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With Hardship Comes Ease:
Muslim-feminist meditations on miscarriage, care-based knowing, and lineage

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ABSTRACT

Through a critical auto-ethnographic account of miscarriage and grief, I explore what it means to inherit Islam as a tradition through care-based modes of knowing. Through Muslim-feminist theorizing, I blend Quranic narratives of care with maternal lineages of Islam I have inherited through care, that not only guide how I think about care Islamically, but also, how I practice care in my relations as a Muslim. I also illustrate the value of intertextuality of care as it is experienced across lived time, and across generations, within systems of kin and the need to let go of monolithic senses of tradition, and moral epistemology, within our practice of comparative care ethics. I draw a parallel between colonial, and white-orientated modes of knowing Muslims, and Islam, and grounded care-based modes of knowing by which we come to know and inhabit our practices of Islam in caring as, and being cared for , as Muslims.

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1. A Testimony: Miscarriage, Time and Mourning

> *Have We not uplifted your heart for you ˹O Prophet˺,*
> *relieved you of the burden*
> *which weighed so heavily on your back,*
> *and elevated your renown for you?*[1]
> *So, surely with hardship comes ease.*
> *Surely with ˹that˺ hardship comes ˹more˺ ease.*
> *So, once you have fulfilled ˹your duty˺, strive ˹in devotion˺,*
> *turning to your Lord ˹alone˺ with hope.*
> Quran 94:1-94:8

A dream of cerulean, blue waves washing over a shore, washing over me. A voice from a place within, and beyond, that assured me that this child would bring me peace, calm, ease. A warm embrace, a promise, a daughter. For years I have known this being's signature; I have felt her presence around me on my darkest nights, and in my quietest joys. That night, I decided I wanted to name the baby Rahma, in witness of *Ar-Rahman,* and the ease we are promised after hardship. In this dream, at 8 weeks pregnant, was the closest I had gotten to holding her in this world. In a few days, during an atmospheric river, as sheets of rain slammed the pavement, during the first ultrasound, I learned that she was gone. I was experiencing a missed miscarriage. Leaving that clinic, I was awe-struck in grief, but my body continued in making a home for this child, and just did not let go on its own. I kept hearing, healthcare providers, tell me, they were sorry, because it was very much a *wanted pregnancy*. I admired how carefully they used their language to protect the grief, and choice, of pregnant people in the difficult space of making the decision to end pregnancies for different reasons. I admired how important such boundary-markers are to navigate the complexities in holding space for the grief of people seeking abortions for unwanted pregnancies. Aurally, though, it was hard to process these words, I wanted this pregnancy, but I felt helpless, in wanting something that could not be—a choice I did not make for myself. There was grief in hearing the difference—in having something I wanted taken from me, not a matter of choice but of, accepting what had been written for me.

I had prayed every day for years for this. My father had been hospitalized in an ICU, from covid, for almost three years, now; I had prayed with all my heart for this to be our family's happiness after so much hardship and grief. Yet, I found myself sobbing, over a phonecall, as the midwifery clinic discharged me and referred me to an abortion clinic; a difficult rerouting. I cancelled my classes for the week; nervous I'd begin miscarrying while teaching. Weeping, I scheduled a D/C procedure with a kind stranger on the phone, and she gave me a time to have t*he products of conception* removed. The language, again, was jarring but offered respite and

relief. I just wanted this pregnancy to end, and the weight of carrying something unviable, something dead, was suffocating. I wanted time to splinter, so I could just get to the part where I am not pregnant and could try again. I needed to be in the moment after all of this.

Yet, I also wanted time to bend to feel this child's presence around me. I wanted time to bend in another direction, into another world, where my arms felt full in embracing the children who had chosen me as theirs. I asked the woman on the phone if I could ask the doctor for an ultrasound, just in case, before the procedure to make sure there was nothing there anymore. She assured me, I could. I asked her if it would be painful or traumatic while medically awake. She assured me, I will be okay, that most people do not even feel or remember the event. She noted that no partners or support persons were allowed to accompany me to the abortion clinic for the safety and privacy of others. I was terrified to walk this journey alone, but grateful that such services were accessible and prioritized the safety of all. I learned in the coming days that there are some trials of life as a mother that Allah intends for you to walk alone through in the dark, with no one to hold your hand, that are meant to propel within you profound healing, peace and enduring courage within you.

In the week between this phone call and the procedure, I woke up every day with morning sickness, food aversions, spikes in hormones, in a body trying its absolute hardest to keep building a home for a baby that I no longer was carrying; a baby that had returned to the spirit world, to surround me. This pregnancy and loss unfolded in the same string of days I laboured and birthed my now four-year-old son. There I was, on his birthday, still tiringly developing a gestational sac for no reason, watching him open his presents with no more news to share, of a sibling, of hopes that it would no longer just be us three—that our family was growing. I felt so guilty as a mother for stealing time and care from him, spending the past few months exhausted, nauseous, and anxious in the first trimester for nothing. I wanted this birthday to be so special for him, and knowing I would only spend the coming months crying and in mourning made me feel like I had failed us all—again and again.

I also learned that in life, there is senseless suffering too, of a series of horribly cruel things that have also been written for us, and happen to us for absolutely no reason at all and leave us shattered. There are parts of this loss, sleepless nights of crying, I will never ever be able to weave into a purpose, or a narrative—that there can be suffering to which we as humans are not able to, or meant to, inscribe meaning to—that only Allah knows the answer to, why did this happen to me? These answers can unfold only in his time, in our dialogues, as they unfold in this life and in the Hereafter. *A blighted ovum*, for example, in which you are left to grieve a pregnancy with no fetal pole, and in its place, you are left with so much wisdom, spiritual sense, and visions of a child that you will never come to hold. An experience, a relationship that existed for you, but remained outside the senses, and witness, of everyone but God. I learned that some parts of our loss will remain forever absent, yet ever-present in the make of one's self and one's

self alone. That a necessary part of being Muslim, is loneliness, in that there are some parts of our ethical selves that only exist, care needs that can only be seen and met in our relationship with our Creator.

I called my mother and friends for counsel and support before the procedure. They prayed and meditated with me. They helped me do visualizations, shared stories of their pregnancy losses, and reminded me that I am not alone. Some echoes from Muslim stories of pregnancy loss, that my family and friends shared,

"Pain is energy, breathe through it and it will pass."
"Recovery after a miscarriage is even harder than birth, take care of yourself."
"God is love, imagine his love surrounding you in every step of the procedure."
"Our children choose us in the spirit world as theirs, and will be waiting for us, keeping open the doors of Jannat, demanding their reunion with you."
"Our children are with us eternally in God's time"
"Sometimes our children stay in the spirit world as our protectors, in the company of our ancestors."
"Our children will find us again in this world, and be in our arms, soon."??

The day of the appointment, I walked in alone, cried as much as I could in the hallway leading up to the reception desk. Every step I took from there to the waiting room, to grief counselling, to surgery prep, to the actual procedure, felt like a unit of time—with a weight and duration of its own. In a missed miscarriage, my body had not begun bleeding yet, it remained with Rahma in a time-space I had been ejected from; I was still hormonally pregnant. There was no natural process, or rhythm, to the loss; it was only through a medical intervention that I could safely let go and move on. The idea of even anticipating such a loss, waiting to bleed at any time, while working, parenting, with no community or support system was terrifying.

The D/C marked this shift in time, the point of Rahma's departure from my womb, and her return to the spirit world, to the womb of our creator—Ar-Rahman. In birthing my son, I was left with a deep understanding of the place of mothers in Allah's gaze, who have been gifted with the power of creating and carrying life to earthside. In miscarrying, I witnessed in a deeper way, that I as a human, am not a creator, and that only our Creator, can breathe life, and spirit, into our bodies. That no matter how much I willed, or plead, that I could not mould clay into life.

I sat in the grief counsellor's room, asking more questions than I needed to, trying to suspend time. I wept. I froze. I stuttered. I learned that just as I could not create life, I had no control over time—its flow was relentless. I have written extensively on, and experienced, medical injustice, on the violence and impersonality of healthcare spaces. I received the most empowering and compassionate care for the first time in my life, at the most scared and vulnerable I have ever been. She did not rush me and was committed in her promise to ensure

my safety, consent, and voice throughout this process. I asked again, feeling embarrassed, will they do a follow-up ultrasound before the procedure, just to make sure that there was really nothing there? She assured me that it was necessary for my consent. In this weird time-space, the outside world, all the relationalities within which I am situated, my responsibilities, did not exist for me. Someone engaged with me, just as me, not as a mom, daughter, wife, or worker. Someone asked me, how I needed to be cared for. I did not know if the care during the next steps of this procedure would be as compassionate, and I joked, that I did not want to leave her office. I think a part of me will forever remain in clinic, in that office, on that hospital bed in the prep room, in the procedure room.

