

OF HOME AND OTHER FIGMENTS: THE PASSAGE OF EXILE IN THE TIBETAN
DIASPORA

By

Sean Akerman

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
the City University of New York

2011

© 2011

SEAN AKERMAN

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the
Dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Suzanne C. Ouellette

09/08/11

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Maureen O'Connor

09/08/11

Date

Executive Officer

Michelle Fine

Vincent Crapanzano

Susan Opotow

Annie Rogers

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

OF HOME AND OTHER FIGMENTS: THE PASSAGE OF EXILE IN THE TIBETAN
DIASPORA

By

Sean Akerman

Adviser: Suzanne Ouellette

This dissertation used a study of lives approach to understand the stories told by four Tibetans who came to New York following the passage of the Immigration Act of 1990 when Tibetans first came to the United States in mass. Not unlike other diasporas in the world today, the transfer of the events, the stories, and in many cases, the wounds, of exile formatively shape the narrative hereafter of younger generations, though this phenomenon has been given little attention in the social sciences. This work asked: 1) What stories of exile are passed from one generation to another and what are the mechanisms of transmission within that passage? (2) How is home understood generationally? (3) And within the experience of exile, what are the possibilities for action in daily life?

Looking across four life historical accounts, my analysis revealed that the stories my informants heard as they grew up can be grouped into the themes of death, survival, and hope. The stories they passed on to younger people in their lives took the form of bodily care, solitude, and discrimination. These stories moved through the narrative mechanisms of translation, silence, and interlocutory slippage with attention to a story's didactic, shaping features. Home was understood as an impossibility for those younger Tibetans with whom I spoke, whereas it

was associated with death and decay for older Tibetans. However, generational differences were downplayed by considering exile as a noun (a status) and verb (the ongoing result of an event), which was rife with socio-economic implications. Action took the form of community involvement and its gesture, a commitment to education, and a cursory knowledge of politics. These forms of action were narrated through bearing witness, employing the subjunctive, and calling attention to the body to narrate what escaped words. This inquiry highlights the importance of stories in the experience of exile, as well as the mechanisms through which exile is narrated. Additionally, my analysis emphasizes a consideration of death and natality as central to the experience of exile, and explores the literal and metaphorical ways through which death and natality become narrative forces.

Acknowledgements

There are many individuals who added to this work through encouragement, conversation, or an off-hand remark, whose names and exact insights I cannot remember, so I extend gratitude to them first, however mislaid. I am particularly indebted to the three faculty members who advised me during this project: Suzanne Ouellette, a wonderful mentor with a sharp and respectful editor's pen; Michelle Fine, an inspiration both in person and in text for the past five years; and Vincent Crapanzano, whose coursework and lectures provided the foundation to many ideas in this dissertation. I also wish to acknowledge the two outside readers of this work – Susan Opotow and Annie Rogers – for their thorough reading, support, and curiosity. This project would have been impossible without the assistance of several individuals in New York City's Tibetan community. I list them alphabetically: Tashi Chodron, Tenzin Dickyi, Tenzin Dolkar, Alex Gardner, Norbu Gephel, Chungdak Gonge, Christina Harris, Kyle Knight, Bumu Lhamo, Michael Sheehy, and Meg Ventrudo. And to the many individuals who wish to remain anonymous within that community, I am quite grateful. Additionally, I thank the Graduate Center of the City University of New York for providing me with a fellowship that supported this work. Some of the themes I explored in this dissertation became points of discussion in the classes I taught at Hunter College and Sarah Lawrence College. I am grateful to my students, who provided critical feedback and fodder for thought. I also thank Peter Nadin for giving me the opportunity to lecture as a guest in his seminar at the Cooper Union School for the Advancement of the Arts since 2008 where I have been able to develop many of these ideas at length. Finally, I thank Alexandra for her steadfast love and support. And last, but certainly not least, I thank my parents for more than I could ever articulate.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: <i>HISTORY AND THEORY</i>	8
CHAPTER TWO: <i>PROGENY</i>	47
CHAPTER THREE: <i>HOME</i>	87
CHAPTER FOUR: <i>ACTION</i>	120
CHAPTER FIVE: <i>DEATH AND NATALITY</i>	151
REFERENCES.....	182

INTRODUCTION

If you walk east from Hell's Gate Park in Astoria and turn down the relatively peopleless Crescent Street you come into intimations of Cornelia cherry trees budding not far from several ashen-colored, two story warehouse buildings long abandoned and partially gutted. Tashi continued to take me through the surrounding streets, talking at length about the bowl-shaped white flowers that characterize Tibetan cherry trees. Even long after the trees were out sight she still pointed to an indeterminate spot behind us and went on to describe how the brown bark of the tree looked almost polished when she was a little girl in Tibet. She said she would run her hands along them in the cold weather. I asked her how old she was and she said two. I thought it was quite an early age to have such a vivid memory. She claimed that it could be a dream and went on to describe it:

I remember sleeping outside the night before we left [Tibet]. My father built a fire. He used some of the wood from the tree which I wasn't happy about it but he needed it. We all were so tired then. I've never been so tired in my life, so worn down. [The fire] grew large – big, sweeping streaks of light, and then later on it died down just to a glow. We kept worrying there was something, some animal, right outside the edge. I don't know, maybe there was. I felt like we all worried about it the next day when it was light again. And we could never talk about it.

We continued walking for a long time. She said walking cleared her head, and though our route appeared quite roundabout to me, she traversed this same path with purpose, daily. Later,

we sat on a weathered bench in a park just a short distance from the restaurant where we would eventually eat. I asked her about her parents, whom she had described earlier as suffering from very poor health. She repeated this several times, stopped speaking, and stared at the ground for one or two minutes. “They had no means, so when we left, they did what they could. . .” she said and cut herself off. From my vantage point it obscured something she was reliving but did not want to verbalize, so I too said nothing and stared at the ground. “But,” she went on, “he was very young, and he was not allowed to come with us, so we had no choice, you see. His health was so bad from the beginning.”

I said that Dickyi, her son – whom I had been introduced to when I met Tashi at her apartment earlier that day – looked healthy and vibrant now. I had filled in the pronoun inaccurately. “No, not Dickyi. Dickyi was our first, but we had a second son. We had to leave both when we came here.” I apologized and she went on: “We were traveling when he died, but we didn’t know. Then we got here and it took weeks to contact home. I wanted to go back. I felt so numb over here, and we had just arrived after working so hard. I don’t know,” and she grew quiet again. Visually, I was reminded of the moments before a thunderstorm when the background grows sharp and obscures, if only through the suggestion of what comes next, anything in the foreground. Before I could respond – and had I had the chance I have no idea what I would have said – she went on to describe, in detail, the bureaucratic entanglements that she and her husband dealt with in order to provide Dickyi with a way of getting to the U.S. I was stunned at both her ability to continue telling the story and at what she had lived through.

A light rain began as we got up and continued down a street paralleling Roosevelt Avenue. Tashi pointed to a plot of two-story homes decorated with Tibetan flags where several of her friends lived. By the time we arrived at the restaurant her mood had lifted some. Inside,

she insisted I order the threaded bean noodle soup and went on to describe which items on the menu she could make on her own, and which ones she would not bother with because they were not really Tibetan. All the surrounding tables were empty and the restaurant was poorly lit with ornate iron over the windows in a sort of medieval candor. We continued to talk during lunch, discussing her coursework in nursing which demanded much of her time, the importance of friendship with several women in her neighborhood, and the long hours of her husband's job.

As she talked, her eyes darted to a conversation between two restaurant employees who were on their break, a woman in her late twenties, and a man in his early forties. The man was telling a story, with his arms occasionally going asunder in the most animated ways. The woman was laughing, adding what seemed to be her own anecdotes, though I do not speak Tibetan and can only infer. Tashi smiled at them and turned to me with a look of disdain on her face. She said, "They're not really Tibetan." I asked her how she knew that. "I listen. They've never been there, they don't know it. They're ignorant of it. If you don't know your own ground you have nothing." I was struck by the force of her tone, her implied dependence on the physicality of Tibet for one to proclaim a Tibetan identity.

By the time I returned home that night, I had already walked over seven miles with her. So much of her story revolved around geographic movement, and it was almost as though the very act of walking provided her with a mode of telling her story, in direct contradiction to our first meeting wherein the small table we shared at a coffee shop felt like a prison and our conversation was paralyzed. She had exhausted me, and in doing so I experienced a slight departure from my own subjective register and interpretive defenses. To turn her aforementioned dream story in a metaphor, the day had allowed me to momentarily cross a threshold beyond the ambit of any light – or insight – I had carried with me, resulting in a momentary betwixt which

vanished in an instant and which I have subsequently tried to recreate. The emotional charge of Tashi's stories was quite strong, whether in the beautiful scenes she depicted, the tragedies she conveyed, or her insistence on what determines a Tibetan identity. To imagine and participate in much of what she discussed was to consider another way of being-in-the-world: impassioned, adrift, commemorative.

*

The meaning of exile and the aporias of life historical work – these are my themes. The afternoon I spent with Tashi in July, 2010 encompassed both. Although that day occurred early in the work for this dissertation, it has stayed with me because it both adhered to the romantic connotations with which I imbued exile, loss, and nostalgia, and yet it also shook me from that stance by calling attention to the logistical difficulties of exile, the struggles that come with the contestation of identity in a new country, and the realities of death. In a broader sense, I believe that it was through Tashi's story, and later the stories of other Tibetans I spoke with, that I came to see the value of life historical work I had earlier espoused as useful but not fully realized: it holds the possibility of transcending stale debates about social and cultural determinism in politically and morally turbulent times by revealing the microscopic ways in which one fashions a range of experiences into layered mosaic that may be written and rewritten as *self*. It is no doubt dangerous to collapse the totality of a person into a text – for no matter how much one says, a great deal is always framed out – but the use of one's words and stories are perhaps the best avenue to evoke the experience of an other.

I have titled this dissertation “Of Home and Other Figments: The Passage of Exile in the Tibetan Diaspora” for two reasons. First, I am in fact interested in the passage of exile as a narrative action from one group of individuals to a subsequent group of individuals born on

foreign soil. Secondly, I treat passage as a noun, as the means of explaining an expulsion from home that is simultaneously inscribed with a hope of return – a passage back – that so determines the mode through which many Tibetans describe their lives. I want to relate this style of social and psychological construction to the prolonged experiences of exile that have shaped the mechanisms of narrative inheritance in the Tibetan exile community, creating mnemonic ties across time. I am particularly concerned with the stories of those who suffered exile from Tibet or inherited that exile growing up in India, and eventually came to the New York City. I argue that the turbulence suffered by the older Tibetans leaves a psychological impress, an experiential remnant that bears greatly on their lives, resistant as it can be to language (though sometimes it may, in contrast, become quite rhetoricized). I am interested in the passage of such an impress how it is inherited, how it can provide a narrative lining and give shape to the arc one's life for both the one who was there and the one who was not.

The anthropologist Michael Jackson writes in his book *At home in the world* (1995) that home is understood once one leaves, an understanding that is created in reflection, achieved only with requisite distance. As such, home becomes a figment that takes shape in absence. Indeed, what matters in this work is the distance the individuals I spoke with have from the resonant events in the Tibetan history of exile, and from Tibet itself. Tibet provides a unique example of exile insofar as the possibility of returning home, or even going there for the first time – for some individuals – is quite slim. As a struggle that has unfolded over half a century, marked by junctures of hope and dread, belonging to temporalities that invoke the immensity of the past or the ambiguity of the future, I argue that Tibet's situation must be understood generationally, a term itself requiring disambiguation, especially in light of Buddhism. With that in mind, I draw upon narrative psychology to understand the stories of the Tibetans with whom I spoke,

structuring this work around the following questions: What stories of exile are passed from one generation to another and what are the mechanisms of transmission within that passage? How is home understood generationally? And within the experience of exile, what are the possibilities for action in daily life?

A Note on Structure

I believe the experience of much social science research bears a resemblance to the bildungsroman in that the author undergoes a quest and returns somehow changed, in worldview, in conclusions about meaning, in the exposure to life conditions of which she or he was previously unacquainted. Such was my experience in this work. However, I must add that I concurrently felt a distinct sense of the outside that never dissipated. My interviews, my textual re-creations of those encounters, and my interpretive stance are all stamped by my perspective as an outsider to this particular community. Yet many of the Tibetans I spoke with articulated their own sense of the outside, describing it as the consequence of exile, and despite the fact that many of them were quite comfortable living in New York, and intended to stay here for the rest of their lives, most were committed to the belief that they would always be away.

My intention is that this work maintains a fidelity to the structures of my experience while learning about the issues of Tibet and speaking with various informants and, ideally, is evocative of their own lives. In Chapter One, I create an historical backdrop against which the experiences of my informants play out, a backdrop which concurrently serves as a point of reference for their stories and my understanding of their stories throughout the work. In the second part of that same chapter, I outline the theoretical approach of this dissertation; that is, narrative psychology and the use of the life history as a tool of inquiry. The pages that come after

deal directly with the stories of my informants presented in a sort of montage. Chapter Two seeks to provide an answer to the first question I pose: What stories of exile are passed from one generation to another and what are the mechanisms of transmission within that passage? In Chapter Three I explore how each of my informants understood home, and how those understandings are narrated. And in Chapter Four I examine the ways through which my informants engaged in action and narrated that experience. Chapter Five is the concluding chapter, and it speaks to the issues of death and natality, which, I believe, are the primary filters in the lives of the individuals at the center of this work.

*

On the subway home after my afternoon with Tashi in April, 2010, I thought of the Portuguese word *saudade* which does not translate to English easily. In broad terms, it means a deep longing or melancholy for someone or something no longer present, carrying with it a fatalistic connotation. I wondered how much Tashi's *saudade* encompassed. Could one pass on those sentiments to others? Could one long for a place they have never been? Tibetans in New York are a vocal community; they have a presence on the world stage, as well. They have not, one may argue, been forgotten by history, as other refugees and exiled populations have been. But they exist in a unique spatiotemporality, enveloped at times by a metanarrative that occludes the particular. As unique as Tibet's situation is, it shares common ground with other populations around the world who have been displaced in such a way that the possibility of returning home may very well never materialize into a reality. The individuals who grow up in that displacement inherit the impress of exile in myriad ways. That is a social fact, and it needs more attention than it has been given.

CHAPTER ONE: *HISTORY AND THEORY*

It is the memory of a forgotten separation. To take up one of Walter Benjamin's remarks concerning Proust, we might say that writing assumes the "form" of memory and not its "contents": it is the endless effect of loss and debt, but it neither preserves nor restores an initial content, as this is forever lost (forgotten) and represented only by substitutes which are inverted and transformed according to the law up by a founding exclusion.

-Michel de Certeau (1992, p. 323)

It is often the case that we are inclined to view the writing of history as a fair summation of a supposed, reflected, objective reality that has elapsed with time. We are less inclined, as Michel de Certeau suggests, to view history as the construction it very much is, a product of over-remembering and forgetting, of power plays and mythologies, of ideologies. In the following pages I outline what I see as the testimonial history of Tibet since 1959; that is, the events and stories that have so determined the iconic events and points of reference that many Tibetans refer to the accounts of their own lives and the lives of their kin. I do not, however, offer what follows as a "corrected" version of modern Tibetan history; that task is outside the purview of this dissertation. And while I emphasize the importance of testimony as an historical discourse, I must also add that in the case of Tibet, what is remembered and what is done with those remembrances has to be considered in accordance with certain Buddhist practices. As Carole McGranahan (2005) writes in her commentary on exile politics, "the loss of [Tibet's] home country has fused history and nation so tightly together that even subaltern Tibetan histories are framed within the nation" (p. 572). The process of reconstituting community in the midst of national trauma flattened the heterogeneity of Tibetan identity into a singular "Tibetan refugee identity," emerging largely from histories and practices in central Tibet and Lhasa. In

one sense, the practices of historical arrest and the freezing of a discourse have to be understood in accordance with Tibet's conception of history. McGranahan notes that historical arrest, "resonates with a Tibetan Buddhist tradition of the storing away and rediscovery of religious texts and ritual objects...Arrested histories follow a similar cultural and temporal protocol insofar that their arrest and release is also understood to be in the hands of authority figures, most notably, in this case, the Dalai Lama" (p. 575). Such productions, she notes, not only foster particular records of history, but creates community as well.

History

The event that historically punctuates Tibet's exile status is the failed uprising in March, 1959 wherein the current Dalai Lama fled from Tibet to Dharamsala following rumors that the Chinese government had plans for abduction. The event, which has obvious iconic significance within the Tibetan community at large, also has a complex history that is often conflated into the "Lhasa Uprising" wherein thousands of Tibetans died in battle. However, the origins of the event reach back several years earlier in the 1950s when the People's Republic of China incorporated Tibet into its territory without provocation, during which time it began to align Tibet with the socialist vision it promoted. The ensuing changes – and there were many – led to reforms that eventually clashed quite significantly with social, religious, and political facets of Tibetan life. Initially, these reforms were not a top priority for the Chinese. However, the Tibetan Western Region of Kham was placed under the severe eye of the Chamdo Military Committee in the mid-1950s where the reforms first grew in earnest. The committee initiated a land reform that was opposed by thousands of Tibetans. Many of those who opposed were subjected to public humiliation in "struggle sessions" (a much-used tactic of the Communist Party in China) and

others were imprisoned or executed. By 1956, Tibetans in Eastern Kham – which had already been incorporated into China and thus land redistribution had already happened at an alarming rate – began armed revolts. The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) easily outnumbered those Tibetans who fought, and thousands of Tibetans were subsequently killed. Elsewhere, monasteries were looted, libraries were burned, and works of art were destroyed, as the violence grew in intensity.

The exodus that followed the Dalai Lama in 1959 was enormous. Close to 80,000 Tibetans crossed the Himalayas in the ensuing months. In the early years of the 1960s, when Chinese reforms were especially pernicious, between 1,000 and 2,500 Tibetans continued to cross the mountains into India, though in these later migrations the survival rate of those who traveled southward dipped below 40 percent (Evans, Buxton, Borisov, Manatunga, Ngodup, and Raison 2008). Rather quickly, India was lambasted by the Chinese as conspiring in the Dalai Lama's abduction. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru attempted to strike a conciliatory tone in his response to the Chinese, noting India's desire to abstain as much as possible in the conflict (Smith, 1996). Indeed, the degree to which India has abstained from this conflict, which I will discuss later, has long been a point of contention for both the Chinese and the Tibetans.

Six months after his arrival in India, the Dalai Lama appealed to the United Nations on political grounds and secondly, on humanitarian grounds, to intercede. The response to the appeal was complex: the International Commission of Jurists, who drafted a report on the issues of and relating to Tibet, concluded that Tibet's legal status was far from easy to assess but added China had indeed committed a terrible act of imperialism and colonialism. The United States helped Tibet garner support with the United Nations around that time, though it is important to note that the support the U.S. offered was only in terms of humanitarian issues. In other words,

neither the U.S., nor any Asian country, was willing to dispute China's sovereignty over Tibet. Meanwhile, the U.S. appealed to over a dozen countries to find a primary sponsor for a solution on the issue of Tibet, as the U.S. would only agree to be a co-sponsor. The appeals, again, were only heard on humanitarian grounds, as few countries were willing to even consider the question of Tibetan independence (Smith, 1996). By 1961, the U.N. adopted a somewhat harder stance on the Tibet Question, calling for, "the cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedom including their rights to self-determination" and also addressing "the hope that member states will make all possible efforts as appropriate towards achieving the purpose of the present resolution." Four years later the U.N. advocated the same position.

What followed in the early 1960s was a period of so-called "democratic reforms" in Tibet, which included the redistribution of land, the exchange of Tibetan money for Chinese yuan at a rate of 50 percent of that prior to the uprising, agricultural collectivization, and the restriction of private commerce. Concurrently, the religious establishment of Tibet underwent a period of intense scrutiny. Numerous high monks and monastic officials were deported to labor camps, and those who remained were forced to maintain the upkeep of their monasteries via their own labor following the prohibition that taxes could no longer be paid to monasteries (Smith, 1996).

Amidst the initiation of class divisions and class struggle, the Chinese also initiated a "speaking bitterness" campaign against the fallen old society in which Tibetans were urged to criticize the years before the Chinese occupation and the "feudal backwardness" they once suffered from. Struggle sessions occurred with regularity too. In those sessions, individuals who were identified as reactionaries or simply those who offered no more than lukewarm support for

the Communist Party, were humiliated and persecuted in front of large groups who would shout accusations while the individual subject to struggle had her or his land deeds burned (Smith, 1996).

