

Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities

Volume 5

Issue 1 *Stories Untold: Subverted History,
Selected Narratives and the Politics of Memory*

Article 6

2016

Restor(ation)

Dilreet Kaur Dhaliwal

Macalester College, dilreetdhaliwal@gmail.com

Keywords:

poetry, resistance, healing, political science, Sikh diaspora, borderlands, lived histories

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/tapestries>

Recommended Citation

Dhaliwal, Dilreet Kaur (2016) "Restor(ation)," *Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/tapestries/vol5/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the American Studies Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.

Restor(ation)

By: Dilreet Dhaliwal

you fed
me with your
smooth,
wrinkled
hands
the purest
magic
universes are
woven out of-
love
- to *Naniji*

magic like *Naniji's*
can light even
the darkest
of places.
- divine

do the people
who sit
in our moments of
pain-
then leave.
do they
permanently
swim. laugh.
live.
in the deep sea
of our
brains?

when i die
i will live
in the sub conscious
of the universe.
because i know
my compassion
will live with souls.
creating
entire new worlds.
i'll swim there. write
poetry. sing.
i'll finally be free.

"Every act of sharing is an act of translation, an act that contains the possibility of becoming radically vulnerable" -Richa Nagar: writer, alliance worker, weaver, and teacher

i'm a displaced soul. surrounded by six feet of snow.
i dream of a village. where love isn't just nuclear. it's from the kin. of the many hands that
raise beautiful spirits. lips that kiss fat cheeks. where my little hands pick up soil, dirt.
clung onto my Nanaji's back, crying out to go eat eggs. where the water never stopped
flowing. punjab.

i cry. i want to find them, next to the water. where they'll be telling stories. i want to
munch on the punjabiness. telling them i was gone for a while, but i'm back now. mom's
always telling me they say 'reeti left. but she never came back.' no, my spirits still there,
roaming your house, begging to be reunited with my body. i feel it jerking. tugging. at me
from this dorm. but the center of capitalism is here and over there isn't the same,
anymore. my *being* hurts.

liberation
in
collaboration.

yes.
liberation.
but on my own terms.

i cry. i become
the sea you
live in.
it is
the reminder
of how much
i
cherish
you -
still.

the motherland's been sucked dry. the british used the five rivers and the fertile soil, and turned it into money for themselves. the money they used to finance more bloodshed. the exploitation never stopped. it's the greed of corporations and puppet leaders replacing the richness with heroin.

our worth-
defined by the
proximity to whiteness
and protestantism
- early British colonization, Punjab

they act like countries choose to be underdeveloped. that people choose to live in
poverty. like we're just so subhuman we can't help ourselves. not that they shoved us so
deep into their pockets, they won't let us out.

let it be clear.
the only thing that
separates me
from them is
opportunity.

their english
is broken
but now-
after four years
in college-
my Punjabi
is breaking
too
- lost

i wrote and wrote for you
until my *dil*
broke thousands of times.

you named me *dilreet*.

coming to peace
with
realities at war with
each other.
i'm a warzone.
- borderlands

the silk,
smell of sweet tea.
sugar on your tongue
the *love*.
of every moment of
understanding

how can i ever
thank you
enough?
- Ma, Daddy

eya and me.
me and eya.
cradling the soft
blanket with the red
roses knit together -
blooming.
on the creamy orange color.
green
leaves poking gently.
i asked my Ma to teach me
to draw the roses, too.
the kind her Ma taught her.
i just love them
eya would say.
i feel a need to protect them.
- our resistance.

isn't it so mighty beautiful there are still flowers like us. rained. stiff. hardened. yet still
blooming of pink, blue, yellow, orange, purple, red in the light. connected to humble
resilient gracious roots. watered by sea salt tears.

