks out heavy oil smell), and finally challenges a local gas station attendant to replace an old gasoline vapor recovery unit. She mobilizes the audience to follow her example and report cases of pollution to a national hotline by dialing 12369. 12369 is the environmental hotline across China, supervised by the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Chai delivers her feeling to the audience genuinely, saying that after the restaurant owner installs the smoke filtering device, she feels like “her feet have landed on solid ground” (01:38:53-01:38:55). Her feeling is that even though a small act by one person may produce only a minimal effect on the whole ecosystem, “when you look at the war between people and pollution, you will see this is how history is made” (01:39:10-01:39:16). The documentary ends with Chai, speaking from the position of a mother with a young daughter and motivating her audience in the following manner: “Right now, tens of thousands of mothers are pregnant with or giving birth to their children, to whom these rivers, skies and lands should belong. We have no right to consume without restraint. We can prove to them that a world illuminated by energy can, at the same time, be clean and beautiful” (01:41:54-01:42:21). The final spectacle in the film positions Chai’s back facing the audience while an image of the globe revolves on the screen. Through this visibility of planetary scale, Chai speaks in a harmonious voice: “And so I protect it, just as I protect you” (01:42:52-01:42:57).

The ending of *Under the Dome* brings the force of Anthropocentric futurism to a powerful manifestation. Here, Chai builds on the momentum of Anthropocentrism that is evident in her self-motivated acts of monitoring environmental violations in Beijing. Through her small acts of victory, she calls the audience to arms, implying that “you” too can be a human agent of change, not only in a national context but on a geological scale. As we protect the planet, we are also protecting the “not-yet-arrived you,” the imaginary Child to be born, who deserves clean river, blue sky, and uncontaminated lands. In so doing, the documentary imagines “the Child as the emblem of futurity’s unquestioned value” (Edelman 4). The visual projection of the globe as a mappable object out there to be treasured lines up intersubjectively, almost too perfectly, with the unnamed “you.” The “you” might well be the future generation who are the rightful guardians of the planet. The plenitude of eco-happiness evident in the final moment begs the following questions that will also guide my reading of Jiuliang Wang’s documentary about waste management: How can one visualize

agents, actants, non-human animals, and objects who coexist with the humans in the Anthropocene? Are there alternative ethics and ways of seeing that do not immediately reinstall the human-centric optic of Anthropocentric futurism? Why do cultural representations about pollution habitually turn to human agency of a planetary rescue mission, even while the critical reckoning with the Anthropocene suggests that the human is only one, among many, vital forces in a multispecies world?

Beijing Besieged by Waste: Sensing Slow Violence in Beijing

Beijing Besieged by Waste, like *Under the Dome*, exudes a strong feeling of documentary realism in the sense that it seeks to expose the dark side of Beijing's urbanization and China's late capitalism by directing the viewer's attention to toxins and pollutants. Aesthetically speaking, both films recall what Rey Chow termed a cinema of "primitive passions," where the filmmakers are also "their culture's anthropologists and ethnographers, capturing the remnants of a history that has undergone major disasters while at the same time imparting information about 'China' to the rest of the world" (38). But whereas the "China" in films by the Fifth Generation filmmakers like Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou is often arrested in cinematic moments of the nation's past, especially the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the "China" that is under the documentary gaze is driven by primitive passions of a different kind. In other words, both Chai and Wang document China's existential ecological crisis, capitalist nightmare, and environmental unsustainability through the assumed objectivity of the documentary form.

In addition to a certain ecological primitivism that serves as the "material" for contemporary Chinese independent and documentary filmmakers, both Chai and Wang's films are highly intersubjective in their visual entanglement of gender and ecology. Elsewhere, I have defined the gendering of intersubjectivity as a way "to foreground the embodied relation between the states of filming and being filmed, between the visual and the spatial, and between the psychological and the intimately historical" (Wong 121). Where Wang's documentary vision differs from Chai's is his critical reluctance to reinstall the bright optimism that tomorrow, we humans can make the planet clean and natural again. Specifically, Wang departs from the habitual Anthropocentric futurism of environmental documentary films by troubling the clear boundary between human and nature, and reassembling the intimate connections across humans, non-human animals, and seemingly inanimate objects (waste) intersubjectively. In this way, Wang's documentary can be read as a visual exemplar of Bruno Latour's model of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which critically redefines

