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RICE UNIVERSITY

TRANSGRESSIVE COMPASSION: THE ROLE OF FEAR, HORROR AND THE THREAT OF DEATH IN ULTIMATE TRANSFORMATION

by

LUCY ANNETTE JONES

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Anne C. Klein, Co-Director, Professor, Department of Religious Studies

Edith Wyschogrod, Co-Director, Professor Department of Religious Studies

Helena Michie, Professor Department of English

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Abstract

A cross-cultural study of a never-before translated 14th century Tibetan Bön Severance (gcod) text and the theoretical work of 20th century French theorist Georges Bataille is undertaken. Juxtaposing these two radically different materials is justified by themes related to sacrifice identified and highlighted in both works as well as by Bataille’s expressed interest in inner experience, shamanism and Tibetan spirituality. Through exploring the role played by fear, horror and the threat of death in effecting human transformation in these two materials, a complex understanding of compassion that accommodates self-conscious transgression is put forth. A critical edition (in dbu chen) and translation of the Precious Garland of Severance Instructions (gcod gdamgs rin chen phreng ba) are included.
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PART ONE
Preface

I returned to the university in mid-life because I sought theoretical categories adequate to thinking critically about the suffering and putrefaction I had encountered in ten years of intense work with people living and dying with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Neither my working understanding of compassion nor my spiritual development seemed sufficient. For example, how should I understand my own deeply-felt split-second decision to violate hospital policy by turning off the respirator of a person who had just died before he was pronounced dead by a doctor who, I knew from experience, might not come for hours? Should I fault myself for wanting to shield his family from the trauma and agony I had seen others experience at that same hospital? Or for denying to the doctor, tongue in cheek, having done it? Did that hour of peaceful silence with him and his parents before the doctor came justify my actions? Was it worth it that I had prevented air from pumping into and disfiguring his lifeless form? Was I standing on solid ethical ground or merely rationalizing outlaw action? While I must never stop asking these questions, the present work inspires me to hope that I never fail to act when compelled, despite normative ethical boundaries.

I offer this dissertation as a serious exploration of the vital role played by the transgressive in human self-overcoming and ultimate transformation. Because the Bön Severance practice translated in this work is part of a traditional religion invested in gaining acceptance in order to keep the Bön tradition alive, it alone was not sufficient to explore the shadowy spaces where ethical boundaries collapse. I needed the help of an
outlaw theorist who understood the value of the tragic and transgressive. Georges Bataille fulfilled this role even better than I thought when I began this project. Before I could explicate the resonance between Severance and Bataille, I intuitively ‘sensed’ it. The quest for theory that approximates intuition has been rich and rewarding.

I am profoundly grateful to the esteemed and distinguished master teacher of Yung Drung Bön, Lopon Tenzin Namdak, for the many hours he spent with me last July and August at his monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal, patiently reading critically, correcting and commenting on the Precious Garland text. I made audio recordings and subsequent transcriptions of his commentary. He answered my questions until I had no more questions — at that time anyway! A refugee from Tibet who obtained his monastic training in that country, his insight, personal experience and stories enriched my research in a way that could not be duplicated by one who had not lived in pre-Chinese occupied Tibet. Unfortunately the time approaches when there will be no more such teachers.

I am equally grateful to Lopon Namdak’s eminent student, respected teacher in his own right, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, who actually selected the Precious Garland text for me to translate. He, too, spent many hours reading and commenting on the text during a Tibetan language seminar at Rice in the spring semesters of both 1996 and 1997. He also met with me many additional hours, clarifying the accuracy of my translation and the text’s meaning. I audio recorded and transcribed his commentary as well. I am also grateful to him for the personal time and effort he spent transliterating the dbu med script of the manuscript preserved at bSam-gling Monastery in Dol-po into dbu chen. While the drafts were done by others, Tenzin Rinpoche read and corrected the dbu chen several times. In the final reading of the dbu chen text for accuracy, Lopon Namdak
read from the *dbu med* text as I checked the *dbu chen*. Professor Anne Klein did a careful reading of the text with me a final time making many helpful suggestions and correcting typos in the *dbu chen* text. However, any shortcomings or inaccuracies in the completed translation and critical edition of the *dbu chen* text are entirely my own responsibility.

I am indeed fortunate to have had Professor Klein supervising the translation and directing the Tibetan aspect of this project. Her breadth of experience and knowledge of multiple Tibetan traditions, her own cross-cultural work as well as her commitment to provide students the opportunity to study with Tibetan teachers who are also from within the Tibetan culture has immeasurably enhanced my graduate studies. Her confidence in the creative process even when my project was only an ‘intuition,’ that it would bear me to the culmination of a full-blown dissertation, has been invaluable. I am equally grateful and blessed to have Professor Edith Wyschogrod, a renowned and accomplished scholar in Continental philosophy and ‘post-modern’ thought, as director of the Bataille portion of my project. Though Professor Wyschogrod came to the Rice faculty a year into my studies, I now realize I could not have completed this project without her scholarly instruction and wise advice. I want to thank Professor Helena Michie for serving on my committee and for her bold instruction, cheerful interest in and encouragement of my work. I also want to thank Jill Carroll for going before me and for our many Friday afternoon conversations at the Black Lab. I am especially grateful to Susan Spruce for loving and supporting me in every way as we have journeyed together down this ‘long and winding road’ to ‘the limit (not yet extreme) of the possible.’
Key to Abbreviations

I have placed many references within the text, using abbreviations. These abbreviations are given below. When referring to texts in Tibetan, the numbers refer to folio instead of page numbers.

Georges Bataille

AS

AS2

EDS

IE

TR

Drung-mu ha-ra

PG

Allan Megill

PE
Introduction

Ray died last Thursday. He had AIDS\textsuperscript{1} for ten years and was distinguished among his peers by his longevity. I knew him for all those ten years. His doctor was proud of him because he had survived so long – he had just turned forty. Ray was a pharmacist – his body had become a pharmacy.

I visited Ray three days before his death because he was having anxiety attacks. He was afraid he was dying and he was afraid he wasn’t. His left leg had turned black and was rotting and sluffing, piece by piece. Ray was in travail. I gazed intently into his face, his eyes, touched his forehead lightly and listened with my heart as he gave voice to his suffering. Love’s companion, horror, flooded my sensibility as I caught a whiff of his decaying flesh and wondered if I would throw up.

Compassion, disgust, horror all reverberate simultaneously within the same space. As a Christian minister trained in psychotherapy and spiritual direction, compassion is what I expect of myself in this situation. But I hide my face from and persistently avoid embracing the disgust and horror. In seeming contradiction, I am fascinated by my revulsion and I am troubled by my fascination, straining to hold within the space of awareness my own repulsion, attraction to that which repulses, and compassion. They all emerge from and disappear into a ghostly liminality that suffuses, colors and determines experience.
In Part One of this dissertation, I explore the complexities of compassion and the transgressive through examining two works that at first glance appear an unlikely dyad: the work of 20th century French theorist Georges Bataille and my translation of a 14th century Tibetan Bön Severance ritual text entitled, *Precious Garland of Severance Instructions* (*gcod gdams rin chen phreng pa*). As with compassion and the transgressive, a closer look reveals the affinity between these two radically different materials. Bataille's theory is grounded in his analysis of the role that ancient sacrificial ritual plays in the general and particular societal economy. I will take the *Precious Garland* as illustrative of the type of sacrificial ritual on which Bataille’s theory is based and then open the way for a mutual critique.

On the one hand, the work of Georges Bataille maps the domain of sacrifice and the tragic, notes domesticating strategies and highlights the vital role transgression plays in releasing the force necessary for human transformation. His work highlights, for both Bön and Buddhism, pitfalls for further domestication. On the other hand, I suggest that Bön critiques Bataille’s erotisation of compassion to the point that compassion *per se* is invisible in his theory. Its veiled presence can be discerned as an impulse toward a self-consciousness that mitigates or delays the destructive force of what Bataille calls expenditure. It appears as the impetus to retain choice over how expenditure takes place, claiming that more humane states of equilibrium in relation to the expenditure of this excess maximize the luxurious and minimize warlike activity. However, *Bataille does not foreground this impulse toward self-consciousness as, itself, an expenditure that mitigates the violent destructiveness of expenditure.*
Without the profound generosity and shift in perceptual perspective characteristic of the Severance ritual, exuberant, violent expenditure fragments, erodes, and ultimately annihilates human consciousness. I suggest that the universal compassion of a fully realized Severance practitioner is unbounded expenditure without reserve or return and is the essence of sacrifice. This enlightened healer/shaman bursts the limits imposed on a domesticated compassion, without which the Bodhisattva becomes a sentimental and impotent religious ideal.

I begin by introducing Bataille – his life, writing, and ‘inward turn’. Through his philosophical writings, transgressive novels and poetry, Bataille reaches toward sovereign subjectivity by means of what he calls a ‘negative’ project that appropriates the force of fear, horror and anxiety-imbued anguish. I highlight life events, theoretical themes and philosophical influences that explicate his understanding of sacrifice and intersect the Bön material. Some of these intersections are immediately obvious, like the themes of sacrifice, gift and offering. Other resonances, such as Bataille’s notion of ‘dramatization’ with ‘meditative visualizations’ in the Precious Garland are not as obvious and become more clear as the two are juxtaposed in the third chapter.

Bataille is of particular interest because, unlike the explicitly religious context of the Precious Garland, the environment within which he was nurtured was not religious, yet as a youth he had what he and others call a ‘mystical experience’. Prompted in part by this experience he, in the short run was a serious student of Catholicism (five years), and in the long run rejected religion and spent his life exploring the energetic and affective spectrum of community as well as ‘inner experience’. His secular approach helps to locate
a liminal space common to and accessible by means of both traditional religious ritual and certain artistic strategies.

Bataille was a complex thinker in conversation with many voices, developing a multifaceted, multi-layered corpus of work. Refusing to allow his creative passion and vitality to be chained to the French intellectual academy, he opted for a career as a librarian, hoping to protect his freedom of expression (sovereignty). In the early years following his renunciation of Catholicism, Bataille familiarized himself with ‘Lamaism’ and studied, for a short time, the Tibetan Language. In later years, prompted by personal illness that forced him to leave his position at the Bibliothèque Nationale (mid-1930’s) and a passion for inner experience, he become acquainted with yoga and practiced his own style of meditation.

One major facet of Bataille’s work explores the movement of energy on the surface of the globe, what he calls the ‘general economy.’ Drawing on his study of, among others, the Aztecs, Tibetans and Northwest Coast Indians, Bataille explores the energetic dynamics of sacrifice. In a move that turns Hegel’s totalizing project on its ear, Bataille, decisively influenced by Nietzsche, claims that excess and ecstasy propel humanity, not the desire to be everything motivated by lack. This expenditure without reserve, discharged through sacrifice, compels abandoning the project of knowledge, of being God and God as an ideal.²

Excess is expended either by means of festivals, sacrificial rituals, and sexuality or, in their absence, more destructively as war. Because illness is a significant theme both in
Bataille’s life and the Severance text, I make a case for including it along with war. Noting Bataille’s impulse to mitigate the destructiveness of expenditure by means of self-consciousness which preserves choice about how the excess is expended, I suggest that this motivation to mitigate destruction along with what he terms ‘eroticism’ reveal a simulacrum of compassion, which remains implicit and undeveloped in his work.

Bataille discusses concentration and ritual in terms of a dynamic unity or ‘body’ formed by a nucleus of sacred places, beliefs and persons who hold them in common. Located within this nucleus are forces of both attraction and repulsion that divide the sacred into the left-handed sacred (impure and associated with the criminal and tragedy) and the right-handed sacred (pure and associated with the victim). He claims that tragedy is a more consequential illustration of the central movement of society than is the Christian church and notes a shift within society historically from bloody sacrifice to symbolic sacrifice and calls attention to the difference in intensity between the two.

Bataille highlights the open and extravagant nature of expenditure (dépense) and gift (don). Using the example of children who fail to thrive due to emotional deprivation (deprivation dwarfism), I note the complexities of energetic consumption, transmutation and excess. Then, I pose the question, ‘what is the relationship, if any, between affective energy such as anguish, erotic energy and the Bodhisattva motivation to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings as described in Bön/Buddhism of the Great Vehicle?’

Another facet of Bataille’s work is his ‘inward turn’ in which he discusses self-consciousness from the standpoint of the particular, that is, the individual. Bataille
privileges inner experience, a type of mysticism, as its own authority and abandons himself to it, allowing it to take him where it will. This is not an isolating move but a turn that enables him to recover that which is necessary for communication with the world. Anguish (irrelevant when speaking of the general economy) and eroticism supply the force that takes one to the extreme limit of the possible.

Dramatization is activity that exaggerates affective existence and is intended to overcome the disjunction between the sacred and the profane, thereby effecting communication. At the level of the general economy, ritual sacrifice is the paradigmatic act of dramatization. At the level of the individual, meditative visualization and literature can substitute for actual acts of blood sacrifice. Bataille employs dramatization as a means of using images and discourse to go beyond knowledge to non-knowledge. His novels are an example of how transgressive images can subvert received notions such as ‘God’. I discuss the way in which his novel *Madame Edwarda* demonstrates this literary sacrificial operation.

Propelled by anguish and a spirit of contestation, Bataille’s ‘negative project’ catapults him to the abyss of non-knowledge, a non-conceptual state in which subject and object are swallowed up by the continuity of life. His familiarity with yoga contributes to his approach to and articulation of this state.

Because Nietzsche’s view of tragedy influenced Bataille profoundly, I explore Nietzsche’s treatment of Apollo and Dionysius, art as heir of religion and Bataille’s view of sovereign subjectivity. He contends that the sovereign subject alone is not enough but
must be conscious and ‘give’ out of this consciousness. This giving sovereign subject is suggestive of the Bodhisattva from whose heart flows universal compassion.

The first chapter concludes by noting that all four levels of sacrifice – ritual sacrifice of living beings, ritual sacrifice using symbolic substitutes, sacrifice by means of meditative imagination and novels as sacrifice – point to a liminal space common to all that can be opened by either. Bataille calls this liminality ‘the sacred’. I discuss this liminal domain more thoroughly in the third chapter, allowing the Tibetan material to augment Bataille.

Since most of the published work on Severance (gcod) has dealt with the lineage of Machig Labdrön and has emphasized her association with the Buddhist perfection of wisdom tradition, the vital role played by the transgressive, sacrificial, ‘shamanic’ aspects of this practice that cuts ignorance and delusion has been neglected. Unlike most recent articulations of Buddhist Severance, its practice within the Bön tradition, while explicitly associated with the “higher” tantric vehicles, is thoroughly grounded in the lower ‘shamanic’ vehicles of the Nine Ways of Bön’s Southern treasure (gZi-brjid).

In Chapter two I situate the notion of sacrifice historically and make the association between literal blood sacrifice and the substitution of dough effigies for sacrificial victims. Tradition holds that Don-pa Shen-rab (ston pa gshen rab) was the first to teach Bön to the Tibetan people. Because they were not ready for the higher teachings he taught them only the first four shamanic/ritual vehicles of the Nine Ways of Bön, instigating a shift away from actual blood sacrifice. This shift cordoned off a smaller
domain of actions that could be considered compassionate, no longer included the killing of living beings, even for the purpose of restoring harmony between heaven and earth to insure the health and well being of the community. This shift away from flesh and blood sacrifice, away from the transgressive, signals a degree of domestication. However, sacrifice itself was not abandoned. While there was resistance to abandoning actual blood sacrifice, the majority of Tibetans followed the practice of substituting dough effigies and other offerings for living beings in the rituals.

Besides dough effigy substitution, the Severance ritual represents another important transmutation of sacrifice in the Bön community. In this 14th century Severance ritual from the Precious Garland, there is a return to a kind of human sacrifice. While this sacrifice takes place in a space that is more ‘real’ than ordinary imagination, it does not result in the literal death of the victim. Extraordinarily rich with vivid detail, the Precious Garland instructs the suitable student of Severance in the visualizations necessary for practicing an entire cycle of experiential teachings, a complete path to enlightenment.

In addition to the red and white offerings typical of Buddhist Severance, in this text the practitioner’s role as healer is clearly acknowledged. Accordingly, in discussing the correct approach to the gods and ghosts who are responsible for certain diseases, visualizations necessary to clear wind, bile and phlegm maladies are included. While exploring the many facets of sacrifice in the Precious Garland I explicate themes relevant to a discussion of the transgressive such as offering (mchod), gift (sbyin), ransom (blu) and so forth and note the role of terror, illness and the threat of death in supplying energy necessary for transformation.
According to the *Precious Garland*, the purpose of Severance practice, as with perfection of wisdom, vajrayana, mahamudra and Dzogchen practices, is to overcome delusion (‘khrul pa) at its root. Delusion is an imaginative creation of desire (‘dod), craving (chags), grasping (‘dzin) and attachment (zhen). It manifests both as attraction to things that are beautiful as well as repulsion by things that are disgusting or frightening. The *Precious Garland* describes practices that appropriate the repulsive and disgusting aspect of desire, craving, grasping and attachment. Practicing in wild places that humans ordinarily avoid at all costs, such as cemeteries for leprous corpses and haunted places, the practitioner heaps ‘fear on top of fear’ and intensifies her sense of disgust and threat in order to focus, quicken and sustain practice. By practicing like this, she comes to understand all things that terrify or threaten, such as gods, ghosts and illnesses created when these beings are disturbed, as illusions with no substantial existence. She develops an understanding that whatever evil happens is not separate from her own mind. These intensified feelings of repulsion and terror animate and ultimately exhaust thought, sharpen focus and deepen meditative concentration. This process of separating delusion and appearance is the essential meaning of Severance.

Convinced that the root of all suffering is delusion, the Severance practitioner understands that, having practiced successfully, the self-generated external appearances of the world will arise as helpful friends. What previously appeared to her as demons will not only become helpful to her understanding, but she will also receive the miraculous signs of spiritual accomplishment (*siddhas*) from those very demons. Her ultimate response is deep gratitude toward those gods and ghosts for enhancing her practice and ultimate
realization. Out of profound generosity and compassion cultivated by this Severance practice, she teaches these beings the way to liberation.

To intentionally embrace and provoke experiences that terrify and repulse for the purpose of stimulating and focusing the process of ultimate liberation is alien to most religious sensibilities. The *Precious Garland*, quoting from the *View Subjugating Thought* (*rtog zil gnon lta ba*) tantra says, “practice in the meeting places of the gods and ghosts increases [the power of] spiritual practice tenfold.” Healing itself is effected through inviting intensification of illness and even death.

In the third chapter I reiterate the radical difference between the Bataille and Severance materials and my hope that together they can deepen understanding of the interplay between compassion and the transgressive. In order to explore more deeply the nature and qualities of the virtual space of liminality common to literal, symbolic, visualized and artistic sacrifice, I juxtapose the notions of dramatization, visualization and ghosts.

It is through dramatization (Bataille) and visualizations (Drung-mu Ha-ra) that a secret/sacred sacrificial space is opened. Bataille assumes that transgressive dramatization, projected into his silenced mind and at work in his novels, can substitute for the drama of an actual sacrifice and that both can elicit a type of ecstatic state, penetrating the sacred and subverting knowledge. He associates this ecstatic state with certain religious mystical states. Similarly, the *Precious Garland* instructs the practitioner to remember and meditatively visualize disgusting images of, for example, putrid,
decomposing corpses, as a substitute for seeing an actual corpse. This neutralizes clinging and grasping to the body, increasing the force and focus of consciousness, giving way to a non-dual state without thought. Bataille employed for this purpose a self-styled meditation and aimed for his transgressive novels, of which *Madame Edwarda* is exemplary, to accomplish the same.

Recognizing that both Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra assume that mental images of sacrifice can substitute for the ‘real thing’, I explore the issue of ‘real’ versus ‘mental images’ from each perspective. Next, since the body is prominent in the work of both Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra, I briefly sketch recent modes of ‘body’ discourse while considering the real and imaged body. By extracting the notion of the three ‘bodies’ (*sku, kaya* Skt.) of Bön from its religious context and raising it to the level of philosophical discourse, I note the resonance between the continuum of space designated by the three bodies, the three spaces, and Bataille’s sacred. I draw on Euripides’ and Derrida to more fully characterize this secret/sacred space.

I then juxtapose Bataille’s notion of sacrifice with offering and gift in the *Precious Garland*, noting his analysis of Tibet as an unarmed society in which energetic excess in the form of money and people is expended by means of monasteries instead of an army. I suggest that the universal compassion grounded in equanimity privileged by Bön/Buddhism is the ultimate gift without reciprocation or return, i.e., non-productive expenditure of energetic excess that maximally mitigates destruction.

For both Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra, this secret/sacred space is beyond knowledge and thought, a space of non-knowledge that can only be found by turning
inward. Itself a non-revelatory state, non-knowledge is subversive of all received notions and mental activity and is illustrated (for Bataille) by the eye's blind spot. For Bataille, remaining in that state induces a rapture characterized by supplication without response. This state of rapture conceals an unrequited desire that is not present in Drung-mu Ha-ra's equanomous, non-dual state of no thought.

I close the third chapter with a discussion of sexuality, sickness and death. The skilled Severance practitioner is also a healer. Thus, the Precious Garland explicitly appropriates for healing both a ransom offering as well as meditative visualizations grounded in an energetic understanding held in common with Tibetan Medicine. Bataille does not deal directly with either disease or healing, though his desire to be a shaman implies an aspiration to be a healer. I argue that his thought can be linked to illness implicitly through his discussion of putrefaction and death as well as through the illness that substituted in his own life for war.

Just as Bataille does not mention illness, sexuality is not explicit in the Severance practice. However, if we rely on Bataille's analysis that eroticism is the link between sexuality and death, sexuality's implicit presence in Severance becomes apparent. Bataille notes that fear of annihilation is associated with death as well as sexual and mystical experience and is imbued with ambivalence, i.e., annihilation is feared as well as desired. As in Severance, fear of annihilation or death, induces transcendence.

In light of the preceding analysis, the final chapter moves toward an expanded understanding of compassion, venturing a response to questions such as: 'Why do
intelligent, rational people engage in behavior that is stupid, shocking, transgressive, destructive, painful, dangerous and even deadly?’ and ‘Why is some transgressive behavior acceptable and some not?’

Compassion within Severance, far from being domesticated, has affinity with not only the Bodhisattva ideal but also the shamanic, accommodating the actions of a teacher who allows a student to undergo life-threatening states of terror in the service of ultimate liberation. Although compassion is not explicit in Bataille’s work, his impulse to mitigate the destruction of exuberant expenditure has recognizable family features. Severance makes clear a need for a perceptual perspective shift, which is also not explicit in Bataille and without which compassion can result in life-destroying anguish. In other words, if anguish does not effect a shift in perceptual perspective it will wound or kill.

I locate in Kirby Dick’s provocative, award-winning documentary “Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist” an approach to healing that embodies transgressive qualities foregrounded by Bataille and Severance. Flanagan, born with Cystic Fibrosis, imbibes his sado-masochistic activities with healing power, claiming that ‘s and m’ is a major reason he survived twenty-five years longer than most persons with CF. That this exceptional movie is attracting small audiences across America leads me to conclude that a certain level of proscription, hiddenness and an implicit impetus toward secrecy protect its powerful and essentially transgressive quality. I suggest that this is not only true for transgressive art but also for religious practices as well. I conclude with a discussion of the response of the particular, i.e., individual, to exuberant expenditure – fascination with and terror of annihilation.
Part Two includes my translation of the *Precious Garland*. Preceding the translation *per se*, I have included an outline of the text in addition to a technical note detailing procedure and conventions used. The Tibetan texts as well as images important to Bataille are included in the Appendix, which is followed by a Glossary of Tibetan-English and English-Tibetan terms.
Notes to Introduction

1 Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

2 The thrust of Bataille's theory has some affinity with the work of Fredric Jameson (The Political Unconscious), the American theorist who put forth a Marxist interpretive framework. Jameson describes an 'untranscendable horizon' that aims to subsume other critical operations such as the ethical, the structural, the psychoanalytic and even the work of French theorists such as Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. (p. 10). Unlike Hegel, Jameson emphasizes difference within his system as opposed to its totality.

Jameson's notion of 'primitive communism' (Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to The Political Unconscious) in which all members of society are undifferentiated and share a collective mind is not unlike Bataille's view of humanity before the advent of the tool (discussed in chapter one) or Bakhtin's (referenced in chapter two) social embeddedness of the ancient societal matrix. However, Bataille breaks with the Communist view at the point he fully embraces the 'sovereign subject.' For Bataille, communism did not have a sufficiently developed view of the individual. For that matter, neither did Nietzsche. (More about this in chapter one.)

Jameson holds that an adequate narrative style would produce a sense of 'dialectical shock,' 'that as the price of its intelligibility again and again forces the reader out of customary and comfortable positions and into painful confrontations with unsuspected truths' (Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction, p. 11) is consistent, to a point, with Bataille's sacrificial strategy. However, Bataille is clear that his 'journey to the extreme limit of the possible' is not for the sake of knowledge but non-knowledge. So, to the extent that Jameson's 'unsuspected truths' could be an experience for its own sake that is beyond conceptuality, he and Bataille could journey a long way. However, I suspect that ultimately Bataille would strongly contest Jameson's 'untranscendable horizon.' To clearly explicate this point would require more extensive research than is merited by the present project.

3 For example, Jérôme Edou's recent work, Machig Labdrön and the Foundations of Chöd. (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996).
1. Bataille: The Headless Horseman

Bataille, I know nothing about him. His obsessions disturb me, his ignorances numb me, I find his thought incomprehensible, the abrasion of his writing shears uselessly across my inarticulacy. In response I mumble, as a resistance to anxiety, maddening myself with words. Locked in a cell with my own hollow ravings... but at least it is not that... (and even now I lie)... Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation*¹

Writing from within the tradition of French modernism, often broaching the cusp of postmodernism and at times defining the genre, Georges Bataille’s novels, philosophical writings and poetry boldly confront the serious student of his work with the vital and transforming role of abject states of terror, horror and anxiety-imbued anguish. Reading Bataille is like trying to balance on logs as they float down a churning, winding river. Working furiously, feet and arms flailing, I know loss of balance is inevitable. My wet foot slips and in that split second as the dark waters swirl over my head, I connect – only to lose the connection as I struggle to the surface and scramble on shore. There I sit, gulping air and readying myself for the next round with the spinning logs and wild river that are Bataille’s corpus.

In this chapter I aim to sketch a map of that wild river, noting not only the space of sacrifice, the tragic and eroticism in Bataille’s thought but also highlighting his impulse to mitigate the destructive effect of untamed exuberant expenditure. These themes will contribute to our subsequent discussion of compassion and the transgressive informed by the Tibetan material.
His Life

A syphilis-infested father already blind and a mother of questionable sanity conceived Bataille. Born in central France in 1897 to non-religious parents, he was not schooled within any religious tradition. Acutely aware of and affected by his father’s morbid state, Bataille was no stranger to gazing, for example, at his father’s huge gaping eyes rolling back into his head and becoming almost entirely vacant when he pissed. The boundary between his life and art being permeable, he later wrote Story of the Eye.

When the war broke out in 1915 Bataille and his mother evacuated their home leaving behind his father who was too infirm to travel. His father died the following year, reportedly raving and delirious, refusing ministration from a priest. An indelible imprint was left on the young Bataille by these events.

Soon after his father’s death Bataille had a mystical experience leading him to study at the seminary of Saint-Fleur, intending to become a monk. Though he attended confession regularly for at least five years, he suddenly rejected the Christian faith because it caused a woman he loved to weep.² Although his experience and writing soon took him in other directions, he never tired of inscribing Christian notions into his writing in order to subvert them.

In 1920 Bataille was awarded a fellowship to study in Madrid. He traveled extensively around Southern Spain where he witnessed the goring and death of the famous bullfighter Granero. During this period he began an intensive study of foreign languages, including Tibetan, familiarized himself with ‘Lamaism’ and dreamed of travel to Tibet.³ The term ‘Lamaism’ was coined in 1817 and was popularly used in the early part of this century. It referred to what is currently known as Mahayana Buddhism of Tibet and
immediately surrounding areas. Currently considered a non-specific and inaccurate characterization of Tibetan Buddhism, the name ‘Lamaism’ derives from that religion’s hierarchical system of monastic leadership headed by the Dalai Lama and the devotion adherents ascribe to those leaders. When referring to Bataille’s writing on the subject I will use his term with the above caveat.

In his early life Bataille was concerned with the formation of societies, experiments in community if you will. Surrealism and his conflictual relationship with its founder, André Breton, influenced him greatly. But the coming of World War II saw him take what some have called an ‘inward turn’ focusing on interior or ‘mystical’ states, writing *Inner Experience*. Unable to serve in the First World War because he had contracted tuberculosis, Bataille was discharged a year after being drafted in 1916. He had recurring bouts of TB for the remainder of his life, perhaps contributing as well to this turn inward and interest in yoga.

His early encounter with disease (his parents and his own) and death (his parents, the bullfighter, Granero, his colleagues of the Resistance⁴ and especially the death of the intensely passionate ‘Laure’, Colette Peignot, in 1938), marked him with the necessity to write in order to survive or, put another way, to delay his own death. Writing was his means of communication, of entering the sacred and as such his writing was an act of sacrifice. (EDS, 87) How this is so will become clearer as we proceed.

**His Thought**

It is impossible to state a single aim or a simple summary of Bataille’s work. On one level he wrote to increase consciousness of laws of energetic economy (disintoxication) in order to mitigate humanity’s self-destruction. This sounds as if he
wants to 'save' the world from war and destruction. Is this not an impetus toward salvation, the very thing for which he criticizes religion and Hegel? Or does Bataille’s understanding of salvation exclude mitigating destruction? Is he criticizing 'salvation' only in the sense that it, becoming a 'positive project', protects against tragedy and avoids the horror of the extreme limit just beyond the realization that we are not everything? Perhaps his impetus to mitigate destruction has a more 'liberative' and less 'protective' quality. These are some of the issues addressed in the following exposition as I explore the role of horror, tragedy, eroticism, transgression and sacrifice in human economy.

On another level Bataille wrote to induce the experience of sacrifice as he describes it, propelling himself and his readers to the extreme limit of the possible, the abject, naked abyss of non-knowledge. At this he is, without question, successful!

I begin now with an overview of Bataille's major works relevant to the present project. Writing to bring about this increase in self-consciousness in order to mitigate or delay humanity's self-destruction, in The Accursed Share and Theory of Religion Bataille describes laws of energetic economy as he discerns them through surveying historical processes. For example in Theory of Religion he describes humanity coming into consciousness out of the unbroken continuity of animality. Not constituted as subject, the animal is "lost in the world like water is lost in water."(TR, 29) This continuity, what Bataille calls the sacred, is a type of intimacy that is forfeited when the individual, initially through developing the tool (an object posited in opposition to self as subject), disrupts continuity. The rupture of continuity and consequent emergence of the individual as subject opens up a space Bataille calls the profane. Religion is humanity striving to regain
that lost continuity. Partial recovery of lost intimacy is achieved through the transgressive act of ritual sacrifice. Bataille sees the archaic festival (TR, 52ff) as a model in which life is gloriously affirmed through destructive consumption (sacrifice) but also discerns in the festival seeds of catastrophe (war). (TR, 57ff)

Included in his survey of historical processes in volume one of The Accursed Share is Bataille’s discussion of human sacrifice among the Aztecs, the notion of ‘gift’ in the context of the Northwest Coastal Indian ritual known as ‘potlatch’ as well as ‘Lamaism,’ his example of an unarmed society. His discussion of Lamaism and the gift are particularly relevant to the present work, a discussion to which I will return.

In what many regard his foremost work, Inner Experience, Bataille takes an inward turn and considers self-consciousness (what he terms “disintoxication”) from the standpoint of the particular. “The self-acknowledged suffering of the disintoxicated is the subject of this book.” (IE, xxxii) His analysis of eroticism in Erotism, Death and Sensuality reveals a link between the general and the particular as he investigates eroticism from the standpoint of the general economy and inner experience. (EDS, 87)

In addition to describing the general and particular energetic dynamics that contribute to a brewing catastrophe and the role of sacrifice in mitigating impending devastation, Bataille manifests sacrifice through transgressive writing in the genre of the Marquis de Sade. “A sacrifice is a novel, a story, illustrated in a bloody fashion.” (EDS, 87) I take his novel, Madame Edwarda, as illustrative of literary sacrifice. In order to understand the overall thrust of Bataille’s ‘negative project’ it is necessary to explore his understanding of the general economy in more detail.
General Economy

Bataille understood the flow of life to constellate and interrelate as systems. “I will begin with a basic fact: The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g., an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically.” (AS, 21) This formulation reveals his scientific bias, assuming that there are certain irrefutable laws of physics that govern the energetic economy – the life and death of all living beings – of our biosphere.

For Bataille, humans do not suffer lack that propels them toward growth seeking fulfillment, but excess that must be absorbed in growth or expended extravagantly when confronted by limits to growth. He slides easily between speaking of this excess energy as the physical energy that impels a system (for example, an organism) toward growth (the effervescence of life), as energy manifestly present in wealth and possessions as well as products of art (including his own writing), and energy expended in ritual acts of sacrifice, transgressive sexual acts and death. Such acts of extravagant expenditure can be either glorious or catastrophic. (From the standpoint of the particular, maximizing the glorious and minimizing the catastrophic is implicitly a positive value in Bataille’s work.)

The vicissitudes of this life force conceived in terms of excess are such that the very energy that vivifies can also destroy. Enter the uncanny, the horrific – the person who contracts AIDS during conception or dies while masturbating. “Life persists in increasing and yet is lost.” (EDS, 232) From the perspective of the general economy, powerful
natural forces such as hurricanes, forest fires and floods destroy as they make way for new life. They clear out old growth and pollution, plowing the air as well as the earth, transporting soil, seeds and nutrients for new growth while property and lives are consumed or swept away in the exuberant play of energy on the face of the globe.  

Humanity comes into being embedded in this swirling, dynamic, extravagant matrix of energy. Never static, life always exhibits a vigorous, fluid interchange with other life such that the individual becomes caught up in and identified with this exuberant movement. “The general movement of exudation (of waste) of living matter impels him, and he cannot stop it; moreover, being at the summit, his sovereignty in the living world identifies him with this movement; it destines him, in a privileged way, to that glorious operation, to useless consumption. If he denies this ... his denial does not alter the global movements of energy in the least.”(AS, 23) Unable to accumulate limitlessly, finally energy can only be emptied, depleted, wasted. (AS, 11, 23)  

By remaining ignorant of these matters, humanity forgoes choice of how this wasting takes place. “Above all, it consigns men and their works to catastrophic destructions. For if we do not have the force to destroy the surplus energy ourselves, it cannot be used, and, like an unbroken animal that cannot be trained, it is this energy that destroys us; it is we who pay the price of the inevitable explosion.”(AS, 24) How does one develop the force to destroy the surplus energy for him or herself? By using the metaphor of a wild, untrained animal, does Bataille imply that this force to destroy the surplus energy can come through training or taming?  

Bataille maintains that festivals, acts of ritual sacrifice and monuments with no useful purpose are ancient societal emanations of this excess. When these outlets are
inevitably inadequate, war steps in and wastes great quantities of goods and lives. In his teens when World War I began, Bataille was understandably preoccupied with the destructiveness of war, having been drafted and served for one year before becoming so ill he could not serve. He later endured World War II and Hitler’s genocide. In the third chapter I will make a case for including disease along with war as a more destructive societal as well as individual emanation of excess.

If one accepts that some measure of the wealth of a person, nation or world is “doomed to destruction or at least to unproductive use without any possible profit, it is logical, even inescapable, to surrender commodities without return.” (AS, 25) In this way the “possibility of pursuing growth is itself subordinated to giving”: (AS, 25) Bataille appeals for lucidity in these matters of cosmic law not for the purpose of utility but expecting an acceptable, as opposed to an unacceptable, consequence to inevitable loss. (AS, 31)

Continuing the physical basis of his theory, Bataille takes as fact that the sun’s exuberant gift without return of solar energy is the source and sustainer of life. That earth’s sun will one day be completely depleted by this effulgence is hardly a question. Limit is what renders growth impossible; first the limit of another individual or group and ultimately the limit of life-sustaining terrain or biosphere. Growth within a confined, but not completely enclosed area creates pressure. “The limit of growth being reached, life, without being in a closed container, at least enters into ebullition: Without exploding, its extreme exuberance pours in a movement always bordering on explosion.” (AS, 30)

The first effect of this pressure is to extend the habitable space and the second is squandering or luxury. If the space cannot be extended sufficiently, the death of some will
also decrease the pressure. For example, if a country is too crowded, it may expand into a neighboring country or if this is impossible, war may break out decreasing population and crowded conditions. "I insist on the fact that there is generally no growth but only a luxurious squandering of energy in every form! The history of life on earth is mainly the effect of a wild exuberance; the dominant event is the development of luxury, the production of increasingly burdensome forms of life," (AS, 33) such as industrial expansion and technology.

Together with eating and sexual reproduction, death is one of the three luxuries of nature. While distinct, these three are also intimately related. Death makes life possible by creating space for the newborn. Without death, we would never have been because it is the giving over of space through death that makes way for new life. Eating the dead flesh of other species is luxury in its simplest form. It is through eating that the boundary between the eater and the eaten disappears. Bataille borrows his notion of appropriation from Freud and psychoanalysis. In the psychoanalytic model "appropriation destroys the distinction between subject and object; in the 'oral' phase the different (food) becomes the same (the 'me'), but equally, excretion reestablishes the 'different' in the expulsion from the body of that which cannot be assimilated. If the bodies change, the process remains the same: Bataille consistently demands, and he cannot escape this demand, that we confront whatever is expelled; not because he is a philosopher locked in an anal phase of development...but because the theme of exclusion refers not to the myth of origin of humanity, but to its end."8 To confront the abject is to face one's own death and the death of humanity.
Anguish in the face of death is characteristic of the particular and not the general. The movement of life in general does not know anguish because it is exuberant, overflowing, its resources are in excess and death is not meaningful or relevant. However, in the case of particular individuals, they are at times at risk of exhausting resources and suffering deficiency. An example is the contrast between extreme poverty in India and American excess. One part of the globe needs to discharge excess and another needs to grow. "The present state of the world is defined by the unevenness of the (quantitative or qualitative) pressure exerted by human life." (AS, 39) The pressure created by this unevenness results in a brewing catastrophe that Bataille envisions as danger of war. "Nevertheless, and even more clearly, what general economy defines first is the explosive character of this world, carried to the extreme degree of explosive tension in the present time." (AS, 40)

For Bataille the reversal of this explosive quality depends on humanity becoming conscious of these combustible dynamics. "This recourse, as I have said, is linked to a refusal to see, in its truth, the exigency to which the recourse is intended to respond.

...The exposition of a general economy implies intervention in public affairs, certainly; but first of all and more profoundly, what it aims at is consciousness, what it looks to from the outset is the self-consciousness that man would fully achieve in the lucid vision of its linked historical forms." (AS, 41) This self-consciousness is, among other things, "consciousness of the being without essence," (TR, 13) which points to the incompleteness of knowledge, the impossibility of an absolute and the truth of the impossible. He concludes that if humanity is self-conscious we will have more choices about how these inevitable discharges of excess are effected.
A prerequisite for becoming more conscious of the general economy's combustible dynamics entails understanding the role of sacrifice in expenditure. It is important to explore the full range of what Bataille means by sacrifice, including the sacrificial operation effected by Lamaism as well as religion's heir, literature. (EDS, 87)

Sacrifice

As previously noted, sacrifice is fundamental to Bataille's philosophy. It is the religious act above all others and suspends the taboo of death for religious purposes. (EDS, 81) The sacrificer pierces the body of the one sacrificed, opening it and spilling forth the blood (excess) of the sacrificial being, transgressing the boundary that separates sacrificer, sacrificed and witness, and restoring lost continuity. All existence emerges out of this plenitude of continuity, which is a surge of life that is essentially extravagant and violent. This realm of continuity is what Bataille calls the sacred. Paradoxically, as discussed earlier, this unchecked life can consume and destroy that which it creates.

Taboo (limits) and work (the tool) are the forces that call forth discontinuity (the profane) within continuity. This discontinuity within continuity creates self-consciousness. Yet the self longs for and is drawn toward that remembered continuity. Humanity conceived of ritual transgression as a way of participating in the sacred, that extravagant surge of life, without personally dying. In ancient times when ritually sacrificing a human or animal the other members of the clan entered into the sacred along with the sacrificial victim by identifying with the victim. However, because Bataille was concerned not to endorse a net profit for the sacrificer and the witnesses, he understood them to be lost along with the victim. As Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons explains:
In both *L'expérience intérieure* and *L'érotisme* Bataille declares that his view of sacrifice is to be distinguished from that of others: his view entails the loss of the sacrificer and witness along with the victim, whereas, traditionally, the former are not lost along with the victim, for they profit from the latter’s loss and return to continuity. It is this mutual loss of witness and victim in sacrifice that Bataille hopes to realize in his erotic fiction.\(^*^{10}\)

Sacrifice became the means by which the taboo on killing was suspended so that the participants could penetrate the limit of the profane and participate in the sacred vicariously through the death of a sacrificial victim. Sacrifice is, in a sense, negation of the individual and a loss of subjectivity of, not only the victim, but also the sacrificer and witness.

While the accuracy of Bataille’s anthropological work has been questioned,\(^*^{11}\) he understands that, in the development of humanity, animal sacrifices were the first offerings because of humanity’s deep identification with animals and their closeness to the gods. The sacrificial victim is elevated to the form of a deity. Human sacrifice came later and was again followed by animal substitution for humans because human sensibility developed to the point of being horrified by the sacrifice of their own.

For Bataille, sacrifice is essentially the transgressing of a taboo so that the violence and exuberance of life may be unleashed. In that moment the sacred and the profane become continuous and the participants participate in the ecstasy of that continuity. Through sacrifice we seek to “…bring into a world founded on discontinuity all the continuity such a world can sustain.”\(^*^{12}\) He describes this continuity as “water in water.” (TR, 13) Eating within the context of the ritual penetrates the continuity of the sacred, as well, and is another way in which life and death are integrated.
It is the excess that is sacrificed, that must be sacrificed in order for the self to transcend itself. Furthermore, the way in which a society spends its excess determines the structure of that society. Bataille illustrates his view of sacrifice by describing the sacrifices of the Aztecs and the often cited, extravagant potlatch ritual of the Northwest Coastal Indians. The Aztecs engaged in the sacrifice of living human beings in contrast to the potlatch ritual in which people brought their most prized, valued possessions and burned them at a specified time, making a huge bonfire. Lost value is restored by giving up that value.

Michael Richardson and others have critiqued Bataille’s characterization of expenditure in those societies claiming ethnographic data presents a different picture of sacrifice’s role. Richardson maintains that potlatch among the Northwest Coastal Indians served to secure social position and relationships and Aztec sacrifice was not so much driven by an inner need for expenditure as by a sense of guilt and need for expiation and social cohesion. Furthermore, the human victims sacrificed were not members of Aztec society but were usually captured prisoners who substituted or doubled for the Aztec warrior. However, I do not understand Bataille to claim that the Northwest Coastal Indians or the Aztecs consciously engaged in sacrifice with self-understanding as he envisages it. Bataille is writing in order to increase self-consciousness regarding what he discerns as energetic dynamics that are more fundamental than a need for expiation or social cohesion. As noted earlier, more self-consciousness would result in more choice about how the accursed share is expended. Put another way, his work is not ethnographic but analytical and philosophical.
Richardson observes that "Bataille sees in Aztec ritual sacrifice, which is devoted to the sun, a movement of expenditure that is comparable to the sun's generosity. It is, however, only fair to point out that elsewhere Bataille himself equates expenditure specifically with guilt and so brings his own argument on this point into some doubt."\(^{13}\) Richardson fails to take into account Bataille's distinction between the general and particular economy. Bataille's observation that the movement of expenditure in Aztec ritual sacrifice is comparable to the sun's generosity is clearly in the domain of the general economy. Just as anguish is the individual's response to inevitable loss and is not applicable to the general movement of expenditure, I would suggest that neither is guilt.

Bataille concedes that in recent times sacrifice takes place mostly in the imagination or through art, specifically the novel or story. "Nowadays sacrifice is outside the field of experience and imagination must do duty for the real thing." (EDS. 91) By making explicit the different dimensions in which sacrifice can be effected; that is, ritual sacrifice of a living being, sacrifice that takes place in the imagination, and sacrifice in the writing and reading of novels, Bataille recognizes that these dimensions are not cordoned off by rigid boundaries. *They all access a common space by means of different ordered sacrificial operations.* One such operation explicated by Bataille is the Tibetan Buddhist monasticism he calls 'Lamaism.'

**Lamaism and the General Economy**

In contrast to Islam which he has dubbed a 'conquering society,' Bataille looks to the country of Tibet as an example of an 'unarmed society.' Writing *The Accursed Share* in the mid-1940's, he was aware of the threat China posed to its Tibetan neighbors and
correctly understood (as history has born out repeatedly) Tibet to be incapable of launching an attack against others or defending itself. Most of Bataille’s data came from reading Sr. Charles Bell’s journal writings and portrait of the thirteenth Dalai Lama.

According to Bataille, Bell reports that the British wanted Tibet to be a buffer between China and British-occupied India and thus were in favor of an autonomous Tibet but were unwilling to support military action against China. Good relations between the British and Tibetans in the 1920’s made it possible for Bell to reside and pursue political policy within that country previously closed to whites for over a century. He encouraged the Tibetans to form an army commensurate with their resources but met with difficulties that Bataille finds illuminating of what he understands to be an economic paradox.

He rehearses Bell’s version of the history of Buddhism in Tibet including the shift from kingship to ascendancy of the Dalai Lama as both temporal and religious leader. However, due to the usual 20 year hiatus between the death of one Dalai Lama and the reinstatement of another, the regency who governed in between incarnations was very powerful and had an interest in the Dalai Lama not living long. “A sovereign is precarious that does not command both the religious enthralment of the people and the half-mercenary, half-emotional obedience of an army.” (AS, 97) When the thirteenth Dalai Lama sought the protection of the British government in India this “demonstrated that the most firmly established religious power is at the mercy of a real power based on armed force.” (AS, 100) However, British India did not take up Tibet’s cause militarily against China for political reasons. Tibet gained independence only due to China’s internal struggles when the Empire fell in 1911. The Dalai Lama had “learned little beyond the captivating and peaceful lamaic meditation, which is structured by meticulous speculation
and a deep mythology and metaphysics... But one would expect that such an education would be more apt to anesthetize than to arouse a feeling for the political necessities, especially in this part of the world that is inaccessible and deliberately closed to the outside.” (AS, 101)

Even when the Dalai Lama offered external sovereignty to Britain, they refused, not wanting the responsibility. This left the Dalai Lama to face the world without military defense, having chosen the monks and not the kings. “The fact that a lama carried the prestige of a king took away the latter’s ability to resist the pressure from without.” (AS, 102) The thirteenth Dalai Lama “scrupulously accepted the responsibility of a power that could not be exercised, that was essentially open to the outside and that could expect nothing from the outside but death. So he resolved to renounce his own essential being” (AS, 102) by making a commitment to grow Tibet’s army.

Following the Dalai Lama’s return to Lhasa after the fall of the Chinese Empire in 1911, he did make an attempt to expand Tibet’s small army. Bataille’s sense is that this project was doomed from the start because any increase in the importance of the army would decrease the importance of the monks. The army, to the extent that it was supported, was supported on condition that it would uphold and preserve the religion. But most Tibetans wondered what the good was of maintaining their religion if they had to violate that very religion (killing is morally wrong) in order to preserve it. (AS, 103ff)

Bataille sets aside what he considered to be a superficial explanation (killing is morally wrong) for this failure on Tibet’s part to defend itself because “a social behavior cannot result from a moral rule; it expresses the structure of a society, a play of material forces that animates it. What evidently commanded this movement of hostility was not a moral scruple, but rather –
in a ponderous way – the self-interest of the monks" (AS, 105) (preserving monasticism.
[emphasis mine]) But this does not explain why Tibetan society chose the monks and not the kings in the first place, an exploration of which is not the focus of the present work. Vestiges of the ancient warrior kings re-emerge within the monastic economy as invisible images of the fierce tsan (bstan) group of the Eight Classes of beings (sde brgyad). Perhaps the ‘medicine’ of strong and persuasive leaders like the Indian Buddhist Padmasambhava or founder of Bön, Don-pa Shen-rab whose aim was to civilize and tame the wild and unruly Tibetans through the force of compassion proved more compelling than competing warrior kings.

This is not completely unrelated to Bataille’s explanation. He believes the answer lies in perceiving his general law of economy, i.e., that a society, as a rule, produces a surplus and it is the way the society makes use of this surplus that determines the character of that society. If the surplus is not used for growth, it is frequently channeled into the military and when that limit is reached “the surplus has the sumptuary forms of religion as an outlet, along with the games and spectacles that derive therefrom, or personal luxury.” (AS, 106) More humane states of equilibrium in relation to the expenditure of this excess maximize the luxurious and minimize warlike activity. However, this state of equilibrium is not possible to maintain and begins to dissolve society, resulting in a return to disequilibrium. Here Bataille is sketching the image of a society in constant flux continually responding and accommodating to changing internal and external pressures, surges and expenditures of life.

In place of another type of luxurious expenditure such as war or growth, Bataille understands monasticism to function as a mode of expenditure of Tibet’s societal excess in which the monks are non-productive and childless consumers of resources. Supported by
lay members of Tibetan society, the monks do not engage in activity or project directed toward acquisition and growth. On the contrary, their aim (enlightenment) is the practical realization of "the essence of consumption, which is to open, to give, to lose, and which brushes calculations aside." (AS, 109) (emphasis mine) Understanding Tibet to be a closed system needing to stop growth, delimited for many years by an isolationist policy supported by the country's inaccessible and rough terrain, Bataille sees Tibet's totalitarian monasticism as absorbing that society's excess. "Just as Islam reserved all the excess for war, and the modern world for industrial development, Lamaism put everything into the contemplative life, the free play of the sensitive man in the world." (AS, 109) For the monastic, life is not subject to any other ends save life itself.

Bataille discerns Tibetan military forms (from a time prior to Buddhism's advent and displacement of Tibetan kings) still present in their sacred dances and rituals "but as obsolete forms whose loss of authority is the object of a ritual representation." (AS, 109-110) (emphasis mine) The lamas, by displacing the kings, have triumphed over the military regime that unleashes its violence toward the outside. They, instead, unleash a different type of violence inwardly. "Of course, while monasticism is a pure expenditure it is also a renunciation of expenditure; in a sense it is the perfect solution obtained only by completely turning one's back to the solution." (AS, 110) This solution "confronts human activity with its limits, and describes - beyond military or productive activity - a world that is unsubordinated by any necessity." (AS, 110)
Literature as Sacrifice

In what sense can a novel or story be sacrifice? In sacrifice, the agent of sacrifice opens up the body of the one sacrificed by means of a violent transgression of limits resulting in the powerful release of energy (excess). Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons explains that in literature the term ‘notion’ can “occupy the position of the body acted upon” in sacrifice and ‘image’ can “represent the sacrificial agent or acting body.”¹⁴ The notion is more or less static and tied to connotations and accepted use of language. The image is fluid, subject to slippage and capable of transgressing limits as in, for example, poetry.

In Bataille’s novels the excess or violent energy is limited and determined by the image itself, an embodiment of potential poetic violence. This potential force is directed against the “boundaries delimiting received notions, be they those of God, of mother, of the eye or of any other signified; what is altered is the integrity of these notions as the energy of Bataille’s image – the acting body – exceeds the confines of its discursive parameters and collides against the parameters of received notions, opening it and releasing its energy as body acted upon.”¹⁵

What is left is the return to continuity of the sacrificer, the sacrificed and the witness. As the notion fades the energy released “reverberates within the reader as a simulacrum of death,” having transgressed but not destroyed the limit of the notion. The limit remains, heightening awareness of the transgressive. This heightened awareness of the limit of the notion means that the loss is not completely lost and suggests that the loss is ultimately a gain. However, “Bataille tries in his erotic fiction to approach the ‘impossible’ of a loss that is neither fully lost nor gained in sacrifice…”¹⁶
The received notion of ‘God’ is subjected to this sacrificial operation in Bataille’s novel *Madame Edwarda*. Written under the pseudonym Pierre Angélique, *Madame Edwarda* describes the narrator’s lurid encounter with a prostitute. The narrator intuits her identity after which she confirms his suspicion when she tells him she is God, spreads her legs and shows him her vulva. Within the Judeo-Christian tradition God is predominately imaged as male so the first rupture to the received notion of God is the image of God as woman. Moreover, the narrator tells us God is not only woman, she is whore, rupturing notions of God as asexual or virginally pure. Furthermore, God is not only whore but she is also not completely human and not altogether present. The narrator senses an air of uncanny animality about her as she runs away wearing a black cloak. While she is naked underneath her cloak she also wears a mask, signaling her revealing and revealing character. The narrator finds her, faces her in the dark night and senses he is free of her, that he is facing a black rock in all its silent, bleak barrenness. He notices the transient nature of his experience of Madame Edwarda – moments before he had felt all the sensation of her inviting presence and the next moment, the nauseating emptiness of her absence.