As I settled into my hospital bed to prepare for the surgery with antibiotics, a nurse explained the procedure and recovery process to me. She, too, was incredibly kind, gentle, and spoke in the softest, compassionate voice. Before administering medication, and checking vitals, she asked me who I was, listened to my stories, witnessed what this pregnancy meant to me—tried to pronounce perfectly the name I would've given the baby. She held my hand, and did not rush me. She stayed with me in my grief, in ways that not even friends of family have been able to in this journey as did every other nurse in that room, they listened, stayed, and witnessed. I wondered how much time and labor they offered to make sure we felt safe and empowered, not just to me, but to every patient there. It was care that was life-affirming, competent and consent-based. I knew the value of their labour—that abortion clinics are life-affirming and essential for reproductive justice. But this all was taking place in a slice of time in which their time and labour was not valued and under siege—days after Donald Trump was elected for a second term as President and as conservative leaders across Canada, also threatened ending access to abortion care. I am intentionally documenting this experience of just care, because as a racialized, neurodiverse and Muslim woman, my experience of settler-colonial healthcare systems has been anything but safe. This experience felt like a welcomed exception, but also a glimmer of hope—that such care is possible, and that I too deserve it.

As I waited to be called into the procedure room, an hour had passed, where I was alone again. I chose to recite *dhikr* and meditate to surround myself with love, and hope, with the reminder that whatever the experience will bring, I am capable, strong and protected in the care of Ar-Rahman. In recitation, and in a state of sleep, I felt around, one last time, the same warmth, I have marked as my daughter Rahma. She brought me a message that I found unsettling—that she chose me as her mother, that she would not leave my side, and that I was deserving of love. I also witnessed in this message that it is only with love, that Allah had willed me into existence, that my life had a purpose and weight of its own; in becoming a mother, with my first pregnancy, my sense of self, had withered so much, that to accept this truth felt harder than the impending D/C. I wept, and wept. I had lost so much of my self in pouring into others, in caring, without any sense of a village, that I had forgotten that I deserved care too—that

Allah had accounted for my nurturance, well-being and safety too. It was the first time in my life that I felt, that I too was provided for, by Allah as Ar-Razzaq, the Provider. I did not know at the time, but the peace, and safety, I was given at that moment was to stay with me, and move within me, just a gentle breeze creates ripples within water.

The time had come, for me to not to be pregnant anymore, to be freed from the invisible, embodied, and out(side)-of-time labour of making within myself, a home, for someone that was no longer here. Before the procedure, the doctor also took the same time to listen, witness and stay with me in my fears. I asked her how to best advocate for myself if I am in pain. She assured me, that this was not birth, and that I should be expected to push through pain, and that she would stop immediately and check in whether I needed another dose of pain medication. Her words will also stay with me, as possibly, one of the only times I was assured by a healthcare provider that my account of pain, and demand for pain relief, matters and that the expectation to endure pain in reproductive healthcare is unjust—and gendered and racialized. Out of anxiety, and shame, of looking desperate to see something that does not exist and knowing that seeing an empty gestational sac would crush me again, I hesitated to ask for that second ultrasound. She offered, pre-emptively, without prompt, to assure that my consent was informed. She asked if I wanted to see the ultrasound, I declined and trusted her judgement. I would've wondered for the rest of my life if I did not confirm with a second ultrasound. All week I had wanted this second ultrasound; I needed to confirm again that this pregnancy really was over. To have a caring healthcare provider steward this desire and demand, in the process of consent, was deeply healing. It was in this moment, that I knew I was ready to let go, with ease. It meant something to me to trust her in being the last to witness, see, the image on the ultrasound, as the place I had made for Rahma. The nurses administered the pain medication, and I fell asleep, remembering nothing of the procedure itself, other than being supported in walking back to the prep room. All I remember is that during the procedure, I dreamed of Taylor Swift inviting me to the Eras Tour; no memory, or experience, of having a place for life vacuumed out of me.

The same, kind, nurses offered me juice and cookies, and tucked me in. They spoke with me in the same loving voice I speak with my toddler when he is hurt, upset or afraid. I thanked them, profusely, and will always remember them in my prayers as doing God's work, in watching over my life and my grief in that space. In birthing my son, I felt constantly displaced as a mother, as healthcare providers prioritized the safety of only my baby in medical decision making. My birth was rushed, in a timeline not of my own; I felt unheard and alone, even when surrounded by people. In that abortion clinic, I felt seen, heard, and mothered as a mother, and as some mother's child. Full-spectrum reproductive care means investing in services that mother, nurture, and care for people who experience miscarriages, abortions and stillbirth, too. Our post-partum experiences also matter, yet remain unmet, invisible and illegible needs within

healthcare systems and our communities' horizons. Because of the exceptional care I received, I felt suspicious of how calm I felt afterwards, attributing it to the pain medication or disassociation, but that calm continues to stay with me today as the most peace I have ever felt within. I left that experience grieving but not traumatized. Although I felt the D/C to be an artificial marker of time in a miscarriage, or intervention, into what should've been a *natural* process of letting go, I felt that just and safe conditions of care protected the *natural* timeline of my grief. Because I did not accrue additional, or compounded, medical trauma, I did not have to grieve the excess grief of racialized, gendered or ableist violence, that one picks up in moving through healthcare systems. Instead, what was centered was just the pain of pregnancy loss and the procedure—the actual injury from the process and event.

Recovering from the procedure, I bled a lot, saw tissue, of what should have been that home and felt traces of that time be returned to the earth. No tangible parts of my pregnancy will remain, no one will remember how much I endured in that first trimester, how beautiful the pregnancy had been, before the loss. The marks of miscarriage-time on my body slowly became invisible. I spent the first two weeks in recovery, still pregnant hormonally—which was a cruelty and sadness of its own. I felt in my uterus, a black hole, a portal to this great beyond, a place where I could feel Allah's love, this child's sweet spirit. But also, a place marked by the absence of something that had been taken from me. In this place, I felt embraced, safe. Yet, at the same time, the grief of losing this pregnancy, this connection, this place, within me and beyond, captured me and left me standing over a cliff overlooking a vast dark abyss. For months after, as my body finally let go, I felt this darkness haunt every thought, threatening to consume me whole. I could feel my hormones spike every evening, trying to jumpstart the body back into pregnancy, and then feel a brutal physiological and emotional crash that would leave me crying at night for hours, for months after. I lived the same day for months, where I was reminded every evening that I was pregnant, and then I was not anymore. The process of miscarrying, of grief, possessed my body to radically possess a time of its own. Recovery felt like an abridged version of postpartum, all at once, with no newborn to hold as you rebalance yourself.

With the end of bleeding, this moment in time would be capsulated, and enclosed within my body, and memory. I resented how the world, and time, moved on—how quickly my friends, colleagues and family forgot that I was still grieving. Noone cared anymore and, soon, no one would remember that I was pregnant September-November of 2024. As I continue to hope to be able to carry life earthside again, in the process, in tracing ebbs and flows of menstrual cycles, I find myself abruptly brought back to that same, lonely place, seeing over the vast abyss, watching it all slip through undeserving hands again. This time, however, every time I felt absenced in my relations of care, I felt the same ripples of water, within me, propelling me, reminding me, to interject, to refuse, to make demands, to claim a place in time. Reminding

others of this pregnancy, and demanding witness to my grief, is interjecting in the marking of time itself and carving a space within it for what I uniquely, and solely, experienced. It is a rupture into all captures of the "I" that I possess and inhabit.