the science of the social as “the *tracing of associations*” (5; emphasis in original). In such a model, researchers should “follow the actors themselves” instead of subjecting inanimate objects like waste to a “social explanation” because once we do that, we stabilize the meaning of the social (12). Wang’s film disturbs the symbolic meanings of waste as something to be removed, hidden, or recycled by following the numerous traces of association that waste travels. Specifically, a scientific study, funded by the Science and Technology Innovation Program of Beijing Forestry University, shows that the main waste disposal technology used in Beijing is landfill, “accounting for 92.27% of total designed capacity in 2008 and 78.54% in 2009” (Wang and Wang 67). The study concludes optimistically that “reduction in waste quantity was obviously observed in 2010, wherein a decrease of 5.08% from 6.69 million tons in 2009 to 6.35 million tons in 2010 was recorded” (Wang and Wang 71). Instead of restricting his filming to the official waste disposal areas of 15 landfill sites, 2 incinerators, and 2 composting plants (Wang and Wang 70), the filmmaker adopts an ANT method of following the trash, which leads to his discovery of some 500 privately owned landfills across urban areas and suburbs of Beijing.

Departing from a causative, scientific, or state-centric view of managing waste, Wang troubles our Anthropocentric optics by framing human actions and non-human animal movement as inhabiting a shared domain of planetary destruction and ordinary violence. The opening of the film presents a panoramic view of a vast site that looks like a remote mountain area, while the dawn and orange sunlight serves as the background of the long shot. Dust and heavy smog occupy the frame, and any viewer with no knowledge of the regional specificity of Beijing could have easily mistaken the place as a wasteland from a war zone. Slowly, a few human figures enter into this “natural” wasteland. Through their actions of digging through trash, plastics, and other things, it becomes clear that these are scavengers looking for valuable and recyclable materials in the landfill. Slowly again, a third group of subjects (besides humans and waste) enter into the frame—sheep, behaving just like the scavengers, are digging in and eating leftovers thrown away by the humans of urban Beijing. Visually, the camera pans through a mode of slow temporality in which the filmmaker patiently stays with the movement and sensory details of the scavengers, waste and “dirty” objects, and the sheep.

In such visuality of multispecies entanglement, human and non-human animals *do things* together, and the objects, namely piles of waste, elicit their responses. Such a toxic yet intimate world of entangled existence recalls Jane Bennett’s evocation of thing-power: “The notion of thing-power aims instead to attend to the it as actant . . . to name the moment of independence (from subjectivity) possessed by things, a

moment that must be there, since things do in fact affect other bodies, enhancing or weakening their power” (3; ellipsis added). In this trans-human-species-thing biosphere, the distinction between the scavengers and the sheep is temporally suspended, with both aiming to obtain value from what is often rendered as valueless, namely municipal and industrial waste relocated from urban Beijing. The fact that one sheep seems to be enjoying the leftover orange peel from its urban human companion also lays bare the violent (re)production of the human. Human subjects dwelling in the Anthropocene deem themselves to be separated from the non-human animals, yet their undesirable waste becomes the very life-support of livestock, whose inhumane slaughter and commercial consumption returns human-produced waste in ghostly and mutated forms. We are all implicated in this species hierarchy and multispecies food chain.

If Chai Jing’s one-person TED talk documentary assumes an ecophobic vision of Beijing covered by smog and further gives weight to an environmental ethic that posits pollutants as things to be quarantined at all costs, *Under the Dome*’s ecophobia also marks an intersubjective visuality of environmental protection as maternal love, thus powerfully implicating the viewer within its Anthropocentric futurism. While also highly intersubjective, Wang’s documentary begins with the failure of clearly separating toxins from human existence. Beyond framing humans as one among many vital actants in the toxic sphere of urbanization, Wang also draws our attention to Beijing as an increasingly unsustainable city, where the boundaries between urban construction and environmental destruction, human existence and non-human suffering, and subject and object gradually disappear. At the visual register, Wang’s documentary is often hard to follow given its seamless traveling between urban and rural landscapes, official and unofficial landfills, and animate and inanimate modes of agency. But such a jarring visuality is precisely what marks the film as an alternative archive of an emergent ecological landscape. This type of guerrilla filmmaking embodies what Chris Berry and Lisa Rofel term “on-the-spot realism,” which “treasures immediacy, spontaneity, and contact with lived experience over the high levels of manipulability associated with the special effects culture of mainstream cinema” (4).