By 1964, China had also removed the Panchen Lama (the highest ranking Lama after the Dalai Lama) as an obstacle in the way of socialist transformation. Initially an ally with China's reforms, the Panchen Lama became distressed after a visit to Tibet in the early 1960s whereupon he found 10 to 15 percent of the population imprisoned and the number of monks cut from 4,000 to less than half of that. A strongly worded letter from the Panchen Lama enraged the Chinese, who treated him as a political liability and accused him of conspiring with the Dalai Lama. Struggle sessions and imprisonment followed. The disappearance of the Panchen Lama as a major figurehead was a huge blow to Tibet. Uncontested, the Chinese established the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965 in what was formerly the U-Tsang and Western areas of Tibet (including Lhasa), thus setting up a permanent system of governance and an accelerated means to cultural replacement. As Smith (1996, p. 539) notes,

Why were the Chinese not satisfied, having taken over physical control of Tibet; why would they not rest until they had taken over Tibetans' minds as well? Perhaps the answer was that the evidence of Chinese imperialism in Tibet would not be eradicated until the ethnic, cultural and national category "Tibetan" ceased to exist and Tibetans became indistinguishable from the Chinese.

The changes that ensued were even larger in scope than the years directly following the uprising. With the announcement of Mao's May 16th "Notice" in 1966 came the beginning of what would later be termed the Cultural Revolution. The "Notice" was a decree that pointed to reactionary thought in academic, educational, literary, and artistic circles which had to be

criticized and stamped out (Goldstein, 2009), though in essence it is perhaps best described as a struggle against what the Chinese described as feudal traditions. The goal of the Cultural Revolution was total assimilation and therefore the eradication of Tibetan identity. How this manifested itself was in the renaming of public spaces, the continued desecration of religious and cultural artifacts, and a total flood of Mao's propaganda in all facets of daily life. In a sense, Tibetan language remained the only visible stronghold of Tibetan identity, though it too was assailed as calls were made to reform its grammar. In light of such changes came enormous problems for the Chinese in terms of governance. Factional politics – particularly the accusation that two Chinese officials were treating Tibet as something of an independent entity – created mass chaos for the Chinese to the point that the People's Liberation Army stepped in to assume control. Only through the establishment in a Cultural Revolutionary Committee in each province – which included a collection of Chinese officials, PLA officers, and mass revolutionary organizations – did the infighting subside. On several of these committees, Tibetans were included, though their inclusion served merely a symbolic function as they were given no real power to effect change (Shakya, 1999).

By 1969, Tibetans were openly revolting against the new social policies, the most transformative of which included instituting communes. By and large, the Chinese believed that despite the infighting and revolts, the aims of the Cultural Revolution had largely been achieved three years after its inception. As Tsering Shakya (1999) writes in his rendition of Tibetan history, Buddhist deities by 1970 had been replaced by portraits of Mao as monks, once so characteristic of Tibetan society, were seemingly nowhere to be found. Indeed, the most visible marker of assimilation was the standard uniforms worn by all Chinese and Tibetans. Throughout the 1970s, the Chinese worked at building and strengthening agricultural production in Tibet

primarily through reliance on the commune system which concurrently furthered the communist agenda. The propaganda espoused by the Chinese Communist Party during this time tended to increase solidarity among Tibetans – quite the opposite effect of what was intended – whereas outside of Tibet, the propaganda was a resounding success. The well-orchestrated tours given to visitors and journalists promulgated the ideals of liberation and transformation that the Chinese emphasized (Smith, 1996).

Mao's death in 1976, along with the death of leading Chinese figures Zhu De and Zhu Enlai, provided a window of opportunity for China to reconsider the Tibet Question. Deng Xiaoping rose to power and advocated a number of unilateral gestures which included freeing a group of Tibetan prisoners and providing visas to a select number of Tibetans in exile in order to visit Tibet. Meanwhile, attempts were made to improve the quality of living in Tibet, which then suffered from widespread malnourishment, almost complete destruction of religious life, and stunted economic growth. Perhaps most importantly for China, the policies of the past 20 years had had little effect in aligning Tibetans with a socialist agenda, which, as one Chinese official described, “equated the previous 20 years of Chinese development efforts in Tibet with throwing money into the Lhasa River” (Goldstein, 1997, p. 65). The subsequent reform program that took root in the late 1970s and early 1980s again would not consider the question of full independence for Tibet, however the Chinese did begin to advocate for the revival of Tibetan culture, the renewal of worthwhile economic endeavors (such as an increased focus on agriculture), as well as reinstating the study of Tibetan language in schools.

The liberal reforms headed by Hu Yaobang in the 1980s put the Tibetan government in Dharamsala in a difficult spot. On the one hand, there is no doubt that the attempts to revitalize Tibet were intended to be a substantial step forward in alleviating the plight of a largely

impoverished country, yet China would not budge the issue of Tibetan independence – exactly what the Dalai Lama and other officials in exile had spent so much of the past few decades advocating. The formal response from Tibetans in exile was that if China could offer Taiwan a “one country – two systems” option, why was the same option not available for Tibet? To complicate the situation further, social and economic life in Tibet was in fact improving by the mid-1980s. Though circumstances were far from the idyllic, romanticized visions of early twentieth century Tibet, Tibetans were in fact seeing the reinstatement of much of their religious and monastic life in addition to more lax policies on travel which saw an ever greater number of Tibetans visiting the homeland they had left (Goldstein, 1997).

Officials in Dharamsala meanwhile launched an international campaign in the late 1980s to garner support from Western countries – particularly the U.S. – with the hopes of attaining the needed leverage to achieve the aims of autonomy they had not abandoned. The appeals made by the Dalai Lama in a speech to the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus in 1987 were well-received; one year later President Reagan signed the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which expressed sympathy for Tibet and called on China to end human rights violations. In Tibet, the news of U.S. support, however slight, was invigorating. An outpouring of demonstrations, primarily by monks, in the latter part of 1987 into 1988 saw ardent anti-Chinese anger from Tibetans, many of whom were beaten by police in well-publicized acts of brutality. Concerned that their reforms had been too liberal, the Chinese were prompted to enact a more hard-line strategy, as though history was repeating itself. Goldstein explains, “In Beijing it was hard for moderates to refute the historical parallel between Mao’s gradualist Tibet policy (supporting the Dalai Lama while postponing reforms), precipitating the 1959 rebellion, and Hu Yaobang’s policy, leading to the 1987-1989 riots” (p. 91). The economic advances that had so benefited

many Tibetans in the last several years began to peter off as more and more Chinese monopolized the business opportunities and benefited from entrepreneurial ventures.

Another watershed moment in Tibet's international campaign was the Strasbourg Proposal that came out of the Dalai Lama's address to the European Parliament in 1988. The proposal is of historical interest in the complex history between China and Tibet because it was the first time the Dalai Lama outlined a proposal that would accept China's sovereignty over Tibet. However, the wording of the proposal described Tibet's relationship to China as an "association," and meanwhile demanded complete political autonomy (excepting defense and foreign political relations). Widely praised in Western countries and the international community as a move towards compromise, and reviled in Dharamsala, the Chinese ultimately rejected the proposal on the grounds that it was a roundabout means towards achieving independence (Smith, 1996).

*

I now want to turn the development of exile communities abroad. Certainly, much remains to be said about the changes in Tibet since the 1990s and 2000s (some of which will be addressed later), but most relevant to the present inquiry is how the diaspora has spread globally. Amidst the tumult of the last 50 years, 54 settlements including approximately 130,000 Tibetans spread throughout India, Nepal and Bhutan, comprise the central most area of the exile community. Up to the present day, the influx of Tibetan refugees continues to those settlements, with an average of 2,500 refugees arriving in Dharmasala each year (Evans et al, 2008). Elsewhere in Asia, the diaspora has spread to Taiwan (approximately 1,000) and Japan (60). The international campaign also helped exiled Tibetans find immigrant status in a number of European countries. The most recent estimate of Tibetans living in Europe (not including

Switzerland) is 750, approximately the same number residing in the United Kingdom today. Switzerland has remained the real bastion of the exile community on the European continent; starting in 1960, Switzerland offered immigrant status to a number of Tibetans, and the number currently residing there nears 1,600. Canada followed in the footsteps of Switzerland in the early 1970s by becoming the second country to offer immigrant status to Tibetans. Approximately 300 arrived in various parts of Canada between 1970 and 1972, spread throughout various provinces based largely on their ties to different traditions of Buddhism. Now 4,275 Tibetans live in Canada, with the majority clustered in Ontario (MacPherson, 2008).

Most germane to the present work is the migration of Tibetans to the United States. Beginning back in the mid-1970s, the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration lobbied Congress to allow Tibetan immigration to the United States. The U.S., at the time, was concerned that doing so would interfere with U.S.-Sino relations (DIR, 1993), and also claimed help was largely unavailable since Tibetans were not technically refugees. At the time, the small number of Tibetans residing in the United States were primarily lamas who taught Buddhism, having come at various points in the 1960s. A minute number of Tibetans who were not lamas lived in the U.S. prior to 1990, and those who did acquired work visas and later, citizenship, largely on account of marriage (Nassar and Talkha, 1995, as cited in Hess, 2006). Inroads were made into Tibetan resettlement in the U.S. based upon the work of Ed Bednar, a former New York City Director of Refugee Services. Bednar was enthralled upon hearing the Dalai Lama speak at Harvard in 1979, and worked for the next ten years at circumventing the lack of enthusiasm Congress had about resettlement (Hess, 2009). In 1989, with the help of Congressman Barney Frank and Tom Lantos, as well as Senator Ted Kennedy, Bednar saw the fruition of his work when the Tibet-U.S. Resettlement Project (TUSRP) began in earnest.

Under the Section 134, Tibetan provisions of the 1990 Immigration Act, 1,000 Tibetans would be given visas and placed in 22 cluster cities in 18 states across the U.S. by 1992. New York City quickly became a focal point for arrivees, in addition to New Jersey, northern California, the Rocky Mountain region of Colorado, the Great Lakes region in Chicago and parts of Minnesota, as well as communities near Washington, D.C. Tibetans were defined as “natives of Tibet, including their children and grandchildren, who have lived continuously in India or Nepal since the enactment of the Immigration Act” in 1990 (Howe, 1991). Visas were awarded through a lottery system in which Bednar and others organizing TUSRIP emphasized equity of selection: their intention was to bring over well-educated leaders of Tibetan society who would articulate the issues pertinent to the community in exile, as well as those who were impoverished. The provisions also stated that those individuals from the first phase of resettlement would be allowed to bring family members over to the United States three years later. Congress passed the Immigration Act and the accompanying provisions, not recognizing Tibetans as refugees (despite the fact that the term is regularly implored), preferring to use the term displaced immigrants instead, and affording them no federal funding. Non-Tibetans sponsored the arrivees and subsequently helped them find employment at each of the project sites. Today the number of Tibetans living in the U.S. nears 9,000.

As Hess (2009) notes, the passage of the Immigration Act spoke to broader issues, such as the changing stance of the U.S. towards China, partially in light of that the Tiananmen Square massacre just a year before. Then, in 1991, President Bush signed a State Department authorization declaring Tibet an “occupied country.” However, elsewhere in the Tibetan community, the passage of the Immigration Act was met with mixed feelings. Articles published in the *Tibetan Review* in 1991 expressed discontent over the ambiguous, jargon-filled language

of the Resettlement Project, and moreover questioned the claim that Tibetan culture was on the brink of extinction. Proponents of such a position underscored the mood of surrender which belied such a resettlement (Fallon, 1997). Others were more hopeful, believing that such a move could foster resources and build connections to help the Tibetan Government-in-Exile better achieve its aims. As Hess notes, “Thus, even in the early stages of TUSR, a highly idealized discourse justifies the project not just in terms of improving the lives of individual Tibetans, but one that will actualize revitalize Tibetan culture and furthermore, allow Tibetan culture to contribute to the world” (Hess, 2009, p. 115).

Governance and Citizenship

As a diasporic entity, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile exists in relation to three groups: Tibetans living in southeast Asia, whom it governs; those Tibetans still living in China, who are tied to the Government-in-Exile symbolically (and of course governed by China); and finally those Tibetans who live in one of a number of countries elsewhere in the world with whom the Government-in-Exile seeks to maintain close ties and foster the practice of Tibetan identity abroad.

India, the bastion of the exile community, is where numerous skirmishes about governance and citizenship play out. By and large, Tibetans living in India are not Indian citizens; they are, rather, “stateless citizens” and have remained this way for the entirety of a half century in exile. As Falcone and Wangchuk (2008) note in their study of Tibetan refugees in India, there are highly divergent explanations for this. On the one hand, several interpretations of Indian law claim that second-generation Tibetans in exile are in fact entitled to Indian citizenship but refuse to go through with it. Meanwhile, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) claims

that foregoing the right to Indian citizenship is a “formal assertion of Tibetan identity, or a performance of resistance against the Chinese occupation of Tibet” (p. 168). However, the situation is much more complex. Besides the fact that CTA officials heavily discourage Tibetans in India from attaining citizenship, there are concurrent pressures from other refugees to remain stateless. Additionally, the Home Ministry in India is infamous for rejecting the paperwork of any Tibetan refugee. The results of these bureaucratic entanglements cause a number of problems for Tibetans living in India, namely the denial of jobs only available to Indian citizens, travel restrictions, a lack of civil and political rights which are not afforded to non-citizens (although, Indian citizens with Tibetan religious or ethnic affiliations have helped Tibetans find bureaucratic loopholes to acquire land and jobs).

Documents of identification comprise another complex matter. Most Tibetans are in possession of Green Books, which represent their affiliation with the CTA and require a yearly tax. Meanwhile, India requires all Tibetan refugees over the age of 17 to formally register that they are visiting the country and they must also periodically renew their Registration Certificate, a document also makes Tibetan ineligible for Indian citizenship. However, it is often the case that newcomers to India are not provided with Registration Certificates, by and large, an act that Hess (2009) speculates is motivated by the Indian government’s desire to not antagonize the Chinese by keeping official records of how many Tibetans actually reside in India. One informant I spoke with in New York City, who had come from India a half decade ago, described the general results of the collaboration between the Indian government and CTA as inviting one into your house to stay, only to offer your guest a plot on the floor without a cot, with the door ajar and chained.

Added to the frustration many Tibetans in India feel are the restrictions on travel. Identity Certificates, not passports, are the means through which Tibetans are able to travel outside of India. Obtaining such a document requires not only a Registration Certificate (which, as mentioned above, is sometimes denied), but proof of date of birth as well as a letter of approval from the CTA. However, the CTA is often criticized for denying the applications of individuals who are often behind in their Green Books taxes. In 2000, a minority religious sect engaged in Dorje Shugden practice (which the Dalai Lama has advised against) renounced their affiliation with the CTA at a public press conference in India and espoused the value of Indian citizenship. Instances such as these speak to oft-felt ambivalence towards the CTA, and what some believe is its lack of transparency. And indeed, the CTA itself has admitted that a complicated bureaucratic situation fosters a shared sense of difficulty, and therefore, community (Falcone and Wangchuk, 2008).

In contradistinction to Tibetans living in India, Nepal, or Bhutan, the government-in-exile encourages Tibetans living in the U.S. to adopt citizenship and serve as ambassadors for the homeland they have lost. During the initial stages of TUSR, individuals selected via the lottery system were told through a mandate by the government-in-exile that it was especially important to adopt foreign citizenship, which could provide them with the means to act on a transnational level and return to India to visit those with whom they maintained close ties. From this perspective, adopting U.S. citizenship is a means of bolstering national pride and agency, affording “a diaspora consciousness” (Hess, 2009) in their second exile. Gulfs of geographical distance divide the exile community in important ways. The difficulties faced by Tibetans in India cannot be collapsed onto the same plateau with the veracities of everyday life for Tibetans

in the United States, for example, who often experience less financial distress and travel restrictions than their compatriots on the other side of the world.

Questions of citizenship are concurrently troubled by conflicting desires within various age groups, clear evidence of the gulf that time has opened up. Younger Tibetans, especially those living in India, are quite critical of any compromise with China, whereas the older generation – those who fled Tibet – tend to comply with the Dalai Lama’s recent statements that full independence for Tibet is likely out of reach. In fact, many older refugees have come to accept India as their permanent place of residence, fearing that a move back to Tibet might be fraught with peril. The dominance of Mandarin as the language for business and education in Tibet, the feelings of rootedness in India, the standard of living in India which by and large exceeds that of Tibet – all of these factors contribute to a paradoxical hesitation. Falcone and Wangchuk go on to speculate,

If Tibetan nationalism is a construction just like other nationalisms, and Tibetanness is as fraught an identity as most others, then perhaps these notions should be held more lightly instead of grasped ever more tightly. . . Recognition that the conventional “nation” is simply a construction without inherent existence is consistent with this formulation of Tibetan Buddhist ontology. If Tibetans in exile place such a high premium on preserving Tibetan national identity, what effect would it have to argue that Tibetanness itself is only a conventionally existing state, and not an ultimately existing state? (2008, p. 190-1)

Of course, while such an argument holds in the abstract, it misses the sense of alienation and paralysis that many Tibetans feel in exile, what Margaret Nowak described in 1984 as the liminal vacillation between hope and dread as Tibetans wait to return to autonomy and independence within Tibet, a description that still holds some two and a half decades later.

The Present Study: An Overview

If one assumes that the stories one tells and hears are inherently a part (though certainly not the only part) of one's identity, then the stories that are passed on from one generation to another deserve significant consideration. This applies not only to Tibet but also to numerous diasporas in the world today where children grow up receiving the inheritance of their families' exile. Margaret McNay speculates that in many cases, "the children of postcolonial diasporas may also face the silence of the older generation. Traumatized into silence, their parents and relatives transmit the wounds of subjugation and displacement, and not the memory" (2009, p. 1179). How those wounds and stories are transmitted and the repercussions of that transmission – the psychological, the communal, the narrated, the possibilities for action – are enormously important. I do not, however, assume that what is passed from one generation to another – and perhaps to another after that – is merely a wound. While stories of abuse, torture, and death blot the patchwork of many Tibetan narratives of exile, so do stories of resistance and hope.

My point is that there is a sort of narrative inheritance implicit in this situation, one that takes a great number of forms. Above all, I argue that it is especially fruitful to draw upon life stories to understand the questions I pose above, for the very essence and practice of Tibetan identity lies in the telling, negation, and translation of such stories.

Conceptual Framework

I am inspired by Erika Apfelbaum's (2000) call for an epistemological shift within psychology that is fully grounded in history and culture and its disruptions, a shift that explores the realities and consequences of dislocation for uprooted people. Writing about the social

framework of memory, Apfelbaum argues that investigations into collective experiences of damage, loss, and grief hold the potential to legitimize private memories and provide a proverbial ground upon which one can reckon with issues of the past. She says, “Not only is the sense of genealogical continuity important for grounding one’s life and identity, but equally important is the possibility of finding, in the public collective discourses, the means to make sense of one’s uprooted and disrupted personal history” (p. 1011). The creation of a public chronicle provides space for the play of recollection, thus bridging the possible dissociation between what is felt and what can be voiced.

The research in this dissertation aims to practice the type of psychology Apfelbaum outlines. Many of the Tibetans who arrived in the United States came with a tortuous past, parts of which are both politicized and silenced. They face the possibility of residing in a narrative no man’s land wherein the language to describe what happened to themselves and their kin is either unavailable or stale. To paraphrase Armenian psychoanalyst Jeanine Altounian (1990), such individuals may become shadowless and bereft of origins. In the pages that follow, I outline several worthwhile, narrative-minded contributions that have sought to investigate collective experiences of damage and uprootedness, and the transmission of those experiences, and thereby reflect elements of my own conceptual approach.