Because I remembered that "I", as a sovereign ethical subject, in my miscarriage was and have always been cared for, by Ar-Rahman, and my children, and this care, will find me relentlessly in this life and beyond. The closing of time, occurred for me as the end of bleeding, and hormonal pregnancy, aligned with an unexpected journey home to visit my family. My sister miraculously secured face value tickets for the Eras Tour the day after. I got to fly to Toronto, from Vancouver, for a weekend, my first time being away from my son, to visit my family. I was finally able to grieve outside of the schedule of parenting and be in solitude. I was cared for in the witness of my parents and siblings. Just as I walked into that abortion clinic alone, I also walked into the Eras Tour, still bleeding from the D/C, all alone to experience a joy that is deeply, and profoundly, mine alone. A joy, and healing, that Allah intended for me, perhaps even a joy that my daughter herself beseeched Allah to deliver to me. I also know that the pain of this miscarriage was written for *me*, it was mine to carry. It felt like the first time in my life I had time and space to process a pain, that was uniquely my own to inhabit and claim—not my family's, not society's, not pain created by abstracted and material systems of oppression. In a strange way, I had finally learned what a boundaried self, as a Muslim ethical subject, felt like, one that is not always pouring into, and being displaced, in caring for the pains of others. I do not know how this loss will come to fold into time, if I'll ever meet this being earthside, in this time-space. But on quiet nights, I still see, and feel, Rahma's silhouette sitting next to my son, as we read him his favourite bedtime stories. On rainy days by the Salish Sea, I can feel her in the air, as a lightness, a force that uplifts, and pulls our little family closer.

2. In the Belly of the Whale, again: Care-Knowing, Epistemic Linage and Time

La illah illa unta subhanaka inni kuntu minazalimeen.

In this essay, I offered above a narrative portrait of a miscarriage I experienced in November 2024 to share how different layers of care-based knowing are activated in the process of grieving, and experiencing time pass, as a Muslim woman and carer. In this paper, I explore the epistemic aspects of pregnancy loss—the knowledge that grief yields. Such knowledge travels through contexts of reception, which I name as lineages of care—which in this case, are uniquely Muslim, and Islamic. I frame lineages of care as relational ecologies, as divinely placed infrastructure, or even a kind of wealth, intended for us all individually, and collectively, by our Creator that shapes our ethical formation as Muslims. A critical part of all ethical selves, in a Muslim perspective, is the knowledge, and contexts of reception through which we inherit and activate it, that has been written for us by Allah—as a form of care itself. An Islamic ethic of receptivity helps us be mindful of how care-based knowledge travels, how it how it

places us, and the responsibilities it entrusts us with as its inheritors. Care as stewardship, for Muslims, means activating such knowledge towards the end of building justice and livable worlds for all.

This essay reflects how care-based knowledge folds into time, across ruptures, to become lineages of knowledge that inform how we care as Muslims, and how we think about care Islamically. To begin by reciting the Quran is my way of embodying "epistemic humility" in my knowledge relations (Dalmiya, 2016). It is also my way of creating a continuity in textures, and in lineages, that shape my ethical subjectivity. On one hand, in navigating Islamic knowledge, and inhabiting my Muslimness, in miscarrying I felt deep, embodied, conviction in my encounters with Ar-Rahman. These were truths written for me, of which I am the sole interpretive authority. On the other hand, I often feel unsure, lacking confidence, in my interpretive authority as a Muslim in company, and in dialogue, with other Muslims. As an Urdu-speaker, my pronunciation of Arabic is not perfect. My understanding of these verses is not complete. It terrifies me to even recite, and cite it, so incompletely and imperfectly in the witness of Allah, fellow Muslims and fellow academics. Each interpretive community, and audience, summons a different ghost. What haunts how I give breath to this prayer are intergenerational and embodied histories of spiritual abuse, of military dictatorship, of gendered Islamophobia, of white supremacy, of imperialism and of heteropatriarchy. These interlocking systems of violence in Judith Butler's words, "enter the limbs, craft the gesture, and bend the spine" (Butler, 1997, 159).

Violence can shape not just the ends to which we recite the Quran, but also, how we hear its recitation. Sidrah-Ahmed Chan, for example, offers us an anecdotal example in which a racist and a Muslim survivor of spiritual abuse both feel an aversion to hearing the *adhaan* (call to prayer). Although they share an acoustic setting, their feelings do not share the same sonic lineage. Their relation to the aversion, and how they receive the sound, have a different affective history. The epistemic plight of Muslim feminists is that our inheritance of de-colonial and intersectional Islamic knowledge and praxis has come by way of both harm and healing. Epistemic lineages are embodied, relational, and affective; they come to shape how we feel in possessing the knowledge of the Quran, and how we evoke it to serve the ends of care. In miscarrying, to recite the Quran to beseech Allah for relief I had to push through the thickness of feeling like I had been punished for my failures as a Muslim, as if I was unworthy and undeserving of carrying life. I placed my duas, and these feelings of shame and guilt, in Allah's care—charging him, and trusting in his duty, of delivering me through this darkness. I knew with my full being, that there was child, a being, around me, and I just was not able to carry her here, to bring her home. Yet, she is home, with our Creator. I have no place to put this truth, yet I cannot stop being moved by it and sharing with others the lessons I have learned in receiving it.

In this essay, I hope to offer care-based knowledge, and the way it moves within and beyond our horizons as healing, as a part of the ease, and relief, that is promised by Allah after hardships we endure. Care-based knowledge is medicine, we receive, as we are plunged into the darkness, that reaches us in transforming our sense of place in the world; how we are cared for by our relations in this time is what delivers us and helps us in receiving such knowledge as medicine—ensuring its lessons carry forward to impress upon generations to come a sense of Islam in which they feel seen and heard during hardships of their own. Writing from within the temporal horizon, as well as the embodied experience, of a miscarriage, I wonder a lot about my spiritual experiences, in feeling my daughter's presence in dreams, in meditations and in mourning. I wonder where the knowledge, I gained in miscarrying, will go; how this experience will fold into larger lineages and traditions of care within our family. We never got to tell our son the truth of why we had been crying; there is no child to remind us, of this time. The pregnancy is already slipping beyond the horizons, and memories, of our loved ones. In this article, then, I inscribe in text a place for it all, a place that comes to exist spectrally, where we come to retreat to, and descend from in forming our ethical subjectivities as a lineage of care.

I map the process of miscarrying, and rebuilding my sense of place, and self through it, to the process of building a repository, or lineage, of knowledge of the Quran, to call our own. As Muslims, Allah has intended for us to unlock meanings of Revelation through gifts, miracles and losses—all with unique care-based contexts of reception. Simply put, the relationships within which we are grounded, our interdependencies, with land, (spectral and present) humans and more-than-humans, are divinely placed infrastructure through which our Creator has intended for his care to reach us. Parts of our moral epistemologies, as Muslims, then are activated in being relational selves. Tradition, or epistemic lineages of Islam, then, is not just the work of studying the Quran, through independent practices of worship, but also the, intricate work of weaving through lived experience personally and collectively to form lineages of knowledge, that labour as care itself, to nurture, keep warm, and hold place for its recipients. In the words of Sa'ddiya Shaikh, despite the darknesses we navigate that pull us from our faiths, and threaten to sever us from our Creator, it is with a radical, and critical, "fidelity" to the Islamic tradition that we continue to re-claim our interpretive authority as knowers of Islam and our relationship with Creator (Shaikh, 2023).

This is the difference that Ayesha Chaudhry marks between the harm caused by patriarchal and white supremacist lineages of Islamic studies and the healing potential of Islam, as an inherently intersectional, life-affirming and anti-oppressive force (Chaudhry, 2018). De-colonial and intersectional Islam requires us to be willing to "sit in difference", in Fatima Seedat's words, and create a critical conversation between what we are given, what we can be, and what we can make of what we have found (Seedat, 2018). In reciting the Quran, any feeling of tension in my body, inflicted by human-built systems of oppression, dissolves considering

the contexts of care through which I came to know of different verses. The prayers I recited in dhikr during the D/C procedure were: *Hasbunallahu wa ni'mal wakeel* (Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs) (Quran 3:17) and *La ilaha illa anta subhanaka inni kuntu minaz zalimin* (there is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers) (Quran 21:87-88). I inherited these pieces of Revelation as a gift from my mother.