Wang further adds to the aesthetic of on-the-spot realism with a perverse method of non-linear and disorderly visual juxtapositions. Specifically, at 4:55 minutes into the film, Wang’s voiceover narration informs the viewer that he has been traveling to 400-500 landfills around the city, and that after a two-year effort, he has marked the exact locations of these landfills on the map. His archival effort thus revises the original Google Earth’s satellite image of officially acknowledged

landfills in Beijing. By way of a zoom-out shot, Wang informs the viewer that “Beijing has become a city surrounded by waste” (00:05:13-00:05:16). Quickly following this shot, an old man enters the frame and sorts out trash in dim lighting, probably in a small waste-sorting facility. The next scene quickly shifts to bright lighting through a medium shot. Here, workers, tourists, and ordinary folk gather at Tiananmen Square in the morning and observe the flag raising ceremony. In several close-up shots throughout the film, Wang zooms in on the very thingness of trash by documenting a variety of waste and its object-human traversal: scavengers sorting out plastics, children of the scavengers playing with broken glass and a religious statue, trash and human excrement collected from planes and trains, and last but not least, toxins filled streams along the banks of the Wenyu River. By disorderly filming the national space of order and authority embodied by Tiananmen Square as cinematically aligned with the spaces of waste mismanagement, water pollution, and disposable lives of the garbage scavengers, the film dares the audience to question our privileged existence in the ecosystem. Beyond the guise that the government is actively fighting air pollution and declaring a new war on environmental pollution through sustainable waste management, the film points to what Giorgio Agamben terms “zones of indistinction” between the exceptional space of toxicity and the normative space of national order and livable life (*State* 26).

The zone of indistinction where the violence of toxic modernity becomes the new normative order is further linked to a sense of slow violence that permeates the entire film. In addition, this slow violence of redistributing toxicity in Beijing is inextricably tied to the often occluded but perverse regeneration of capital itself through the production of surplus value. Rob Nixon defines the concept of slow violence as “a violence that occurs gradually out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (2). Here, I would like to add to Nixon’s insight on the slow temporality of environmental violence by drawing our attention to Wang’s visual archiving of the lively and perverse conversion of waste into profit-driven capital, which sustains all animal lives through the mechanism of neoliberal deregulation and privatization. Specifically, at the living quarters in Yongshun town in the Tongzhou district, which are occupied by migrants from Sichuan, Wang documents some 40-50 families who are raising pigs for sale. In order to feed so many pigs, most of them purchase big buckets of filthy water derived from human excrement from the city. These barrels of food/waste are purchased from the city at a total rate of 2,000 RMB a day. The slightly modified “food” is then fed to the pigs who are caged inhumanely in a tight pig pen. The scene narrated here depicts one

worker feeding the pigs through a hole just large enough to let the excrement pass through, and busy noises of the pigs screaming and consuming their food are heard in the background.

Yet another scene shows a mountain in a remote area outside of the Sixth Ring Road in a demolished state because concrete needs to be produced through mountain explosion in order to support the intense rate of Beijing's urbanization and real-estate development. Yet, the very same spaces of illegal waste landfills are all located around the Sixth Ring, in addition to the ones near the urban center. Wang laments: "The construction in the city demands large amounts of rocks, cement and the like. The mountain has contributed raw materials to the city, while the city gives back the waste to the mountain" (00:39:58-00:40:15). On the surface, these two scenes depict quite distinctive forms of waste management, namely one concerning the production of value out of waste in pig farming and another concerning the simultaneity of land destruction and real-estate development; yet, both practices in fact point to how the boundary separating waste from productive forms of capital like raw material and food is increasingly being blurred. In fact, waste, a seemingly inanimate object, emerges as a highly perverse form of regenerative capital, sustaining human lives through animal husbandry and housing projects. Yet, the irony is that the very living spaces that many urban Beijingers dwell in are produced through landfill projects. Certainly, the two scenes in question lend themselves to an all too apparent reading of the Anthropocene biosphere as increasingly a timespace of what Donna Haraway terms "situated naturecultures, in which all the actors become who they are in the dance of relating" (25). Furthermore, these different scales of the reproduction of life (both human and non-human animal) as such unmask the no-longer-natural aspect of nature, awakening us to new forms of politics where "ecology without nature" (Morton, *Ecology*) also marks a new frontier of capital accumulation. Consequently, *Beijing Besieged by Waste* departs from the heteronormative genre of Anthropocentric futurism through a daring vision of multispecies-object entanglement.

How China Matters for the Anthropocene

How might a critique of Anthropocentric futurism be useful for rethinking the ways that China matters for the Anthropocene? Here, I would like to highlight the ways in which China and its global city, Beijing, are caught up in the Anthropocene. Moreover, the recent environmental and national policies in the city and in China in general both reinforce what I term the politics of environmental metrics.