Edwarda returns and the narrator observes she is suffering and in anguish. She physically attacks him and flees once again, then returns before the narrator recovers. He is still on his knees as she approaches him with cries of anguish and falls into a deathly silent madness. God is not only a revealing, revealing whore who comes and goes unpredictably but she transgresses the boundary of conceptuality as she collapses into convulsive madness. The narrator likens himself to one whose heart is broken and who would not choose to die from any other cause. He picks Edwarda up and carries her to a
taxi. She revives then seduces the taxi driver while the narrator watches their orgastic ecstasy, after which he tenderly wipes her wet body. All three fall asleep, waiting for death....

The transgressive image of God that Bataille puts forth in this work collides with the reader's received notion of God, ruptures it, spilling forth an ecstatic emptiness and releasing a simulacrum of death that reverberates within the reader. However, just as the image of a mad whore ruptures the traditional image of God, that received notion is, to some degree, reinscribed through the compassionate, vigilant narrator who chooses and pursues Edwarda, yearns for her, watches over her, and cares for her when she cannot care for herself. However, because the narrator is also a degraded and transgressive figure the reinscription is incomplete, retaining only the notion of God as vigilant, passionate, caring compassion.

As Bataille points out in his preface to Madame Edwarda, if we follow pain and anguish to the extreme limit we encounter horror, just this side of ecstasy. "Not only can the pain I or others feel, drawing me closer to the point where horror will force me to recoil, enable me to reach the state where joy slips into delirium; but when horror is unable to quell, to destroy the object that attracts, then horror increases the object's power to charm. Danger paralyzes; but, when not overpoweringly strong, danger can arouse desire. We do not attain to ecstasy save when before the however remote prospect of death, of that which destroys us." Pain, anguish, horror and threat of death enable and intensify the force that carries one to the extreme limit. Because Bataille did not postulate the existence of consciousness beyond the death of the body, he understood the being fully
revealed in death to be taken away the same instant it is given. Hence, we must approach that extreme limit “in the feeling of dying, in those unbearable moments when it seems to us that we are dying because the existence in us, during these interludes, exists through nothing but a sustaining and ruinous excess, when the fullness of horror and that of joy coincide.”

As Madame Edwarda demonstrates, death and sexual experience are of one piece. Sexual experience can be substituted for human sacrifice just as can Bataille’s transgressive novels. Reading Madame Edwarda as evocative of Roman Catholic Mass, Allen Stoekl points out that while death is clearly seen to be tragic and grave, we rarely recognize sexual experience in this way, more often viewing it as an object of contemptuous laughter. Laughter, taking place on the periphery is, in some sense, a by-product of the novel’s dramatization. “As we see, the basic ‘events’ of Madame Edwarda can be viewed as the carrying out of a tragic ritual that involves the divinization and even the martyrdom of the central character, but a martyrdom accomplished through sexual experience rather than death (although the two are, so the preface argues, inseparable). He claims that substitution is central to tragic and sacrificial ritual. It is via this medium of ritual to which substitution is central that we can die without necessarily losing our life. But that sexual orgasm and death involve similar perceptual states combined with the fact that people are known to die while having sex or from having sex all enhance its potency as a substitute for death.

It is this slippage between death and its substitutes that gives ritual its power. In other words, that the Christian Eucharist is a substitute for the death of Jesus allows
slippage between the ritual substitute and actual death, opening the way for the communicant’s participation in Jesus’ actual death. It is in this way that corporate rituals such as the Christian Eucharist, as expressions of exuberant expenditure, have organized and defined society. However, to the extent that the affective association between Jesus’ death and breaking of the host is lost, the ritual loses efficacy.

**Concentration and Ritual**

Influenced by the social theory of Emile Durkheim, Bataille assumes that individuals, society, the world and the universe interact via fluid, dynamic systems, not unlike cells within a body. There is, of course, a concentration of nuclear material within individual cells that determine not only its own activity but the activity at the cell’s periphery as well. The nucleus and peripheral materials form a cell, individual cells form organ systems, the organ systems form a body, the body interacts with other bodies to form families, groups, societies and so forth. This aggregation (concentration) and interpenetration of cells, individuals, groups and the like provide the potential for transformation. Bataille does not go so far as to postulate their culmination in a single overarching system that determines all other systems. He envisions a fluid field of complexity with slippage among and between systems.

Bataille’s description of a concentration of societal movement directed by a nucleus of sacred places (a cathedral for example), objects, people, beliefs and ritual practices calls to mind the Bön practice of calming (*zhin gnas*). In this foundational meditative practice, an individual collects the uncollected mind, concentrates its diffuseness and focuses the unfocused mind in order to increase the transforming power of
practice. This association with Bataille’s description of the role of the sacred in society suggests that corporate rituals not only concentrate and direct the consciousness of individuals who participate but they also, and perhaps more significantly, concentrate and focus the consciousness of the community as an organic and dynamic unity, i.e., a ‘body’ so to speak. This is reflected in the Christian understanding of community as ‘body of Christ.’

Bataille understands that the organizational nucleus described above characterizes one aspect of the place and role of the sacred in most religions of the world. However, the richness of the forms of ritual activity differs from religion to religion as evinced in part by the shift from bloody sacrifice to symbolic sacrifice. He refers here to the difference between the intensity that accompanies the actual ritual killing of a living being and the elevation and breaking of the bread, symbolic of the sacrificial body, during the Catholic Mass, claiming that blood sacrifice is more intense. He maintains that the actual point of breaking or opening the body (the putting to death, whether in the actual or symbolic ritual) is the central point and terrible moment of the ritual. The forces of attraction and repulsion are both brought into play and coalesce (explode?) in the central point of the ritual.

Attraction and Repulsion

While Bataille’s description of societal movement determined by a nucleic concentration of sacred places, objects, beliefs, people and ritual practices appears on the surface to deviate little from a biological description of a functioning cell and its nucleus, he recognizes that lived experience, though not characteristic of an individual cell, is a
distinctive feature of human beings. He is quick to explain that he could not have
developed such a paradigm of sacred society without recourse to a careful analysis of lived
experience. He confesses that it is through Michel Leiris’s personal accounts of blood
sacrifice in Africa as well as his own lived experiences that he became aware of and was
able to describe the repulsive movement in the activity of the central nucleus.\textsuperscript{25} He,
however, does not conflate his and Leiris’ lived experience with ‘common experience’
claiming their experiences are somewhat fabricated because both of them had been
psychoanalyzed and similarly influenced by French sociology.

He draws on psychoanalytic premises when he asserts an intimate connection
between repulsion, disgust, and repression. “Hence, the action of repulsive forces itself is
driven from consciousness each time at least there is production by and of the
unconscious: It is, in any case, driven from consciousness each time there is production by
and of the sacred.”\textsuperscript{26} It is for this reason that Bataille does not equate ‘lived experience’
with common knowledge. “It is only to the extent that a mind has been led to recognize
the fundamental identity between the taboo marking impure things and the purest forms of
the sacred that it is able to become conscious of the violent repulsions constituting the
specificity of the general movements that create human community.”\textsuperscript{27} He claims an
“abnormal conscious perception” due to his vocational pursuit of various areas of
systematic knowledge that enables him to ascertain this repulsive action.

When an object is made taboo and/or sacred by a system or institution, that object
has the power to attract individuals as well as to keep them away or at a distance.
Because, in Bataille’s view, the sacred is divided into the left-handed (impure) and the
right-handed (pure), he understands that all taboo objects are untouchable and sacred. For example, when a freshly dead corpse is made taboo, it has repellant as well as attractive power just as does the sacred monstrance containing the Christian Host.

I am unable to determine the precise source of Bataille’s notion of the left and right-hand sacred put forth in a lecture to the College of Sociology on February 5, 1938. Richman recalls Leiris’s reproach that Bataille’s emphasis of the left sacred was a detriment to Durkheim’s more conventional presentation. She assumes that “Bataille’s most sustained illustration of the sacred as a transformative process leads to the antipodes of the exotic, since he refers the reader to the cemetery behind the church located at the heart of every typical French village. The entire complex comprised of building and burial ground forms the essential ‘kernel’ necessary for the transformative process of the negative forces unleashed by the proximity of death into the sacred ‘right’ of religious order and consecration.”

However, knowing that Bataille read Buddhist and Hindu tantras and practiced yoga circa 1937, it is natural to wonder how much these materials influenced his presentation of the sacred. Aghora, the Hindu left-hand practice of God, is a radical unconventional path. Tantric practices in general can be considered left-hand practices because they frequently appropriate the power of the transgressive or dangerous for the purpose of transformation. The aghora path is risky because it is so powerful, like the practice of handling snakes among some Holiness Christian sects. If large quantities of energy are put in motion without the skill to direct it, the energy more than likely will be destructive. Not unlike Derrida’s discourse on Plato’s pharmakon, the notion that the
skilled practitioner can transform poison into medicine through embracing the poison (that which is impure or taboo) within the context of practice is fundamental to tantra. Bataille's engagement with the transgressive is grounded in a similar view.

Bataille points out that whether a corpse is shunned as impure or embraced as pure is temporally dependent. Immediately following a person's death and until putrefaction is complete, the corpse is shunned. "But once putrefaction is ended, the remains are purified, bleached bones being relatively lucky and pure." Relics of holy people are revered and believed to transmit the blessings and power of the cherished one who has died.

Bataille maintains that transmutation only occurs from left sacred to right sacred and uses the tortured, crucified body of Christ as one example among many, which he believes can be seen more clearly and perceptible among many non-Christian religions. He claims the following statement to be a correct explanation of the phenomenon described: "the central nucleus of an agglomeration is the place where the left sacred is transformed into right sacred, the object of repulsion into the object of attraction, and depression into stimulation." This contrasts with the tantric approach of the Bön Severance practice described in the next chapter in which both attraction and repulsion are considered to be a form of grasping that results in delusion (khrul pa) which must be overcome. I will return briefly to this point of dissonance between Bataille and Bön Severance practice in the final chapter.

Observing the paradox integral to the interplay between the left and right sacred, Bataille points out the power that seemingly depressing and horrific images of death and mutilation have to attract and stimulate a crowd — a fact well demonstrated in
contemporary society by media in general and the six o’clock news in particular. Tragedy encompasses a crime, which consists of breaking a taboo involving transgressing the boundary of repulsion that protects, in particular, left sacred things. This transgression, for example, the death of an important public figure, can result in the liberation of large amounts of energy that threatens the integrity of not only individuals but also the entire community. In the wake of such a death there is a conservative movement toward containing the liberated energy as well as an extravagant movement toward total expenditure. As mentioned earlier, the first impulse when confronted with a corpse is to recoil but the possibility remains for a violent outbreak of expenditure. “Crime would thus put into circulation massive quantities of energy in a free state.”36 For example, in some primitive communities in which death is considered a crime of magic, a chief’s death may be followed by exuberant chaotic behavior consisting of community-wide orgy, pillage and violence. Or in contemporary society, orgy, pillage and violence may accompany a major sporting event such as a soccer game or the Super Bowl.

As this exposition makes clear, the nucleus of primitive communities is a swirl of license as well as prohibition precisely because it is in the nucleus that both take place. Ultimately, in the interest of prohibiting crime and maintaining the integrity of the social whole, society denies the role transgression plays in initiating the energetic value necessary for that “overall social movement and prohibitive power itself.... Tragedy... is thus a more significant example and less obscure demonstration of the central movement of society than the Christian Church. Furthermore, it is the counterpart of the Church in the sense that it offers the criminal for the compassionate communion of those present, whereas the Christian ritual no longer has the power to do more than designate the
victim.”\textsuperscript{38} In other words, because of its remote association with tragedy, the Christian church has lost efficacy and is no longer situated within the heart of society.

In summary – the greatest loss of energy is death. However, life is not possible without a free expenditure of energy. Consequently we human beings cannot live without transgressing the taboos we set in place to protect ourselves from total expenditure. These barriers we must penetrate in order to live signify the face of death. Penetrating them creates a swirling interplay of explosive tensions of both life and death. Tragedy parallels the left sacred and allows identification with the criminal who slays the king. Christianity parallels the right sacred and allows identification with the one slain, i.e., the victim.\textsuperscript{39} Bataille believes this dynamism is present at the center of each individual as well as each systemic unit and is continuous with forms of transgression at the periphery such as laughter and eroticism. Recognizing this dynamic helps human beings comprehend the affinity we have for the very things that most threaten and horrify us.

Lest I mistakenly leave the impression that Bataille has uncritically appropriated Hegal’s totalizing notion of the dialectic let me hasten to point out that in Bataille’s thought these nodes of attracting and repulsing dynamism are infinite and constitute many ‘centers.’ While simpler systems coalesce into more complex ones, there is not a megasystem with a single center within history that is totally encompassing. All systems are constantly in motion, bumping up against one another, exchanging energy and when united by common beliefs, ritual practices, sacred places, etc., themselves coalesce as a more complex system in relationship to other systems.
Expenditure (*dépense*) and the Gift (*don*)

Although their two positions are not equivalent, Marcel Mauss, Bataille’s ethnological source on the gift, recalls the recurring theme in our society of generosity, the gift and self-interest in giving.⁴⁰ Continuing this conversation, Bataille uses the French word *dépense* to indicate the proper fate of the energetic excess with which life has been endowed. The English equivalent of *dépense* is rendered variously as ‘expenditure’, ‘lavish spending’, ‘extravagant expenditure’ and ‘wasting.’ Neither the French, ‘*don*’ (gift) or ‘*part maudite*’ (accursed share) are actual equivalents of *dépense*. That which is expended is the accursed share, which can also be understood as the gift.

As explained earlier, in his theory of the general economy, Bataille outlines society’s need for extravagant expenditure of energetic excess, subverting the capitalist notion of reinvestment of surplus in order to increase production for utilitarian and acquisitional purposes. He claims that historically, evidence of this need for non-productive expenditure can be seen in collective rituals such as the sacrifice of living beings, symbolic sacrifice (Catholic Mass) and sacrifice in art and literature (a novel illustrated in a bloody fashion).⁴¹ *He observes that modern society is impoverished when it comes to such collective rituals. Nonetheless, the need for non-reciprocal expenditure remains, leaving the man in isolation vulnerable to “incomprehensible and sometimes even stupid behavior. (II, 13)”⁴²*

What does it mean to be in isolation? In the present context to be isolated is opposed to being involved in collective rituals. To be cut off from collective rituals is, to some degree, to be isolated. Only when one is involved in collective rituals, is one part of
a community. On a very basic level, it is by means of collective rituals that individuals are incorporated into community. For Bataille, participation in community gives rise to ‘communication’ and for him communication is intimately associated with the intimacy of participation in the sacred.

What exactly is communicated when one is in communion? What are the energetic implications of an individual person in isolation as opposed to communication? If corporate rituals facilitate Bataille’s exuberant expenditure of energetic excess that must be given without reserve, then one of the prerequisites for community is a complex dynamism of energetic expenditure – not give and give back but give, receive and give. Communication implies an openness that allows what is given to flow freely and continue to be given from individual to individual. If the chain of giving, receiving and giving is broken, the communion is broken and community breaks down. The result is isolation.

A dramatic illustration of the energetic consequences for human beings of extreme isolation is the child with non-organic failure to thrive syndrome. In the early 1970’s endocrinologist Gerald Powell and others demonstrated that children who failed to grow properly (short stature and underweight) in their early months and years of life while being fed an adequate diet (failure to thrive syndrome) suffered from emotional deprivation in relationship to parents, primarily mother. In other words, in spite of taking in calories adequate for normal growth, these children did not grow normally. Dr. Powell found that when these children were hospitalized and cared for by nurses who made intentional efforts to emotionally bond such as making eye contact while talking to the child, smiling, touching and so forth, the children (with little change in caloric intake) grew at catch-up
rates. The missing component necessary for growth was emotional bonding and the activity that facilitated the bonding was, in this case, a compassionate energetic initiative toward the child. Initially, the emotionally deprived child is repulsed by the initiative. For example, initially when the nurse would reach toward the child, he would turn his face away, begin crying and struggle to get away. Only when the nurse, over time, kindly and gently reached through the child’s ‘protective’ barrier did his resistance diminish.

One significance of this study for a discussion of the expenditure and gift is the mathematics of energy exchange, i.e., calories in and calories out. What happened to the energy, absorbed but not used for growth, taken in by the emotionally isolated children? What was it about their subsequent emotional connectedness that made catch-up growth possible?

In the context of discussing expenditure and the gift, the phenomenon of emotional deprivation highlights the varied and numerous complex factors that govern energetic consumption, exchange, transmutation, transformation and/or expenditure. In other words, the attraction and repulsion characteristic of the energetic swirl at the nucleus of a system determining the dynamism of that system are themselves indicative of the relative presence or absence of affective connection between individuals and/or systems. In other words, both attraction and repulsion are indicative of some degree of discontinuity or isolation. When the nurse and emotionally deprived child connect emotionally, that affective connection enables growth by somehow making the energy consumed as food available for growth. When there is no connection, that energy is somehow depotentiated in a way that renders it unavailable for growth.
Is what I am speaking of as affective energy the same as what Bataille calls the extravagant surge toward life or erotic energy? Can two persons making love be considered an adequate model for the type of connectedness necessary for an individual or system to utilize available energy for growth? Is orgasm in which a child is conceived a model for this connectedness in its ultimate form? Is orgasm in which a child is not conceived a model for death, isolation or non-productive expenditure? Certainly two people can have orgasm and even conceive a child without being emotionally connected in the way that stimulates growth in the child who has failed to thrive. I believe Bataille’s emphasis on ‘awakening’ and self-consciousness accents an aspect of emotional connectedness that is essential for human beings to thrive.

In the Tibetan Bön and Buddhist traditions, a blind horse carrying a lame rider is a popular image for a person’s life force that transmigrates from lifetime to lifetime. The lame rider is the subtle mind and the blind horse is the subtle ‘wind.’ In the most gross or substantial form they manifest as the mind and body. The thing that differentiates the life force of a cabbage from that of a sentient being is the mind, i.e., awareness and/or intentionality. The mind makes it possible to direct the energy manifesting physically. Bataille aims to awaken this awareness or consciousness through his exposition of the general economy so that we might have more choice, i.e., be able to direct our energies more prudently and mitigate self-destruction. Exemplary of one who has achieved an advanced stage of awakening or focused awareness with a high degree of freedom of choice (on the opposite end of the spectrum from depravation dwarfs) powerful yogic adepts, forgoing actual eating, are said to extract the nourishment they need for life from the air they breathe.
In the sacrificial act, the sacrificer penetrating the sacrificial body (transgression) opens the way for the extravagant, non-reciprocal spilling forth (dépense) of the victim’s blood (accursed share or gift). This opening up and spilling forth renders continuous the sacred and the profane. The result is communication. Can altruistic unbounded love (universal compassion in the Bön and Buddhist systems) be considered exemplary of Bataille’s notion of gift? Perhaps a closer look at his ‘inward turn’ will shed some light.

**Bataille’s Inward Turn**

As noted earlier, Bataille contracted tuberculosis in his early years and suffered recurrent bouts of illness throughout his life. By 1942 he was so ill he could no longer work and was forced to leave his job at the Bibliothèque Nationale. The preceding decade had been a particularly tumultuous one for Bataille. In 1934, after being quite ill for several months, he suffered a severe psychological crisis followed by a separation from his wife.45 His novel, *Blue of Noon* written soon after the break up of his marriage, reflects this crisis.

In 1936 Bataille and certain of his friends from surrealist circles resolved to form a non-political, anti-Christian ‘secret society’ concerned solely with pursuing religious goals. Four issues of the journal *Acéphale* (1936-39) recorded, in part, the intentions of that society which dissolved in September 1939. Bataille writes of himself in the third person: “Bataille, in fact, had begun in 1938 to practice yoga, but really without close adherence to the precepts of the traditional discipline, in considerable chaos and in a state of mental turmoil pushed to the extreme. A death occurring in 1938 had torn him apart. It was in complete solitude he began, in the opening days of the war, to write *Le coupable*, in which
he describes a mystical experience of a heterodoxical nature.... This tremendous anguish was over the illness and death of his passionate love, Colette Peignot (Laure), certainly contributing to his anguish-imbued inward turn. He wrote and published *L'expérience intérieure* in the two years prior to leaving his job as librarian in 1942 due to a fulminating, TB-related lung infection.

Bataille characterizes his work as an effort beyond means toward a liberation that is direct (sovereignty). A sovereign is one who is free of limitations of interest – free from traps those goals represent.\(^{47}\) This sovereign subject is not isolated from the world but is the space of communication in which subject and object are fused (ecstasy). (IE, 9) In other words, the sovereign subject is a mystic, maybe even a shaman. Knowledge, words and conceptuality fail, giving way to this space of communication.

In his critique of Bataille’s *L’expérience intérieure* Sartre dubbed Bataille’s work a type of new mysticism and criticized him for mixing the confessional method with that of “objective” philosophical discourse.\(^{48}\) There can be little question that Bataille was driven, at least in part, to a practice of yoga and a study of Christian mysticism by his own state of anguish, illness and personal mystical experiences. While clarifying The College of Sociology’s\(^{49}\) interest in the subject of shamanism Roger Caillois explains: “Shamanism, consequently, was important to me as the synthesis between religious powers and the realms of infernal affairs. Bataille, for his part, was in approximately the same frame of mind. But the difference was that Bataille wanted really to become a shaman.”\(^{50}\)

Perhaps this desire to become a shaman reflected the same impulse that prompted him to attend seminary when he was younger. Although he studied for the priesthood in
his adolescence, by his own account reading Nietzsche in 1922 was decisive in many ways, including his (Bataille’s) embrace of Nietzsche’s scathing critique of Christianity’s loss of the tragic. Yet he was profoundly affected by the accounts he read of Christian mystical experience as well as mysticisms of other traditions (Hindu yoga and Buddhist tantra). However, whereas Christian mystics have been said to be ‘intoxicated with love of God’, the ecstatic state that Bataille describes is one of “disintoxication” in which anguish and ecstasy coexist, a signal he intended to make a radical departure from traditional Christian and philosophical categories.

Bataille’s unflagging interest in interior states and his willingness to put his notions into practice within experimental communities convince me that Sartre was not far off the mark when he recognized Bataille’s work as a ‘new mysticism.’ He appears to be reaching toward a “secular” religion. One that honors the transforming power of the ‘left-handed sacred,’ the dynamic and subversive character of non-knowledge and silence in play with knowledge and words, and the privileged position of excess, not loss, to supply impetus toward and effect communion with the sacred.

Bataille aims to allow experience to take him where it will, with no guide save non-knowledge – not dogma, tradition or even a goal. “By inner experience I understand that which one usually calls mystical experience: the states of ecstasy, of rapture, at least of mediated emotion. But I am thinking less of confessional experience, to which one has had to adhere up to now, than of an experience laid bare, free of ties, even of an origin, of any confession whatever.” (IE, 3) He speaks of non-revelatory experience which is not the foundation or confirmation of any belief system. It is instead subversive of that which
one knows. If at all similar, Bataille’s inner experience bears more resemblance to St. John’s, St. Theresa’s and Eckhart’s way of knowing God by negation than any knowledge founded on revelation through scripture. (IE, 4-5) The movement he seeks is toward the “more obscure apprehension of the unknown: of a presence that is no longer in any way distinct from an absence.” (IE, 5) A closer look at *L’expérience intérieure* will shed further light on this aspiration of the particular.

For Bataille, the one who embraces inner experience with no goal except experience itself, embarks on a voyage to the end of human possibility. His ‘mystic’ renounces any value or authority that would place limits on possibility, accepting only the value and authority of experience itself. He considered institutions such as organized religion and universities to be illustrative of this authority, subordinating experience to knowledge. For Islam and Christianity, that authority is God and for Buddhism, according to Bataille, it is a negative goal, “the elimination of pain (*la suppression de la douleur*)” as opposed to the goal of experience for its own sake. In general, it was the authority of the German philosophical school (IE, 8) from Hegel to Husserl and Heidegger that Bataille challenged. More specifically it was to Husserl’s phenomenology that he contrasts his view of experience. He understood phenomenology to place experience in the service of knowledge, making it a means to an end rather than an end in itself. For Bataille, that very knowledge which phenomenologists seek is a limit that must be crossed by experience in its pursuit of the end of possibility. (IE, 8) On one level Bataille considered knowledge to be a type of logic that could demonstrate the truth of a principle. Ultimately he included any type of conceptuality or activity of the mind within that notion. When all intellectual operations cease and the entire erotically imbued headless body
becomes not just the organ of perception but perception itself, experience exceeds the limit imposed by intelligence.

Roger Caillois, a fellow member of The College of Sociology who refused Bataille’s invitation to participate in the secret society founded contemporaneously with the journal *Acéphale*, became irritated by Bataille’s emphasis on madness, drama, death and expenditure and accused him of being anti-intellectual. Bataille insists this is not the case: “I, too, ‘want to see myself as an intellectual’ provided that I do not take it lightly – that is, provided that I do not give the impression of being ‘upright’ and ‘honest’ by renouncing my espousal of existence in its totality, on the pretext of restricting myself to knowledge, or by letting it be imagined that it is possible scientifically to overcome ‘the unpredictable course of things’.” Ultimately, the sovereign subject is the emotive intellectual committed to experiencing his limits without recourse to claiming the primacy of any intellectual operation including empirical, scientific and/or philosophical knowledge.

Bataille turns within, not in order to isolate from the world, but to recover that which is necessary for communication with the world. By foregrounding experience (which must be lived within a community), (IE, 24) Bataille hopes to address the feeling that philosophical questions are empty and that religion is meaninglessness. “It is only from within, lived to the point of terror, that it [experience] appears to unify that which discursive thought must separate.” (IE, 9) Experience is ecstatic in that in the end, the subject, who is non-knowledge, is fused with the object, which is the unknown. The secret society’s artistic representation of this state of non-knowledge (icon for the journal
Acéphale) was the image of a naked, eviscerated, headless man with a flaming heart in his right hand and a dagger in his left.\textsuperscript{55}

Bataille laments that the Enlightenment dismantled the edifices of, for example, sacrificial rituals through which, in olden times, humanity had attained communication with the beyond. Such edifices effect an exaggeration or dramatization of existence that facilitates ecstasy and communication. "In all religion dramatization is essential... if we didn't know how to dramatize we wouldn't be able to leave ourselves." (IE, 11) But when the sacrificial rupture occurs we forget ourselves and in that self-forgetting, communication with the beyond takes place.

Recalling his critique of Buddhism's authority, Bataille claims that one whose goal is to eliminate pain is lead toward action as opposed to dramatization. By opposing action to dramatization Bataille makes a distinction between activity undertaken to eliminate pain (action, project) and that done to effect communication (dramatization). He claims that action taken to eliminate pain moves in the opposite direction from the extreme limit of the possible and renders the possible meaningless. "Action conducted in order to eliminate (suppression) pain moves finally in the opposite direction from the possibility of dramatizing in its name: we no longer tend towards the extreme limit of the possible—we remedy (remèdions) pain (without great effect)...."\textsuperscript{56}

Due to Bataille's psychoanalytic orientation, apparently action taken to eliminate or remedy pain is comparable to avoidance of pain or repulsion, which, as noted earlier, for him is intimately connected with repression. If this is the case, Bataille's understanding of Buddhism's goal is skewed by his psychoanalytic bias. As I expect to clarify in my
explication of the Severance practice described in the *Precious Garland*, the impulse to eliminate pain, suffering or unsatisfactoriness in this tradition is not a move away from Bataille's extreme limit. The practices included in the *Precious Garland* take aim at and consciously move into the very heart of the state from which they seek liberation, satisfying Bataille's criteria for 'dramatization' as opposed to 'action.'

Repudiating efforts toward salvation, labeling them 'project', Bataille insists on simply being. He wonders if a true faith has salvation as its object or if salvation is simply an excuse to give the spiritual life the shape of project. Activity as project blocks experience and is an external means that must be rejected. Instead, he seeks the refutation of knowledge in favor of non-knowledge, nakedness, supplication without response. The mind is exposed when all discursive activity, all intellectual operations cease. "...[W]hat counts is no longer the statement of wind, but the wind." (IE, 13) Bataille privileges non-discursive art and literature that aim to elicit the sensation of that which they seek to imitate. For example, if a painting is imitating the wind, it makes every effort to elicit a chill from those who view it.

Discourse and images can be used to go beyond discourse, as do the *Exercises of St. Ignatius*, though, according to Bataille, often failing. Nonetheless, they are dramatization in that the method exhorts the aspirant to meditate on scripture by imaginatively constructing the place, the people, etc., and then to project oneself into the scene, thereby going beyond the discursive exhortations, to experience. The dramatic method's weakness is that it "forces one to always go beyond what is naturally felt." (IE, 14)
The beyond-the-extreme-limit of that which is possible to know is non-knowledge, the domain of the impossible. Bataille suggests that one can approach the state of non-knowledge by silencing discourse in the mind, fixing (arrêté) the awareness (conscience) on some vague inner movement and lingering "over the surprise which it provides us." (IE, 15) Remaining in this suspended silence is like a mother who comes upon her sleeping child and lingers passionately. This silence is not easily attained and requires a mother's patience to attain it.

Bataille recognizes that this "mastery of innermost movements" (IE, 15) is none other than yoga, which he admits he only knows as it has been transmitted to the West. (IE, 182) As he encounters it, however, he objects to yoga's "course recipes, embellished with pedantism and with bizarre statements. And yoga, practiced for its own sake, advances no further than an aesthetics or a hygiene, whereas I have recourse to the same means (laid bare), in despair." (IE, 15) Unable and/or unwilling to be an ascetic and recognizing he cannot reinvent yoga, heavy with tradition and embedded within the Hindu culture, Bataille hopes to learn from yoga's inspiration without recourse to its scholastic atmosphere. 57

Bataille sought to find words that nourish practice but which do not allow one to become caught in objects that hem in — words like silence which signals its own death, and (like the Hindus) breath, which leads one inward. "Silence is a word which is not a word and breath is an object which is not an object...." IE, 16) He felt the essence of the Hindu 'recipe' was fixing awareness on the breath, mantra, (which he characterized as providing
nourishment for the mind’s need for words by putting words into one’s head while at the same time introducing feelings) and silence.

If one were to meditate on the word ‘silence’, one would “seek all affectivity which one could link to this word which is barely a word since it is already the abolition of the sound which the word is. One must seek this silence in the sick delectation of the heart as one of those ungraspable lovers born in the most vaporous regions of dream. Nothing more than the shadow of summer heat, the transparency, in a room, of a ray of moonlight. When a flower’s perfume is heavy with the secret fragrance of a past of childhood vacations, we linger alone over breathing in the flower....” (IE, 182) In this process it is the heart that dilates, as the entire body becomes the eye, i.e., sensibility itself. (IE, 17)

Bataille’s ‘spirit of contestation’ refers to an inner inclination that subjects everything to question, that challenges our human tendency to become indulgent, stuck, or indifferent within categories of discourse that we hang onto like graspable objects that we appropriate for ourselves. “It is by means of often comical and always breathless mishaps that the mind slowly gets itself out of the sand. These silent ‘movements’ are nothing yet—it is necessary for us to release their light and, projecting it outside of us, to adore it, then to extinguish it.”

Bataille expresses a deep ambivalence toward yoga, an attitude, at times, of condescension toward Hindus and ignorance about India. His impression of yoga comes, at least to some extent, through Hindu-friendly Europeans he doesn’t like, no doubt coloring his perception. (IE, 17-18) Yoga’s inclination toward mastery of inner
movements is disquieting to him. It is not the mastery of inner movements *per se* that
bothers him but it is yoga as *techne*,⁵⁹ as stilted exercise, exploiting experience and making
it a competition. His understanding of tantric yoga is that the male practitioner uses the
female partner sexually in order to prolong the pre-orgasmic state. He finds this use of the
woman as a means other than for the experience itself as contemptible as is the use of
drugs to induce inner experience. He tried sounding the syllable OM but was not
comfortable with it and did not practice it enough to grasp “the sought-after effects and,
moreover” did not know “how to give it the desired resonance,” (IE, 183) most likely
indicating his lack of instruction and discomfort with his independent efforts. Within the
Bön and Buddhist traditions individual instruction in the practice, including correction by
the teacher is indispensable. Based on what he was able to learn of Hindu yoga through
reading and limited practice, he concedes that the Hindu yogis have excelled far into the
impossible, beyond the extreme limit of the possible. In other words, he recognized them
to have gone beyond conceptuality into the dimension of the non-conceptual. However, in
addition to not excelling at verbal expression, Bataille finds greatest fault with their search
for salvation from endless rebirths, though recognizes a commonality with yoga’s
beginning impulse – “a feeling of dissatisfaction, with a nostalgia for going beyond.” (IE,
182)

The continuity of life is only meaningful in the face of death, which breaks that
continuity. Bataille recognizes an affinity between “the absence of worry, generosity, the
need to defy death, tumultuous love, sensitive naiveté” and “the will to become the prey of
the unknown.” (IE, 21) There is in both instances the same need for unlimited adventure
and the same horror of ‘project.’
By way of critique, Bataille insists that while conducive of experience, asceticism makes experience itself an object in a ‘positive project’ to become everything by giving up everything. On the contrary, the experience at the limit of the possible requires that one give up wanting to be everything (IE, 22) which leaves out Hegel as well as St. John of the Cross, because when one unites with God who is everything, one ipso facto becomes everything. Since Bataille understands Buddha to have said that suffering is what is individual, then freedom from suffering is non-individuality or totality, just as is Christian union with God.

This desire to be everything is an obstacle to losing oneself and losing oneself is a prerequisite to experience at the extreme limit of the possible. Bataille’s call to inner experience in which one escapes isolation by turning inward – losing oneself with no hope of salvation is, itself, ‘project.’ However, it is not ‘positive project’ in which one seeks salvation but ‘negative project’ in which one abolishes project by abolishing the power of words. (IE, 22)

If one argues that asceticism is comparable to Bataille’s view of sacrifice, his rebuttal is that this is only partly true. If one sacrifices an eye, one does so in order to save the remainder of the body. Moreover, he insists that to lose oneself completely requires emotion, precisely what the ascetic renounces. The ascetic domesticates experience. “But the voyage to the end of the possible demands freedom of temperament—that of a horse which has never been mounted.” (IE, 23) Ascesis, like yoga, is a type of mastery and to the extent it lacks emotion, it lacks drama. Untamed eroticism, wildness, “the non-
mutilated ‘whole man’” (IE, 23) is required for Bataille’s turbulent path toward the extreme limit of the possible.

When one seeks a result, such as being everything, one makes an object of interiority. To cease wanting to be everything is to want to be human, to no longer turn away from self, to be all that a human can be who is released from the necessity to gaze longingly at the perfect. (IE, 25) Evoking Nietzsche and his goal of life (experience) as opposed to knowledge, Bataille tells us his desire to communicate comes from a feeling of community with Nietzsche – Dionysos philosophos. Such a one becomes, not the master of the universe, but the universe’s (God’s) dream. (IE, 28)

**Anguish (angoisse)**

Philosophically, the analysis of anguish in Bataille’s work owes much to the 19th century Danish religious philosopher Søren Kierkegaard’s concepts of anxiety/dread and despair/melancholy. Considered by many the founder of existentialist philosophy, Kierkegaard is known for his critique of Hegel’s totalizing system and for his challenge to the ultimacy of objective rational truths and objective moral standards. For Kierkegaard, anxiety is an erotically imbued melancholy that is constellated when an individual is faced with the freedom to sin, or as Bataille frames it, to transgress a taboo. It is a groundless fear that is common to human experience as opposed to fear based on imminent danger.

“The experience of anxiety is of a bewildering, indeterminate fear, literally a fear of nothing; it is groundless. We imagine it must be related to something outside ourselves, have some ‘objective’ point of reference. We do not know what this object is but, as an unknown, it both attracts and repels. Anxiety, a ‘heavy spiritedness,’ is a fascination with
an unknown but presumed reality. The author interprets this ‘something’ to be our own nature, to be the freedom of possibility; but it is a freedom ‘entangled in itself’.”

This eroticism or sensuousness “can enter into the personal dimension of actuality, therefore, only in disguise, as a ‘demonic’ force which grips the will and bends it to its own hidden purpose.”

Nevertheless, Kierkegaard places a positive spin on dread by claiming that there is an intimate connection between it and the formation of a new selfhood. “Thus, just as the development of the ideal, through doubt, returns the subject to actuality at a ‘higher’ point than the point of departure from it, so anxiety contains within itself the potential for spiritual development.” Whether or not anxiety is more positive than negative depends on the individual’s consciousness of it. Foreshadowing Bataille’s attention to ‘self-consciousness’ and ‘awakening thought,’ for Kierkegaard self-consciousness gives rise to will which gives rise to the ability to choose.

Developing an understanding of anguish within his own theory, as mentioned earlier, Bataille understood it to be meaningless when viewed from the standpoint of the general economy. Only individuals or units that function as individuals are vulnerable to anguish.

...[A]nguish for its part signifies the absence (or weakness) of the pressure exerted by the exuberance of life. Anguish arises when the anxious individual is not himself stretched tight by the feeling of superabundance. This is precisely what evinces the isolated, individual character of anguish. There can be anguish only from a personal, particular point of view that is radically opposed to the general point of view based on the exuberance of living matter as a whole. Anguish is meaningless for someone who overflows with life, and for life as a whole, which is an overflowing by its very nature. AS, 38-39)
An extreme sort of dissatisfaction, anguish is not learned (IE, 35) and is thus part of the existential fabric of humanity. To flee from this is to flee from the extreme limit of the possible. Bataille believed Hegel touched upon this but because he feared he was going mad he worked out ‘the system’ to escape the perceived abyss. Hegel’s system is the annulment of the extreme limit. (IE, 43) Similarly, for those who believe, ‘God’ and ‘salvation’ are the annulment.

Anguish is, as it crests, torment, and as it subsides, a shadowy sort of angst. If you cast your lot with anguish it will take you to the depths of the extreme limit of the possible. Bataille recounts what he considers a type of mystical experience in which he approached that extreme limit. He was coming from Saint Germain and though it was not raining, was holding an open umbrella. He is quite sure he had not been drinking:

I was extremely young then, chaotic and full of empty intoxications: a round of unseemly, vertiginous ideas, but ideas already full of anxieties, rigorously and crucifying, ran through my mind. In this shipwreck of reason, anguish, the solitary fall from grace, cowardice, bad faith profited: the festivity started up again a little further on. What is certain that this freedom, at the same time as the “impossible” which I had run up against, burst in my head. A space constellated with laughter opened in dark abyss before me. At the crossing of the rue du Four, I became in this “Nothingness” unknown—suddenly… I negated these gray walls which enclosed me, I rushed into a sort of rapture. I laughed divinely: the umbrella, having descended upon my head, covered me (I expressly covered myself with this black shroud). I laughed as perhaps one had never laughed; the extreme depth of each thing opened itself up—laid bare, as if I were dead… I was illuminated convulsively… (IE, 34)

This experience was a model for Bataille of anguish turned into delight, anguish glorified. However, to glorify is not to annul anguish for anguish glorified is not hope but is still anguish, “which is painful and perhaps decomposes. He who does not ‘die’ from being merely a man will never be other than a man.” (IE, 35) Bataille’s implication is that one who ‘decomposes’ loses one’s composure or loses one’s composition—like becoming
flustered, or being disfigured, chopped up, dismembered, burned, eaten by vultures or merely rotting.

Anguish-inspired emotional affect moves freely in either direction along the continuum of "a wheezing parody of laughter teetering upon the abject nakedness of a sob." Not willing or able to bear the horror of being suspended over the abyss at the extreme limit of the possible, I avert my eyes and turn away my face trying to escape the torment via pleasure (compulsive use of drugs, sex, shopping, etc.) and/or project (production and accumulation). Summoning courage I turn back toward the extreme limit, my sense of self annihilated as I contemplating the "infinite possibilities of my fellow beings" (communication). (IE, 36) Every person who does not turn toward the extreme limit is the enemy or servant of humanity. "...[B]eyond known possibilities, an anguish so great inhabits the gray of the sky, in the same way that a monk inhabits the darkness of a tomb." (IE, 39) Not merely anguish but "anguish transcended and the act of transcending it" (EDS, 86) is what makes humankind.

**Bataille and Nietzsche**

As indicated earlier, reading Nietzsche decisively influenced Bataille. What was it about Nietzsche’s work that so captivated him? Perhaps fundamentally it was Nietzsche’s strong spirit of contestation that dared to declare God dead. In his work *Prophets of Extremity*, Allan Megill dubs Nietzsche a crisis thinker, locating the genesis of crisis in nineteenth century historicism that presupposed a linear view of history (Buckle, Spencer and their predecessor, Hegel) (PE, 113) and faith as a process. Crisis occurs when this linearity is disturbed. Because historicism presupposed a linear view of history and crisis
occurs when this linearity is disturbed, historicism, in Megill’s view, is the precondition for
crisis. However, in my view, it is continuity, not linearity, that is the precondition for
crisis. Linearity implies a temporal dimension that is not necessarily suggested by
continuity. If the temporal dimension is absent, as it is, for example, within Bataille’s
sacred then, instead of crisis occurring only when there is a break in history, crisis occurs
when history breaks in. Nonetheless, Megill claims that with the collapse of historicism,
the crisis thinkers of the early twentieth century, if not refuted, are called into question in
that their fundamental presupposition, i.e., that history is a process and that there is an
absolute against which history can be measured, has collapsed. For Megill, the dominant
metaphor for crisis is “break.”

Connected to this notion of crisis is the notion of “apocalyptic change and
regeneration.” (PE, 114). There were those who were forward looking and embraced the
new and imaginative and those who looked back with nostalgia in their call for change.
For example, according to Megill the Stefan George circle was backward looking and
Nietzsche embraced both sides, never choosing between them or showing how they relate
to each other. “This ambiguity finds expression in his failure to make a definitive choice
between the imaginative notion of the will to power and the nostalgic notion of eternal
return.” (PE, 115)

For Megill, aestheticism is the “attempt to expand the aesthetic to embrace the
whole of reality...the tendency to see ‘art’ or ‘language’ or ‘discourse’ or ‘text’ as
constituting the primary realm of human experience.” (PE, 2) He claims that the work of
Nietzsche and Heidegger as well as Foucault and Derrida suggest this aestheticizing
tendency. Aestheticism and Romanticism are connected and can both be seen as attempts to respond to what Megill claims were the inadequate theoretical presuppositions of the Enlightenment. The failure of the Enlightenment sparked crisis accompanied by change.

"Viewed from this perspective, the decline of the French Revolution into Terror might be seen as merely the most striking manifestation of the inadequacy of the Enlightenment's social, moral, and political theory." (PE, 6) A common motif in the work of Romantic thinkers was the view of art as not only a manifestation of truth but even as its source -- a source that competed with and ultimately surpassed the Enlightenment's analytical reasoning. It was in this way that art was given primacy over the artist. "As the objective embodiment of fleeting, inarticulate insight, art was seen as allowing access to a dimension of reality from which the merely analytical understanding was entirely barred. Finding its highest expression in poetry, art pushed well beyond the limiting confines of the calculative and prosaic spirit of the Enlightenment." (PE, 7)

As mentioned earlier, Megill claims that Nietzsche was such a crisis thinker and suggests that this crisis theme plays out in several ways. One is in his proclamation that 'God is dead', and another is manifest in his suggestion that the essence of the world is as a self-creating work of art and that it is only as such an aesthetic phenomenon that it can be justified. Crisis and alienation are closely connected. Megill reminds us that in Rilke's Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge, (1910) he depicts the "poet's all but hopeless attempt to maintain his own 'authentic' existence in the face of the anonymous reality of the city, and of Thomas Mann's various explorations of the gulf between art and life." (PE, 113) This motif of alienation was a common one among intellectuals, especially German, who saw themselves as an elite, alienated from mass society and technology.
The Enlightenment having failed, Nietzsche perceived that the Germany of his age was in a state of dereliction, the response to which was nihilism. Following Megill’s reading of Nietzsche, a nihilism that viewed the present state as oppressive and burdensome was to be avoided. An active, aesthetic nihilism that provided an opportunity for creativity was more appropriate for our modern and postmodern existence. Once we discover that the world, does not, in fact, exist, we embark on a creative attempt to create a world, to become the “artists of our own existence.” (PE, 34) Enter the early Greek myths of Apollo and Dionysius as paradigms of aesthetic existence in Nietzsche’s early work *The Birth of Tragedy*. While Apollo is the god of illusion who responds to harsh reality by wrapping humans in a protective veil, Dionysius tears away that veil and “opens the way for a direct and unmediated participation in reality.” (PE, 39) Both the Apollonian and the Dionysian models are a move away from the Enlightenment understanding of the primacy of analytical thinking and the superiority of concepts. Megill asserts that while they both strive for immediacy, the Dionysian does so by means of direct, unmediated experience and the Apollonian does so by way of illusion, i.e., art. I would suggest that these two ways are comparable to Bataille’s distinction, alluded to earlier, between the voidness of St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross’ mystical way and St. Ignatius’ use of discursive images as an aid to realization.

While it is general perception that Nietzsche privileged the Dionysian over the Apollonian model, it is also clear that he thought both were necessary in a world in which truth was not ‘correctness’ but was embodied in the aesthetic view – in the view of the world as illusion being continually created through art. Nietzsche shares the Romantics’ critique of the primacy of concepts and reason as a way of penetrating into truth. But he
differs from them in that he did not believe that truth could be known. (PE, 50) Art reveals the world to be the illusion that Nietzsche thought it to be and takes over for religion when religion fails. For Nietzsche, a healthy culture with depth and a sense of the sacred must have a viable mythology.

Bataille claims that Nietzsche’s life and work exemplify the giving that he considers essential if we are to mitigate the destructive potential of the ‘accursed share.’ As discussed earlier, Bataille articulates a ‘book of political economy,’ in his three-volume work *The Accursed Share*. Most people think of the production and consumption of goods and services when they think of economy. The scope of Bataille’s work is much broader in that he talks not primarily about money but about the global movement of ‘energy.’ To summarize again briefly, he postulates that each living organism receives more energy than is necessary to sustaining life. The excess energy (wealth) can be invested in the growth of the system or, if the system cannot grow the excess energy must be “lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically.” (AS, 21) The energy that sustains living matter is always in excess on the globe’s surface such that the excess must be spent extravagantly and without return. Our choice is not ‘if’ but ‘how’ the wealth will be squandered. As the result Bataille claims that “it is not necessity but its contrary, ‘luxury,’ that presents living matter and mankind with their fundamental problems.” (AS, 12)

From the standpoint of the particular economy Bataille’s analysis of anguish is central. He claims that it is the analysis of anguish that alone can circumscribe two political methods that he sees opposed to one another: the search for a solution that is fueled by
fear and anxiety and the search for a solution that exhibits freedom of mind. For Bataille, it issues from "the global resources of life, a freedom for which instantly, everything is resolved, everything is rich -- in other words, everything that is commensurate with the universe. I insist on the fact that to freedom of mind, the search for a solution is exuberance, a superfluity; this gives it an incomparable force. To solve political problems becomes difficult for those who allow anxiety alone to pose them. It is necessary for anxiety to pose them. But their solution demands at a certain point the removal of this anxiety." (AS, 13-14)

Since Bataille sees in this inevitable global excess of life energy the potentiality for catastrophic destruction, "relieving the blockage was always, if only in the darkest region of consciousness, the object of a feverish pursuit." (AS, 24) When this pursuit fails because, for example, the soaring industrial activity cannot sustain its level of growth due to surplus production, the first and second World Wars are the result.\textsuperscript{71} Based on this premise, Bataille concludes that the ethics and principles of global economy must be overturned and reversed, i.e., that the goal of production and growth must be subordinated to giving.\textsuperscript{72}

Bataille understands communism to be a fundamental problem posed to us. It is characterized by a submission to a set of doctrines based on the thought of Marx and relinquishment of the individual will in favor of the collective with no promise of reward commensurate to ones sacrifice. The reward of some may actually be destruction by the others, always a consequence of revolution. "Indifference or hostility change nothing in this: nothing is more important, for the neutral or the enemy, no matter, than the
communist endeavor." (AS2, 366) Having established the importance of communism, Bataille places Nietzsche's thought on par with communism in its importance. However, Bataille believes that Nietzsche has heretofore not been understood by anyone and that his "mobile, concrete thought, tied to historical conditions, completely vanished with him. He found commentators, but they treated him like a dead man stretched out on a dissecting table." (AS2, 367)

Says Bataille, "I am the only one who thinks of himself not as a commentator of Nietzsche but as being the same as he...There was nothing sovereign that the historical world offered him that Nietzsche could recognize." Bataille does not claim that he is always faithful to Nietzsche but that his "thought is placed under the same conditions as was his." (AS2, 367) I take this to mean that Bataille understood himself to be in a similar critical position vis a via contemporary culture as did Nietzsche and his thought was subject to the same critical rigor in relation to the givenness of that culture as was Nietzsche's.

Bataille observes that while Nietzsche shares a common view of traditional sovereignty as the communists, he parts ways with them at the point of considering the value of the individual. After Nietzsche broke with Schopenhauer, he did not waver from his view that the individual should never be merely the means and not the end of some common enterprise. Bataille claims that the refusal to be useful in the sense of being a servant is the principle of Nietzsche's thought and work. He further claims that there are only two viable positions at the time of his (Bataille's) life and work: communism in which each person is reduced to an object, and his own view which he claims is similar to that of
Nietzsche -- "free the subject, at the same time, of the limits imposed on it by the past and of the objectivity of the present." (AS2, 368)

Bataille criticizes Hegel's view of sovereignty because it establishes Hegel himself as the sovereign. He further claims that Hegel's absolute knowledge folds in on itself and dissolves 'into sleep.' Bataille asserts that his own vanishing thought is not sleep but *awakening thought*. "I am talking about the discourse in which thought taken to the limit of thought requires the sacrifice, or death of thought. To my mind, this is the meaning of the work and life of Nietzsche." (AS2, 370) Bataille aligns Nietzsche on the side of those who *give* in contrast to the bourgeoisie who simply accumulate. Nietzsche's move was in concert with those who would have us live life in the moment. While Nietzsche found himself in opposition to Romanticism because of his objections to Wagner's lack of intellectual rigor, he, nevertheless, remained on the side of Romanticism's critique of the Enlightenment. "Nietzsche's gift is the gift that nothing limits; it is the sovereign gift, that of subjectivity." (AS2, 371)

Bataille claims that Nietzsche was jealous of God and that he set himself against Jesus. Nietzsche setting himself against Jesus speaks of Dionysos. Bataille contrasts the seduction of Dionysos, which he characterizes as a prelude to tragedy, to what he terms the 'arranged marriage' of Jesus. Because the sacrifice of Jesus was predetermined and for the good of all humanity, Bataille claims that "Nietzsche's jealousy is that of the passion that is forsaken for the match dictated by utility. In the end, the difference between the two sides has this sense: I don't say Jesus, but the believer *withdraws from the game*, and the disciple of Nietzsche *throws himself into it.*" (AS2, 378) Bataille is
moving toward a subjective sovereignty in which the order of values is overturned. In this he understands himself to stand with Nietzsche.

In the context of discussing transgression of prohibitions Bataille reviews Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*. He observes that while it is common knowledge that Mann’s novel is a fictionalization of the life of Nietzsche, it fails to adhere to Nietzsche’s biography in many important ways. In Mann’s novel the transfigured Nietzsche becomes the “myth of defeat, of the catastrophe of the spirit.” (AS2, 398) In his precise and delicate philosophical work on Nietzsche, Mann links Nietzsche’s illness with his genius just as he links genius and the illness of Leverkühn in the novel. Mann views Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* as falling far below Nietzsche’s hopes for it and sees him not only as a brilliant intellect but also as a tragic figure much like the burning of a farmhouse in the night. “Mann’s invalidation is so complete that Nietzsche emerges from it muzzled, confined to musical expression. This book is in fact an abdication, if not by the writer, then by Germany.… *Doctor Faustus* is the funeral panorama of a nation the account of a collapse, the dirge of a world into which the Devil brought confusion and error: this *lamento* is the execration of excess, it is the confession and the cry for mercy of a diabolic resolution.” (AS2, 400)

Bataille’s defense of Nietzsche is complete when he proclaims Nietzsche’s philosophy the only one that overcomes the servitude in philosophical discourse and “restores sovereignty to the free spirit. It’s true that Mann is right: ‘Who takes Nietzsche literally ... is lost!’ But: ‘Who tries to save his life shall lose it.’ No one is -- for a moment -- sovereign who does not lose himself.” (AS2, 401) Enter Bataille’s sovereign subject.
Bataille observes that in communism, the sovereign subject is lost. Writers and artists are in the service of leaders who are not themselves sovereign except in the sense that they renounce sovereignty. (AS2, 411) Bataille agrees with Nietzsche that art and literature are substitutes for religion. "Considering them as a whole, imposing as they are, profane art and literature still did not bring men anything more than a substitute for the emotions that were found first in the sanctuary where the most terrible truth appeared to them." (AS2, 413) Nevertheless, it still continues to fulfill art's function, i.e., the expression of subjectivity. (AS2, 414) The sovereign subjectivity of which Bataille speaks draws its "consciousness and very existence form literary expression." (AS2, 421)

Sovereign subjectivity as expressed in sovereign art is a paradox in that it is constituted by the renunciation of the power and functions that are characteristic of real sovereignty.