Narratives of Inheritance

I find useful the work of Francesca Cappelletto (2003), who has looked at narratives about the massacres by German troops in two Tuscan villages during World War II. In her research she is concerned with ineradicable remembrances – those stories that refuse to disappear into oblivion, and as such, intrude on everyday life. Cappelletto writes, “The survivors and their

children form a mnemonic community which is no longer defined by the spatial boundaries (in that many of its members have emigrated), but rather by the duration of the story through time. Since the war, the survivors have continued to tell what they think of as ‘their story’, a narrative in which individual and group memories intertwine and meld together” (p. 245). Cappelletto describes the transposition of individual memory to social memory as she speculates,

It seems sometimes that the narrator cannot entirely possess the reality or meaning to which the traumatic event gives access. The inability to reach complete understanding explains how it is possible for there to be striking common features in the accounts of survivors and in those of people who learned the story from others in the years after the massacre. Sometimes the survivors leave the telling to those who, in their opinion, can remember more clearly precisely because they are not burdened with the survivor’s traumatic memory. (p. 250)

Although Cappelletto’s work is based on the narratives told by survivors of the Second World War, I believe that what she has to say – about the intertwined, and intersubjective, dimensions of events that went on to be iconic events for survivors of the massacres – can speak to many populations in the world today dealing with the immensity of a past upheaval. Certainly, this is true in the case of Tibet. Those who managed to leave Tibet continue to tell their story, often one of upheaval. Again, my particular interest in those stories is the passage, or transmission, to one’s kin, who did not experience the event. Cappelletto does not give extenuated attention to how such massacres have been transmitted to the children and grandchildren of the survivors, but she does observe that for both witnesses and non-witnesses alike, what unites them is the emotional meaning of the event, and hence is it the emotion as memory that is transmitted. Thus, for non-witnesses, the recollection of the event and the

subsequent imagination imparts a discernible effect upon those who were not there. Of course, unlike Cappelletto's work, there is not one singular event I am concerned with. However, I believe that what she has to say about the intersubjective contents of memory, as well as emotional transposition, bear on the issues of inheritance for Tibet as well.

Psychologists and sociologists working in this direction have brought to the fore the interlocutory elements of inheritance and the possibilities for the creation of counter stories to emphasize that what is inherited is not just passively received. Writing about Japanese-American internees during the Second World War, Donna Nagata (1993) looked to the children of those who were incarcerated to ask how the long-term effects of that incarceration were passed on from one generation to the next. Nagata found that for the Sansei (the grandchildren of Japanese immigrants), the incarceration of their parents left significant silences and gaps in their personal histories, even five decades later. Yet for many that Nagata spoke with, the injustice they felt about their parents' internment served as a vehicle for them to address racism, discrimination, and civil rights issues in a variety of arenas. Grace Cho (2006), documenting the ways in which Korean artists have addressed the double trauma of the Korean War and its removal from public memory in the U.S., observes that the difficulty of seeking reparations for something that is not remembered. Cho finds that in the case of the second generation Korean-American women participating in a collaborative, multi-media-based arts project, many of those who inherited the silences from the older generation used performance as means of not only reparation but more notably as a means of distributing the ethical responsibility of remembering. Instances such as these speak to the ethical responsibility that varies across time and place and possible generativity that can arise from narratively inheriting the wounds of one's lineage.

Methodological Approach: The Life History

Located in much of the aforementioned work is a focus on the idiographic, the life history and life narratives, a focus which I take to be the primary methodological approach in this dissertation. My use of narrative psychology and in particular, the value I ascribe to the life historical account, is inevitably a Western presumption, an objectification. Based on that presumption, the remembering self is left with traces of the past, which are traces from their own experiences in the world, and indeed the vestiges of their forebears. The subsequent distillation into a life story is now taken as a hallmark of understanding selfhood for personality psychologists (McAdams and Pals, 2006). In the 1930s, Henry Murray formally began the study of lives tradition within personality psychology in which he placed the focus upon the life history while working with colleagues at Harvard. Murray believed that the use of multiple methods – interviews, projective tests, and especially autobiographical narratives – would provide more important insights into the structure, development, and dynamics of personality than the popular but limited trait approaches of the time. The field’s primary commitment, he said, should remain faithful to individual, complex lives viewed from a variety of angles.

For many decades however, the use of life historical accounts within personality psychology, and the discipline as a whole for that matter, was often framed as a justification equipped with a long addendum explaining why primacy should be placed on the idiographic rather than the nomothetic. This point has become increasingly banal in the past few decades amidst the shortcomings of the cognitive revolution and the wider acceptance of narrative as a mode of thought and inquiry that does justice to the experiential contortions of life. As Josselson puts it, “Narrative research, rooted in interpretive hermeneutics and phenomenology, strives to preserve the complexity of what it means to be human and to locate its observations of people

and phenomena in society, history, and time” (2006, p. 3). Life histories have been welcomed by some psychologists who emphasize the unity of the self and identity as told through stories (Erikson, 1968, McAdams, 1993), whereas others have taken a deconstructive route (Gergen, 1991; Parker, 1992) to emphasize a lack of inner unity, thus claiming a radical social constructionist position that the author of the text is essentially dead. Still others, such as Raggatt (2000) and Hermans and Kempen (1993) have built on the work of literary theoretician Mikhail Bakhtin, who emphasized dialogicality. My interest here does not lie in subscribing to one particular narrative approach. Rather, I want to call attention to the importance of the life history as a standpoint and mode of inquiry in the case of Tibet.

The value of the life history, Bert Cohler (2008) argues, lies in its ability to show the coalescence of autobiographical reasoning and collective remembrance. Cohler, writing about the circulation of memoirs after World War II, advocates for the primacy of stories as a means to understand how representations of the Shoah have changed over time. As he notes, in the three years directly following the end of the war, well over a hundred accounts were written, many by attending physicians who documented in a straightforward manner the events that transpired at concentration camps. A second wave of life accounts was written in the years following Adolph Eichmann’s trial (in 1961) emerging mainly from those individuals who were incarcerated and survived their time at the concentration camps, fostering a discourse of “survivors” rather than “refugees.” And finally, as the 1978 television miniseries on the Holocaust garnered an enormous audience across the United States, accounts by Holocaust survivors increasingly took the form of preserving memory by compiling their stories of first-hand violence in several oral history projects.

What Cohler points out is the value of looking microscopically at one life to understand the changing demands of time and place with which a life history is written. The past century of Tibetan history in exile provides a related example of how the account of one life is often written in accordance with the larger demands of the exile community, whether that be a presentation to Western nations about the atrocities committed within Tibet, an emphasis on human rights violations, or an attempt to preserve an obscured history within the past half century's tumult. The practice of identity in exile, as I have argued above, is rooted in the telling, negation, and transmission of stories. Viewed as more than just cultural documents, the life histories in this dissertation should not be considered mere evidence of exile, socially determined in its entirety, but of individual agency, too. As three generations now live in exile, as the Dalai Lama reaches 75 years of age, and as brutal unrest and protest erupted in Tibet as recent as two years ago, a life historical inquiry of several Tibetans in New York City provides the opportunity to look closely at a population at a critical juncture.

Yet as a burgeoning theoretical and methodological approach in psychology, we must, exercise caution about how much a life history can reveal. As Gary Gregg points out at the conclusion of his book *Culture and Identity in a Muslim Society*, in which he draws heavily on the life historical accounts he collects and analyzes:

A life narrative collected at a single point in time yields but a still photograph and cannot be used to assess how open or closed a person may be to change, development, or involution. . . I believe that no cross-sectional investigation can do that, because too much fluidity is built into personality – much more than recognized by most psychologists – to predict how an individual will respond to novelty. As a system of integrated multiplicity, personality remains fundamentally open. Not only do contrasting identities organize our

personalities as dialogue and dispute but also our subjective experience continually eludes, escapes, and overflows the confines of the discourses we design to render it meaningful. As Erikson recognized, identity guarantees no stability, and at some historical and life-historical moments, it leads beyond its own boundaries. (2007, p. 332)

Insofar as social scientists claim the life historical account as a view from within – a cut on the opacity of the other – they bypass the fact that any life historical account is not a mirror of one’s subjective reality, but rather a co-construction between the author and her or his informant. The life history thus owes a fundamental debt to the dynamics of the encounter; as it is never a direct reflection of an other’s experience, it is the diegetic re-creation of a fleeting encounter, a textual act one step away from its referenced actuality. “The life history,” Crapanzano notes in his study *Tuhami*, “like the autobiography, presents the subject from his own perspective. It differs from the autobiography in that it is an immediate response to a demand posed by an Other and carries within it the expectations of that Other. It is, as it were, doubly edited: during the encounter itself and during the literary (re)-encounter” (1980, p. 8). The life history is thus accompanied by an ethical imperative to create a voice evocative of what happened between two individuals at a fixed moment in time.

As the life history is a remembrance of an encounter, invariably written from a particular standpoint, ultimately we must recognize that its form may bear a certain resemblance to literary constructions. Such a point may be obvious when we remember that the ground upon which the life history is based is tethered to the intersection of memory, power plays, silence, and confounding issues of representation. In Freud’s case study of Elisabeth von R, he (1955) observed a strange state of affairs that would run the gamut of his writings – the limits imposed by a largely accepted concept of science cut short, circumscribed, and entrapped his

understanding of a person. As a gifted writer, he relied on his skills to navigate the problem – acknowledging at one point that his case histories read like short stories – but it persisted nonetheless. The problem of how to write – or how one is allowed to write – is a problem that social science likewise continues to both grapple with and ignore, unavoidable problems imposed by “the nature of the subject,” as Freud termed it. Psychology in Freud’s time was still beleaguered with the methods that Wundt borrowed from physics, creating a tension Dilthey (1989) outlined as a division between the *Geistwissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*. Dilthey saw the goals of the human sciences and the natural sciences, respectively, to understand and to explain. He believed that a human scientific mode of inquiry could form the basis of a response to an essential problem that Kant posed: “to retain the deepest understanding of the moral, aesthetic, and religious elements in experience, while redeeming them from speculative interpretations and making them the object of empirical scientific study” (Hodges, 1969, p. 6).

The life historical account, which I take to be a formidable human scientific tool, has provided psychology with a form for the subject. I would like to argue, following Freeman (2007), that in providing a form for the subject, it has stretched our modern concept of what may be included within the purview of science. While narrative psychology is particularly well-suited for understanding the passage of exile in the case of Tibet, I now want to turn to a consideration of Tibetan life history to consider what narrative psychology may gain by looking closely at Tibetan life histories.

Tibetan Life History

Briefly I want to address a study by Janet Gyatso (1998) on the secret autobiographies of a Tibetan visionary. While this dissertation deals with interviews I conducted with Tibetans in

New York City that I subsequently turned into written text, Gyatso is working with the written autobiography of a Tibetan visionary from several centuries ago. Nonetheless, I turn to her work because in many ways it speaks to the cultural specificity of telling one's own life story, and the interpretation of the demand to tell that story.

The focus of Gyatso's study is Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798), highly regarded as a poet and a visionary in the tradition of "Old" Tibetan Buddhism. His powerful meditative experiences and several visions of his past lives – one including his life as the king Trisong Detsen who played a pivotal role in developing Tibet as a Buddhist country – feature strongly in his account. In Lingpa's autobiography, Gyatso points out the polemical agenda behind much life writing in Tibet, which is to assert religious achievements of one school over those of another. Such a polemical agenda dictated much life writing in Tibet for centuries, yet she adds that life writing in Tibet coincided with the tendency to record historical events. Autobiography often translates to *namtar* – the full liberation story of oneself, though such stories were often, as in the case of Jigme Lingpa, written by and occasionally edited by the subject's scribe or disciple. Thus the actual construction of a life account, often written by more than one individual, taken in consideration with the emphasis on past lives, negates any concept of self as a single, bounded entity. Gyatso writes, "The self-written life account, due to powerful constraints in Tibetan linguistic convention on how one should talk about oneself, typically exhibits a studied diffidence, whereas the life written by someone else typically exhibits an equally studied reverence" (p. 105). She goes on:

To write a diffident autobiography is a complex project. A variety of strategies were developed to allow autobiographers to recount their own achievements. Even though Tibetan autobiographers usually end up portraying themselves positively, even self-

aggrandizingly, they do so always in light of a tension that is missing in biography. The tension results from a pair of conflicting social norms: one requiring that persons refer to themselves with humility and the other that religious teachers present themselves as venerable exemplars. Ultimately, we should note, the show of diffidence will also satisfy the latter expectation, since it is itself a sign of the author's admirable incorporation of Buddhist sensibilities and Tibetan mores, hence worthiness as a role model. Still, the rhetorical dissonance remains. (p. 105)

Certainly, Lejeune's autobiographical pact (1975) has no chance for applicability here. Autobiographical representation – the “I” in the text corresponding to the author's identity – does not transfer to Tibetan accounts such as those written by Lingpa, one that emphasizes impermanence, thereby “undermin[ing] a metaphysics of the individual, who is often rendered empty of essence precisely because of the inevitability of death” (p. 110).

As Khetsen Zhangpo (1994), a scholar of Tibetan Buddhism, notes about the practice of life writing, the individuals deemed worthy of a biography in Tibet have long been lamas who devoted themselves to study, and lamas who devoted themselves to practice. In the case of Lingpa, the very fact that he could have a life story published was largely on account of belonging to the male religious elite. The majority of life accounts published before 1950 in Tibet were designated to that particular class of individuals, a designation which began to break down in exile amidst political struggle (McGranahan, 2010). In the ensuing half century since, writing one's story has transcended categories of both class and gender, often in an attempt to show through one's own experiences the resonant permutations of history. Necessarily, the life stories written by or about Tibetans in exile have often taken the form of testimony, several of which have had a lasting influence as Tibetan exile literature, deserve mention here. David Patt's

A Strange Liberation (1993) chronicles two Tibetans – one imprisoned and separated from her children for 25 years, another imprisoned for 20 years following the Lhasa Uprising – document their own torture and persecution, as well as survival. Palden Gyatso's (2004) account of 30 years of imprisonment, during which time he was starved and tortured, has also figured prominently into the exile literature emerging from Tibet. And recently, the autobiography of Tubten Khetsun (2008), the nephew of a senior government official who was imprisoned and spent years in a labor camp, as well as living as a class enemy in Tibet, provides a relatively dispassionate account of the Chinese occupation.

The Present Study: Interviews and Protocol

My approach to the stories of Tibetans differs in several ways from contemporary research on Tibet within the social sciences which I have already alluded to in this chapter (McGranahan, 2010; Hess, 2009; Falcone and Wangchuk, 2008). First, the view I offer depicts exiled Tibetans in New York City, the locality wherein there is the largest number of Tibetans currently living in the United States. The number of individuals I spoke with is small and not necessarily representative when the New York's Tibetan population is taken as a whole. Henry Murray would defend such criticisms about "sample size" in the study of lives with his claim that in each life we can see the intricacies of individuality, the conditions of interdependence in which social and cultural identities are fashioned, as well as universal vestiges. Secondly, this work differs from previous, related academic research on the subject in that I am not able to offer a view from Tibet or one of the surrounding refugee communities; I have never been there. Inevitably, my distance from familiarity with that part of the world is quite far (and thus the cause for this inquiry as one of exile). In later chapters, I explore the ways in which this put me

at both a marked disadvantage when speaking to my informants, as well as the ways it provided an opportunity to find common ground with younger Tibetans who know the physicality of Tibet primarily through stories and their imagination. Thirdly, I focus on the construction of the life history itself in a way that has not been given suitable attention in this arena. I find useful the work of Gary Gregg (2007) has done on young adults living in Morocco and the ethnographic work of Robert Desjarlais (2003) on Yolmo wa elders in Nepal. There are, of course, innumerable differences with the aforementioned scholarship and this work in both scope and subject matter. However, both Gregg and Desjarlais inquire into the life history itself, its construction, and the demand it makes on their informants, themes which lie at the center of this work.

I sought participants for interviews by explaining this work to officials at several Tibetan organizations in New York City, leaders at two Zen Centers, and a number of friends and acquaintances. My criteria was broad: I hoped to find both young and old Tibetans, both those who came from Tibet or one of the surrounding refugee settlements in India, Nepal, or Bhutan, as well as Tibetans who have lived most of their lives in the United States. Initially, I encountered constant deferral – each contact claimed to find the work interesting, but recommended that there was someone who would be more suited for me to speak with. I came to interpret such an experience less as bad luck and more of a result of my naiveté. Only when I stopped badgering my contacts with a flurry of questions did they agree to talk to me at length. Many Tibetans I came in contact with were thrilled that I was interested in their cause. I emphasized that I am a graduate student. I said I was suspect that this work would serve as the outlet to their concerns with demonstrable results. Many believed that I was training to be a clinician, despite my insistence otherwise. They told me it was important that Tibet's cause find

voice in a number of different forums, though overall they seemed to see this work as a sort of journalism. They remained concerned (perhaps, at times, even more than I was) at the possible audience. Yet within that concern was an unspoken nonchalance. This was not the first time someone from outside the Tibetan community had taken an interest in their stories. The telling of exile, it seemed, was inscribed within the practice of Tibetan identity. It is also important to consider the fact that many of the Tibetans I spoke to played an active role in a host of community organizations. Inevitably, these organizations promote certain discourses and discourage others. Those discourses, and the more personal concerns which lie behind those discourses, feature into the life portraits ahead.

The interviews took place between July, 2010 and February, 2011, with the majority of those interviews occurring in the late autumn and early winter months. All interviews were conducted in English at a place of my informants' choosing, which was often their apartment, their place of work, a coffee shop, a quiet restaurant, or during a walk. At the behest of my informants, not all of my interviews were tape recorded and all names (as well as possible identifying information) have been changed. I depended heavily on the few notes I made during our talks, the lengthy notes made afterwards usually on the subway back to my apartment, and what I spoke aloud into a tape recorder in the hours after each interview. Much has been written in recent years about the reification of the transcript, its hold on a researcher, the way it freezes an encounter. I see grains of truth in such arguments, and additionally, in this case, my informants' were often politely adamant that I not record their voices.

Our conversations took the form of open-ended interviews. It was especially important, I found, to let the individuals I spoke with dictate the direction of the first few minutes that we talked. As I mentioned above, only when I recognized this did lengthy, worthwhile conversations

take place. The questions I carried with me were underscored by a metaphysics of individuality and chronological, calendric time which I attempted, however slowly, to abandon. At first I wanted to know the logistics of how they came to New York City, the experience of leaving Tibet or a surrounding settlement and arriving in New York, the ways in which they built a life here, their political involvement (if any), memories of home. These areas of inquiry were answered by my informants, usually in roundabout ways, as almost no one I spoke to had any interest in constructing a timeline. We also discussed the vicissitudes of daily life, social inclusion and exclusion within the Tibetan community and other communities in New York City as well, some politically-minded topics, and speculations about the future in terms of jobs, relationships, and Tibet itself. I believe the reader will find their stories, as I did, both captivating and sorrow-filled. Somewhat hesitantly, I use the term *informant* simply because I prefer it over *subject* and *participant*. Nonetheless, I believe the term *informant* carries with it a connotation that both de-humanizes the relationship that develops between a researcher and the individuals with whom she or he talks. It is, however, the lesser of several evils.

What resulted from several conversations are a series of life histories that figure prominently into the pages that follow. These are not life histories in the standard sense, by which I mean they do not conform to models of the life story espoused by psychologists such as McAdams (1995) and Singer (2001), who emphasize a mode of interviewing (and thereby, responding) that favors personal, chronological history followed by an inquiry into elements of redemption and contamination, as well as external influences. Useful as these models appear to be, such a protocol did not cohere to my informants' experiences. In the case of this work, what results are layered, mosaic-like portraits organized around various issues pertinent to the Tibetan community. Coming to this work with an existential and phenomenological orientation, I have

attempted to craft portraits of my informants that are evocative of their lives. The way in which my participants' stories sit next to one another in the following chapters speaks not only to the commonalities of the pressing issues in their lives, but – from a psychological perspective – underscores the value of narrative juxtaposition (Roberts and Rosenwald, 2001), and montage. I believe that presenting a chronological account of these four lives would be an imposition, an unfitting act of framing. In another sense, I believe that narrative juxtaposition captures my experience of these life history interviews; that is, I could not help but constantly look across the accounts of these four individuals, for their stories moved dexterously and regularly between the particular and the general, a maneuver that is perhaps not surprising in light of the historical tumult under which their lives developed. Such a mode of writing, I recognize, not only captures my (and hopefully their) experience, but also imparts an effect upon the reader, one that may be dialogic. I believe the role of the voice was so central to my informants. The cacophony of voices in the lives of my informants, and the emphasis they placed on the act of narration, underscored the importance of voice. It was a construct that I understood apart from the oft-used terms self and identity, and indeed it was a construct I felt a responsibility to evoke in these life histories.

