Introduction: Worry and Hope

Worrying about what would become the central concerns addressed in *Living with an Infected Planet. Covid-19, Feminism and the Global Frontline of Care* set in in March 2020. Thinking about writing what became this book began on March 13, 2020. That was the date on which António Guterres, the secretary-general of the United Nations, "the world's largest universal multilateral international organization", informed all the human beings who inhabit their shared planet together that "we must declare war on the virus".[1] Just two days before, the World Health Organization, the United Nation's agency which has the task to "direct and coordinate the world's response to health emergencies", had declared the outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2—SARS-CoV-2, the cause of coronavirus disease 2019, known as Covid-19—a pandemic.[2] Like millions and millions and millions of other human beings around the world, I most intently followed the news on the global health catastrophe, listening to reports and watching images of ambulances rushing the infected to hospitals only to end up in long queues and find themselves unable to deliver those in most urgent need of oxygen to the intensive care units. There was news on the surging numbers of people dying from infection. The news circulated images of healthcare workers, nurses, and doctors, in their gowns, goggles, gloves, and face shields, working with utmost dedication under enormous stresses and strains. The news showed images of dead Covid-19 patients in the hallways of hospitals, of Covid-19 dead piling up in funeral homes and on burial grounds that were operating around the clock, while friends and family were not allowed to be with their infected kin, with the dying or the dead, so that the spread of the deadly virus could be slowed down. Worry consumed me as I followed the news on the pandemic in March 2020 and sought to comprehend what it means to be living with an infected planet. While the pandemic realities were reason enough for utmost worry, what worried me even more was that the response to the pandemic catastrophe by the

world's largest universal, multilateral, international organization was fundamentally based on the idea of war. The international political response to the global health emergency, with its aim to ensure the formation of a global frontline of care, relied on terms and imaginaries of war.

António Guterres stated that the "only war we should be waging is the war against COVID-19".[3] Political oratory bound care to war in order to define the duty to care as a social obligation through the ethos of militarized solidarity. My interest is on how public, political, and social imaginaries are constituted, and made material, by way of words and metaphors. Susan Sontag's book-length critical essay *Illness as Metaphor*, first published in 1978, identified a specific historical moment in which war and disease were metaphorically joined together. Sontag states that the "military metaphor in medicine first came into wide use in the 1880s" when "bacteria were said to 'invade' or 'infiltrate'".[4] Given that there is this long history of a traffic between illness and war, disease and the military, I am interested in the implications these metaphorical relations have for care. War and disease are even linked in statistical comparison.

> There are dozens of calculations showing the cost equivalent in fighter jets or nukes, which governments apparently can afford, compared with the costs to develop, produce and stockpile the lifesaving medical goods we need.[5]

Political oratory uses words or metaphors in order to work ideologically and strategically with specific associations that words have acquired. Human rights activist and writer on human rights, conflict, and peace Alex de Waal spoke of the importance of words and metaphors in pandemic times and stated that "it is imperative we attend to the language and metaphors that shape our thinking."[6] What, then, does it mean in cultural, social, spiritual, affective, and emotional terms that the response to the pandemic health catastrophe was not articulated in a vocabulary of care, but in the terminology of war? War is a key imaginary in the histories and value systems of masculinist patriarchy and militarized nationalism. The realities of war are stimulants and drivers of colonial capitalist economies. War reproduces and fuels patriarchy and capitalism. How does one respond to having been made part of, and implicated, in a war effort against the virus when one wants to contribute to care, in particular to an alternative importance, value, and understanding of care beyond, or outside, the violent regimes of economic extraction, politics of domination, and epistemic silencing? This book represents an humble attempt at a response to the implications of the hegemonic response to the needs of care in pandemic times. This includes engagement with the specific feminist

response to Covid-19 at the level of feminist-policy making articulated through the notion of recovery.

