

Conclusion: We Care Therefore We Are

Living with others means that we are never living alone. Human bodies are, always, living with others, which range from tiny organisms called microbiota, to other humans, to the earth's atmosphere. Conceiving of planetary existence as living with others foregrounds interdependency and raises awareness of the fact that relating to others always means relating to interdependencies. How relations to interdependencies are imagined emotionally, epistemologically, ethically, and spiritually is central to the economic, infrastructural, material, and political realities of how these relations are defined and how interdependencies can be lived.

By writing this book under the conditions of living with an infected planet, my aim was to provide a feminist cultural analysis of keywords, keymetaphors, and keyimages that articulated the politics of the response to the pandemic catastrophe in the early months of the pandemic in March and April 2020. The extreme health emergency led to full lockdown mandates and, at the same time, introduced essential work orders. Using as my study material political oratory, in particular at the level of supranational organizations, but also at the level of the nation state, policy frameworks, and globally circulating media imagery—such as cover images of magazines or popular public art—, my analysis shows that the terminology and visuality of war articulated the emergence of a new militarized care essentialism and compulsory heroism expected of those conscripted to the global frontlines of care. Declarations of war in the name of care and the militarization of care in response to the pandemic produced new frontline ontologies that organize interdependencies as class antagonism between the caring classes, who have to fight, and those who depend on them, so we can survive. The terms war and frontline present us with the patriarchal symptomatology of the pandemic.

Troubled by the hegemonic political response to the pandemic, I started to research if there was a distinctly feminist response to how hegemonic pol-

itics and economy dealt with the pandemic, placing my particular focus on dimensions of care in policy as articulated in the feminist recovery plans for Covid-19 and beyond. The longer I engaged with the rhetoric of war in political speeches and the normalized terminology of war, as expressed in the term frontline in policy documents, the more I came to understand that not only did the pandemic result in an acute crisis of care, but the political response to the pandemic revealed a deep lack of public and political imaginaries of care. This poverty of imaginaries of care is the aftermath of the historical silencing and invisibilization of care, a lasting effect of exploitative care extractivism. The structural devaluation of care was at once corporeal, material, economic, epistemic, and spiritual. Colonial sexist and racist capitalism and patriarchal modernity have not only foreclosed care as knowledge but also eroded the capacity of developing public and political imaginaries of care. Therefore, I read the idea of feminist recovery, in and beyond policy, as a proposal for finding ways of living as recovery from the historical and present-day onslaught on care. As one possible way of contributing to making recovery real, I developed in this book an epistemic intervention, namely feminist worry and feminist hope as analytics that are derived from care as knowledge.

Care as knowledge starts from acknowledging that living is always living with others in interdependencies. Responses to living with interdependencies need to be based on care. Feminist analysis of how these responses are articulated, with my particular interest in the material implications of metaphors and the power of metaphors as public and political imaginaries, begins to change when worry and hope are recognized and used as analytical tools. Recovery can be slow, very slow even, but it can be. Recovery from colonial capitalist patriarchy can seem impossible. Therefore, recovering the capacity of developing imaginaries, in particular new public and political imaginaries of care, is necessary. The extension of recovery to imaginaries counteracts both the depletion and the erosion of the capacity to imagine collectively which occur under the conditions of compulsory neoliberal capitalism and in the aftermath of historical patriarchal imaginaries of independence, war, enmity, heroism, and competition; as imaginaries constantly change, adapt, and evolve in response to the present.

In the midst of pandemic mass death, ongoing Covid-19 mutations, and constant work overload for care workers, my thoughts were devoted equally to a feminist recovery which eschews hegemonic economic and political care regimes and to hegemonic epistemic traditions that have excluded care from knowledge. The legacy of Cartesian modernity and its philosophical principle

I think therefore I am is still powerful. The imperative of the cogito was the premise for the formation of the modern subject, that is, modern Enlightenment Man who made Himself at once a universal and exceptional figure. The absence of a historical legacy based on the principle we care therefore we are is felt most painfully. This absence has given rise to the lack of public and political imaginaries of care just as much as the exploitative economic violence against all those from whom care is extracted, historically as well as in the present. Recognizing care as knowledge is central to today's care feminism and to beginning to work for new public and political imaginaries of care. While feminist worry is always concerned with the conditions of possibilities (that is, with the conditions that make new public and political imaginaries of care possible), feminist hope works toward new imaginaries of care even if the conditions for them are not there yet, and insists on making them possible. Hope and worry can work together to care-think, to not split caring from thinking and thinking from caring.

Hope and worry speak to living with the infected planet as recovering with the planet. Some days I believe that we can arrive at a point where it is possible for us to think: we care therefore we are.