She taught me how to recite them in August 2012 in a hospital waiting room in Ontario to advocate for my father's right to life as a survivor of a severe stroke. My mother invoked the story of Prophet Yunus and how he recited the *Ayat al Kareema* verse when he was swallowed by a whale (Munawar, 2022a). He was submerged within multiple layers of darkness: the darkness of a moonless night, the darkness of the whale's belly, and the darkness of the bottomless sea. This "view from nowhere" seized Yunus' senses. Yet, he continued to move his tongue and heart in the remembrance of Allah. The story ends with this miraculous image of a wounded man delivered from the belly of a whale onto a shore and sheltered by the shade of a gourd plant. This story offers us a vision of Allah as *Ar-Rahman*, as the compassionate, as a merciful carer and as our mother's care. This piece of Revelation has moved me for over a decade to write about, and demand readers to witness, every story of medical injustice experienced by my family in settler-colonial healthcare systems (Munawar, 2022b). With Yunus, Rahma too remains without a place in this world and has come to take on a spectral spatiality from where so many parts of me epistemologically have come to inhabit and descend from. Yet, in the marking of time and place, she is absent in the witness of others. The experience of pregnancy, and loss, remain uniquely enclosed in a space that I inherit alone with my Creator, a foundation of my ethical subjectivity.

In the aftermath of multiple miscarriages, I found myself in the belly of the whale with Prophet Yunus, yet again — disoriented, dark, submerged. And in that space, I began the interpretive work of rebuilding my ethical subjectivity. Rebuilding my relationship with time, with the world, with Allah. I realized this would be a place I'd return to again and again — a sacred geography, not to escape from, but to pull from. To sift through. To descend from. To root within.A part of grieving this miscarriage has been the heartbreaking truth that I felt something so true as a part of this journey, that the world we inhabit would mock, ridicule and discredit, as illusory—a kind of testimonial injustice (Fricker, 2009). Yet, this experience is a foundational component of how deeply I believe in the promise of Revelation, that with hardship comes ease. It is lived testimony that comes to fold into every action, and thought, by which I (re)make myself as a Muslim in this world, in the witness of my Creator. It is a space that all Muslims inhabit as a point of orientation, and container, for care-based knowing, as well as a place we all retreat to in cultivating a caring ethos (Hamington, 2024). It is crafted not in resistance, but rather, in witness and in care of Allah, the primary relationship we inhabit as ethical subjects.

Through this essay, I generate inter-textualities within and through situated and inherited knowledge of Islam that I have acquired through modes of care-knowing across the experiences, of becoming a care-giver for my father, becoming a mother, and experiencing a miscarriage. These context-specific narratives of care I have written about all illustrate the dynamism, and evolution, of what thinking about care Islamically, and caring as a Muslim, feel like for me. It is important to not freeze the situated knowledge of an individual into categorical demands, needs and ethos of all within a particular group; rather, I argue that theorizing care Islamically, by and for Muslims, to map needs, demands, judgements of care require letting go of monolithic senses of tradition, difference and religion as a category of analysis. Instead, we must do the care-work of connection-based equality, of treating people in our knowledge relations, as humans who think, look and act, differently than us (E. Kittay, 1999). We are all carers, and need care, in different ways, and deserve to be cared for in caring.

Comparative care inquiry, then, on care is not just placing different traditions in dialogue with one another or facilitating epistemic encounters and exchanges between individuals from different social locations, to expand the epistemic horizons of care ethics (Dalmiya, 2021). Rather, it is also allowing for complexity within our understandings of care as they are grounded within our relationalities, contexts and worlds. Activating care-knowing, by drawing upon epistemic lineages of care and what it means for you, to cultivate a caring ethos through different experiences is a process that unfolds over time, is grounded within webs of relationalities and stretches across multiple spaces (Dalmiya, 2016). In this paper, I argue that unlike matricidal notions of epistemology, that dispossess us as knowers from our relations and worlds, Muslims inherit their sense of Islam through care-based contexts of reception that require upkeep, and preservation, for it to be sustained as a lineage—storied, and embodied, tradition. Such giving, or passing forward of knowledge, as *sadaqah*, requires careful tending to, and the work of living justly within, the relations within which are situated.

3. An Ethic of Receptivity: On Matricide, Grounding Knowledge and Labouring for Return

In navigating profound grief, I was left wondering: Where does this kind of knowledge go? How is the time spent grieving — time that pulls us out of the visible world — accounted for, measured, valued? The knowledge we gain in the throes of mourning — knowledge that is embodied, broken open, uninvited, and still sacred — what becomes of it? We are delivered through grief in being cared for. Such knowledge, is inherently gestated in receptivity. I began to think: maybe some of this knowledge — this grief-soaked, time-bent, spirit-filled knowing — seeps back into the world. Maybe it enters the soil. Or finds its way to us through the breath of a friend. Or in the pouring rain, of atmospheric rivers. Maybe it finds us in sunflowers, and Quran verses, and Taylor Swift songs. Such knowledge becomes medicine. A way of sustaining life in places that feel unlivable. In miscarrying, it has felt as though time itself has broke open

— not just as rupture, but as portal. A portal to something otherworldly. A terrain of care not easily seen or measured, but no less real. My essay is an attempt to trace, in writing, a place for what is spectral — what resists containment — and yet still demands care. As Muslims, we believe our children choose us in the spirit world as theirs. Children, we miscarry, wait for their mothers, keeping open the doors of Jannat/paradise, demanding Allah to be reunited with their parents. In the process of writing this paper, I have since experienced, multiple losses. This text becomes a way of inscribing a place for all the children I could not meet earthside, a place in this world, too. A place in text, yes — but also in the design of my care. It has been an act of mourning, but also of witnessing. Of refusing erasure. Of insisting on continuity, and carrying forward these losses to be ever-present in who I am. A portrait of all the places of care I visited, the ways I had been cared for, to navigate a new mourning.

Care-based Knowledge borne in grief is fragmented, imperfect, incomplete — and still, it carries. It carries onward as lineage. As care. As maps — maps that help us fare safely through harsh terrain of this dunya/worlds-on-earth. In Islam, we are not alone in these moments. The Qur'an reminds us: "With hardship comes ease", not after, but with. Care-based contexts of reception — divinely intended for us by Allah in the shaping of our ethical subjectivities shape how we come to know. How we come to be. How we return. All through caring, and being cared for. The auto-ethnography I share is a testimony, of the contradictions, power and processes of grief, of pregnancy loss, as I experienced it in a Muslim way. It is a continuation of my approach to care ethics, in which I document what it means to think about and practice care Islamically, and to give and receive care as a Muslim. In each story I have shared, I break medical frames of illness, birth, disability, and in this case, miscarriage, to show the dynamism with which Muslims make sense of their bodies, the world, and their relationships. In this testimony, I share dreams, visions. Moments where the veil thinned. Portals into the unseen — '*alam al-ghayb* — where care, knowledge-keeping, and moral witnessing from Muslim women who had also miscarried became my guides.

In miscarrying, what helped me heal, and rebuild my strength, was being witnessed and held in my grief by friends and family who generously shared their stories of pregnancy loss with me. I learned that one person's story alone of what care means to them has epistemic, and therapeutic, relational value; it tells us about the worlds (and material systems of oppression) they navigate, the unmet and invisible needs they carry and how these needs fold into the complexities of moral personhood, and the dynamic ways they have stitched through layers of knowledge to act upon ethical obligations. It also tells us how we are responsible for the plight of others, and the ways the vulnerabilities of others, and our relational attachments, obliges us to act ethically. Studying the epistemic lineages of care, as it is enacted spatio-temporally within larger structures of care by individuals to respond to concrete relational care needs helps us do the intersectional and interpretive work of mapping our entanglements, not just within

systems of oppression, but also, with one another in our shared struggles to build a just and more caring world (Tronto, 2013). The stories I have shared, across my career as an academic, have all been examples of care-knowing that help us expand the meaning and praxis of: 1) culturally-safe and culturally-competent care for Muslims within healthcare spaces, as well as, 2) meeting unmet needs, and ethical demands, of disabled, elderly Muslims, as well as, carers within relations of (chosen) kin and our communities.

We can only open the poetics of how we inherit Islam as a living tradition by studying its human and historical dimensions, which Shahab Ahmed calls the "spatiality of Revelation" (Ahmed, 2015). The story of Prophet Yunus (Jonah) in the belly of the whale, for me, for example, represents the epistemic violence with which political theorists are expected to absolve ourselves of our relations, our bodies and our histories when facing the writing table. I identify this as a *matricidal epistemological* orientation that underpins white supremacist and heteropatriarchal horizons of inquiry. Here, epistemic authority is b/ordered by and predicated upon the appropriation of caring labour, the denigration of care-work and the erasure of interdependency in our knowledge relations. Because mother-work — the slow, intimate, embodied, everyday labor of care — is a primary location for Islamic knowledge keeping. It is where the Muslim caring ethos is primarily cultivated and housed. The impulse of white supremacy and of heteropatriarchy, is to destroy, absence and make invisible our lineages of care-based epistemologies. We cannot care, or think about care, from nowhere. To do so, compromises our capacity to be witnesses in our knowledge relations by absolving the function of *place* in the work of relating, of building knowledge. In addition, epistemic Islamophobia has always worked in and through unstorying lands, knowledge, and histories of the people that possess them. Therefore, in my accounting of Islamic knowledge, I always center place, and care, in mapping the way that senses of the Quran have travelled to reach me, and to what effect, and with which intentions.