As a cultural feminist theorist, whose analytical interests "follow words around", as Sara Ahmed inspirationally put it, and examine "ways of seeing", as John Berger critically advised, I began to follow words in political speeches, press briefings, and policy documents and to look at ways of seeing care workers transformed into frontline workers under the pandemic gaze as they appeared on the cover image of a globally distributed magazine, or in a popularized painting by a very well-known artist.[7] The visual rhetoric of pandemic portraits in documentary photography, and the accompanying narrative, affirmed and celebrated the masculinist and militaristic rhetoric of public political oratory. I was worried about the fact that the *political response to the pandemic* turned the so-called metaphor of war into a political concept for global solidarity, which resulted in militarized care essentialism. What is equally, if perhaps even more, worrying is the metaphorical normalization of war terminology, as war and its imaginaries also penetrate legal and economic policy in times of non-war. The definition of the *frontline worker* is a central example of the normalization of the idea, and ideology, of war in economic state policy and economic realities. Worry led me to search for a distinct *feminist response* to the pandemic, in particular, a *feminist response to this hegemonic political response* that relied on the imaginary of war for mobilization at the *global frontline of care.* This led me to study *feminist recovery plans* that were drawn up and written in the early months of the pandemic lockdown situation in 2020, when political war rhetoric was permeating the global public sphere. Learning about and studying *feminist recovery plans* gave me *feminist hope*. *Feminist worry* and *feminist hope* motivate and drive this book.

Working with the concept of "keywords", first introduced by Marxist critic Raymond Williams in 1976 and defined by him "as significant binding words in certain activities and their interpretation" and as "strong, difficult and persuasive words in everyday usage", I understand *war*, *frontline*, and *feminist recovery* as most significant words that articulated politics and policy in relation to care after the World Health Organization had declared the virus outbreak a pandemic in mid-March of 2020.[8] Structured in three chapters, "We Are at War", "Serving at the Frontlines" and "Feminist Recovery", this book follows the words *war*, *frontline*, and *feminist recovery* around as they matter to care and provides a feminist cultural analysis of their meanings and implications. Words and metaphors are used to articulate imaginaries. The power of words and metaphors to form associations and to deliver up imaginaries is harnessed

by hegemonic politics and put to use for violent ideologies. At the same time, this specific power of words and metaphors is used for emancipatory struggle and feminist resistance. As words and metaphors are shared articulation, able to be put to use for very different purposes at the level of political articulation, it is most important to attend analytically to the material-making of the meaning they hold in the response to living with an infected planet. The political pandemic vocabulary of war and the frontline spread quickly and globally. Approaching from a feminist cultural analysis perspective this vocabulary and the deep semantic implications of the meanings held by its words, terms, and metaphors requires close attention to the epistemic, affective, and social implications, and impact, that words have as they circulate in public realm of politics and policy. Key to my motivation here is the interest in the traffic among words, images, meaning, imaginaries, and ontologies as they connect the crisis to metaphors and realities of war and disease. Words and metaphors are central to constituting and spreading meaning. "Metaphors […] are conceptual in nature. They are among our principal vehicles for understanding. And they play a central role in the construction of social and political reality."[9] Words, and metaphors, seep into cultural imaginings and visual imagery as they constitute social imaginaries and give shape to public ideas and public consciousness.

This book is concerned with the meanings and implications of the words war, frontline, and feminist recovery in public and social imaginaries in relation to care. Rather than working with a narrow definition of care, the understanding of care that underpins my approach is most expansive and includes all kinds of cares: labors, infrastructures, natural resources, knowledge, feelings, ethics. Care is, at once, corporeal, material, infrastructural, natural, environmental, ecological, epistemological, emotional, spiritual, and ethical. Perhaps most importantly, care, even if imperfect or unjust, starts from and practices the acknowledgement of interdependency in social, ecological, infrastructural, epistemic, and emotional terms. Feminist philosopher and public intellectual Judith Butler stated that "social interdependency characterizes life".[10] Following Butler, "the description of social bonds without which life is imperiled takes place at the level of a social ontology, to be understood more as a social imaginary than as a metaphysics of the social."[11] What, then, to make of the state of social bonds when politics and policy turn to imaginaries of war and the terminology of the frontline in order to ensure essential care? War imaginaries are harmful and destructive to social ontologies. Therefore, work toward a different understanding of care, based on both worry and hope, has to

start with analysis of the political response to the pandemic, which is characterized by the erosion of public imaginaries of care and by militarized violence in frontline ontologies.