_For Bataille, sovereign subjectivity alone is not the answer to the inevitability of war due to accumulation. The sovereign subject must also be conscious and 'give' out of this consciousness._ Ultimately Nietzsche's Zarathustra falls short of this conscious sovereign subjectivity in that Nietzsche conceals his deep subjectivity beneath fictional antiquated forms. "This book [Zarathustra] is the fiction of sacred reality..." (AS2, 420)

Zarathustra falls short of the rigors of Bataille's transgressive genre.

'Thoughts' After Losing My Head

I abhor Bataille. His work provokes nausea and vertigo. Nonetheless, he and I share a destiny just as did he and Nietzsche. The ghosts of his dead parents, his lover, a dead bullfighter, dead friends and carnage of two World Wars suffuse Bataille's dance with Nietzsche. The ghosts of dozens, maybe hundreds, who have died of AIDS suffuse
my dance with Bataille. Images of rotting flesh, bloated and emaciated bodies, young people growing old overnight, the stench of death and unspeakable suffering propel me into Bataille’s arms. Horrified, I take refuge in the cemetery.

...I remember the cemetery in a different way from when I was young. Because it was a park to us. It was a place you could go late at night and know that no one would disturb you. You could go up there with your friends and lie in the grass. We would take a flashlight and set it in the tall grass and we would lie up there and we would talk, knowing that nobody would overhear us and nobody would bother us. I was purely peaceful. And for some reason that we never talked about, we always lay around that flat granite monument that commemorated the five teenagers who had died in the car crash and we lay there and we never talked about them...

...[W]e would lay on our backs and we would turn off the flashlight and we would look up at the sky on a clear night filled with stars and the sight of the milky way was sooooo intense that I lost track of the force of gravity and felt as if I were standing and not lying – that I was standing on a precipice made of grass with the dead behind me and that out there was the great black, with brilliant points of light to which they had journeyed. It was terrifying and exhilarating to hang onto the ground, to know how sweet this life is when we look into the dark and that everything that we know, our clothes and the smell of cut grass and of new asphalt, the smell of ice cream, the smell and the distant sound of traffic and people calling our names far down in the town below, that all of this is impossibly precious and that we would cling to this grass precipice as long as we possibly could like tenacious plants that would refuse ever to give up lightly. O blessed mood! in which the burden of the mystery and all the heavy and the weary weight of this unintelligible world is lightened! Then we would turn on the flashlight and we would go home. 73

Then again, perhaps the cemetery is our home. It is in the cemetery that Bataille stumbles upon the Tibetan Bön Severance practitioner.
Notes to Chapter 1


4 Hollier recounts that Vildé, Lewitzky and five others were shot by the Germans on February 23, 1942. The College of Sociology. Denis Hollier, ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. p. 249.


6 For Bataille, the difference between a 'negative' and a ‘positive’ project is that the negative project is not associated with production and accumulation. It is more on the order of ‘play’ in that it is pure expenditure, not oriented toward a goal.

7 Geoffrey Bennington’s essay “Introduction to Economics I” in Writing the Sacred. London and New York: Routledge, 1995 pp. 46ff, explores implications of Bataille’s assumption that the world is a globe (round).


9 Bataille’s explication of ‘being without essence’ is not without resonance with the Buddhist notion of ‘emptiness.’ Buddhist emptiness is exhaustively explicated within Mahayana literature, which includes detailed meditative practices by means of which the aspirant can realize this non-conceptual wisdom state for herself. In one sense emptiness is beyond the limit of conceptuality but it is experience that includes a wisdom component. It is clear that as Bataille weaves his way toward the extreme limit of the possible, that toward which he points is beyond the limits of conventional knowledge and can be reached only by a contestation and subversion of knowledge. His own vanishing thought is ‘awakening thought’, possibly implying a clarity or wisdom aspect as well. However, it is problematic, beyond noting superficial similarities such as both states are reached by means of negation, to reliably compare or contrast states that defy and subvert conceptual constructions. Nevertheless, I will engage this ‘impossible’ conversation in more detail in chapter 3 as I explore Bataille’s notion of non-knowledge and the Precious Garlands non-conceptual state beyond elaboration.


13 Georges Bataille, op. cit., p. 79.


15 “Sacrifice and Violence in Bataille’s Fiction,” Bataille: Writing the Sacred. op. cit. p. 94

16 “Sacrifice and Violence in Bataille’s Fiction.” Bataille: Writing the Sacred. op. cit. p. 95

17 This is a quote from Bataille’s preface to Madame Edwardsa translated by Austryn Wainhouse in My Mother, Madame Edwardsa, The Dead Man, London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1989, p. 140.

18 My Mother, Madame Edwardsa, The Dead Man, op. cit. p. 141.
20 Bataille’s view of the sacred and the profane as well as his view of the transforming potential of group-induced effervescence was influenced by Émile Durkheim’s (Marcel Mauss’ uncle) groundbreaking work in French Sociology, including his *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912). For an informative article on the Collège de sociologie’s (of which Bataille was one of six founding members) reading and appropriation of Durkheim see Michèle Richman’s article “The Sacred Group” in *Bataille: Writing the Sacred*, pp. 58-76.


22 I describe this type of meditation in the next chapter. While the actual practice of calm abiding applies to an individual, I am suggesting if society were to occupy the place of the individual, Bataille’s description of the concentration of societal activities around an organizing nucleus recalls the way in which the individual uses the beliefs and practices of the Bon tradition to collect and focus her mind, culminating in the concentration practice of calm abiding, a powerful and necessary base for the transforming practices of tantra.

23 “Attraction and Repulsion II” p. 119.

24 “Attraction and Repulsion II” p. 120.

25 “Attraction and Repulsion II” p. 121.

26 “Attraction and Repulsion II” p. 121.

27 “Attraction and Repulsion II” p. 121.


31 See *Salvation on Sand Mountain*.


33 “Attraction and Repulsion II,” *op. cit.* p. 121.

34 “Attraction and Repulsion II,” *op. cit.* p. 122.

35 “Attraction and Repulsion II,” *op. cit.* p. 122.

36 “Attraction and Repulsion II,” *op. cit.* p. 123

37 ‘Sin’ in the Christian tradition is comparable to what Bataille means here by ‘transgression.’ Sin, and therefore, transgression, is a fault, “it is that which ought not to have happened.” *Erotism, op. cit.*, p. 261.


39 “Attraction and Repulsion II,” *op. cit.* p. 135


41 See Derrida’s discussion of Mauss’ call for ‘returning,’ not as regression but revolution in *Given Time*, pp. 65-66.

42 *Reading Georges Bataille: Beyond the Gift, op. cit.* p. 3.


My Mother, Madame Edwarde, The Dead Man, op. cit. p. 221

My Mother, Madame Edwarde, The Dead Man, op. cit., p. 222.


Georges Ambrosino, Georges Bataille, Roger Caillios, Pierre Klossowski, Pierre Libra, and Jules Monnerot were the founding members of The College of Sociology, initiated in 1937 and disbanded in 1939. This diverse group of scholars came together to advance the study of ‘Sacred Sociology’, “the study of all manifestations of social existence where the active presence of the sacred is clear.” (The College of Sociology 1937-1939, Denis Hollier, ed., Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p. 5.) Sources for the College were heavily influenced by the work of French Sociologist, Emile Durkheim. The founders shared a common skepticism of institutional religion, parliamentary politics and university based knowledge and sought to stimulate social and political activity by going beyond customary boundaries of intellectual discourse. (“The Sacred Group: A Durkheimian perspective on the Collège de sociologie [1937-9], Michèle Richman, p. 58ff. in Bataille: Writing the Sacred.”


The College of Sociology (1937-1939). p. xxcii

L’expérience intérieure, Georges Bataille, Éditions Gallimard, 1943 et 1954, p. 19. Leslie Anne Boldt translates ‘suppression’ using the English cognate ‘suppress’, which is technically correct. However, in our psychologically sophisticated culture ‘suppress’ has come to mean to ‘control’, ‘restrain’, or ‘curb’ as opposed to ‘eliminate’, which, based on his use of the term ‘remèdes’ on p. 23 in a parallel text, is likely what he means here.


This icon is reproduced in Appendix I.


Judging Vivekananda’s (follower of Ramakrishna) writing poor intellectually, Bataille’s reading of him was not meaningful. See Inner Experience, op. cit. p. 182.

Inner Experience, p. 181. Can these silent movements be visualized as light images in the form of deities that are then dissolved or reabsorbed into oneself, leaving only limitless space? Also see Bataille: A Critical Reader. 1998 p. 4 – Blanchot and Foucault on contestation as a type of negative affirmation – an affirmation of nothingness. Contestation pushes a notion to its limit where it fails.

Techné is my word, not Bataille’s.

See Nietzsche’s Twilight of the Idols, (London & New York: Penguin Books, 1968) in which he asserts that no one is “the result of a special design, a will, a purpose; he is not the subject of an attempt to attain to an ‘ideal of man’ or an ‘ideal of happiness’ or an ‘ideal of morality’ – it is absurd to want to hand over his nature to some purpose or other. We invented the concept of ‘purpose’; in reality purpose is lacking.... The concept ‘God’ has hitherto been the greatest objection to existence. ... We deny God; in denying God, we deny accountability: only by doing that do we redeem the world.” (p. 54).

Georges Bataille, Michael Richardson, London & New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 16, 19. Bataille read Kierkegaard contemporaneously with Nietzsche, in the mid-1920’s. He felt that the integrity of their work was so strong, at least in part, because they remained, as did he, on the periphery of academia. Heidegger’s view of anxiety is also indebted to Kierkegaard and has resonance with Bataille. See George Steiner’s Martin Heidegger, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 72, 79, 94. Also see Being and Time, Martin Heidegger. John Macquarie and Edward Robinson, translators. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1962, pp. 306ff. Anxiety is an anticipatory state of mind that can face the ‘nothing’ of Dasein’s ‘possible impossibility’ of existence, i.e., non-being (p. 310).
Edith Wyschogrod explains that “[t]he mood basic to Dasein’s self-disclosure is anxiety or care: ‘Anxiety...provides the phenomenal basis for...grasping Dasein’s primordial totality of being’ (BT 182, p. 227). ...This nothing and nowhere are brought into view by anxiety. They bring the world as such before Dasein because in anxiety the specificity of persons and things vanishes. But with their disappearance falleness also disappears so that Dasein can no longer hide from itself. Thus anxiety is the linchpin of Dasein’s self disclosure: through anxiety Dasein is thrown back upon itself, individualized.” Spirit in Ashes. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. pp. 168-169.


Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity, op. cit., p. 130.

Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity, op. cit., p. 133.


Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity, op. cit., p. 137.


Thirst for Annihilation, op. cit. p. xv.

Stefan George was an influential German poet and accomplished linguist. He lived in Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Heidelberg and later Italian Switzerland after Germany had succumbed to National Socialism in the early 1930’s. George’s project was nothing short of the renewal of the German culture through the creation of a group of disciples around himself who would reinvigorate and regenerate poetry under his influence, and through the regeneration of poetry, bring about the regeneration of society. Stefan George, E. K. Bennett, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954, pp. 1ff.

“‘It is sometimes denied that the industrial plethora was at the origin of these recent wars, particularly the first. Yet it was this plethora that both wars exuded; its size was what gave them their extraordinary intensity.’ The Accursed Share, p. 25.

He explains this assertion in the chapter entitled “Nietzsche and Communism.” The Accursed Share Volumes II & III.

2. Losing Your Head: The Ritual of Severance, *gCod*

**Historical Perspective**

As indicated in the introduction, I take the Severance ritual described in the *Precious Garland* to illustrate Georges Bataille’s notion of sacrifice. Since Severance is not literal blood sacrifice, I account for the aforementioned association in two ways: the connection between Severance and ancient Tibetan practices of blood sacrifice and the power of Severance’s transgressive meditative visualizations to penetrate the same secret space accessed by blood sacrifice.

First, since human sacrifice is paradigmatic for Bataille, I explore the relationship of Severance to the sacrifice of living beings. In order to do this I register connections between Bön’s four causal vehicles (*rgyu yi theg pa bzhi*) and Tibet’s ancient shamanic\(^1\) religion in which blood sacrifice is know to have been practiced. I note the ethical imperative based on compassion introduced by the emissary from Tazik (*stag gzig*),\(^2\) Don-pa Shen-rab (*ston pa gshen rab*), the great priest who brought those causal vehicles to Tibet. Through the ethnographic work of Stan Mumford and the association between Severance and the second, and third causal vehicles of the Nine Ways of Bön (*theg pa dgu*), I maintain that practices included in the *Precious Garland* retain images of rituals from an ancient shamanic matrix that supported sacrifice. I argue that this connection with the sacrifice of living beings contributes to the transgressive quality of the practice and thus to its efficacy.

Although human sacrifice is paradigmatic, Bataille’s view of sacrifice covers a broad spectrum of activities spanning the domain of both religion and art. It slides
between human sacrifices of the Aztecs to sacrifice that takes place in the imagination of which his own transgressive novels are exemplary. On this basis I use the instructions for visualizations in the Precious Garland to discuss the importance of meditative imagination in the efficacy of Severance and note distinctive features in contrast to ordinary imagination. This discussion of sacrifice and Severance reveals the way in which not only blood sacrifice but compassion as well becomes transmuted.

Most study done relative to Severance has focused on the Nyingma Buddhist tradition of Machig Labdrön. Little research has been done concerning gcod within the extant tradition known as Yung Drung Bön (g.yung drung bon). Scholars agree that this modern Bön tradition bears much resemblance to Nyingma Buddhism and that both are quite different from the pre-Buddhist shamanic religion also called bön. Per Kvaerne observes that the relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and Yung Drung Bön, “was a complicated one of mutual influence.”3 Stan Mumford theorizes that the traditions known today as Bön and Nyingma Buddhism both evolved as the result of a clash between the ancient shamanic bön religion and Indian Buddhism. As a result of this interpenetration the two have undergone a parallel evolution – present day Nyingma Buddhism developing primarily from the Indian Buddhism of Guru Rinpoche and Yung Drung Bön mainly representing a transmutation of the ancient shamanic religion.4 I will take this as my working assumption, realizing that more research is needed. Certainly contemporary followers of Yung Drung Bön claim continuity with the bön religion present when Guru Rinpoche came to Tibet in the 8th century. However, Bönpo tradition states that their Nine Vehicles predate Nyingma by at least 1,000 years (one account says 17,000 years).
Mumford and others theorize that when Guru Rinpoche came to Tibet in the 8th century and subdued the indigenous gods and demons of the bönpo, those unwilling to give up their shamanic practices were eventually driven out of the country. He concurs with Pignède, Snellgrove and Richardson who believe the Gurung shamans in Nepal are carriers of Tibet’s pre-Buddhist tradition. “It is an identity that the Gurung shamans of Gyasumdo subscribe to themselves.”

In his excellent work *Himalayan Dialogue*, Mumford provides a small window through which the reader can glimpse the fluid and complex process by which Nyingma Buddhism and the ancient Gurung shamanic tradition continues to confront, accommodate, assimilate and critique one another in the mountain valleys of Nepal. We can have little doubt that, a dialogue between cultural layers similar to the one described by Mumford has been in force for hundreds of years in Tibet and surrounding areas.

Apparently unaware of Mumford’s research, in his recent work *Machig Labdrön and the Foundations of Chöd*, Jerome Edou argues that “the Prajñāparamita is the conceptual source from which the Chöd system developed, and not the other way around. As for the specific methods of Chöd such as the offering of one’s body, these seem directly derived from the Bodhisattva tradition, as described for example in the *Jataka* stories.” Edou goes to great length to deny any connection between ancient shamanic sacrificial rites and Severance (*gcod*).

I agree that the Prajñāparamita and the Bodhisattva ideal are critical strands in the weaving of the Severance ritual. But by dismissing as “fanciful interpretations” the idea that significant threads of the practice are rooted in pre-Buddhist shamanic rites, Edou ignores the importance of recognizing Severance’s connection with the sacrifice of living
beings and turns a cavalier eye to the crucial role played by transgressive elements of the practice. In this work based on my translation of a 14th century Bön Severance text, *Precious Garland of Severance Instructions (gcod gdam s rin chen phreng pa)*, I intend to bring those transgressive elements to the fore, discuss their relation to actual blood sacrifice, and highlight the critical importance of this association. Perhaps Evans-Wentz and others concluded on the basis of too little data that the Nyingma Buddhist practice of *gcod* is rooted in what he termed the “pre-Buddhistic Bön Faith.” Nonetheless, Mumford’s work confirms he was correct to assume that the sacrificial element of the ritual echoes ancient shamanic sacrificial rites. A closer look at Mumford’s research on sacrifice among the Gurung shamans will be instructive.

**Sacrifice among the Gurung Shamans in Nepal**

For two and one-half years (1980-83) Stan Mumford lived in the Tibetan village of Tshap in the Gyasumdo region of Nepal. He conducted an extensive study that included numerous interviews with villagers, Tibetan lamas and Gurung shamans in the area. As noted earlier, Mumford and others believe the Gurung are representative of the pre-Buddhist folk religion known as bön that was defeated and marginalized by Guru Rinpoche. He believes these Gurung people living near the Tibetan/Nepal border are descendants of those who fled Tibet rather than abandon their ancient shamanic practices. In his view, with which I concur, the extant religious tradition known as Yung Drung Bön, from which the *Precious Garland* is taken, is not synonymous with this ancient, pre-Buddhist shamanic religion and has, itself, undergone a transmutation similar to Nyingma Buddhism.
These Tibetan and Gurung villages remain distinct despite the fact that among the villagers there is much interpenetration of the more ancient shamanic cultural layer with the newer Buddhist worldview. It is this interpenetration that is the focus of Mumford’s project. He believed by studying the way in which these two distinct traditions encounter, dialogue and accommodate one another we gain insight into the way in which Buddhism and shamanism have conversed and changed one another for many hundreds of years.

The theoretical frame for Mumford is predominantly the tripartite historical model of Makhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin describes three temporal models of existence that Mumford sees reflected in the dialogue between the Gurung shamans and the Buddhist Lamas. The first is the older shamanic layer in which “the Ghyabre and Paju shamans still seek to live out what Bakhtin calls the ancient matrix, an identity embedded with relationships of the community and the cosmos and signified in the local landmarks.” They have no agenda beyond restoring harmony between the upper and lower worlds by means of rituals in this life. “[T]hey mediate between forces, images, and will of various domains.” Their is a true oral tradition with no written texts.

Mumford understands the Tibetan lamas to be representative of Bakhtin’s second temporal mode in which the individual life sequence is favored and rites are based on written texts oriented toward liberating one from the world matrix. The emphasis is on individual karma as merit accumulation oriented toward the future. “Merit making requires an internal ethic, that of purity of intent. At advanced levels this interiority matures through a series of renunciatory initiations that lead toward enlightenment.”
However, as Buddhism encounters shamanism Mumford theorizes that the shamanic concerns with health, wealth and harmony in this life through right relationship with the spirit inhabitants of the upper and lower worlds are assimilated by the Buddhists through a process he calls “transmutation.” The shamanic images and rituals came to be refracted into a bounded inner subjectivity,\textsuperscript{14} falling out of consciousness. By participating in rituals that contain these transmuted images from the ancient matrix, the bounded individual (Buddhist practitioner) engages in a type of denial that allows him or her to claim a purity of intent that would otherwise be impossible. \textit{In other words, the transmuted images make it possible for the Buddhist practitioner to transcend the ancient matrix while continuing to participate in it and while denying that participation.}\textsuperscript{15} For example, by substituting offering cakes (\textit{tor ma}) for animal sacrifices the Buddhist is able to participate in animal sacrifice without killing an animal. By drawing a tight boundary around himself, he is able to eat the meat killed in the Gurung deer sacrifice without being karmically implicated. In other words, if he did not personally kill the animal or if the animal died of natural causes, the Buddhist understands karmic implications of eating meat of the deer to be minimal.

Bakhtin’s third temporal mode is a type of “betweenness” which emerges through this unfinished dialogue between older and newer cultural layers. “Since this emergent tradition is unbounded and global, no one is excluded, not even the ethnographer.”\textsuperscript{16} The ancient matrix continues to return in reflexive forms – barely perceptible ghostly apparitions.
**Red Offering (dmār mchod)**

Mumford’s theory of transmutation in regard to the “red offering” (*dmār mchod*) is particularly relevant to the present work. He notes there is powerful pressure from tradition, environment and everyday experience among Tibetan communities in the mountain valleys of Nepal, to continue the ritual killing of animals. He illustrates the way in which ritual killing among Gurung shamans has become transmuted in dialogue with the Tibetan lamas as well as the way in which the Buddhist lamas have themselves been transformed by the dialogue.

The ritual he uses as an example of this interpenetration is the deer sacrifice, important because it restores relationship and harmony between the upper and lower worlds. The Drong awa to whom the offering is directed is considered to be a powerful protector god and must be offered sacrifices yearly or the Ghyabre risk the threat of angry retribution. The deer’s heart is the essence of the offering, the remainder of which is roasted and eaten immediately or saved for later distribution to the rest of the community. The shamans who perform this sacrifice compare “the meat sharing with the Tibetan lama’s distribution of *tshogs* that is distributed after each Tibetan ritual, and also compares it to the lama’s Chinlab (*byin-rlabs*): elements he has blessed that are distributed among the laity.”

In direct antithesis to Tibetan Buddhist belief, the Paju shaman understands decline in animal sacrifices being offered by the villagers to be a sign of historical decline.

Across the river, Buddhist lamas denounce the Gurung practice of deer sacrifice and recall that in the 1960’s Lama Chog Lingpa came to Gyasumdo from Tibet and vigorously condemned the compromise local lamas and shamans had reached in regard to
the sacrifice of living beings. Before his coming, lamas looked the other way each year when shamans offered an animal sacrifice as part of a joint communal ritual. Lama Chog Lingpa composed a ritual text on the spot for the villagers in which vegetable offerings and effigies were to substitute for the red offering and commanded it be followed on pain of rebirth in a hell realm (dmyal ba).19 Mumford understands this event to mimic the crisis created by Guru Rinpoche’s triumph over and oath binding of the bön spirits when he came to Tibet in the 8th century.

The diachronic process Mumford describes in which rituals are transmuted20 comes about due to just such cultural and environmental pressure. In the case of Bön and the red offering, Don-pa Shen-rab is traditionally described as the powerful teacher who brought the Nine Ways of Bön to Tibet, condemned the offering of living beings and commanded instead the practice of rituals involving substitutes in the form of dough effigies and visualizations. Believing the Tibetan people too wild for the higher teachings, i.e., sutra, tantra and Dzogchen, at that time he taught them the lower or ‘shamanic’ vehicles. However, the Southern Treasure’s (gZi-brjid)21 shamanic teachings differ from the shamanic teachings of the Gurung, in that they are not only textually based but are rituals practiced and understood within the context of the “higher” teachings, all of which are motivated by compassion.22 This is to say, the shamanic teachings included within the four causal vehicles have been written down, re-contextualized and placed in the service of compassion such that bounded, karmically directed individuals may achieve enlightenment for the sake of all beings, which is the Bodhisattva ideal.
The gcod ritual from the Precious Garland surely takes into account ancient rituals in which living beings were sacrificed in order to restore health to beings in this life and harmony between the upper and lower worlds. However, because these earlier elements have become assimilated into the internal liberation narrative of the bounded individual, the transgressive elements participate unselfconsciously. Edou’s denial of shamanic influence on the formation of Buddhist gcod is illustrative of the way in which these earlier elements become marginalized and virtually invisible. It is this unselfconsciousness that allows these transgressive elements to disappear and foreshadows the domestication of a religious tradition. When they are recognized and consciously linked to ancient practices, it becomes possible to reclaim the potency and efficacy of the earlier practice.

**Historical Ambience of Severance Practice**

A significant issue confronting one who explores a ritual shaped by a spirituality and culture not her own is the obvious constraint of being an outsider. No matter how much study and practice one who is not born and nurtured within the Tibetan culture does of the Severance ritual she can never explicate that ritual from the perspective of an insider. The best she can hope is to glimpse a reflection – a simulacrum that hopefully provokes a fresh perspective on her own spirituality and culture.

One thing missing and impossible to adequately re-create is the context in which the gcod of this 14th century text was practiced. Although her work reads more like a novel than an ethnographic study, Alexandra David-Neel’s account of experiences she had while traveling, studying and doing Buddhist practice in Tibet in the early part of this century bears witness to the wild and dangerous nature of the practice. David-Neel’s
narrative, while recounted in dramatic language by an outsider communicates, perhaps in a way that a pure ethnographic study could not, the ever-present threat of death that quickens and sustains the practice of Severance. She recounts in vivid, if not embellished, detail an encounter she had with a gcod practitioner as she trekked in northern Tibet circa 1920.

The most fantastic of [the rites] is called gcod (cutting off). It is a kind of “Mystery” played by one actor only, the celebrant, and it has been so cleverly devised to terrify the novices that one hears of men who have suddenly gone mad or died while engaged in its performance.

A cemetery, or any wild site whose physical aspect awakens feelings of terror, is considered to be an appropriate spot. However, the place is thought even more suitable if it is associated with a terrible legend or if a tragic event has actually happened there quite recently...

Though she understood the fear of the gcod celebrant, David-Neel thought the stories she heard about the tragic effects of the ritual were exaggerated until she witnessed the terror for herself.

She tells of camping in a large grassy plain near three black herdsmen tents. Hearing the sound of drums and bells in the distance, she soon learned there was a lama with two attendant disciples meditating in nearby caves. When the two attendants passed near her tent she became quite concerned that one of the young disciples was ill because of his thin, gaunt look. She offered him medicine but he refused, quite wary of her.

A week later she learned that one of the herdsmen had died and observed the dead body being carried to the place of sky burial where it was cut into pieces and left for the vultures. That evening, in the tradition of the yogi, David-Neel walked to the cemetery to practice overnight.

The moon was nearly full and beautifully lit up the immense plain extending from the foot of the hills which I skirted to other distant
ranges... I could have walked for joy the whole night, but the cemetery, my goal, was less than an hour's march from my camp. As I neared it I suddenly heard a strange sound, at the same time hoarse and piercing, that broke the perfect stillness of the desert. It was repeated several times, rending, it seemed, the calm atmosphere in which the sleeping steppes lay. Then the rhythmic beating of a damaru followed. This language was clear enough to me. Someone—no doubt one of the lama's disciples—had gone to the place and performed Chöd near the corpse.

She reached a small hillock, hid herself and observed the thin and sickly disciple practicing gcod.

"I, the fearless naljorpa," he exclaimed, "I trample down the self, the gods, and the demons..."

"Ye lamas, spiritual teachers, Heroes, Khadomas, by thousands, come join me in the dance!"

Then he began the ritualistic dance, turning successively toward the four quarters, reciting "I trample down the demon of pride, the demon of anger, the demon of lust, the demon of stupidity."

Each exclamation "I trample down" was accompanied by actual stamping and ritual vociferations... which grew louder and louder, till the last ones were thundered out in truly deafening tones...

[After he had entered his tent and as] I began to round the hillock, and climb down, a sudden explanation stopped me.

"I pay my debts!" shouted the naljorpa. "As I have been feeding on you so feed upon me in your turn! "Come, ye hungry ones, and you that ungratified desires torment! "In this banquet offered by my compassion, my flesh will transform itself into the very object of your craving. "Here, I give you fertile fields, green forests, flowery gardens, both white and red foods, clothes, healing medicines! . . . Eat! Eat! . . ."

The excited ascetic blew furiously his kangling, uttered an awful cry and jumped on his feet so hastily that his head knocked against the low roof of the tent, and the latter fell in on him. He struggled a while under the cloth, and emerged with the grim, distorted face of a madman, howling convulsively with gestures betokening intense physical pain.
Now I could understand what Chöd means for those who work themselves up until they are absolutely hypnotized by its ritual. No doubt that the man felt the teeth of some invisible ghouls in his body.

He looked around him in all directions and addressed unseen bystanders as if he had been surrounded by a host of beings from other worlds. Most likely he beheld some kind of ghastly vision....

I felt most anxious to awaken him from his nightmare. Yet I hesitated because I knew that my intervention would go against the established rule. Those who have engaged in such training must fight it out unaidered...

I could not bear it any longer. I rushed towards the poor mad fellow. But, as soon as he caught sight of me, he called to me with a vehement gesture, shouting:

“Come, angry one, feed on my flesh.... drink my blood....”

This was too absurd indeed! He took me for a ghost!.... In spite of the pity which I felt, I nearly laughed.

“Do be quiet,” I said. “There are no demons here. I am the reverend lady-lama whom you know.”

He did not appear even to hear my voice but continued to address me in the words of the ritual. I thought that the toga in which I was wrapped gave me, perhaps, a somewhat ghost-like aspect. So throwing it on the ground I spoke again.

“Now, do recognize me!”

It was of no use. The poor novice was utterly out of his mind. He stretched his arms towards my innocent zen and addressed it as if it were a newcomer among the troop of phantoms.

... As I pondered over the matter the young man, who was staggering round his tent, stumbled on one of the pegs and fell heavily to the ground. He remained immobile as if he had fainted, and I watched him to see if he would get up, but I did not dare approach, for fear I should frighten him even more. After a while he moved and I deemed it better to withdraw before he looked at me again.

After much internal debate, David-Neel decided to inform the lama about the extreme state of his disciple’s suffering in case he would deem it wise to intervene.

[When I reached the lama’s cave] Rabjoms Gyatso was seated cross-legged, in meditation. Without moving, he only lifted his eyes, when I
opened the curtain and addressed him. In a few words, I told him in what condition I had left his disciple.

He smiled faintly.

"You appear to know Chöd, Jetsumna. Do you really? . . ." he inquired calmly.

"Yes," I said, "I have practiced it too."

He did not reply.

After a while, as the lama remained silent, and seemed to have forgotten my presence, I tried again to appeal to his pity.

"Rinpoche," I said, "I warn you seriously. I have some medical knowledge; your disciple may gravely injure his health and be driven to madness by the terror he experiences. He really appeared to feel himself being eaten alive."

"No doubt he is," answered the lama, with the same calm, "but he does not understand that he is himself the eater. May be that he will learn it later on. . . ."

"You seem to imply that you have had some training in the ‘Short Path.’ Did your spiritual teacher not inform you of the risks and did you not agree that you were ready to run these three: illness, madness and death? . . .

"It is hard to free oneself from delusion," he continued, "to blot out the mirage of the imaginary world and to liberate one’s mind from fanciful beliefs. Enlightenment is a precious gem and must be bought at a high price. Methods to reach supreme liberation are many. You may follow another one, less coarse than suited to the man whom you pity, but I am certain that your way must be as hard as that of my disciple. If it is easy it is a wrong one.

"Now, pray, go back to your camp. You may come to see me tomorrow in the afternoon if you wish." . . .

I bowed my parting ‘good night’ and returned to my tent . . . 23

David-Neel also knew of a tamer version of gcod, in which the great mediators practice together in a group celebrating their liberation. They sing, dance, play the drum and blow the femur trumpet in the “proud joy of having trampled down the feelings that keep the
mind feverish through hopes and fears, through ‘the burning thirst, the distressing race
toward mirages.’”

Evans-Wentz echoes David-Neel’s account of teachers warning their students of
the danger of madness, becoming ill or dying while living and practicing Severance in the
wilderness. Tales of people gone mad and/or dying while practicing Severance are an
indispensable adjunct to the practice of this ritual, bearing witness to its transgressive
character. gCod’s reputation as a risky and dangerous practice and its association with
notorious instances of madness and death augment its power to elicit the powerful affect
that contributes to its efficacy. I will discuss this more in a later section.

That Severance confronts and risks crossing these ultimate limits of existence is
no accident. The practice not only hazards disintegration of the individual through literal
death and madness but also, in fact, has as its goal the dissolution of one’s identity as it
relates to identification with the body. While not sacrifice in the sense that the ritual calls
for the actual killing of a person, the ever-present possibility and risk of death or madness
as one withdraws identification with the body, separates the mind and body and
meditatively visualizes making that dismembered body an offering and a gift places the
gcod practice solidly within the sphere of the transgressive.

**gCod in the Bön Tradition**

In general, there are three distinct, but not unrelated, manifestations of Bön:

Ancient or Old Bön (*rnying ma’i bon*), New Bön (*bon gsar ma*) and Zhang Zhung Bön. Ancient Bön is composed of two types: Yung Drung Bön and Shamanistic Bön.

Furthermore, there are four classifications of gcod associated with Bön. The Severance
of the Peaceful White AH (*a dkar zhi gcod*), the powerful Severance of the Secret Dakini
(mkha’ ‘gro gsang gcod), and the increasing Great Severance of Drung-mu Ha-ra (drung mu gcod chen) are associated with Yung Drung Bön. The fourth, the wrathful Severance of the Seven Heroes (dpa’ bo bdun pa) is connected with New Bön.29 The Precious Garland of Severance Instructions (gcod gdam s rin chen phreng pa), translated and included in this work, is from the increasing Great Severance of Drung-mu Ha-ra (Yung Drung Bön).

While the origin of gcod is not the subject of this project, I expect this study to make clear that Severance is not only a practice explicitly associated with tantra for the purpose of transforming fear into a cause for receiving the supreme and ordinary signs of accomplishment (siddhas).30 It is also intimately associated with rituals performed for the purpose of healing through subduing supernatural spirits responsible for illness, commonly referred to as shamanic practice. In the Bön-po tradition these shamanic practices are described in the first four causal vehicles (rgyu yi theg pa bzhi) of the nine vehicles or ways of Bön’s Southern Treasure (gZi-brjid).

According to the venerable Bön master, Lopon Tenzin Namdak, there are no extant Bön-po monasteries today in either India or Tibet whose primary practice is gcod.31 Prior to 1959 when Lopon escaped from the invading Chinese government and fled Tibet into exile, any Bönpo monk who wanted to practice gcod in the monastery using a drum, bell and horn32 had to receive special permission from the abbot. He knows of only one powerful Bönpo gcod pa who left Tibet in 1959 and went with his teacher to India where he wandered and practiced until his death several years ago. His teacher has also died.
These recollections underscore the fact that the practices taught in the Precious Garland are meant for only a few people who are capable of living a very rough life and practicing in wild and frightening places. It was never practiced by a large number of people, even in ancient times. A lineage holder might teach only one or two students in his entire life. Lopon is not personally aware of any Bönpo gcod practitioners living today outside of Tibet who practice in solitude, wandering from fearsome place to fearsome place.

Currently, the most popular Bön Severance practice is the powerful Severance of the Secret Dakini (mkha’ ‘gro gsang gcod). However, according to Lopon Namdak, the present day gcod practitioner is, for the most part, not sufficiently accomplished to live in the wild, practice in fearsome places or subdue the gods and ghosts responsible for energetic disturbances that cause illnesses. The modern Severance practitioner rarely progresses beyond doing chants, reciting mantras, doing the visualization with the body and playing the drum with a group in a tame setting. One receives benefit from practicing this generosity with the body but that is only part of the teaching and is far from the rigors and level of accomplishment needed to practice the complete text. Traditionally one would practice the Precious Garland very strictly in a three-year retreat. This would include preliminary practices, refuge, bodhicitta, introduction to the natural state, visualization of the tutelary deities, healing practices as well as dedication, i.e., all the necessary practices for ultimate realization. Since the Precious Garland teaches only the visualizations, the practitioner would take the actual chants and recitations from other texts.33
If a person practices according to the *Precious Garland* and is qualified in every other way, only lacking the actual experience of living in the wild, he can still become a lineage holder by substituting the actual experience of the fearsome places with visualization of them. Analogous to the tantric Buddhist distinction between practicing with an actual consort and visualizing a consort, the latter is generally considered to be a sufficient but not superior way to practice.

**About the text**

The *Precious Garland of Chöd Instructions* (*Precious Garland*) is included in an anthology of Bönpo Severance texts containing tantras (*rgyud*), rituals (*cho ga*) and instructions (*khrid yig*). While the complete anthology contains 672 folios, the chapter I have translated comprises folios 37 through 58 of that volume.

Most probably this *Precious Garland* was written in the 14th century by Drung-mu Ha-ra (*'gro mgon drung mu ha ra*), a great practitioner and lineage holder of the Tibetan Bönpo religion. According to the Bönpo text *A Cycle of Severance Instructions* (*good gdam pa kyi skor*), he received this teaching in a vision from Dong-gyung Thu-chen who many Bönpo’s believe was a contemporary of Shakyamuni Buddha in India. From notes kept by Lopon Tenzin Namdak and also a biography of Tulku Lo-dan Nying-po (*blo kdan snying po*), we know that Lo-dan Nying-po received this Severance teaching from Tsu-ra-od zer Gyal-tshan (*tsu ra’od zer rgyal mtshan*) who was a pupil of Drung-mu Ha-ra. Lo-dan Nying-po, also known as Nam-kha Rin-chen (*nam mkha’ rin chen*), was three or four years younger than Nyam-med-shes-rab Gyal-tshan (*mnyam med shes rab rgyal mtshan*), follower of Shen-chen Lu-ga (*gshen chen lu ga*) and founder of the influential Menri (*sman ri*) Bönpo monastery in central Tibet (1405). It is through this
connection with the founder of Menri that the present text can be dated to the 14th century.

Object of the Practice

*Overcoming delusion (‘khru{l pa)*\(^{39}\)

According to the *Precious Garland*, the object of gcod “is to self-purify delusion (‘khru{l pa) and cut the four demons.” (PG, 39) In so doing the practitioner becomes free from the cycle of rebirths, the condition that defines samsaric existence. Delusion, one of the five poisons, is a type of mirage or illusion arising when a person erroneously believes the appearances that manifest to awareness have a ‘solid’ or ‘permanent’ existence independent of her own mind or other causal conditions.

In general, a person has traveled far on her journey to become free from delusion when she meditatively experiences the impermanence (*mi rtag pa) of all things. For instance, from within a state of deep meditative concentration the practitioner considers the ‘I’ that has wandered in the form of a subtle consciousness and taken rebirth within this uncut, whole, body of flesh and blood covered over by thin skin. It is a source of much pain, a net of nerves that will soon become a corpse and be taken to the cemetery. We have devoted our lives to nursing this ‘I’, this body – fondling, decorating and ornamenting it. Eventually, “it will end up leaving behind either a handful of burnt bones, or a piece of rotten carcass, or a ditch full of insects, or something to be destroyed by birds and animals. Time rolls on, months absorbed in the sky and days in the earth. One might not be ready but the time of death will come.”\(^{40}\) If the meditation is carried out in this way and “becomes fully integrated into ones mind-stream, then the sensation of fear, skin-startling shudders, hyperventilation or a feeling of disgust at oneself will
Occur.”41 Once the practitioner has understood the “manner in which things become manifest and the nature of karma, it is impossible that a positive change will not occur in their mind.”42 When this happens, the meditation on impermanence is accomplished and the practitioner understands that all appearances are illusory and free of inherent existence.

Alternatively, taking her own body as object of meditation, the practitioner may attempt to find the real “I”. While in a state of meditative concentration, she searches among each of the five aggregates for the “I.” She does not find it and soon realizes it does not exist in any of the five aggregates and that, she has, in fact, constructed the “I” for which she is looking. This constructed “I” is like a reflection or a movie. We think there is an “I” who is moving, going from place to place, chanting, or talking but if we look for it from the perspective of that “I,” we find nothing. Thinking there is an “I” to be found is delusion.

Delusion is not like the distinction ordinarily made between, for example, a dream and reality where a dream is illusory and waking life is real. With reference to delusion, both the dream and waking life are similarly mistaken. When the practitioner develops lucidity in the dream and does not attach to the dream images, she realizes that the dream is constructed by her own mind. Further, all things in the universe share equally in the same condition. The difference between the dream and other phenomenon is their relative solid appearance. The appearance of solidity or substantial existence that they each have is a construction of mind and is delusion. Becoming lucid in the dream is overcoming delusion. We are seeing but are not grasping to the image as solid. In a
lucid dream we recognize the dream is not solid and that is does not substantially exist. This realization is the real thing, i.e., free of delusion.

The mistaken view that reality has a permanent, solid existence separate from our own mind is due to ignorance. Delusion is an imaginative creation of desire (‘dod), craving (chags) and grasping attachment (‘dzin zhen). It manifests equally as grasping at things that are beautiful as well being repulsed by things that are disgusting or terrifying.

There are many methods within the Bönpo religious tradition that one can apply to overcome this grasping and attachment rooted in delusion. The practice of Severance is one such method. Itself a complete path, Severance appropriates that which is disgusting, repulsive and terrifying for the purpose of ultimate liberation. The Severance practitioner comes to understand all things that frighten or threaten him, such as gods and ghosts and illnesses created when these beings are disturbed, as illusion, with no substantial existence. He seeks out the terrible, frightening places in which to practice Severance and develops the understanding that whatever evil happens has no substantial existence. He intentionally stirs up fear within himself in order to animate thoughts, sharpen focus and deepen meditative practice. gCod means “to cut” and what is being cut is ignorance and delusion. This process of severance or separating delusion and appearance is the essential meaning of gcod.43

The Severance practitioner is convinced that the root of all evil is delusion. She is confident that to realize the true nature of reality is to vanquish evil. She understands that for the successful gcod pa, the self-generated external appearances of the world will arise as helpful friends. (PG, 39) What previously appeared to her as demons will not only
become helpful to her, but she will also be given the miraculous signs of spiritual accomplishment (siddhas) by those very demons. (PG, 52)

*Cut the four demons (bdud bzhi)*

Namkhai Norbu identifies the four demons or four hindrances to spiritual realization as "the demon of the passions (nyon mongs pa'i bdud), the demon of the physical body (phung po'i bdud), the demon of the lord of death (‘chi bdag gi bdud), and the demon of the son of the deities (lha'i bu'i bdud)." Alternatively Janet Gyatso enumerates the demon of obstruction (thogs bcas), beginningless demon (thog med), demon of pleasure (dgag’ spro), and demon of pride (snyems byed).

While confirming there are varying accountings, Lopon Namdak’s commentary on the Precious Garland identifies the four demons (bdud bzhi) as birth, death, aging and sickness (skye rga na ‘chi). He maintains that there are usually three presentations of the four demons: the inner four demons, the external four demons and the secret four demons.

When the demons manifest in form and color, etc., they are the external four demons. For example, all beings must be born; therefore there is a demon who controls birth. After birth, all beings age, hence, a demon who controls aging, and so forth. The internal four demons relate to one’s own consciousness and emotions such as anger, desire and ignorance, which is the king of the internal demons. The secret four demons are primarily related to grasping to the self, king of the secret demons. This secret demon, self-grasping is the master demon in whose service are all the external and internal four demons.
The external indicates that the four demons are visible to us as external beings. They are visible manifestations of our own mind, much as seeing our mind reflected in a mirror. The internal four demons appear as emotions. The secret four demons manifest as craving and grasping to the self, which is the root obstacle to liberation.

**Dependence of the practice on thought and visualization**

A universally held belief within Tibetan culture is that space is filled with both visible and invisible powerful energetic beings. Anne Klein observes that for the Tibetan both self and cosmos are alive and populated “by myriad invisible beings, some of whom bring disease or crop-damaging weather.” Mumford distinguishes both modern Buddhism and Bön from Baktin’s ancient shamanic matrix, claiming their affiliation with his second historical temporal layer in which the individual is defined and bound by the internal project of ultimate liberation. Nevertheless, he also notes the in-between state in which the vast majority of Tibetans continue to live more or less within a matrix of ancient embeddedness.

For the Tibetan, the presence of spirits is predicated on there being a fluid boundary between self and cosmos as well as there being a link between mental activity and materiality. The healing visualizations described in the *Precious Garland* reflect this presupposition and their efficacy is predicated on the power of the visualization. For example, meditative visualizations, i.e., mental images produced from within a state of meditative concentration, are one means of communicating with the spirit realm. For a Tibetan practitioner of *gcod*, such discourse between the visible and the invisible is possible because they are both manifestations along the same continuum of mental elaboration, one merely being more visibly apparent because it is more solid than the
other. Such a view is not without parallel in other philosophical systems. For example, Jainian epistemology understands conceptual thought to be a type of materiality and that in order to overcome materiality one must go beyond conceptuality.

In addition to philosophical parallels there are scientific parallels as well. For example, within the last ten years, western medical research has discovered a neural receptor on the surface of white blood cells that translates thoughts and feelings into material manifestations such as hormones that decrease or increase the strength of the body’s immune system.

From a Tibetan Bön /Buddhist philosophical perspective, both thoughts and feelings are considered to be conceptuality. Such mind/body connections challenge a view that conceptuality and materiality are rigidly bounded and opens up the possibility for a more fluid intercourse between these two than the modern Western imagination is accustomed.

For the native Tibetan, this same fluidity exists between the person and the visible and invisible inhabitants of his or her environment. Klein reminds us that “persons do not spring to life in one individual form only, but are embedded in a series of lives, as well as in the social, spirit, and natural networks. And life is everywhere; there are no empty forests, no wholly inanimate objects.”

From the standpoint of tantric visualizations described in the Precious Garland, when the Bön-po practitioner imagines a naked bone ornamented dakini with a curved knife in her right hand and a skull filled with blood in her left hand (PG, 42) she is projecting her thoughts into the environment. The image’s relative ‘realness’ and
potency depends on the strength of her concentration as well as the coherence and vividness of the imagined image. In the beginning stages of meditative concentration the mind may need a template or base from which to create these images. Khetsun Sangpo suggests that, for example, when one is visualizing the mandala offering, the grains of rice used or a picture can serve that purpose.\(^49\)

The gods and ghosts of the eight classes are not unlike the naked bone ornamented dakini intentionally created by means of visualization. When the gods and ghosts manifest 'out there', the practitioner is able to face them, develop a relationship with them, integrate with them, and ultimately dissolve them. She does this by recognizing (\textit{ngos bzung}) their unrecognizable (\textit{ngos bzung ma grub}) empty and clear nature. This clear and empty nature is not a real thing, i.e., it is not a proper object of ordinary dualistic awareness. (PG, 47) Like the clarity of innate awareness described in Dzogchen, it is realized within a non-dual state.

The effect of the Severance ritual depends not only on the awe-inspiring surroundings in which the ritual is practiced and the feelings aroused by the ferocious words of the ritual but it is also intended to provoke the invisible forces. Until they manifest in some discernable way, they are not part of awareness and until they are part of awareness one cannot develop a relationship with them.
Concentration

Since forms, feelings and images disturb the mind, it is important to use forms, feelings and images to bring the mind back from disturbance. Space is wonderful but form has more power... Being unable to focus on an object is a sign that you can't be with yourself. That is why there is formal training in concentration, which culminates in calm abiding (zhi gnas). We learn this in stages. Formal practice is very important so that we can control the mind. 50

The first stage of meditative concentration practice requires effort to focus the mind. This can be accomplished by various methods. One such method involves focusing the mind by focusing the eyes on an external object. One practices this until the mind becomes steady and effort is no longer required to maintain continuity of one-pointed concentration. "The consciousness with clarity, sharpness and strength is the definition of concentration. This is fundamental for any form of meditation." 51

In Bön, an important example of basic instruction on the practice of concentration is found in chapter two of the cycle of oral teachings on the experiential transmission of Zhang Zhung. This Practice of the Stages of Instruction of the Oral Transmission of Zhang Zhung (zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi khrid rim lag len pa), directs the practitioner to "collect the uncollected mind" (sems ma zin pa zin par byed pa). 52 Much like non-coherent light, 53 the mind in an ordinary state is scattered and unstable. It easily goes from one object to another. We do, of course, have at least some ability to concentrate, i.e., collect our mind and hold attention to an object of focus for extended periods of time, or we would be unable to study, learn, and accomplish tasks. However, while this ordinary level of concentration operates similar to meditative concentration, the difference between the two is much like the difference between ordinary and laser light. Ordinary light is made up of multiple, random frequency light waves that travel in all directions. When this light is directed, its intensity increases but still remains low. A
laser beam is composed of single frequency light waves. Because it is pure, directional, sharp, bright and wholly coherent the resulting beam is tremendously powerful and can cut through the hardest materials as well as vaporize small amounts of any substance. It is this type of pure, coherent, clear and sharp concentration that the practitioner seeks to develop in meditation. Further, unlike ordinary concentration, the aim of meditative concentration has nothing to do with the object on which one focuses. In this case the object is merely a support for the mind. When a certain level of concentration is attained the object is removed and one proceeds with concentration without support. Moreover, during this process of cultivating concentration, much about subjectivity is revealed.\textsuperscript{54}

The \textit{Practice of the Stages of Instruction} specifically directs the practitioner to hold (\textit{bzung}) her gaze to a white \textit{A} affixed to an indigo background. She is to do so with such a level of fixed concentration that she does not blink or allow internal thoughts and sensations of the body or external events to disturb her. This beginning stage requires considerable effort.

The aspirant continues this practice until she receives the meditative signs of accomplishment. First, she will have the blissful experience like a bee sucking nectar from a flower. The bee's attention is thoroughly fixed upon the nectar. It is being pleasurably nourished by that nectar and has no desire to stop.\textsuperscript{55} The next sign of accomplishment is the experience of one's mind streaming like water in a pipe. The water is gathered together, directed by the pipe and flowing in a continuous contained stream. The smaller the pipe the greater the force produced by the water. The final sign of accomplishment is the experience like a turtle in its shell. The practitioner is no longer conscious of the object and is completely absorbed within her own motionless and stable
mind, quite undisturbed by any internal or external distraction. This is *zhi gnas* or calm abiding.\(^5^6\)

In addition to the Oral Transmission of Zhang Zhung, a second cycle of Bön’s unique grouping of Great Completeness practices, *Instructions on A (a khrid)*\(^2^7\), describes more violent signs indicating that the mind has been concentrated to the point of entering into the central channel. For example, “when the awareness has been collected (*rig pa zin bas*),” a strong desire to weep, laugh, dance, run, sneeze, shudder or fall to the ground are said to be signs “that the gentle wind (*jams rlung*) has entered, consolidating within the central channel (*a ba*).”\(^5^8\) As the mind becomes more concentrated, force accumulates, the excess of which must be expended through emotional and physiological (in some cases, orgasmic\(^5^9\)) discharge.

This level of meditative concentration is presupposed by the *Precious Garland* and is a minimum requirement for creating the visualizations described. Since forms, feelings and images are the “language” of the mind, by creating specific visualization one uses this same language to free the mind from language itself. This is the essence of tantra. A discussion of the invisible beings of the eight classes will set the stage for an explication of the means by which the practitioner brings them into relationship and ultimately ‘dissolves’ them.

**The Eight Classes of Beings (sde brgyad)**

As indicated earlier, that there is a dimension of reality not visible to most human beings is taken for granted within Tibetan Culture. This dimension of reality influences and is influenced by visible, material reality. The Severance practitioner realizes that there is much we cannot see that, nevertheless, exists. For example, we know that there
are causes for illness that are invisible to our eye. We know they exist because of their effect, i.e., we get sick. Similarly, we cannot see wind but we can feel it. Also, we know that some people have a type of intuition that tells them, for example, that someone is following them at night even though they can’t see anyone. In other words, the eye, or even our five senses are not the only means we have of apprehending the presence of the invisible.