Environmental metrics as a concept assumes that ecological disaster can be calculated in quantifiable ways and that “climate debt” can then be assigned responsibly across developed and developing countries. More crucially, the scientism of numbers, graphs, and statistics cannot deal with the materialist dimensions of globalization and the transboundary routes of toxins and pollutants. As Julie Sze notes: “Nations such as China and India also use temporal dimensions in their political arguments against international treaties to regulate carbon emissions; they argue, in effect, that countries in the West have historically contributed greater carbon emissions and have a ‘head start’ on economic development” (8).

With this limit of environmental metrics in mind, it is all the more necessary for ecocritical thinkers to reconsider the place of China and geopolitics within the Anthropocene, thinking both with and beyond numbers. In terms of national ideology and environmental initiatives, which connect the national space of China to that of the global community, perhaps no city embodies as important a role as Beijing. At the level of state ideological work and educational agendas, the 2008 Beijing Olympics provided an occasion for cultivating a sense of reproductive futurism. Specifically, the Beijing Municipal Commission on Education (BMCE) designed a document for the purpose of a primary and secondary school Olympic education program. It aims at

fully implementing the three guiding ideals of “Green Olympics, High Tech Olympics, People’s Olympics” and the ‘one world, one dream’ publicity theme, and links Olympic education with the cultivation of the comprehensive quality (*suzhi* 素質) of youth, promoting physical education and sports among primary and secondary school students, spreading the Olympic spirit, the spirit of internationalism and the spirit of patriotism . . . shaping a legacy of Olympic education with Chinese characteristics. (qtd. in Brownell 48; ellipsis added)

While the state education protocol speaks in a genre that is quite different from a documentary film like *Under the Dome*, it is not difficult to observe how both Chai’s film and the document here posit the symbolic equivalence established between three entities—the children, China, and the world, the latter entity also implicates the Anthropocene here. The logics here operate in the realm of the reproductive and the national. It implies that if you want to produce a healthy image of China and export that image to the global world of imaginary oneness, you have to cultivate just the right kind of *suzhi*, namely “quality,” in the body politics of the

children who represent the future of China. The survival of patriotism and the sustainability of China depend on this reproductive imaginary of Anthropocentrism.

Moving from the ideological level to the politics of metrics in systems theory, China emerges not only as a national entity but quite literally the game changer in the fate of the Anthropocene. Such a perspective that focuses on the magic of numbers is evident in a provocative article entitled “China in the Anthropocene: Culprit, Victim, or Last Best Hope for a Global Ecological Civilization?” Here, the researcher Joachim H. Spangenberg defines the Anthropocene as “the time window when evolutionary adaptability of biodiversity and ecosystems could no longer keep up with human alterations of the environment(s)” (2). He further identifies China as the biggest energy consumer and polluter in the world, and thus also a driver, major victim, and possible “climate hero” for the planet. While Spangenberg’s study provides important metrics for measuring China’s impact on a planetary scale, ranging from statistics on carbon emission, logging, deforestation, and climate debt measured in longer geological time, it also pivots on a narrative of masculine failure and possible heroism. Within this politics of environmental metrics, a highly discursive construction of gender and sexuality is linked to China and the Anthropocene. China is the newly awakened Child of environmental consciousness. China has done naughty bad things to the planet! China can be a good boy again, be a real hero (male?), and save our planet. Tomorrow will be good again, just find the right numbers and implement policies based on the politics of environmental metrics. This dominant logic of heteronormative, reproductive, and Anthropocentric futurism operates at the psychic, state, and global levels all at once. Even though the Beijing Consensus seeks to realize environmental sustainability through the recent building of the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-city (Kaiman) and ambitious financing of renewable energy with firms in Denmark (Mafi), the politics of metrics in China’s environmental discourses disregards valuable insights from the humanities. Alternatively, animal studies, object-oriented ontology, and posthumanism highlight the covalence between human, non-human animals, and our intimate attachments to inanimate objects in our shared planetary dwellings. Instead of governing non-human animals through the sheer politics of metrics and biopolitical engineering, human-animal-object assemblage shows that “being *after*, being *alongside*, being *near* [*près*] would appear as different modes of being, indeed of *being-with*. With the animal” (Derrida 10; emphasis in original). For Agamben too, while the production of “man” as human depends on the opposition between man and animal, this Anthropocentric machine of modernity actually “produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the

inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside” (*The Open* 37). While the visuality of ecological disaster works through distinctive logics of intersubjective maternal love and human-non human assemblages in Chai’s and Wang’s films, both films produce the shared cinematic effect of rethinking human’s ontological separation from animality, toxicity, and inanimacy as highly impossible and ecologically unsustainable.