Participants

This work represents the research of a year and a half, during which time I spoke with numerous Tibetans at length and spent a great deal of time in New York City's Tibetan community. That background research has informed the whole of this dissertation – my conception of post-1959 Tibetan history, my areas of inquiry, and my methodological approach –

yet the proverbial center of the pages that follow are the stories of four individuals with whom I developed a relationship and spoke at length. They are:

- Tashi, a woman in her mid-30s, who resides in Astoria with her husband and son. She is currently working towards a degree in nursing. She was raised in one of the many settlements in India, just outside of Dharamsala, though she was born in Tibet. Tashi and her husband came to the U.S. in 1998. I interviewed her four times. Our interviews took place either at her apartment, walking around her neighborhood, or at a local restaurant. Others I spoke to who also knew her praised her optimism and hard work, her perseverance, qualities which came across quite clearly in my interviews with her and underscored the fact that she was a social bulwark for many. She often talked of living a “clean, healthy life,” and emphasized how her studies in medicine had shaped her worldview. Evidently very goal-oriented, she spoke of attaining a good nursing job at a Queens hospital and earning enough money so that she could partially support her aging parents in India. In her apartment were vestiges of an interest in Tibetan (Vajrayana) Buddhism, a subject I found her more unwilling than my other informants to talk about. I sensed that such vestiges as well as her silence on the matter reflected an interest that had either petered out or simply been abandoned. At the same time, Tashi was quite interested in the travels and news of the Dalai Lama, and had compiled a binder of newspaper clippings about the leader’s activities in the past ten years, but her fascination was lodged on the overtly political aspects.
- Dawa, a man living alone in Jackson Heights who currently works at a bank in Manhattan. He is 51 years old and is an active member in several New York-based Tibetan organizations. He came to the U.S. in 1996 with his son following the death of

his wife. Dawa, who was born as his parents fled from Tibet in 1960, lived primarily in Dharamsala for most of his life. Dawa and I spoke four times over the course of two months, each time at his apartment. If indeed an interview can be “cathartic” for the one being interviewed, Dawa, I believed, received such a benefit. As he regularly lamented his son’s decision to move to California as well as the relative lack of social outlets in his life, he was hyper-attentive to my presence and was certain to keep the interviews going as long as possible. Most striking to me was how Dawa accepted the contingency of life, and particularly his life, with a sort of steadfast resignation. He found little solace in Buddhist beliefs, he told me, largely out of not knowing enough about the religion and its philosophy. He admitted to a cursory fascination with notions such as rebirth, emptiness, and karma, and tried, I believe, to find ways in which such notions had or might materialize in his own life.

- Tenzin, a 56-year old man who lives in Ridgewood with his wife and daughter. Tenzin, who studied on scholarship at a Southern university in the late 1990s, moved to the U.S. with his family in 2005 to work in library sciences. He spent the first few years of his life in Tibet, until 1959, when his parents brought him and his siblings to India. I interviewed Tenzin on four occasions, each time at his place of work at the end of a weekday. He was often quite tired during these conversations, his eyes bloodshot, but was insistent that we never reschedule. When the weather was good we would spend the last part of our interview walking around the blocks near where he worked. He often spoke of being close to an age when he could retire and live peacefully in New York. Tenzin was also extremely well-versed in various strains of Buddhism, and I believe its effects on his life, and the life of his family, were quite significant. However, it remained an aspect of our

interviews that was somewhat closed off. Allusions to his recent interest in Zen practice, and the time he spent visiting monasteries in India peppered some of our conversations, but Tenzin was quietly adamant that those references went unexplained. I believe that for him, speaking of the role of Buddhism in his life would have constituted a slight transgression.

- Kelsang, a woman in her late twenties who lives on the Upper West Side. Kelsang was born in the Gangtok settlement in India and grew up there. In 2008, she came to the United States and has since worked in massage therapy for a hotel, a job towards which she has very mixed feelings. I spoke with Kelsang on three occasions, each time at a coffee shop or tea house near her place of work. At least a few minutes of each of our interviews occurred while we walked through a city park. As I describe below, she treated many of these interviews as a sort of intellectual exercise where she could weight various positions on a number of issues. A recurring theme in many of our talks was her relationship to her uncle, whom she described as a “real Buddhist and very important for Tibetans in New York City.” He no doubt played a role in her relocation to New York and in her helping locate an apartment and a place to live. Where they seemed to clash most was on her apparent lack of religious commitment. She was content to confine her interest in Buddhism to meditative practice while he was quite dissatisfied with her decision.

*

These four relationships developed for a number of reasons, not the least of which had to do with the notion of an outsider. Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang regularly invoked the term “outsider” when describing themselves, whether as a result of their own historical backgrounds,

their myriad relocations, or their present life circumstances. On some level, I believe these relationships were formed in the first place because of a sense of the outside I shared with my informants. Indeed, apartness provided the proverbial ground for a relationship to develop. As such, these four individuals do not constitute a “representative” sample of New York City’s Tibetan population insofar as the older voices are those of two men, and the younger voices are those of two women. Though within the experiences of these four individuals are vast differences in background, distance (both literal and metaphorical) from Tibet, past and present socioeconomic status, and interpersonal lives. I argue that the inevitable slant of age and gender is overshadowed by the multivariate experiences of Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang, which, in their singularities, speak to themes befitting the larger Tibetan community of New York City.

In the chapters that follow, I attempt to preserve the intimacy of those relationships by writing in a way that hopefully reflects the distances and proximities I experienced to these four individuals over the course of several months. It will likely be clear to the reader that my relationships with the two men were relatively unencumbered; that is, while certainly not without complications, I was more able to settle into a familiar mode of interviewing and conversation with Tenzin and Dawa. I am still uncertain what accounted for this, whether it was the dynamics of gender, autobiographical experiences, significant differences in age, or myriad other factors outside the purview of my own reflexivity. My relationships with Tashi and Kelsang were more complex and thus deserve some attention here. Tashi befitted a maternal quality that made her both very easy to talk to, and at the same time, often evasive of my questions. She was also the only one of my informants to whom I spoke as her family sometimes sat nearby in the background. Despite the fact that many Tibetan women I met were reticent to engage in an interview with me, Tashi neither had any apparent qualms nor was she overly guarded. She often

prefaced our meetings with the revelation of some pain or frustration – physical, memorial, logistical. Those pains and frustrations – real as they were – had the effect of particularizing her story and delimiting the end points of what she would narrate. I found these gymnastics beguiling insofar as they both comforted and alienated me, as though we misread each other’s objectives. Yet at the same time, such misunderstandings or misreadings provided a shared, if limited, intimacy often characterized by a pensive silence.

My relationship with Kelsang was perhaps even more complex. Her hesitation to participate in the interviews as she participated in them often kept me hesitant and formal, mirroring her own hesitation and formality. Her job as a hotel masseuse was a point of pride insofar as she had knowledge of the body’s muscles and tissues which she did not hesitate to showcase during several of our interviews. However, beyond the studying and resultant knowledge she wanted to talk little of the job itself – what I initially read as a sort of shame – though I believe her silence on the matter was tied to frustrations about her course of study not exactly matching the job, and once she noted how some guests confused her as being Chinese. In other words, what she gained about knowledge of the body was immensely important to her, but she felt that work hardly manifested itself in what she did on a day to day basis. Her comments about being misidentified as Chinese speak to sentiments she expressed in other interviews that the job of a masseuse was not a “typical Tibetan job.”

What also must be given attention is the fact that we were age mates. I was concerned – more than in my time with Tashi – that these interviews would be misread as a façade under which some form of attraction could play out. Such a concern faded over the course of several encounters, but its presence, however muted, did give some shape to our interviews. In those interviews I felt more of an imperative to rely on questions I had brought with me and less

willing to digress, perhaps – again – mirroring Kelsang’s own attitude of reluctance. Indeed, these were the least personal interviews I conducted in formality and direction but deeply engaging in the sense that the interviews themselves became a sort of intellectual exercise. It will likely be clear in the chapters to come that Kelsang found herself, eventually, quite interested in the issues we raised together and attempted regularly to pivot around various perspectives on topics such as home, identity, and status. Perhaps out of defensive posturing, perhaps out of mere interest, any sense of comfort or ease was wiped out. For me, these interviews demanded a requisite distance to bring the dynamics into focus.

Background and Inception

Historian of psychology Ian Nicholson (2005) has utilized Sartre’s notion of project to explore the constellation of long-standing existential concerns in a researcher’s work. Nicholson’s heuristic is a useful way for one to practice a degree of reflexivity in a discipline where researchers often fear the inadvertent appearance of their own faces in the structure of their ideas, like the face of a drowned person under the ice. In that vein, I should note that I have been an inept practitioner of Zen for the past ten years and I have known a number of Tibetans during that time (in Boston, Providence, and for the last four years, in New York). However, I should also note that I am an atheist and do not remotely consider myself a Buddhist. Zen has simply been a useful everyday practice through which I have met a number of interesting people who would often talk about the historical-geographical grounding of Buddhism and relatedly, the rather tortuous past century of Tibet.

In general terms, this research started with a naively broad interest in how individuals describe their experiences of transformation and apartness, which I see most poignantly in the

exile communities that dot the globe, especially Tibet. I began imagining a dissertation that would inquire specifically into issues of and relating to Tibet in September, 2009 when walking in Manhattan with a friend who had just returned from a year of a fieldwork at a children's center outside Katmandu. He had become quite involved in Tibetan issues during his time in Nepal, and on that autumn afternoon, he brought me with him to meet a few of his Tibetan friends protesting in front of the Empire State Building (many Tibetans in New York were angry about the decision to turn the landmark's upper lights red and yellow in honor of the founding of the People's Republic of China). I was not especially moved by what I saw, nor did we stay long. I was, however, fixated in the days that followed by several images I remembered from the protest: an elderly man in a grey jacket leaning against a building around the corner, telling another person his hands were too arthritic to hold one of the many signs other protestors were grasping; a young woman speaking to a news reporter, her face quite still as she voiced what sounded like a manifesto written by one of the several Tibetan organizations in the city. There is nothing terribly distinct about what I remember, yet in the days after I was moved by both curiosity and, to a lesser extent, affinity, to explore what space psychology had provided to Tibetans in exile. What I found was a significant dearth, aside from a smattering of mental health pieces and some politically-minded articles about postcolonialism, and even less that drew upon their life histories. From that vacant space this work emerges. I should add that I have long been critical of China's position towards and occupation of Tibet, the recurring hard-line approach concerning issues of autonomy, and the country's unyielding tendency to halt seemingly all conversations about possible change. I also share the views of many Tibetans I knew before this project and met as the work progressed, even if some of those views amounted to a distant distaste of what China has done.

There is the added fact that my ambitions here seek to unsettle a psychological understanding of a life history and meanwhile call attention to the prospect of re-imagining both the possibilities and limits of writing about a life in what still may be called social science. In the case of Tibet, as in the case of numerous diasporic populations around the world, writing about the coalescence of history and individual lives demands a form that speaks to the complications inherent in that grand intersection. Our experiences of ourselves and others constantly elude us and flow over the parameters we use to confine them. Demonstrating the ways in which this happens is a moral imperative in any discipline that grounds its fidelity to human experience.

CHAPTER TWO: *PROGENY*

“To answer the question ‘Who?’ is to tell the story of a life”

- Hannah Arendt, (1958, p. 179)

I met Dawa on a frigid day in mid-October at his apartment in Jackson Heights. A contact of mine at a local museum arranged the interview, noting that Dawa was a person she considered to be one of the best representatives for Tibetan culture in New York City, citing his role in local organizations. His apartment, on the fifth floor of a five floor building, carried a redolence of cigarette smoke and incense, both of which he had just extinguished by the time I arrived. He coughed violently upon opening the door and showed signs of emphysema throughout our first interview.

He cast me as something of a young handyman right away, asking if I would not mind fixing the speakers to his computer and adjusting the outdated VCR resting on the faux wood paneled stand in the living room. Several times in the first ten minutes, he noted that his son should be doing this work, but “he’s off in San Francisco trying to shed what he has left.”

“Does he come to New York often?” I asked.

“No, he comes when he has to come, which is about once a year.”

“How often do you two talk?”

“Not enough. I call him four times and he calls me back once. He says we should talk via the computer, like on video. I have no idea how to do it so we just don’t. It’s like opening the door just a little for an old person who is weak. The door shuts. What can you do?”

He poured me sweet tea and we chatted about the wind, which he called a baleful wind. He laughed about his characterization of the weather, and told me how much he liked talking about the weather in such terms.

“I feel like a poet when I talk like that,” he said, laughing again.

“Do you go out in this weather?” I asked, to which he pursed his lips and shook his head, making a shivering motion.

“I’m an old man. If I go out in this weather, I have to accept consequences. Who will take care of me if I fall down? No health insurance,” and he spread his palms wide, as if to say, *I have nothing*. “See, I know Tibetans who work at hospitals, who work at doctor’s offices. They would help me if I needed to. But it is impossible. All the forms to fill out. I barely go to the doctor’s now. I skate, like on thin ice.”

Dawa and I talked on three more afternoons in subsequent weeks, and in each interview, he raised concerns about the frailty of his health and the absence of his son. Such concerns, I found, characterized many of the conversations I had with Tibetans I met during this project. Dawa, especially, seemed to be in a state of despair not having his family around. His wife had died in 1995 after a brief battle with breast cancer, the year before he came to the United States from Dharamsala. He worked for several Tibetan organizations in New York – as an organizer, a treasurer, among other administrative duties. In addition, he worked a nine-to-five job at a bank in Manhattan. How he managed what appeared – to me – to be an active life was perplexing, given the slowness with which he shuffled over his carpeted floors. Often he would ask for my opinion about how his countenance (his word) looked. I usually told him he looked spry. His response to my assessment became a refrain throughout our talks: “What can you do?”

I was, and remain to the present day, struck by Dawa's solitude, his general resignation, and his resistance to what I was attempting to ask. Whereas isolation can be described as a type of thrownness, solitude implies a degree of choice. Dawa worked a full-time job and was, at least on paper, a very active participant in New York City's Tibetan community; he was around others regularly. However, my interviews with him led me to believe that he let few into his life. He told me I was the first person to enter his apartment in months. Each time we talked, he wore pajamas, explaining "how Saturdays can be tough," with his thinning hair both coal-colored and graying, uncombed. His disheveled appearance belied the great enthusiasm with which he spoke. Dawa resided in a solitude that was not necessarily melancholic, but rather a stoic acceptance of what he took to be the givens of and surrounding his life: death, loss, and lack.

*

Dawa was the second of my informants with whom I spoke at length; Tashi was the first. Unlike Tashi, there was no significant social life to which he referred at length. While I began this dissertation with an interest in how individuals who experience exile pass that experience – in the form of stories – onto others, my encounters with Dawa caused me to question the facticity of passage. There was an absence of what I imagined to be a clear means through which the stories he possessed were passed. Only after our final interview ended did I come to see that Dawa had been significantly shaped by the stories he had heard, and by those he had told others. And even later, I understood my own naiveté in presupposing that the stories passed down from one generation to the next took the concrete form of an older family member relating an experience of the past to a younger family member, as it had materialized in my own life.

The aims of the following chapter are two-fold. First, by looking across the stories of my four informants, I explore the types of stories they heard as they grew up, and I also explore the

types of stories they have passed on themselves, whether to their children or to younger people in their lives. My intention here is thematic in scope; that is, by looking across the stories of my informants, I locate the types of stories and the narrative horizons they both inherited and responded to. In most of my interviews, it was not at all difficult to ask what stories their parents and elder family members had told them. It was more challenging to discern what stories they passed on. A one-on-one interview naturally creates such a challenge, and makes an interpretation more speculative. Through my own inquiries, or often through indirection, my informants would talk about what they would tell their children (or, simply younger Tibetans with whom they were close). Sometimes they described these stories as ones they had told, and other times what they said was more hypothetical: a story they would possibly tell one day.

In the second half of this chapter I work towards understanding the mechanisms through which the stories they heard and told have moved. At the end of *Totem and Taboo* (1953), Freud asks what mechanisms one generation draws upon in order to hand down its mental states to the next generation. Such a phenomenon has been given undue attention in psychological circles, but it remains hugely important, especially in light of the realities of diasporic populations, where stories of uprootedness, violence, and exile are handed down, intimately shaping the hereafter of those individuals who receive such stories. Rather than assume that the repercussions of the past are felt in the way the aftershocks of an earthquake are felt – a fermentation less scarring than the initial upheaval but still violent – I think it is more worthwhile to question not only what the past is, but also how it is used. In my interviews with Tibetans in New York City, such stories passed through what I will describe as translation, silence, and interlocutory slippage. I am less concerned here with the occasions for passage – where and when such stories are told, for example – and more concerned with exactly how such stories come to be told, and how the past

– in narrative form – is reshaped in light of present-day demands. After considering the mechanisms through which the stories move, I will conclude with a consideration of the function of such passage.

Stories in Transit: Hearing

What Dawa heard from his parents in the 1960s and 1970s when he was growing up in India were accounts of what he called “the last evenings on earth,” the final days of relatives who had died under harsh living conditions in Tibet. The choice his own parents made in leaving was something of an anomaly in that his father’s large and extended family had chosen not to go to India. Correspondence with those relatives who stayed took an epistolary form for a number of years, detailing in letters their own final days. I asked Dawa whether he had ever read the letters. He said,

No, I have not seen them, and no, they were never read to me. But my father would talk about them, and so would my mother. When Norbu [his father’s brother] died around 1967, he wrote to us, and then his wife wrote to us. Many of the letters told about changes in the land [a rural village outside in the Shigatse province]. They were songs, almost. He would say some about his health, his sorrow about what was happening around him.

“What did your parents say about the letters?” I asked.

“There has to be restraint, so we would talk around the letters. Everyone knew Norbu was dying. We were all very sad. His last letters talked about the crops.”

“Would your father say much about Norbu?”

“No, he would stick to the letters. Sure, he would say some, but my brother and I basically knew him just through the letters he wrote. This would happen a lot.”

And Dawa was right in that sense, for Tashi, too, described this tendency to talk around a loved one's last evenings on earth. As she explained to me in our second interview, the death of her own grandparents, who stayed in Tibet because of frail health and suffered enormously from food shortages in the 1970s, was described to Tashi in her early childhood lacking in particularity but abound in sensory details of the place in which one was dying. She noted, "My mother, she did get back there to be with them. But she would never explain all that sadness in detail. I remember she would not even cry when she told me about it. She would tell me about conversations her and my grandmother had."

"What did they talk about?" I asked.

"They talked about a local monastery, which could not afford its upkeep and looked ruined. And how some plants hadn't bloomed yet. The land seemed real parched, from what I know."

She went on to describe this tendency in her own family, a sort of encirclement around death itself wherein the end of one's body was described by zeroing in on the land itself. Such restraint, Desjarlais (1992) has observed among Yolmo Buddhists in Nepal, relies on poetic tendencies to approximate pain in a way that is not self-indulgent. I was most struck by not only the form these renditions of death took, but by their inclusion and prefacing of a *then* and *now* of the physical world. Tashi said that these stories were told in the family, but one did not talk about such stories with others. In other words, I could inquire into just the rind, but not further.

Likewise, I believe the space provided by one's family could also be used as a means to invoke particularity about so-called non-events. As Carole McGranahan (2005) has observed, Tibetan exile identity rests so much in the hands of the exile government – understandably pushing for unity and solidarity – that those histories which do not coalesce neatly become

“arrested,” stored away or silenced. Writing about violent resistance, for instance, goes against the human rights and non-violent agenda of the exile community. She writes, “Built into the conceptual structure of arrested histories is an anticipation of a time other than now when buried political items can be dug up and treasures revealed, and when histories might no longer be drafted in terms of the modern nation-state” (p. 591). Given the political pressures to censor certain histories, I believe the space provided by familial recollections of the past can serve the function of particularizing or re-drafting historical events in which the family took part.

As Tenzin described to me in our first interview, Tibetans in the 1960s and 1970s were especially encouraged to keep their critiques of the developing exile government to a minimum. He notes that his father and uncles were quite vocal about their unhappiness with issues regarding citizenship, but were concurrently unable to find any forum in which they could voice those issues. His family survived on what he described as an unbelievably small sum of money each month when job after job was denied to his father based on his lack of Indian citizenship.