The Buddhist explication of perception as outlined by Gelukba Ge-shay Jam-bel sam-pel in his presentation of awareness and knowledge (*lo rig*) underscores this point. In this system, there are four types of direct perception: sense, mental, self-knowing and yogic direct perception. Each requires an uncommon empowering condition (*thun mong ma yin po'i dbag rkyen*) that, in sense direct perception, corresponds to the sense power associated with whatever sense is involved with perception. When the eye is involved with perception, its uncommon empowering condition is the eye sense power (*mig dbang*), and so forth. However, the uncommon empowering conditions are not limited to those associated with the five senses. For example, the uncommon empowering condition for yogic direct perception is the meditative stabilization (*ting ne 'dzin*), which is itself a union of calm abiding (*zhi gnas*) and special insight (*lhag mthong*).^{60}

While yogic direct perception is the mark of a very high level of spiritual practice, there are other types of perception exclusive of the five senses that occur more commonly, such as clairvoyance, a type of mental direct perception,^{61} and intuition.^{62} I am not prepared to argue for the specific type of perception involved in the practitioner’s apprehension of these largely invisible beings of the eight classes. However, I do claim
that the perception of such beings is not outside the bounds of present understanding of perception within Buddhist thought.

Many, but not all, of these largely invisible beings are grouped within what the Precious Garland terms the eight classes. These eight classes of beings are considered to be similar to humans in that they do have minds. They think as well as have emotions. While most people can’t smell them, some of them have a very keen sense of smell and can actually be nourished by smoke offerings. While they have form, it is not like material human form. In short, just as humans, the eight classes, though different in substance, do have a type of body, speech and mind.⁶³

Because these beings of the eight classes also occupy space, if one of them were to occupy the same space as a human being, this could create a dangerous or even fatal energetic disturbance for the person due to the spirit being disturbed and causing harm to the human. Sometimes a person may be throwing rocks and because of not being able to see the invisible beings, she may hit one of them. This makes the spirit angry and it retaliates, causing an accident and/or making the person ill, and so forth.

Though these beings are invisible, because the mountains and rocks to which they are often attracted are visible, the eight classes often become associated with identifiable geographical formations and sites. For example, if a btsam spirit was believed to have taken up residence on a certain mountain, gradually, because of the invisible spirit’s association with the visible mountain, local residents would come to view the mountain itself as the spirit.⁶⁴
These places are sought by the practitioner as evocative and powerful places to practice Severance. For example, the *Precious Garland* identifies an abandoned temple and an isolated cemetery for lepers as places associated with male energetic disturbances. Places that are red such as a red rock are associated with the *btsan* spirits and places that are black such as a black rock are associated with the *dbud* or demon disturbances. In general, springs, canyons, cemeteries, fierce mountains, rocks with unusual shapes, the edge of a bridge, an underground cave and the base of precariously situated rock formations, are spots where the eight classes of beings can be found. (PG, 50)

Because the majority of the eight classes of beings are more powerful than the average human, it can become important to appease them so they will use their power to help and not harm. Consequently, an intentional relationship between humans and beings of the eight classes is considered essential for health and well being in this life. It can be either in the form of direct worship and offerings to each member of the eight classes or through a relationship with a being more powerful than they are who controls them and provides protection from them. That powerful being can be a tutelary deity, guardian protector, Bodhisattva, or a human practitioner of *gcod*.65

Any human being who attempts to provoke, confront and subdue the eight classes of beings must be a careful, powerful and skilled practitioner. Once tamed, the beings actually become helpful to the *gcod pa*. (PG, 39) The practitioner comes to understand that the diseases and energetic disturbances caused by these beings have been an impetus to spiritual practice and are therefore something for which it is proper to be grateful. They become the means by which the Severance practitioner receives the supreme and ordinary signs of spiritual accomplishment. (PG, 57)
Different gcod lineages, even within Yung Drung Bön, enumerate the eight classes of beings slightly differently. In this lineage of the increasing Great Severance of Drung-mu ha-ra (drung mu gcod chen) each class is associated with a particular seed syllable. The seed syllable A is associated with the lha, YA with gnod sbyin, MA with ma mo, DU with bdud, RU with srin po, TSA with btsan, SHA with gshin rje and sometimes ya ma, and NA is associated with the klu. When speaking of the four guests, the eight classes of beings are considered to be one of the two lower guests together with the beings of the six realms. The gods (lha) and ghosts (‘dre) spoken of in the Precious Garland are general terms referring to these eight classes.

In general, there are two types of gods: those allied with the Buddhas and those affiliated with ordinary beings. The gods of the eight classes are those akin to ordinary beings. The gods allied with Buddhas are not members of the eight classes. There are also two types of ghosts, i.e., living ghosts (gson ‘dre) and dead ghosts (shi ‘dre). A living ghost is a being that is alive, looks like an ordinary being of either the animal or human realm but who is capable of disappearing and creating disturbances for other humans. Such a being can emanate as a cat, dog, insect or human and can even change its form. Dead ghosts are spirit emanations of six realm beings who have died or beings who have never had animal or human bodies.

While they are not the cause of all illnesses, these eight classes of beings are believed to be the source of some diseases (nad) and energetic disturbances (gdon). These can externally manifest, among other things, as tumors, rashes or fever. Internally they can manifest as disturbed emotions. When one of the eight classes is the cause, the illness or energetic disturbance can only be resolved by means of the appropriate ritual.
The skill of an experienced gcod pa includes the power to discern or diagnose which of the eight classes is the cause of the disease or disturbance.\textsuperscript{68} The suitable ritual is based on this diagnosis. I will describe these rituals in more detail in a later section.

From the perspective of the natural state (sems nyid), these gods and ghosts who cause diseases and energetic disturbances are intimately connected with conceptual thought. If a person does not recognize the actual nature of conceptual thought, then thought can appear to her or him as a god or ghost. Therefore, when the actual nature of conceptual thought is realized those thoughts are severed at the root and the diseases and energetic disturbances together with the gods and ghosts who caused them dissolve into that nature (sems nyid), which is free of any causes and conditions. (PG, 46) In the words of the bone ornamented naked dakini offering the perpetual feast (tshogs 'khor, ganacakra) who shoots out from the heart of the practitioner: “since beginningless samsara you have been cycling in the three realms without achieving Buddhahood. By acting on the basis of ordinary conceptual thought, your body is tormented by illness because of craving and attachment to this body.” (PG, 42)

Diseases and energetic disturbances, gods and ghosts, craving and attachment to the body and following after ordinary thoughts are inextricably linked. Following after ordinary thought gives rise to craving and attachment to the body. These thoughts manifest as gods and ghosts which cause diseases and energetic disturbances increasing craving and attachment to the body, a vicious cycle. The ultimate goal of the complete cycle of practices included in the Precious Garland is to cut the practitioner’s involuntary tendency to follow after conceptual thought, thereby automatically cutting all the others. However, because developing the skill to cut conceptual thought is a long and nuanced
process (few accomplish this in one lifetime) and because to cut any of the intermediate links in the causal chain increases the practitioners skill and disrupts the entire cycle (albeit temporarily) the *Precious Garland* outlines practices that address each link. Even a temporary disruption of the causal chain can give a measure of relief from suffering and possibly extend ones life. Naturally, if life is extended the person has more time to develop skill in practice, increasing his or her chances of cutting the root of cyclic existence.

For example, training in generosity targets craving and attachment to possessions and ultimately one’s own body. While developing generosity, the practitioner is also developing a relationship with each of the four guests. These include not only the eight classes of beings within which the disease causing gods and ghosts are included but the high guests as well, including the protector deities. It is to these beings that one makes offering and gives gifts. This generosity and these relationships with the four guests become a basis for practices specifically intended to relieve illnesses and energetic disturbances. However, included in each act of generosity and each healing visualization (each practice of compassion) is a return to the wisdom aspect of the practice, remaining within the empty and the clear. The practices described in the *Precious Garland* are much like a spider weaving a web, not proceeding in a straight line but doubling and tripling back, picking up loops of fiber at different points on the loop, creating an intricate and beautiful pattern.
Accumulation that is not accumulation – amassing merit (*tshogs sog*)

We generally understand accumulation to mean the amassing of material possessions or wealth. However, accumulation of merit is quite different. One accumulates merit for example, by giving away all one’s possessions, even one’s own life, and ultimately by giving away even the merit that one accumulates, most assuredly a paradox.

This paradox raises several questions: when the practitioner accumulates merit, what exactly is accumulated? What color is merit? What is its size, its shape? Can you taste it or touch it? Where is it stored? Can you exchange it or trade it or use it as currency in order to gain something else such as enlightenment? How is it possible to accumulate by giving? How can one give away one’s accumulated merit? What is the economic significance of accumulating and giving something that has such elusive form and materiality? These queries would not be foreign to Bataille. ⁶⁹

Within the Bön (and Buddhist) tradition there are ten perfections (Skt. *paramitās*) or merits which one accumulates, namely: generosity (*sbyin pa*), discipline (*tshul khrims*), patience (*bzod pa*), determination or power (*stobs*), concentration (*bsam gtan*), vigor or diligence (*brtson ‘grus*), aspirational prayer (*smon lam*), compassion which is method (*thabs*), wisdom (*ye shes*) and dedication. ⁷⁰ From among these ten, three are associated with wisdom and seven are associated with virtue. ⁷¹ Practicing all ten perfections is necessary for the would-be *gcod pa* and an opportunity to accumulate them all is included in this *gcod* cycle of teachings.

For example, prior to the more rigorous practices of generosity in the *Precious Garland*, the practitioner must make a commitment to practice the complete cycle of
teachings included in the text. Making and keeping such a commitment requires great discipline, another of the ten perfections. The altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings is the foundation of this practice and defines aspirational prayer. The Severance practitioner also must realize the wisdom that cuts desire and separates appearance and delusion, and so forth. The mandala offering, water offering, purifying offering, and perpetual feast are among the practices included by means of which one develops generosity, the perfection foregrounded by the *Precious Garland*.

**Developing generosity (*shyin pa*)**

It is important to note that generosity within this tradition does not refer to how much or what is given but how one gives whatever one gives. It indicates the degree of freedom from attachment one has to that which is being given. It is common to assume the more one gives the more generous he or she is. However, this may or may not be true depending on the degree to which one feels loss when giving. The *Precious Garland* instructs the person to give with a sense of openness, without a feeling of loss without feeling diminished (*phangs *sems*).  

The importance of this way of giving is highlighted from the beginning of *Precious Garland* by the mandala offering preliminary practice. The practitioner meditatively imagines giving things that do no belong to him or her, "wealth, food and whatever you find to offer in the one billion [existing] universes." (PG, 41) By practicing in this way, conjoining a sense of the illusory nature of gifts with a willingness to give them, the practitioner develops the ability to make offerings and give gifts without a feeling of loss. When she is able to do this with things that do not belong to her she is
challenged to give her own belongings and ultimately her most cherished “possession”, her precious human body.

The Bön adept Lopon Namdak illustrates the generosity of a fully qualified Severance practitioner. “If a highly accomplished gcod pa meets a starving wild animal and only the practitioner’s body can save its life, though he is willing to give his own precious body to the starving animal for food, he must decide if giving it up would be wise at that time.” If he judges it prudent to give his body as food, the yogi’s compassion for the starving animal and his freedom from craving and attachment to the body prevent him from feeling loss. However, in this context the use of the term ‘sacrifice’ in connection with the gcod body offerings highlight its resonance with ancient practices of animal and human sacrifice.

There is no question that a sacrificial element has been appropriated and placed in the service of the ‘higher’ project of ultimate liberation, what Mumford refers to as “transmutation.” (See discussion below.) “In general, giving generously as you turn the wheel of the perpetual feast of your own body together with the body of the sick person [is also] for the purpose of attaining enlightenment, the all pervasive space.” (PG, 52)

**Offering (mchod)**

Linguistically, mchod is an honorific term. The first two classes or high guests are either enlightened beings or intimately connected with enlightened beings and the honorific is used when referring to offerings made to these highly qualified ones. (PG, 42)
In many contexts *mchod*, as a noun, is a general term used for ‘offering’ or ‘puja’ or simply to indicate veneration of holy beings. As a verb it means ‘to offer’, ‘to worship’ or to indicate eating and drinking, usually as part of a ritual. When used with the Tibetan *dnar*, meaning “red,” it is translated as “red offering,” specifying the offering of meat or the sacrifice of a living being, i.e., ritual killing.

Bönpo history says that when Lord Don-pa Shen-rab, founder of Bön, brought his teachings to Tibet several thousand years ago, the actual sacrifice of living beings was common. “Shen-rab quelled the local demons and imparted instructions on the performance of rituals using offering cakes in the shapes of the sacrificial animals that led to the Tibetans abandoning animal sacrifices.” Don-pa Shen-rab found the Tibetan people to be wild and unprepared for the higher teaching of Bön’s nine vehicles. He concentrated on teaching them the four lower or shamanic vehicles, which, though equal with the higher vehicles in being grounded in compassion, emphasized present life concerns like relationship with elemental and guardian spirits, removing energetic disturbances and exorcising demons. He planted the wish that the higher teachings would be taught and come to fruition in the future.

It is significant that, according to tradition, Don-pa Shen-rab did not teach sutra, tantra and Dzogchen but taught the lower vehicles while emphasizing compassion. This indicates that transmutation of ritual killing took place in the service of compassion and not ultimate liberation *per se*. By emphasizing, in the higher vehicles, the Bodhisattva ideal, i.e., achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, compassion remains primary even when ultimate liberation becomes the goal. *In fact, what is really transmuted when Don-pa Shen-rab substitutes effigies for actual animals is compassion.*
Juxtaposing compassion with abandoning ritual killing places a narrower frame around what can be considered "compassionate." The imperative becomes, 'Killing animals and making them an offering is not compassionate. Therefore abandon ritual killing. Offering grains, dough effigies and visualizations can make the same connection with disturbed spirits.' By teaching the lower vehicles, Don-pa Shen-rab did not refute the importance or even prudence of making offerings to spirits but he did change what was offered.

The prohibition against ritual killing is an ethical imperative meant to preserve life and tame wild human beings just as the human being tries, by making offerings, to tame the unpredictable spirits. In the higher vehicles that which must be tamed is the practitioner's own mind. Only in some practices of tantra and Dzogchen by highly skilled practitioners does the clear boundary placed around compassion dissolve. For such highly realized ones, giving one's own body as a living sacrifice or even killing can be a compassionate act.

It is this suspension of the taboo on killing, apparently in the service of compassion, that signals a resonance between the ethical boundaries of shamanism and tantra. This relationship can be seen more clearly by examining the Nine Vehicles or Ways of Bön in more detail. Snellgrove points out that "[i]n classing the four lower ways as 'Bon of cause' and the five higher ways as 'Bon of effect', they were trying sincerely to relate the old ways of magic ritual to the new ways of morality and meditation." It is not until the fifth and sixth of the nine vehicles that one recognizes what is known in Buddhism as sutric teachings. The seventh and eighth are associated with tantra and the ninth comprises the teaching known as the Great Completeness (rdzogs chen).
The inclusion of four vehicles that reflect ancient shamanic practices within the same system as sutra, tantra and Dzogchen teachings is unique to Yung Drung Bön. Snellgrove quotes from his translation of sections of the *gZi brjidad*: “Fertile fields and good harvests, extent of royal power and spread of dominion, although some half (of such effects) is ordained by previous actions (viz karmic effect), the other half comes from the powerful ‘lords of the soil’ — so you must attend to the ‘lords of the soil’, the serpents and the furies.”\(^{81}\) He observes that “every Tibetan, whatever his religious order, believes this, but — to my knowledge — only the *bonpos* have formulated this belief as doctrine.”\(^{82}\) This is one reason it is justifiable to assert that images common to all four of Bön’s lower vehicles and the tantric practices of the *Precious Garland* have common roots in ancient practices that accommodated living sacrifice.\(^{83}\)

The closeness of these practices to ritual killing is illustrated by a closer look at Bön’s third causal vehicle. According to the accomplished Bön Geshe, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, a lower form of Severance practice is commonly considered to fit within this third vehicle, the Way of the Shen of Illusion or Magical Powers. This vehicle is connected with the practice of magic and includes a ritual for killing offending persons who meet proper qualifications. Just as with Bön tantric practices, when one trains in the third vehicle the practitioner must have had initiation, instruction and transmission connected with his or her tutelary deity (*yi dam*).\(^{84}\) The power for the path comes from this personal deity. One meditatively imagines the tutelary deity until the image is sharp and clear and then visualizes wisdom coming from beyond and merging with the deity. The practitioner then imagines the wisdom-imbued deity melting into herself. It is from this position that the third vehicle is practiced. The deity safeguards and insures that the
practice proceeds from a compassionate motivation. Otherwise, the motive might be selfish or the person might misunderstand the teaching and great harm done to self and others. A compassionate base from which to engage in this practice is essential.

There are ten qualifications a person must fulfill before that person can be considered a danger to the world and thereby qualify to be killed utilizing this vehicle. Tenzin Rinpoche relates that in the tantra of the result vehicle the practitioner is said to be able to "cut the body and guide the mind." However, the practitioner of this third causal vehicle does not necessarily have the power or skill to guide the mind when the body is cut. Tantra is more powerful.

This third vehicle is divided into three aspects: Veneration, Conjuration and Application. The objects of veneration are the teacher and ones fellow practitioners who take part in the same practice. Once one has total trust of the teacher one is said to have secured the path. Conjuration is the aspect of the third vehicle in which one generates the power for the application part of the ritual. The practitioner finds a fierce place, makes the torma, and collects the ritual objects and any other offerings that may be needed.

The third vehicle practitioner engages in three levels of meditative stabilization: the very truth itself, the universal manifestation, and the substantial manifestation. Tenzin Rinpoche finds it curious that the very truth itself is spoken of in this causal vehicle because it is thought of as all pervasive innate awareness and is usually not connected with any rituals but with the Great Completeness. Nevertheless, it is here and refers to the undifferentiated non-entityness that transcends conventional existence.

After the preparations are made and the place is found and the practitioner is concentrated, she manifests as a fierce deity such as Wal-sas (gbal gsas) and asks very
strongly for the power to perform the task he or she has to perform. The offerings include
the red offering: flesh, blood and bone; the white offering: yogurt, cheese and milk; and
sometimes sweet and sour offerings. The ritual instruments include daggers, human
skins, skulls, and so forth.

Having received the power to perform the ritual in conjuration, one applies the
power in the application phase of the ritual. The development of love and compassion is
very much a part of the application phase. The wrathful deity that is presiding over the
ritual arises from compassion and wisdom just as do the peaceful and blissful deities.
The complete ritual consists of calling the person's spirit into the ritual object prepared to
contain it, dissolving it, slaying it, disposing of it, making offerings, enjoying and
atonement. As mentioned earlier, Severance practice is a common example of a practice
that could be included within this vehicle. However, in gcod practice, one does not wish
to destroy a person or one's self but wishes to destroy one's craving and attachment to
oneself.

From an ethical perspective, in this third vehicle practice, contradiction and
coherence join in pairs. For example: flesh and bones are contradictory to normal
practice but the destruction of pride is coherent with practice; a ritual dagger or a hairy
skull are contradictory to practice but cutting attachment and making offerings are
coherent and so forth. There is a complex dance between the transgressive and the
ethically acceptable.

As I hope is clear by now, convincing Tibetans to abandon ritual killing has not
been an easy or completely successful undertaking. In addition to Mumford's work
already discussed, Barbara Crossette quotes Lopon Tenzin Namdak: "He added that he
still hears occasionally, though very rarely, of blood sacrifice among Bonpos and
Buddhists, who share occult rites in remote communities, often to appease a demanding
natural deity. ‘Goats or sometimes, I heard, yaks are sacrificed,’ he said. ‘This is very
rare, but they do.’”

In the Severance practice, instead of substituting ritual cakes for the ritually
slaughtered offering, the practitioner substitutes her vivid meditative imagination of
cutting up her own body and offering it to the four guests. In the Precious Garland’s first
visualization (PG, 42) giving instruction in the method of making the perpetual offering,
the practitioner’s dismembered body, skin, bone, fat and all, is placed in the skull pot and
transformed into nectar by the sacred letters, OM, A, HUM. In comparable Severance
rituals, although not in the Precious Garland, this mixture is felt to be cooked as it
changes into an elixir for the gods. Though the designation “white offering” (dkar
mchod) is not used in the Precious Garland, oral tradition so designates this transformed
nectar.” Traditionally, the white offerings are dairy products such as yogurt and cheese,
i.e., products from animals other than their flesh.

In the Precious Garland’s second instruction on visualizing offering the body,
(PG, 45) after separating the mind and body, the practitioner/dakini skins her abandoned
body and fashions the skin into a pot. She removes the heart and places it in the center of
the skin pot. The remainder of the red meat and blood is arranged around the heart
decoratively. Though not so designated in the actual text, tradition designates this as the
gcod practice’s “red offering.” The heart as primary offering garnished with raw,
bloody meat recalls the actual red offering (dmar mchod) that was practiced in Tibet
when Don-pa Shen-rab brought the Bön teachings and still practiced today as the deer
sacrifice by the Gurung shamans in Nepal. Clearly the cultural encounter between new and old practices within Tibet has a long, complex and continually emerging history.

*Gift (sbyin)*

In general, *sbyin* as a noun means gift, donation, charity, alms or generosity. As a verb it means to give, donate or bestow. It indicates a generous and charitable gift given by someone of higher rank to someone of equal or lower rank. In the *Precious Garland* it is used with *mchod* to make a distinction between offerings made to the higher guests and gifts given to the lower guests, i.e., the eight classes of beings and the beings of the six realms. (PG, 42)

In the case of the perpetual offering and gift to the four guests, the most pure part of the nectar is offered to the higher guests and the less pure is given to the lower guests. What is the relationship, if any, between the purity of the one to whom an offering or gift is made and the purity of the offering or gift? In other words, is an offering always more pure than a gift? Is the relative purity of an offering or gift dependent on the one who receives it or on the degree to which the one who offers or gives is free from craving and attachment to that which is offered or given?

When a highly realized being gives something to a being of lesser realization, that which is given is not *mchod* but is *sbyin*. Does this mean that which is given is only as pure as the one receiving it or is its purity based on the one who gives? Or is there some type of complex cause and effect dynamic here in which the giver’s level of freedom from craving and attachment to that which is given affects the purity of the gift as well as the purity of the one to whom it is being given? Conversely, is the level of purity of the one who makes an offering affected both by his or her own level of freedom from craving
and attachment to that which is offered as well as the purity of the one to whom the offering is made? In other words, perhaps one important distinction being made in the *Precious Garland* between an offering and a gift is not so much *what* is being offered and *to whom* it is being offered but *who is transformed* in the process of offering or giving. In the case of an offering it is the one who offers and in the case of the gift it is the one who receives.

The perpetual feast (*tshogs 'khor, ganacakra* -Skt.) focuses on both the transformation of the practitioner and the transformation of the beings of the eight classes and the six realms. While the enlightenment of the practitioner is clearly primary, this focus on the transformation of the lower guests keeps the practitioner’s altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment for the sake of all beings squarely in the foreground.

In the *Precious Garland* one of the gifts that is given (*sbyin*) to a suitable student is the teaching itself. (PG, 40) Interestingly, this gift is withheld, on pain of death, from those who are unsuitable. The master states, “May the angry protector goddess of the teachings suck the blood from the heart of that sinful one.” (PG, 40) An unsuitable student is one whose words are not connected to her heart, who is insincere, lazy, and who, in her being and lifestyle, contributes to the production of conceptual thoughts. A suitable student is one who is stable, has great faith, persistence, and experience practicing in solitude and one who has great compassion and confidence. (PG, 40) The teaching is such a great gift, the withholding of it from unsuitable students not only does not signal a lack of generosity, it is an obligation of the one who holds the teaching to only give it to a qualified recipient. So, the teaching is a gift that is not given indiscriminately or unwisely. As explained in more detail below, it is any giver’s
responsibility to check how and for what purpose the gift will be used. If a gift, for example a knife, is likely to be used to harm others, it should not be given. An exception to giving the teaching to a fully qualified student is giving it to a person of great faith who is ill or otherwise incapable of practicing the full range of Severance practices necessary for the fully qualified student who will become a lineage holder.

In light of the role unreciprocal expenditure plays in Bataille’s notion of sacrifice, it is interesting that the student makes an offering to the teacher and then requests the teachings after which the teacher gives the teaching. Is there any type of energetic exchange that would qualify as commerce between the student and the teacher in this process of making offering, requesting teaching and the teacher giving the teaching? What is the difference between what happens in this case and buying the teaching? Based on Lopon’s commentary, whether or not giving is commerce or virtue depends on the giver’s intention.

If you give expecting to become famous for giving or expecting to get something in return, that is not real generosity. That is more like a business transaction and is dirty generosity, not clean or pure. The best type of generosity is giving without any attachment. For example, if you go to a flower garden and visualize your own root lama’s refuge tree in front of you and you offer that flower garden to those beings, that is pure generosity. Generosity means giving without attachment and gcod helps you learn this. You say that you are giving your flesh, bone and blood, everything, to whoever needs it. You visualize this but you don’t actually die. By practicing in this way you learn the method of generosity which is to be free to give everything you have, all your belongings including your body, without attachment. Then once you have practiced and learned this, one day someone like a wolf or a lion or a tiger comes and is very much in need of your flesh for food. You discern this is, in fact, the case, and you are free to offer the animal your body. Otherwise, if you just say, “take my body and my blood” without cutting craving and attachment to your body you will never be a real gcod pa. Becoming free from craving and attachment to your body is the purpose of practicing gcod. Otherwise generosity is just talk. The authentic practice of gcod is extremely
difficult. If you don’t take the practice seriously and learn it from the beginning you are just playing like children. If the tiger takes your body forcibly and you are frightened, that is not at all the same. That would just be ordinary killing and eating and would be a waste. It is important that you have practiced and are free from attachment to your body so that you can freely give your body without fear when there is a need. Otherwise the intention is not right.89

It is important to make a distinction between losing the body through illness or violence and giving the body in a free and generous act. The human body is considered precious, difficult to obtain and essential for spiritual practice. There is so much that can be accomplished in a lifetime. Also, if one loses one’s life it is very difficult to control the next life. Consequently, persons are encouraged to value the body, maintain good health, and protect their life. If something is wrong with the body or mind, a person may wish to practice but have no support in the body. Hence it is important to care for the body and not give it up rashly or imprudently. Recognizing the value and importance of the body makes the practitioner’s choice to give her body that much more remarkable and makes the importance of freedom of choice that much more clear.

In short, just giving things is not generosity. One first has to learn how to practice properly with generosity, when and what to give and the proper way of thinking for that purpose. The proper intention is very important. However, as mentioned earlier, it is also important to know what that which is being given will be used for. Of course, it is not necessary to check how the offering will be used when making an offering to the three jewels or Buddha. You only have to check when giving material things to other persons.

One is not expert in generosity from the beginning. It is learned gradually. It is important that one starts this process of learning generosity wherever he or she is and progress from there. Ultimately, the practitioner should be able to give without feeling a
sense of loss and without expecting anything in return. That the person does not have to feel a sense of loss is the first lesson to learn about generosity. Otherwise it is not a clean offering or gift. When the practitioner is first learning generosity, it is more important that she give without a sense of loss than it is that she gives any of her actual belongings. For example, when giving flowers in the garden to the deities nothing is lost. Eventually, it becomes possible to offer something one owns without attachment or a feeling of loss. In the beginning generosity may be more a type of dedication. Lopon Namdak observes that unfortunately many people’s understanding does not progress very far from there.

The purifying offering (spong dag)

When a practitioner begins the process of becoming a gcod pa, she first searches for a suitable teacher who has realized the heart of the teaching, has compassion and the power to guide her practice. (PG, 40) If the student is not a proper recipient and/or the teacher is not a powerful master, the practice of Severance can be harmful or even fatal to both. (PG, 40) As mentioned earlier, there are tales of practitioners being sent by their teachers into the wild to practice and never returning or being found torn to pieces by wild animals.

Once the suitable teacher is matched with a suitable student, the student takes the development of generosity to a new level by making the first of three purifying offerings (spong dag) to either his teacher or to those in need. (PG, 40) He gives everything he owns, retaining nothing and places himself, essentially, and sometimes literally, naked at the feet of the teacher. The degree of freedom from craving and attachment to external appearances that is required to freely give all of one’s possessions is a necessary step
toward being free enough from craving and attachment to the body to perform the
Severance perpetual offering, the body offering.

In Tibet, the one who goes into the mountains to do spiritual practice in fearsome
and isolated places is respected and revered by his fellows. It is widely believed that
someone inevitably sees the practitioner going there and will, without doubt, regularly
bring food enough to sustain life together with other gifts. Over a period of years that
practitioner will again accumulate possessions that go beyond the daily necessities for
life. The practitioner will be asked to make the purifying offering for a second time and
then again a third time during his life as a wandering gcod pa.

This purifying offering is very difficult. Very few people are able to make it because we human beings expend a great deal of energy collecting every single piece of our belongings and we feel a need for each thing. There is a story about a magician who was quite rich. One day he looked at his reflection in the water and saw that his hair was turning gray. He thought, “Oh, now it is time for me to think of the next life. I must find a teacher and begin spiritual practice. Up to now everything I have done has been to earn wealth and property. Now I must do something for myself. How can I do this? I know nothing about spiritual practice.”

Now, in the country was a solitary yogi. The magician thought he should go to see the yogi and ask his advice about what to do. He had heard previously that if you go to see a holy man you should take an offering. So he started to look for something to take as an offering. He went to the stable to look at all his horses and he decided he needed all of them. There were no extras. Then he went to see his goatherds and he could find no extra one to offer. Then he came back to the house and looked around his property but could find nothing extra to offer. He knew he would have to offer something so he decided that the very next thing he got from someone in a business deal or whatever, he would give, because, you see, he needed everything he had. There was no extra.

_The Mandala offering_

Like practicing the ten perfections, the mandala offering is also an important
aspect of accumulating merit. As with all offerings, the more the practitioner is able to
give whatever she gives without craving or attachment to it, the more pure the offering. To whatever extent the giver gives reluctantly, either out of obligation or guilt, or expecting something in return, the offering is tainted. This is so important that it can be better not to give at all than to give reluctantly or with an improper motive. For example, on seeing a beautiful sunset the practitioner may, in that moment and with an open heart, offer that sunset to the lama, tutelary deity and dakini.\footnote{If she can give in this way, such an offering is very excellent.}

The mandala offering described in the \textit{Precious Garland} utilizes this method of giving what one does not actually own as a means of making a remarkably pure offering. From within a state of meditative concentration, the practitioner visualizes all of the world systems that presently exist, said to be \textit{stong sum} or a billion universes. By means of her imagination she searches within these universes for infinite quantities of jewels, food, wealth, property and whatever she can find, both good and bad. From within a deep state of meditative concentration and with an open heart she makes all these things an offering to the lama, tutelary deity and dakini.

The \textit{Precious Garland's} Severance mandala offering also includes meditatively imagining offering the practitioner's relatives, as well as her own body with the other things found in the billion universes. While offering one's own body and the bodies of others is not uncommon in other Bön and Buddhist mandala offerings, in the context of this \textit{gcod} practice in which generosity and freedom from craving and attachment, specifically to one's own body, is foregrounded its significance intensifies. This offering is to be made with the same open and unbiased heart as when offering a beautiful sunset. Practicing in this way the \textit{gcod pa} accumulates all ten perfections.
Water Offering (chu gtor)

_Chu gtor_ literally means to scatter water. Water offerings made to hungry ghosts are called _chu shyin_. In the _Precious Garland_ the water offering is made in conjunction with the body offering in order to satisfy the desire of the gods and ghosts. (PG, 53) In addition, after the _gcod pa_ has practiced in a wild and fearsome place and has received definite signs that the energetic disturbance has been resolved, she may make water offerings together with other offerings as a way of securing a positive, compassionate relationship with the subdued beings.

The Perpetual Feast (tshogs ‘khor, ganachakra)

The cycle of practices in the _Precious Garland_ does not proceed in a linear fashion in discrete stages. Each practice is rich and multi-dimensional, in a sense complete in itself. While the perpetual feast embodies the spirit of the complete practice, there are specific energetic aspects of separating the mind and body that are covered in minute detail after instructions have been given on performing the perpetual feast in which the practitioner must already be able to separate mind and body. Because of this, it is more helpful to think of these practices proceeding, not in a straight line, but more like a spiral in which one doubles back and amplifies some aspect that has already been practiced. _Khor_ means ‘circle’ or ‘wheel’, and in this context can be viewed as a metaphor that approximates very well the flow of this series of practices.

Literally meaning ‘wheel of accumulation,’ the _tshogs ‘khor_ (Sanskrit, _ganacakra_), in most Bön/Buddhist systems, is a feast offering consisting of a variety of foods and drinks such as grains, meats, sweets, and wine offered in abundance. The food and drink offered are the best available. These material offerings become the basis from
which the practitioner meditatively imagines an infinite number and variety of pure offerings.\textsuperscript{94} Imagination generated through ordinary thought is not sufficient to effect this offering. The practitioner must have developed the force of meditative stabilization in order to make a powerful and effective imaginatively created offering.\textsuperscript{95} The offerings are intended to satisfy the sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch of those to whom they are offered.\textsuperscript{96}

The perpetual feast is offered to the four guests. The first of the four guests are enlightened beings: lama, tutelary deity and dakini. They include the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past, present and future. The second are the two classes of guardians: protectors of the teachings (\textit{bon skyong}) and the Glorious Lord protector (\textit{dpal mgon}). These are highly qualified guests who are not always fully realized but who are connected with enlightened beings. Some protectors are associated with higher forms of realization and others with the world. Only the former are included here. For example, a local person who dies, becoming a ghost protector of the area in which he or she lived, is not included among the highly qualified guests. The third group of guests are the eight classes of beings, usually inhabitants of the spirit world to whom we owe some type of debt. The fourth group are beings of the six realms, beings for whom we have compassion such as those in the hell, animal and hungry ghost realms.

From among these four categories of beings the only ones who are actually a threat to humans are the eight classes. The two high guests are either enlightened or connected to enlightened beings. Because their activities arise from the union of compassion and wisdom, they will not cause harm. The beings of the six realms are either equal to or less powerful than the human in question, consequently, they are not an
ultimate threat. Beings of the eight classes are stronger than most humans and not necessarily connected to or controlled by enlightened beings, ones capable of causing serious harm to humans. As a result, it is the beings of the eight classes that have the power to obstruct ultimate liberation who are the focus of this Severance practice.

In the Precious Garland, the perpetual feast is included in the preliminary practices of purification, accumulating merit and receiving blessings. In this Severance, instead of the usual grains, sweets, meats and wine offered the aspirant offers her own body to the four guests. The practitioner does not literally die, rather within a state of highly developed concentration she enacts the offering via meditative visualization. As different from ordinary imagination as incandescent light is from laser light, this process of meditative visualization affectively simulates that which is visualized: the visualization is so vivid it stimulates the same quality of affect within the practitioner as would be produced if it were actually happening. By affect I am referring to an energetic stimulation or forceful dynamism, usually manifest in the form of sensations such as emotions, thoughts, bodily perceptions, and so forth. The strength of the affect produced depends on the practitioners developed power of concentration.

The practitioner meditatively imagines that a naked, bone-ornamented dakini holding a skull filled with blood and a curved knife shoots out from her heart. The dakini's nakedness signals her purity and freedom from the boundedness of thoughts. The bone ornaments symbolize different levels of wisdom as well as purity. Since this dakini is a manifestation of the practitioner's own awareness (rig pa), the body and mind are now separate.
As she turns, faces the body and speaks, it falls limp. She says, “since beginningless samsara you have been cycling in the three realms without [achieving] Buddhahood. By acting on the basis of ordinary conceptual thought, your body is tormented by illness because of craving and attachment to this body. Now, bring your body as an offering and a gift.” (PG, 42)

If the practitioner has successfully projected her awareness as the image of the dakini and has left the body like a corpse, there will be no pain perceived when the dakini chops off the head, arms and legs of the practitioners body. However, this complete separation is very difficult and requires a high level of generosity developed through much practice. The image of the dakini serves as a support for the practitioner’s awareness and is preliminary to the more advanced practice of separating the mind and body described later in the text in which she propels her awareness through the central channel and integrates directly with space.

To complete the perpetual feast the dakini fashions a hearth from the dismembered arms and legs on which she places the decapitated skull as a pot. After chopping up the remainder of the flesh and blood she heaps it into the skull pot. Blessing the mixture with the mantra ‘AH OM HUM’ she sends it forth as an offering and gift to the four guests. Having been satiated, all the high guests integrate with you as the dakini by dissolving into you. This state of integration marks the completion of the perpetual feast. (PG, 42)

_Ransom (glud) to repay debt owed_

While the practitioner makes offerings and gives gifts to each of the four guests, the ransom is specifically directed toward the eight classes of beings. This is because it is
in relationship to the eight classes that the human practitioner becomes indebted and must be reconciled. In one sense the ransom offering can be seen as “an eye for an eye” exchange in that something of equivalent value has to be given in order to repay a debt owed. Because she owes something, there is an onus placed on the practitioner and she must comply or suffer the consequences – a variety of illnesses and other obstacles to spiritual practice.

Within the Bön tradition, ransom is most often associated with the second of the four causal vehicles included in the Southern Treasure’s presentation of Nine Ways. These causal vehicles presuppose a dualistic view of reality and “contain the myths, legends, rituals and practices concerned mainly with working with energy in terms of magic for healing and prosperity.”

There are over thirty kinds of ransom in which one exchanges or gives back what one owes to the disturbing spirit. Once that spirit is satisfied by this means, the disturbance dissolves. In these rites, the ransom offered is a ‘substitute’ for a living sentient being. The ransom is frequently made from tsampa, a barley flour and butter mixture, and is offered to one or more of the eight classes of beings understood to be responsible for the particular illness or disturbance in need of ransom. Most especially, it is the life of the person being attacked that is ransomed by means of the substitute offering.

The Precious Garland is not explicitly associated with Bön’s causal vehicles but is a tantric text from the father tantra (pha rgyud) cycle of teachings allied with the result vehicles. The tantras are considered to be higher practices that aid the practitioner in cutting delusion at its root and thereby attaining liberation from cyclic existence.
However, in spite of being associated with the result vehicles, the *Precious Garland* exhorts the practitioner to give her own body, “in general, as a ransom (*glud*) for all sentient beings, in particular, for [beings who have been] your parents and more particularly, as a ransom for that ill person.” (PG, 53) This explicit reference to ‘ransom’ as a means of healing, resonates powerfully with the casual vehicles and suggests transmutation and incorporation of an earlier form of ransom that may have, at one time, stood on its own.

For example, in the second causal vehicle, the Shen of the Visible World (*snang gshen*), ransom is characterized as that which restores phenomenal existence (*snang zhi*ng *srid pa thams cad*) to order, bringing positive and negative forces into balance.

In the whole of phenomenal existence the sacrificial cakes (which serve as) items of ransom attain their objective. The thousand regions will have their hopes fulfilled. Phenomenal existence will be tranquilized in peace and happiness. The lords of the soil, the serpents, and the furies will be reconciled (*za bdag klu gnyan bshum par bya*). All disturbances will be tranquilized and joy and happiness will be produced throughout phenomenal existence. Thus living beings will enjoy benefits and happiness. Phenomenal existence is put in order.

When restoring health and order to the phenomenal world by pacifying the disturbed beings of the eight classes is the goal of ransom offerings, it is important that the offering be made from a motivational base of an altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment (*Bodhicitta*). The ransom offering itself resonates with more animistic or shamanic practices, yet this compassionate motivation connects these rituals with the practices of the Mahayana or Great Vehicle, a term used by both Bön and Buddhist traditions. However, it is equally important to note that the compassionate motivation itself, while distancing, does not wholly dissociate ransom from its shamanic roots.
The ransom offering presupposes that all actions produce certain effects in the phenomenal world and encourages mindfulness of and responsiveness to our interdependent relationship with existence. It is said to purify any negativity associated with the disturbance after which the sufferer receives whatever positive bequests those beings have to offer. In the case of the rite of ransom of the bla\textsuperscript{105} there is a concern to restore a harmonious relationship between the three aspects of a person’s mind bla, yid and sems, which can become fragmented due to energetic disturbances. The ransom can be crucial because if the mind is to be guided to an auspicious rebirth, all three aspects must be restored.

However, in the Precious Garland ransom ritual when the Severance practitioner acts as healer, that which is offered is not the effigy of the ill person made from barley flour and butter as it is in the lower vehicle. It is the body of the gcod pa that is substituted for the one who is being disturbed. While the practitioner’s body is not sacrificed in a literal sense, through the use of meditative visualization the practitioner freely gives her body as a substitute for the ill person. By doing so she seeks to pacify the member of the eight classes responsible for the energetic disturbance causing the person’s illness. When the being or beings responsible are pacified the energetic disturbance is resolved and the illness disappears.

**Healing illnesses caused by the eight classes of beings (sde brgyad)**

A notable feature of this Precious Garland’s cycle of teachings is the explicit link made between conceptual thought and disease-causing beings, as well as practices intended to heal those diseases. Conceptual thought is referred to as the “ghost of
disease” (PG, 47) meaning that conceptual thought manifests as ghosts that cause
diseases in human beings.\textsuperscript{106} These healing practices distinguish it from, for example,
Machig Labdrön’s lineage of gcod.\textsuperscript{107}

While the primary work of the gcod pa is to realize the true nature of reality by
cutting delusion at its root, her work as a healer is important for at least two reasons.
Suffering usually accompanies illness and relieving suffering is usually considered a
compassionate act. And, to the extent that the illness or energetic disturbance is an
obstacle to the person’s ultimate liberation as opposed to a base for that liberating
realization, it must be removed.

Nevertheless, like any practitioner who is motivated by an altruistic aspiration to
highest enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, the gcod pa knows that her own
realization must be first priority in order to equip her to be of maximum benefit to others.
Consequently, even though the highly qualified Severance practitioner is also a healer,
personal realization remains the primary purpose of practice. Lopon Tenzin Namdak
made this point several times as he commented on the practices in the Precious Garland,
especially the ones for healing diseases of wind, bile and phlegm. Reviewing the
transcript of our conversations, he made this point so often I began to wonder what the
unstated side of the polemic is here? If we accept Baktin’s model described via
Mumford’s work earlier, perhaps Lopon is resisting the force of the shamanic pull back
into embeddedness within the ancient matrix. Perhaps his great care to contextualize and
qualify the Severance practitioner’s activities as healer is a dynamic example of
transmutation in progress.
In order to place these healing practices within the context of other practices described in the *Precious Garland*, I will review the practices that precede it. The aspirant first does the preliminary practices, which include accumulation of merit and purifying obscurations. The perpetual offering (*tshogs 'khor, ganacakra* - Skt.) is introduced as part of these practices. The main instructions, which include the healing practices, come next.

Before the healing practices are described there are detailed instructions on the method for separating the mind and body and remaining within the unborn mind. The practitioner is taught to recognize the body of Bön (*dharmakaya*) and to conclude that her “own body, the nature of mind, and whatever mind arises as well as the outer world, beings within the world, both samsara and nirvana do not go beyond the mind. This is the recognition of thought.” (PG, 49) In other words, all existence arises from mind, including the beings of the eight classes, the energetic disturbances they cause and the illnesses that arise from these energetic disturbances. This understanding is foundational for the remaining practices.

Focusing on actual energetic disturbances come next. The practitioner first must learn to recognize what specific energetic disturbance is associated with what class of beings. Specific members of the eight classes are associated with planets and stars, i.e., upper energetic disturbances, male elemental forces and female ghosts, i.e., intermediate energetic disturbances, and serpent deities and landlords of the fearsome places, i.e., lower energetic disturbances.

The practitioner learns to recognize the invisible members of the eight classes by symptoms or landmarks characteristic of them. This is what modern medicine would call
learning the skill of diagnosis. For example, within the context of this practice, symptoms such as a cyst or wasting, or dreaming of a swollen river or a black dog are signs of male energetic disturbances. The color red is often associated with bstam spirits and black is characteristic of demonic forces, etc. (PG, 50)

After one learns to recognize the offending member of the eight classes, the gcod pa needs to know where to find it if he is to subdue the being and heal the disturbance. A place where leprous corpses are brought for sky burial is noteworthy because it is a gathering place for many if not all members of the eight classes. Some places are more specific to certain spirits, such as the red rocks associated with bstam spirits. Prior to doing healing practices for the other, the Severance practitioner goes from fearsome place to fearsome place doing refuge, Bodhicitta, prayer, offerings, cutting thoughts, the perpetual offering, separating the mind and body and sending forth the aggregates as an offering and a gift to the four guests. “The yogi practices by means of a fearsome frame of mind in fearsome places that are violent, fearsome places. This pacifies the ghosts and energetic disturbances in their own place. Diseases, energetic disturbances and thought are cut in their own place. The signs of accomplishment are given by means of the demons and obstructers. Enlightened understanding, which is the non-conceptual absolute, arises in the mental continuum. [The yogi] receives the blessings of the lama.” (PG, 51-52)

In this way the yogi heals his own diseases and energetic disturbances. For this purpose he visualizes his own flesh and blood “more and bigger than before.” (PG, 52) All possible beings are summoned to partake in this feast and in this way all diseases and
energetic disturbances are dissolved and vanish in their own place. "Understand them as your own thought and practice in a manner without thought." (PG, 52)

Once the yogi has subdued his own diseases and energetic disturbances, he turns his attention to the sick person. In a manner similar to the way in which he has previously offered his own body to the gods and ghosts, referring to the ill person he says to the gods and ghosts “Let him die, let him be sick. I give to you, the gods and ghosts of this fearsome place, whoever is here, both the energetic disturbances that are in this body and the body of this sick person, both to you without a feeling of loss. Immediately take all that you need.” (PG, 52)

Here, the text points out that this is not just a method to be used for healing. It is also for the purpose of attaining enlightenment. More and more beings are invited, filling the space in front of the gcod pa. His body is offered as a wish-fulfilling jewel for the sick person as well as all beings. It is given “in general as a ransom for all sentient beings, in particular for [beings who have been] your parents, and more particularly as a ransom for that ill person.” (PG, 53) All the gods and ghosts are satisfied and free from a desire to cause harm. Making this ransom offering and placing in motion the perpetual feast is a practice for clearing diseases, energetic disturbances and obstacles in general.

Next, the text focuses on specific diseases as object and condenses 360 diseases into three categories: wind, bile and phlegm. It describes visualization methods for clearing illnesses in these three categories. The yogi can do these practices for himself or for another person. In addition, if the ill person is able, he (the yogi) can teach the practice to the ill person, potentiating the healing.
Wind disorders result in illnesses related to cold and manifest symptoms such as a heavy-feeling body, drowsiness and an inability to concentrate. After doing all the practices outlined so far and from within a state of meditative equipoise, the practitioner imagines lama Dong-gyung Thu-chen having a deep wine colored body, three eyes and a flaming long beard, at the crown of the head. He has a cosmic flame decorated with the letter RAM in his right hand and a copper pot in his left hand from which is pouring a stream of fire into the central channel, filling it and all the channels of the sick person’s body. Following this visualization, uniting the winds (rlung kha sbyor), meditatively imagining the lama dissolving into you and then remaining without thoughts pacify the wind disorder. (PG, 53)

Diseases of bile cause a bitter taste in the mouth, jaundice and a dry mouth. The practitioner does the preparatory practices as before, going for refuge and arousing the altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment. Then she imagines Dran-pa Nam-kha (dran pa nam mkha’) with a dark blue body and three eyes, at her heart center holding a wheel of wind in his right hand and a vase of nectar in his left. Gathering all the gall bladder disease together with the fever associated with it, the wheel of wind begins to spin and draws all the disease out the ill person’s mouth. After the channels are completely clear of all disease the nectar from the vase fills all those channels after which the lama melts dissolving into her. She remains free of thoughts. All this purifies gall bladder diseases.

If diseases of fever and heat are prominent, one imagines Tshe-wang Rig-dzin (tshe dbang rig ’dzin) with a dark red body, three eyes and long straight hair at the crown of your head. In the right hand of his bone ornamented body is a turquoise vase of water
and in his left hand is an immortal wish-fulfilling tree producing a cool wisdom shade. Icy nectar water flows continually into the central channel of the ill person chilling the entire body. A frozen slush forms in all the channels and oozes out through the hair follicles, causing goose bumps and chills. From the wish-fulfilling tree, soothing nectar water flows into all the channels, rinsing all aspects of the disease out of the body. The practitioner imagines the lama dissolving into her and remains within the non-conceptual, completely dissolving the fever.

To heal diseases of phlegm, imagine Kun-du Sang-po (kun du sang po) with one face and two hands at your heart. In his right hand he holds a swastika and in his left hand is a lamp of clear wisdom. The crossed swastika spins from the right, collecting all the diseases and energetic disturbances, recognized as darkness, drawing them out through the hair follicles. Filling them with the lamp of clear wisdom’s light clears any trace of the darkness left in the channels. After forcefully uniting the two winds (rlung gnyis kha sbyor), imagine Kun-du Sang-po melting and dissolving into you, clearing the diseases associated with phlegm.

The remainder of the text describes the valid indications of arising, cutting and resolving the diseases and energetic disturbances as well as the proper attitude toward the ones causing those disorders.109 When one realizes that the diseases and disturbances themselves are employed as a means of severing delusion and appearances, the practitioner responds with gratitude and compassion toward those formerly considered to be the enemy. He then teaches them the dharma, establishing a cause for their future liberation.
Tibetan Medicine

A similar theoretical understanding of physiology undergirds Tibetan medicine and Bön Severance (tantra). However, accurately pinpointing all precursors and the degree of influence of each on Tibetan medicine and tantra is complex and beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, a brief overview of the domains involved can be instructive.

In general, just as with Severance, experts suggest that Indian Buddhism and ancient Tibetan shamanic practices are Tibetan medicine's primary influences. Fernand Meyer discerns influence from China\(^{110}\) as well and minimizes the significance of the religion of Shen-rab mi-wo,\(^{111}\) arguing that Tibetan medicine \textit{per se} emerges in the 8th century with the advent of literacy and Buddhism. The fundamental text of Tibetan Medicine is the \textit{Tantra of Secret Instructions on the Eight Branches, the Essence of the Elixir of Immortality} (\textit{bdud rtsi snying po yan lag brgyad pa bsang ba man ngag gi rgyud}),\(^{112}\) commonly known as the \textit{Four Tantras}.\(^{113}\) By contrast, Dr. Tamdin Sither Bradley,\(^{114}\) a practitioner trained in Tibetan medicine, and others claim that this medical art has been practiced for several thousand years and is influenced by ancient folk practices that predate Buddhism.\(^{115}\) The fact that included in the Tibetan medical doctor's differential diagnosis is the possibility that a disease may be caused by spirit provocation supports this claim.\(^{116}\) Only religious rituals, not medicine, can cure such diseases.

In general, Tibetan medical theory maintains that the basic precondition for health is the maintenance of balance between the three, \textit{rlung}, \textit{mkhris pa} and \textit{bad kan}, through the use of meditation, medicine, and/or rituals. Lopon Namdak confirms that \textit{rlung}, \textit{mkhris pa} and \textit{bad kan} in the \textit{Precious Garland} refer to categories associated with Tibetan medicine. There is no satisfactory English translation for these Tibetan terms,
frequently rendered as wind, bile and phlegm, respectively. *rlung*, a component of many disorders, is most closely associated with the air element and is composed of both gross and subtle vivifying energy pervading the body. It is intimately associated with the mind analogous to a blind horse (*rlung*) carrying a lame rider (the mind) and is the means by which the mind pervades the body. The most subtle aspect of *rlung* transports the most subtle mind from lifetime to lifetime, making transmigration possible.

Both the *Precious Garland* and Tibetan Medicine enumerate 360 illnesses that can be condensed into these three categories of disorders signaling the imbalance of either *rlung*, *mkhris pa* or *bad kan*. They are the essence of the three poisons, (PG. 53) traditionally known as desire, hatred and ignorance, understood to be long-term causes of disease. Short term causes of *rlung*, *mkhris pa*, and *bad kan* disorders can be the time of day and season of the year, improper diet, improper behavior in addition to spirit influence. Instead of saying, as does the *Precious Garland*, that desire, hatred and ignorance are the inner manifestation of the same delusion that arises externally as gods and ghosts, Tibetan Medicine differentiates them as “long term” and “short term” causes for disease.

According to Dr. Bradley’s account, the female spirit influences are associated with desire and attachment and result in *rlung* disorders. Male spirit influences are associated with anger and hatred and result in *mkhris-pa* disorders. Water serpents (*klu*) and landlords (*sa bdag*) are associated with ignorance and result in *bad kan* disorders. When the medical practitioner determines that an illness is caused by one of these spirits, she refers the person to a lama or tantric practitioner for divination and religious ritual.
This use of divination and ritual (ransom, for example) for healing most likely unveils a transmuted shamanic thread.\textsuperscript{117}

In summary, while describing the human condition this Severance practice seeks to address, the first paragraph of the \emph{Precious Garland} explicitly states that when the eight classes of beings become disturbed they are “aggressive toward humans [causing] infectious diseases, acute illnesses and illnesses with intense, throbbing pain.” (PG, 38) In a general sense the complete cycle of \emph{gcod} practices address the entire spectrum of diseases. However, as described earlier, the text highlights the ransom offering as specifically intended to extend the Severance practice for healing others. (PG, 53) As already noted, the ransom or substitute offering has deep roots in shamanic practice. By contrast, as in Tibetan medicine, the \emph{Precious Garland’s} visualization practices connected with \emph{rlung, mkhris-pa,} and \emph{bad kan} more then likely reflect some level of Indian Buddhist influence.