In *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*, Judith Butler and feminist theorist and anthropologist Athena Athanasiou explore in conversation "what makes political responsiveness possible"[12]. They examine how political imaginaries are constituted. Athanasiou speaks of "opening up conceptual, discursive, affective, and political spaces for enlarging our economic and political imaginary."[13] In order to open up such spaces for alternative economic and political imaginaries of care, one also needs to understand what kind of imaginaries occupy such spaces. In particular, the space between the literal and the metaphorical, which is central to constituting public and social imaginaries, has been occupied by war and frontlines in pandemic times. The hegemony of capitalist economies was allied with the use of war imaginaries in public political oratory and policy made real in the policy term frontline work, which mandated the continuation of essential work and demanded that all essential workers continue working while all the non-essential work had to stop and people were required to shelter in place at home. The term frontline work clearly exposes the militarization of exploitative, extractive, and dangerous conditions of essential labor under the hegemony of capitalism, as it made clear how deeply the imaginaries of war had penetrated and defined policy frameworks and economic realities. Understanding critical feminist cultural analysis as relevant to feminist social theory and as a contribution to feminist activism and practice, my interest is on what a critical cultural analysis of the imaginaries of care, as they emerged in public articulations circulating on an international level and informing a global public sphere, tells us about our humanity and how we live in social and cultural terms with the conditions of ontological interconnectedness and interdependencies, which we can begin to understand at the level of our dependency on breathing. The analysis presented over the chapters of this book is seen as a modest contribution to a still largely unwritten history of political, economic, and epistemic cultural imaginaries and social ontologies relevant to understanding care. Such imaginaries will have to be critically unearthed and reconstituted from the long history of multiple silences around care.

Worried about the absence of public imaginaries of care and about the political use of the idea of war in order to ensure care led me to ask critical questions of my own work as a feminist cultural theorist and of the field of feminist cultural theory and feminist cultural analysis. Why have feminist approaches

to cultural theory and analysis failed to more fully think with epistemologies of care and care as knowledge? Why has feminist cultural theory not contributed much more to an expanded, more nuanced, and richer vocabulary around care?

The contribution this book makes is the introduction of *feminist worry* and *feminist hope* as methods, which emerge from taking care as knowledge seriously. I will say more about feminist hope at the end of this introduction; for now, I will stay with worry. Worry has to do with care. Historical semantics and etymology connect care and worry through the Proto-West-Germanic root of karu, which is also related to the Old Norse kǫr, which means sickbed. The everyday experience of care, both care-giving and care-receiving, offers ample instruction on how care fills one with worry and requires one to respond to needs of care with worry. Feminist worry as an analytic includes worried listening, looking, reading, writing, and questioning. As a cultural theorist, I hold it to be my task and social obligation *to look at and listen to words and images*.[14] As a feminist cultural theorist, I am particularly interested in the space that opens up between the *literal meaning* and the *metaphorical meaning*. I see this space as a space of and for "political responsiveness", as a space for feminist political agency, and as a space to be used with care.[15] Words and metaphors are never independent, they come with meanings, histories, and associations attached to them. They have been to many places before one starts using them. Metaphors, in particular, are very agile. They move quite effortlessly between times as well as between real spaces and discursive spaces. Metaphors connect, while they separate: they separate a word from its literal meaning, by connecting it more deeply to this meaning in order to free up this meaning for transference onto other contexts, situations, objects, things, humans and so on and so forth. Use of metaphors has far-reaching implications in the contexts of social, political, material, cultural, religious, spiritual, ecological, and economic meaning-making. Expanding on the notion of keywords, one can think of keymetaphors as useful to the analysis of how politics, culture, and society relate to the meanings of words, in particular in situations of extremes. I understand metaphors to be conveyors of the deep meaning of language to the surface. Furthermore, the figurative use of words has to be understood as a specific form of language-based heritage, through which we can grasp important ontological, cosmological, and spiritual concepts through which relations between humans and their world are imagined. Metaphors reflect back to us, they tell us out loud how we imagine ourselves in relation to the world. Metaphors rely on understandability and on stretching understandability to the maximum, and, perhaps, even beyond, as they invite those, who hear, read,