“He would say, ‘Fine, give me the citizenship. We have to eat.’ But all his attempts went unanswered. This happened so much, and I heard more about it as I got older. Somehow he got a job in manual labor. It was hard, and he could have gotten other jobs, based on his degrees.”

“Was there a sense of dread that giving up Tibetan citizenship would change what the government-in-exile was doing?” I asked.

“Perhaps, at least to the people running it. You never hear about the number who died in the years when settlements were being established all over India. Tibetans could barely find work, and therefore survive.”

“What would your father tell you?”

“He would pretend to be Indian, which was hard, based on how he looked. But he told me how he faked his accent, and some papers, and then he got this job. People don’t talk about this but many Tibetans did it. He would only tell me in private. He was so angry at what the Tibetans in government were asking people to forego.”

Such a story seemed to be a model for how Tenzin described the relationship with his father: secrets were passed that told him how to survive. His father even insisted – amidst such recollections and advice – that they enact a sort of game in the house wherein Tenzin would have to prove he was Indian. He went on to explain that the emphasis his father placed on education very early in his life sent him away, across India, Nepal, and the United States. How to circumvent what his father took to be the unreasonable demands by the government-in-exile characterized much of their relationship.

And yet, other stories my informants were told can be group into a third category of hope. Tenzin also explained to me that his mother had very little tolerance for his father’s cynicism and opted to remain hopeful about what the government-in-exile was doing. He said, “For her, that is what a person did when they were waiting – to be hopeful, almost blindly so.” He said his mother was filled with stories of questionable accuracy about men, women, and children who continued to cross the dangerous passage in the Himalayas between Tibet and India up to the present day, and were received warmly by strangers in India.

“I have no idea whether these people existed, or whether this happened, or how she heard about such stories. My siblings and I would hear them all the time,” he said. Tenzin added that his parents were exhausted, fatigued in a way he has not yet experienced in his own life. He linked his mother’s stories of hope with her exhaustion, describing such stories as her needed reminder that there was perhaps light at the end of the tunnel.

Kelsang, the youngest of the four Tibetans with whom I spoke at length, and the one who has spent the entirety of her life before coming to the United States in India, described a similar quality of hope filling many of the stories she heard in her own family. Her mother, who was also raised entirely in India and also never was able to visit Tibet, told Kelsang about her attempts to enter the country for the first time when Mao died in the mid-1970s, and again in the early 1980s (during both periods, the number of Tibetans living in India, Nepal, and Bhutan who attempted to visit the country was quite high). Neither attempts were successful on account of bureaucratic entanglements, but such obstacles were not what Kelsang's mother focused on in her rendition of these stories.

“It’s so strange to think about it, to remember it, because she would always start by telling me what she packed,” Kelsang said. “And her face would almost be glowing. The first time I wasn’t even born, and the second time I was one or two years old. I don’t know what the world was like, so these stories were always weird.”

“How did they go?” I asked.

“Always the same thing. What she packed, and the description of the road that would take her there. I don’t know how she knew what it looked like. Then she’d rehearse the promises she made to our family and friends in India for what to do, where to pray. She would trail off when news came that she couldn’t go, but she didn’t dwell on that.”

I asked Kelsang how she felt when she heard these stories repeated so many times in her youth, and she noted that such stories had the tendency to enchant her, especially when she was a young girl curious about Tibet. “It’s like I was with her, too,” she said, her eyes widening some. What Kelsang said sheds light on is the intersubjective dimension of these stories of hope. Such stories cannot be removed from the context in which they came – Mao’s death and the increased

international condemnation of China – nor can such stories be considered outside of the engagement in which they occurred. They not only reference a disruption in the past that could illuminate something to come in the future, they depend upon a listener who can also engage in the act of being hopeful. Tenzin and Kelsang were those listeners. Rather than passive acceptance of a time bygone, these types of stories demanded, implicitly, participation.

Many of these stories showcased the ways in which family comes to serve as something of a substitute for a larger community. As I listened to the accounts of many Tibetans I spoke to, and their stories of death's surround, survival, and hope, I came to realize that the space of one's family helped to bridge an unbridgeable gap between past and present in a way that a larger community could not. Indeed, the Tibetan exile community has long been well-organized in its narrative, in its aims, its commitment to perseverance, that it cannot always speak to the myriad situations into which Tibetans have been thrust. The subsequent lack of community, which my informants' parents often saw as a missing bulwark, cast an ever greater light on the necessity of storied inheritance. Anastasia Christou (2006) writes in her article on Greek-American diaspora that the family itself can serve as a "diaspora space" wherein the larger issues that occur amidst relocation – nostalgia, power relations, and generational differences – are played out. The family, in this sense, becomes a microcosm, a space for rehearsing what will be played out on a more collective level. In another sense, when the family serves as a "diaspora space," it becomes a means through which an individual can build a site of identification with their cultural heritage and safely habituate to what is new.

Though beyond the so-called "diaspora space," I believe these family ties helped enliven my informants' (and perhaps their parents') imaginative capacities. Overwhelmed by the historical tide under which they had been swept and under which they lived, and often frustrated

at an exile government that could not speak to their myriad particularities, they had to, I believe, depend on the narrative transmission of the past to frame not only the past but also the future. Listening to their stories, I had to wonder whether the purpose behind much storytelling, at least in families, often resides in its ability to allow one to envision a time and space beyond the immediate. As Tashi told me many times, she remembers the silence of adults around her during her youth in India, a silence that she equated with being robbed of a past and a future. With a government consumed by an agenda and the logistics of establishing exile communities, one had to look more towards the family. Tenzin noted that his father told him the years of the 1960s and the 1970s were when Tibetans most felt the divide between political and religious leadership. In other words, finding solace in religious forms became especially difficult in the initial years after exile. He suggested that it would be interesting to know if someone ever did a study of religious commitment in those years but suggested such a study would never have been approved. I believe he was implying that faith or religious conviction helped very little during that time.

Relatedly, I was also struck by the degree to which the stories passed down in the years following exile created a sort of surround, a horizon that both hinted at and delimited a space of experience. I believe the contours of such a space did not so much index a past event as they did invoke a temporality all their own. Of course, these stories referred to what my informants did not experience themselves, to what they did not know, but even so, I believe the stories they heard had the unique quality of prescencing them in a particular space and time. In short, such stories closed, or attempted to close, the temporal gap between then and now. Given the tumultuous historical tide under which many of their parents and grandparents lived, I had expected stories of atrocity and abuse to characterize more of what my informants heard. But as Tenzin told me in our second interview, “It is not that one doesn’t talk about death in detail with

loved ones. There has been so much of it. But describing it would be like describing every crack you see in the sidewalk. Impossible.” What does the past even mean? In the case of these four individuals, it was a space not only for recollection but participation.

Stories in Transit: Telling

Among my informants, there was a constant concern for physical health. Beyond the fact that both Tashi and Kelsang worked in – or were working towards – a profession dealing with the care of the body (nursing for Tashi, and massage therapy for Kelsang), stories relating to the body’s upkeep characterized much of what they would pass on. Tashi regularly discussed how she felt upon arriving in the United States – not in terms of attitudes or perspective – but in terms of heartaches, pain that she could not quite locate, and shortness of breath. Kelsang, too, described her first weeks in New York as filled with pain that shot all the way up her neck, a pain that concurrently caused dizziness and a degree of anxiety. They told these stories to me, but they also told these stories to others.

Tashi noted, “Dickyi [her son] hears about this – he was young, so I don’t know much he remembers. But he was my little confidante those first few months. We had a nice neighbor, but she did not understand.”

“What didn’t she understand?” I asked.

“My heartaches. She would bring me medicine – we didn’t have insurance – but I didn’t want to take it. She would watch Dickyi, sometimes. I wonder if he ever tried to explain it to her.”

“What do you think he understood?”

“Most everything, because I would tell him. He knows that when your heart aches, it is because of what life is, and what has happened. He’s young but so smart. I’d tell him that when your body is off, it means you are trapped and cannot get away, like in a house. It’s better now.”

Kelsang had no children, but she worked as a nanny to her cousin’s two young children on occasion. In most of our conversations, she spoke with a reserved tone; I often had to coax her to talk length, but when the content of our talk turned to the children she cared for a few days each month, she was enthused. She said that both children, now in early adolescence, wanted to know her stories from living in India (the children had spent their entire lives in the United States. Their father had been here since the 1980s).

“They get an edited version,” she said, laughing, in response to me asking what she told them. “No, seriously, I tell them all sorts of things. But they don’t always understand. Some doctor put them on a medicine for an attention disorder. I have no idea what this is. They tried to tell me but I can’t make sense of it. I have a friend, a Tibetan, who is a smart guy. He says, ‘They are abstracted from their bodies.’”

“Do you agree with that?”

“I do. What I tell them is that you have to be able to tolerate a lot. For example, I tell them that when I came here and things were not good. The trip on the plane was so long, and my neck was in such pain. I had days where I could not leave [the apartment]. Who knows what was wrong? You worry about a lot in those states – death, or never getting better, who will help?”

“What do you think it was?”

“I tell them that my mind was in one place, and my body was in another. It was disruptive, you’d say. When that happens, you cannot move.”

I believe that this concern with health speaks not only to the uproar of a significant shift in one's environment – changes in climate, exhaustion, stress – but also coalesces with the prominence of suffering in Buddhist philosophy. Indeed, when Tashi and Kelsang spoke of these events, they were particularly saddened, pausing more than I believe they otherwise would have, as though the act of remembering was a labor itself. They felt and described the disruption of leaving India not in a (Western) psychological idiom, but as an event that their body remembered, its reverberations reaching up to the present day. The care of the body was not only a narrative marker in each of my informants' lives, but it also was one they hoped would be something of a marker in the lives of younger Tibetans, too. In one sense, this could be viewed as a means of showing others how to maintain a certain identity in exile. In a broader sense – and one some divorced from identity politics – I believe these stories maintained a certain continuity in ways of talking and being that were once present where they lived, but less present here and now. Health became embedded in a description of one's geography, disruptive at times when one could not wholly transfer elements of their former geography to a new place and time. Indeed, I believe it was a way of remembering.

Vincanne Adams (1998) writes in her commentary about an alternative to the human rights discourse that permeates Tibet that one should look to Tibetan epistemologies of suffering that speak to the prominence of the body as a point of often subtle narration. She explains:

In Tibetan theories of the body, a lexicon of winds makes it difficult to draw the stark distinction between self and society, and mind and body, which are generally made by Westerners and found in Western biomedical epistemology. For example, when Tibetans talk about foods and job frustrations as similar disruptions to their winds, they are telling us that, in terms of bodily experience, these two things are in the same category. Likewise, becoming

upset by one's poverty is experienced in the same visceral manner as falling and hitting one's head from dizziness (p. 88).

Adams emphasizes the relatedness between events in one's social world and how one feels as it regards health concerns in Tibetan medicine. Significant changes in one's social world, she says, create corresponding changes in one's body; the skin becomes especially porous in that sense. As experience becomes mediated by the body first and foremost, the body becomes a central means through which one engages in the process of remembrance.

Stories of solitude were a second identifiable theme in what I understood my informants to pass on to younger people in their lives. Dawa explained to me one day:

Of course, in winter, you can't go out and meet everyone. So that added to it, the loneliness of it all. It was my son and I here. So now I have these meetings with my organization once a month. And now there's more and more young people who come. And every now and then I speak, someone asks me to speak. Some of the young people are just here a year, if that. I tell them how lonely it was – no friends, no familiarity. But then – I craved that solitude! I had hours to myself, but I needed more. It's hard to explain, but I try to tell them. That solitude is so important, it's part of your Tibetan-ness that people throw away here. They think I'm crazy, probably.

Dawa went on to describe how his urban life in India did not differ in commotion from his life in New York. "That's not the difference – city versus country. No, not quite." What he pointed to instead was a feeling of being ostracized for retreating from the social world. I asked him who was ostracizing him and he said he didn't know, but he got the sense from those he worked around, and from his neighbors, that he always had to be doing something. He told me he

would attempt to rid this burden of activity from what younger Tibetans feel. He noted, “With such a burden, you can’t even talk to yourself any longer.”

Tenzin, too, explained to me that he would emphasize the importance of solitude to his daughter.

“She will ask me now some things, she’s at that age. She adapted so quickly over here I do get worried. So I will have to tell her not to get too busy, not to forget that she needs time by herself.”

“Why do you think she needs time by herself?”

“Everyone does. But it’s a real Tibetan thing. I had all this time when I was over here first for university. I know it’s shunned upon here, to just sit in a room by oneself. Do you do it? It’s important.”

“I do. What do you think she will get out of it?”

“I’ll tell her that it will help her remember what life was like before we came here. I’ll tell her that she can’t cling too much to all these things her friends have – the expensive technology, the phones, the computers. I know she has to adapt, she’s young. And it’s not a problem yet, but maybe it will be.”

Tenzin described, briefly, his stint at a Southern university while on scholarship ten years ago, and then talked some about the year he returned to India, in which he had to live away from his wife and daughter for reasons having to do with work. He described it as a difficult time, a sort of blank space in his family’s history that they do not talk much about. He said he would tell his daughter one day, because it is part of their story, and he learned several lessons, particularly finding solace in others who feel like outsiders if one does not want to adapt too much to the dominant culture. I asked him to clarify and he said whenever he has had a job or was in school,

he was drawn to other foreign students (even in India, where Tenzin has spent most of his life). “It’s with those people where you find some appreciation of solitude,” he said.

Both men seem to be addressing the means through which younger people can practice and maintain what they consider a Tibetan identity, one that is rooted in a degree of separateness. Tenzin and Dawa both discussed the powers of solitude to overcome bouts of apparent alienation. The same concern did not appear in Kelsang’s accounts, nor was it prominent in what Tashi told me. Tashi’s concerns for time to herself were framed more as an escape from the confounding pressures of school and childcare responsibilities.

Finally, several of my informants emphasized stories of discrimination which they had told to younger people in their lives. Dawa’s story began with a Tibetan celebration last spring, a parade that wound through Chinatown. Already uneasy with the organizers’ decision to pass through Canal Street, Dawa claims he was sweating a great deal on account of his nerves and the long distance he had already walked.

“Then I looked down,” he said, “and right there on my pant leg someone had spat on me. I could see it. How gross. No one said anything to us, there were no protest signs, but I wasn’t the only one who was spat on.” Later in his account, he noted that the organization of which he is part met soon thereafter, and Dawa related this story to the members, who had had a hand in organizing the parade. “I told them, what’s the point of being so brazen? Maybe next year we can take another route. Why must we carry that fight right now? I mean, we can use resources here, and send money home, do what we can, but I don’t know why it has to be one-on-one combat right here.”

Tashi, too, experienced a personalized form of the China – Tibet conflict. In one of her classes, the first assignment was a sort of autobiographical presentation of one’s lineage. She had

been ecstatic at the prospect of doing her research and presenting it to the class, but had, in the moments after class, a contentious discussion with a student who had recently come from China. The crux of their argument was about the correct representation of the China-Tibet issue. Tashi was adamant that she would present the atrocities her family suffered without censor, whereas the student from China promised that any diversion from the “true” history of China – Tibet relations would evoke a harsh response from him. Tashi dreaded confrontation, she told me, and had no idea what to do. The situation was unexplainably resolved the next day before class. They talked and agreed to discuss differences in their understandings of history at another place and time.

She explained that she had told this story to her son several times, and to the young woman who runs the daycare where her son would occasionally go.

“It’s important they know,” she said to me. “Nothing is solved by being angry over here. I always tell Dickyi [her son], they left, and we also left. Both for different reasons, but we’re all here.” Echoing Dawa’s sentiment that the conflict belongs to a particular geographical place, Tashi was adamant to make certain that others understood this.

The Mechanisms of Passage

Translation

In this work, progeny refers not only to the descendents of those who suffered exile but also to the result of a creative effort: how exactly do the aforementioned stories move? The passage from one generation to the next is a complex interplay whereby there may not be merely passive acceptance, but a degree of translation, as well.

My understanding of translation is informed by the work of Bella Brodzki, specifically her book, *Can these bones live? Translation, survival, and cultural memory* (2007). Building on Walter Benjamin's ideas regarding the materialist and metaphysical mode of translation, she writes, "the issue is not the mere transmission of communicable, least of all, essential content or information, but rather a structure that is 'the relation of life to survival.'" Brodzki sees translation as a cultural practice and a symbolic action that not only extends life but extends the traces of life after death. As such, translation becomes linked to survival. She writes,

Of the myriad cultural forms available to transmit the losses of the past, all involve the act of translation. The memorialist especially is preoccupied with the legacy of historical loss as it is manifested in lost battles, lost illusions, lost lives. In their broadest embrace, textual acts of mourning and memorialization are dialogues with death, in which relief, rage, guilt, and shame are enmeshed with grief, both collective and personal. More pointedly, they speak on behalf of the dead, the missing, and sometimes even in their name – for the dead, by definition, can no longer speak for themselves and are often consigned to anonymity and oblivion, as well as to silence. Indeed, the memorialist is steeped in the work of mourning both for others and for oneself, a complex, potentially interminable transaction, a 'reckoning with the dead.' Translation is an impetus to forestall loss, it is a response to impending loss, and it is a sign itself of the consequence, as well as the consciousness, of loss. (p. 185-186)

I am drawn Brodzki's conception of translation because it is understood in terms of need – the need to survive. In the case of the Tibetans I spoke with in New York City, the term survival expectedly and regularly appeared in our interviews. Both Dawa and Tenzin called attention to the widespread belief among Tibetans abroad in the 1980s that there would be total

cultural annihilation. Both men also said that such a concern has disappeared in the ensuing two decades amidst greater international recognition of Tibet's conflict with China and regular condemnations about human rights abuses, as well as increased solidarity among the exile community.

While we often conceive of translation as a linguistic act, Brodzki cautions that “excavating or unearthing burial sites or ruins in order to reconstruct traces of the physical and textual past in a new context is also a mode of translation, just as resurrecting a memory or interpreting a dream are acts of translation” (p. 4). In doing so, the original – whether an event, a memory, a text, and so on – is redefined. What translation makes apparent is the fact that inheritance is not always a passive act. It may, in contrast, be the opportunity to create a counterstory, to take what one has received and re-form that story in light of present day demands.

The tumultuous 1980s have passed, and with them have come changes in the stories Tibetans tell on the international stage – and to a degree – to one another. Of the four individuals whose lives feature into this dissertation, Tenzin had the most significant memory of Tibet itself, since he spent the first five years of his life there. When I asked, during our first interview, what he remembered about the year 1959, he said:

I was so young, you see, about five or six. And it was like what you read – a long crossing through the mountains, and many people died, some who were traveling with us. There are these lightbulb memories – my eyes open, and it's so cold, because of where we are and it was March, when the winds were bad. And then the memory, it goes away. There's so much out there already on this, though.

Tenzin was right; given that the 50 year anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising had just recently passed, a plethora of accounts were available for public consumption. Few of those accounts provided much detail about the actual crossing, though. In our final interview, we revisited this question, and Tenzin's response was more particular.

“My daughter, she's curious now that it's been 50 years, and wants to know.”

“What do you tell her?”

“I'm adding now, I think. Who knows? I tell her people gave me and my parents clothes. They did. Wool, some hats, too. Yes, people were united with the protests in the months before, I think. But there was this closeness once we gave up our homes. I remember no one consoling me.”

“What did they say to you?”

“Not much. You know, I read these things that talk about all the vows that people made to return. Vows they made while crossing. But it was so silent. There was this warmth in my stomach I can't describe. I don't know how we knew where to go. There was much confusion. The feeling went all the way up my spine. Something really unexpected.”

“What does your daughter say when you tell her this?”

“Oh she loves to hear it!” and his face brightened. “All these sensations are so interesting to her.”

I believe Tenzin's elaboration was in part a result of him feeling more comfortable talking to me, however, I also believe that he had not been satisfied with the first account he gave me – there was no particularity, no translation. In another sense, what he related the second time was what he told his daughter, what he had translated from his own memorial life to her ears. To quote Brodzki one final time: “The charge of translation, as performed on every conceivable

level, is not to maintain equivalence, level differences, or smooth over what is missing or flawed. Rather, its task is to alter linguistic and textual frameworks by disrupting sameness and injecting otherness. In doing so, translation graces the intimate and the ultimate, defying oblivion, stasis, and death.” (p. 65).