The defining marks of a Severance practitioner are freedom and generosity. Unlike renunciation, generosity signals an equanimity and openness that allows unobstructed expenditure of the natural state’s exuberant dynamism, which is the essence of universal compassion. Since universal compassion is unbounded, within that state there are no ethical boundaries, all is allowable though not necessarily prudent. This ultimate state is healing for the one who attains it and endows that person with the power to heal as well. However, this ultimate state of freedom and generosity is rarely attained. Most of us exist in varying degrees of bondage due to craving and attachment to self. As demonstrated by the action of Don-pa Shen-rab, Guru Rinpoche and many other Bön and
Buddhist adepts over the centuries, compassion’s ethical boundaries shift depending on the practitioner’s level of development.

In the next chapter I juxtapose several notions already highlighted within the thought of Georges Bataille and Drung-mu ha-ra (author of the *Precious Garland*). I hope that these two materials together will illumine a common space of exuberance and dynamism that can be entered and released not only by means of religious ritual but by transgressive art as well.
Notes to Chapter 2

1 The use of the terms ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ in this work are not intended to bear the full freight of their characterization by, for example, Mircea Eliade in his authoritative study *Shamanism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964). I make no claim that the practitioners under consideration necessarily go into trance, become possessed or are possessed by spirits. They do have highly developed meditative skills, including superior concentration and are able to relate to invisible beings. However, Per Kvaerne warns that this term is somewhat misleading in reference to the ancient Tibetan bon religion. “An important part in the rituals of this religion was played by the sacrifice of various animals… Recent research indicates that the pre-Buddhist religion was referred to not only as bon, but also as gag (both words of uncertain etymology), and that other priests were active besides the bon-po, especially a class of priests known as gshen, a word probably meaning ‘sacrifice’.” *Tibetan Bon Religion* Per Kvaerne, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 3.

I am unable to determine conclusively if the gshen referred to by Kvaerne is the same gshen applied to the author of the text translated in this work, *Precious Garland of Severance Instructions*. Dru-mu Ha-ra. In a short autobiography in the *Cycle of Severance Instructions* text, (good gdams kyi skor) Srid pa rgyal mo highly respects Dru-mu ha-ra by telling him that though he is not actually born as a member of the gshen clan, he is still most excellent gshen and rays of gshen linesage. (folios 413-14). At the very least this refers to him being a follower of Don-pa Shen-rab, priest who brought the Nine Ways of Bön to Tibet prior to Shakyamuni Buddha and credited with being able to communicate between the living and the dead, certainly an aspect of shamanic activity. “A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bön” by Samden Karmay in *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko*, Tokyo, 1975, 175ff as referenced by Anne C. Klein in “Preliminary Reflections on The Authenticity of Innate Awareness (gTan shigs gal mo rig pa'i tshad ma), *Etudes Asiatiques* XLIX-1-1993, p. 774. Dru-mu Ha-ra is also said to have wandered from town to town employing the practice of appearing to be a madman when it was beneficial, another behavior typical of persons referred to as ‘shamans.’ The esteemed Bön scholar Lopon Tenzin Namdak and his eminent pupil Geshe Tenzin Wangyal who both have spoken English for many years use the English term ‘shamanic’ when referring to the four causal vehicles.

2 Some scholars have suggested this may have been in the general vicinity of Persia. See Karmay’s *The Treasury of Good Sayings*, p. xxviii.


4 Samuel’s conflation of Nyingma Buddhism and Bön, identitifying shamanic practice with tantra in both those traditions is not sufficiently nuanced for the present study. “Clerical Buddhism is scriptural, and it relates to the text as a source of rational argument. Shamanic or Tantric (Vajrayana) Buddhism is oral…” *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993, p. 19.


6 *Machig Labdron and the Foundations of Chöd* op. cit. p. 9


The tension between the ethical domains of Mahayana Buddhism and earlier shamanic practices is evident in Anne Klein's description of a hail protection ritual performed by a Buddhist lama. "Hail Protection with Khetsun Sangpo Rinpoche" in Donald S. Lopez's Religions of Tibet in Practice. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 538-547. "Hailmaster traditions are linked with the earliest forms of Buddhism in Tibet. The rich descriptions of the spirits associated with hail, together with careful elucidation of the substances that injure them, very likely derived from the pre-Buddhist period.

Mahayana Buddhism is famous for its intention to help all beings without exception. However, because hail is understood to be brought by malevolent spirit-figures, some of whom are figures in the retinues of Bodhisattvas, it becomes the business of the hailmaster to prevent these spirits from accomplishing their goals. In doing so, sometimes he must harm them. This violation of the Mahayana spirit was obviously uncomfortable for Khetsun Sangpo, and he spoke of hail prevention as a dirty business, something he was glad to be out of." (338-9)

Anthropologist Geoffrey Samuel boldly states that "Lamas in Tibet function as shamans, and they do so through the techniques and practices of Vajrayana Buddhism." Civilized Shamans. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. p. 9. This view is resisted by many Buddhist scholars just as was the 'role' by Khetsun Sangpo.

Mumford's approach recognizes the futility of any claim that the ethnographer can escape influencing or being influenced by that which he or she is chronicling. He also recognizes that the shamanic tradition is a purely oral one without written texts. Hence, authentic source materials for the shamanic tradition are the Gurung shamans themselves, further highlighting the ethnographer's inclusion in the matrix.

This is the twelve-volume epic story of gShen rab's biography belonging to the category of Oral Transmission (snyan brgyud). It is thought to have been dictated to bLo idan snying po in the 14th century. The other two biographical presentations are the one volume mDo 'dus, thought to be 10th century or earlier and the two volume gzer mig dated 11th century. See Karmay's "A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon in Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko. No. 33, 1975, p. 177.

The Southern Treasure's Nine Vehicles include four causal, four result and Dzogchen, the ninth. They represent a comprehensive presentation of the various stages and developments of Bon and are presented as an aggregate of teachings that presuppose a certain internal coherence by virtue of their designation as 'cause' and 'result' within a single system. Since the four causal vehicles, comprised mostly of rituals, are presented within a larger context that includes the practices of sutra, tantra and the Great Completeness (rdzogs chen), this larger context must be taken into consideration when interpreting each vehicle. Nyingma's Nine Vehicles do not include the four causal vehicles.


Magic and Mystery in Tibet, op. cit. p. 165.


The value of provocation in eliciting a strong reaction from a great healer or teacher is well known in this tradition. For example, "it is thought to be more than fortunate that there was such a demon (Khyab pa) who could provoke gShen rab's reaction which otherwise would hardly have manifested themselves so strongly." "A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon." Samten G. Karmay in Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko. No 33, 1975, p. 176.


Klein reminds us that 'Shamanistic' here does not translate any Tibetan term but is used (in English) by the master teacher of Yung Drung Bon, Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

New Bon has even more affinity with Buddhism than does Yung Drung Bon. "Preliminary Reflections", op. cit. p. 772 n. 14.
The supreme and ordinary siddhas are all signs of accomplishment up to and including complete enlightenment.

This is not true for Buddhism.

In years past certain of these instruments have been made from human body parts. The drum, for example, was made by placing the tops of two skullcaps together and stretching human skin over the two caps. The horn was made from a human thighbone. The majority of gcod drums today are made from wood and animal skin. However, human skull drums can still be found.

Oral commentary by Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

The zab lam gnad kyi dgams pa drug nu gcod chen gyi gsun pod is reproduced from an ancient manuscript preserved at bSam-gling Monastery in Dol-po in Northwestern Nepal by Tsultrim Tashi. Distributor: The Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre New Thobgyal, P.O. Ochghat (Via Solan) H.P., 1973. The preface credits Gshen-gyas Lha-rje, alias Go-lde `Phangs-pa G.yung-drup ye-shes and Gnyos Nyi-ma shes-rab with authoring the volume. Lopon Namdak believes that Drung-mu Ha-ra was the recipient of the vision of sTeng rgyun mchu chen, author of this text and founder of this cycle of Severance teachings.

I give a brief synopsis of his life at the beginning of Chapter 3.

gchod gdams kyi skor. Published by Tshultrim Tashi, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Community. Dolanji and Printed at M. M. Photo-Offset Printers, Delhi, 1985 folios 413-417.

I have not yet identified the exact text that contains this biography.


In addition to “delusion,” khrol pa is variously translated as bewilderment, confusion, deception, mistake, illusion and error. Herbert Guenther maintains that ‘khrol pa is synonymous with gti mug (deeply, intensely dull) and ma rig pa (ignorance). It is “essentially an emotive factor, forming a triad with ‘dod chags and zhe sdang. While ‘dod chags and zhe sdang may be tempered by social affections and correspond to our likes and dislikes, ‘khrol pa can operate alone and without them. Although essentially emotive, ‘khrol pa is half-way between an emotion and a cognition. Its translation by ‘error’ has been rejected, because etymologically it implies deviation, unlike error ‘khrol pa does not imply culpability, since it does not suggest a guide, principle or the like to be followed. Similarly its translation by ‘delusion’ has to be rejected, because all that we divide into normal and delusive perceptions falls under the operation of ‘khrol pa.” Guenther opts for the translation ‘bewilderment.’ The Jewel Ornament of Liberation. sGam po pa. Tran. and annotated by Herbert V. Guenther. Boston: Shambhala, 1971, pp. 9-10 n.6. In his translation of the same text John Rockwell translates ‘khrol pa as confusion.


Lopon Tenzin Namdak oral commentary.


Meeting the Great Bliss Queen, op. cit.


Notes taken from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche’s (TWR) commentary on the zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi khrid rim lag len pa at a retreat, November 1997, in Houston, Texas.

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche Oral Commentary.
52 Folio 610.1 – 610.2.

53 Non-coherent light is ordinary light as opposed to coherent or laser light. Coherent light is “light of a single frequency or color in which all the components are in step with each other.” “laser” Britannica Online <http://www.eb.com:180/cig-bin/g?DocF=micro/33993.html>

54 See Anne Klein’s discussion of mindfulness and subjectivity in Meeting the Great Bliss Queen. op. cit., p. 62ff.

55 This state reminds me of Bataille’s description of the silence required to approach his state of non-knowledge – like a mother who comes upon her sleeping child and lingers passionately. See page 57, this volume.

56 This description of calm abiding is part of the Bön Great Completeness oral tradition as distinct from, for example, a sutric description in which calm abiding is paired with special insight (lho ng mthog). For a detailed explication of the latter see Jeffrey Hopkin’s translation of Geshe Gedun Lodron’s lectures at the University of Virginia in Walking Through Walls: A Presentation of Tibetan Meditation. co-eds. Anne C. Klein and Leah Zahler. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1992. Since the view (lha ba) of the Precious Garland has more affinity with the Great Completeness than with sutra, I have used the description of calm abiding from the Practice of the Stages.


58 This is my translation of the Tibetan taken from Kvaerne’s transliteration of the dogos gshri section of the man ngag khrig kyi rim pa lag len thun mchams dang bcas pa cited in part two of “Bonpo studies, the A-Khrid system of Meditation.” p. 260. (Kvaerne’s translation in The Stages of A Khrid Meditation. p. 24)

59 In Buddhist Highest Yoga Tantra it is said that one must practice with a consort in order to generate enough force for the wind to enter into the central channel. See Geshe Gyatso’s Clear Light of Bliss, London: Wisdom Publications, 1982 and Daniel Cozort’s Highest Yoga Tantra. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1986.


61 Mental direct perception is considered the bridge or link between direction perception and conceptuality. At the end of every sense direct perception there is postulated one instant of mental direct perception that induces either conceptual thought or clairvoyance, a type of knowing that transcends form, time, and space. Mind in Tibetan Buddhism. p. 18.

62 While intuition is not a Tibetan Buddhist category, it would likely be considered a lesser degree of clairvoyance.

63 Oral commentary by Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

64 See Gibson’s discussion of how this association was made between the early Tibetan bstan po and geographical sites as well. From bstan po to bstan: The Demonization of Tibetan Sacred Kingship. unpublished dissertation, Indiana University, 1991. p. 22-23.

65 One of the distinctive features of this practice in contrast to some demon-subduing rituals like, for example, Khetsun Sangpo’s ritual of protection against hail (Religions of Tibet in Practice, op. cit., pp. 538-547) is that this Bön Severance does not harm the gods and ghosts of the eight classes. The approach is complete non-resistance. The Severance practitioner offers her own body without resistance to the offending being. Her generosity is without limit. “…[T]ake whatever you want. This empty mind of mine has no place which can be harmed.” (Precious Garland, folio 48) The beings are overwhelmed and ultimately satisfied by the practitioner’s generosity, following which they become his followers. This is reminiscent of Don-pa Shen-rab’s experience with the demon, Khyab ba, who led him into Tibet. The two struggled and fought time after time without either being victorious. Finally, Khyab ba was subdued and became Shen rab’s leading disciple when he (the demon) encountered him (Shen-rab) meditating in solitude and realized what hardships he (Shen-rab) went through doing his religious practice. The Treasury of Good Sayings, op. cit., p. xx.

Contrary to Edou's designation of *lha 'dre* as a single class of "god-demon," *(Machig Labdrön and the Foundations of Chöd, op. cit., p. 63)* Lopon Tenzin Namdak understands that these two Tibetan syllables identify distinct races of beings. "From the beginning, the karmic cause for the gods is different from the karmic cause of the ghosts."

A similar discernment process is common to many rituals. For example, the lama who protects from hail also must be able to discern what being is responsible for the weather disturbance. See Klein's "Hail Protection" in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, pp. 538-547.

These type of questions are addressed in Derrida's *Given Time*, a treatment of Mauss' essay on the gift.


Lopon Tenzin Namdak commentary.

The Tibetan *sbyin pa* can be used as both a noun, verb and adverb. As a noun it is translated as "gift," as a verb it is translated as "give" and as an adverb it is translated as "generosity." *sByin pa* is one of the ten paramitas, variously translated as perfection, transcendent action or skillful means.

This is what Mumford calls "purity of intention." He does not speak of "generosity" but of "renunciation."

*Precious Garland, op. cit., folio 51.* This description of generosity is not unlike Buddhist presentations. Although making a detailed comparison is beyond the scope of this work it is interesting that Shantideva says virtually the same thing. "Without any sense of loss I shall give up my body and enjoyments as well as all my virtues of the three times for the sake of benefiting all." *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (*byang chub sems dpa' spyod pa la jug pa*). Translated by Stephen Batchelor. Dharamshala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1979, p. 24.

Wonders of the Natural Mind p. 29

Wonders of the Natural Mind. p. 39.


Zil gnon & 'joms in the *Precious Garland* are used to refer to subduing or destroying conceptual thought, the transmuted demon.


There are three enumerations of the Nine Ways of Yung Drung Bön. This division is according to the Southern Treasure. The other two are the Northern and Central Treasures. *Wonders of the Natural Mind*, p. 35.

*Nine Ways of Bon, op. cit.* p. 199.


See notes 4 and 15 above in which I distinguish the affinity and distinctiveness I am asserting between shamanism and tantra in Bön from, what I consider to be, Samuel's conflation of the two in Buddhism.

The five major *yi dam* in Bön are: *ga khod, lha rgod, gtsos mchog, gbal gsas,* and *phur pa*. The first four are unique to Bön but *phur pa* is connected with the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism.

This entire explication of the third vehicle is from notes taken during a lecture given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal at Rice University in Spring 1993 for a class at Rice University entitled "Shamans and Philosophers." He followed very closely the explication given in the *gzi brjod*. See David Snellgrove's translation in the *Nine Ways of Bon, op. cit.* pp. 99-115.


Oral commentary of Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

Oral commentary of Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak oral commentary.
When questioned on this point Lopon was unequivocal in his confidence that someone would furnish food for the hermit. He said that even today in Tibet this practice is still supported and notes that the Chinese government is not so threatened by single meditators as they are those who practice in groups.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak oral commentary

Most common is to make this offering to the three jewels, i.e., the Buddha, the sacred teaching and the spiritual community. In this tantric text the offering is made to the lama, in whom all the blessings of the Buddha are realized, the tutelary deity who is the guardian of the sacred teachings as well as those who practice and the dakini who also mediates and protects the teaching and the spiritual community.

See Khetsun Sangpo’s Tantric Practice in Nyingma, op. cit. pp. 154ff.

Tantric Practice in Nyingma, op. cit., p. 171.

Tantric Practice in Nyingma, op. cit., p. 171.

“Think that the more gross part [of the nectar is] for the five attributes of desire.” Precious Garland p. 46.

According to Lopon the five attributes of desire are the five sense objects, which refer to the lower guests. [Also see Tantric Practice in Nyingma, op. cit. p. 173 & Drung, Deu and Bön, op. cit., p. 127. In these references the five sense objects do not necessarily refer to the lower guests. Khetsun Sangpo, renowned Nyingma lama, suggests the offerings satisfy the five senses of Guru Rinpoche, a high guest.]

Oral commentary by Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

According to Lopon, rig pa in this instance refers to the practitioner’s ordinary mind and not to the state of innate awareness as typically described in the Great Completeness.

Wonders of the Natural Mind, op. cit. p. 35

Wonders of the Natural Mind, op. cit. p. 35

Drung, Deu and Bön, op. cit. p. 80

Snellgrove translates klu gnyan as “serpents and the furies.” Norbu also translates klu and gnyan as separate beings. (Drung, Deu and Bön, p. 130) He points out that the klu command the earth and underworld whereas the gnyan dominate the intermediate or atmospheric space. In the Tibetan tradition the third or sky dimension of the world of superhuman and divine forces is controlled by the lha. p. 227.

Nine Ways of Bön, op. cit. p. 94 - 95

Nine Ways of Bön, p. 97

The vital force of the mind usually translated as ‘soul’.

This is an excellent example of the brilliant way in which the shamanic “gods-and-ghosts-cause-disease” perspective has been incorporated, transmuted and reinterpreted in the service of the bounded individual’s project of ultimate liberation through severing delusion and appearance. If one is not a superior practitioner, i.e., “if you think that ghosts exist which harm this body, tell them, ‘take whatever you need. This empty mind of mine has no place which can be harmed.’” (folio 48) In other words, the Severance practitioner who is not yet free from delusion must practice in a way that potentiates and magnifies the delusion. The practitioner seeks to go beyond fear by turning up the intensity of fear without turning her face away. “Lie down and face your head to one side [toward the energetic disturbance].” (folio 51)

Unlike Edou, Janet Gyatso mentions the role of the gcod pa as healer in a list of elements that suggest gcod’s connection with shamanism. However, the bulk of her article explores in detail Buddhist gcod’s connection with the Indian Buddhist Perfection of Wisdom tradition. While undoubtedly an important project excellently done, in light of the title of her work, “The Development of the gCod Tradition,” her cursory glance toward shamanic influence leaves many questions unacknowledged and unanswered. Soundings in Tibetan Civilization, p. 322. Anthropologists such as Geoffrey Samuel and Stan Mumford tend to explore the Buddhism/shamanism connection more aggressively. However, Samuel refers to the modern Bön religion as essentially “a variant of Buddhism. It is the interplay between the shamanic and clerical aspects of Buddhism (including Bön) that provides the interpretive framework of the present book.” Civilized Shamans, op. cit., p. 12. For Samuel to define Bön exclusively in terms of Buddhism and treat them as one in regard to the issue of shamanism is not consistent with the perspective of the present work. As indicated in various ways throughout this dissertation, Bön uniquely constellates and has a
relationship with shamanic practice that is not as readily embraced in Buddhism. Also see Samuel's *Mind, Body and Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 106ff. as well as Mumford’s *Himalayan Dialogue*, op. cit.

108 According to Bön tradition, *Dran pa nam mkha’*e, an 8th century Bön sage, was father of Guru Padmasambhava, the Indian pandit who brought the Nyingma Buddhist tradition to Tibet. Externally, *Dran pa nam mkha’*e embraced the new Buddhist religion but in private he maintained allegiance to Bön and hid important texts in order to preserve the teaching during the subsequent persecution of Bön. There was a Bön revival in the 10th century precipitated by the discovery of some of these important textual treasures. *The Treasury of Good Sayings*, op cit. p. xiii. Also see Per Kvaerne’s article, “Bön Rescues Dharma” in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*. Ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 98-102.

109 These valid indicators of arising (*slongs tshad*), cutting (*gdod tshad*), and resolution (*tshar tshad*), discussed in folios 55 and following, are virtually identical to the process Don-pa Shen-rab is said to have gone through as he subdued the demon, *Khyab pa*. This demon instructed his followers to steal *gShen rab*’s seven horses and hide them in Tibet. In order to reclaim his horses, *gShen rab* followed the demons into Tibet, struggling with them and teaching the four causal vehicles to Tibetans as he went along. These provocative actions on the part of the demons correspond to valid indicators of arising. At one point *Khyab pa* pretended to be subdued and to become *gShen rab*’s pupil. However, intending no good *Khyab pa* burns *gShen rab*’s books. Pretending to be subdued and revealing himself to have not been are valid indicators of cutting. *Khyab pa* coming back, finding *gShen rab* practicing meditation, becoming overwhelmed by the hardships of his spiritual practice, breaking down and truly becoming one of his leading disciples corresponds to the *gdod pa*’s valid indicators of resolution. This is further evidence of interpenetration between the *gdod* of the *Precious Garland* and the four causal vehicles. (The story of *gShen rab* is found in Karmay’s *The Treasury of Good Sayings*. London: Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. xix-xx.)


111 “The Medical Paintings of Tibet”, op. cit., p. 3.


113 This has been translated by Jampha Kelsang and annotated by Dr. Yeshi Dhonden and is available from Snow Lion Publications as *Ambrosia Heart Tantra: The Secret Oral Teachings on the Eight Branches of the Science of Healing*.

114 World Wide Web, The Tara College of Tibetan Medicine, “Introduction to Tibetan Medicine.”


116 *Drung, Deu and Bön*, op. cit. p. 142.

117 Norbu notes that divination and medicine, among others, are dealt with in the first causal vehicle, the Way of the Shen of Prediction (*phywa gshen theg pa*), explicated in the *Zijid Drung, Deu and Bön*, op. cit., p. 38.
3. The Mad Hatter’s Tea Party

Introduction

To juxtapose the work of Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra is already to do violence to both. To have so carefully contextualized each only to rip them from that context is itself transgressive. But, as suggested in the foregoing analysis, a self-conscious act of transgression can be a catalyst for transformation. To even refer to the one who composed the Precious Garland as an author with the same status as an author within Bataille’s culture is misleading. Unlike Bataille, Drung-mu Ha-ra is not only an individual but is also the transmission vessel for a teaching that is understood to come from the very heart of the body of Bön, source of all quintessential instruction. (PG, 38) As already noted, Bataille’s work, however one characterizes it, is not ‘instruction.’

Drung-mu Ha-ra is not considered to be an original thinker although he is regarded as a highly realized being whose lived existence justifies his compositions. A short autobiography in the Cycle of Severance Instructions (gcod gdam să nge bskyor) details his exceptional gifts. At the age of six he knew automatically how to read and do calculations. At age nine the real Dong-gyung Thu-chen appeared to him and gave him transmission and initiations for the four causal vehicles, the Precious Garland and many other gcod as well as sutra, tantra and Dzogchen teachings. He kept them secret until he was sixteen. Between ages sixteen and nineteen he was a nomadic beggar, practicing gcod in solitude and wandering from village to village doing causal vehicle rituals for households in need. Sometimes he practiced with the method of pretending to be a
madman if this was needed or convenient. At age twenty-three the Queen of Existence
(*srid pa rgyal mo*) came in person to him, authorized and empowered him to teach and
write down the full range of teachings he had received from Dong-gyung Thu-chen.¹

Even his name, Drung-mu Ha-ra, is intimately connected with the tradition within
which he was empowered. Lopon Tenzin Namdak identifies ‘*drung mu*’ as Zhang Zhung
language² for the Tibetan ‘*g.yung drung*’, meaning ‘unceasing unchanging,’ the name for
none other than the Bön lineage itself. The Zhang Zhung ‘*ha ra*’ means *ye shes* in
Tibetan and translated means ‘primordial wisdom.’ When referring to Drung-mu Ha-ra, I
indicate not just the individual who composed the *Precious Garland* but in a larger sense
am invoking an entire tradition.

I do not claim that Bataille was an accomplished student of Buddhism or even
Hinduism. It would certainly be a mistake to uncritically map the syncretistic Hinduism
of Vivekananda, whom Bataille read, onto Hindu tantra proper or even Buddhist tantra.
And it would be an even bigger mistake to equate any of these with Father tantra from the
Bön tradition to which the *Precious Garland* belongs. I will make no effort to
systematically trace all the Hindu and Buddhist sources that have influenced Bataille
since to do so would be a project unto itself, though not unprofitable. It is also not my
purpose to demonstrate that certain of his notions are grounded in any tradition other than
the western philosophical/psychoanalytic/sociological tradition in which he was nurtured;
though I find this possibility intriguing. I am particularly interested in Bataille for four
reasons: the major role he assigns to affective states of fear, disgust and horror in
supplying the force for liberating transformation, his use of images (including those
created via fiction) to stimulate these affective states, his location of this process within
art and the general economy as opposed to religion per se, and the ghostly intimation of compassion discernable in his work. My hope is that this rendezvous between Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra will affirm the importance of the transgressive for human existence and help identify its subterranean movement within contemporary culture.

Being the preeminent heterodox boundary-croser, Bataille was well known for his interest in ancient religious practices as well as philosophical thought. He was implicated by Roger Cailllois of not merely being interested in shamanism but of actually wanting to be a shaman, by Pierre Klossowski of being a Catholic,³ and by Sartre of putting forth a ‘new mysticism.’ Posthumously, Maurice Blanchot refused to characterize him as “...a man who went into ecstasy, engaged in irreligion, praised debauchery, replaced Christianity with Nietzscheanism and Nietzscheanism with Hinduism, after having hung around surrealism...”⁴ because to do so would make a spectacle of thought and create a fictional character without accurately characterizing the person Blanchot had called friend for more than twenty-five years. Yet, even in Blanchot’s refusal, Bataille is so characterized. In the final analysis, perhaps Bataille was doing what most of us do – attempting to come to terms with existence as it was unfolding in and to him as an existent.

In the spirit of Alice in Wonderland’s Mad Hatter, I have invited both Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra to a topsy-turvy tea party. Without doubt my guests prefer different types of tea. Drung-mu Ha-ra has a taste for the rough, full-bodied flavor of hot buttered tea while Bataille’s ‘tea’ may actually be effervescent champagne. Although aware that appropriation and syncretism are ever-present risks, I am, at times, unable to resist the temptation to look at specific notions of Bataille alongside similar operations described in
the *Precious Garland* in order to explore the subtle, different and sometimes similar flavors of each drink. I am most tempted to map one work onto the other when noting the sacrificial strategy employed by each to subvert mental activity. With the pitfalls of juxtaposing such different materials clearly in mind, I hasten to take the plunge.

**Dramatization, Visualization and Ghosts**

As explained earlier, for Bataille dramatization is activity that exceeds what one naturally feels and that penetrates into the sacred. The exaggerated affect is induced either by images or by an act of will and sometimes both. (IE, 13) For Drung-mu Ha-ra, creating mental images within consciousness that are imbued with enough force to effect transformation requires much disciplined practice. Of course there are fortunate persons who have had little or no instruction or training for whom advanced meditative states occur spontaneously. The Bön tradition understands that these persons must have received instruction and perfected the practice in a former life and the spontaneous manifestation is, in effect, recovery of earlier development. Or alternatively from a Dzogchen perspective, the only obstacle to every person having a spontaneous manifestation of the primordially pure and spontaneously perfected nature of mind (*sems nyid*) is craving and attachment to thoughts. If a person has made substantial progress in overcoming this gasping in previous lives, he may spontaneously manifest mind nature in this life with no apparent effort in practice and sometimes without a clear knowledge of Buddhist tenets or practices.⁵

As a young man, Bataille manifested spontaneously what he and others have characterized as a mystical experience. This experience together with others factors (such as the deaths of loved ones, reading Nietzsche’s philosophy and so forth)
apparently stimulated his interest in ecstatic states, ways to elicit such states, and the role of such states in the history of society in general and of individuals in particular. Having abandoned Roman Catholicism as a youth, he rejected any notion of salvation because it shielded the aspirant from anguish experienced when one dangles over the abyss of non-knowledge resisting the temptation to recoil from the extreme limit by ‘being saved.’ He also believed, with Nietzsche, that Christianity had become domesticated, that it had cast out the Dionysian tragic leaving it anemic, like Nietzsche’s ‘pale and sickly spider.’

While Catholicism, Surrealism, Hinduism, Buddhism, shamanism, sociology, economics, Freud, Hegel and Nietzsche significantly influenced Bataille, none provided an adequate or sufficient frame for his experience. He had little patience for the methods of others but learning from many disciplines, he arrived at a way of achieving transcendence that is uniquely his own. He writes:

I’m going to tell you how I arrived at an ecstasy of such intensity. On the wall of appearance I threw images of explosion and of being lacerated—ripped to pieces. First I had to summon up the greatest possible silence, and I got so as to be able to do this pretty much at will. In this boring silence, I evoked every possible way there was of my being ripped to pieces. Obscene, ridiculous, and deadly thoughts came rushing out one after the other. I thought of a volcano’s depths, war, and my own death. It wasn’t possible any more to doubt that ecstasy dispenses with an idea of God.

Bataille’s meditative technique is reminiscent of the method described in St. Ignatius’ *Exercises*, to which he (Bataille) explicitly links his notion of ‘dramatization.’

(IE, 13-14) The four-week cycle of exercises occurred spontaneously to Ignatius while he was withdrawn, meditating in a cave. These experiences organized themselves around the sinful condition of the exercitant (First Week) and the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (Second, Third and Fourth Weeks). Bataille’s images resonate most with Ignatius’ weeks on sin (First) and death (Third). St. Ignatius exhorts the exercitant to use
the imagination to create images of the objects of one’s contemplation such as the place, characters and so forth, and to use the will to project oneself into the scene. \textsuperscript{10} 

However, no matter how exemplary St. Ignatius’ method is of Bataille’s ‘drama’, the Exercises were conceived and are intended to be taught and practiced within the doctrinal framework and orthodox narrative of the Catholic Church. When speaking of the exercitant’s understanding of his or her experiences while doing the Exercises St. Ignatius exhorts: “If an orthodox construction cannot be put on a proposition,\textsuperscript{11} the one who made it should be asked how he understands it. If he is in error, he should be corrected with all kindness. If this does not suffice, all appropriate means should be used to bring him to a correct interpretation, and so defend the proposition from error.”\textsuperscript{12} In other words, Ignatius was careful to interpret meditative experience in a way that did not conflict with orthodoxy.

Bataille, on the contrary, was committed to subverting all knowledge, especially orthodoxy. He insists that one not interpret experience, that experience is its own authority and not for the purpose of revelation. In other words, experience is an end in itself and not a means to an end. One finds oneself not only in a state of non-knowledge (\textit{non savoir}), but because conceptual operations are suspended, one does not extrapolate understanding from the experience.

However, in seeming contradiction, Bataille’s theories of religion, the general economy and eroticism serve as an interpretive frame facilitating one’s understanding of certain laws governing human existence. And it is based on one’s acceptance of his theories that one would abandon oneself to the type of experiences Bataille describes as a laudable negative project, i.e., pursuing the extreme limit of the possible.
Just as with St. Ignatius' exercises, there are tenets and narrative that guide interpretation of and mold the aspirant's experience within the Bön tradition as well. The *Precious Garland* was composed and practiced within a community organized around common beliefs and practices. They guide and mold experience and, according to the teachings of the highest of the Nine Vehicles, Dzogchen, lead to liberation from those very beliefs and practices as well as to ultimate liberation from cyclic existence.

For Bataille, anguish, eroticism and ecstasy provide the force necessary for the contestation of received limits and notions. For Drung-mu Ha-ra, the transforming power of the Severance ritual comes from potentiating, within a state of meditative concentration, the terror, disgust and sickness resulting from attack by the eight classes of beings. The actions taken to evoke these affective states Bataille would call 'drama' and Drung-mu Ha-ra calls 'practice.' The specific type of practice that elicits the powerful affective states of terror, disgust and so forth, is tantra and consists of using meditatively produced visualizations to elicit the desired affect. As before, I am using 'affect' to indicate an emotive force that pierces and/or transforms and/or otherwise changes that on which it is brought to bear.

Drung-mu Ha-ra's method of producing these visualizations is grounded in a system that gives very specific instructions for practice – the type of instructions Bataille disdains as 'recipes' in yoga. No stranger to disciplines, the suitable student for practicing the Severance of the *Precious Garland* is not a beginner. Already stable in great faith and judged by his teacher to have an aptitude for the rough path, he must be persistent and have settled any doubt he may have had about the Bön tantric view. Respect for his teacher is vital but he must have enough self-confidence and courage to
practice alone for extended periods of time. He must have developed compassion, have become skilled in practice free of thoughts and have the ability to keep the teaching secret. (PG, 40) The suitable student must be able and willing to devote him or herself single-mindedly to the practice. Students who meet these rigorous qualifications are rare, even in the 14th century. A Severance practitioner qualified to teach may have had only one or two suitable students in an entire lifetime. Even when judged qualified, the student must know that the 'short-cut' path is dangerous and threat of death ever present, potentiating the affective force of the practice.

Because he didn't have an affinity for exact procedures, the indications Bataille gives regarding the inner disposition of his mind are sparse, making it very difficult to compare in detail the specifics of his meditative technique with the Severance practice. However, in the passage from Guilty quoted earlier, he speaks of silencing the mind, something he practiced until he could accomplish it readily. By a quiet mind does Bataille mean a state similar to Drung-mu Ha-ra's description of placing the mind at rest? (PG, 47) Is his reference to the silence of a mother passionately watching her child sleep comparable the Bön practice of concentration in which the practitioner relates to the AH as a bee sucking nectar from a flower? Bataille paints with such a broad stroke here it is difficult to characterize with certainty the dimensions of quiet he indicates.

By contrast, Drung-mu Ha-ra's strokes are very finely detailed and clear. He refers not just to a quiet mind but to a state of equanimity in which one is free from craving or attachment to both the body and mind. (PG, 48) There is no explicit indication in Bataille of a state in which there is no attraction or repulsion, although his non-conceptual state is also a non-dual state within which, by definition, one would be free of
the type of attraction and repulsion characteristic of subject/object interaction. However, Bataille’s quiet mind has not yet reached this non-conceptual, non-dual state. He requires the force of revolting and violent images to reach that extreme state beyond the limit of knowledge and conceptuality. If the Severance practitioner was able to remain in the unfabricated natural state of innate awareness in unbroken continuity there would be no need for further practice with visualizations either. Drung-mu Ha-ra acknowledges this when he declares that:

While remaining in the unfabricated state like that, [the mind] does not stay (bsdad) in the place of rest. At the time movement proliferates (‘gyu byed ‘phro ba) [within the mind], observe from where does that consciousness arise, to where does it go? It is unrecognizable, empty. Although it is merely empty, it has not gone into empty nothingness. Remain in clarity that is unrecognizable. From where does that ghost of disease, conceptual thought, arise? By looking for where it abides and the searcher, you remain free from grasping in the empty and clear, which is not an established thing. (PG, 47)

Since the mind does not stay in the place of rest Drung-mu Ha-ra recognizes the need to have alternative approaches for overcoming holding the body dear. He says if you cannot overcome holding the body dear by remaining in the natural state and examining the arising, abiding and ceasing of thought then bring to mind a corpse you have seen previously. Imagine it “filled with a substance which is very dirty, disgusting, fearful and rotting. Thereby understand, ‘even my own body is a cause which is like that and no one [is worthy of] craving.’” (PG, 44)

In a similar move, after Bataille had quieted his mind, echoing St. Ignatius’ method, he imaginatively projected within his still mind violent images such as himself being torn to bits, erupting volcanoes, explosions or his own death. One favorite image with which he meditated that had a decisive impact on him was of a Chinese man being tortured to death. His psychoanalyst Adrien Borel had given him several devastating
photographs, taken in 1905, of this young man being dismembered while alive and conscious. This type of torture, called the ‘hundred pieces’ (cent morceaux), was evidently not uncommon among the Chinese. This image is remarkably similar to images suggested in the Severance ritual of the perpetual feast offering in which one visualizes her own body being chopped into pieces. Bataille tells us that he does not look at these images for pleasure but “in order to ruin in me that which is opposed to ruin” (pour ruiner en moi ce qui s’oppose à la ruine).

What does Bataille mean by ‘ruining in himself that which is opposed to ruin?’ Opposition to ruin in him most likely refers to an ethical proscription against breaking taboos. As in sacrifice, self-consciously transgressing taboos stimulated an affect that induced within him a non-dual state of ecstasy. Both the French and English word for ecstasy comes from the Greek ex stasis meaning ‘standing outside’ of one’s ordinary consciousness. In an ecstatic state free of subject and object, individuality and a sense of ‘self’ give way to a ‘disintoxicated’ state of void continuity in which there is nothing to know and no one to know it. Bataille’s appropriation of repulsion when viewing these images of a living person being severed into one hundred pieces for the purpose of transcending himself bears a remarkable resemblance to the spirit if not the letter of the Severance ritual. I find it astounding that these two from such different times and cultures came to such a remarkably similar meditative operation.

Bataille’s transgressive novels also perform an operation parallel to his ‘meditation.’ Using words to stimulate the reader’s mind, he creates images that contest and subvert received notions such as the existence of God, leaving the reader vulnerable, dangling over the abyss of non-knowledge. Bataille was a serious reader of the Marquis
de Sade and felt if reading de Sade did not scandalize the reader, that person had not understood him. The same is true for Bataille. For example, in his novel *Madame Edwarda* discussed earlier, having made the association between the prostitute Edwarda and God, Bataille continues to do violence to the reader’s received notion of God as, at the novel’s climax, she (God) and the taxi driver copulate in the back seat of the driver’s cab – quite scandalous for most God-fearing folk. Yukio Mishima, a Japanese novelist and political activist greatly influenced by Bataille, observes that in *Madame Edwarda* the reader through the narrator catches a glimpse “of the darkest abyss of human experience, at the same times as that of the pure and clear, twilight domain which arises from there.”17 Thus confronted, the reader who will abandon herself to Bataille’s literary sacrificial operation finds herself plunged into an experience of non-knowledge.

**Real vs. Mental Images**

Both Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra presuppose that mental images of sacrifice can substitute for the ‘real thing.’ Bataille assumes that transgressive dramatization projected into his silenced mind and at work in his novels can substitute for the dramatization of an actual sacrifice and that both can elicit an ecstatic state, penetrate the sacred and subvert knowledge. He associates this ecstatic state with certain religious mystical states. Similarly, Drung-mu Ha-ra is within the tradition of Don-pa Shen-rab who, as explained earlier, advocated the substitution of flour effigies for actual sacrifice when he brought the Four Causal Vehicles of the Nine Ways of Bön to Tibet. Drung-mu Ha-ra’s tantric text instructs the practitioner to think (*bsam*), remember, and meditatively imagine (*sgoms*) disgusting images of, for example, putrid, decomposing corpses, as a substitute
for seeing an actual corpse. (PG, 47) Within the context of the Severance ritual, this image, as would viewing an actual corpse, increases the force and focus of consciousness, neutralizes clinging and grasping to the body giving way to a non-dual state of no thought.

There is debate among Bön/Buddhist tantric adepts about the relative power of ‘real’ versus ‘imagined’ but no disagreement of which I am aware that mental images can be substituted. For example, is practice with a real consort more powerful than practice with a visualized consort? For persons with equivalent levels of skill in practice, the mental image created within a state of meditative concentration is generally considered to elicit less force than supplied by a meditative experience involving a real consort.18

Within Bön, what determines the relative efficacy of real versus mental images? As noted earlier, Tibetans view the space in which beings live and relate in a vastly different way from, for example, my own view as someone who was born and nurtured in the United States. Drung-mu Ha-ra assumes that appearances of all kinds are a type of ‘magical display’ that manifest as by-products of mental activity. These include the full spectrum of appearances from the external world and my own body to the faintest dream image appearing to my consciousness as well as all types of appearances in between, including the gods and ghosts of the eight classes of beings. The external world is no more real than a dream. Likewise, the external world is real in the same way a dream is real in that neither has an essence or substantial existence. Both are wispy, fluid and mutable. The same is true for the eight classes of beings. We become deluded when we put all these dimensions of existence in different categories of reality instead of seeing them each existing under the same conditions.
It is true that human perception of these different dimensions of existence varies. For the Tibetan Severance practitioner, it is easier to understand that dreams are not substantial than it is to realize that gods and ghosts have no essence. Similarly, it is easier to understand that gods and ghosts have no essence than it is to realize that her own mind imbues the external world with ‘realness.’ All of this is easier to understand than it is to realize that her body’s existence is not independent of her thoughts.

I surmise that for Drung-mu Ha-ra, it is because mental images that appear to the mind and external appearances are considered to be of a piece, the one merely being a more solid appearance than the other, that ‘imagination’ and ‘reality’ can stimulate the same affective force. However, this does not mean that from a practical standpoint there are no distinctions or that both are equally efficacious.

It is important to note that the understanding and manipulation of appearances within the Precious Garland is not as simple as I might have indicated to this point. For example, there are different types of mistaken appearances. One can mistake a rope for a snake in addition to mistakenly believing that both the rope and the snake posses an essence. It is correct that the rope is not a snake and, conventionally, it is important to make this distinction because if the snake is poisonous and bites you it can kill you. A rope cannot bite you and poses no danger unless someone is about to put it around your neck! However, it is also correct that if one has a highly developed meditative skill and understands that appearances do not go beyond ones own thought, the snake would do no more harm to a person than a rope.

The level of mindfulness and concentration the aspirant has developed is fundamental to her ability to practice Severance and in this way overcome mistaken
appearances. Tantric training and practice, the cycle of teachings to which Severance belongs, moves the practitioner from less mindfulness to more mindfulness to a state of mindlessness. She moves from a limited, shadowy awareness to an awareness that is expansive and clear and from a scattered consciousness to a consciousness that is focused and sharp and then to one in which there is no object and no focus. The practitioner, by exerting effort in practice, moves from less stability to more stability on to a relaxed looseness and from a compassion that is specific and personal to one that is equanimous and universal. The practitioner moves from a mistaken understanding of all appearances to understanding that appearances are not other than one’s own mind. When the Severance practitioner ‘gets it’ that absolutely all appearances are manifestations of thought, she is able to go beyond thought, resting relaxed and loose within a non-dual state free of subject and object. Make no mistake about it, there is nothing in Bataille that compares to this systematic and clear process of mind training and I am not suggesting otherwise. I can’t help but wonder if Bataille had been born in proximity to a qualified teacher of *gcod* and had heard and understood the teaching, would it have resonated powerfully with his own untrained and raw inclinations?

Drung-mu Ha-ra knew that the mistaken view of appearances occurs naturally, requiring no extraordinary ignorance or delusion. The mind is naturally wild, attention naturally following after thoughts, which results in delusion and ignorance. This wild mind must be tamed in order for delusion to be overcome. It would be interesting to know how Bataille would have engaged the mind training process, i.e., the taming. Since he felt that religion domesticated the tragic by taming the wild and exuberant surge of the sacred, how would he have viewed this ‘mind taming’ process? As mentioned earlier, his
critique of asceticism makes clear his disdain for at least that level of ‘taming’ when he
affirms that the journey to the extreme limit of the possible requires the wildness and
exuberant force of a ‘horse that has never been mounted.’ On the other hand, there can
be no question that Bataille sought ways to mitigate the destructive aspect of that
powerful, unchecked surge of the sacred. In light of the meditative operation he devised
on his own, perhaps in the Severance ritual he would have found an acceptable process of
domestication that tamed but did not deny or destroy the force of the tragic, bringing that
force to bear on his ‘negative project’.

In Drung-mu Ha-ra’s tradition, once the mind has been honed and tamed it can
produce, at will, visualizations that appear as substantial as the external world. Some
yogis are said to have produced visualizations that could be seen by persons with
ordinary consciousness. Tradition also understands that sufficiently strong devotion of
the faithful can cause a particular Buddha manifestation to materially appear. In this
instance devotion can be understood as a communal concentration practice in the sense
that it implies collective mental activity brought to bear in a focused and concentrated
way.

Tantric practice embraces a training of the mind that increases the potency of
mental processes in order to utilize these processes to subvert certain kinds of mental
activity, ultimately freeing the practitioner from all mental operations. For example, in
the Precious Garland’s red offering, the practitioner meditatively separates her mind and
body by imagining her awareness in the form of a dakini and her body as a corpse. One’s
own consciousness, imaged as a dakini, becomes the sacrificial agent and one’s body
becomes the sacrifice. In the form of the dakini you now chop off the head and limbs of
your own body, fashioning a hearth. Stripping the skin from the body you arrange it on the hearth as a pot. The bloody heart is placed in the center of the skin pot and the remaining flesh and blood arranged around the heart, as one would arrange a party tray. Repeatedly exposing oneself to this image of your own bloody, dismembered body gradually subverts the practitioner’s belief that identity is in any way wedded to your body. As this belief erodes, craving and grasping to the body dissolves.

You as the dakini sweeten the flesh and blood with mantra (syllables) and make it an offering and gift to the four guests.\(^{20}\) These four guests constitute every possible mind-imbued elaboration. Once these four guests receive the offering and gift, the dakini (you) dissolves into light and the practitioner remains in a state beyond elaboration (\(spros bral\)) free of all mental constructs. By offering one's own flesh and blood to be eaten by this assembly of mind manifestations the practitioner establishes continuity with them, going beyond subject and object. Bataille hoped both his meditation with horrific images and transgressive novels (described earlier) would perform a similar dramatic and subversive operation.

**The Real and Imaged Body**

In *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* Catherine Bell reminds us that in the last decade a number of academic disciplines have focused on the ‘body.’ “The reasons for this perspective may involve the development and interaction of several lines of thought: the rich tradition of anthropological studies of the body; the critique of traditional objectivism and its ‘mentalist’ or ‘mind-centered’ notions of knowledge; and the impact of feminist and gender studies, which, in some circles, have inspired a new ‘erotics’ of
interpretive practice." Early studies by Durkheim and Mauss, both influential for Bataille, recognized the body as a social construct "in the image of society and a microcosm of the universe." More recent formulations of, for example, Richard Rorty Mark Johnson, and Deleuze and Guattari, counter the mind-body, individual-society, dualities with assertions of embodied minds and socially constructed and constituted persons. Julia Kristeva, herself influenced by Bataille's work, with other feminists such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gerber have "challenged traditional methods to focus on 'woman's lived experience' at the center of which is 'the Body.'"

Edith Wyschogrod argues that the ascetic, while forcing pain and pleasure into meaning constellations, is an artist whose medium, the body, has the capacity for either purity or putrefaction, demonstrating a signification that transcends the body itself. In Saints and Postmodernism, following Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, she describes the way in which the body can be utilized as a locus of discourse that is a generality. This connection with lived experience through the body preserves the complexity of the particular while introducing what she calls "carnal generality."

"Levinas and Merleau-Ponty agree that the psycho-physiological primordium that is the incarnate subject is a primordial expression of generality." The move from a body to the body as carnal generality is constituted by the power of the self to inhabit the body of the Other. Language is the 'magic machine' which effects this mobility, makes carnal generality possible, and is its expression. Together, another and I form an ensemble of significations that is traversed by and expresses meaning...

The blurring of the distinction between self and Other is bound up with another relation, that of visible and invisible. The elements of this dyad are inseparable from the start and constitute the field -- a primordium of sensibility prior to the subject-object distinction -- where carnal generality arises. The difference between perceiver and perceived, subject
and other, loosens and shifts so that the body sensing and the body sensed, looking and looked at, overlap. Body and world intersect in a 'chiasmatic' crossing over.²⁵

This concept of ‘carnal generality’ is a middle way between a feminist articulation of essentialism²⁶ and disembodied types or universals. Regarding the body as a locus of discourse that is a generality but that maintains its connection to particularity via its prior association with specific bodies in the mind of the reader further exposes the permeable and fluid boundary between ‘real’ and ‘imagined.’ This fluidity allows an exploration of the full range of ‘body’ in Drung-mu Ha-ra and Bataille.

Bön speaks of three Buddha bodies (sku): the body of Bön (bon sku, dharmakaya), the complete enjoyment body (longs spyod rdzogs sku, sambogakaya) and the emanation body (sprul ba'i sku, nirmanakaya). These are not bodies in the sense that they are necessarily solid, flesh and blood people but can be given both a general and a particular nuance. In one sense, these three bodies are understood as the three pure dimensions of a Buddha. For example, the venerable teacher who brought the Bön teachings to Tibet, Don-pa Shen-rab, is considered to be an emanation body Buddha, an historical embodiment of the pure Buddha dimension (dharmakaya). By contrast, the complete enjoyment manifestation of the Buddha is not visible in a conventional sense. It is designated as Shen-la Od-gar (shen la 'od gar) who possesses a body of light with elaborated appearances. The body of Bön, imaged as Kun-tu Sang-po, is the source from which all appearances, both visible emanation body and invisible complete enjoyment bodies arise and into which they dissolve. It is unelaborated, naked self-appearance.²⁷

In a more general sense the three Buddha bodies can be understood as three interrelated dimensions of existence. It is in this general sense that the four guests
together with the state beyond elaboration spoken of in the *Precious Garland* can be said
to exemplify the three Buddha bodies. The state beyond elaboration is one way to
characterize of the body of Bön (*bon sku*). From among the four guests, the beings with
bodies of light cannot be seen with the naked eye and are therefore conventionally
invisible. They manifest as the complete enjoyment body (*long spyod rdzogs sku*).
Those members of the four guests that are conventionally visible, i.e., more solid beings,
manifest as the emanation body (*sprul pa'i sku*). (PG, 44)

One example used to explain these three dimensions is the sun.\(^{28}\) The body of
Bön, like the center of the sun,\(^{29}\) is naked, unelaborated, undifferentiated potentiality.
The complete enjoyment body is like the sun’s rays. The light is transparent, cannot
itself be seen but does make visible the emanation body manifestations, whose colors are
reflected on the wall and visible to the eye. The body of Bön is formless and is the source
and place of dissolution of the other two bodies.\(^{30}\) The complete enjoyment body and the
emanation body result from a creative dynamism (*rtsal*)\(^{31}\) within the body of Bön. This
dynamic movement can manifest in an infinite variety of ways within the complete
enjoyment and emanation dimensions. For example, it manifests as thoughts, dreams,
sentient beings, gods, ghosts, language, mantras, and so forth, as well as my own body.
The emanation dimension *appears* more solid and ‘real’ than does the complete
enjoyment dimension, which is invisible and appears only to the mind. However, both
are no less ‘empty’ than are their source, the body of Bön. Although classified as a
tantric text, the *Precious Garland* shares a Dzogchen perspective which understands the
body of Bön to exist primordially within all sentient beings as the nature of mind (*sems*
nyid) and to be self-aware (rang rig), meaning an awareness that is spontaneous and non-dual, free of subject and object.\(^{32}\)

The practices included within the Precious Garland are primarily for the purpose of freeing one from the delusion that appearances have any type of reality or substantiality independent of this body of Bön or mind nature. *Meditatively created images sever or subvert images assumed to be 'real' by exposing the 'real' as no more real than the imagined.* The affect elicited by the process supplies the force needed to shift awareness from the conventional mind that perceives subject and object to the non-dual mind nature (sems nyid) that is without object and focus, (PG, 47) i.e., the body of Bön. If, as a result of Severance, one perceives the common nature shared by all three bodies, a corollary benefit is resolution and healing of energetic disturbances (*gdon*). These disturbances manifest as mental and physical diseases within the visible, ‘real’ emanation body of the practitioner, further indication of the fluid boundary between the ‘real’ and ‘imaged’ body.

**The Space of the Real and Imaged Body**

As discussed in the first chapter, Nietzsche understood the early Greek myths of Apollo and Dionysius to be models of existence that provide correctives to Enlightenment thinking. Apollo, god of illusion, responds to harsh reality by wrapping humans in a protective veil, while Dionysius tears away that veil opting for direct, unmediated experience of reality. While both models strive for immediacy, the Dionysian favors direct, unmediated experience and the Apollonian proceeds by means of art. (PE, 34) Apollo protects and Dionysius threatens.\(^{33}\) Both subvert received notions.
While emphasizing the tragic aspect of the Dionysian, Nietzsche felt that truth was embodied in the aesthetic view. Not a proposition that could be known *per se*, art revealed the world to be an illusion. The illusory world was continually being created by means of art, which takes over when religion fails. Nietzsche believed if a culture was to be healthy, have depth and a sense of the sacred it must have art and a viable mythology.