By turning to recent Chinese cinematic representations of air pollution, waste, and the toxic assemblage of human, non-human, and inanimate objects in the planetary lifeworld, I hope my work here can contribute to the scholarly debate on why gender and sexuality should matter in our thinking and worrying about the Anthropocene. Is not the habitual investment in the symbolic Child as the one and only reason for restoring a “natural” planet symptomatic of how much damage we, as human animals, have already done to the planet, ourselves, and our diverse species? Would not a recursive return to the human as political desire simply reproduce our existing conditions? If “the nature of thought itself must change if it is to be posthumanist” (Wolfe xvi), how do we include animals (in all their heterogeneity) and inanimate objects in theorizing the geopolitics of the Anthropocene without reproducing new forms of exception? As Chinese documentary filmmakers like Chai and Wang explore the world of uneven ecological assemblage where toxins live alongside humans alongside caged animals, which are then fed on our human feces, a new posthumanist multispecies world emerges. Of course, this is also a world of species hierarchy where the reproduction of “the human” depends on the unending exploitation of nature made cheap and animals made killable. Coming to terms with species hierarchy means engaging with a form of posthumanism that is materialist and queer in orientation. It means learning to live and die in the Anthropocene through shared responsibility and reciprocity across the human-animal-object divide, in which we are all caught in “varied webs of interspecies dependence” (Tsing 144). Rethinking the geopolitics of China in the Anthropocene necessitates deep conversations with affect theory, animal studies, and posthumanism. Only through thinking in this mode of interdisciplinary perversity can China really matter for the Anthropocene.

Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004.
- . *State of Exception*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005.

- Ahmed, Sara. "Affective Economies." *Social Text* 22.2 (2004): 117-39.
- Beijing Besieged by Waste*. Dir. Wang Jiuliang. dGenerate Films, 2011.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010.
- Berry, Chris, and Lisa Rofel. Introduction. *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record*. Ed. Chris Berry, Lu Xinyu, and Lisa Rofel. Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2010. 3-13.
- Beyer, Stefanie. "The Green Olympic Movement: Beijing 2008." *Chinese Journal of International Law* 5.2 (2006): 423-40.
- Bodeen, Christopher. "China Bans Free Plastic Bags." *National Geographic News*. National Geographic Society, 10 Jan. 2008. 15 Nov. 2016. <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2008/01/080110-AP-bags.html>>.
- Brownell, Susan. "Beijing's Olympic Education Programme: Re-Thinking Suzhi Education, Re-Imagining an International China." *The China Quarterly* 197 (2009): 44-63.
- CCICED (China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development). "President Xi Jinping Pledges Not to Sacrifice Environment." *CCICED*. CCICED, 28 May 2013. 1 June 2016. <http://www.cciced.net/encciced/newscenter/latestnews/201305/t20130528_252803.html>.
- "China Takes *Under the Dome* Anti-Pollution Film Offline." *BBC News Asia*. BBC, 7 Mar. 2015. 18 Nov. 2016. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-31778115>>.
- Chow, Rey. *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. New York: Columbia UP, 1995.
- Clark, Timothy. *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
- Davies, Jeremy. *The Birth of the Anthropocene*. Oakland: U of California P, 2016.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. David Willis. Ed. Marie-Luise Mallet. New York: Fordham UP, 2008.
- Dimock, Wai Chee. "Literature for the Planet." *PMLA* 116.1 (2001): 173-88.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.
- Estok, Simon C. "Tracking Ecophobia: The Utility of Empirical and Systems Studies for Ecocriticism." *Comparative Literature* 67.1 (2015): 29-36.
- Evans, Erica. "Beijing is Sinking at an Alarming Rate, Research Shows." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 28 June 2016. 17 Nov. 2016