The psychologist Robert Kraft (2006), writing about the oral histories of Holocaust survivors archived at Yale University, finds two levels of representation in the testimonies, what he calls core memory and narrative memory. The account itself, he writes, releases painful emotion but does not reduce the noxious and essentially unchanged core memory. “Narrating the traumatic events does not provide meaning to the past suffering or to the memories themselves,” he notes. “No longer meant to be hidden, memory is meant to be narrated: to educate others and to document the lives of those who were murdered. Translating memories of atrocity into understandable narratives gives meaning to the act of recalling — an act that formerly provided only torment” (p 328). Is meaning created in the act of telling? Indeed, I believe it is. In what I heard from Tenzin, and Kelsang, too, translation was a powerful mode of passage, an act of redefining.

A recurrent figure in my conversations with Kelsang was Kunal, the boyfriend she left behind in India. The first two times I spoke with Kelsang, she explained her departure from India as a matter of luck: discovering a distant relative had come to the U.S. in the initial resettlement time period, who wrote to her suggesting that she apply for a visa. In Kelsang’s account, she experienced previous stirrings to leave India, but the impetus was the discovery of this relative.

I was skeptical about such an explanation. All the while, Kunal was in the background, a nebulous person whom she would rarely detail. However, in our final conversation, the figure of Kunal became clearer. She described him as “fanatical,” supporting a group who advocated the

practice of Dorje Shugden (described in Chapter One). He refused to meet any of her Tibetan friends (his grandparents had fled Tibet in the early 1960s), and chided her interest in traveling to the United States as “blind, stupid faith in following the dictum of a shady leader [the Dalai Lama].”

“He was just impossible,” she said, exasperated. “I don’t know why he even spent time with me. We had all these talks about living together one day. And then he once came home, so drunk, laughing about how that would never happen. I was just staying with him a few days. And then the next day when he was at work I started the paperwork to come over here. I didn’t say goodbye.”

“So you never talked to him again?”

“No. What was there to say? One thing was over and another would soon begin.”

Of course, the application process was quite long, and it was several months before Kelsang left India. Still, I think the space provided by our interview allowed Kelsang to redefine her reasons for coming to the United States, reasons which perhaps became clearer in the act of telling, the act of translating a memory of personal upheaval into a narrated account. The more Kelsang talked, the more she articulated a clear turning point in her decision to leave India. Though other factors may have – and likely did – contribute to this decision, this particular memory was revised with a certain degree of distance, altering what it was in light of the present.

Silence

Stories indexing experiences of the past do not always find expression in words for myriad reasons. With that in mind, I would like to call attention to what I see as one of the more significant mechanisms of the transmission of stories among the Tibetans I spoke with: silence.

Indeed, silence itself may narrate just as much, or more, of what is in fact narrated by words. In this case I believe it is necessary to delineate two prominent ways in which silence manifested itself in my interviews. Firstly, the silence that was secretive, and secondly, silence that was the result of familial attitudes.

Some stories resist telling for what I would deem psychological reasons. What can account for the secretive? The presence of the secretive often invites a psychoanalytic interpretation. I am thinking of the work of Nicolas Abraham (1994), who reads Freud with an eye towards transgenerational silences, which are felt by the children as an unspeakable catastrophe suffered by the parents, what Abraham terms "the phantom." The phantom is "a memory buried without legal burial place" (p. 141), "the gaping wound of a topography" (p. 142). It is a creation meant to objectify the gap produced by the concealment, a result of that which could never be incorporated into memory but nonetheless haunts the halls of memorial life. Abraham writes, "The concept of the phantom redraws the boundaries of psychopathology and extends the realm of possibilities for its cure by suggesting the existence within the individual of a collective psychology comprised of several generations, so that the analyst must listen for the voices of one generation in the unconscious of another" (p. 166). Bracketing off the therapeutic element of what the authors describe, I want to call attention to the claim about the ways in which voices of past generations inhabit current ones. All I can do is point to areas in which I believe my informants experienced recurrent tension, where the interview itself became fraught with noticeable attempts to evade what I was asking when the question dealt with a nebulous area of the past.

One such area dealt with betrayal about activities in Tibet in the late 1950s. In my first three interviews with Dawa, he claimed to know nothing of his family's background before they

arrived in India – he did not know exactly where they lived, or what jobs they worked. However, in my final interview with Dawa, he speculated about what would have happened if the Chinese had not taken over Tibet.

“You have to wonder...I suppose things would be different, but can I say that they’d be better? For me, no.”

“What do you mean?”

“Nothing, no. What I meant to say is that it was a very hard life before and after those events. My family, they were not treated well. You serve wealthy people and that happens.”

“What did they do?”

“I was not there, so I don’t have an account. But the Chinese came and they – what’s the word – leveled things. People who were servants got to berate the rich at first.”

I did not ask Dawa if by “people” he meant his parents, though I inferred that he did. He was noticeably uncomfortable for one of the first times, and quickly changed the subject. Afterwards, he talked little of his parents. I believe his story was akin to what Abraham (1994) describes as a memory passed down without being told because it refers to an instance that has no place for legitimacy in post-1959 Tibetan exile politics. Kelsang, too, related a story to me in which she lamented how much her grandparents lost in the years leading up to 1959. They were a wealthy family in the Kham region and were among the first targeted by the Chinese. They had showed very little interest in cooperating with Tibetans who were organizing against the incipient occupation.

“Their home was looted. So much was lost,” she said. “Everybody lost a lot, but particularly them. My parents would tell me that India was hell compared to what they had before. For everyone, of course. I mean, they were by no means special.”

A sense of unease arose over any memory that painted “old” Tibet in less than egalitarian terms. These stories, often regarding financial security or lack thereof, or the seldom discussed caste system, often came late in my interviews with my informants. Dawa used a very accurate word in this sense – leveling. It was as though exile leveled those differences, compounded with what McGranahan (2005) describes as a Tibetan Buddhist tradition to place the authority for the description of cultural identity in the hands of religious figures, namely the Dalai Lama. Invoking such a memory of before was a transgression in the eyes of my informants, I felt. To do so constituted a betrayal they only inherited and would have preferred to ignore.

Accounts of life prior to 1959 were not the only areas of secrecy. Relatedly, revelations regarding financial security also seemed to be an area of secrecy. Kelsang, especially, eluded questions that revealed anything about her apparent lack of financial distress. Her distant cousin, whom she cited earlier as the only contact she had in the United States while living in India, has resided in Manhattan since the 1980s. He is an important figure in New York’s Tibetan community, and from what I gathered, quite wealthy. Kelsang’s descriptions of where she lived were particularly obfuscating; I believe her cousin had given her the apartment she resided in on the Upper West Side, though she never said this directly. She complained often that her job as a masseuse did not make for easy living, but skirted going into detail about such topics.

In both cases, I believe my participants felt uneasy diverting from what constitutes a “typical” Tibetan identity, as though such a diversion would mean betrayal. This betrayal shadowed their words with a suggestion of an elsewhere, an other world. It is important to remember the criteria for initial involvement in the Tibet-U.S. Resettlement Project when it began some twenty years ago: organizers sought out Tibetans who were impoverished, as well as those who had notable education and leadership skills. Vast differences characterized, and

continue to characterize, the Tibetan community, though to recognize that was to step out of bounds . Kelsang could, and indeed did, allude to this, though mainly through indirection.

It is also necessary to consider the ways in such a phantom, manifested through silence, was determined by the use of and particularization of Buddhism in my informants' lives. One could describe Tibetan (Vajrayana) Buddhism as a theology of apophaticism, that is, one in which transcendence is defined through negation. Thus, the place of negation becomes central to much of Buddhist philosophy, materializing in such beliefs as the lack of a single narrative of Vajrayana thought, the emphasis on not grasping onto things and experiences that are by nature impermanent, and the illusory essence of all appearances. Most pertinent to the present work are the ways in which negation and absence become appropriated from the Buddhist frame encasing my informants' lives and applied to issues of remembering.

As I will discuss elsewhere in this work, Dawa saw his own understanding of Buddhism as elementary, noting that while it always existed around him, he was never able to participate in its beliefs and practices as much as he would have liked. In the years following his arrival to New York City, however, he joined up with a meditation group in Queens and attempted to fill in some of the gaps in his knowledge of Buddhism. His attendance petered out, he said, not out of disinterest but out of other commitments. What he seemed to stay with him from those practices (which were Zen-based) was the teacher's emphasis on "extending the silence that comes before and after." Dawa liked this expression and repeated it several times in our interviews. He understood it as a means to disentangle oneself from staying lodged on certain experiences and emotions. He emphasized that he is almost never successful with such a practice, but mused how he could have used it elsewhere in his life, when he discovered his wife's affair, when he was forced into somewhat unscrupulous business to make a living when

his son was born, and when he was confronted about parts of his family's past he did not want to know about. Dawa very much lived with such phantoms, though he sought their eradication in distinctively Buddhist terms.

Kelsang had been educated in Tibetan Buddhism, largely through her family, though she was guarded about it and played down its influence on her life. It was largely bracketed off in our conversations as an area of no trespassing, though on occasion she would invoke it as a means of narrative escape. In the instances described above, it was not at all unusual for her to switch registers on a dime and begin talking about how much value she saw in the notion of anatta, central to Buddhist philosophy. Anatta refers to non-self or an absence of "I"; an individual is merely an unremarkable bundling of sensations, memories, and emotions. Kelsang was quite taken by this idea and discussed it several times in our interviews. "Therefore you cannot be too lodged on what happened in the past, on what you were not there for," she would say after alluding to her family's position in Tibet, and repeat, didactically, where she had first learned of anatta and the value it had on her outlook on life. Perhaps it was defensive posturing on her behalf, though such a psychological explanation may blind the possibility that her knowledge of Buddhism and participation in it – which was more immense on both counts, I believe, than what she said – very much framed her forms of remembering and storied transmission. In other words, what I have cautiously referred to as a phantom, was swept up by clinging to favored Buddhist notions and thereby obscuring what may otherwise be an open wound.

Finally, it is also worth considering familial attitudes toward silence as those attitudes played out in my interviews. Only with Tashi did I meet other members of her family; Tenzin and Kelsang met me at or nearby their places of work; and Dawa lived alone. Had these

interviews been conducted in the presence of other family members, the whole of this dissertation would look quite different. I cannot know the specifics of the interplay of silence as they are manifested in each family's everyday life. However, I believe the act of participating in an interview with a graduate student who was an outsider to the community spoke volumes about attitudes towards silence.

Tashi, as I describe later in this chapter, was seen by her husband, Lobsang, as transgressing just by speaking to me. When I did visit her apartment, I felt like an intruder, and a possible cause for conflict between them. She adamantly defied his disapproval, and in fact, I believe that whatever Tashi's reticence about certain subjects would have been, that reticence was negated to a large degree. Similarly, Kelsang demonstrated a certain defiance to typical Tibetan attitudes regarding the authority of men. The final time Kelsang and I spoke, I met her outside her apartment on the Upper West Side so we could walk to a coffee shop nearby. Her uncle – described in these pages previously – descended the stairs with her. He was in his sixties and well-dressed. Kelsang introduced us and he asked me, somewhat jokingly, why I had to bother with “gossipers” when there was a real authority on Tibet here. Kelsang rolled her eyes, I stumbled some for a response, and then he was off. “Don't mind him,” she said as walked down the street.

Both Tashi and Kelsang described the change in women's opportunities as one of the most positive features of leaving India. Dawa and Tenzin also praised the change with a reserved tone that invited a hermeneutics of suspicion (Josselson, 2004). Both men asked me who else in the Tibetan community I had spoken to. I did not give names; I said two women in the community had agreed to talk to me. Dawa expressed surprise that the two women agreed to an interview. When I asked why he was taken aback by this, he backtracked some and said, “It's

just because of work issues, you see. The jobs they have...well, I'm just surprised they are so open, but it's America," and he laughed some before changing the subject. Tenzin's reaction was more subdued, noting "That's very good," with an agreeableness that belied a certain skepticism.

I believe that the attitudes, or rather the defiance, towards silence as demonstrated by both Tashi and Kelsang accounted in part for what stories they have, or will, pass on. Both women praised the "openness" they had been afforded since coming to the United States, creating what both described as a "much-needed change" in their close relationships with others. I am less certain how such loosened attitudes towards silence in the family played out in the case of Dawa and Tenzin, or even if those men experienced any sort of change in those attitudes, for they never spoke of it in our interviews. However, I do believe that what they inherited from their own families in the way of stories was influenced by somewhat typical Tibetan familial attitudes about what can be said and what should be left unsaid.

Particularly, I want to call attention to the role of reverence as it is manifested in silence. In one interview with Tenzin he described his father's return visit to Tibet in 1978, the same year Tenzin completed his studies at an institution in Jharkhand, India. He told me,

It was very different. My father would tell me, "You have to expect that 20 years later." But he went back to where we lived because not everyone [other relatives] had left. The houses were dilapidated and the land completely parched, torn apart. [He paused for a very long time.] But I know some of them were still alive, living there. Imagine: two decades under the Chinese thumb. What would a day resemble after all that?

I did not pursue the question further. To do so would have been intrusive, I believe, a kind of violation that our relationship was predicated upon. What his silence pointed to was a surround that was not to be articulated, a hinterland beyond the ambit of our talk. It was, I think,

a space of reverence, pointing to a loss – how terrible life had become for those who stayed behind. I do not think his father gave him all the details.

Tenzin spoke not overly much of Buddhism, though his allusions to several Buddhist texts, and the fact that his job involved the acquisition of Buddhist texts, as well as his educational training in India in Buddhist philosophy, indicated that it was a part of his life in a way that it was not clearly a major part of the lives of my other informants. He spoke some of the importance of ethical behavior, which, in certain strains of Buddhism, includes a studied reverence for that which could lead to fervor (Kapleau, 1965).

To what degree, then, can such reverence be explained as an effect of Buddhist training and learning? I do not know, though I do believe Tenzin demonstrated a reverence for certain matters not unlike other Tibetans I met during this project who were reasonably devout. Indeed, from the perspective of Zen, language can act as a sort of cage, delimiting the boundaries of experience. Silence can be the road back, the means through which one can remove a cloying filter (Ueda, 1995). In an instance when language cannot bring one to an experience, one may approximate it best through silence.

Interlocutory Slippage

I believe that the age difference between Dawa and I accounted for many of the stories he told me, and perhaps his agreement to speak with me in the first place. He is 51 and I am 27, the same age as his son, a fact he reminded of each time we met. The psychological space we inhabited during our conversations allowed for what I will call an interlocutory slippage wherein Dawa was able to address his son, Tsering, vicariously, through the stories he told me. The degree to which this happened was small, and it was certainly not the most salient feature of our

encounters. Nonetheless, it deserves attention because the longer narratives he offered in the interviews about his youth in India were given less as a response to my questions and more as a shared remembrance. In our second meeting, I asked Dawa about the transition from India to Nepal when he was 16. He said:

Remember, the difference between India and Nepal is the difference between morning and mid-morning. My parents were back in India, my brother was back there, I was in the school. But still, so lonely. What do you do when you're 16 in a new country and you don't want to be there? So there was anxiety, but I didn't know what it was then. I thought I was having heart problems, maybe something wrong with, what are they called, the chambers? But then one day after exams my father showed up wearing his suit. He never wore a suit. It was my mother who was very ill on account of heart problems. But I thought I had the problems. It was her! How did I know? I did though, and my father didn't want to hear it. Remember how awful it was, it was, it was like I knew.

Such a mode of speaking concurrently shook me from my position as his interviewer. I took his opening and closing – *Remember. . .* – as a directive; indeed, I would attempt to remember something which bore no resemblance to my own life history, something that I could never in fact remember but only imagine. He went on:

My father and I went back. A long trip. He told me I was being selfish for claiming to know about my mother's illness. We didn't understand each other, you see. And then we never really understood each other again. He was so angry about what had happened to her, and all I was trying to say was that I knew it too. So later, I saw her, she was very sick, it all came on suddenly. Once when she was in a hospital bed I tried to explain to her that I felt sick back in Nepal because she did too. She nodded, maybe she understood. I don't know.

Francesca Cappelletto (2003), whom I refer to in the opening chapter, notes that among the survivors of massacres by German troops in two small Italian villages during World War II there is a tendency to place the responsibility for the recitation of a story on one who did not experience it, for that person would not be burdened with the trauma. The subject matter of Cappelletto's work contrasts greatly with that of this dissertation, but there is commonality to be found in the theme of shouldering the burden of telling. The slippage I have described above in my encounters with Dawa took place primarily in those instances in which he was telling a story of great personal difficulty. My position as his interlocutor became perplexing; long silences filled the space in between the sentences I record above, silences in which he did not seem to be rehearsing an utterance, but rather he seemed to await my presence in the recitation – more than a vacuous agreement, I imagine. It was something that, in the end, I could not offer.

Loss in the form of a sudden and irreversible change in health was a salient theme in every conversation I had with Dawa; his mother, later – and with less emotion – his father, his wife from breast cancer in the mid-1990s.

“Does your son know about your mother?” I asked.

“Him? No, not much. I mean, I tried to tell him, but what can you do? He had his life here that he had to adjust to.”

“But he had 12 or so years before he came here. Did you talk about it before then, when he was younger?”

“Oh, there was too much to do and too much to talk about before then. Some stories, yes, but not much.”

In the ensuing minutes, Dawa appeared to have switched emotional registers on a dime. Perhaps he believed my questioning would become accusatory, as if he himself was to blame for

not telling Tsering about his grandmother. I hoped he would not think so, but at the time, I felt I had transgressed some social scientific distance I had long been critical of by participating in his remembrance, even though my participation was just listening. Was he, in fact, defending himself, predicated on his belief that I thought he should have done more? Perhaps, but such is my (Western) inclination to default to explanations that feature defensive posturing when an experience eludes immediate clarity. Concurrently, I was also struck by the change in his tone, from one of animation to one of melancholy and austerity. Perhaps I had slipped back into the position of his interviewer and felt uneasy sharing a remembrance I could not in fact share.

Such slippage – and the slippage back to distance – occurred in conversations with others, too. This happened several times with Tashi. The third time I saw Tashi, we met at her apartment in early September after her first week of classes at a local community college. She was exhausted, not exactly in the mood for an interview, but agreed with some forced politeness to talk for one hour. Despite her exhaustion, she had quite a lot to say that day.

Her husband, Lobsang, was opposed to my presence in the apartment. Tashi and I would talk in her kitchen, and Lobsang would sit in the adjacent bedroom with his back to the wall, straining to hear. At least twice each time we met at Tashi's apartment, Lobsang would call her into the other room to talk. What they discussed in Tibetan I do not know, but the conversation seemed to be acrimonious. When she returned to the kitchen – perhaps to spite him – Tashi would re-narrate what she had last said with more detail. She took pleasure in hearing her words, I sensed.

I do believe that my interviews with Tashi occupied a unique, albeit very small, place in her life during the few months we met. Several times, she brought up the fact that between her coursework and taking care of her son, she had almost no time to socialize with her Tibetan friends.

In fact, she mentioned that she actually talked very little during the course of her day, and even less in English. Whether I represented to her some form of a tutor, a possible friend, or simply a person with whom she could practice English (or a hybrid of all three), I can only speculate. I am more certain, however, that I was not her only addressee in those hours in which she spoke English. Talking with Tashi, there was not the clear slippage into a directive as there was with Dawa, but there was, I believe, a tendency for her to conflate my presence with an English-speaking friend to whom she was once close.

The same day in which she related the story of the difficulty she had with the student from China, Tashi also told me about a Queens-born woman whom she came to know well the year she arrived. The woman, Quinn, ran a daycare not far from the Astoria apartment where Tashi and her family lived. Dickyi, Tashi's son, attended the daycare from the time they arrived in the U.S. until four years ago (he is now 15). The mention of Quinn's name sent Lobsang storming into the other room where he shut the door quite hard.

Tashi explained, "He thinks the women just gossip, so he'd like it if I had no friends, but that's not what happens here. People talk. People would talk back in India, too. But he can't stand that women can do more of what they want here."

She went to relate that Quinn was her closest friend during her first year in the U.S., a friendship that was cut short when Quinn's husband was relocated for the purposes of work to California. In the months since Tashi and I last talked, I have come to see a striking resemblance between the stories she told me, and the stories she told me she related to Quinn. Three chairs encircled the wooden table we sat at in Tashi's apartment, and I came to imagine Quinn inhabiting the third chair during those hours Tashi and I talked. As I alluded to in the

Introduction, Tashi enchanted me for a number of reasons, not the least of this was how the past inhabited her present day life.