or see metaphors to add their own associations and comparisons. While one might think of metaphors as an explicitly, perhaps even exclusively, literary device, metaphors are, in fact, everywhere. We make use of metaphors in everyday language. Political oratory is quite purposefully, strategically, and ideologically filled with metaphors. Metaphors are held to be more persuasive than the bare literal meaning of words. They enhance the power of language as they invite affective and analytical responses. They make meanings hotter or colder, sharper or softer. Metaphors are articulations of structures of thought just as much as of structures of feeling. Metaphors cause us to relate to our realities and our imaginaries differently. I see this space that opens up between the literal and the metaphorical as a profoundly political space, as a space in which meaning can be shaped and reoriented, as a space from which influential public imaginaries can emerge. How this space between the literal and the metaphorical is put to use in the contexts of politics and policy requires feminist cultural analysis. At the same time, this space between the metaphorical and the literal is open to feminist political agency and collective action. *Looking at*, and *listening to*, words and images are not only seen as critical social obligations in feminist cultural theory, but also as distinct methods.

Approaching my study material of political speeches, press briefings, policy briefs, popular imagery, and feminist recovery plans with worry and with hope led me to ways of working that interrogate, interpret, and use the space between the literal and the metaphorical, based on the understanding that meaning-making is always material. Feminist historian of science Donna Haraway has challenged the separation between semiosis and materiality. She speaks of "material-semiotic nodes or knots" and "material-semiotic makings". [16] Therefore, metaphors cannot be separated from their material histories. Worried analysis includes the methods of *reading back* and *reinscribing*. This entails reading literal meanings back into the figurative use of metaphors in order to provide a critical feminist cultural analysis of how imaginaries and ontologies are interdependent and interrelated. Reading back builds on activist feminist epistemological traditions of Black feminist thought, in particular on social activist and scholar on race, class and feminism bell hooks' notion of "talking back".[17] Reading back means reading political keymetaphors, which are understood as the articulation of political will and public imaginaries from above, through their hegemonic and canonical meanings in order to provide critical interpretive approaches to the analysis of the materialization of power in meaning-making, for resistance and, ultimately, for developing other metaphors and other imaginaries. *Reinscribing* supports

the method of reading back and places emphasis on the material realities captured in the literal dimension of words. Reading back and reinscribing are methodological tools for the critical analysis of how the materiality of metaphors operates as part of their ideological function.