Because he understood the force of ritual to be grounded in the Dionysian festival, Bataille was not limited to traditional ‘religious’ forms. In the Greek tragedy of which the poet Euripides’ play *Bacchae* is illustrative, religious ritual and secular theater (art) are of one piece. Dionysius is god of both theater and ritual and inspires religious ecstasy as well as the drama of the mask. Euripides’ play was performed at the state-sanctioned religious festivals that incorporated religious and secular into a single celebration. The Greeks saw no incongruity between, for example, the sporting events of the Olympian festival, the animal sacrifices and feasting, and the staging of plays depicting the lives of the gods among the *polis*. Not so today.

Since the time of the Greeks, Dionysius has split and manifests in two trajectories: a secular trajectory incarnate in drama, theater, art and fiction, and a sacred trajectory incarnate in religious institutions and ritual. Nietzsche lived and wrote from within the trajectory of the religious, specifically Christianity. His scathing critique of Christianity hinges on his observation that Christian ritual practice was dissociated from the tragic Dionysian, leaving it pale and sickly, without vitality and passion. While greatly influenced by Nietzsche, Bataille writes from within the secular trajectory and seeks to locate, within fiction, the sacred that is opened up through sacrifice and dramatization.
In Drung-mu Ha-ra’s Severance ritual we find a religious ritual with both Appolonian and Dionysian elements. While the Severance ritual does not involve literal blood sacrifice, this ritual embraces, by means of a drama played out in the liminal space common to both imagination and reality, the tragic states of terror, horror and the threat of death as agents of healing and ultimate liberation. The powerful meditative visualizations dissolve into a direct experience of the nature of mind, an undifferentiated space free of thoughts, appearances and limits.

While space is by definition indivisible, Bön tantra and Dzogchen speak of it in at least three ways: external (mkha’), internal (klong) and secret (dbying) space. External space is like sky space and is the visible space in which all else takes place. Internal space is the space of objects situated in external space. The visibility of this space is obscured by the object’s appearance but is, nevertheless, present. Secret space is the space of direct experience that manifests when one meditatively ‘gets it’ that sky space and object space have the same empty nature and exist in unbroken continuity. The quickening of this insight is itself an entry into secret space. Just as when one ‘gets it’ that the emanation body and the complete enjoyment body have the same empty nature and exist in unbroken continuity with the body of Bön, that insight is itself recognition of the body of Bön. What can be said about the sacred space opened up through the operation Bataille calls ‘dramatization’ and the secret space opened up through what the Precious Garland calls ‘Severance practice’?
Secret Space, Sacred Space

Derrida knows that traditional scholars do not believe in ghosts. They are theoreticians who observe – intellectuals and scholars who “believe that looking is sufficient.” Consequently, they are not usually in a position to do what is most important: converse with ghosts. It is natural that a conversation over tea between Drung-mu Ha-ra and Bataille, instigated by the Mad Hatter, would include coursing ghosts.

For traditional scholars, the only alternatives to thought are imagination and reality, between which there are firm boundaries. Imagination is not reality and reality is not imagination. As a case in point, Herbert Fingarette, in his recent work, *Death*, makes a clear distinction between our actual death and our imaginings of our death.

The answer lies in the fact that imagination is the only way one can get the “feel” and grasp the inner significance of some past or possible experience. Thought alone is abstract, verbal, not experiential. The only alternative to imagination is actual experience. Actual experience is, of course, limited to the here and now. Tenuous and imperfect though it may be, the vicarious experience afforded by imagination – whether through memories or projection of possibilities – is the only way to experience what the future would feel like, or to recall the feel of the past.

According to Fingarette, the only way I can get a “feel” for what my death will be like is to imagine it, that is, experience it vicariously. But my own death will never be a reality for me, never an actual experience, because at the moment I die, my consciousness ends. If I am not conscious of my death at the time it occurs, then it is not a reality for me. While maintaining a “sharp distinction between the real and the unreal, the actual and the inactual, the living and the non-living, being and non-being…in the opposition between what is present and what is not…,” Fingarette knows there is a need for experience. However, he opts for “vicarious” experience and opposes it to “actual” experience in the
here and now. As my earlier analysis indicates, such distinct boundaries are not so simple to draw and when drawn do not easily stay in the place where they are put. An experience from my psychotherapy practice convinced me that there is a space common to both 'reality' and 'imagination,' assessable by means of a wide range of operations.

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Several years ago one of my clients was mediating two strong political forces. She felt crushed between them because of her personal relationship with members of both factions. Though she had asthma, she was otherwise healthy with no conscious awareness that her death was imminent. Leintine had the following dream three weeks before her sudden death.

I'm in a ballroom and we're dancing a real dance, a minuet. People are in French period costumes like Marie Antoinette. I go to a public restroom. People are dressing in there. I just get dressed. I go out without a partner into this court. The music begins. Somehow I am acquainted with the king. I feel relief and I want to escape. I know something that others don't know. I dance with the king. I use the dance to further escape. The people who are looking for me are there but I do not see them. A little black man in a bright green leisure suit with a white shirt is there but it was O.K.

"I awakened with music. I am using the dance to escape this scene, too."

As Leintine and I discussed her dream, she made associations with every aspect except the black man in the bright green leisure suit. Knowing that disjunct, vague or shadowy aspects of a dream are often crucial, we were especially alert to the significance
of this image and we discussed the black man in the bright green leisure suite extensively. Who was he to her? What was he doing in her dream? Finally we acknowledged that his significance would probably become clearer with time.

Leintine had an appointment with me the morning of her death. After she failed to keep her appointment and appear at work, friends found her on the bathroom floor in front of her medicine cabinet, dead from an asthma attack. Because I am also clergy, her family asked me to officiate at her funeral. At the close of the service I was standing at the head of her casket at the graveside ready to begin the Committal. Looking up from my service book I suddenly spotted among the sea of black, gray and navy-blue clad mourners, a black man in a bright green leisure suit! My body and mind was suddenly suffused with Leintine’s dream image as an electrical current shot through me like being struck by lightening. Feeling as though I had seen a ghost, my head began to spin and I nearly fell into the grave. Though feeling limp and breathless, I somehow finished the service. Perhaps a burst of laughter would have warded off the terror.42

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Derrida’s “virtual space of spectrality”43 locates an alternative space, a space that is not exclusive to imagination or reality but is a template for both imagination and reality. A space of shadowy comings and goings where the boundaries that separate one moment from the next have collapsed and all is accessible, but not present, in one moment that is not a moment. A space that is neither inside nor outside, but recalling the three dimensions and three spaces in the Precious Garland, neither here nor there, a space in between going and coming. A space that can, but not necessarily, “possess” material reality and imbue it with the spirit of the ghost but cannot, itself, be possessed.
This *spectrality effect* undoes the opposition between actual, effective presence and other.\textsuperscript{44}

Just as unpredictably as it has come, it can withdraw and leave ‘reality’ barren and monochromatic. “...[A] specter is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*.”\textsuperscript{45} It haunts, terrifies, fascinates, animates, attracts, and repulses. It seduces, then kills leaving only a trace of the body; gives birth, then eats the young. “...[A]s powerful as it is unreal, a hallucination or simulacrum that is virtually more actual than what is so blithely called a living presence.”\textsuperscript{46}

One “conjures” the ghost\textsuperscript{47} becoming possessed by/fascinated with that which both destroys and creates. Actual events such as death, natural disasters, plagues, war, and festivals, as well as dreams, art, and ritual both protect from and evoke this spectral liminality. Too much protection and we lose connection with the specter’s vitality and transforming power. Too little protection or too nakedly confronted by some without sufficient method, skill or conditioning to manage the violent surge of life released, the specter becomes diabolized, demonized and malignant, destroying all in its path and coming back even after death.

Derrida surmises that traditional, classical scholars cannot converse with ghosts. Only from the “singularity of a place of speech, a place of experience, and of a link of filiation,” only from these places and links can one “address oneself to the ghost.”\textsuperscript{48} Neither Drung-mu Ha-ra nor Bataille are traditional scholars. They have drunk, slept, and eaten with ghosts. Ghosts are their longtime companions. It is by conversing with ghosts that they achieve transcendence.
Derrida traces the ghost through a Shakespearean lineage. The *Precious Garland*’s gods and ghosts, though invisible to the eye, leave recognizable traces in the form of dreams, illness and actual events such as natural disasters. Nietzsche and Bataille evoke Euripides — the ghost is a god — Dionysius. The conjuring and/or exorcising of this secret/sacred, ghostly space takes place through the dramatization of what Bataille calls sacrifice and by means of the visualization practices Drung-mu Ha-ra calls offering and gift.

**Sacrifice, Offering and Gift**

Speaking from the perspective of a general economy, the lynchpin of Bataille’s theory is his notion that the force of life surges up as energetic excess that must be wasted or expended without profit. If this excess is not expended ritually it will explode in violence such as war, transgressive sexual practices, and I would add, illness, assault on celebrities by the paparazzi, gang wars, racial tension and so forth. It is by means of sacrifice that this energetic excess is expended and its destructive potential mitigated.

Illustrative of Bataille’s thinking is his analysis of Tibet (example of an unarmed society), recounted earlier, prior to the communist invasion of that country in 1959. Generally, armed societies funnel their energetic excess (both money and people) into their army where it is wasted in maintenance and expansion of the army and in war. Since Tibet does not have an army, and since monks have displaced the royals, Bataille theorizes that Tibet’s energetic excess is expended in maintaining monasticism, the monks being non-productive, childless consumers, not engaging in project or activity aimed toward acquisition and growth, which delays existence. Is Bataille accurate when
he suggests that for the monastic, life is not subject to any other ends save life itself? Is he justified in ignoring services monasteries provide the populace, particularly as the country’s primary educational institution? Is he accurate in speculating that monastic education is more likely to anesthetize political sensibilities than awaken them? Does he properly understand Tibetan monastic life?

Though interesting and important, these questions are not central to my present undertaking. I think Bataille correctly observes that the societal dynamic in which laypersons support monasticism’s liberative project through gifts of resources and children to the monasteries corresponds, in terms of its dynamics, to a society’s funding of a military complex. Both types of expenditure are illustrative of sacrifice, as he understands it. Tibet made use of its surplus by supporting monasticism and that is what determined that society.

However, one important distinction between a militaristic and a monastic society is that the military exerts violence toward the outside and the monastic unleashes a different type of violence inwardly. More specifically, the monastic exerts force inwardly intended to undo commonly held notions about the world, existence, the self and ‘reality’ as such. This negative project, when successful, results in freedom from the constraints of existence as we now know it. This is no more ‘salvation’ in a pejorative sense than is Bataille’s impetus toward the extreme limit of the possible seeking liberation from limits that block his non-conceptual, non-dual experience-for-its-own-sake.

Within Bön/Buddhism the Bodhisattva is not a savior but an embodiment of universal compassion. While the vow of the Bodhisattva is to achieve enlightenment so
that she might assist all beings in becoming free of suffering, the suffering referred to is a general suffering shared by all sentient beings, similar to the intrinsic potential for destruction within Bataille’s understanding of the sacred. Similar in the sense that the potential for suffering in both instances is ‘built into’ the fabric of existence. Drung-mu Ha-ra understands that, short of enlightenment, dissatisfaction will always return, even to those who fancy themselves happy and content for a time. His practices do not narcotize but lead the aspirant into life and death eyes wide open with a view toward developing equanimity, not desensitization or anesthetization.

Equanimity referred to in the Precious Garland (PG 45) is a state in which attraction and repulsion have been overcome through a deep meditative experience of the ‘single taste’ (ro gcig) of all things. For example, one overcomes attraction to pleasure and aversion to pain (or vice versa) when one ritually penetrates the secret space described earlier and meditatively experiences that which is common to both. In this tantric text, equanimity entails a decisive shift in perceptual perspective that involves consciously experiencing whatever attraction or repulsion is present until that shift in perspective occurs. Attraction and/or repulsion actually supply the force necessary for the perceptival shift to occur. By contrast, in desensitization, perspective does not shift but one’s likes and dislikes are altered and/or dulled due to selective perception secondary to repeated exposure to the stimulus. When developing equanimity one’s sensitivity to that which stimulates affect heightens. In desensitization, as the name implies, one’s sensitivity to that which attracts or repulses decreases. When asked if desensitization helps to develop equanimity and liberation, Khetsun Sangpo Rinpoche (understanding pigs to embody an animal consciousness that lacks sensitivity and the
ability to discriminate) replied, “pigs love the smell of shit but aren’t getting anywhere near liberation. It doesn’t help at all.”

By this I take him to mean that whether one likes shit or is repulsed by it is not the point. The point is to meditatively experience the ‘single taste’ of both shit and chocolate cake, something of which neither a pig nor a desensitized human being is capable – this is equanimity.

For Bataille that which is sacrificed must be gift without reciprocation or return – non-productive expenditure. As described earlier, Drung-mu Ha-ra’s use of the term ‘gift’ is more narrow and specific than what is meant by Bataille. Offering and gift as described in the Precious Garland both interdigitate with Bataille’s understanding of gift and indicate expenditure free from attachment or expectation of return. However, while Bataille’s expenditure does result in self-forgetting and communication with the beyond, this communication parallels only in a general way the relationship that is established between the practitioner and the Four Guests, the freedom from grasping and attachment to the body, and the non-dual state of no thought subsequent to dissolution of the Four Guests described by Drung-mu Ha-ra. Bataille’s communication is more abstract. He posits no being or beings with whom the sacrifice effects communication and restores relationship. Drung-mu Ha-ra does. The ransom repays a debt owed to beings of the Eight Classes and restores right relationship with them. Bataille avoids such mythology and speaks only of a recovered intimacy with a lost continuity that on the surface sounds like his ‘water-in-water’ animal consciousness prior to the emergence of ‘self-consciousness,’ or the ‘oceanic feeling’ Freud credited with being the source of religious needs. However, although Bataille was influenced by psychoanalytic theory, his sovereign subject who participates self-consciously in lost continuity is very different
from the animality that precedes discontinuity and consciousness, described most succinctly in his *Theory of Religion*.

**Interlude**

Though I continue to point to resonances between Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra, I must reiterate that I in no sense intend to conflate the two. These tantric Severance practices belong to a different period in history, a different culture and a different genre of text than does Bataille’s work. *gCod* within Bon is a complete, systematic approach to meditative practices that purport to result in ultimate liberation. Each state is explained in great detail. Much like a piano teacher who gives the student a piece of music and explains how to play it as the student memorizes and practices the piece, a meditation teacher offers commentary to the student from a root text as the student practices the meditation and then returns to the teacher for critique of her practice. The realization of the practice requires many months and years, unless, of course, one has developed those practices in a previous life. In that case, as mentioned earlier, very advanced states can manifest spontaneously, just as on rare occasions a student may be able to play a piece of music without learning it or may spontaneously manifest her own composition. Such appears to be the case with Bataille.

As I hope is clear by now, I consider the Severance ritual to have an energetic dynamic similar to the ancient sacrificial rituals in which Bataille grounds his theory. Severance, linked to actual blood sacrifice but itself a transmutation of that practice, opens up a liminal space that is accessible by means of a variety of sacrificial operations including Bataille’s self-styled meditation and transgressive novels. As I have indicated,
Bataille understands sacrificial ritual to expend an energetic excess in the service of transformation and Drung-mu Ha-ra understands offering and gift to foster a generosity that leads to freedom from craving and attachment to the body resulting in healing and ultimate liberation. If, as Bataille suggests, there is excess that must be expended, humanity exists within the grip of inevitable loss. The choice is not if we lose but how we lose. Will the excess be ripped from us as the result of war, unselfconscious transgressive behaviors, illness and so forth or will we self-consciously become proactive so that we have a choice to regulate expenditure and the wisdom to guide our choices?

The Severance ritual puts forth an intentional, structured and detailed way of training in generosity. Instead of becoming destabilized and destroyed by inevitable loss, the person trains in generosity to the point of being free to give up a fundamental condition for life, the precious human body. In the process she develops wisdom that guides her choice of when and how to expend commensurate with available excess. As Bataille has pointed out, the general economy is propelled by perpetual excess but this is not always true for the particular or the individual. The individual is always subject to energetic exhaustion and deficiency and this is why wisdom in expenditure is important. However, from the Bön point of view, when the practitioner's awareness has integrated with innate awareness or the nature of mind, infinite energy (rtsal) is released, expendable in the form of universal compassion.

When Don-pa Shen-rab came to Tibet he offered a powerful and compelling life plan for being in the world with freedom and choice without constant conflict with society's flux or subordinated to the necessity of inevitable loss. His shamanic practices (Four of Bön's Nine Vehicles) are grounded in compassion and are the beginning of a
taming process that culminates in freedom from craving and attachment to the self (ultimate generosity) and universal compassion. Ultimate generosity (open, giving, and losing) is the essence of consumption according to Bataille. Universal compassion is the other side of the ultimate generosity coin—a coin that is simultaneously spent and consumed. Perhaps this augments Bataille’s explanation of why an entire country would become a monastery and is not unrelated to his observation that more humane expenditures of excess maximize the luxurious and minimize warlike activity.

Bataille also understands that gaining choice requires a shift in one’s consciousness, a move he characterizes as ‘disintoxication.’ He assumes that this move can occur not only by means of religious meditative practice but also through the transgressive operation of artistic images. Both Drung-mu Ha-ra and Bataille characterize this ultimate state toward which one moves via sacrificial offering and gift to be beyond thought and beyond knowledge.

**Non-Knowledge and the State Beyond Elaboration**

For Bataille, the sacred space of non-knowledge can only be found by turning inward. ‘Oneself’ is the space of the sovereign subject, which, paradoxically, is the space in which subject and object are fused, the space of communication and ecstasy. (IE, 9) This space of non-knowledge is the shared experiential state of the sacrificial victim, agent and witness. It is induced when the sacrificial agent penetrates the extreme limit of the possible (the body of the sacrificial victim), opening the limitless state of non-duality and releasing exuberant, ecstatic surge of life. However, as Boldt-Irons points out, a trace of the limit remains, heightening the force of transgression.
Non-knowledge is not the foundation of any confessional system or belief and in that sense is non-revelatory. On the contrary, it is subversive of that which one knows, leaving the mind exposed and naked, without discursive or mental activity. “But we reach ecstasy by a contestation of knowledge. Were I to stop at ecstasy and grasp it, in the end I would define it. But nothing resists the contestation of knowledge and I have seen at the end that the idea of communication itself leaves naked—not knowing anything.... I remain in intolerable non-knowledge, which has no other way out than ecstasy itself.” (IE, 12)

As detailed in the first chapter, the headless (acephale), naked man with body open and exposed represents this state of non-knowledge. Bataille’s liberation, in contrast to his understanding of the deliverance or salvation of Christians and Buddhists, is from the limits imposed by knowledge and conceptuality, hence the image of the headless man as logo for the journal, Acephale. As noted previously, this journal published the ‘non-secret’ portion of the proceedings from a secret society whose members are said to have actually contemplated human sacrifice. Several persons reportedly volunteered to be sacrificed but no one agreed to be the sacrificial agent. The group disbanded in 1939.

The experience is the point – not any mental or discursive activity associated with experience. However, as noted earlier, Bataille understood the importance of discursive activity that undoes itself, like meditation on the word ‘silence’ in a state free of speech. “...[T]o no longer know it would be necessary to no longer speak.” (IE, 13) Silence is a ‘slipping’ word that tolls its own death.

One surrenders, is laid bare and falls into the void, which is non-knowledge. Nothing is revealed because the revelation of non-knowledge is a means of falling further
into absence. (IE, 51-52) There is an infinite play between knowledge and non-knowledge. When knowledge is contested, the contestation reveals what knowledge was hiding to that point. "Indeed, I know, but non-knowledge again lays bare what I have known. If nonsense is sense, the sense which is nonsense is lost, becomes nonsense once again (without possible end)." (IE, 52) If one gives the optical form to experience, the eye's blind spot occupies the space of non-knowledge. (IE, 111)

The 'I' who wants to become everything through knowledge falls into anguish because of non-knowledge. (IE, 53) Anguish signals both a desire to communicate and terror of losing oneself (being annihilated) in communication. "As long as ipse perseveres in its will to know and to be ipse, anguish lasts, but if ipse abandons itself and knowledge with it, if it gives itself up to non-knowledge in this abandon, then rapture begins." (IE, 53)

I do not intend to claim that the non-knowledge of which Bataille speaks is the same state described in the Precious Garland variously as conceptual thought liberated or destroyed in its own place; remaining within the unborn; state beyond elaboration; unfabricated natural state of innate awareness; your own essential nature; state without remembering, without object and without focus; emptiness and boundless clarity; spacious state of equanimity and enlightenment; that all pervasive space. As indicated earlier, Drung-mu Ha-ra is giving instructions from within a coherent and supportive systematic frame for practitioners attached to a qualified teacher who expect, through meditative practice, to experience the states described. Bataille is not giving the 'how' or even a detailed description of the 'what.' In Inner Experience, he describes the 'what' in
a general, sometimes veiled way that opens the possibility for the reader to experience for herself by means of his transgressive novels that which he describes.

The terms Drung-mu Ha-ra uses to point to this ultimate state belong to an intertextual network of referents that are specific to Bön/Buddhist tantra and the Great Completeness (*rdzogs pa chen po*). Bataille’s terms do not belong to this network. However, both are describing an ultimate state and to the extent that the *Precious Garland* can be considered an example of sacrifice in Bataille, it is important to note resonance and dissonance between the states described.

Since Bataille denies that his state of non-knowledge is the basis for any type of conceptual understanding – that it is, in fact, the opposite – or that the state can be reached by way of logic, he bypasses one infamous problematic between a Bön Dzogchen view and Madhyamika described by Klein. “A primary distinction between Bön and Madhyamika uses of logic is that in the later reasoning builds toward authentic and valid understanding of the ultimate, in the former it does not. This, in turn has to do with differences regarding three closely related topics: (1) the Dzogchen emphasis on singleness, in contrast with the Madhyamika structure of the two truths, (2) the Dzogchen claim that the ultimate is in fact a factor...of consciousness, a claim that contributes to subjectivity itself being the primary focus for discussions of the ultimate in Dzogchen...” and (3) the Dzogchen understanding that conceptual thought involves effort and that the ultimate is free of effort. The *Precious Garland* is not a Dzogchen text and does not explicitly emphasize singleness although, as noted earlier, it does describe the ultimate in language characteristic of a Dzogchen view – *sems nyid* (natural state) and *rig pa* (innate awareness), for example. It does presuppose that the ultimate is a factor of consciousness,
emphasizing subjectivity but, while the ultimate state is, itself, free of effort, in the 
*Precious Garland,* as is characteristic of tantra, effort is required to open the way for that 
state to manifest. Once the visualizations, created through effort, subvert conceptuality, 
one relaxes in the non-conceptual state beyond elaboration. According to the Bön master 
Lopon Tenzin Namdak, this use of visualizations and the accompanying presupposed 
duality is the essential difference between Bön tantra and Dzogchen.53

Based on this discussion, in comparing Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra we can say 
that while they differ in detail and the theories that support them, central aspects of their 
*methods* to attain the ultimate are strikingly similar. What can we say about their 
*descriptions* of the ultimate? Bataille’s characterization of the state of non-knowledge 
leaves many questions unanswered that have been thoroughly debated in Tibet. 
Characterizing this ultimate state has been a major subject of debate within Bön, between 
Bön and Buddhists and within Buddhism for centuries and, unlike Bataille, these 
descriptions carry much philosophical freight in those traditions. Much ink and perhaps 
even some blood has been spilled over this subject.

However, there are a few points of convergence beyond the claim made by both 
that the ultimate state in each system is empty and reached by subverting the conceptual. 
Both suggest that there is also a component of clarity. While Bataille tells us that he 
“*reached excessive nauseating clearness,*” (IE, 93) the *Precious Garland* describes the 
state of no thought in this way:

For example, like sunshine free of clouds, remain in penetrating vibrancy 
(*sa le seng nge*) with unobstructed clarity. That is called the unobservable 
body of Bön, which cannot be altered and abides in you primordially.
While remaining in the unfabricated state like that, [the mind] does not stay \(\text{bsdod}\) in the place of rest. At the time movement proliferates \(\text{'gyu byed 'phro ba}\) [within the mind], observe from where does that consciousness arise, to where does it go? It is unrecognizable, empty. Although it is merely empty, it has not gone into empty nothingness. Remain in clarity that is unrecognizable. From where does that ghost of disease, conceptual thought, arise? By looking for where it abides and the searcher, you remain free from grasping in the empty and clear, which is not an established thing. Remain loose and relaxed.

Whatever diseases, energetic disturbances, gods and ghosts arise [are] the magical display \(\text{cho 'phrul}\) of your own mind. Understanding the delusional appearance of awareness is not merely [understanding] the way conceptual thoughts arise. It is [understanding it as] without actual existence \(\text{dngos po med pa}\), empty, and being free of grasping.\(^54\)

Bataille credits anguish and eroticism with propelling him toward the abyss of non-knowledge. Anguish results from the inevitable loss characteristic of the exuberant expenditure that is the hallmark of sacrifice. When the 'I' gives up being everything and abandons knowledge, anguish gives way to rapture and ecstasy. (I will explore the erotic aspect of rapture and ecstasy in more detail in the next section.) Drung-mu Ha-ra instructs the practitioner to abandon his body without a feeling of loss. If he can't do this, then he calls to mind a disgusting, repulsive corpse he has seen previously and allows those feelings of horror and disgust to exhaust both negative and positive desire.\(^55\)

This absence of a feeling of loss is neither anesthetization nor desensitization. As noted previously, neither attraction nor repulsion, it is a state of equanimity. Bataille's shift from anguish to rapture and ecstasy does not emphasize equanimity or freedom from attraction and repulsion. Rapture, free of resistance, may be a neutral state but Bataille does not articulate it in this way. His is more supplication without response, which indicates an unrequited desire. A closer look at the erotic aspect of rapture and ecstasy will help fine tune this distinction between Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra.


**Sexuality, Sickness and Death**

While the aim of both Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra is an ultimate state beyond conceptuality, the person who has become skilled in the Severance Ritual is also able to heal diseases and energetic disturbances caused by the eight classes of beings. Though Bataille does not specifically refer to disease or healing, his thought can be linked to illness both directly and indirectly. First, Bataille links putrefaction and morbidity (both constituent of disease) to death. The body is made up of cells and while dead cells do not necessarily signal disease, the disease process always involves the death and sluffing of cells and tissue. In other words, in general, disease, old age, accidents and killing are the causes of death. It is in this way that disease is powerfully implicit in Bataille’s discourse on death.

Secondly, Bataille says that festivals, sacrificial rituals and monuments are societal emanations of excess. When these are inevitably inadequate, other more destructive emanations such as war waste lives and resources. Since I am suggesting that the Severance ritual is an example of Bataille’s sacrificial ritual, it is significant that in the *Precious Garland* war along with illness and famine share a common etiology – disturbances created by the eight classes of beings. (IE, 38)

Privileging Bataille’s paradigm and Bön’s cosmology, how do the eight classes of beings relate to Bataille’s excess? The *Precious Garland* characterizes the eight classes as a type of magical display of the mind causally connected to war, illness and so forth. In other words, in Tibetan culture where boundaries between reality, imagination and ghostly liminality are more fluid than in the West, Bataille’s energetic ‘excess’ is ‘embodied’ and manifests as the eight classes of beings who, in turn, are credited with
causing disturbances such as war and illness. As we have seen repeatedly, the Bön paradigm draws more distinctions than does Bataille. In this indirect way we infer that illness can be considered in the same class as war in Bataille's thought. Consequently, I will assume that whatever he says about war we can say about illness as well.

That Bataille wanted to be a shaman (healer) is further indication that illness was of concern to him. So why isn't this concern explicit in his work? Could it be that Bataille’s silence about illness actually signals the level of its importance to him? Perhaps it was so important he couldn’t speak it.\textsuperscript{56} It is also notable that he was drafted into the army during the First World War and was almost immediately discharged because of illness – he had contracted tuberculosis and suffered from recurring bouts of illness until his death in 1962. For Bataille personally, disease literally substituted for war. When his friends and fellow members of the College of Sociology were fiercely involved with the resistance movement (late 1930’s) Bataille was consumed with health issues to the point of being unable to continue work as librarian at the \textit{Bibliothèque Nationale}.

For the Bönpo, death is not the exhaustion of vital energy but marks a transition. The interplay of subtle wind, subtle mind and karmic traces (\textit{bag chags}) combine to propel the mental continuum from the gross body into an intermediate state from which one takes rebirth and assumes a new material form determined by ripening karma. The \textit{Precious Garland} claims that one of the benefits of the Severance ritual is that the self-visions (eight classes of beings) and disturbances that were obstacles in life will become a virtuous support in the intermediate state. (PG, 39, 57) In other words, using Bataille's language, once you gain skill in mitigating the destructive force of expenditure, you can
appropriate that energetic excess in the service of a favorable rebirth. Bataille’s theory does not broach the fate of individual consciousness following death.

Just as Bataille does not mention illness in his theory, sexuality is not explicit in the tantric Severance ritual. However, based on affinity between the energetic dynamic of Severance and Bataille and by noting the association between sexuality, death and the mystical in Bataille’s novels and philosophy, it is possible to postulate the erotic within Severance. Bataille augments the meaning of ‘sexual’ with the term, ‘erotic’, meaning the intense attraction (or repulsion) stimulated by that which is considered unclean or forbidden (taboo). Eroticism exclusively finds its fulfillment in transgressing the taboo (EDS, 256) and is the link between sexuality and death. Eroticism “only exhausts all its potentialities if it brings some degradation in its train, the horror of which will suggest the simple death of the flesh.” (EDS, 235)

Bataille juxtaposes the moral death of the mystic with physical death when he draws an analogy between the death of the drone as he mates with the queen bee with the Christian’s imperative that she must die in order to have life. As the drone mates, he dies at the very moment of extending life most profoundly. The mystic, Bataille quotes St. Theresa, says: “I die because I cannot die.” (EDS, 240) This unrequited desire propels her beyond herself, bringing her to the point of death, in consequence of which she lives more passionately, more violently. Since Bataille claims that “sexual excitement and ecstasy are always connected with an active sense of transgression,” (EDS, 248) and since dying is in her case taboo, St. Theresa’s dying because she cannot die is imbued
with eroticism. Paradoxically, this “death of not dying is precisely not death; it is the ultimate stage of life…” (EDS, 240)

Fear of annihilation is associated with not only death but also sexual and mystical experience. Bataille surmises this fear is due to the expenditure and subsequent loss of energy (momentary in the case of sexual and mystical experience) that accompanies each state. Paradoxically, while we fear annihilation we also desire it. Feeling destabilized or out of control is exciting like, for example, scary rides at an amusement park. “No one could deny that one essential element of excitement is the feeling of being swept off one’s feet, of falling headlong. If love exists at all it is, like death, a swift movement of loss within us, quickly slipping into tragedy and stopping only with death. For the truth is that between death and the reeling, heady motion of the little death [sexual orgasm] the distance is hardly noticeable.” (EDS, 239) However, this love of which Bataille speaks is not the universal compassion grounded in equanimity of Severance.

While danger can have a paralyzing effect, a mild danger can stimulate the erotic. So, in order for danger to stimulate eroticism it must be bounded. Bataille suggests that horror is a suitable boundary that destroys or reinforces fascination and makes consciousness of death possible. We arrive at a state of ecstasy only when conscious of, even if remotely, death or annihilation. (EDS, 265-267) “More than any other state of mind consciousness of the void around us throws us into exaltation. This does not mean that we feel an emptiness in ourselves, far from it; but we pass beyond that into an awareness of the act of transgression.” (EDS, 69) These “gulfs of terrifying darkness” (EDS, 222-223) associated with sexual, mystical and death experiences interdigitate.
For Drung-mu Ha-ra, not only horror but horror within the context of ritual bounds the fear of annihilation. The earlier extensive quote from David-Neel’s account of her encounter with a Severance practitioner (gcod pa) and his teacher in the wild vividly illustrates the way in which the environmental context of Severance augments fear and perceived danger. Fear of annihilation is first activated when the teacher reminds the student that the path to liberation is extremely difficult, fraught with danger and possible death. This fear is maintained and potentiated throughout the series of practices described in the Precious Garland. Practicing alone in wild places believed to be haunted is difficult, dangerous and frightening. The practitioner also risks disease when practicing in cemeteries and sky burial places in such close proximity to actual corpses that are frequently diseased-infested. Visualizing ones own body chopped in pieces and being consumed by vicious beasts stimulates anguish as it contests comforting notions of identity, wholeness and purity.

Bataille claims that transgressing, being transgressed and the accompanying pain allow us to transcend ourselves and reach that toward which we are striving. “If there is nothing that transcends us, transcends us in spite of ourselves, something that at all costs ought not to be, we shall not attain the insensate moment towards which we are striving and which we are the same time resisting with might and main….” (EDS, 267-268)

Mishima observes that this ‘insensate moment’ is the instant in which God appears, fully grotesque and fearful and considers unique Bataille’s claim that this moment can be accessed by extreme eroticism and pain. It is through confronting anguish with one’s eyes fully open, transcending it, and fully embracing the process that humankind is made. (EDS, 269)
For Bataille, the individual is able to move beyond self through erotically imbued anguish, which reveals the way toward death, which, in turn, is a way to transcend self. “Without doing violence to ourselves are we able to bear a negation that carries us to the furthest bounds of possibility?” (EDS, 24) Mishima, commenting on Bataille’s novels, observes that “the sacred quality hidden in the experience of eroticism is something impossible for language to reach...A woman was chosen to represent the God, who appears in the novel [Madame Edwarda] through the essential unity of the spirit of the flesh embodied in woman, and the recognition that the mother [My Mother] (thought to represent the highest virtue in woman) and the whore (thought to represent the dirtiest) both originate from the same part of that flesh: ...”59 [emphasis mine]

Both Bataille and Drung-mu Ha-ra point to a space of ghostly liminality that, on the one hand, cordons off, renders invisible, and protects humanity from the violence of life’s exuberant dynamism. On the other hand, recognition of and relationship with this secret/sacred space is essential if life is to be infused with vibrancy, health, meaning and transcendence. Because, from the standpoint of the general economy, this dynamism always exceeds what is required for growth and the maintenance of life, the excess must be expended. However, this spectral liminality is invisible, operates behind the scenes, lurks in the shadows, frequently appearing in disguise. When festivals, sacrificial rituals and monuments are not sufficiently operative in a society to successfully expend the society’s excess, that excess manifests in more destructive forms like war and disease or in more obscure forms like transgressive behaviors.
For both Drung-mu Ha-ra and Bataille the force necessary for ultimate liberation and extension to the extreme limit of the possible is supplied by the dynamism of that secret/sacred space. This dynamism punches through as affect such as terror, anguish, disgust, repulsion, rapture and eroticism.

Bataille’s pursuit of the extreme limit of the possible (a non-dual experience beyond conceptuality) by means of sacrifice takes him into Drung-mu Ha-ra’s neighborhood. The intertextual network of Bön tantra of which the Precious Garland is a part, specifies a vehicle for traversing the path from the bondage of delusion to liberation from mistaken appearances, the key to release from cyclic existence.

Why do intelligent, rational human beings, people who ‘know better,’ engage in behavior that is stupid, shocking, transgressive, destructive, painful, dangerous and even deadly? For example, why would a person who knows the dangers of unprotected sex have sex with a stranger without using a condom? Why would a person with cystic fibrosis nail his penis to a board? Why would a doctor intentionally give a patient a drug that would cause her to throw up if given alcohol and then intentionally give that person alcohol, causing her to throw up? Why is some transgressive behavior allowable and some not? For example, it is acceptable and even laudable for a surgeon to pierce with a knife and open the human body but it is illegal for a member of one gang to pierce and open the body of a rival gang member. Are there important similarities between these? If we could truly penetrate the vissitudes of existence would we be able to answer these questions? In the next and final chapter of Part One I move toward a response.
Notes to Chapter 3

1 *gCod gdams kyi skor*, Dolanji: Tshultrim Tashi, Tibetan Bönpo Monastic Community, 1985, folios 413-417. This is an ancient Bönpo cycle of *gcod* practices revealed in a vision to Drung-mu Ha-ra from *sTsong rgyang mthu chen*. It is reproduced from an old manuscript from the Monastery of *bsam gling* in Dol-po. This short autobiography appears at the end of this cycle of *gcod* practices.


5 Commentary by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

6 Nietzsche felt that when God is viewed as “domestic servant, as a postman, as an almanac-maker” (*The Anti-Christ*, p. 170), in other words, when God is considered to be ‘good’ to the exclusion of potency and power, such a God goes against life – destroys life.

7 In the Bön tradition the Guardian protectors safeguard the teaching from becoming disintegrated, watered down – domesticated. If the teacher does not keep the teaching secret the text pronounces, “May the angry protector goddess of the teaching suck the blood from the heart of that sinful one!” (*Precious Garland*, folio 40). Becoming aminic like Nietzsche’s ‘pale and sickly spider,’ (*The Anti-Christ*, p. 128) the teaching would no longer have vitality and would lack its former potency. The protector protects by threatening. But human beings can’t stand too much threat. Threat must be titrated – just enough to awaken and energize and not so much to numb or completely fragment.

8 *Guilty*, Georges Bataille as quoted by Mark C. Taylor in *Nots*, p. 188.


10 This division of the psychic apparatus into imagination, will, and so forth reflects a traditional scholastic categorization common to western mysticism.

11 A “proposition” in this context is a statement made by an exercitant about her or his meditative experience while doing the Exercises.

12 *The Spiritual Exercises*, op. cit. p. 11.


15 *Georges Bataille: la mort à l’œuvre*, op. cit., quoted at the bottom of illustration 15.

16 I will discuss this state of ‘non-knowledge’ in a later section.


18 Oral commentary by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

As explained earlier, these four guests include the lamas, tutelary deities and dakinis, two classes of protector deities, eight classes of beings and beings of the six realms.


Ritual Theory, op. cit., p. 94.

Ritual Theory, op. cit., p. 96.


Saints and Postmodernism, op. cit. p. 51

In her book, Essentially Speaking, Diana Fuss puts forth an excellent argument for her theory that, with reference to identity, there is essentialism contained within postmodern depictions of cultural construcrionism and there is a constructed element within, for example, Luce Irigaray's strategic use of essentialist formulations.

Self-appearance indicates that this is a non-dual dimension in which there are no subject/object distinctions. If there is appearance it is self-originating and self-appearing.

Wonders of the Natural Mind, op. cit. p. 136

From notes taken on oral commentary given by Lopon Tenzin Namdak on the Twenty-One Nails (gzer bu nyi shu rtsa geig) at a retreat in July 1995 in Jimeiez Springs, New Mexico.

Notes taken on Lopon Tenzin Namdak's oral commentary on the Twenty-One Nails at July 1995 retreat.

rTsal is sometimes translated as 'energy.' Energy is considered by many to be a problematic translation because of its wide range of meanings in English.

While the practices described in the Precious Garland are classified as tantric, it does employ terms such as sens nyid (folio 49) and rang rig (folio 58) ordinarily considered to be terms unique to Dzogchen. When I asked Lopon Tenzin Namdak to comment on these terms in the context of the Precious Garland, he referred me to his commentary on them in a Dzogchen text with which he knew I was familiar, The Twenty-One Nails (gzer bu nyi shu rtsa geig). Although these ‘Dzogchen’ terms are employed to describe the state beyond elaboration toward which the Severance ritual is aimed, because the ritual itself proceeds by means of visualizations which supply the force for manifesting that state, the practice is classified as a tantric practice. Within Dzogchen the natural state is a self-arising, self-liberating spontaneously perfected state that does not require visualizations. Nevertheless, it is important and significant to note that the practices described in the Precious Garland span the entire range of Bön’s Nine Vehicles by including elements characteristic of the causal vehicles (for example, the ransom offering) and Dzogchen in addition to the tantric visualizations. Taking this fact into consideration, it is completely understandable why this text is considered to describe a complete path to enlightenement.

Within the Bön tradition the guardian protectors safeguard the teaching from deterioration and domestication. In this case the Guardian protects by threatening!


When I say he wrote from 'within' the trajectory of the religious I do not claim that he was a Christian but that because his father was a Christian clergyman and Nietzsche was reared within the Christian church, the fabric of his being was etched with Christian symbols in a way that, for example, Bataille was not.

Wonders of the Natural Mind. p. 118ff


Specters of Marx, op. cit. p. 11

The name is fictitious.

Specters of Marx p. 47.

Specters of Marx. p. 11
"Specters of Marx", p. 40

"Specters of Marx", p. 11

"Specters of Marx", p. 13


"Specters of Marx", p. 12

The full range of affectivity humanly possible such as love, hate, anger, anguish, fear, horror, joy and so forth is included within the signifiers 'attraction and repulsion.'


Civilization and Its Discontents, Sigmund Freud, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1961, pp. 19-20. Freud cites the opinion of one of his friends (he assures us he knows what he is talking about) that the "practices of Yoga, by withdrawing from the world, by fixing the attention on bodily functions and by peculiar methods of breathing, one can in fact evoke new sensations and coenaesthesias in oneself, which he regards as regressions to primordial states of mind which have long ago been overlaid. He sees in them a physiological basis, as it were, of much of the wisdom of mysticism. It would not be hard to find connections here with a number of obscure modifications of mental life, such as trances and ecstasies."

"Preliminary Reflections," op. cit. p. 779

Oral commentary by Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

Precious Garland of gCod Instructions, op. cit., folios 47-48.

Oral commentary by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.


Death is the limit of life to which humans relate with fear, deference and awe. Killing of self or others is considered taboo by most cultures in most circumstances. Freshly dead bodies are commonly considered untouchable and unclean.


My Mother, op cit., p. 12.
4. Transgressive Compassion

Compassion is difficult to characterize. Perhaps ‘compassions’ would be a more accurate designation. As noted earlier, a shamanic understanding of compassion differs from the understanding of compassion introduced by Don-pa Shen-rab. The shaman’s aim is to bring heaven and earth into harmony so that beings will have health and prosper in this life. Whatever means are required to achieve this aim are allowable, including killing. By contrast, Don-pa Shen-rab introduced a compassion that disallowed killing but not sacrifice, advocating the substitution of dough effigies for living beings. This transmuted compassion is oriented not only toward this life but includes an awareness of karmic (traces, left by actions, that accrue and accompany a person from lifetime to lifetime) implications for the actor. However, as argued earlier, compassion operative in the Severance practice has affinity with both the transgressive compassion of the shaman as well as the Bodhisattva ideal, accommodating the actions of a teacher who allows a student to undergo life-threatening states of terror in the service of ultimate liberation.

From a Buddhist perspective there are different levels of compassion that must be cultivated. The highest form is universal compassion that begins as an inner motivation to achieve enlightenment in order to assist all sentient beings in that same process. The embodiment of universal compassion, a Bodhisattva, seeks to relieve suffering and the causes of suffering and vows not to enter into nirvana until all sentient beings have entered. Earlier I noted that this reference to ‘suffering’ refers to a general ‘unsatisfactoriness’ that permeates existents and is perhaps more pervasive than Bataille’s ‘anguish.’ As the Severance practices described in this work make clear, the journey to
liberation, far from narcotizing life’s dreadful underbelly, involves going into the heart of suffering and anguish with eyes wide open, developing concentration, stability and equanimity – essentials for ultimate liberation. The affective dynamism of fear, terror and threat of death, all included in Bataille’s understanding of anguish, provide the force necessary to enact the shift in perceptual perspective\(^2\) that must take place if one is to achieve freedom from attraction and repulsion.

As already indicated, Bataille does not flesh out a notion of compassion *per se* nor does he explicitly indicate that attraction and repulsion are neutralized when one passes beyond the extreme limit of the possible. His ‘supplication without response’ experienced in rapture, has the flavor of one who has not yet reached what Drung-mu Har-ra would consider a state of equanimity. As long as there is even a hint of supplication, a subtle attraction/repulsion remains. This subtle remainder would be of considerable consequence to a Bön or Buddhist philosopher.

The analysis put forth in this work lays the foundation for the following claim: *if one dares to open ones eyes to the tragic and develop more and more empathy for existents and if a shift in perceptual perspective does not take place (attractions and repulsions continue) anguish will increase until one either burns out, goes mad or dies.*

In other words, the ecstatic expenditure characteristic of universal compassion cannot proceed unimpeded unless one has overcome clinging and attachment to, most especially, ones precious human body, i.e., ones own life. If clinging and attachment to life does not diminish and, at the same time, compassionate impetus toward ecstatic expenditure continues to increase, the human organism may be unable to tolerate the friction/tension and a burn/break instead of a shift will occur, resulting in disease, madness or death.
The literary image of Nietzsche seeing a horse being beaten, running to its aid, throwing his arms around it and collapsing in madness comes to mind. Though I don’t presume to know what actually happened to Nietzsche in that moment, the image is powerful and suggestive of my claim. The ecstatic expenditure (compassion) prompted when he saw the horse being beaten was conjoined with a clinging and attachment to the horse (throwing his arms around it) that stood as an impediment to non-reciprocal, ecstatic expenditure. The resulting tension, instead of effecting a shift in perceptual perspective, gave rise to a psychic break (he collapsed in madness).

There are important implications here for all persons, especially for caring professionals who live and work within environments with a high concentration of tragedy such as physicians, clergy and mental health professionals who work with those with life threatening illnesses. Such workers frequently lack the conceptual understanding, training, or methods to remain within the tragic, eyes open, without harming themselves. Just to recognize that the flow of existence involves ecstatic expenditure (accompanied by inevitable loss) that can be creative as well as destructive and that the desire to mitigate the destruction gives that expenditure the valence of compassion is vital information. Realizing that clinging and attachment (fundamentally to one’s own body) gives expenditure a destructive valence, impeding the development of higher forms of compassion, is crucial for the development of self-consciousness. And recognizing that it is within the heart of the tragic where one is at greatest risk for death, illness and insanity that one has the greatest possibility to experience that shift in perceptual perspective Bön calls enlightenment and Bataille calls sovereign subjectivity both terrifies and exhilarates.
Suppose we accept Bataille's theory that life is driven, not by lack, but by an impetus toward ecstatic release of an energetic 'excess.' And suppose we accept that an entire spectrum of mental images and actual events can effect this sacrificial operation opening up a secret/sacred space, evoking and releasing a potent and dynamic force that can be both creative and destructive. And further suppose we extrapolate from the transgressive practices of the Severance ritual and recognize that a broader understanding of compassion can accommodate actions that are ordinarily considered 'sinful,' wrong or taboo – that, actually, would demand such transgressive actions if one is to progress toward ultimate transformation. In a culture where ethical behavior is under scrutiny in every quarter (political, professional, religious) what are the implications of such a claim? If ultimate transformation requires behavior that by definition breaks rules that are intended to regulate social and religious transactions, are we not exposing ourselves to antinomianism and/or anarchy? Is this not a giant step backward in the civilization of humankind?

If the above dynamics were included in our understanding of existence my hope is that, far from stimulating antinomianism or anarchy, transgressive compassion would guide us, as a society, to be inclined less toward condemnation and judgment in our attitudes toward 'sin.' Not that we would necessarily relax laws or even modify ethical standards but we would have a more sophisticated understanding of the dynamics involved when persons engage in behaviors we consider sinful or taboo.

For example, can we recognize in the destructive behaviors of youth vampire cults and persons who intentionally transmits AIDS an impetus toward transcendence as
opposed to being merely pathological, anti-social, irrational and/or stupid? If so, perhaps then we would put our creative minds to the task of helping individuals, families and communities make self-conscious efforts to develop for themselves richer, more potent dramas and practices that mitigate the destructive component of their exuberant dynamism. Most of all I hope that this understanding would convince our culture of the need for potent transgressive dramas and practices operative at every level of society that suspend the ethical for the sake of ecstatic expenditure in a way that minimizes the destructive and maximizes the luxurious.

However, it is also important to recognize that any dramatic practice worth its salt entails risk of destruction and even death. To expunge a dramatic practice or ritual of all risk is to domesticate and depotentiate it. We know this is true of, for example, medical treatment of an illness but we have forgotten, if we ever knew it, that this is also true for spiritual practice as well. Bataille’s work and the Precious Garland reaffirm that potent medicine can be poison and poison can be potent medicine.

Undeniably there is a degree of domestication that takes place when substituting images within a novel for actual events or allowing ritual to curb violent expenditure. Both Bataille’s transgressive novels and the dramatic Severance practice provide a level of protection from the threat of death. Obviously, if ecstatic expenditure results in death, there will be no more opportunity for practice in this life. One of the functions of religious ritual, art and drama is to channel the violent surge of life in a way that maximizes vitality and minimizes casualty. However, the more potent practices will inevitably be the more transgressive and thus, marginalized.
Tantra is not a mainstream practice in either Bön or Buddhism. Its teachings are protected by secrecy and its practice is cordoned off by stringent requirements for qualified students. Likewise, neither Bataille’s theory nor his transgressive novels are, nor do I believe they will ever be, mainstream. To the extent that either Bön or Buddhist tantric teachings become popularized and mainstream they risk losing their transgressive element and thus, their potency. So, where in contemporary culture might we locate a fresh, potent, transgressive, healing work of art that embodies the shamanic/sacrificial strategy common to both Bön and Bataille?

The 1997 film “Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist,” exemplifies the type of transgressive art that has the potency to heal as it slays – in my view a type of spontaneously occurring ‘shamanic practice.’ The film is of particular interest in this context because it is a contemporary example of artistically represented ritually transgressive behavior outside a religious context with the limited purview of healing. Kirby Dick’s Sundance award-winning and critically acclaimed documentary is a shocking and moving portrayal of one of the world’s longest survivors of Cystic Fibrosis, Bob Flanagan an internationally known writer, artist, and comedian. This film, together with Flanagan’s transgressive art, courageously explores the complex relationship between sexuality, illness and pain. Flanagan, an extreme masochist who characterized himself as a ‘Supermasochist,’ was, since 1980, the slave, lover and collaborator of dominatrix Sheree Rose. Suffering from Cystic Fibrosis since birth, Flanagan died in 1996 at age 43, a medical anomaly having lived twenty-five years
beyond the life expectancy of persons with that disease. He credited masochism and his sado-masochistic relationship with Rose for his longevity.

In a *Village Voice* article C. Carr dubbed Flanagan a practical masochist who fought sickness with sickness.

Flanagan was all about real and shameless self-disclosure. He lived his life at death’s door...Certainly Flanagan behaved like someone with no time to be untrue to himself. “This is the person I am,” he once declared. “I’m not afraid of any aspect of what I am.” That included the part of him that lived as a ‘supermasochist’ and always had. As a boy, he’d begun inflicting pain on himself because it helped him to cope with the chronic pain of CF...In the late ’80’s, he began staging his pain-inducing rituals as an art form. “I never wanted to call myself a performance artist,” Flanagan once said. “I just went out and did these things from an honest place.” Spectators fainted on both coasts.  

The film is funny, shocking, disgusting, and profoundly moving. Scenes depicting Sheree Rose inflicting pain on Flanagan for their mutual gratification bear striking resemblance to an interaction between doctor and patient. Rose practiced her art with obvious love and tender violence. When using a pulley to hoist him naked, upside down by his ankles or when she whacked him soundly on his back side one could not help noting that what looked like torture must have been a relief for one whose lungs were constantly full of fluid and mucus.

The film includes video scenes from every stage of Flanagan’s life, from childhood to postmortem. He was very active in the national Cystic Fibrosis organization and served as counselor at that foundation’s annual camp for children and youth with CF. He was an inspiration for hundreds of children with that life-threatening illness. One scene in which he sang an original composition to the tune of “Supercalifragilistic” for the camp kids was remarkable. For example, one verse says: “A lifetime of infection and
his lungs all filled with phlegm — the CF would have killed him if it weren’t for ‘s and m’ — um di de lil’ lil’ I’m gonna die — um di de lil’ lil’ I’m gonna die.” Judging by the rapt and delighted countenances of the campers, Flanagan’s lyrics communicated deeply and powerfully.

In the documentary, Dick includes Flanagan’s filmed performance art installation at The New Museum comprised of a ‘crucifix’ style display of video monitors each playing footage of his hands, head, chest, genitals, feet, and so forth, his ‘fluid man’ and his own physical presence lying naked except for collar and bondage paraphernalia in a hospital bed. The footage of his death and photographs taken by Rose immediately following his death are devastating.

Since its release in November 1997, despite its critical acclaim, the film has played only to small audiences all over America. In an article entitled “Warning about Warnings” published on the film’s Web site, its maker, Kirby Dick, notes that while critics have given the film excellent reviews, they always include a warning.