That I was only the second fluent English speaker with whom Tashi had conversed at length led to, I believe, a certain amount of conflation, a repetition of that first relationship with Quinn. In this context, I will refer to it as interlocutory slippage, in that I believe many of Tashi's responses to my questions were less a result of the creative act of responding, and more a type of carbon copy of what she had once said to Quinn. However, while the content of what she said may have been more or less a direct transposition from a conversation with a close friend, I argue that both Tashi and I mutually engaged in a sort of dialectical posturing that allowed for not only an occasion for Tashi to repeat a previously told story, but also allowed for a re-enactment of that situation. To be critical of my own position interviewing her, I could say that such a maneuver made my job quite easy; by assuming the role of an other, we could slip away from the interview, a mutually agreed upon escape of sorts, into a realm of greater comfort.

One particular instance during our third interview delineates this. Tashi had just finished telling me about the benefits she enjoyed here as a woman compared to India, and how Lobsang struggled to reconcile with that fact. She went on,

Oh, Quinn and I would have fun. You know, when you get to a new place, a new country, it is very easy to be closed off, to go to one market, or one restaurant, just see your family. I mean, that's what we did. That's what so many Tibetans did. But who doesn't need a break? I mean, Quinn and I went out once; it was six months after I arrived. I don't know the name of the place but they served martinis, which were new to me. I never drank much. I had had alcohol before, but who hasn't? They were very powerful, those drinks! Oh, Lobsang was so mad.

“What happened?” I asked.

“My class had been canceled – a snow day, I think. I was going to see Quinn for tea, but she suggested we meet elsewhere. I was off the grid, as you say. Everyone thought I was in class,” Tashi said, laughing. “We had a table near the window, and the snow was coming down...it was a break,” she added, looking a bit lost in the act of recollecting the experience.

“What sticks out in your memory about that afternoon?”

“And Lobsang was so mad,” she said, diverting some from the question. “‘You can’t do this,’ he’d say. ‘You’re a mother.’ Oh, you know how he is.” I did not in fact know this about Lobsang.

Tashi went on: “The day was so different, just a nice change, you know? You had. . .well, I had that lemon flavored drink, and he tortured me about it the whole week. Every time we were in the market, ‘Tashi, do the lemons smell nice?’”

This was not the only instance in which an important memory was conveyed in snippets, snippets that perhaps, on some level, Tashi believed I could fill in. I cannot, of course, know for certain whether or not Tashi momentarily conflated my presence with Quinn’s. However, I do know that the effect, similar to the effect of being caught in Dawa’s remembrance, was a presumed intimacy in which I felt an imperative to extricate myself. At times, I felt capable of doing so, though in those instances the dubious promise of escape occurred by changing the subject, altering the course of conversation, or excusing myself to go to the bathroom, therefore, inevitably reconstructing a distance that would again paralyze the interview.

*

With Tashi, more than the three other individuals whose stories feature into this dissertation, I was most often caught. The psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden (1999) might call such

space an “analytic third” wherein Tashi and I both created and inhabited a shared psychological space so determined by its ability to “capture” the participants that both of us were looking out at the surround, rather than gazing into the interview itself. I do not know how to name it. And while I am inclined to reduce instances of interlocutory slippage to my position in relation to Dawa and Tashi, and the few similarities I bore to the people to whom they may have been speaking, I believe that there is a larger point to speculate on in regards to these stories: their didactic, shaping features. The function, then, of these stories both referred to the dynamic of the interviews themselves, and also indexed a narrative past, present, and future in my informants’ lives.

An outsider inquisitive about the stories of Tibetans in New York was not an anomaly, which calls attention to an important aspect of how stories are passed. To a large extent, telling was inscribed as a prominent feature of Tibetan identity. There was an impetus to tell that often made my interviews remarkably easy, as though it took very little coaxing to generate answers to the questions I asked. The passage of stories – whether through translation, silence, or interlocutory slippage – occurred with persistent nonchalance. In other words, these stories (both the ones I heard and the ones I inferred through their absence) had been told before and will likely be told, in some form, again. I have to understand these stories, in part, as a result of my own presence as an outsider to the community. In that sense, their didactic features can be seen as something of a response to my presence and the expectation of what I might take with me from the community.

In a broader sense, the stories passed down that indexed my informants’ personal histories had a distinct shaping feature. More pointedly, I found a tendency for my informants to summarize, draw a point, a conclusion from their story that transcended the question I asked. In

my final conversation with Tenzin we discussed the time he spent on a travel scholarship at a Southern university, and his decision to return to India. He explained,

So by that time [the scholarship ended] it was 2002, and what with 9/11 being very recent, I didn't know how easy it would be to stay in the U.S. Not easy, let's be honest. In Jharkhand [a library he previously worked at in India], they took me back. So it happened. My wife and daughter were away. Not far. I would see them each month. And I could continue to study there on the side. I would say that's the most important part – I could keep doing what I was doing.

“But how did you come to that decision?” I asked.

“I don't think it really matters.”

“Maybe not. But I'm just wondering if you wouldn't mind speculating.”

“The die had been cast, so I can't go back and figure out why. Do you see? I mean, there are a million reasons why this happened instead of that. That is what you do. Oh yes, I had been away for a long time, but this job was good, it paid well, the benefits were good. That's what matters. Do you know that? A good job and the opportunity to continue the education.”

Again, the didactic element comes through, a lesson is offered. Stripping himself of agency (a discursive move quite contrary to ways in which Tenzin had explained other events in our previous conversations), he is able to offer a lesson: education matters. Who was his addressee? We had talked about education several times before in terms of its transformative potential, so I would be hesitant to say he was speaking to me. It was as though his story, and other stories from my informants, were permeated with a carefully considered sense of reception. However, I believe that their concern with audience dealt less my audience and more with their imagined audience. All of my informants did ask who would hear their words, but that question

was often posed with curiosity rather than concern. Perhaps my informants understood through their lineage what I only understood through Bakhtin (1981) – the importance of the utterance, and the distinct shaping features that come with it. Bakhtin noted that the formation of a person’s (or group’s) consciousness demands a struggle, one in which a speaker not only refers to dialogues long past, but anticipates what will be spoken in the future, offering rejoinders and orienting oneself to that time to come.

As I note in the first chapter, Tibetan life histories from 1959 onward have served something of a correcting purpose – writing one’s story to right history. Having lived without a country and to a large degree – without citizenship – and shorn of a tangible future in which Tibet will resemble a Tibet most of them never knew, the Tibetans I spoke with were aware of the enormous responsibilities that come with residing in a betwixt so characteristic of exile. The stories looked back, of course, indexing experiences in their own life histories. But I must emphasize the forward-careening nature of these stories, how they were framed, thus offering tools they did not necessarily articulate as tools that would bring them into a future they similarly did not articulate explicitly.

As Hermann Broch asks in *The Death of Virgil*, “What was the future towards which remembrance must go?” (in Bowie, 1987, p. xvii).

CHAPTER THREE: *HOME*

This tone of grieving and loss could not signify nostalgia for a time or place these people knew first-hand (the traditional life of their grandparents was long gone); rather, it articulated a longing for a choice they had never had since, like adopted kids, they have never inhabited the world whose passing they now lamented, and had therefore never had the freedom to embrace or repudiate it as their fathers had. This was their loss: The inability to exercise control over their lives. The discovery that one was chaff blown in the wind of history, a creature of forces that had swept one's own world away, and that had carried into another world where one had no place.

- Michael Jackson (2007, p. xvii)

In the passage above, the anthropologist Michael Jackson describes what he hears in the rehearsal of a band in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, a longing for something they can never know, wrought with a tenor of sorrow and agency bygone. The quality of adoption that he describes here also materialized in descriptions of home in my informants' lives. Indeed, the question of what home even means is bound up in what one has adopted or inherited, and the proverbial distance one has from the event that so determined one was "chaff blown in the wind of history."

The first time I met Kelsang she barely greeted me at the front entrance of the hotel where she worked as a masseuse. I approached her and asked if she was who I thought she was. A mutual acquaintance had set up the interview, and while our one exchange over email was polite, the first half hour of your interview was plagued by mutual unease. We walked through Central Park circuitously toward a coffee shop she knew of near her apartment, a walk made ever more brutal by a sharp January wind that inhibited much organization of one's thoughts. After a prolonged silence near Sheep's Meadow she said, "You probably want to know what life in exile is like. That's such an old-fashioned term; and Tibetans are one of the only exile groups this

large.” She quickly established the parameters of what was to come and foregrounded her own identity as that of an exile, not an immigrant, as she then explained.

She continued before I could respond, “I think it’s important to keep in mind that we do know something about what it’s like to be that person,” and she pointed to a homeless man leaning on a shopping cart jammed full of recyclables. “Whatever happened to him, it’s not fair, and we know how that is.” Then, in the next breath, she pointed skyward to show me where she lived – a high-rise with floor-to-ceiling windows that faced New Jersey.

I was appalled. She compared her own existential plight to that of a man she did not know who was seemingly without a place to sleep in the dead of winter. Perhaps it was not so much the comparison itself that perturbed me, but rather her ability to even make it. Later, during that same interview, I understood Kelsang’s status as an exile as a sort of *carte blanche*, a proverbial free ticket that allowed her to shirk certain responsibilities. I was further irked by her initial narrative maneuver to say “We” instead of “I,” as though her own well-to-do circumstances mirrored the brunt of New York’s Tibetan community, when in point of fact, that was not so.

At the coffee shop not far from the park, Kelsang went on to explain the origin of her handbag (a gift from her grandmother), and provided a brief account of where she was able to locate her favorite designer jeans and snow boots. I know little of fashion and felt aloof struggling for a response. So it went. She would interrupt my questions with notations about her clothes. I believe that what was happening in much of our first interview was an attempt, by Kelsang, to establish a position in the way that Bakhtin (1981) writes of the ways in which one assumes a narrative stance as they engage in dialogue with another. She no doubt had financial means, displaying it, juxtaposing it to what she had come from, as though it was a reward for her

status. All the while, she seemed to be saying, *You're talking to a real exile, a rarity in this world*. And while I believe that Kelsang's attitude toward being an exile was, in its showmanship, more of an anomaly than a representative descriptor of those I met in the Tibetan community, I also believe that what she, and my other informants said, helped me consider the complex relationship between exile and this chapter's theme: home.

*

In the pages that follow, I seek to understand the figurations of home in each of my informants' lives, employing a hermeneutics of faith (Josselson, 2006) that attempts preserve, as best as possible, their accounts of what home means. Often by asking my informants what home meant, or simply through indirection, they would talk at length about their various conceptions of home. It is, I believe, important to preserve as best as possible the figured world of home in their narrative accounts, which – for me – involved a step back from my own conception of home as a dwelling.

In the second part of the chapter, I explore the modes through which my informants understood home and the narrative mechanisms they used to arrive at those understandings. In the case of diasporic populations, I do not believe it is enough to know only how home is conceived; I believe that such an inquiry must also take into account how those conceptions come to be in an interview encounter, how they are produced, and how their productions draw upon several temporalities. In particular, I focus my discussion on the use of impossibilities as a means of articulating home, the narrative employment of death and decay, and the difference between exile as a noun and a verb in relation to home. I conclude with a brief discussion regarding the narrative creativity that is demanded by such conceptions of home.

Figurations of Home

Kelsang: Roads of Indirection

“There’s not much to explain about it, really,” Kelsang told me during our second interview at the same coffee shop on the Upper West Side. “Obviously, Tibet is home, in Kham – where my grandparents lived, that’s home. But what does it look like? What does the air smell like? I don’t know.”

There was, in point of fact, a great deal Kelsang explained about home. Her maternal and paternal grandparents fled with thousands of others in March 1959. Both her parents were born in India in the early 1960s, her mother in Gangtok and her father in Dharamsala. She did not know how they met, just that their marriage did not last long; her father – on scholarship to Cambridge University three years after Kelsang’s birth – met an English woman whom he later married.

“Why is Kham home?” I asked.

“My origins are there.”

“But origins go back very far.”

“Very, very far. But at a certain age you pick which origins matter.”

“When did you pick?”

“I wasn’t very old when I decided my father was a prick, so I had to trace my mother’s side, which, as far as I know, goes to Kham.”

“What do you think it’s like there?”

“I don’t imagine anything. Nothing. It’s just a place. I’ve seen pictures, but I don’t remember those well. I was young.”

“Do you ever dream about it?”

“Yes, a lot, in fact. I dream that I’m on this road, always a gravel road. And I have a rucksack, but I’m very small and the rucksack overwhelms me. The road begins in India and goes through different mountain passes but gets to Tibet eventually.”

“How far have you made it down the road?”

“Once, quite far. But I had to turn around because my mother has not yet been.”

“Does she tell you to come back?”

“No, she would never do that. She didn’t object to me coming here,” and she gestured out the window, meaning New York.

“What did she think of it – your decision?”

“I think she was happy. She had never been, but it is a parent’s job to want better things for their kids.” I was not certain whether we were talking about the dream or her decision to live in New York.

I asked Kelsang whether she would ever go to Tibet in the near future. She said so much would have to change, possibly even the achievement of complete independence before she could even conceive of it. She then related the story of two Tibetan friends in their early twenties who made it back to Lhasa for the violent 2008 protests. She has since been unable to reach them, insisting that they are not dead, but she wondered if they are imprisoned. Such stories very much served as her frame of reference for delineating what Tibet was – a violent place overrun by the Chinese where human rights abuses continue sporadically (not entirely different from my conception of Tibet when I began this project). Kelsang even described herself as a “product of what I hear in India about a place I will never see.”

She imagined living in New York for the rest of her life. To return to India – a place she described as rife with joblessness and passive unrest, was unthinkable. She could not even bring

herself to imagine going back to visit. In New York she had a career as a masseuse, an ever-widening social circle, money, and citizenship – what she called the shape of a life. It is not home, though, as she reiterated many times. But such questions bored her after a while; she did not want to speculate overly about what one’s geography implied. “I drive myself crazy thinking about all these other possible lives and paths, so I don’t, you see?” I was told more than once.

Yet, just as she broke off my questioning with a sort of fatigue, we would walk. These walks became a way for Kelsang to narrate her own personal history about New York. Perhaps it was an escape from a shared table in the way Tashi (as I described in the Introduction) relied on physical movement to tell. Perhaps, in another sense, it was a means through which she could show me where she lived. The chain movie theater where she had, just the previous night, a first date with a man she worked with at the hotel (a recent immigrant from the Dominican Republic), the market where she had long bought certain Indian spices for cooking, and the independent record store where she pointed out an extensive collection of Bob Dylan music, were all noted as she walked me back to the subway. With each notation of a place would come an addendum about a person who no longer worked there, someone with whom she had a transient acquaintanceship. She rarely understood why they left their jobs.

In my final interview with her, she revisited our previous conversation about home and origins since that day marked three years since she had arrived in the U.S.

“And I’m still exhausted, just like then,” she said, laughing some about comparing the day of our interview to the day she arrived.

“Is it much different?” I asked.

“No, it is another place, which I know better, but there are still limits.” And then she went on to describe neighborhoods in the city she did not know, and would likely never know. Near

the end of that interview, she said that maybe by talking and thinking about where she lives, she was able to understand what her mother felt growing up in India.

While I did understand Kelsang's exile as both inherited and, at times, pretentious, I believe she did experience daily the sort of groundlessness that is associated with exile, wherein the road home – or knowledge of it – is obscured. She so rejected the physical place in which she was born, and rejected her own throwness into that place, that it is almost as though she threw herself into another place she could not be. And so it was that she bore the pains Michael Jackson describes in the passage that opens this chapter, an incomplete mourning of a place she never knew, a road – or life – she never traversed. Within that mourning was a sense of pride as she lived in exile, pride in the term itself rather than the history leading up to that term. Perhaps for this reason, I felt that more than any of my other informants Kelsang understood home as an abstraction. Perhaps it had to do with her lack of visible roots – she had only arrived three years ago, she had moved from apartment-to-apartment, her one relative, a wealthy uncle, was described as distant and enamored with his own circumstances. But I must recognize my own attempt to scan her life for such tangible things, or rootedness, as a bias that does not fully account for the ways in which individuals take home to be a negotiable horizon rather than a person or a physical place. Hers was akin to a corn maze in which she was denied egress.

Tashi: A Pastoral Place She Cannot Know

What became clear from my first interview with Tashi straight through my fourth and final interview with her was her tendency to narrate dichotomies. Real Tibetan and “imitators,” India and the United States, one course and another one she had taken the previous year at her college. I do not believe this amounted to “us versus them” accounts in any way; Tashi regularly

positioned herself on both sides of whatever she was narrating, and nowhere was that more true than her description of rural versus urban in regards to home.

I asked her how her parents came to the decision to leave Tibet. I also asked her how she and her husband came to the decision to leave India. She described the processes of both decisions as the reluctant movement towards an ever more urban life. What she described last were political circumstances; her accounts were prefaced, in contrast, by what one gave up in moving further and further from “the land.”

“Knowing yourself away from other people is one thing,” she told me. I asked her to clarify and she said, “It’s like this: my husband and I were trapped when we lived in India. No good doctors, no good jobs. What can you do? So we come here, and we’re around each other and other people all the time. I don’t care about the privacy, but it’s just people, people, people.”

“And that is much different from just outside Dharamsala?” I asked.

“No, it isn’t. But it’s just more – you see what I mean? More things to distract you. The other day Dickyi saw a robin and he didn’t know what it was.”

To be in exile denied her the opportunity to pick. “Where else would we go in the United States?” she would ask. Her question implied that if one wanted to leave India and work towards more money, a higher standard of living, and attain citizenship in the United States, New York became almost an inevitability. She said her family did not have the money to travel elsewhere on vacation; if they did, they would have returned to India to see her husband’s family and Tashi’s mother. To be in a pastoral space was denied to her, she suggested, and it was quite possibly something she could never get back to.

“So this is why I come here,” she said to me one day when we spoke on a park near where she lived with an expanse of verdant space in front of us. “If you go down over that hill,

the trees make it so you can't see the buildings in Queens, and it even blocks the view of Manhattan. Sometimes I tell my husband I'm still in class when I'm actually here. It is so nice."

I once lived in the part of Queens where Tashi lives. I had been to this same park countless times, but never had I noticed how the particular plot of land we were on obscured the fact that one was in the city.

"It is all I have," she said lightly. "I mean, I have a family and a nice life and a nice apartment. But Dickyi will build his forts in the living room with blankets and he always asks why I don't want to play. This is a version of a fort."

And as we walked through the rest of the park, she began to launch into something of a happy-go-lucky story of her childhood in India:

It was March, and Mao had been dead a little while. March was when so much hope would be renewed. For whatever reason there was all this celebration in the community in India. That year [1979] we took a trip. We got on a train, my parents and I, and we went far into the country, to a small mountain village. I don't know the name of it. But we went hiking that day – that I do remember. I was so tired, but my father made me keep going because he said when you get above the tree line you can see so much. And he was right. The day was so perfect. I had never seen a place without so many people, and I wanted to stay.

"How often did you take those trips?"

"So often, so very often. We would go at least every year, and sometimes more than once a year. My parents had good jobs. My father taught in a school and my mother would sometimes work in the school, too."

The conversation shifted to Tibet and the inception of Tashi's memorial life. Her first memory of Tibet was her only one; she had never gone back, nor did she intend to. "We are here,

in the U.S. now, so we just plan for being here,” she told me. And she added that it was nice to dream about, “but it is very far, and if you only think about that, then you miss the rest of the life.”

For Tashi, Tibet became a less a repository of political turmoil and paradise lost, and more of a pastoral place, like several others, that she could not return to and was out of reach. She became more animated when she talked again about trips that she took to the countryside when she was young, adding in her next rendition that her husband and her found their common ground in idealizing these trips (he spent even more of his youth in rural places, often through work). The demands and cost of urban life corroded aspects of their marriage, she said.

The juxtaposition between rural and urban was not accompanied by an addendum of traditional and modern, as others writing about cultural divides have noted (Gregg, 2007, for example). Not only was Tibet a pastoral place she could not know, so too were trips to mountains in India that she liked as a young girl. Tashi could not remember the particular names of these villages she would travel to with her parents. She remembered urban places much clearer. The demarcated roads and street signs, the complex subway maps – these things stayed with her more in terms of what she could name, where she had been, and so on. But what Tashi longed for in her accounts was a place not unlike the swath of grass in a nearby park that allowed her escape, or what she described as purer air, bereft of litter, and the opportunity to not be seen by anyone. This place was not Tibet nor was it where she visited in India as much as it was an idealization of what nature could be and what it could provide. Listening to her, it was hard not to think of the Transcendentalists who placed such importance on what a small, rural space could offer a person over the course of a life.