Metaphors are constituted through the relations between the literal and the figurative. In political usage, war metaphors are used to manage a perceived societal problem. What is war a political metaphor for? When I asked family and friends for help to provide me with associations of war as metaphor in political public oratory, they drew up the following list for me: war stands for the army, manliness, honor, responsibility, heroism, patriotism, strong male bonds, strength, force, power, vigilance, resolve, unity, comradery, loyalty, defensibility, armament, being equipped for war, sacrifice, uniformity, obedience, and endurance, but also mass death, ethnic cleansing, extinction of life and nature, war crimes, violence, destruction, nationalism, fundamentalism, killing the enemy at all costs, sexual violence and mass rape, sacrificing the lives of soldiers, cannon fodder, ruination, mourning, suffering, pain, disease, terror, futility, disease, refugees, and displacement. While the political rhetoric comparing the pandemic to war mobilizes unity, endurance, obligation, commitment, and readiness for personal sacrifice and heroism, the mass death, suffering, pain and deadliness associated with war can also be linked to pandemic disease. My feminist examination is aimed at understanding the implications of the frontline. The inquiry is focused on how the emergence of pandemic frontline imaginaries changed the social ontologies of care. The duty to care was ideologically construed as a new form of militarized care essentialism. Like all other forms of sexism, these modern social ontologies and imaginaries of gendered care essentialism matter to state governance, capitalist economies, political thought, and the realities of women's lives. The militarization of care in pandemic times is placed, here, in relation to the modern formation of sexism, in order to foreground that the notions of mobilization and the frontline imaginaries served the purpose of re-gendering the image of care as a male virtue and masculinist heroism, while, at the same time, perpetuating its feminized material and economic realities. Taken together, reading back and reinscribing insist that material realities cannot be decoupled from the metaphorical use of terms. I understand it as an ethical commitment and a social obligation of worried analysis, and feminist cultural theory in general, to work for a better understanding of the ideological effects that the literal meanings of words, and the changing material realities stored within them, produce when these words are used

metaphorically as political ideas. At the same time, I see analysis not only as a way of responding to circumstances, to what is already given, using the tools of critical cultural theory, but as a contribution in order to be responsive to what is yet to come. Therefore, my hope is that such a focus on the importance of words and imagery can be useful to future feminist work on words and imagery that inspire public imaginaries of care, of which there is a chronic lack.

This book does not present a history of the pandemic during its first months of lockdown in March and April 2020, but an unfolding of matters and concerns around imaginaries and realities of care that were thrown into stark relief because of the pandemic. There exists a large body of research, in particular social science research, on gendered, racialized, and classed dimensions of care, labor, health, and poverty as well as care injustices and care discrimination. What this book brings to the understanding of care, defined by political theorist and care ethicist Joan Tronto and educational scholar Berenice Fisher as "everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible", is the political idea of imaginaries of care and the epistemological view on care as a distinct way of generating knowledge.[18] The legacies of Western philosophy and political thought are characterized by the understanding of the human being as ζῷον πολιτικόν.[19] In historical hindsight, one can see today that this history is marked by the absence of a political thought tradition that conceives of the human being as a caring being. Furthermore, there is an also an absence of political thought traditions in the imaginaries of care that would understand the human "species activity" of care as one of many activities of care engaged in by a multitude of species.[20] I see this lack of public care imaginaries, which includes the still widely assumed human exceptionalism and human-centered speciesism, in care, and the absence of multispecies care, as cultural, ethical, and spiritual poverty around care. This became acute in the militarized care essentialism and the expectation of care heroism that emerged through the political response of declaring war under the aim of ensuring care. This poverty of imaginaries of care is part of the profound crisis of care.

The "crisis of care" that has long been diagnosed by critical feminist thinkers, as for example by Marxist political scientist Nancy Fraser, has been described as a gendered, classed, and racialized crisis of labor and infrastructures.[21] This crisis of care, which is commonly understood to result from the violence of economic extraction as well as infrastructural injustice and discrimination, is, at the same time, a crisis of imaginaries of care. The his-