Developing the notion of receptivity in Islamic-feminist hermeneutics, in his essay, "Veil of Islam", psychoanalyst Fethi Benslama interprets the scenescape between Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) and Khadijah in Surah Al-'Alaq (The Blood Clot) to centre the receptive faculties of Khadijah as the first witness, hearer, of Revelation (Benslama, 2015). After nights of clairvoyant dreams, one night the Archangel Gabriel visited Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) in the cave of Mount Hira and said, "Recite!" Carrying in his heart the first of the Quranic verses to be revealed in his heart, he ran in fear to Khadijah and asked, "What is wrong with me? I fear for my soul" (Quran 96:1-5). In an intimate and vulnerable state, unsure if he could trust his sensorial capacities, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) turns to Khadijah in doubt of himself and asks for her to cover him with a blanket. I read in this scene that truth in Islam began with the Prophet doubting his bodily capacities, as someone who is illiterate and in a meditative state, as a truth-bearer only to be affirmed through the loving ear- and eye-witness of Khadijah.

In another scene, while Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) is sitting with Khadijah he sees another creature and lets Khadijah know of its presence (Adil, 2012). As a test, she uncovers her hair and asks Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) if the creature has left the room to confirm it was an angel from Heaven and not an evil entity; at the sight of her uncovered hair, the creature left. Khadijah brings her husband to meet with her cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, a blind elder and knowledge keeper who confirms the revealed verses as *Nāmūs* (nomos, divinely revealed law) (Nasr 2015, 7224). In walking- with the Prophet in his disorientation, through her caring labours Khadijah, in her witness, holds space/way not only for Islam's entry to the world, but also for Muhammad's entry into the world as a truth-bearer, as a Prophet by becoming the first Muslim. However, Benslama's reading has similar patriarchal undertones as seen in Lacan's reading of miracle, through such caring labours "man enters the certitude of his Allah" and "that (through) which he believes becomes that which believes in him" (Benslama, 2015). He observes:

> Woman is thus the origin twice over: the origin of belief and belief in the origin. She is on the side of the origin and of its result. Woman turns. *Veiled, unveiled, reveiled*: these are the three sequences of theology's feminine operation. Veiled originally, unveiled for the demonstration of the originary truth, then re-veiled by the order of belief in this truth of origin... (Benslama, 2015).

In my reading, I want to center that what is critical in the reception of Revelation, is care. Care is an animating force that delivers the Prophet through the experience of receiving Revelation. Revelation was not just shaped in abstraction, or solely embodied practices of the Prophet, it was delivered, and *grounded*, within and through caring labours and the Prophet's relations. Trembling, cold and afraid, in this scene we are provided access to Muhammad as a human, and not as the Prophet, who becomes a prophet through the nurturance of being heard, witnessed and seen in a relation of care. Not only is Muhammad dependent on Khadijah as the first witness of Revelation, the surah within which this scene takes place is titled the blood-clot in reference to the process of gestation and the creation of life. Revelation is the divine truth that is awaiting delivery through the body of the Prophet and it is Khadijah who must play the role of the mid-wife. And as a midwife of Islam, man must "pass through her in order to believe" (Benslama, 2015). Building upon this metaphor of birth, in his translation of Farīd ud-Dīn and ʿAṭṭār's poem, "Muhammad the Maternal prophet" (Safi, 2018, 45) in which the poet asks to the Prophet to suckle him with compassion and mercy, Omid Safi reinterprets an honorific, *Ummi (*which translates into the Unlettered Prophet) to shift attention to the root of the word *Umm*, which means mother, to signify the Prophet as he "who loves the community the way a mother does"(Safi, 2018, 267).

Feminist scholar of Islamic law, Hina Azam teaches us that stories within the Quran convey ethical norms narratologically (Azam, 2021). How we as Muslims make meaning out of a Quranic narrative, and to what effect, holds epistemic potential and prescriptive power. Fatima

Mernissi calls this the "dual attitude towards sacred text"; the texture of exegesis depends on the "person who invokes it" (64). Despite heteropatriarchal attempts at displacing Muslim women from Islamic spaces, marking female bodies as impure, and delegitimizing women as interpretive authorities and knowers of the Islam, "the whole earth is a mosque" (69). What I interpret in Mernissi's definition of the *qibla* as a cosmological orientation is that it is like our mother's home that holds and opens space not just for our return, but also, a place that has never been taken from us, conquered or subjugated—a place held by Muslims for one another. It is a place that all carers hold for their children that do not make it earthside. A place I will always hold for *Rahma*. In affirming that Rahma existed, for a short while in this *dunya*, every healthcare provider, friend and witness also inhabited, and stayed in this place with me as a Muslim mother.

4. A Care-Based Epistemology of Islam: Spectral Places, Memory and Time Travel

Knowledge cannot descend from nowhere. The harm Yunus endures in the belly of the whale is that he has lost his relations, his sense of place and his situatedness. With the Ayat al Kareema prayer, he seeks return and repair. The narrative contexts of care, through which care-based knowledge "travels", matters (Said, 1983, 226). In my re-telling of my birth story, my father's hospitalization and my miscarriage, I use care-based knowing, to return, to witness, and to capture how my sense of time and place were ruptured—in hopes of repair, too. The interpretive work, of (re)building my sense of ethical subjectivity in the wake of such a vast grief, and the ways I experienced Allah's care through it, will be a *place* I will return to evermore—to pull from, to sift through, in building a continuous thread of time that uniquely has been written for, and belongs to, me. Memory, too, then serves as place, and these places are tied together within verses of the Quran, as they become embodied *dhikr*—as containers of care. In Aaniyah Martin's sense, containers of care are ecological environments, such as tidal pools, that exist within a larger ecosystem and work to sustain unique forms of life and relationships in response to context-specific challenges (Martin, 2024). In a connected sense, what I label as a container of care, are the relational ecologies, the spectral places, we inhabit in our Creator's witness, from which we pull, as Muslims, to propel ethical action and judgement. In returning to the place where I stood under sheets of rain outside the ultrasound clinic, through prayer, I also return to the hospital waiting room where my mother taught the story of Yunus. In teaching me how to move through darkness, my mother taught me that Islam is inherently a care-based tradition, and moral epistemology, that is nested within: 1) storied and situated knowledges, 2) an ethics of moral witnessing and 3) care as stewardship. Such knowledge demands us to situate, to place, ourselves within care-based obligations, to possess our moral faculties of witnessing, and to build worlds that are inclusive, caring and just for all. Islamic knowledge, then, labours through embodied, relational and interpretive work, performed by all Muslims, uniquely, to fulfill these three functions.

Rooted in my mother's care, I learned that an Islamic ethic of receptivity asks of us as Muslims, to perform three epistemic (and interpretive) labours. First, it asks us to recognize that care-based knowledge travels. It doesn't arise in a vacuum. It carries with it intention, labor, history — it is inherited. How I turn towards and orientate around Islam in my theorizing is deeply rooted in the work I perform as a carer. My situatedness in my father's care web`, and as a parent of a toddler, pulls at my capacity to attend to the writing table and shapes what I pay attention to in my writing. I extend this lesson to account for how material and political economies of attention, our social location and historical orientations shape how we turn towards and orient ourselves around *Islam*, whose bodies we identify as interpretive authorities, and which types of knowledge we authorize as *Islam*. An ethics of receptivity and the ways in which we come to know, inherit and embody Islam as a tradition require us to ask, who can inherit a tradition? What exactly do we inherit as Muslim feminists, what do we leave behind and what of our theorizing will we be accountable for in the Hereafter?