- to you.
- i'd still rather be me.

the compassion
makes your
being
glow

poverty
is when
you wake up
in the morning
to get on your
knees to
sweep the
veranda which
is
dust.
it's the dusting
of the dust
that never ends
- Ma

first we
must
imagine ourselves
as
architects
of the world.
hands ready to
mold.

through respecting myself
despite the shaking.
breathing in vanilla.
watching the flame.
i melted with you
- ma
- how can I forget it is your *dil* that beats deep in my chest

waking up to the
home of my soul
- moments of peace

even after all that,
you still stand
straight.
- keep going.

you are not
ill.
sensitive
vibrating
hallow,
maybe.
-with
spirits
nature,
pain.
- your superpowers

you said over and over again:
resiliency.resiliency.resiliency.
until it eventually began to form
as an extra layer on my skin.
- Duchess

the violence
is not just
outside of us.
it's us.
in
the words
we speak.
in our judgement.

if actions cause
the contradiction
in the psyche,
do the work.

a false
sense of superiority
is not
confidence.
it breeds dangerous
insecurity.

you are the resistance. years of violence. yet here you are, speaking fire. ice. vanilla.
oranges. carolina reapers. coconuts. i know a part of your spirit will always be here.
protecting. dancing. laughing. transforming dirty ice on the ground into fabricy
snowflakes with your whirlwind.

they readied
men up-
claimed they were
the world's
manliest warriors
and sent them off to
World War II
to die fighting for their
wars.

funny,
the only mention of it
is when I asked my
father why my great
grandfather speaks impeccable
english.

but there is no mention of it
in the history books.

- Sikhs fighting in Italy, WWII

you encouraged
me to embrace
my whole self.

- Sedric
- healing.

the trauma
is heavy
but don't
you forget the
Courage. Resilience. Strength.
you carry of so many,
too

- notes to myself

focus on the
psychological work
with benefits

- DLB, when it was difficult.

i still brush the brown-golden
on my eyes.
line it with black on top
of long, black eyelashes.
wrap the magenta, turquoise, navy
scarf with the long
golden streak around my neck.
hug the grey jacket with
silver linings Naniji
placed softly in my hands.
put my thick, curly hair
into a half-messy
bun.
i am kaur.
i am powerful.

they had
no problem
growing that
poppyseed
on land they colonized
and using a drug
to build riches
but they'll call a War on Drugs
when they don't profit

- british colonization, India (in trade route to China)

i place both hands on the soil.
crying.
how many strong
souls crossed the
same sacred land
now forgotten-
stories erased.

the way i remember
your spirit
is you leaning by
kaddu
mooli
karela
watering life,
making sure i didn't
step
on life as i
played in the backyard.
- Daddy

if the writing
writing
reading
researching
is not for the flesh and blood
but only for the pen and paper-
keyboard and fingers-
then what's it all for?

the opinions
of my parents
on the situation
in Punjab
are far more
valuable
than “experts”
- on knowledge production

it's the 2:00 morning where I cry for the healing that is not there. for the wound that is
ripped apart. where the bleeding doesn't stop; it's dragged out for decades but also
pervading all time. sometimes, the blood oozes out, all at once, like the butchering of an
animal. other times, the skin around the edges begins to thicken until it is forced out
prematurely

they didn't
see a Guru.
they saw
the brown
martin luther.
- british colonization, annexation of Punjab

it is not a disorder
or an illness.
it is your human
experience
as it is.

“Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority, **but to their inhumanity and fear.**” - James Baldwin

she's not a bitch-
isn't it difficult to live in such a
violent world.
to deal with all the microaggressions
adding up.
clouding your world into
one of *mistrust*
fear.
caution.

“did you hear, they ripped the pages out of Guru Granth Sahib,” i say to my mother on the phone after reading articles upon articles of the situation online. right when the words escaped my mouth, I knew I'd said it wrong. No. she explained, [in Punjabi] fine, you said it to me, but don't ever say that to anyone from our community again. Say *Katal Karthi Guru De Ang*.

sometimes, I feel
as if my heart will
explode out of my chest
because the anger-
the anger-
it's enough to
rupture
the world

'anger is an
unmet need'

- Sedric
- the words I needed to hear.

i hold up
the world
for moments at a time.