- <<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-fg-beijing-sinking-20160628-snap-story.html>>.
- Greenpeace East Asia Press Release. “30% of China’s Cities See Air Pollution Worsen Compared to Last Spring.” *Greenpeace*. Greenpeace, 21 July 2016. 20 Nov. 2016. <<http://www.greenpeace.org/eastasia/press/releases/climate-energy/2016/30-of-Chinas-cities-see-air-pollution-worsen-compared-to-last-spring--Greenpeace/>>.
- Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007.
- Hays, Jeffrey. “Air Pollution in China.” *Facts and Details*. Jeffrey Hays. Jan. 2014. 1 June 2016. <<http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat10/sub66/item392.html>>.
- Kaiman, Jonathan. “China’s ‘Eco-Cities’: Empty of Hospitals, Shopping Centres and People.” *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 14 Apr. 2014. 1 June 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/apr/14/china-tianjin-eco-city-empty-hospitals-people>>.
- Konstantinides, Anneta. “OK, Mr. Kerry, We Get It—It’s for the Children.” *Daily Mail Online*. Daily Mail Online, 22 Apr. 2016. 1 June 2016. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3554325/John-Kerry-bring-granddaughter-sign-Paris-agreement-climate-change-UN.html>>.
- Larson, Eric. “China’s Growing Coal Use is World’s Growing Problem.” *Climate Central*. Climate Central, 27 Jan. 2014. 1 June 2016. <<http://www.climatecentral.org/blogs/chinas-growing-coal-use-is-worlds-growing-problem-16999>>.
- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.
- Lu, Sheldon H. “Cinema, Ecology, Modernity.” *Chinese Ecocinema: In the Age of Environmental Challenge*. Ed. Sheldon H. Lu and Jiayan Mi. Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2009. 1-14.
- Mafi, Nick. “China Set to Build World’s Biggest Waste-to-Energy Power Plant.” *Architectural Digest*. Condé Nast, 10 Feb. 2016. 1 June 2016. <<http://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/china-build-worlds-biggest-waste-to-energy-power-plant>>.
- Moore, Jason W., ed. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oakland: PM, 2016.
- Moretti, Franco. “Conjectures on World Literature.” *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 54-68.
- Morton, Timothy. *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007.

- . *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013.
- Murray, Geoffrey, and Ian G. Cook. *Green China: Seeking Ecological Alternatives*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002.
- Newbern, Elizabeth. "China's Latest 'Airpocalypse' Seen from Space." *Live Science*. Purch, 8 Dec. 2015. 16 Nov. 2016 <<http://www.livescience.com/53004-china-air-pollution-satellite-photo.html>>.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Harvard UP, 2011.
- Palumbo-Liu, David, Bruce Robbins, and Nirvana Tanoukhi, eds. *Immanuel Wallerstein and the Problem of the World: System, Scale, Culture*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011.
- Ramzy, Austin. "Beijing's Olympic War on Smog." *Time*. Time, 15 Apr. 2008. 1 June 2016. <<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1730918,00.html>>.
- Shapiro, Judith. *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.
- Spangenberg, Joachim H. "China in the Anthropocene: Culprit, Victim or Last Best Hope for a Global Ecological Civilisation?" *BioRisk* 9 (2014): 1-37.
- Steffen, Will, et al. "The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration." *The Anthropocene Review* 2.1 (2015): 81-98.
- Sze, Julie. *Fantasy Islands: Chinese Dreams and Ecological Fears in an Age of Climate Crisis*. Oakland: U of California P, 2015.
- Tsing, Anna. "Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species." *Environmental Humanities* 1 (2012): 141-54.
- Under the Dome*. Dir. Chai Jing. Prod. Ming Fan. 2015.
- Wang, Hao, and Chunmei Wang. "Municipal Solid Waste Management in Beijing: Characteristics and Challenges." *Waste Management & Research* 31.1 (2013): 67-72.
- Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010.
- Wong, Alvin K. "Gendering Intersubjectivity in New Chinese Documentary: Feminist Multiplicity and Vulnerable Masculinity in Postsocialist China." *Filming the Everyday: Independent Documentaries in Twenty-First Century China*. Ed. Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 119-33.

Zhang, Yijie, and Tristram R. Kidder. "Archaeology of the Anthropocene in the Yellow River Region, China, 8000-2000 cal. BP." *The Holocene* 24.11 (2014): 1602-23.

About the Author

Alvin K. Wong is Assistant Professor of Chinese Literature and Film at Underwood International College (UIC) of Yonsei University in South Korea. His research interests include Chinese literary and cultural studies, transnationalism, Sinophone studies, and queer theory. He has published articles in *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, *Gender, Place and Culture*, and in edited volumes like *Transgender China* (Palgrave, 2012), *Queer Sinophone Cultures* (Routledge, 2014), and *Filming the Everyday* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). His co-edited special issue on "Queer Asia as Critique" is forthcoming from the journal, *Culture, Theory and Critique* (2017).

[Received 7 July 2016; accepted 11 November 2016]