torical invisibilization and silencing of care cannot be understood through the violence of politics and economies only, but has to be more fully recognized as a form of lasting epistemic violence that largely excluded care as knowledge from Western traditions of thought. Care as knowledge is always embodied, always corporeal. This understanding of knowledge is useful to seeing that the violent separation of body from mind, human from nature, was epistemological warfare. Let me think about breathing for a moment. Breathing is vital. Breathing is essential for human life. Thinking of the breathing of human bodies-and-minds is a fundamental way of understanding the utmost violence of such separatist traditions of thought. The Covid-19 pandemic was a global lesson of care in breathing and shared air. As it was understood that the "novel coronavirus can spread through the air" and the Covid-19 infection is airborne, it became clear that human breathing presented a potentially deadly threat to others and to oneself. [22] Humans had to learn how to protect themselves and others from being exposed to the easy spread of the virus from an infected person's nose or mouth through the air. The risk of infection required that human beings fully acknowledge that being in the world is embodied and fundamentally depends on air and breathing. Breathing is not a choice. If one wants to continue living, one has to breathe. Humans cannot choose not to breathe. When our breath stops, our life ends. Breathing is a matter of life and death. Breathing, on the most fundamental level, connects humans with one another and with the planet as a whole in interdependency and vulnerability. Protecting others from one's own breath and protecting oneself from the breath of others, in order to avoid infection, became a global task and responsibility. Breathing became an act of care for oneself and others. More than before the outbreak of the virus, breathing, with humans on average breathing in and out 22,000 times a day, had to be socially acknowledged as a concern of interdependencies and vulnerabilities, as a concern of interconnectedness in life and in death. Breathing, which during the pandemic so deeply connected human beings to the threats of infection, illness, and death, is chosen here to raise awareness of how deeply and complexly human beings are interconnected in their interdependencies with one another, with their environments, their infrastructures and technologies, and the planet as a whole. At that very moment in March 2020, when fundamentally confronted with the shared responsibility toward living and dying, and becoming more deeply aware than before that one's breathing in could carry the infection into one's own body and that one's breathing out could cause someone else to be infected, fall ill, or even die, it was most troubling and unsettling to learn that

it was expected from us, the human inhabitants of planet Earth, to wage a global war against the virus.

While the first two chapters of this book use the method of *feminist worry* in order to analyze how imaginaries of war are connected to *frontline ontologies* that subjugate the production of care to a militarist masculinist ethos of heroism and sacrifice and militarized care essentialism, which comes out of a long history of essentializing care that I trace back to mammalian epistemologies and its gendered essentialization, the third chapter introduces the method of *feminist hope* and studies *feminist recovery plans*. The feminist response to Covid-19, and to the hegemonic political and economic ways of dealing with the pandemic, in no way, of course, limits itself to feminist policy. There is now an abundance of feminist research on the pandemic and, in particular, many sociological and political science studies on the conditions of caring labor and healthcare in the pandemic.

In the context of this book, the feminist policy documents of *feminist recovery plans* were chosen as study material, as my interest is on how public imaginaries around care were being articulated in response to the pandemic crisis of care. Feminist policy provided a distinct political response not only to Covid-19, but also to the failures of and the violence in the hegemonic political and economic response. Feminist policy emerged as a distinct practice of public pandemic articulation, in which economic and political imaginaries were enlarged and in which care was actively redefined. That feminist recovery plans were being thought and written was hope-inspiring. The proposals of these feminist recovery plans were aligned with my own understanding that it was necessary to imagine and organize a new "international global care order" to resist and overcome hegemonic politics and economies of care.[23] Feeling hope made me understand that feminist hope is also a distinct method that emerges out of care as knowledge, in particular ways of knowing care in relation to recovery.

Feminist hope as a methodological approach and theoretical perspective, much like *feminist worry*, emerges from understanding care as knowledge that counteracts epistemologies of mind/body and nature/culture separation and renders epistemic violence, including violence against care and violence of care, legible.[24] In particular, when dealing with care in processes of recovery, there is at once worry and hope. Worries arise on account of the uncertainties of recovery and the specific, and oftentimes changing, vulnerabilities of minds, bodies, and environments in the process of recovering from disease, loss, harm or violence. Hopes arise because of the very fact that the possibility of a recovery is assumed. While recovery can never be taken for granted, hope

for recovery is also hope for futurity and for meaning-making for futures based on different economic and political imaginaries. Worry and hope as epistemologies of care pull us into obligations and responsiveness, understood here as social obligations and political responsiveness. This pull extends to the past, the present, and the future. Worry and hope connect human beings with their own situated moment as the two concepts extend to the afterlives of violent pasts and to the possible lives in transformative futures. In everyday language, recovery is associated with *getting better*, not with returning to normal. While feminist worry as a method is used to read hegemonic meanings, realities, material histories, and past associations back into words and metaphors used in political speech and policy, feminist hope as a method is used for turning to words and metaphors and for opening up the space between the literal and the metaphorical as part of the process of recovering from past associations and of prefiguring healing.