Knowledge can heal — or it can harm. We are responsible for the way we move Islamic knowledge. We must ask: To what ends are we moving it through care? As medicine? Or as zulm — as oppression? How we travel — across time, through containers of care, into different contexts of reception — is not always towards the ends of care. I argue, that it should be. In caring, we leave our mark and claim the ways that Allah has intended Islamic knowledge to reach us. I want to challenge here the assumption that thinking Islamically as a feminist is a passive, following of a religion. Humeira Iqtidar argues that within the Islamic tradition, knowledge production and consumption engages both method and sensibility (Iqtidar, 2016, 3). Method is a way of doing things, such as textual interpretation. Sensibility means that we identify ethical goals through our subjectivities. We enact Islam, through the dynamism between *taqlid (to follow) and ijtihad* (independent interpretation) (Iqtidar, 2016, 3).

In different yet connected ways, heteropatriarchal and white supremacist readings frame *taqlid* as a practice of governance, or in Iqtidar's words, "a blind following" by which Muslims obey "established norms or tradition" through "servile imitation" (6). The problem here is two-fold: 1) the situation of dependency writes one off as ontologically and epistemically incapable of sensing and knowing the Islamic and in turn, 2) the work of interpretation, and cultivating Islamic sensibilities, is attributed to legal scholars, religious authorities, white and secular male scholars. The methods of knowledge keeping in Islamic thought and praxis are inherently connection-based, embodied and interdependent, the human and historical dimensions of knowledge production by which we learn Islamic sensibilities and orientations are dismissed as insignificant. More particularly, *how* Muslims come to embody and emulate *sunnah*, hadith and Revelation through care-based modes of knowing is segregated from the work of knowledge-production. The past three decades of Islamic-feminist thought and praxis focus on dismantling

this epistemic hierarchy and the gendered and racialized notion that Muslim women can only be passive followers of a tradition.

On one hand, there is the "colonization of Islam" by ablest heteropatriarchy (Chaudhry, 2018). Interpreting the Quran is also not solely the domain of men. Authority comes not just through formal chains of transmission, or doctrine, but also, through care-work. Patrilineal conceptions of Islam as a tradition that can only be inherited and interpreted by men rely on epistemic gatekeeping and a conception of citizenship as a birthright. Instead of valorizing stories of Muslim women as pious, obedient and sacrificial care-givers, we must denaturalize care in an Islamic ontology of maternity and invite investigation into the differential allocation of precarity and precariousness within our care webs and its consequences for the ecology of Islamic knowledges (wadud, 2006). The deliverance, reception and textures of a text are shaped by systems of ability and ableism which aim to domesticate social reproduction as women's work and knowledge production as able-bodied man's work. Here sense and sensibility are differentially allocated. I am drawing a parallel between the unequal and unjust division of care-work within Muslim kinship networks and the refusal to recognize the epistemic contributions and interpretive authority of Muslim women and disabled Muslims.

I present matricide as a colonial epistemological orientation that not only strives to alienate Muslim women from the Islamic tradition but also destroy the relational ecology of Islamic knowledges. Here, women-identifying, queer, non-binary and disabled Muslims are treated as "despised" genders and bodies, in African-Christian feminist Musa Dube's words (Dube Shomanah 2012, 41). They are seen as unfit to embody interpretive authority as knowers and makers of Islam. For example, hadith transmissions by deaf, blind and disabled Muslims are received as "transgressive, faulty and unreliable" (Richardson, 2012, 102–106). There are vast histories of Muslim women actively engaged in Islamic knowledge production as jurists, poets, interlocutors, knowledge-keepers, receivers of Revelation, witnesses, and scholars. Yet, Muslim women continue to be seen as *intellectually deficient and unfit* to embody interpretive authority.

If we do intervene through the written word, we are perceived as inciting social unrest (*fitna*) and are marked as a sign of the apocalypse (Geissinger, 2008). Suspicions about women's epistemic and ontological capacity as knowers of Revelation fold into either the absence or erasure of tafsir and hadiths by women or a blighted location within the *isnad*. It is through such b/ordering of interpretive authority that "the Home" is territorialized as a place for care-work and not epistemic or political activity (61). Just as the patrilineal b/ordering of kinship excludes women as inheritors of property, heteropatriarchal and ableist conceptions of personhood deny Muslim women and disabled Muslims from inheriting interpretive authority.

What remains unquestioned within Islamic-feminist hermeneutics is the interpretive authority of patriarchal readers of Revelation, particularly the authority of Muslim men, as

authors of the Islamic. The violence of patriarchal textual interpretations is accepted as "plain-sense" or "traditional" readings of Revelation against which Muslim feminist readers build their negations. In the #metoo era, for example, various cishet male Muslim scholars, and their supporters, have been called upon by survivors of spiritual abuse to account for the sins and harm they have caused Muslim women. Yet the scholars and their scholarship on Islam remain morally inscrutable and authoritative. If we consider sense as an ability, a care-based epistemology of Islam urges us to consider Islamic ontologies of self-making and we, in Rudolph Ware's words, "shape lowly clay into the walking Quran" through bodily discipline and moral character (Ware, 2014, 42). We refuse to ask how such scholars, as perpetrators of violence, tarnish their textual sense-abilities to interpret the Islamic. Such violence darkens the critical sense organ of the heart and affects the narrative texture of their embodied tafsir. If only chains of *isnad* could speak of the hearts and hands of the men we have inscribed as interpretive authorities.

On the other hand, while white and non-Muslim political theorists have built their careers on thinking Islamically, Black, Indigenous and racialized Muslims , are "made to feel" as if our belief in Islam, and our identity as Muslims, somehow compromises our "intellectual integrity and objectivity" (Chaudhry, 2018). Non-Muslim scholars naturalize travel and empathy as the desire to discover uncharted epistemic terrain, expand dominion and see the face of the Other. The aim of travel here is to submerge and "domesticate" Islamic knowledge into the netherworld of the self-same. Whiteness as a straightening device determines what makes it into the canon, into the reach of white bodies (Ahmed, 2006, 2007); here, colonial occupation, displacement and genocide here are read by Roxanne Euben as the "ambivalence that comes with travel" and the pursuit of knowledge (Euben, 2006). There is a desire to know the Muslim Other and Islamic epistemologies without opening our selves and asking why such gaps in our disciplines exist in the first place. I argue that such scholarship is oriented by what bell hooks calls, "an imperialist nostalgia" in which white theorists seek to rehabilitate gaps within their self-understandings while policing, gatekeeping and erasing the caring labours of Black, racialized and Indigenous Muslim scholars in preserving Islam as a tradition (hooks, 1992). It is a desire to know what they have absenced, a yearning for what one has destroyed. Such scholarship centers white lineages, and contexts, of knowing Islam.

Second, lineages of care-based knowledge place us. I place the relational ecologies, and the spectral places we inhabit, as Muslims in our Creator's witness as containers of care—a concept theorized by South African care ethicist Aaniyah Martin (2024). We don't arrive at knowledge. We are placed in it, enwombed by a particular set of relational ecologies, without which we would not be able to process and receive it. These containers are sacred infrastructure — divinely embedded architectures from which we, as Muslims, pull to enact ethical action and moral judgment. Here, I re-interpret Judith Butler's note on grief, in which they wrote, "Who

am I without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted we do not know who we are or what we do….I think have lost you only to discover I have gone missing as well" (Butler, 2004, 22) . Within the paradigm of recognition, oppressors compete to control us through realms of representation. They claim that their stories capture a part of who we are in this world. I argue that such sacred hermeneutical infrastructures of care, belong to us, and exist for us to make meaning of in ways that serve the ends of life. They are a part of our ethical subjectivity, that exists in the eyes of our Creator, that cannot be seized, captured or denied.

The attachments by which, and the intimacy of how "I came to know" of these verses from the Quran will always shape their narrative texture and how I embody them in rituals of care. Reciting this verse in community, or in solitude, is a way of healing from "multiple colonialisms" but also refining our capacities to bear witness to our complicity in authoring and authorizing *zulm (*oppression*)* in all our relations (Da Costa & Da Costa, 2019). What is important here is how Islamic knowledge is mobilized to not only discipline and refine our faculties of moral witnessing but also generate medicine for ourselves, our (chosen) kin and the worlds we inhabit together. Post-colonial anthropologist David Scott notes that "an ethics of receptive generosity also requires us to cultivate the willingness to relinquish the desire for masterful giving" (Scott, 2017, 21) Gift-giving in the Islamic sense follows what Scott may call a tragic ethic of hospitality. Sura Al-Asr (Quran 103: 1-3) (The Flight of Time) from the Quran captures this perfectly:

> *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Caring:*
> *By the age, the epoch*
> *The human is always at a loss*
> *Except those who keep the faith*
> *who works justice*
> *who counsel one another to truth*
> *and counsel one another to patience*

Sensing the finitude of time compels within the Muslim feminists a sense of urgency to make the most of the time we have left, and to use our limited time on earth to serve justice, and counsel our companions to truth and patience. Yet, within an Islamic cosmology, this limit on time does not mean that the time for faith is over, but rather, the time to act ethically is now. How we read and write, what is at stake in our theorizing and the normative ends of our interpretive labours is oriented by this sense of losing time. It was in inheriting this urgency from my mother that I was able to contest the moral inscrutability of political theorists, and the doctors, and make an intentional choice to disinherit white supremacist and colonial sensibilities of knowing.

