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Fall 2012

Polluting Mama: An Ecofeminist Cultural Memoir

by Heidi Hutner

polluting mama
an ecofeminist cultural memoir



Heidi Hutner

Polluting Mama explores Heidi Hutner's cancer and mothering experiences through an ecofeminist lens. The book begins by examining Hutner's cancer family history, and the impact of being a cancer survivor in a polluted environment on her mothering. When becoming pregnant after her cancer recovery, Hutner asked herself such profound questions as, "What right do I have to become a mother when I, myself, am polluted, contaminated, and genetically flawed?" and "How can I protect my fetus and child in a contaminated world?" Recent studies show that mothers' wombs do not protect their fetuses from the external pollutants to which we are all exposed in contemporary society, and breast milk, too, is filled with contaminants. This information and the questions it raised led Hutner to study the relationship between cancer, mothering, and the environment, and to look closely at the ideologically symbiotic and symbolic relationship between human mothers and 'mother earth.' In *Polluting Mama*, Hutner examines at the subject of environmental degradation through her own mothering, cancer, and environmental stories and poetry, and through film, culture, and literary analysis. To this end, she looks at contemporary work on mothering and the environment by Alice Walker, Margaret Atwood, Terry Tempest Williams, Sandra Steingraber, Octavia Butler, and others, as well as numerous twentieth-century popular films on environmental issues including anti-nuclear films such as *On the Beach*, *Testament*, and *Silkwood*, to films on toxics such as *A Civil Action* and *Erin Brockavitch*, and more. Hutner also considers mothers and environmental activism, and ecofeminism and mothering in the classroom--what she calls "putting into practice." *Polluting Mama* is an original work of creative nonfiction; it is multi-generic and widely accessible to academic and non-academic audiences alike.

Heidi Hutner is Associate Professor of English, Sustainability and Women's Studies at Stony Brook University. Heidi Hutner publishes widely on ecofeminism, environmentalism, and mothering, and she is an avid environmental activist. Her next book project is on anti-nuclear mothers, past and present, with a special focus on the mothers of Japanese Mothers of Fukushima post 3/11. Heidi edits the environmental section of the new online site *TerraSpheres*, where she writes frequently on environmental topics. She has published numerous academic articles on the environment in print as well. Additionally, she is the author of *Colonial Women: Race, Culture and Stuart Drama* (Oxford UP, 2001) and the editor of, and contributor to, *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, Criticism* (UP of Virginia, 1993). Heidi Hutner keeps an active blog, *Ecofeminist and Mothering Ruminations*. She is a mother and a cancer survivor.

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