Writing this book in a state of worry, I sought, at the same time, to remain hopeful. How does one respond to the presence of war within political imaginaries of care? How does one not despair? Worry and hope were necessary in order to continue writing despite the too-large questions, the too-painful planetary realities. How can one find meaning in writing when one understands that the infected planet is the result of a Man-made condition?[25] The pandemic was caused by the environmental ruination known as the Anthropocene Epoch, which is the period of planet Earth's history that results from Man-made impact on the planet and is the condition all living and non-living beings find themselves coping with today. As massive urbanization, environmental ruination, deforestation, and rampant extraction move humans closer to viruses, the risks of zoonotic spillover—the transmission of pathogenic viruses from wild animals to humans—increases. How can one find it meaningful to share, through writing, a feminist cultural analysis of political pandemic keywords in relation to care, when grief and loss because of mass death due to a global health catastrophe are overwhelming? In May 2022, the World Health Organization reported estimates that "the full death toll associated directly or indirectly with the COVID-19 pandemic (described as "excess mortality") between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021 was approximately 14.9 million."[26] Perhaps, meaning in feminist writing can be found through sharing worries and hope in analytical observations and through the concerns and questions they raise which can, if ever, only be responded to collectively. Questions I am thinking of here include the following: How could it be that war was seen as curative? How could it be that the most urgent need for more care was secured through

the notion of frontlines? Why was care made part of a war effort against the virus? How, in this situation of a global health catastrophe and acute awareness of interdependencies and intervulnerabilities, could the political response to the pandemic mobilize for war in order to ensure solidarity and duty under pandemic lockdown conditions? Why were care workers—historically feminized—ordered to be warriors and soldiers—historically masculinized—at the pandemic frontlines? How could it be that care was made hyper-visible through sacrifice and forced heroism? How could it be that there was such a poverty of political and public language around care? How had human beings maneuvered themselves into such a situation of acute lack of public imaginaries of care that the void created by this lack could be filled with imaginaries of war? How could it be that the violent modern ideology of individualism is still being perpetuated, when every breath that human beings took in pandemic times reminded them of their existence in embodied interdependency and interconnectedness? How could it be that human exceptionalism was still being upheld when human beings had learned that "human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells" in their bodies, with the "other 90 percent of the cells […] filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such"?[27] How could it be that care, including healthcare, was still mostly conceived of through human-centered, even human-centric perspectives, when care is largely provided by non-humans, by air, water, or food? How could it be that the Man-made pandemic did not immediately result in a consequential rethinking of what it means to be living with an infected planet? Questions and concerns like these are huge, they can feel overwhelming, too much, too painful. Sharing such questions and concerns with others by way of writing is a feminist way of responding. Sharing questions that are too large for any one to be answered alone is feminist response. "Response, of course, grows with the capacity to respond, that is, responsibility."[28] Response grows with the capacity to share "response-ability".[29] Questions around public imaginaries of care can only be worked through collectively. The huge and painful questions raised here are shared in order to explain what motivated my humble attempt at contributing to a better understanding of how deeply human beings have failed in ethical and social terms, to develop a culture of care for living together with their planet. These questions are shared in feminist worry and in feminist hope that political responsiveness to care will become possible and that care as knowledge will enter into ways of thinking and feeling. Feminist worry and hope are not held to be simple or easy. Much rather, worry and hope complexly, ambivalently, and conflictingly respond to the given, to the conditions of living and

dying with an infected planet. Feminist worry and feminist hope as methods emerge from epistemologies of care. Worry and hope are central to the emergence of a new *care feminism* and its political responsiveness and response-ability to living with an infected planet.