The NY Times called it “unforgettable...groundbreaking,” then added, “the pursuit of sexual ecstasy goes over a line few viewers will want to cross.” The LA Weekly said it was “the most moving documentary of the decade – if you have the stomach to see it.” Time Magazine called SICK “funny, graceful, and stirring,” then humorously warned that “when the song ‘Hammer of Love’ comes on, go out for popcorn.” I am certain that each of these reviewers was personally affected by the film, and their writing communicates that passion. But what concerns me is that they communicated something else as well — that only certain audiences should see the film. These critics assume that many viewers won’t be able to watch the film the critics have just watched and praised... The media as a whole typically sanitizes its presentations of pain, illness, sex, and death. In spite of the fact that we all have a profound and ongoing relationship with these experiences, the media acts as if the public is unwilling to confront these issues directly. By presuming that audiences will be unable to watch my film, the critics become party to the same sanitizing or avoidance of difficult human experience.
Dick's recounting of the warnings attached to his film's reviews and its small audiences reinforce my claim that for rituals or art to maintain enough transgressive quality to be potent, they must, virtually by definition, remain marginalized. Such art and religious practices when mainstreamed risk serious domestication. The Flanagan film, though critically acclaimed, is not a yuppie movie. A certain level of secrecy, hiddenness and proscription protects its powerful and essentially transgressive quality.

This is not only true for transgressive art but as we have seen is also true for transgressive religious practices such as Severance. No physician or psychotherapist could have prescribed or even officially recommended, without risking malpractice, the transgressive practices that Flanagan is convinced doubled his life span. A shaman or tantric practitioner whose compassion operates outside conventional ethical boundaries could.

I suggest that the impetus toward exuberant expenditure of excess stirs within humanity a veiled fascination with and terror of annihilation in its variety of manifestations and this, to a great extent, determines our lives. More than an emotion, this terror/fascination is an orientation toward existence. It is this terror of losing/not losing what we have or getting/not getting what we want that gives rise to what the Precious Garland designates as craving and attachment to the body and Bataille calls attraction and repulsion.⁷

If we lose what we have or don't get what we want, we are terrified we will no longer exist and if we get all we want and are unable to expend what we have we are terrified we will explode. For some this manifests as the fear of loosing or exploding
their mind (going insane), i.e., the dissolution of identity as constructed by and
experienced with our mind. For others it is the terror of losing our physical appearance,
and/or disintegrating through illness and death. For still others the fear of losing control,
power or wealth is how fascination with and terror of annihilation manifests.

In the Severance ritual, the practitioner seeks to intentionally intensify her own
fascination with and terror of annihilation in order to magnify the psycho-material
manifestations of this fear, known in the Precious Garland as the eight classes of beings.
By magnifying these manifestations she can more easily recognize their true nature,
which is not other than her own mind. By recognizing their true nature she is able to go
beyond them.

In our present culture, we make strenuous efforts to avoid anything that stimulates
or activates this fascination with and terror of annihilation. We get plastic surgery to
avoid the reality of aging and go on perpetual weight-loss diets so our bodies don’t
explode. We spend trillions of dollars on medical research trying to undo illness and the
causes of death. The raison d’être for many people is making and spending money. Being
homeless and poor is not popular. As a nation, economic considerations drive practically
every aspect of our government, political, educational, healthcare and even our religious
institutions.

We are obsessed with cleanliness and purity. So much so that we make up dead
bodies to look like living ones as we try to avoid the reality of putrefaction and
disintegration. Illustrative of this, I overheard one elderly woman say to her fellow senior
as the two of them gazed upon the face of their dead friend lying in state at a local funeral
parlor, "Doesn't she look good?" Her companion replied, "Yes, too good!" Perhaps on some level we suspect we are being deceived by appearances.

In a culture so well defended against this fascination with and terror of annihilation, the presence of disease, particularly life-threatening ones such as CF, AIDS and cancer, intensifies our latent terror and provokes psycho-material manifestation of that terror in ways that we, unlike the skilled Severance practitioner, are ill-prepared to confront. When regarding someone with, for example, AIDS instead of merely seeing a person with a life-threatening illness for whom we have compassion, this terror of annihilation begins to resonate and we sense a challenge to our defenses. This threat is articulated in a variety of ways from fear of contagion to prejudice and discrimination accompanied by a resurgence of religious proscriptions and purity rules that ignore the reality of what it means to exist within life’s vissitudes. Proscriptions against pre-marital sex are reinforced and touted as a solution to the AIDS pandemic while ignoring the reality that nothing we have ever done in the history of humankind including education and religious condemnation has, to date, stopped pre-marital or extra-marital sex. I am suggesting that one significant reason for this is the importance of transgression, eroticism and loss of control as a catalyst for the human process of self-overcoming, transformation and healing.

In other words, what we have suspected all along is in fact the case, that which we most fear i.e., annihilation, is the path through which we must pass in order to experience ultimate transformation. What I mean here is not some mindless or foolish giving up of one’s life. Ultimate transformation is predicated on the fact that we face our terror of annihilation mindfully with both compassion and wisdom. This is the essence, the
“fangs” of the Severance practice. As for Bataille, one achieves sovereignty (a state of unencumbered freedom) as one has courage to dangle over the abyss of non-knowledge with eyes open without succumbing to the temptation of ‘being saved.’

As Bön and Buddhism become mainstreamed, popularized and chic, the efficacious power of their transgressive (tantric) practices, as has happened with mainstream Christianity, is placed at risk. Perhaps the most we can hope for in contemporary culture are a few spontaneously appearing tantrics and shamans like Georges Bataille and Bob Flanagan who continue to remind us that sometimes the most potent and healing compassion does not follow the rules but rather leaves one teetering on the edge of the abyss with the smell of blood in the nostrils.
Notes to Chapter 4


2 By ‘shift in perceptual perspective’ I mean the overcoming of delusion through either ‘cultivating’ or ‘discovering’ what Bön/Buddhists call ‘emptiness.’ In the previous chapter I have explicated this as a shift that takes place when one ‘gets it’ that the secret space is not separate from the inner and outer space and that the essence of the body of Bön is not separate from the Emanation body and the Complete Enjoyment body. The entire spectrum of practices in the Precious Garland is intended to effect this shift in perceptual perspective.

3“Early in January 1889 Nietzsche, then in Turin, saw a coachman flog a horse, rushing toward the horse, and collapsed with his arms around it. He was carried home, and, after recovering consciousness, wrote and mailed a number of letters which mirror the sudden outbreak of his madness. They are the last meaningful things he wrote...He died on August 25, 1900.” The Portable Nietzsche. ed and trans by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1954. p. 684.

4I am using ‘ultimate transformation’ as a generic term to indicate Buddhist enlightenment, Bataille’s extreme limit of the possible or union with God of the Christian Mystics, and so forth. It indicates a transformation that aims toward transcendence in contrast to transformation limited to an individual’s personality.


6Flanagan’s ‘fluid man’ is his modification of the ‘visible man’ model of a human being used in science classes for educational purposes. The different visible organ systems can be assembled and disassembled, aiding the student in learning. Flanagan ran plastic tubing connected from three different pumps to each orifice – mouth, penis and anus. The appropriate colored and consistency substance was continually pumped from each orifice.

7This is my analysis and not the claim of the Precious Garland, according to which delusion is the source of all lack of satisfaction.
PART TWO
Technical Note

I have used standard Wylie transcription for Tibetan word-equivalents. This system is described in “Standard System of Tibetan Transcription,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 22 (1959), 261-67. Sanskrit equivalents are given only when widely known such as *ganacakra* and *kaya*.

Proper names of Tibetans within the body of the dissertation are given in ‘essay phonetics’ for the sake of easy pronunciation. The system used is a modification of the convention detailed in the Technical Note at the beginning of *Meditation on Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983), pp. 19-22) In the *Precious Garland* translation I have left proper names in standard Wylie. A variety of phonetic conventions are used in the various materials quoted. As would be expected, I have not altered quotations.
Outline – Precious Garland of Severance Instructions

gcod gdams rin chen phreng pa

I. Introduction.

II. Historical teachings.

III. Central Principles.
   A. From what tantra is it excerpted?
   B. To what category does it belong?
   C. The benefits of composing this text.
   D. The faults of not composing it.
   E. What master composed it?
   F. What is the purpose of composing it?
   G. The method of practicing the central principles of the text.
   1. Preliminary practices.
      a. Examining the recipient and bestowing initiation.
         1. suitable recipients.
         2. unsuitable recipients.
      b. Teaching the preliminary practices of purifying obstructions and accumulating merit.
         1. prayer and receiving blessings.
            a. meditate to develop devotion.
            b. prayer.
         2. offering the accumulation of merit and purifying obscurations.
   2. Main instructions
      a1. separate the body and mind, remain within the unborn.
         1. the essential point of guiding the thigle.
         2. the essential point of teaching the sound.
         3. the essential point of recognizing the body of Bön (dharmakaya).
      a2. recognizing the body of Bön.
         1. recognize the body of Bön.
         2. the radiance that dawns as the energy of awareness.
      b. changing the visualizations, cut conceptual thought in its own place.
         1. set in motion the perpetual feast (ganachakra) without craving or attachment to the body.
            a. regular daily practice.
            b. focus on the energetic disturbances.
         2. focus on whatever is needed according to the circumstances.
            a. focus on the energetic disturbances as object.
               1. the thoughts.
                  a. leave innate awareness in its own place.
                  b. recognize conceptual thought.
               2. the actual energetic disturbance.
                  a. intentionally settle into the fierceness.
                     1. recognize the energetic disturbance.
                        a. the planets and stars are upper energetic disturbances.
                        b. both the male elemental forces and the female ghosts are the intermediate energetic disturbances.
                        c. the water serpents
(nagas) and
d. the landlords of the
fearsome places are the
lower energetic
disturbances.

2. search for their abode.

3. instructions on visualization.
   a. settle fear on top of
      fierceness.
   b. sharpen the
      visualization.
      1. my own
         welfare.
      2. the welfare of
         others.
   b. abandoning your body without craving or
      attachment, cut arrogance.
   c. give him your body and settle into your
      own essential nature.

b. focus on the diseases as object.
   1. wind.
   2. bile.
   3. phlegm.
   c. focus on the ones causing diseases as object.
   d. focus on the enemy.

3. the method of holding to the fearsome places.
   c. explain the signs of meditative progress of those.
      1. explain the magical display as valid indicators of arising.
         a. externally, the gods and ghosts.
         b. internally, your body.
         c. secret, conceptual thought.
      2. explain signs that the diseases and energetic disturbances are clearing
         as valid indicators of cutting.
      3. arising of the supreme and ordinary signs of accomplishment
         (siddhas) as valid indicators of resolution.
         a. for the ill.
         b. for the healthy.

3. [Conclusion]

IV. Dedication.
Precious Garland of Severance Instructions

38 I pay homage to you three: lama, tutelary deity and dakini. This precious garland of severance instructions, fulfilling all wishes, is taught in the secret mantra wish-fulfilling jewel by the knowledge holder, sTong rgyun mtu chen. From the oral teaching of the lama: In the disturbed evil era, the time of the kaliyuga, sickness, famine, and the era of warfare increase [due to] evil actions. Having become disturbed, the eight classes [of beings] become aggressive toward humans [causing] infectious diseases, acute illnesses and illnesses with intense, throbbing pain (khrag du khol).

At that time, the superior noble Bön [should be taught], for their welfare (don du gyur), to the faithful, to the ascetic concerned with (gnyer) the next life and to fortunate persons making joyful effort who can keep [the teaching] secret. A light radiating from the heart of Kun tu bzang po (Samantabhadra), the dakini, Thugs rje kun sgrol taught the special Bön, superior secret mantra orally to the knowledgeable masters of Zhang Zhung and Tibet. Hidden in the heart of the knowledgeable masters of Zhang Zhung and Tibet, at this time it is taught to you, unmistakable karmically connected persons, for your welfare.

Be wise, weighing what [instruction] you give (btang) and what you keep [secret].

As for the secret mantra wish-fulfilling jewel, there are four branches, [including those that are] common and [those that are] special. From the special secret cycle of Bön:

This precious garland of chöd instructions fulfilling all wishes is the king of tantra, the heart of scripture, the final quintessential instruction, the elixir of knowledge, the deep-seated understanding (thugs dgongs) of the tatagathas, the Bön of the great vehicle. [It is] the vital meaning (gnaad don) of secret mantra, the essential intent (thugs bcud) of all the
knowledgeable masters, the essential intent of the dakini, the ultimate understanding.

39 The object is to self-purify delusion ('khrul pa) and cut the four demons. 9 If karmically connected fortunate persons come for this quintessential, secret practice severance instruction, give it (sbyin). Keep (ring) it secret from [those] with a wrong view.

As for this, in general there are two sub-divisions, namely, historical teachings which foster conviction (yid ches pa), and practicing the central principles (gzhung don) 10 of the text. The history is taught elsewhere. As for the second, practicing the central principles of the text, generally there are seven sub-divisions:

1. [From] what tantra [is it] excerpted?
2. To what category (phyogs) 11 does it belong?
3. The benefits (yon tan) of composing [this text].
4. The faults of not composing it.
5. What master [composed it]?
6. What is the purpose (don ched) of [composing it]?
7. The method of practicing the central principles.

[These are] the seven sub-divisions.

With respect to that, [it was excerpted] from the Infinite Vast Expanse General Bundle 12 cycle (klong chen rab 'byams spyi spungs bskor), Cutting the Thoughts of Samsara ('khor ba rnam rtog gcod pa) tantra. As for the category, it belongs to (gto gs) the most secret unsurpassable [teaching]. As for the lineage of the master, [it is] composed by the [one who] liberated thoughts in their own place, 13 Kun tu bzung po.

The benefits of composition are to liberate conceptual thoughts in their own place for fortunate yogis who wander ('grims pa) 14 in fearsome places (gnyan khrod). Self-visions will arise as a help, the intermediate state will be a support, the murderous experiences (nyams sod) 15 will arise as a virtuous support, obstacles (bar chod) of migrators will melt, and it will become a short cut (nye lam) 16 to the three result bodies. 17
The faults of not composing are thoughts rising up as ghosts (‘dre), much suffering due to afflictions and diseases and many obstacles to journeying on the path to liberation. The purpose [of composition] is to clear the obstacles to journeying on the path of liberation and to clear the obstacles of migrators who are fortunate persons wandering in fearsome places.

The seventh, with respect to practicing the meaning of the text, there are 40 three sub-divisions: preliminary practices, central teachings, and conclusion\textsuperscript{18}. The preliminary practices have two sub-divisions: (1) examining the recipient and bestowing (skur ba) initiation, and (2) teaching the preliminary practices of purifying defilements and accumulating merit. There are two types [of recipients]: [those to whom it] is suitable to give and unsuitable ones.

A suitable student is stable (zhing ‘gyur ldog dka\textsuperscript{19}) in great faith, removes doubt and has great persistence. He practices in solitary retreat and has great fortitude, great confidence and compassion, destroys (‘joms)\textsuperscript{20} conceptual thought and respects the lama. He makes joyful effort in practice and keeps [the teachings] secret.

[People who] babble, are insincere, expert in worldly ways, don’t work hard (snying rus med), easily follow (rkyen) conceptual thought and, having received [the teaching], sell it for profit [are unsuitable recipients]. If you teach (byin byur\textsuperscript{21}) to one like that both master and student violare the commitment. May the angry protector goddess of the teachings suck the blood from the heart of that sinful one!

Because of that, make [the teachings] very secret. Teach (bya) to not more than one or two karmically connected fortunate persons. Maintain (byas) the single lineage,\textsuperscript{22}
give (gdab) [instructions to] keep [the teaching] secret. Bestow initiation and give transmission three times in sequence.\textsuperscript{23}

The oral transmission is meant (dmigs pa) for faithful persons to address their afflictions and illnesses. Do not [give these persons] the written text.\textsuperscript{24} That is scrutiny (brtag pa) of the student.

The procedure (rim pa) for bestowing initiation is in \textit{Consolidating and Refining the Quintessential Instruction} (man ngag bkol byang du zhi).\textsuperscript{25} With respect to teaching the purification of obscurations and accumulation of merit, there are two sub-divisions: 1) prayer and receiving blessings, and 2) offering for the accumulation of merit and purifying obscurations.

As for the first, seek a master who has the elixir of the quintessential instructions, compassion and the power to guide, and embrace his teachings (thugs bzung\textsuperscript{26}). Make the purifying offering (spong dag byas\textsuperscript{27}) three times. Request [teaching on] bodhicitta (sems skyed\textsuperscript{28}) as well as refuge and initiation. Offer the perpetual feast to the dakinis as much as you can.

41 Next, that student remains comfortably (rung bzhag) in a cross-legged position. Sustain (bzhag) the hand mudra of prayer and arouse bodhicitta and refuge the same as usual. Following that is prayer, with respect to which there are two sub-divisions: meditation with\textsuperscript{29} devotion, and prayer.

Regarding that, as for meditation with devotion, [meditatively imagine] a sun and moon [disk] on a lotus cushion above the crown of your head. In the center is Dran pa nam mkha'\textsuperscript{30}, on the right is Tshe dbang rig 'dzin, and on the left is sTong rgyung mthu
*chen.* Above your head are the two, *Kun tu bzang po* and *Bal gsas rongam ba.* *Srid pa rgyal mo* is behind [*Dran pa nam mkha’*] and *Thugs rje kun sgrol* is in front.

Meditatively imagine (*sgoms*) your own root lama at your heart. Pray with devotion, not just mouthing words. By praying to these, i.e., the lama, tutelary deity, and dakini, all their blessings come together in your root lama. Think that the [letter] RAM separates from the toe of your root lama’s foot. By striking you, the RAM catches fire, burning your body into ashes. Master and students all say RAM together.

Again, meditatively imagine a MAM separating as before [striking your body] and scattering it. Water arises from the MAM and washes you. Meditatively imagine cleansing and purifying the desire (*’dod*) and attachment (*zhen*) to your body together with their karmic traces.

Next, with respect to preparing the mandala, make offerings to the lama, tutelary deity and dakini. Meditatively imagine offering wealth, food and whatever you find to offer in the one billion [existing] universes (*stong sum*). Specifically, offer wealth, food and relatives together with your own body. Remain without craving (*chaugs pa*) and grasping (*’dzin zhen*).

Following that, from the crown of lama *Dran pa nam mkha’* a [white] “A” arises and dissolves into the crown of your own head. 42 You receive the blessings and initiation of his body. From his tongue arises a red OM, [dissolving] into your own throat center. You [receive] empowerment of his speech. From his heart center [arises the blue letter] HUM which dissolves into your own heart center. You receive the blessings and initiation of his mind (*thugs*). In the same way you request and receive the blessings [and initiation of] *Tshe dbang rig ‘dzin,* *sTong rgyung mthu chen,* the two
peaceful and wrathful deities, the dakini, the guardian deity of Bön (bö skyong), and your root lama. Like that, you accumulate merit and receive empowerment. The best [is to receive initiation for] seven days. The next best is three days and the least is one day. Meditate with effort to join body and speech with virtue.

Next, as for the method of offering the perpetual feast, from your own ordinary heart a naked bone ornamented dakini with a curved knife in her right hand and a skull filled with blood in her left hand is expelled outward. Turning her face toward you, she says, “since beginningless samsara you have been cycling in the three realms without [achieving] Buddhahood. By acting on the basis of ordinary conceptual thought, your body is tormented by illness because of craving and attachment to this body. Now, bring your body as an offering and a gift.”

Cut the legs and arms and make a hearth. Place the skull [on the hearth] as a cooking pot. Heap the chopped flesh and blood inside. By [saying] OM, A, HUM, bless [the mixture]. Think that [you as the dakini are] distributing an offering and gift which dissolves (thim par) into the four guests. After that, the lamas, tutelary deities and dakinis dissolve into you. Set in motion the perpetual feast (tshogs 'khor, ganacakra) for three days. That is the purification and reception of blessings. As for prayer, learn it elsewhere.

Secondly, there are three sub-divisions to the main practice of the text: (1) separating the body and mind, remaining within the unborn and recognizing the body of Bön (bö sku), (2) changing the visualizations, cut conceptual thought in its own place, and (3) explaining (bstan pa) the signs of meditative progress in those three.
As for the first, the path of separating the body and mind, the student sits erect with legs crossed, relaxed and at ease and holds the big toes of the feet with the hands. Do the complete refuge and bodhicitta. Pray that forcefully. Next, as for holding (bzung awareness (rig pa), clearly visualize the three channels: the white right channel, the red left channel and the blue central channel. Furthermore, the right channel resembles a [freshly broken] piece of white translucent crystal (shel kang ka ri), the left [channel] resembles a [newly broken] red rock (rgya mtshal), and the blue central [channel] resembles a deep sky-blue ut-pala flower (nye lo and pal). [The channels] abide in their places as fine silk threads but visualize [them] as arrows.

A white thigle descends from the white right [channel] and a red [thigle] from the left red [channel]. Guide them into the blue central [channel at] the juncture (mdor) of the three channels. As for the essential point of holding the breath, blow the stale breath from the nose three [times]. Consider (bsam) that sins and defilements of the three, past, future and present, are purified. Next, press the upper wind [down] and push the lower wind [up, holding it firmly].

Next, there are three essential points to guiding awareness: guiding the thigle, instruction on [making] the sound, and recognizing the body of Bön. As for guiding the thigle, [entering] through the door of the blue middle [channel the red and white thigle], by uniting the winds, become a single pea sized white thigle with a red luster. From a YANG underneath [the thigle], wind arises, lifting it up to the heart. Surrounded by concentric circles of the five lights, it proceeds into the skull. By sounding PHAT, the light thigle shoots out into space and integrates (byas pa) [with space]. Leave (skyur) your body [behind] without clinging.
As for the essential point of recognizing the body of Bön, there are two, namely: recognize the body of Bön and the radiance that dawns as the energy of awareness (rig pa rtsal). As for the first, with respect to that white thigle of light with a red luster, recognize that remaining in emptiness, which is without its own nature, beyond elaboration, indivisible from space is the body of Bön that abides primordially in you. As for the five lights of radiance, recognize that the energy of unceasing innate awareness (rig pa) arising without bias, being produced without any causes and conditions and abiding intrinsically (rang chas) in you is the Complete Enjoyment body. Those two are inseparable from the empty and clear. Bright and lucid innate awareness manifesting in any way possible is the Emanation body. That is known as the essential point of the three bodies.

In this way, separate the body and mind. Remain within the unborn mind. Leave your body without clinging or attachment like a corpse in a cemetery. [Make an invitation to the gods and ghosts] “Whatever you desire, eat. What doesn’t suit you, leave.” But [if you] cannot, in that way, overcome holding [your body] dear, in dependence on a corpse [you’ve seen] previously which cuts your inclination [to cling to your body] by thinking in this way, [imagine it] filled with a substance which is very dirty, disgusting, fearful and rotting. Thereby understand, “even my own body is a cause which is like that and no one [is worthy of] craving.” That is separating the body and mind and recognizing the body of Bön.

I pay homage to the lama, tutelary deity and dakini who cut (gcod mdzad pa) afflictions and delusions in their own place. Second, there are three sub-divisions to cutting in its own place conceptual thought, which changes the visualizations, namely:
set in motion the perpetual feast without craving or attachment to the body, focus according to whatever is needed in the circumstance and the method of holding to the fearsome places.

As for the first, setting in motion the perpetual feast with the aggregates, there are two sub divisions: regular daily practice, and focusing on the energetic disturbances (gdon). The first, produce bodhicitta in order to liberate all sentient beings, mainly your parents [connected with] the three times, from afflictive emotions and suffering. Then, place [your body] in a cross-legged position. With no craving toward the body and without craving or attachment to the mind, remain in equanimity. Think you are making your body an offering.

In an instant, the essence (ngo bo) of your own awareness [manifests as] the great dakini consort, Thugs rje kun sgrol. Think specifically that she has a dark red colored body, a curved knife in her right [hand], a skull filled with blood in her left [hand] and the face of a wild pig. Shooting outward from your own heart, she turns toward you and says, “You, child, have not previously attained Buddhahood [because] you have been born, and again you will be born, with craving and attachment to your body. Now, take [your body] and without considering anything else (gcig bu) [make it] an offering (mchod) and a gift (shyi).”

Stripping the skin from the [body], place it as a receptacle (snod) on top of the limbs cut with the curved knife [and arranged as a hearth]. Taking out that heart, place it in the center [of the skin receptacle]. After that, think you are decorating it with the [remaining] flesh and blood.
Then, the dakini says, “A, A, RAD, NA, GSAL” to establish the receptacle through that precious cause. With respect to that, the flesh and blood [become] the size of one billion universes. By saying “OM, OM, BDUD, RTSI BRUM,” think that the five fleshes, the five bloods, the five nectars, the five afflictions, the five aggregates, and the five poisons, having melted into the light, form an ocean of nectar. Think that [the nectar] becomes the five seed syllables through saying, “A, OM, HUM RAM DZA68 HUM RKO PHUNG AG SHOD OU DUG SHA THUN HAM.”

46 Offer the most essential part of the nectar to the pure ones69 by saying HUM, HUM, RA, SA, YA, NA, GYU, ‘BRANG, BDUD, RTSI, ZUR, NAM, DE SHO, HA, RA, BSO, THA. Think that the sediment (rtsigs ma) is for the [lower guests who possess] the five attributes of desire.70 Think [of the nectar] emanating to the lama, tutelary deity, dakini, Bön guardian deity, glorious lord, eight classes of beings and the beings of the six realms.71 In between,72 remain in the state beyond elaboration. Then, incorporate this into your daily practice.

Second, as for focusing on the diseases and energetic disturbances (gdon), make offering to the lama, tutelary deity, and dakini in order to pacify obstacles to arousing bodhicitta. Then, make this inconceivable [offering] in the presence of the gods and ghosts73 mainly [associated] with your own diseases and energetic disturbances.74

Now, second, in regard to focusing on whatever is needed according to circumstances (skabs), there are four aspects:

1. focusing on the energetic disturbances as object,
2. focusing on the diseases as object,
3. focusing on the ones causing diseases (gnyan thog75) as object
4. focusing on the enemy.
As for the first, focusing on the energetic disturbances as object, there are two: the thoughts and the actual energetic disturbance. First, as for recognizing the thoughts, in this regard, you stop the enemy by [recognizing] that diseases and energetic disturbances do not transcend your own thoughts. When you cut thoughts by cutting all diseases and energetic disturbances, you recognize [the actual nature of] thoughts.\footnote{76}

Furthermore, if you stay within the city, a castle or with many people there are many demons\footnote{77} of distraction (gyeng) which become obstacles to spiritual practice. Completely separating yourself, go to a fearsome place inhabited by (gnas) arrogant (dregs pa can\footnote{78}) gods and ghosts. Go for refuge and arouse bodhicitta. Lay aside activities of body and speech, relaxing the body and mind.\footnote{47} Pray to the lama, tutelary deity and dakini and receive initiation. Separate the mind and body and recognize the three bodies.\footnote{79} Remain without craving or grasping the body. In between, set in motion the perpetual feast [by offering the physical] aggregates.\footnote{80} Make offering again and again to the assembly of deities associated with the four swastika places,\footnote{81} the glorious lord, the eight classes and [the beings of the] six realms.

With respect to remaining in the unfabricated (ma bcos par) natural state of innate awareness, there are two sub-divisions: let innate awareness remain (bzhag) in its own place and recognize conceptual thought. With respect to that, as for letting innate awareness remain in the natural state, meditatively imagine the lama on top of your head and have continual devotion.\footnote{82} Then, remain in the unfabricated natural state of innate awareness. Moreover, don’t attach the mind (blo) to thoughts of the past. Don’t invite conceptual thoughts of the future. Do not mix [those thoughts of past or future] with present activities of consciousness (kun slongs\footnote{83} kyi shes pa). For example, like sunshine
free of clouds, remain in penetrating vibrancy (sa le seng nge) with unobstructed clarity. That is called the unobservable body of Bönn,\textsuperscript{84} which cannot be altered and abides in you primordially.

While remaining in the unfabricated state like that, [the mind] does not stay (bsdod) in the place of rest.\textsuperscript{85} At the time movement proliferates (’gnyi phyed ’phro ba) [within the mind], observe from where does that consciousness arise, to where does it go? It is unrecognizable,\textsuperscript{86} empty. Although it is merely empty, it has not gone into empty nothingness. Remain in clarity that is unrecognizable. From where does that ghost of disease, conceptual thought, arise? By looking for where it abides and the searcher, you remain free from grasping in the empty and clear, which is not an established thing. Remain loose and relaxed.

Whatever diseases, energetic disturbances, gods and ghosts arise [are] the magical display (cho ’phrul) of your own mind. \textsuperscript{48} Understanding the delusional appearance of awareness is not merely [understanding] the way conceptual thoughts arise. It is [understanding it as] without actual existence (dngos po med pa), empty, and being free of grasping.\textsuperscript{87} Doing this when you are in that fearsome place, the gods and ghosts, unable to bear it, [cause] all kinds of magical display to arise. [The practitioner] must possess self-confidence at that time. Without confidence, [the magical display] will be an obstacle to the yogi. At that time, she must cultivate non-grasping in her continuum (rgyud la skye)\textsuperscript{88} [of the natural state].\textsuperscript{89}

In this regard, it is said that the superior practitioner remains without remembering\textsuperscript{90} and without focus. Having fixed (gtad) the eyes without blinking (hreg
(ge) into space and having become certain the murderous magical display [is] not [other than] self-appearances, lacking external appearance, practice.

As for the focus of the [practitioner] of middling capacity, give up the mind’s continuous thinking. Whatever meditative appearances or magical displays arise are not other than deluded self-appearances. For example, even the two, samsara and nirvana are [due to] understanding and not understanding that your own awareness [manifests] as this magical display.

If you think that ghosts exist which harm this body, tell them, “take whatever you need. This empty mind of mine has no place which can be harmed.” With this thought, practice in emptiness and boundless clarity.\(^91\)

The [practitioner] of lower capacity undermines (skur ba) the craving of the body [by reflecting that], ‘formerly when cycling in the three realms, you have fallen (ltung) into the six types of beings.\(^92\) The illness and suffering, the circumstances of existence and this body result from causes (rgyu).\(^93\) As for that, having thought that it is urgent to be free from this body, separate the body and mind and leave your body as a corpse in a cemetery. Project your mind into space and remain without grasping [to the body].

49 For example, keeping company (’grus ba)\(^94\) with bad friends unites you with suffering. Likewise, if you have nothing to do with\(^95\) [the bad friends, there is] no evil influence whatever. In short, disease, suffering, afflictions, magical displays, Buddha, and sentient beings should be understood as not [beyond] self-appearance, without other appearance. If you ask “why”, your own body, the nature of mind (sems nyid), and whatever mind arises as well as the outer world, beings within the world, both samsara and nirvana do not go beyond the mind. That is the recognition of thought.
Second, as for focusing on the energetic disturbances as object, there are three subdivisions: (1) intentionally settle into fierceness (dbab pa gnyan thog), (2) abandoning your body without craving or attachment, cut arrogance and (3) give him your body and settle into your own essential nature (rang gnad).

The first, with respect to intentionally settling into fierceness, there are three subdivisions: recognizing the energetic disturbances, searching for their abode and instruction on visualization (dmigs pa). With respect to recognizing the energetic disturbances, there are hundreds of thousands of divisions. If these are condensed, they are subsumed into four classifications:

1. planets and stars are the upper energetic disturbances
2. male elemental forces (‘byung po) and female ghosts (bsen mo) are both intermediate energetic disturbances,
3. & 4. water serpents (klu, naga) and landlords of the fearsome places are lower energetic disturbances.

If you condense further, there are three classifications: upper, lower and intermediate energetic disturbances.

A cyst, a hard knot between the flesh and skin, wasting, (skam) and so forth, or dreaming of a swollen river, a temple, stupa, monk, monkey, a cat, and so forth, a horse, black dog, or a young boy are explained as signs of male energetic disturbances. A divorced woman, dog, pig, a black tent, big river, and old, broken down houses and towns are explained as signs of female energetic disturbances.

A cow, goats and sheep, meadow and a frog, snake, tadpoles, and water, and so forth, are explained as signs of water serpents. Lightening, hail, storming and [a person with] a crooked mouth drooling saliva, and so forth, [are understood] as signs of planetary energetic disturbances.
Furthermore, a black man, black horse, black dog, and so forth, ferocious (gdug rtsub) diseases and energetic disturbances are diseases of demonic forces. Being crippled, deaf and unable to speak are signs of energetic disturbances of mu spirits. A red person riding a horse, a red dog, and storming, a swollen river and madness, falling unconscious, an unstable, disturbed mind and acute pains (gzer thabs) are energetic disturbances of the tsan spirits. That is recognizing the energetic disturbances.

As for searching for their abode, in general know all the fearsome places (gnyan khrod). As for searching for their abode which is where you meditate, a temple without an owner, a stupa and a place [with] leprous corpses where humans do not go are good [places] to focus on male energetic disturbances. An old broken down town, a spring, a single willow tree, and a cemetery are good for focusing on the female energetic disturbances.

An old castle, the edge of a hill, a [cemetery for] leprous corpses, a big lake, and a rock quarry are good for focusing on the planetary energetic disturbances. [A cemetery for] leprous corpses, a spring, lake without a drain, deep forest, edge of a hill and peaks of a wrathful mountain are good for focusing on the fearsome water serpents.

A great plain, black rock, and black earth (sa dag) are good for focusing on the demonic forces. A red rock, rock cave, place in between rocks and a spot from which you can see several valleys line up in a row where the tsan spirits gather (gong bu btsan gyi ‘hrim sa) are good for focusing on the tsan spirits. A lake without a drain, stagnant water, and a dark underground hole (mun khungs su) are [good] for focusing on the mu spirits.
Furthermore, a spring, canyon, and old, big trees, a cemetery, fierce mountain, and big rock, edge of a bridge (rkyang zan kha) and a big path, ruined hermitage, gorge, underground cave and the base of rock formations are a summary of the fearsome places. Practicing, hold clear visualization in all ghostly abodes and in places of dread, fear and terror. In this regard a quotation from The View Subjugating Thought (rtog zil gnon lta ba) tantra says, “practice in the meeting places of the gods and ghosts increases spiritual practice tenfold.” This is searching for their abode.

Now, thirdly, as for instruction on visualizations, there are two sub-divisions: setting fear on top of fierceness and sharpening the visualization. As for the first, setting fear on top of fierceness – the object (dmigs pa) [of visualization] is the energetic disturbance you have been taught previously to recognize. Go to any fearsome place [appropriate to your purpose.]. Lie down and face your head to one side [toward the energetic disturbance]. [Say to the ghosts in that place] “If death befalls me (tung), whatever befalls me, I lie down knowing whatever you want to do to me, you will do.”

Then, go for refuge, arouse bodhicitta and pray to the lama, tathagatha, dakini and guardian deity of Bön. Offer friends, servants, children, fellow students, food and wealth to the lama without a feeling of loss (phangs sems). Cut uncertain (the tshom) thoughts (snyams byed) and arouse persistent confidence (nges shes nan tan) in the instructions of the lama. Offer to the dakini by means of the [perpetual] feast. Then, separate the body and mind and sustain the mind in space without craving, free from elaboration. Generously distribute the body without a feeling of loss.

Then, set in motion the perpetual feast of the aggregates as you distribute the two, offering and gift, to the objects [of refuge]. Sounding PHAT, dance the offering.
Practice by connecting with experiences [of the place] without thought. The yogi practices by means of a fearsome frame of mind in fearsome places that are violent, fearsome places. That pacifies the ghosts and energetic disturbances in their own place. Diseases, energetic disturbances and thought are cut in their own place. The demons and obstructers (bgegs) bestow the signs of accomplishment. Understanding (dgongs) of the non-conceptual absolute dawns in the mental continuum. Blessings of the lama arise in oneself.

Now, visualization includes two aspects, namely one's own welfare and the welfare of others. Regarding the first, the yogi cuts her own thoughts. Start with the preliminary practices as described above. Visualize your own flesh and blood becoming bigger and more than before. Summon all gods and ghosts that exist, whatever are your own energetic disturbances, the energetic disturbance of the ghosts and the energetic disturbances of the gods, from the height up to and including the peak to the depths, reaching all the way to the lowest point of cyclic existence. By distributing [the gift of your body], visualize all having what they need. Having cleared your karmic debt and repaid your material debt, visualize the diseases, energetic disturbances, sрин ghosts, gods and ghosts dissolving and vanishing in their own place. Understand [them] as your own mind and practice in a manner (spyod pas) without thought. [This] spiritual practice will dawn as a support [to you] in the intermediate state.

Now, second, as for extending [your practice] to others, go for refuge to the master as above. Go to a fearsome place. Fixing your mind (gtad pa) on the place where this sick person is, [say to] the gods and ghosts, "Let him die, let him be sick. I give to you, the gods and ghosts of the fearsome place, whoever is here, both the energetic
disturbances that are in this body and the body of this sick person, both to you without a feeling of loss. Immediately, take all that you need.”

Then, having a confident mind, cultivate impartial compassion for all. [This] is not merely a method for clearing diseases and energetic disturbances. In general, giving generously as you set in motion the perpetual feast (tshogs 'khor, ganacakra) with your own body together with the body of the sick person [is also] for the purpose of attaining enlightenment, the all pervasive space.

53 With sharp yogic awareness, sound a PHAT, casting the awareness of you and the other into the expanse (dbyings). Generously distribute the gift of your body without attachment.

Then, the ill person’s energetic disturbance incites (bskul) the other gods and ghosts to come and fill the space in front [of you]. Your own body, an inconceivable wealth, (long spyod bsam med), is offered in general as a ransom (ghud) for all sentient beings, in particular for [beings who have been] your parents, and more particularly as a ransom for that ill person. Visualize [all the gods and ghosts] satisfied, free from a desire to cause harm.

Perform the water offering arousing bodhicitta again and again. From time to time, as you set in motion the perpetual feast, offer your (kho rang) body as a ransom as above. Without becoming delighted when it helps, remain within a spacious (khrol le) state of equanimity. Therefore, without doubt, [this practice] will clear away diseases, energetic disturbances and obstacles.
Now, in regard to focusing on the disease as object,⁹⁸ there are 360 types of diseases. Condensed, the essence of the three poisons is included in the three: wind, bile and phlegm.⁹⁹

Next, as for visualization as the method of clearing – if you are sick with a wind disorder and your body is feeling heavy (lcī), you are drowsy (‘thībs)¹⁰⁰ and unable to concentrate (gyengs las),¹⁰¹ you have an illness related to cold. Go for refuge and set in motion the perpetual feast as above.

Think that lama sTong khyung mthu chen is at the crown of your head. His body is a deep wine color,¹⁰² he has three eyes and his long beard (zhal tshoms)¹⁰³ is a blazing fire.¹⁰⁴ In his right hand is a cosmic fireball¹⁰⁵ decorated with the letter RAM. From a copper pot in his left hand, a red stream of fire like the nectar of wisdom pours downward continually (ra ra byung nas) into the central channel [of the ill person].¹⁰⁶ Think that [the central channel] together with all the channels of the body are filled with fire. Unite the [upper and lower] winds (rlung kha sbyor).¹⁰⁷ Then, meditatively imagine the lama has melted and dissolves into you. Afterwards, remain loosely within an objectless state.¹⁰⁸ ⁵⁴ The wind disorder is pacified (zhi) in its own place by that [practice].

If you have a bitter taste in the mouth, jaundice, and/or a dry mouth, [symptoms of] bile disease,¹⁰⁹ go for refuge and arouse bodhicitta. Then, think that lama Dran pa nam mkha’ is in the center (kha) of your own heart. He has a deep blue body and three eyes. In his right hand he holds a wheel of wind and in his left hand he holds a vase of nectar. Having gathered (bschus) the bile disease together with the fever, think that by its spinning the wheel of wind draws (drangs) [the disease and fever] from the [sick person’s] mouth, making a whooshing sound as it comes through (seng seng bud pa)¹¹⁰
the opening. After the disease [has been drawn out of the channels,] think that nectar from the vase in his left-hand fills those channels (rtsa phung).\footnote{131} Afterwards, the lama melts and is absorbed (stim pa\footnote{132}) into you. Remain loosely within an objectless state. That purifies (dangs) bile disease in its own place.

With respect to diseases of fever and heat, go for refuge, arouse bodhicitta and set in motion the perpetual feast. Then, visualize Tshe dbang rigs ‘dzin at the crown of your head. His body is dark red, he has three eyes, long straight hair (li ljang)\footnote{133} and his body is decorated with bone ornaments. In his right hand is a turquoise vase filled with water (ting nam chui).\footnote{134} In his left hand is an immortal wish-fulfilling tree producing a cool wisdom shade. A stream of wisdom nectar water pours into the crown of your head cooling (kyu ru ru)\footnote{135} as it flows downward within the central channel. Having filled each [channel] of the cooled body with shredded ice (sil sil),\footnote{136} it spreads, oozing out (chab khrom) all the hair follicles causing chills and goose bumps (gang sil le). Cool, soothing nectar water falls continually from the wish-fulfilling tree on the left driving the diseases of subject and object (bzung ‘dzin)\footnote{137} downward in all the channel openings and water openings, dispersing and passing [out of the body]. After that, the lama melts and dissolves into you. Remain lightly (bum)\footnote{138} within an objectless state. That dissolves fever in its own place.

55 To employ (bzung pa)\footnote{139} visualization with respect to the phlegm disease, meditatively imagine Kun tu bzang po at your heart with one face and two hands holding (snams pa)\footnote{140} a swastika in the right and a lamp of clear wisdom (ye shes gsal ba'i sgron me) in the left. The crossed swastika in the right hand is spinning from the right.\footnote{141} Having collected the diseases and energetic disturbances that are like darkness, imagine
[them] emerging out the hair follicles. With the lamp (*mar me*\(^{142}\)) in the left hand, imagine clearing the [remaining] traces (*rjes*) of the disease. Forcefully unite the two winds. After that, meditatively imagine *Kun tu bzang po* melting and dissolving into you. That is focusing on the disease as object.

After that, with respect to explaining (*bstan pa*) the indicators of clearing the diseases and energetic disturbances, there are three sub-divisions: explaining the magical display as valid indicators of arising (*slongs tshad*),\(^{143}\) explaining indicators that the diseases and energetic disturbances are clearing as valid indicators of cutting (*gcd tshad*),\(^{144}\) and arising of the supreme and ordinary accomplishments (*dngos grub, siddhi*) as valid indicators of resolution (*tshar tshad*).\(^{145}\) As for the first, with respect to explaining the magical display as valid indicators of arising, there are three sub-divisions: external, the gods and ghosts, internal, your body and secret, conceptual thoughts.

From among these, as for the external, by holding the visualization of the gods and ghosts in that fearsome place, many varied magical display\(^{146}\) of the gods and ghosts arise [such as], winning or losing when going on the offensive (*gyul ‘gyed*) in war, dog, wolf or any clawed animal eating or pulling [at you], being pummeled (*brdung*)\(^{147}\) by dzo (*mdzo*)\(^{148}\) and yak, wild herbivorous animals, birds, animals with claws, oxen, goats and sheep, frogs, snakes, tadpoles, a spring, and so forth. A castle, the countryside, a statue (*sku ‘bag*), temple, stupa, woman, an aristocrat (*zhang blon*), a young man who is shouting (*stag shar kus ‘debs*), a storm, swollen river, a battalion of women soldier, a dome tent (*sbra gur*), lightening, hail, magical displays, and so forth, and also (*bzhan yang*) someone actually calling your name,\(^{149}\) someone who takes a heart in their hand and shows it [to you], and when you are overwhelmed by splendor and unable to speak.
When these magical displays are not fully recognized they are the valid indicators of arising \((slongs tshad)\) of the gods and ghosts of the fearsome places.

As for the valid indicators of arising \((slongs tshad)\) of diseases within your own body, if \([you]\) recognize in the dream a previous illness \([becoming]\) worse \((che ba)\), a bird, dog or human and so forth, \([these]\) are valid indicators of arising of \([diseases in]\) the body. A restless, unstable \((phyo sang khyer ba)\) awareness, an unhappy, agitated mind, and not wanting to meditate are the valid indicators of arising of the afflictions and conceptual thoughts.

Secondly, as for instruction on the valid indicators of cutting \((chod tshad)\), a dog, wolf, pig, and so forth, birds and clawed animals splitting open bodies \((grior ba)\), eating the flesh and drinking the blood, a close relative dying and being cremated, losing wealth, repaying a debt, expelling pus and blood, having diarrhea and vomiting, and so forth, swirling dust \((gyo rdul)\) and the death of a horse and \([other]\) animals are valid indicators of cutting the external diseases. Monks and lay people who drive out \((thal ba)\) horses and cattle, the destruction of statues and stupas, collapsing temples and young children who are dead are valid indicators of cutting the male energetic disturbances. A burned black tent \((sbra)\), nomads moving \((skyas)\) taking big tents \((sbra)\) and smaller tents \((gur)\), a woman crying, the family dwelling \((grong mkhar)\) being destroyed and burned, a slaughtered broad-bodied yak \((rgod gyag)\) and a woman being beaten are valid indicators of cutting female energetic disturbances.

Frogs and snakes go out, and springs dry up, growing \((skyed)\) trees are broken \((bcag)\), oxen are slaughtered, goats and sheep are dead, fire breaks out, soldiers marching
(skyas), merchants leaving town (thal)\(^{155}\) and so forth, are valid indicators of cutting the water serpent energetic disturbances.

Furthermore, being cleansed, casting off a black garment and losing wealth, the death of a close relative, soldiers marching, merchants and brides leaving town, and domestic animals (sems can\(^{156}\)) breaking free from their tether (biags zin grol ba) are valid indicators of cutting a variety of diseases and energetic disturbances.

Now, there are two types of valid indicators of resolution, namely, [for] the ill and the healthy. Putting on new clothes and climbing up hill, coming out and going into a castle\(^{157}\) (mkhar skyas kha ru ston pa), cutting the rope of bondage, 57 being cleansed, going to a high place and playing (bkrol\(^{158}\)) spiritual instruments (lha cha\(^{159}\)) [where] the sun and moon rise and corpses cremated without [leaving] even a trace are valid indicators of resolution for the ill persons.

Listening to Bön [teachings], receiving initiations, making prostrations, raising parasols, banners and flags, going through (phyin) a flowering meadow, [going] on a path where there is a rainbow, playing spiritual instruments, blowing the conch, prostrating and circumambulating, a good harvest of fruit, barley, rice, tea and beer and giving various riches and foods are valid indicators of resolution which accomplish many supreme and ordinary signs of accomplishment. When you have any dreams like that, do the dedication and move from the fearsome place.\(^{160}\) After that, remain within an objectless state. That is instruction on the valid indicators of resolution.

Thirdly, focusing on the ones causing the disease (gnyan thog), as object, think back to the beginning cause of the disease.\(^{161}\) [If there are] energetic disturbances of food and/or wealth, go to the slaughterhouse and do refuge and bodhicitta. "Up to now I have
been wandering in samsara, with deluded actions and negligent speech. Now, by the
gods and ghosts of this fearsome place and these diseases and energetic disturbances
inciting (bskul ma btab\textsuperscript{162}) me to spiritual practice, I will not be distracted for an instant.”
Think that you are grateful for these spiritual practices and practice in accordance with
that gratitude. By becoming familiar (rgyud la khel bas) in that way, this spiritual practice
arises as a support in the intermediate state and you go beyond (phebs\textsuperscript{163}) the one causing
the disease (gnyan thog).

Fourthly, as for encountering (thog tu dbab pa) the enemy as object, imagine (‘du
shes su bskyed) that enemy with whom you have fought, as your father and mother.
\textsuperscript{164} From past lives, by engaging in ignorance and doing actions which are obstacles to
virtue, the five poisons flourish in your body destroying the teaching of the Buddha. \textsuperscript{58}
Being contrary to Bön and wandering in the lowest realms without liberation is cause for
compassion. I will not blame you for your afflictions and delusions.” Think, “I must
practice diligently in order that you may quickly attaining complete Buddhahood. When
(kyang) you are freed from your afflictive body,\textsuperscript{165} may you quickly dwell in
Buddhahood.” Thinking thusly, practice without hatred (she sdang\textsuperscript{166}). This is focusing
on the enemy as the object.

This practice of the central principles of the precious garland of chöd instructions
fulfilling all wishes is the word of the lama who is the knowledge holder,\textsuperscript{167} [received]
through the clear teaching of the dakini\textsuperscript{168} related [to the author] by karmic cause (las
grub\textsuperscript{169}). These letters are composed without being careless (om tshod),\textsuperscript{170} without
unclear understanding (tshod bzod) and without failing to rely on sources from the
tradition (ra chod).\textsuperscript{171} If there have been errors and mistakes, I pray for forgiveness from
the lama, tutelary deity and dakini. By these letters composed with an intention like a
golden island,\textsuperscript{172} may ignorant and deluded sentient beings cut thoughts which are self-
appearing delusions. By a guide who liberates from samsara, in all circumstances may
you, having comprehended this wisdom of self-awareness,\textsuperscript{173} overturn the depths of
samsara and quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

[This text] is copied from the text \textit{spa}\textsuperscript{174} received at the feet of the
discriminating\textsuperscript{175} \textit{bTsu ra 'od zer rgyal mtshan}. Virtue.
Notes

1 Dakini literally means ‘sky-goer’ and in this case refers to a goddess or female tantric deity who serves and protects the tantric doctrine.

2 Literally, “the mouth of”.

3 Both Lopon Tenzin Namdak (LTN) and Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche (TWR) translate lnga bskrya ‘i dus, literally “the time of the five hundred,” as the kalyuga, most often snyigs ma ‘i dus in Tibetan. Lopon commented that the lnga bskrya ‘i dus ngsn indicates the division of time into 500 year increments and that over several increments of five hundred years, things get worse marking the beginning of the kalyuga. Commonly understood as the fourth or degenerate age of the aeon, the kalyuga is especially suited to the practice of the tantrams. Tenzin Rinpoche observes that, while not as common as snyigs ma ‘i dus, lnga bskrya ‘i dus is very commonly used to refer to the degenerate age or “kalyuga”.

4 This is a gloss from the commentary of LTN. Literally it means, “boiling blood.”

5 This teaching is for the student’s own personal benefit in future lives as well as for the benefit of others in the future. This passage is not referring to this life because in this context one’s current life is referred to as the present, not past or future. (LTN commentary)

6 According to Lopon’s commentary, thugs rje kun sgrol is the consort of tshe dbang rgyal ‘dzin and known to Buddhists as Vajrayogini.

7 “The teaching was taught from the dakini ‘to’ the knowledgeable masters and kept in their heart and then taught to you fortunate students. You have to be clever and know when to teach and when to keep it.” (LTN commentary).

8 This is an imperative to the students. (LTN commentary)

9 According to Namkhai Norbu the four demons or four hindrances to spiritual realization are “the demon of the passions (nyon mongs pa ‘i bshad), the demon of the physical body (phung po ‘i bshad), the demon of the lord of death (‘chi bdag gi bshad) and the demon of the son of the deities (lha ‘i bu ‘i bshad).” Drung, Deu and Bön, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, 1995 p. 271. According to Lopon, in this context the four demons (bshad bzhi) are birth, death, aging and sickness. There are usually three presentations of the four demons, i.e., the inner four demons, the external four demons and the secret four demons. When each of these manifest in form and color, and so forth, they are the external four demons. For example, all beings must be born and there is a demon who controls birth. After birth, all beings age and there is a demon who controls aging, and so forth. The inner four demons relate to ones own consciousness and emotions such as anger, desire and ignorance, which is the king of the inner demons. And the secret four demons are primarily related to grasping to the self, which is the king of the secret demons. The rest are in the service of this master demon, self-grasping. External means that the four demons are visible to us as external beings. They are visible manifestations of our own mind, much as looking in a mirror. The internal four demons manifest as emotions. The secret manifests as craving and grasping to the self, which is the main obstacle to liberation.

10 Literally, “meaning of the text”. Lopon glosses gshung don as the portion of the text that comes after the preliminaries and before the conclusion, i.e., the main part of the text containing the teaching for which the text was written.

11 Does it belong to the external, internal or secret teachings? (LTN commentary)

12 The General Bundle or sbyi spungs tantrams are from the pha rgyud or Father Tantra. There is also a very famous Bönpo tutelary deity called sbyi spungs who is associated with this very large cycle of tantrams, teachings and rituals. (LTN commentary)

13 Liberated thoughts in their own place means the dharmakaya so this could read, “it is composed by that dharmakaya, Samantabhadra.” (LTN commentary)

14 This ‘wander’ is not an aimless wandering but means that the gCod practitioner goes to a haunted, frightening place and practices there until he or she receives the signs, enumerated later in this text, that practice has been completed. He or she then moves to another haunted place, repeats the practices, receives the authentic signs of resolution and again moves to another place. It is in this sense of moving from place to place that the yogi wanders. (LTN commentary)
The evil activity of the eight classes who are testing you will become a virtuous support to your practice. (LTN commentary)

Literally, ‘close path’.

