



A Review of Susan Hawthorne's *Wild Politics* (North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press.)

COMMENTARY

BY: Theresa Wolfwood LE NOUVEAU MONDE VERT, Vol.1, No.1, 2008

In her opening statement Hawthorne says: "Disconnection is critical for a system based on profit. By contrast, biodiversity relies on connection and relationship." *Wild Politics*, based on the metaphor of a wild plant, sensitive to its ecological context, rooted in its own locality and climate, is about politics as a life form, also rooted in its context, place, time and needs.

It is disconnection that allows us to accept as inevitable the bombing of innocent people from the sky, the manipulation of genetic heritage, the poisoning of food and land by chemical companies, the pollution of our air, the privatization of our water, the felling of our forests, trade agreements that rob democracy and enable the ruthless, and the death of 30,000 children every day from the diseases of poverty. Hawthorne provides an inspiring message by giving a feminist critique of our present world, an explanation of the structures that enable exploitation and an amazing range of actions by women, peasants, farmers, workers everywhere who defy the globalization paradigm and connect to our common humanity and natural commons.

Other essays of interest .

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- *Lysistrata Rising* by Beate Sigridaughter
- *Moving Beyond Self-Possessed Politics* by Eddie Blatt
- *Designs for Connected Living* by David Allen Stringer
- *Eulogy for the Human Spirit* by Marc Eliuk
- *All One Family: An Inclusive Vision of*

She illustrates with copious examples and extensive references how we must see land as a relationship, as do indigenous peoples, not as a commodity if we want to create a better world for all, including the world itself. In the chapter on "The Principle of Diversity"; she quotes Sabine O'Hara: "Feminist theory has much to contribute towards methodological diversity. Its contribution can be seen as a rejection of the superiority of abstraction and a rejection of contextlessness." A world that recognizes context and diversity would be committed, as is Hawthorne, to research in which the researcher recognizes her own connection and involvement; a theory and practice developed by Maria Mies

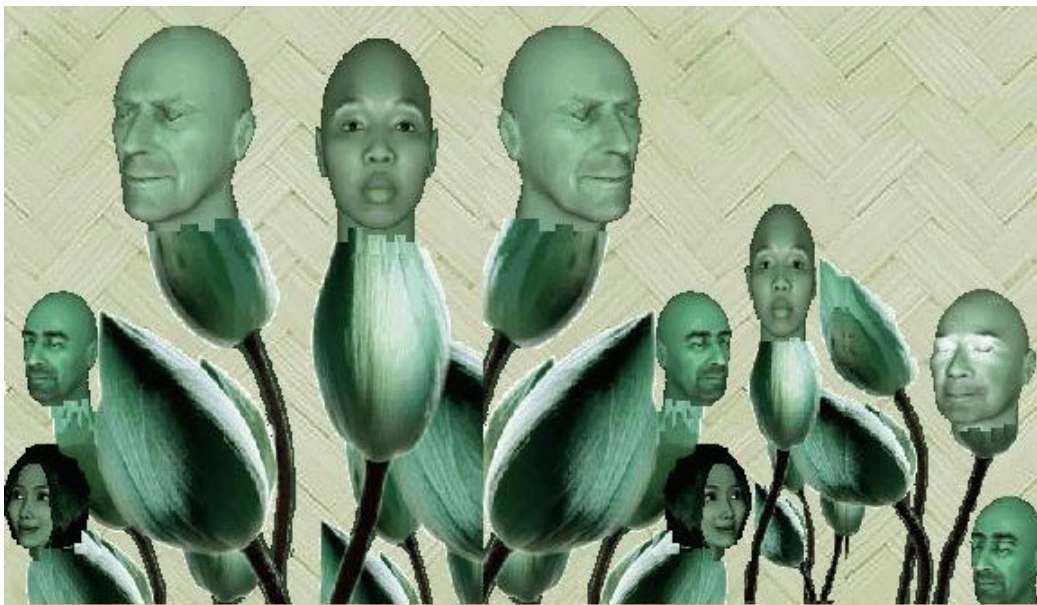
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- **Review of Joel Kovel's *The Enemy of Nature* by Theresa Wolfwood**
 - **Return to Contents Page**
 - **Browse Poetry**
 - **Browse Visual Art**
 - **Explore E-links to Green Resources**

who is much quoted in this book. In order to understand a thing, one must change it as Mies says: "We need to accept that any involvement in a process changes the process as it changes us." Those who believe in objective research or study deny their own context and limitation with arrogance and ignorance.

Production, consumption and work are all controlled by disconnected forces, global corporations and complicit governments. We participate and comply with these forces in every aspect of our lives, willingly and unwillingly. The profit imperative dominates us all. Yet as Hawthorne writes most people, particularly the majority of the world's women, do not work to accumulate profit. They work to survive, producing a bare minimum or less while they labour, many unpaid, to produce enough for life. These are the billions who live on less than \$1 a day from whom we are so disconnected, that we cannot feel pain or solidarity when we buy sweatshop clothes and food from corporate agriculture.

Hawthorne gives detailed charts and lists of countries and corporate wealth to illustrate her thesis. But she also gives hope with examples of little known "wild politics" where people around the world are preserving biodiversity, honouring local and traditional knowledge and working to live a life in harmony with each other and nature. This is the book that I wish I could have written myself. I dip into it regularly to understand myself and my own society, to better direct my activism and solidarity. We must develop a form of shared power that fosters engagement and connection if we want to overcome the unsustainable, violent and unjust system that plans to dominate every phase of life on earth.

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