In another sense, this surah helps us understand the finitude of care and crip time. As I was writing my dissertation to bear witness and speak truth to the injustices my family experienced

in that hospital waiting room, the stress of care-giver burnout had seriously accelerated my mother's chronic illness. The lack of institutional and community support for informal care-givers endangers their life. It is because of this lack of structural care for primary care-givers, I am losing time with my mother. This loss of time not only limits time for knowledge-keeping within my family but also endangers the inheritance of knowledge itself.

In this surah, there are also so many different temporal locations and orientations beyond the secular-western political imaginary; there is an orientation of action with a sense of the Hereafter; there is a sense of organic decay and loss in this world (as opposed to enlightenment, progress etc.) that is juxtaposed to the *real* loss in the Hereafter; there is a sense of God as a timekeeper. Here I interpret Creator to be a witness to the "robbery of time", in Tehnisi-Coates' sense (Coates, 2015, 91). What I mean by lost time is the energy Black, Indigenous and racialized scholars must expend on translating and capturing realities of white supremacy. Saidiya Hartman teaches us another sense of losing time as losing one's heritage and lineage because of white supremacist violence. She notes, "Because of the slave trade you lose your mother, if you know your history, you know where you come from. To lose your mother was to be denied your kin, country, and identity. To lose your mother was to forget your past"(Hartman, 2007, 85)

Whereas Eva Kittay's assumes the mother-child relationship as a point of universal identification (E. F. Kittay, 2019), and the mother as a figure that pours her love into the child, historicizing maternity as a category of analysis enables us to consider how colonial violence estranges and displaces us from our mother(land)s and how motherhood itself can be a site of colonial violence. Boundaries are marked not only through epistemic racism, but also, through material hierarchies of care that cast spectral others into the netherworld of dependency. How we consume knowledge through affective registers of inquiry provides insight into the boundaries we inherit that distance us from the mothers we write about, the mother that gave birth to us, and the ghosts of mothers that haunt us—as well as our children who did not make it earthside or were taken from this world too soon.

How we travel, across and through contexts of reception that we inhabit, is not always towards the ends of care—building a just and livable world for all. De-colonial Christian feminist Musa Dube (1997) asks us to interrogate the method and sensibilities with which we travel and whether they are guided by the colonial desire "to take control of a foreign land—culturally, economically, politically and geographically" (67). What needs to be interrogated is "how we authorize travel" within our modes of inquiry (ibid.) and how we represent foreign land and people "as in need or desiring" to be translated by "superior and exceptionally favoured" white, western intellectuals and their agendas of cosmopolitanism (117). In the work of building for ourselves, and for our (chosen) kin and communities a sense of Islam, we must also be attentive to how harmful renderings of Revelation come to sit in our epistemic lineages

to inform how we care. On the Day of Judgement, parts of our bodies, such as our feet, our hands, our tongues, and the land which are *incapable of speech* in this world will speak and bear witness to that which they used to earn and the intentions of their travels (Surah Yaseen, Quran 36: 65-74). Our desires, yearnings, to know Islam may be induced by shared histories but what matters is our point of entry into a tradition and what gives us access. How I move and activate Islamic knowledge between moments in time, of storied life, from my father's hospitalization to my miscarriage, must carry with it the same signature and intent of healing and repair. It would lose its meaning, and power, if I were to activate to justify harms I am committing, or enabling others to perform. Severing it from the care-based context of receptivity would rupture how it is carried forward in the witness of others, and within my lineages, and return it to be found again, with Allahs' will, by those who come after.

Similarly, harm enacted from within, and harm that is done to us, can both displace us from specific care-based contexts of reception, by which we come to inherit epistemic lineages of Islam. The point of entry, or access, that racialized, Indigenous and Black Muslim scholars have for studying Islam, then, is different in texture and in desire than white political theorists desire to know, and to travel. A Black-Muslim scholar's desire to travel to Africa to know her ancestor's songs is made accessible to her through subjugated histories of care-based epistemologies that her ancestors preserved for her, that Allah has intended for her to know and recover. Such knowledge belongs to her community. A question that de-colonial and feminist readers must ask when reading a text is: does this text encourage travel to distant and inhabited lands, and if so, how does it justify itself? A de-colonial and Islamic ethic of witnessing requires the practitioner to first assess how the traditions she has inherited impress upon her heart; and in what ways coloniality orients her ethical sensibilities and intentions in knowledge production.

Whether its Hajar, a single Black-Muslim mother running between the hills of Safa and Marwa in search of water, or Maryam's exile to the desert to give birth or the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina, travel, in the form of migration, is a projection of diasporic sensibility. The narrative textures of Islam as a tradition carry many scents from the journeys of Muslim diasporas and their struggle for liberation. Such travel is not a desire to journey to other shores, but rather a continual journey of return. The return sought in these struggles is not just the return of history, but also, the repatriation of land and epistemic authority as makers of Islam. We must also hold space for safe passage to the afterlife, our return to our Creator. Turkish scholar, Asli Zengin's work on queer-Muslim community of care in Istanbul arise around the "transgressive death" of transgender Muslims (Zengin, 2019). Because the human body is given in trust to us by Allah, we are "responsible for taking good care" of it until its return to Creator. Zengin teaches us that care can also be performed in a violent and non-consensual way in the name of Islam (Zengin, 2019). The location of Islam is not centralized

but rather diffused within these diasporic histories and movements of return and seeking refuge. Whether it's writing a critical historiography of Black Islam in the US, or Cape Malay Muslims writing against Israel's occupation of Palestine through the lived experience of South-African apartheid, or Palestinian-Muslims in Vancouver standing in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en land defenders, Islam as a tradition labour for *return.* It can be return to the Creator, to the motherland, to our land as mother; however, the way we embody this desire to return and what we demand to be returned and restored is shaped by our social location and positionalities.

Third, I inherited the *work* of carrying out my mother's intentions to hold my family together in face of medical violence, to keep myself safe in a healthcare space during my D/C. Lineages of care-based knowledge bring with them not just epistemic insight — they also entrust us with care-work. As Muslims, we possess our bodies, our relationships, and our knowledge as trustees — as stewards. Care is stewardship—a spiritual and ethical responsibility to "render trusts to whom they are due" (*amanat*) (Quran 4:58). Lineages of care-based knowledge command us to move— as pilgrimage. As path. Alone and together. Toward building a more caring, just, and livable world for all. For example, the forces of heteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism and Islamophobia displace and endanger my father by marking him as a *misfit*, my family and I enact this intention collectively by sustaining and holding in place a fit between my father and the world. Here, I am using critical disability scholar Rosemarie Garland Thomson's notion of mis-fitting to introduce accessibility as a collective Islamic responsibility, and as a function of care-based knowing (Garland-Thomson, 2011). Whether it's the intentions of colonial geographers or abusive spiritual leaders, a care-based epistemology of Islam calls us to account for the direct sense-contact history by which knowledge is transmitted; the materials by which it is inscribed (the ink, the tablet, the clay bowl etc.); the relationships and situated context within which meaning is co-authored (teacher/student, mother/daughter, land/*khalifah*); and the body which comes to be a keeper and enactor of the knowledge. Bilal Ware (2014), for example, explores how the study of the Quran in Western African societies is an embodied, interdependent and relational practice of reading, writing and recitation rooted in *hubb* (love), *khidma* (service) and *hadiyya* (gifts) and realized through *yalwaan* (alms-seeking), *yar* (bodily discipline) and *yor* (internal possession) (8-9). Inheriting Islamic knowledge through care-based contexts of reception, means not just memorizing teachings or specific prayers, but watching over, preserving and creating just, nurturing and caring context of reception, within systems of kin, as well as, our communities, through which we come to know Islam. Aspiring for a continuity in care-based contexts of reception, to contribute to building just and caring worlds for all, is one way to harness barakah (blessings) as a form of generational wealth in our relations.