The three result bodies are the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya.

This third one was omitted from the text but according to Lopon it is ‘rjes bya’, that which follows or the conclusion.

Literally, “difficult to move or change.”

Lopon glosses this as “not following after” thoughts.

Literally, ‘become blessings’.

Teach one after the other, never two at the same time. (LTN commentary)

In order to be a lineage holder, the practitioner must receive initiation and transmission three different times separated by significant periods of time. (LTN commentary)

These faithful persons will not be lineage holders. The single lineage students will be lineage holders and therefore they receive the written text as well as the series of three initiations and transmissions over a period of years. They cannot give initiation and transmission themselves until they have had this series of three, though they can practice. (LTN commentary) Bzhin pa used in conjunction with a verb indicates continuous tense.

This is another text that is not included in the present collection. TWR does not know the reference for this text.

Literally, ‘hold his heart’. Make him happy, don’t provoke him, please him, do what he likes and don’t upset him. (LTN commentary)

spon dag refers to a custom of, the first time, giving all your property and everything you own, either to the master or to the poor before you request teachings. Then, over the years, as you accumulate more things you again divest yourself of all that you have accumulated. This text directs that this be done at least three times over a period of years. (LTN commentary)

Literally, “arouse the mind”. This refers to the cultivation of Bodhicitta or the altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

One should meditate with devotion in order to deepen ones devotion. (LTN commentary)

Dran ba nam ka was an eighth century sage. The Nine Ways of Bön. David Snellgrove. Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 3. “...very important in the later development of Bön. He is regarded as the ‘Savior of the Degenerate Age’ (snying ma'i mgon po). Accordingly his cult is widely practiced and there are many texts concerning it... We know little about his historical existence and can consult only isolated fragments in the West. The Tshe dbang snyan rgyud kyi lo rgyus (section 3 of the Tshe dbang bod yul ma,...) contains a short account of him, and it states (f. 14b3) that he had twin sons who were Tshe-dbang Rig-'dzin ... a Bon-po teacher (eighth century) and Pad-ma 'Byung-gnas (Padmasambhava). ... The nNyis-wa-pa also recognize this story as the Bon-po account of Padmasambhava...” The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon by Samten G. Karmay. Oxford University Press, London, 1972 p. xxxii n. 4.

“Kun du sang po and dBal gsas nam pa are in line with Dran ba nam ka above your head.” (LTN commentary)

“Srid pa rgyal mo is behind Dran ba nam ka and Thugs rje kun sgrol is in front of Dran ba nam ka.” (LTN commentary)

Lopon explains that the first stong is 1,000 universes and the second stong is 1,000 times 1,000 or one million and the third stong is one thousand times one million or one billion. In the mandala offering of the Long-chen Nying-thig preliminary practices, rdzogs pa chen po klong chen snying thig gi sngon 'gro'i' ngag 'don khrigs su bshed pa mam khyen lam bzang zhes bya ba bzhugs so, the phrase, stong gsum 'jig rten bya ba phrag brgya'i zhiing... following Tulu Khyung, is translated (page 26 of a practice text compiled by First Dodrup Chen, Jig-med thrin-le od-zer) as a billion universes of three thousand-fold worlds. While translating the same section in Tantric Practice in Nyingma, Hopkins uses almost the identical English phrase to translate the two different Tibetan phrases, i.e., “...a thousand million world systems each having a thousand million worlds....” This corresponds with Lopon’s enumeration of stong gsum as a thousand million or one billion.
In his translation of sections of the Bön Zijid, Namkhai Norbu translates stong sum as “three thousand world systems” (p. 127 Drung, Deu and Bön). Snellgrove translates stong sum in several different ways in his translation of the same sections of the Zijid in The Nine Ways of Bön: “phenomenal existence” (p. 92-93), “the vastness of the universe” (90-91), “the 1,000 times 3,000 world complex” (80-81), and “the 3,000 fold universe” (80-81).

34 When ‘dzin and zhen are understood as separate words, zhen is a weaker form of attachment than is ‘dzin.

35 While the text does not specify the color in the case of the AH and the HUM, Lopon Tenzin Namdak points out in his oral commentary on this passage that traditionally the AH is white and the HUM is blue.

36 Kun du sang po and dPal gsas nam pa.

37 Thugs rje kun sgrol

38 Srid pa rgyal mo. Bon skyong is comparable to the Buddhist term, chos skyong, translated as dharma protector or protector of the teachings. This is, in fact, the role of Srid pa rgyal mo within the Bön tradition. In regard to the comparability of bon and chos Snellgrove writes, “By the few bonpos who know their texts well Bön is explained as the Tibetan equivalent of the Zhang Zhung term gyer which means ‘chant’. Textual ‘evidence’ can be shown for this in the titles of works said to be translated from the language of Zhang Zhung into Tibetan. Here bon is regularly glossed by gyer. This is the original meaning they say, for they know that bon now covers all the meanings of the Tibetan Buddhist term chos. As is well known, chos simply translates Sanskrit dharma in all its Buddhist meanings.” The Nine Ways of Bön, David L. Snellgrove. Oxford University Press, London, 1967 p. 1. Namkhai Norbu does not make the connection between don and gyer. His understanding of the etymology of bon is the verb bon pa meaning, “to recite magical formulas.” Following this thread, he connects the recitation of mantras with control of the unseen energies and forces that the early Bönpo understood to inhabit his environment. “Chant” and “to recite magical formulas” are not unrelated. I must admit it is not clear to me how Snellgrove made the leap from “chant” to “chos”. However, it is clear to me that bon and chos are used in similar ways by the Bonpos and the Buddhist respectively. Another example is the Bonpo usage of bon sku as equivalent to the Buddhist term chos sku translated by each respectively as “dharma-kaya.”

TWI believes that in this text, bon sku and the Buddhist term, chos sku, translated as ‘dharma-kaya’ can be used interchangeably in the sense that they both signify a comparable, if not identical, referent.

39 shen la ’od gar

40 “At least you must integrate the practice of body and speech with the practice of merit - ge sbyor is the merit.” (LTN commentary.)

41 Lopon’s gloss is that you as the dakini bless the mixture of blood and flesh.”

42 “Thim par means received into them. They have received from the nectar what they are intended to have.” (LTN commentary.)

43 See n. 38.

44 Lopon comments, “both thinking and reciting…”

45 Prayer is sowed deeply, is deeply felt.

46 Bzum here means hold or recognize, to catch or hold, not diluting, to keep the focus.

47 Here rig pa means ordinary awareness, not innate awareness. (LTN commentary)

48 Lopon comments, “where the piece breaks is free of dust and dirt and is perfectly fresh and completely clean and shining and clear white.”

49 Lopon comments, “in the body the channels are very fine but when you visualize them you should visualize them wider, as a bamboo arrow.”

50 You press the upper air down and the lower air up and you hold it firmly. Lopon understands this to describe the bum can.

51 Five rainbow colors
This is the dharmakaya which naturally abides in yourself. After this thigle integrates with space and there is nothing remaining, that is the primordial dharmakaya and that is also the dharmakaya with is integrated with your nature. (LTN commentary)

Thod rgyal visions (LTN commentary)

In this case rig pa is the nature. (LTN commentary)

Lopon glosses “produced without any causes and conditions” as “the unborn.”

These two, the sambogakaya and the nirmanakaya, are empty and clear and are inseparable from clarity and emptiness. We talked about this in a different way in the Twenty-One Nails. The base three kayas, the path three kayas and the result three kayas are all according to the empty nature. Usually, according to the basic pattern, the dharmakaya is considered to be associated with the empty nature and clarity is associated with the sambogakaya and the unification of clarity and empty nature is the nirmanakaya. But here, as in the Twenty-One Nails, the three kayas have the same nature. They each are slightly different from the empty side and the clarity side and the unification but they each go back to the same source, the same nature. (LTN commentary)

Sanskrit = kayas. Lopon, “all three bodies have the same dharmakaya nature.”

We have already separated the body and mind and now we leave the body without attachment to the mind. Once your body is separated from your mind all the gods and ghosts can eat your body. You tell them "whoever wants to eat, whatever you want to eat, eat. If you don’t want it you can leave it." (LTN commentary)

Lopon comments, “compare your body to the corpse and realize there is nothing worth being attached to.”

mDzad pa is a transitive verb indicating an action of an enlightened being. In this context it is not explicitly translated.

This is changing, not places, but different methods of focusing depending on the object... Change the focusing and cut the thoughts into the nature... For the most part, gdon is a category that covers the eight classes of beings. gdon are not beings but are disturbances associated with a number of beings. If someone is sick or disturbed, they may ask the geod pa to subdue and purify the disturbance. The geod pa would then ask the patient specifically what is wrong and when did the disturbance start, and so forth. In that way the geod pa determines which of the eight classes of beings is causing the disturbance and he can focus on that being or class of beings for the purpose of subduing or sending them away. (LTN commentary)

gDon is not actually a being but are disturbances associated mainly with the eight classes of beings. (LTN commentary)

This refers to your parents in past, present and future lives. (LTN commentary) All sentient beings have been or will be our parents in past, present and future lives.

Consort of Tshe dbang rig 'dzin

In the tradition her actual face is not that of a wild pig. She has a wrathful face and the face of a wild pig is on the left side of her head facing to the left. (LTN commentary)

The offering (mchod) is made to the high guests and the gift (sbyin) is made to the lower guests. (LTN commentary)

You decorate the heart with the flesh and blood, i.e., the remainder of the skinned body. (LTN commentary)

The eighth way of Bön, the Primeval Shen (ve gshen theg pa), identifies the five aasonic seed syllables the same as the first five syllables of this mantra, A, OM, HUM, RAM and DZA. (Nine Ways of Bon, p. 301)

The “pure ones” are the three jewels, in this instance the lama, tutelary deity and dakini, the high guests.

The five attributes of desire are the five sense objects, which refer to the lower guests. (LTN commentary)

You offer to the four guests. The first guests are the lama, tutelary deity and the dakini, second, the two classes of guardians, bon skyon and dpal rgyon, third are the eight classes and fourth are the beings of the six realms.

Lopon comments that this could mean the practitioner remains in the natural state between offering to each of the four guests. In other words, the practitioner would offer to the lama, tutelary deity and the dakini after which she would remain in the natural state. Then she would offer to the two classes of guardians and then remain in the natural state, and so forth.
3 You make offering in the presence of the gods and ghosts so that they can witness your generosity. If someone owes you money and instead of paying back the penny what they owe, they repay you many times over, you could be moved to tremendous gratitude and transformed by the compassionate and generous gift that was not owed to you and that you did not deserve. (LTN commentary)

3 I give my body to the owner of the diseases and energetic disturbances, the gods and ghosts, in order to relieve those diseases and energetic disturbances. (LTN commentary)

3 If a person goes to a ferocious place and the spirit owner of that place is disturbed, then that spirit landlord can cause the person to become ill. In this part you focus on the place the ill person has gone and the owner there who has been disturbed, in short, the place where the disease started. (LTN commentary)

3 When you realize that everything is created by thoughts, then thoughts are cut and the sickness and disturbances disappear. (LTN commentary)

7 Lopon comments, “not a spiritual evil but a practical evil.”

7 Lopon’s gloss is “worldly spirits.”

7 This refers to the three Buddha bodies, i.e., the body of Bön, the Complete Enjoyment body, and the Emanation body also known as the dharmakaya, the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya.

8 The aggregates are your own body so you offer your own body as the ganapuja. (LTN commentary)

8 Lopon comments, “these are the lama, the dharma, the Buddha and the Bodhisattva and all their followers and all the doctrines and all who have the moral disciplines and the ten paramitas.”

8 Lopon comments, “you have to develop devotion from your own side.”

8 Lopon comments, “good thoughts or bad thoughts or whatever is going on in your normal, present consciousness.”

8 Or the dharmakaya without object or without focusing.

8 The mind does not remain in the place where you put it, i.e., it does not remain in stillness. (TWR commentary)

8 Ngos bzang literally means “to grasp by the side”. In this case, not being able to grasp by the side means that is this state of emptiness there is nothing to grasp and no one to grasp, i.e., a non-dual state.

87 gZhan, in this case, is used as “moreover”. The preceding genitive connects two independent clauses. LTN said “khrul snang means deluded appearance of awareness. And all these delusions are all kinds of thought activities, otherwise there is nothing grasping and nothing exists, dngos po med pa, without entityness, without being real, no entityness. You must know this without grasping and without entityness – no source, empty nature. gZhan means that everything is only created for thought activities, otherwise there is nothing beyond thoughts. gZhan is beyond thought. There is nothing exists beyond the thought activities.” TWR said “it is just the thought – there is nothing there besides just appearance from the thought. The subject is the deluded perception of awareness. This, one should know. What is this? There are a couple of things – it is empty without grasping, without essence. Besides, it is not merely arising of manifestation of conceptual thought.”

88 Literally, “produce in continuity.”

89 “It means you have to arise into your nature continuously without grasping. rGyud means continuously practicing. Previously you are meditating, practicing continuously in the natural state. Still you must practice in the natural state without grasping – continuously – go on.” (LTN commentary.)

90 Lopon glosses this as, “without thoughts.”

91 Lopon comments, “you have to think this continuously and you have to practice into the clarity nature.”

92 Literally, “mental continuums.”

93 This is the meaning according to Lopon. Alternative, “the circumstances of having illness and suffering are because of having a body.”

94 I took this meaning of ‘grus ba, which frequently means diligence, enthusiasm or zeal, from Lopon’s commentary.

95 ‘Rgyab’ is Kampo language meaning ‘after you leave’. (LTN commentary)
Give your body to the ones creating disturbances.

Sometimes this is checked and found to be cancer, not always. (LTN commentary)

Literal, “to wither.” In “The Bon of Medicine” Norbu discusses the energetic disturbances (gdon) caused by provoking beings and enumerates a few of the eight classes: “sixty thousand types of beings who demand payment through the provocation of negative energies” found in the gZi brjod, snyan bryug of blo ldan snying po (1360-?): The Dol po Tshat mkha’ manuscript TBM 1978. Skem byed is listed as one ‘that emaciates’. Drung, Deu and Bon, op. cit., pp. 142 & 268 n.30.

These dream symbols are not always signs of energetic disturbances. Only if they occur in the context of doing this gcud practice do they have the meaning specified by this text. (LTN commentary)

Lopon comments, “similar to the situation a paralyzed person would be in.”

The btsan spirits are frequently associated with the color red. (LTN commentary)

Isolated places where the bodies of lepers are disposed.

“pond”

LTN translated this as “black earth”.

According to both Lopon and Tenzin Rinpoche, this refers to a place from which you can see several valleys lined up one after the other and is a common place for the btsan spirits to gather.

Shing nags is usually translated “forest”. “Very old, big trees” is LTN’s gloss.

Be stable and clearly visualize the objects of meditation, which are the various energetic disturbances. (LTN commentary)

When in the fearsome place, the practitioner invites more fear, not less. The practitioner seeks to intensify the fear. As fear is increased, clarity and focus increase. (Lopon’s commentary)

LTN commentary

“This is the same as nam rtog. sNyams byed may not be in use today but it means ‘thought’.” (LTN commentary)

The offering is sent to the higher of the four guests and the gift is given to the lower guests.

This is a show of power as the gcud pa stands and jumps around on the fearsome place.

When a person successfully practices in the fearsome place, the gods and ghosts of that place will be under his control. They will make offerings to him and obey what he teaches and promise not to disturb other beings. This power over obstacles to practice is, itself, a sign of accomplishment. It is in this sense that the demons and obstructers bestow the signs of accomplishment. (LTN commentary)

The bells.

Lopon’s gloss is that your body is the wish-fulfilling jewel for the sick person as well as all beings.

Lopon says that you can use the same visualization to make the water offering.

I asked Lopon if kho rabs means your own body or the body of the ill person and he said this is your own body.

This is a reference to # 2, 46.8.

The, 'khris, and bad kan are commonly translated as I have rendered them here: wind, bile and phlegm. However, it is also understood that this English does not adequately translate the Tibetan in all valences. I discuss this more in Chapter 2 in the section on Tibetan medicine.

One’s mind is not very clear.

Literally “inconstant actions” which Lopon glossed as referring to the activities of the mind, manifesting as an inability to concentrate.

His body is dark brown according to Lopon.

According to Lopon, skal tshoms is honorific for “long beard.”
124 Tenzin Rinpoche describes stong khyung mithu chen as having “a red face, full and bright.”

125 Eric’s dictionary has “the fire at the end of the aeon” as well as “cosmic flame.” Lopon glosses this as “a huge fire.”

126 “The geod pa has to visualize the burning nectar coming down the central channel of the ill person. The central channel branches and the fiery nectar fills up all the persons channels.” (LTN commentary)

127 Lopon glossed rlung kha shyor as vase breathing in which one tightens the lower part of the body and pushes the wind up at the same time tightening the upper part of the body and pushing the wind downward, then holding the breath as long as possible. Erik’s electronic dictionary says that kha shyor rlung and bum can are synonyms.

128 “The main point for the geod pa is that he, himself, becomes purified and develops and achieves in his development of knowledge and meditation. This is the aim of these instructions. But, besides that, people can ask the geod pa for healing and he will help if he can, although this is not his main work.” (LTN commentary)

129 This is literally, “bile disease” but Lopon glossed it as gall bladder disease.

130 Lopon describes seng seng as a verbal description of a sound that is made when water comes whooshing through an opening, i.e., water running from a faucet or steam coming through a teakettle.

131 Lopon commented on the fact that phung means “abundant,” or “gathering.” “After taking the sickness out through the mouth, the channels would be empty. Then the nectar pours into them and fills all the channels of the ill person.”

132 Lopon glossed stim pa as “integrate.”

133 Lopon said that li ljang means “to stretch” and this indicated Tshe dbang rig ’dzin’s long hair is hanging loose. “Sometimes siddhis tie their hair up and li ljang means to leave it hanging.”

134 “Ting nam is Zhang Zhung language for ‘water’ and chu is the Tibetan for ‘water.’ So you have the Zhang Zhung word and then the translation in Tibetan. Having two names for the same thing happens quite often in our tradition.” (LTN commentary)

135 “The wisdom water nectar is poured onto the crown head and streams into the open central channel. kyu ru ru means that when the nectar is going down the central channel, you feel it chilling and your body becomes cold.” (LTN commentary)

136 Literally, “shred.” Lopon says, “sil sil is like shredded ice. grang sil le means that you have goose bumps. It is a feeling, like chills. bu ga means the openings of the hair follicles. chab khrom means the frozen white material that oozes out the hair follicles.”

137 “There are two things, the sickness and the feeling about the sickness. Both are grasping to sickness. If you think ‘Oh, I am sick so often!’ the feeling about being sick is very much tied up with your thoughts about being sick. Also, some people think they are sick even if they are not really sick. This is grasping to the sickness.” (LTN commentary)

138 Literally, “mist” or “dissolve”.

139 Or “to hold” or “to fix on”.

140 Honorific. Related to bsams pa & snom.

141 According to Lopon, the Bonpo tradition understands this to mean “from the right”. Buddhists understand it to mean “to the right”.

142 Mar me is usually translated “butter lamp” but since this refers to the lamp of clear wisdom in the previous sentence, I have translated it here simply as “lamp”.

143 “When the geod pa first goes to the fearsome place to subdue the beings, the gods and ghosts there must respond to his challenge – good or bad depending on whether or not they accept that he stays there. If they don’t like him being there they create a magical display that shows him they don’t accept him. Nevertheless, the geod pa is determined to stay there. Whatever magical display the beings show to discourage, intimidate and chase away the geod pa is stongs thad.” (LTN commentary)

144 “After the geod pa does practice in that fearsome place and the being, who is a permanent dweller there, is unable to frighten or chase him away with it’s magical displays, the being might pretend to be subdued in order to fool the
"god pa into thinking his work is finished. Because of this the god pa must check several times to make sure the signs of successful termination are authentic. This checking is chod tsad." (LTN commentary.)

"After the god pa has checked again and again, as a sign that the being or beings in that fearsome place are successfully subdued, they offer him whatever siddhas and powers they are able to give. They obey the god pa and listen to his teaching. This is tshar tsad." (LTN commentary)

"These magical display can occur in a dream or a vision or experience. The Mother Tantra describes them as the visible and the invisible. The visible things are like hail, lightning or storming, and so forth. At that time it is better not to take unnecessary risks, like practicing at the bottom of a steep hill where rocks could fall on you. The god pa should not overestimate his power. The visible disturbances are only for very advanced practitioners. Otherwise, only do the visualizations." These signs only have this significance in the context of doing this practice. For example, if you are not doing this practice and dream of a dog or a wolf, etc., they do not have the same significance as they do in the context of this practice. (LTN commentary)

Literally means ‘beaten’ but the action is that of goring with horns. (TWR)

A dzo is the offspring of a bull and a female yak. (LTN commentary)

Without actually seeing anyone, you hear someone calling your name and when you look you can’t see who it is. (LTN commentary)

OR “light and easily carried away”. (LTN commentary)

Neither TWR nor LTN are able to translate gya rdul. "gya means to move or shake and rdul means dust or powder. Storming or shaking the dust. This is not very clear and is not a normal word. Something is left out. I can’t do much with this, just leave it out." (LTN commentary)

This type of tent, sbra, is made from rough yak hair and is big and hard to move. It has a dome shaped top with an opening in the center for smoke to escape. It is water proof and very warm in the cold, Tibetan winters. (LTN commentary)

The gwar is a smaller, lighter, more portable tent made from soft yak hair or cloth in many different shapes. (LTN commentary)

"wide yak" is usually written gwa ggod but sometimes it appears like this. A wide yak is useless as a domestic animal. (LTN commentary).

"Merchants are leaving town and moving their business from place to place, i.e., becoming peddlers." (LTN commentary)

In this context in which the text is speaking of nomadic activity, sms can does not refer to all sentient beings, only domestic animals. The nomads would tether the animals on a long rope and grol ba refers to the animals getting free on their own, i.e., that no one let them loose. (LTN commentary)

This is TWR’s translation. LTN could not translate this phrase and neither can I.

Literally, “to untie” or “to liberate”.

Symbols, bells, drums, horns, etc.

"The god pa must not leave the place before the authentic signs of resolution come. If he does, he has to take a piece of rock from the place and continue to practice using visualization as he tries to subdue the beings of that place again and again until the valid indicators of resolution come. Otherwise it will be dangerous for him. When the signs come, first of all he does the dedication and then he must put the place in good order, like he found it. He must set up offerings and repair anything he has destroyed, such as prayer flags, and so forth. Then he moves to another place.” (LTN commentary)

This means the sick person asks him or herself when and where was the beginning of the sickness or trouble. (LTN commentary)

bSkul ma also has the sense of “reminding.” bTab means “to sow, plant, mark or throw” and adds the sense of being pointed in the direction of or focused on or established in spiritual practice.

In this context “arrive” means you have gone beyond. (TWR commentary)
At this point the *gcod pa* begins to teach the subdued spirits. (LTN commentary)

In other words, when you die. (LTN commentary)

or aversion

*sTong rgyung mths chen*

*Thugs rje kun sgrol*

There are karmic causes relating this dakini to the author. The author has clear instructions from the dakini who is related to him by the karmic causes." (LTN commentary)

"*Om tshod* may be the Kampa dialect. It means freely, not depending on text or source. Here it means ‘careless’." (LTN commentary)

This sentence means that the inspired words of this text were composed carefully, with clear understanding and with reliance on sources from the tradition. *Om tshod, tshod bzod* and *na chod* are negative words that are negated by *med par* at the end of the phrase. (LTN commentary)

Lopon glosses this as “with an intention as pure as a golden island.”

*Rang rig yi shes don* refers to this text. (LTN commentary)

“*sPa* is the surname of the person who copied the text. It is one of the most common surnames of our lineage.” (LTN commentary)

Lopon glossed *rtog ldan* as “yogi”.


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Appendix I
Chinese man undergoing the 'hundred pieces' torture.

Appendix II
བཏོད་བཟངས་ིན་ཅིང་གི་མི་འབད་བུག་སོགས།

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བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས། བོད་པ་དོན་བཟངས་བཟངས་དཔེ་ནོས་དོན་བཟངས།

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བོད་ལུགས་ཐོབ་གྱི་དོན་དཔལ་ཞི་སོགས་པའི་ཕྲོ་ཕྲུག་ཅིག་ཅེས་བཱས་དགིས། རྡོ་ད་བཟང་གྲོ་བོའི་ཡུལ་ཤིང་། རྟེན་པོ་ལྟ་འགྲོ་བོའི་ཕྲུལ་ནི་ཁྲི་པ་དཀར་འར་ཆེན་སྙིང་བཟང་པོའི་བོད་ལུགས་ཐོབ་གྱི་དོན་དཔལ་ཞི་སོགས་པའི་ཕྲོ་ཕྲུག་ཅིག་ཅེས་བཱས་དགིས་ཀྱི་ཁྲི་བུའི་ཕྲུལ་ནི།}
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藏文
བོད་ཀྱི་དོན་དག་བོད་ཀྱི་བོད་ཡིག་སྟེང་བའི་བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཤུགས་དང་པོ་ཤུགས་པར་བོད་ཀྱི་དོན་དག་གི་མི་གནང་གི་དོན་དག་གི་མི་གནང་གི་དོན་དག་གི་མི་གནང་གི་དོན་དག་གི་མི་གནང་གི
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བད་དང་དམིགས་པའི་ལུགས་ནི་ལོག་རྣམ་སྐྱེས་པའི་དེ་ལེགས་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པ་ནི་དེ་ཡིན་པས་མི་བཞིན་པ་སྨིལ་དུ་བཞིན་པའི་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པར་ཆེན་མེད་པར་གྱུར་ཏེ།

བད་དང་དམིགས་པའི་ལུགས་ནི་ལོག་རྣམ་སྐྱེས་པའི་དེ་ལེགས་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པའི་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པར་ཆེན་མེད་པར་གྱུར་ཏེ།

བད་དང་དམིགས་པའི་ལུགས་ནི་ལོག་རྣམ་སྐྱེས་པའི་དེ་ལེགས་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པའི་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པར་ཆེན་མེད་པར་གྱུར་ཏེ།

བད་དང་དམིགས་པའི་ལུགས་ནི་ལོག་རྣམ་སྐྱེས་པའི་དེ་ལེགས་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པའི་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པར་ཆེན་མེད་པར་གྱུར་ཏེ།

བད་དང་དམིགས་པའི་ལུགས་ནི་ལོག་རྣམ་སྐྱེས་པའི་དེ་ལེགས་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པའི་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པར་ཆེན་མེད་པར་གྱུར་ཏེ།

བད་དང་དམིགས་པའི་ལུགས་ནི་ལོག་རྣམ་སྐྱེས་པའི་དེ་ལེགས་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པའི་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པར་ཆེན་མེད་པར་གྱུར་ཏེ།

བད་དང་དམིགས་པའི་ལུགས་ནི་ལོག་རྣམ་སྐྱེས་པའི་དེ་ལེགས་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པའི་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པར་ཆེན་མེད་པར་གྱུར་ཏེ།

བད་དང་དམིགས་པའི་ལུགས་ནི་ལོག་རྣམ་སྐྱེས་པའི་དེ་ལེགས་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པའི་དབྱིང་པོ་ཞེས་པར་ཆེན་མེད་པར་གྱུར་ཏེ།
喇嘛吉麻巴桑吉仲姆、白玛拉桑杰立、德让仁增桑波、南杰、顿珠、多杰坚赞、桑杰、南杰、顿珠。
ཅེས་པའི་དེ་དག་སྤྲོད་བཅོས་པ་མེད་པར་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ། དེ་དག་རྩོལ་བ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ། དེ་དག་རྩོལ་བ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་ཅོད་རེད་ཞིང་བཞིན་ཐེག་ཆེན་པོ་བསྡུས་པ་ལ་ཐུབ་retch
ཞིག་ཟིན་གི་བོད་ཀྱི་ལྷང་སྐར། དེ་བོད་ཀྱི་བོད་ཀྱི་ལྷང་སྐར་གཟུགས་ཀྱིས་ཕན་ཡིན་གྱིས་ཡིན་པའི་བོད་ཀྱི་ལྷང་སྐར་གཟུགས་ཀྱིས་བཤད་པ་ཐོན་མི་བོད་ཀྱི་ལྷང་སྐར་གཟུགས་ཀྱིས་བཤད་པ་ཐོན་མི་བོད་ཀྱི་ལྷང་སྐར་གཟུགས་ཀྱིས་བཤད་པ་ཐོན་མི་བོད་ཀྱི་ལྷང་སྐར་གཟུགས་ཀྱིས་བཤད་པ་ཐོན་མི་བོད་ཀྱི་ལྷང་སྐར་གཟུགས་ཀྱིས་བཤད་.pbx
བོད་ཀྱི་ལྷག་དབེན་བཅོས་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་བོད་ཀྱི་དབེན་བཅོས་ལེགས་པ་ཕུལ་ཐོབ་མངའ་
๒๓ ซึ่งนี้ด้วย ตรัสรู้สังเกตุ นิคิตะ ที่ได้รับจักรวาล จิตวิจินต์

๒๔ สิ่งนี้เป็นสิ่งที่ไม่ได้รับการอนุญาต จิตวิจินต์

๒๕ ตรัสรู้สังเกตุ นิคิตะ ที่ได้รับจักรวาล จิตวิจินต์

๒๖ สิ่งนี้เป็นสิ่งที่ไม่ได้รับการอนุญาต จิตวิจินต์

๒๗ ตรัสรู้สังเกตุ นิคิตะ ที่ได้รับจักรวาล จิตวิจินต์
ནི་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱིས་བདེན་པ་ཤིང་གི་ཐོས་པའི་རྒྱ་ཆུས་ཀྱི་ཤིང་རིང་ལ་ཞིག་བྱུང་། དེ་ལྟ་ཐུབ་སྤྱི་ཚེ་བར་མ་ཞིག་བྱལ་ནས་དེ་ལ་བྱུང་གི་སྐྱོད་ཞིག་བཟང་དུ་གཞི་ལྟར་བྱས་པའི་ནི་མི་ལུས་སྐོར་ཐེག་པའི་ཁྱོགས་ཁྱོགས་གཅིག་གི་སྟེང་། འཐོན་པས་ཐོས་པའི་རྒྱ་ཆུས་ཀྱི་ཤིང་རིང་ལ་དེས་ཡོད་པའི་ནི་མཁས་པའི་སྐོར་དུ་པོ་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཕུག་ཟད་རོང་ལྡན་པའི་བོད་ཡིག་གི་སྟེང་། འཐོན་པན་ཐོས་པའི་རྒྱ་ཆུས་ཀྱི་ཤིང་རིང་ལ་དེས་ཡོད་པའི་ནི་མཁས་པའི་སྐོར་དུ་པོ་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཕུག་ཟད་རོང་ལྡན་པའི་བོད་ཡིག་གི་སྟེང་། འཐོན་པས་ཤིང་གི་ཐོས་པའི་རྒྱ་ཆུས་ཀྱི་ཤིང་རིང་ལ་དེས་ཡོད་པའི་ནི་མཁས་པའི་སྐོར་དུ་པོ་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཕུག་ཟད་རོང་ལྡན་པའི་བོད་ཡིག་གི་སྟེང་། འཐོན་པས་ཤིང་གི་ཐོས་པའི་རྒྱ་ཆུས་ཀྱི་ཤིང་རིང་ལ་དེས་ཡོད་པའི་ནི་མཁས་པའི་སྐོར་དུ་པོ་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཕུག་ཟད་རོང་ལྡན་པའི་བོད་ཡིག་གི་སྟེང་།
དག་getRepository(52)

དྲོག་པའི་འདིར་བར་ནས། ཆུགས་པའི་འདིར་བར་ནས། ཆུགས་པའི་འདིར་བར་ནས། ཆུགས་པའི་འདིར་བར་ནས། ཆུགས་པའི་འདིར་བར་ནས། ཆུགས་པའི་འདིར་བར་ནས། ཆུགས་པའི་འདིར་བར་ནས།

དགེ་འབུབ་བུལ་བའི་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་�ེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་པར་ཐོབ་མེད་pb.png
西藏之时，达赖喇嘛达桑日格桑王赞，以布洛希仁波切等宿世善根为基础，于乾隆四十四年（1779年）将西藏噶当派的《大藏经》于拉萨大昭寺内修护寺中，其名曰“大藏经”，藏文称为“大藏经”。此经是藏传佛教中最重要的经文，其内容涵盖了藏传佛教的教义、仪轨、密法等。
བར་འབྲེལ་དི་ལོག་ནི་ཞི་ཁྱད་དང་རང་རོལ་གསུམ་བཞིན་གསུམ་གྱི་ཐོན་ཕྲན་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་གསུམ་གྱི་སྐོད་རྟེན་ཐབས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་གསུམ་གྱི་ཚོགས་རྙིང་ཐབས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་གསུམ་གྱི་བཟང་པོ་ནི་བཞིན་གསུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་གསུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་གསུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་གསུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་�སུམ་གྱི་གསུམ་པར་བཅས་མཐོང་དེ་བཞིན་games.
བདེ་བ་དེ་རིམ་པའི་ཁོ་སྦྱོང་བུ་སྣང་མོ་ཙམ་ཨོ་འཐོ་དུམ་ཐིག་བཅིག་གི་གཞི་ཐུགས་བཞི་ཡོད་དུ་སོགས་སུ་གཞི་ཐུགས་བཞི་ཡོད་དུ་དགོཊ་ཕོག་པའི་དགོཊ་ཕོག་པའི་ཐོན་མོཊ་པས་རིམ་པའི་ཁོ་སྦྱོང་བུ་སྣང་མོ་ཙམ་ཨོ་འཐོ་དུམ་ཐིག་བཅིག་

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བདེ་བ་དེ་རིམ་པའི་ཁོ་སྦྱོང་བུ་སྣང་མོ་ཙམ་ཨོ་འཐོ་དུམ་ཐིག་བཅིག་

བདེ་བ་དེ་རིམ་པའི་ཁོ་སྦྱོང་བུ་སྣང་མོ་ཙམ་ཨོ་འཐོ་དུམ་ཐིག་བཅིག་

བདེ་བ་དེ་རིམ་པའི་ཁོ་སྦྱོང་བུ་སྣང་མོ་ཙམ་ཨོ་འཐོ་དུམ་ཐིག་བཅིག་

བཀྲ་ཤིས་ངོ་ནི་མི་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བསྟན་ཟེར་གྱི་སྦྱོར་བཞི་བཞི་དེ་དུ་དེ་ཤིས་ལོ་དོན་དང་བཞིན་
དེ་བཞི་ནི་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཤུགས་ཐབས་ཀྱི་ཤེས་ཤུགས་སྲིད་མོ་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བཞི་ནི་
མི་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བསྟན་ཟེར་གྱི་སྦྱོར་བཞི་ནི་དེ་བཞི་ནི་དེ་དུ་དེ་ཤིས་ལོ་དོན་དང་
བཞིན་དེ་བཞི་ནི་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཤུགས་ཐབས་ཀྱི་ཤེས་ཤུགས་སྲིད་མོ་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བཞི་ནི་
མི་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བསྟན་ཟེར་གྱི་སྦྱོར་བཞི་ནི་དེ་བཞི་ནི་དེ་དུ་དེ་ཤིས་ལོ་དོན་དང་
བཞིན་དེ་བཞི་ནི་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཤུགས་ཐབས་ཀྱི་ཤེས་ཤུགས་སྲིད་མོ་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བཞི་ནི་
མི་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བསོད་བསྟན་ཟེར་གྱི་སྦྱོར་བཞི་ནི་དེ་བཞི་ནི་དེ་དུ་དེ་ཤིས་ལོ་དོན་
དང་བཞིན་དེ་བཞི་ནི་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཤུགས་ཐབས་ཀྱི་ཤེས་ཤུགས་སྲིད་མོ་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བཞི་ནི་
མི་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བསྟན་ཟེར་གྱི་སྦྱོར་བཞི་ནི་དེ་བཞི་ནི་དེ་དུ་དེ་ཤིས་ལོ་དོན་
དང་བཞིན་དེ་བཞི་ནི་ལེགས་ཅིག་གི་ཤུགས་ཐབས་ཀྱི་ཤེས་ཤུགས་སྲིད་མོ་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བཞི་ནི་
མི་འགྲོ་བསྟོད་པ་ཤེས་བསྟན་ཟེར་གྱི་སྦྱོར་བཞི་ནི་

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Notes

1 Excerpted from a collection of Bon-po chöd texts: zab lam gnaad kyi gdaams pa drug mu gcod chen gvi gsun pod, folios 38-58.

2 dbu med (ギュドン) text has ཡི་. Lopon Tenzin Namdak (LTN) corrected it to རྒྱ་.

3 dbu med text has ཤར. LTN corrected it to སྒྲ་.

4 dbu med text has ཤུ་. LTN corrected it to ཤུ་.

5 dbu med text has སྒྲ་.

6 dbu med text does not have a འ. LTN inserted it.

7 dbu med text has ཤུ་. LTN corrected it to ཤུ་.

8 Shorter version of ཤུ་མི་མི་ཨེ་.

9 dbu med text has ཤུ་. LTN corrected it to ཤུ་. ཤུ་ཨེ་ཨེ་ refers to the members of the eight classes who were creating hindrances and obstructions to you.

10 dbu med text has ཤུ་. LTN corrected it to ཤུ་.

11 dbu med text has ཤུ་. LTN corrected it to ཤུ་.

12 LTN corrected the dbu med text from རྡོ་ to རཉོ་.

13 LTN correction to the dbu med text: རཉོ་.

14 LTN corrected the dbu med text from ཤུ་ to ཤུ་.

15 LTN corrected the dbu med text from ཤུ་ to ཤུ་.

16 LTN corrected the dbu med text from ཤུ་ to ཤུ་.

17 LTN corrected the dbu med text from ཤུ་ to ཤུ་.

18 LTN added the ལ་ to the dbu med text.

19 LTN added ཤུ་.

20 LTN corrected spelling.

21 LTN textual correction. Replaces ཤུ་ with ཤུ་.

22 LTN textual correction. Add ཤུ་ མ་.
23 LTN removed ཀུན་ from the dbu med text.
24 LTN removed the བོ མོ from བོ མོ and removed བོ མོ altogether.
25 LTN corrected the spelling of བོ མོ to བོ མོ བོ མོ.
26 LTN removed the repeated བོ མོ བོ མོ.
27 dbu med text has གུན་ but according to LTN, the གུ མོ subscript is old style and should be removed.
28 dbu med text has གུན་ but LTN corrected to གུན་ གུན་.
29 LTN corrected the dbu med text from གུན་ to གུན་.
30 LTN corrected the dbu med text from གུན་ to གུན་.
31 LTN added ཕོ prefix to the dbu med text.
32 LTN added ཕོ prefix to the dbu med text.
33 LTN added ཕོ prefix to the dbu med text.
34 LTN textual correction from གུན་ to གུན་ གུན་.
35 LTN textual correction from གུན་ to གུན་ གུན་.
36 LTN textual correction from གུན་ to གུན་.
37 LTN textual correction from གུན་ to གུན་.
38 Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche (TWR) textual correction from གུན་ to གུན་.
39 TWR textual correction from གུན་ to གུན་.
Appendix III
ZAB LAM GNAD KYI GDAMS PA DRUG MU GCOD CHEN GYI GSUÑ POD

A collection of Bonpo Gcod texts: tantras (rgyud), rituals (cho-ga), and instructions (khrid-yig)

Received in a vision from Ston-rgyun-mthu-chen by Gsen-gsas Lha-rje

Reproduced from an ancient manuscript preserved at Bsam-gliṅ Monastery in Dol-po (Northwestern Nepal) by Tsultrim Tashi

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TIBETAN BONPO MONASTIC CENTRE
NEW THOBGYAL, P.O. OCHGHAT (VIA SOLAN)
H. P.
1973
PREFACE

Gcod practices are common to both Buddhist and Bonpo traditions of Lamaism. Villagers and nomads throughout the Bhotia speaking areas often invoke the services of Gcod-pa wizards (sngags-pa) whenever malevolent influences threaten or death occurs. The practice of Gcod, literally "cutting", spread from Ma-gcig Lab-sgon and Pha Dam pa Sangs-rgyas through all the Buddhist traditions of Tibet. Several scholars, both Tibetan and non-Tibetan, have sought an origin for the Gcod funeral practices in Zoroastrianism and the Iranian speaking lands. It was from precisely these areas that many Bonpo teachings spread to Tibet.

Bonpo tradition divides Gcod practice into three types: a) Zhi ba'i gcod, e. g. the A dkar zhi gcod (which we have not yet been able to discover in India or Nepal); b) Rgyas pa'i gcod, e. g. the Drung mu gcod chen (reproduced in the present volume); c) Dbang gi gcod, e. g. Mkha' 'gro gsang gcod (the cho-ga have already appeared in a 2 volume lithographic print and the tantra will soon appear under the auspices of the Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre). The "New" Bon (Bon gsar) adds a fourth, the drag po'i gcod.

The Drung mu gcod chen teachings found in this volume represent precepts from Stong-rgyung-mthu-chen) to Gshen-gyas Lha-rje alias Go-Ide 'Phags-pa G.yung-drung-ye-shes and Gnyos Nyi-ma-shes-rab, who flourished before 1310.

The original manuscript used for reproduction belongs to the Bsam-gling Monastery in Dol-po. We are grateful to our coreligionists in Dol-po for making it available for reproduction. May the appearance of these teachings be of benefit to all sentient creatures.

Mutsuk Marol
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41. Հայրենիստական շրջանակներում պատմության և մշակույթի զարգացման այս քայլերի եւ նրանց պատմական նմանությունների մշակումից սկսվել էր հայ ժողովածուի ու պատմության գրական անցումը:

42. Հայրենիստական շրջանակներում պատմության և մշակույթի զարգացման այս քայլերի եւ նրանց պատմական նմանությունների մշակումից սկսվել էր հայ ժողովածուի ու պատմության գրական անցումը:

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231
Այս հայոց գրքի հեղինակը հայկական լեզուի ու կրճատության հետ համալիր է, որը նշանակում է, որ այս հետազոտության մասին մեկ կողմից նշանակալի է Հայաստանի պետության ներքնական աշխարհում։ Քանի որ Այս դասընթացից առաջացած այս հետազոտությունը բարենախազմական է, հայտնի է այդ դասընթացի ընդհանուր համար, որ այս հետազոտությունը թույլ է տալիս ավելի փոքր դասընթացի նպատակների հետ կապվել և այս դասընթացի գործողությունների համար ինչպես իրավաչափ կապեր։ Այսպիսով, Այս դասընթացի նպատակի է տալիս այս հետազոտության նպատակների խորհրդանշական իրավիճակը ներկայացնել և մասնակցել այդ դասընթացի գործողությունների համար ինչպես իրավաչափ կապեր։ Այսպիսով, Այս դասընթացի նպատակի է տալիս այս հետազոտության նպատակների խորհրդանշական իրավիճակը ներկայացնել և մասնակցել այդ դասընթացի գործողությունների համար ինչպես իրավաչափ կապեր։
Appendix IV
Tibetan-English Glossary

kun slongs kyi shes pa  present activities of consciousness
skabs              circumstances
skur ba            bestow
skye med           unborn
skyar             leave
'khrul pa         delusion

gong bu btsan gyi 'brim sa  a spot from which you can see several
                           valleys line up in a row where the bstan
                           spirits gather.

'grims pa         wander
'grus ba         keeping company
rgod gyag        broad-bodied yak
rgya mtshal      specific type of soft red rock
rgyud la skye    produce in continuity, cultivate in the
                 continuum.
sgoms                meditatively imagine

ngo bo            essence
ngos bzung       recognize
dngrs po med pa  without actual existence
lngra brgya'i dus time of the five hundred, kaliyuga (Skt.)
sngos grub       signs of accomplishment, siddhi (Skt.)

gcig bu         nothing else, alone
gcod              cut, sever

chags pa          craving
cho 'phrul       magical display
chod tshad       valid indicators of cutting
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>mchod</td>
<td>offering</td>
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<tr>
<td>'joms</td>
<td>destroys</td>
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<tr>
<td>rjes</td>
<td>trace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyams sod</td>
<td>murderous experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyams su blang ba</td>
<td>practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nye lam</td>
<td>short cut, short path, close path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nye loaud pal</td>
<td>ut-pala flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gnyan khrod</td>
<td>fearsome, haunted places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gnyan thog</td>
<td>ones causing diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snyams byed</td>
<td>thought (synonymous with rnam rtog)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snying rus med</td>
<td>do not work hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>ting nam</td>
<td>water</td>
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<td>gtad pa</td>
<td>to fix the mind on</td>
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<tr>
<td>btang</td>
<td>give</td>
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<tr>
<td>stong sum</td>
<td>one billion universes</td>
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<td>brtag pa</td>
<td>scrutiny</td>
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<td>thim par</td>
<td>dissolves</td>
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<td>thugs</td>
<td>mind, heart</td>
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<td>thugs bcud</td>
<td>essential intent</td>
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<tr>
<td>thugs bzung</td>
<td>hold his heart, embrace his teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>thugs dgongs</td>
<td>deep-seated understanding</td>
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<td>don ched</td>
<td>purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>don du gyur</td>
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<td>gdon</td>
<td>energetic disturbances, negative disturbances</td>
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<td>mdor</td>
<td>juncture</td>
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<tr>
<td>'dod</td>
<td>desire</td>
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<tr>
<td>sde brgyad</td>
<td>eight classes [of beings]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dregs pa can</td>
<td>arrogant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'dre</td>
<td>ghosts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brdung</td>
<td>beaten, pummeled</td>
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<tr>
<td>snams pa</td>
<td>to hold, (honorific – related to bsnams pa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>snod</td>
<td>receptacle</td>
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<td>spong dag</td>
<td>purifying offering</td>
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<td>phangs sens</td>
<td>feeling of loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phebs</td>
<td>arrive, go beyond</td>
</tr>
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<td>phyogs</td>
<td>category</td>
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<tr>
<td>bar chod</td>
<td>obstacles</td>
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<tr>
<td>bon sku</td>
<td>body of Bön, dharmakaya (Skt.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>bon skyong</td>
<td>guardian deity of Bön</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bya</td>
<td>make, do, teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>byas</td>
<td>maintain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>byas pa</td>
<td>integrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>byin byur</td>
<td>become blessing, teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blo</td>
<td>mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dbab pa gnyan thog</td>
<td>intentionally settle into fireceness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'byung po</td>
<td>male elemental forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>sbyin pa</td>
<td>give, bestow, generosity, gift</td>
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<tr>
<td>ma bcos par</td>
<td>unfabricated</td>
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<td>dmins pa</td>
<td>visualization, focus, object</td>
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<td>rtsigs ma</td>
<td>sediment</td>
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<td>tshar tshad</td>
<td>valid indicators of resolution</td>
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<td>tshogs mchod</td>
<td>perpetual feast, ganacakra (Skt.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>'dzin zhen</td>
<td>grasping, grasping and attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>zhen</td>
<td>attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhing 'gyur ldog dka'</td>
<td>difficult to move or change, stable</td>
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<tr>
<td>gzhung don</td>
<td>central principles</td>
</tr>
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<td>bzhag</td>
<td>sustain</td>
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<td>bzung</td>
<td>hold</td>
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<td>bzung 'dzin</td>
<td>subject and object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bzung pa</td>
<td>to employ, to hold, to fix on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yid ches pa</td>
<td>foster conviction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yid dam</td>
<td>tutelary deity</td>
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<tr>
<td>yon tan</td>
<td>benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>rang chas</td>
<td>abiding intrinsically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rig pa</td>
<td>awareness, innate awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rig pa rtsal</td>
<td>energy of awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>rim pa</td>
<td>procedure, stages</td>
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<tr>
<td>ring</td>
<td>keep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>li ljang</td>
<td>long, straight hair</td>
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<tr>
<td>long spyod bsam med</td>
<td>an inconceivable wealth</td>
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<tr>
<td>lus</td>
<td>body</td>
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<td>klu</td>
<td>water serpents</td>
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<tr>
<td>glud</td>
<td>ransom</td>
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<tr>
<td>rlung kha sbyor</td>
<td>unite the [upper and lower] winds</td>
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<tr>
<td>slob bu</td>
<td>student</td>
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<tr>
<td>slongs tshad</td>
<td>valid indicators of arising</td>
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<tr>
<td>shel kang ka ri</td>
<td>white translucent crystal</td>
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<tr>
<td>sa le seng nge</td>
<td>penetrating vibrancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sems</td>
<td>mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>sems can</td>
<td>domestic animals, human beings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
sems nyid  natural state
sems skyed  arouse the mind, bodhicitta
seng seng bud pa  whooshing sound
bsam  consider
bsen mo  female ghosts

hreg ge  fixing the eyes without blinking
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abiding intrinsically</td>
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<td>bestow</td>
<td>skur ba</td>
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<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td>lus</td>
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<tr>
<td>body of Bön, dharma kaya (Skt.)</td>
<td>bon sku</td>
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<tr>
<td>broad-bodied yak</td>
<td>rgod gyag</td>
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<tr>
<td>category</td>
<td>phyogs</td>
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<td>circumstances</td>
<td>skabs</td>
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<tr>
<td>consider</td>
<td>bsam</td>
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<tr>
<td>craving</td>
<td>chags pa</td>
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<tr>
<td>cut, sever</td>
<td>gcod</td>
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<td>deep-seated understanding</td>
<td>thugs dgongs</td>
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<td>delusion</td>
<td>'khrul pa</td>
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<td>desire</td>
<td>'dod</td>
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<tr>
<td>destroys</td>
<td>'joms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficult to move or change, stable</td>
<td>zhing 'gyur ldog dka'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissolves</td>
<td>thim par</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not work hard</td>
<td>snying rus med</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
domestic animals, human beings: sems can

eight classes [of beings]: sde brgyad
employ, hold, fix on: bzung pa
energetic disturbances, negative disturbances: gdon
energy of awareness: rig pa rtsal
essence: ngo bo
essential intent: thugs bcud

fearsome, haunted places: gnyan khrod
feeling of loss: phangs sems
female ghosts: bsen mo
fix the mind on: gtag pa
fixing the eyes without blinking: hreg ge
for their welfare: don du gyur
foster conviction: yid ches pa

ghosts: 'dre
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hold his heart, embrace his teaching: thugs bzung

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integrate: byas pa
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juncture: mdor
keep  
keeping company  
leave  
long, straight hair  
magical display  
maintain  
make, do, teach  
{

male elemental forces  
meditatively imagine  
mind, intellect  
mind  
mind, heart  
murderous experiences  
natural state  
nothing else, alone  
obstacles  
offering  
one billion universes  
one ones causing diseases  
penetrating vibrancy  
perpetual feast, ganacakra (Skt.)  
practice  
present activities of consciousness  
procedure, stages  
produce in continuity,  
cultivate in the continuum  
purifying offering  
purpose

ring  
'grus ba  
skyur  
li ljang  
cho 'phrul  
byas  
bya  
'byung po  
sgoms  
blo  
sems  
thugs  
nyams sod  
sems nyid  
gcig bu  
bar chod  
mchod  
stong sum  
gnyan thog  
sa le seng nge  
tshogs mchod  
nyams su blang ba  
kun slongs kyi shes pa  
rim pa  
rgyud la skye  
spong dag  
don ched
ransom  glud
receptacle  snod
recognize  ngos bzung

scrutiny  btag pa
sediment  rtsigs ma
short cut, short path, close path  nye lam
signs of accomplishment, siddhi (Skt.)  sngos grub
specific type of soft red rock  rgya mtshal
spot from which you can see several valleys  gong bu btsan gyi 'brim sa
line up – where the bstan spirits gather.
student  slob bu
subject and object  bzung 'dzin
sustain  bzhag

thought, synonymous with rnam rtog  snyams byed
time of the five hundred, kaliyuga (Skt.)  lnga brgya'i dus
trace  rjes
tutelary deity  yid dam

unborn  skye med
unfabricated  ma bcos par
unite the [upper and lower] winds  rlung kha sbyor
ut-pala flower  nye lo aud pal

valid indicators of arising  slongs tshad
valid indicators of cutting  chod tshad
valid indicators of resolution  tshar tshad
visualization, focus, object  dmigs pa

wander  'grims pa
water  ting nam, chu
water serpents
white translucent crystal
whooshing sound
without actual existence

klu
shel kang ka ri
seng seng bud pa
angos po med pa