Assessing the moral impact, or even the illocutionary force of the text, in the Islamic tradition obliges us to interrogate: 1) the moral character of the knowledge sharer, 2) the legitimacy of

disembodied and de-contextualized knowledge practices, and 3) individualized, isolated reading practices in which the only sense organ engaged is sight (such as in the colonial politics of recognition). Therefore, I as a Muslim reader am empowered to make normative judgements about the traditions I inherit. I can disinherit, unlearn and disrupt the *reach* of their colonial sensibilities. As readers we have the choice of what to make of our inheritance and how to (re)enact tradition. This process of critically (dis)engaging with our inheritance does not take place in isolation. Because knowledge is inseparable from "the person of its possessor" (Ware 2014, 55), unlearning cannot exist solely in the relationship between a reader and a text . It requires human connection in the forms of companionship (*ṣuḥba),* physical proximity, and affective sentience. Chains of authority (*isnad*) by which Islamic knowledge is transmitted are held in place through our relations of care with our bodies, the lands we inhabit, and sentient others.

My concern here is that if we are not critical about how we inherit stories through our instruction in colonial knowledge practices, as Muslims we can also inherit whiteness, and colonization, as orientations. I argue that the imperialist desire does not end with the journey from one shore to another, but rather, continues within the inheritance and upkeep of the settler-colonial state, and the ways in which, in Jodi Byrd's words "we continue to make space" for our arrival (Byrd, 2011, xxvi). Refusing to open *how* we make a home as Muslims in a settler-colonial society, for example, compromises our witnessing capacities—makes us unaware of the scents we have carried over in the journey of arrival. This requires asking: How are our "epistemological, ontological and cosmological" relationships to space and land, as well as our Islamic practices of world-building, as Muslim-settlers on Turtle Island predicated upon and complicit in the colonial violence of resource extraction, land theft and genocide (Tuck and Yang 2012, 5)?

I ask Muslim and non-Muslim feminists, in what ways is our ability to witness, to respond to, to address, and care for the histories and (con) texts of *others* interrupted through the inheritance of colonial models of inquiry? Which practices, or sensibilities, of textual interpretation, delimit our capacity to care, or (dis) orient us to care for others in violent ways? Feminism, like Islam, as a tradition also has colonial baggage. This inheritance is not a dead thing, or a dead body, that is hidden in the chambers of the past, but rather an active ethical orientation that shapes our textual sensibilities and world-building practices to continue to presence coloniality into our horizons—making us deeply complicit as its authors.

5. Knowledge sharing as giving sadaqa: carrying loss

In experiencing miscarriage, my mother counselled me to give *sadaqa*, as those who give charity, and have *tawwakul*, are promised ease (92:7). What helped me heal were the women, such as my mother, who generously shared with me their stories of miscarriage, abortion and pregnancy loss. They counselled me, consoled me, and asked for nothing in return. To give of

ourselves, whatever we can, knowledge that will bring someone ease, even while putting out fires of our own, is *sadaqa* too. In writing this narrative, imperfectly and incompletely, I hope some part of it will bring a reader respite and ease. Knowledge sharing in Islam has always been a mode of *sadaqa* by which we deepen and extend ties of kinship, generate love between communities and begin new relationships. I mean *sadaqa* not as charity but rather as continuous mode of gift-giving that does not end with the giving of the gift, or the death of the giver, but rather has a value of time of its own that extends beyond our worlds, a reach that cannot be grasped or captured by human-built systems of violence. Rather, it is the gift that keeps on giving through the work it leaves behind as its inheritance and in the intentions of its inheritors. How we inherit ideas and what we do with stories has consequences in multiple worlds, past, present, future and in the Hereafter. Sami political scientist Rauna Kuokkanen (2007) and Anishinaabe legal theorist, Aaron Mills teach us that the logic of the gift requires both the guests and the hosts to look after the well-being and needs of the other (Mills, 2019, 21). As theorized by care ethicist Joan Tronto, to receive a gift is not a passive act but rather in receiving care we carry the power of response and critique. In giving, the giver, and the process of giving, are not morally inscrutable and can be complicit in (re)producing the structures of violence that endanger the person they are gifting. We must take responsibility for how we give and how we receive through our faculties of witnessing.

Muslim subjectivity, the actions by which one makes herself as a Muslim, are rooted in the critical moral capacity to self-witness, to bear witness and to be witnessed by Creator. The imprints of our action remain not only in our remembrance, or in representations of us in the spoken or written word, but also in what is inherited in our name, and in the Creator's name, as the ceaseless work of care. Although our capacity to do good deeds ceases with our death, we are still acknowledged for acting virtuously through what we have gifted our inheritors in our name for the service of humankind. What kinds of work are we leaving behind as our inheritance? How will our descendants enact this inheritance? What is acted upon is the mark of our gestures as it travels like a scent that impresses upon those who carry our stories as witnesses.

Before extending a gift, an Islamic ethic of witnessing requires me to first unlearn harmful sensibilities I have inherited through various traditions and systems of oppression. As migrants, we have gained access to these lands and waters through the settler-colonial state's borders and policies of immigration and citizenship. Opening the "self-same" as a Pakistani-Muslim and settler requires me to unlearn and unsettle various emotional plots through which my sense of self has been built. This includes uprooting anti-black, casteist and anti-Indigenous lineages from within Islamic epistemologies and disconnecting from multiculturalism as a mode of relating (Patel, 2022)

Guided by these lessons from my mother, I offer care-knowing as a de-colonial register of analysis by which we can critically inherit a tradition. Just as traditions require continual care-work to be sustained, the work of holding a place together, does not end with mutual imbrication, or the suturing of a wound. Although these multiple colonialisms co-conspire to displace us from our mothers and our motherlands, the connective tissue with which Islamic knowledge is held in place, by which we hold one another is the force of *Ar-Rahman*. Intersectional knowledge helps us sense and repair this tissue. I visualize the ecology of Islamic knowledge not as a chain but as a multi-directional care web of diasporic knowledge that is held in place through different journeys of migration, of separation and reunion with our mothers. Maternity as a cosmological structure houses our knowledge relations. It is constituted by multi-generational attachments, grounded relationalities, nested interdependencies, emotions, caring labours, economies of attention and historical orientations. An Islamic ethic of knowledge production requires the practitioner to first assess how the traditions she has inherited impress upon the state of her heart and in what ways coloniality orients her ethical sensibilities and intentions in knowledge production.

Instead of imagining tradition as a birthright, I imagine tradition as birth work. It is the inheritance of care-work watched over by multiple witnesses. Knowledge production and consumption, in this sense, is a relation of care that is animated by the breathwork of *Ar-Rahman* and truth is like the *Panja-e-Maryam*, a medicine that assures safe passage for (m)others.As Seemi Ghazi, a friend and Muslim-feminist scholar, who counselled my through my miscarriage, reminds us,the same root that Maryam grasped as she was overcome by the pangs of birth in the desert in Medina blossoms today in bowls of water across the world (Ghazi, 2006). The *Panja-e Maryam* is a wooden flower that resembles a clenched fist, or a woody ball, if rooted it blossoms into white flowers, if blown away by the wind or picked from the earth, it rolls and rolls into the hands of expecting Muslim mothers. When submerged under water by a midwife, it unfolds, branching radially from its base to resemble a miniature tree with vast roots. Maryam's root has travelled "from its ancient home" to become a garden in foreign lands for many Muslim women as they soak it in a bowl of water in the delivery room and hold onto it while birthing, to call upon "Maryam to stand by them in their pain." (Ghazi, 2006). Just as this uprooted flower of the desert blossoms elsewhere and otherwise, the same water that sprung from the desert in search of Hajar as she circled the hills of Safa and Marwah, lives on today in a water bottle in my mother's kitchen closet, as a gift from her mother. After performing Hajj, pilgrims return to their loved ones with gifts of *Zam Zam* water and the *Panja-e Maryam* in hopes that they will bring nourishment to their homes, bodies and relations. I hope the day I get to share the truths of this miscarriage with my son one day, that I can offer knowledge that labours to deepen our commitments to the relations we must hold closer, and the work that holds us in place, in the darknesses we navigate alone and together.

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