What Tashi seemed to suggest is that such a space could provide an opportunity for rootedness. She speculated, on occasion, how life would have been different if her and her family could have resided in a more pastoral space, even if that space was outside of Tibet, India, or the United States. She wondered if Dickyi's asthma problems would have abated by now, and once, she wondered out loud whether her lost son would have enjoyed the opportunity to hike and swim in rivers. Tashi, unlike Kelsang, did not indicate that the loss of Tibet denied her the opportunity to have a home; however, like Kelsang, I believe Tashi felt a sort of groundlessness in which she was cast away from that which she *could have* built upon. It was not even the world of her parents or grandparents that she longed for, but rather a world of which she knew just the rind.

Tenzin: Long Gone, Then Gone Again

Tenzin's past differed significantly from Kelsang, Tashi, and Dawa insofar as Tenzin could speak with at least a moderate amount of certainty about pre-1959 Tibet. He was a young boy at the time his family fled – only five years of age – but he had distinct memories of the violence leading to the Lhasa Uprising, and distinct memories of Lhasa itself. He said he knew what it meant to lose Tibet and described it as “someone raping your sister. You are watching and you can do nothing.” Nowhere in my interviews with other informants were descriptions of the late 1950s violence as wrenching as Tenzin's. He described his family's decision to leave as “late” in that thousands of others had already departed. He saw two neighbors shot dead, and watched his father drag both to refuge underneath the awning of a nearby store.

In 1982 – over 20 years after fleeing – and directly after finishing his master's degree, he went back to Tibet. The return trip was fraught with difficulties. He explained:

Just getting there was impossible – the number of times I had to transfer, the documentation, what a headache. My father had been several years before and he said, “Tenzin, don’t go. It’s gone again.” But I didn’t listen. I went and it was terrible. I was in Lhasa for two days and I could not stand it. Butter lamps were not being burned. The place still seemed to be in lockdown. And then I was for two days in Yangpachen, which is not far from Lhasa. My father had family there. I remembered them. And I knew they were all dead. It was not the same to go back. How could it be? A Chinese man who lived in the house they used to live in insulted me when I was walking near the property. So much heartache on the way back. And I would just encounter more and more Chinese, the worst ones, on my way out of Tibet. “Take it, you have ruined it,” I would think. Maybe I don’t mean that.

I asked how the return trip changed his life in India once he got back to his family, and he said the effects were significant. First, he took a job at the library of the university where he had just finished studying. Until then, Tenzin had held out a faint amount of hope that he would be able to find employment that would allow both him and his wife to return. But that was an impossibility, he saw. Though he made the return trip alone, it solidified a great deal for him and his wife: they would not ever visit Tibet again, they would stay in India indefinitely, and they would have a child. He cited the lonely trip back to India as one of the only decisive turning points in his life – one that he was certain he experienced as a definitive moment of change. He said, “I do remember how it felt, and I’m not just making this up in memory. It was this empty, hollow feeling of something being over. I knew. I knew that the limbo period was over.”

And in almost the next breath, he explained how India was not home. “I had to go back [to Tibet] to know how stripped of everything we were. We made due in India, but no, I wouldn’t call that home. Home died.”

I asked how his return trip to Tibet compared with that of his father's. He had little to say on the subject, but speculated that both trips were likely similar, reiterating his father's warning that he should have never gone back. He went on to make some blanket statements about the desire for men and women to return, claiming that many men he knew went back to where they first lived in Tibet to see its actual ruin, whereas many women his age whom he knew would never go back. I asked him to speculate why this might be so but he had no ideas.

Tenzin's decision to relocate to the United States with his wife and daughter came in 2008 when a job offer from his current place of work materialized. The time he had spent in the U.S. on a scholarship several years earlier buttressed his belief that New York would be a good place to live. Tenzin told me that he saw opportunities to make money which had never been presented to him before. He added that he does not want to consider money as the only motivating factor:

And then there's my daughter. She is in college now, and it is just easier if we live over here. She grows up here, gets educated here, and then she can do what she wants. More choices than I or my wife had. So there's that. One day maybe we will move again, when my daughter is older. Retire somewhere. I don't know where. I like it here. But we are not stuck just here, or anywhere.

What came across as particularly important for Tenzin was a place where he could earn citizenship. He expressed frustration at the government-in-exile for discouraging Tibetans from adopting Indian citizenship, as many have, a frustration that was simultaneously directed at Indian bureaucracy.

"This is more important than feeling at home," he said, exasperated. "I can't tell you how many times I've lost a job, or jumped through hoops, because I had no citizenship. It's like I

have to prove that I exist sometimes. I've been working my whole life, and in India, I couldn't get citizenship until my last years there. Traveling was a nightmare. What can you do?"

Citizenship became the issue Tenzin was most impassioned about. It was a lack of citizenship that kept him in the same job for so many years (an abrupt change from his earlier explanation about staying at the library in Jharkhand out of loyalty and comfort). Such a lack drew his ire the same way descriptions of the Lhasa Uprising did. And then he would, just as abruptly, change the subject. In the absence of rootedness was a focus on the means through which one could move. A good job, a good education, a place where one could attain citizenship – these were the things that developed as mattering a great deal to him, almost to a point – I sensed – of replacing home all together.

Dawa: A Labor

Dawa, in contrast, did not replace the notion of home at all. To him it was a labor, a thing that was created by him and those whom he loved, regardless of time and place. Listening to Dawa, I was quickly reminded of the clichéd adage *Home is where the heart is*. Only with Dawa was I afforded a physical description of a house. His idyllic years of 1983 through 1995 took place in a two bedroom flat on the outskirts of Dharamsala. The kitchen was fully tiled and quite large, allowing him ample room to develop his culinary skills, and a balcony wrapped around the corner of the house outside an upstairs living room. Less than a mile away was the Tibetan center of Sidhbari, but as soon as Dawa's description wandered from the house, he would quickly return to it and continue its description in extraordinary detail.

He paid such detail to the physical description of that house I felt as though I could imagine it. Concurrently, I could not help but compare it to the newspaper-laden table, the

unkempt kitchen, and the cigarette-stained walls around me. He was adamant that home meant something you have labored at, but where he lived at the moment did not look to be the result of labor. He explained that his parents had instilled in him a belief that home was something one constructed and not something that was given. His father, who built roads as many Tibetans new to India in the 1960s did, also had a hand in the physical construction of the house Dawa grew up in.

However, the Tibet his parents knew was not what he described as home. Dawa explained to me:

I am straightforward about that. I didn't grow up there, so I can't make it mine. I can imagine it and read all the books, and if you're Tibetan you should. But every Tibetan wants to go at some point. Maybe when I'm very old I will get there somehow. Times change. I never thought when I was young I would be living in New York and here I am. I am settled for the most part.

"Can you ever imagine a time when you will think differently?" I asked him.

"Oh, no. If my son wants me to move near him, then I will think differently. But things are how they are."

Family remained the proverbial crux of his life, even in its absence, something he could rebuild – to a degree – one day if circumstances permitted. Dawa's description of his family brought this to mind. The circumstances of the world were so often against him, he seemed to imply. His wife and son were the only ones "on my team," Dawa said. And indeed, how he described the first decade of his marriage and of his son's life reaffirmed this. He mustered the strength to get through a number of difficult years at his job at a bank in India with his family's

support; the death of his own parents would have been “forever debilitating were it not for what I came home to.”

But with his wife’s terminal diagnosis of breast cancer in 1995 and her subsequent decision to leave him for an English man she had met through work, the diaspora space of the family that Christou (2006) writes about folded. “It was my own version of 1959,” he said, somewhat embarrassed to have made the comparison. “All of a sudden she was gone from my life. Still alive, but I could not be with her. I was floating, hardly alive. At the beginning of one month we started fighting, and by the end of the month, she had moved out, like that,” and he snapped his fingers. Dawa still could not pinpoint what exactly went wrong in their marriage. He and his wife, Dia, met through each other’s parents. The marriage was not arranged but strongly encouraged. By its conclusion, Dawa could not shake his belief that she must have not loved him completely if she did not want to spend her final days with him.

I went on to ask how his son reacted to the news of her health and to the news of their separation. Dawa said, “He was eleven or so – the worst age for this to happen. In India we say that if a parent must go away, he or she has to do it early. Or else, the child will have trouble later.” Tsering, Dawa’s son, and Dawa maintained a close relationship in the final year in India (the boy lived with his mother part of the time). In 1996, Dawa was able to locate a sponsor in the United States through his job at a bank who would help him establish a life in New York. His explanation of how he went from mourning his late wife to moving to the other side of the world is particularly foggy. He said:

I don’t know how it happened. Each day was a daze [after she died]. I knew a man at work.

He said his relative was in the business of sponsoring Tibetans who wanted to come to the

United States. I hadn't given it thought before, but I was floating. The hinges had come off the door. For Tsering, too. My parents had died. We could go anywhere at the end of the day.

"The thought of going to New York had never once occurred to you?" I asked.

"No, not that I remember. Perhaps it had. I know that the month after my wife died I went to a brothel. I had never been but someone made me go. She had been to New York."

"What did she say about it?"

"She said it's where a lot of people were going. I had heard this. She also said it was hard to get jobs there, and it was expensive. I paid her just to talk to me."

"So why did you end up going?"

"It's not easy. I'm not sure. It's never too late to start over, I guess. I was only about 40 at the time." I asked him if his son felt the same.

"I don't know how he felt, but he did not fight about it. A few years ago a tidal wave took away villages near different parts of the Indian Ocean. I know some people there, some who survived. It is like that. What can you do?"

Modes and Mechanisms of Understanding

Impossibilities

As Hu Ping (2005) has written, the experience of exile is rooted in suffering for one's ideals. The qualifying characteristic that defines an exile, Ping argues, is a continued devotion to what may very well be an impossibility – returning to the place they have had to leave out of fear of persecution. For Ping, the difference between an exile and immigrant is primarily psychological: the former resides in a certain groundlessness, the felt liminal between one country and another; whereas the latter undergoes a self-negation, accepting that one's homeland

forever resides in the *before*, and not the now. Salman Akhtar (1999) suggests that the consequences are quite far reaching in either case. With the experience of exile comes a process of incomplete mourning – the rites of farewell may never have been carried out, survivor’s guilt may linger. Immigrants experience a more complete nostalgia, Akhtar argues, investing slightly in a future return – if only through burial, for example – but creating in their present surroundings vestiges of their homeland.

Again, I do not want to employ generational terms that do not map onto my informants’ experiences, but I do want to call attention to the role of impossibilities in the ways Kelsang and Tashi – the younger of my informants – narrated their accounts of home. Tashi’s described process of coming into consciousness occurred during the 1980s when there was a pertinent shift in terms of international recognition of Tibet’s situation. She remembered when the Tibet – U.S. Resettlement Project took route, and the flood of family friends who wanted to leave. In other words, with renewed hope about the culture’s future came, for Tashi, the creation of a horizon that denoted an impossibility. This paradox deserves some explaining.

“My parents thought, so I thought too, that Tibet had been taken for good. Oh yes, we stayed hopeful, but the situation was closed in a way. Then, people all around us starting getting hopeful again. ‘Maybe China will back down, maybe we can go back,’ is what they would say,” she explained during our third interview.

“How did you feel when you heard this?” I asked.

“Frightened, terribly frightened. I could not imagine what it would be like to go back, and maybe it would be horrible.”

What Tashi’s account points to intersects with Akhtar’s (1999) comment about incomplete mourning. Was she worried that by going back her mourning would be complete, that

the change it would demand would again irrevocably shift the proverbial ground on which she had a life? She could romanticize Tibet, and what's more – romanticize the pastoral places she so loved – but in returning to them she would be confronted with the possibility that the dream did not match the reality.

It is also worth considering the role of the dream itself. It was not at all uncommon in my interviews with Tashi for her to evade a question by referring to a recent dream she had. These dreams were often of idyllic, rustic scenes abound with rivers and mountains. The descriptions bore a certain resemblance to Tashi's own description of the pastoral places she would go with her own family during her youth in India. And to a degree, they also coalesced with what she had speculated about the physicality of Tibet.

Kelsang spoke too of the impossibility of ever knowing what home was. Within her narrative account was a fatalism; it was not so much that she could not get home, it was more that home did not exist. It was an abstraction, and by gesturing towards it she could solidify what it meant to live in exile. Her fatalism took the form of describing places she would never know and comparing that lack of knowledge to what her mother must have felt growing up in India. The hypothetical questions I raised with her – What if you were given the opportunity to visit Tibet? If the circumstances for your travel were met, what would stop you from going? – were met with shrugs. She did not, or could not, allow herself to speculate.

Kelsang also dreamt, recurrently about the gravel road that led over the Himalayas to Tibet, as I mentioned above. The dream bore a resemblance to what she had said about her mother's own failed trips to Tibet. For both women, their own narrative maneuvers in tandem with my questioning led to a consideration of the role of dreaming and its relationship to home.

Was dreaming their marrow of home? Not quite. But I do believe it was another means of delineating the impossibility of what home meant.

I was struck by the ways in which both women imbued the dream with the power to prophesize. The notion I put forth to them that their dreams were perhaps products of the past – a tendency I have to recognize as one of originology – was something they both negated. These dreams, they told me, pointed to people they did not yet meet or places they had not yet been, but maybe one day, the subject(s) of their dreams would materialize. In this way, dreams were composed of the *not yet*, rather than the *has been*. Still, I am not certain that Tashi and Kelsang took these dreams to be crystallizations of a time or place to come, but rather as acts that pointed to future impossibilities rather than those of the past. In her fatalism, Tashi believed that she would never get back to a pastoral place. Kelsang also seemed to believe that she would never get to Tibet. It is also interesting to note that while Tashi and Kelsang ascribed a certain amount of importance to what they dreamt in regards to home, Dawa and Tenzin did not. Both men said that they had very few dreams, and if they did, they struggled to remember details. Certainly no dreams they had dealt with what they called home. I am not ready to collapse these differences into sweeping, gender-specific generalizations, for while such differences may be partially accounted for ways in which Tibetan men and women are encouraged to regard home, I believe they speak more to differences in one's autographical experiences.

Deserving of further comment is the temporality of the dream itself, or rather the dream account, since it was what I had access to. There was a certain timelessness to what both Tashi and Kelsang described. Tashi's elaborations of an unnamed pastoral place was devoid of seasons, night, and anything except temperate weather in the same way Kelsang's description of the road to Tibet was always peopleless and dim up ahead. Although such depictions bore a

photographic quality, they also seemed to stand outside space and time. In fact, both women discussed the difficulty “recovering” from these recurring dreams, that is, the dreams themselves induced a sort of exhaustion, an exhaustion Tashi equated with a long trip. She, and Kelsang, too, clearly felt the effects of the dreams spatio-temporality in a way I had never heard another person describe the aftermath of a dream. This temporality even bears a resemblance to the *milam bardo* of sleep and dream which is described in Tibetan Buddhist texts. A *bardo* state is a *betwixt*, an *in between*, an opportunity through which one can experience so called “direct reality” shorn of projections and obfuscations with the hopes of investing those experiences in day to day life. Movement through various *bardo* states helps pull one toward the liberation from cyclical existence (Sambhava, 1994). In Tibetan Buddhism in particular, dream yoga is often taught and practiced as a form through which one can achieve lucid dreaming and graduate to greater awareness, though I do not believe Kelsang nor Tashi engaged with this practice.

Texts authored by religious figures in Buddhist communities have long held dreams in high importance, as Young (1995) notes in her study of Buddhist dream imagery and practice. Sacred biographies and autobiographies often placed the dream at a point in the text where there was a dramatic shift in action, and other times dreams were used to underscore the inevitability of coming events. Young writes that the dream was often emphasized as important to the spiritual development of the author, and distinctions were often made between “seeing” and “having” a dream; the former referred to an experience of external origin, a gift of sorts, whereas the latter was underscored by a more creative element.

Young’s focus is somewhat divorced from that of the present work, but her comments about the experience of the dream itself merit attention. As I describe elsewhere in this work, neither Kelsang nor Tashi talked much of how Buddhism materialized in their own lives.

Kelsang began meditative practice not long after moving to New York following the encouragement of her uncle, and was content to leave her commitment at that, whereas Tashi's use of Buddhism was less clear to me. Iconography indicative of the Vajrayana tradition of Buddhism was spread throughout her apartment, and popularized photographs of the Dalai Lama hung on the walls. While both women no doubt appropriated elements of various strains of Buddhism into their daily lives, I was taken aback by the degree to which they "saw" their dreams, coinciding with the very religious connotation Young (1995) points to. Also emphasized in Young's account is that the dream utilizes six senses (the mind counting as the sixth). As such, dreams of particular importance often have strong sensory qualities, an observation that resonates with what both Tashi and Kelsang described: the smell of earth, picking up dirt or water and letting it run through their fingers, the sonar-like silence that can come with being outside by oneself. And as I mentioned above, Tashi and Kelsang negated my comment that perhaps their dreams were rooted in experiences of the past. However, both women returned to the issue moments later. Tashi noted, "It couldn't come from the past because I saw it – the place – as one sees an opening in the woods. It's there, given, and new."

Kelsang found it curious that I would think her recurring dream was a replay of something in the past. "Did you ever take communion when you were little?" she asked.

"I did once," I told her. "I remember the bread was stale. It was the last time I was in a church, I think. Why?"

"The man up there, the priest, he gave you the bread and the wine. So it is like that in a way with the dream you keep asking me about. It's there and you take it."

The role of the dream underscores the degree to which exile can imprison one in another time and place. So often, that time and place is thought to be the land which they lost, an

elsewhere that is inevitably to the past. But I would argue that the prolonged experience of exile changes that insofar as the progeny of those who were the first exiled have only their imagination to know what is lost. Akhtar (1999) writes that being an exile means one cannot mourn completely, and while that may be true, it is *especially* true in the case of those who inherit that status of exile, for they do not – and cannot – know fully what was lost to begin with. Shorn of the experiences that have so determined their ontological status, they are consigned to a time and place to come that by all means will likely never come. They may hear, through stories or indirection, what it was like to be uprooted, but Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang for the most part entered into that uprootedness in the midst of it. And perhaps it is that fact that so complicates the sociological terms of generation: some knew first-hand what was lost, and for others it is an impossibility.

“Redolence of Ash”

“When I saw what the old house looked like, it was still standing, and people were there, but in my nose was a redolence of ash. Perhaps I am imagining it,” Tenzin said in his elaboration of a return visit to Yangpachen. He had been filled with some wayward childhood nostalgia for the place where he spent the first five years of his life, but in seeing the physical destruction of that place, nostalgia ceased and home became concretized. Michael Jackson (1995) suggests home is created once one leaves, it is an elsewhere known only in reflection. Tenzin returned to that elsewhere, a place of which he had slight memories and anecdotes told to him by his parents. Perhaps in Tenzin’s case, home was created once he went back and saw it destroyed. Extended family there had long been dead – there was no ground on which his memorial life could continue. It was as though home became an elsewhere once it was shrouded in death and decay.

Dawa narrated a similar account. The labor of building a home with his wife and child began to be characterized by decay once she fell ill and left him for another man. He described how in the year of her illness numerous repairs needed to be made to the house, repairs he could not afford. During the precipitous season, rain slaked in through the roof. Mold developed in various corners of the kitchen. The house itself became a site of decay, a place he did not want to be.

Dawa, like Tenzin, is currently in his 50s, approximately two decades older than Tashi and Kelsang. They lived through much of the development of the exile community and knew, from afar, much of what happened during the half century of Chinese occupation in Tibet. I believe the thoroughness through which they experienced and understood exile gave them an ability to concretize home that I did not see in the accounts of Tashi and Kelsang. Put differently, Tenzin and Dawa felt the immediacy of collective loss, its subsequent disorganization and upheaval, and in that loss there was something concrete to long for.

That is not to say that the country of Tibet was home to these men, for what becomes clear here is the fluidity of the term home. While it may be encompassed under the loss of Tibet proper, for both Tenzin and Dawa, it became a term intimately tied to the death of loved ones. In fact, I would argue that home became concretized once it was lost, as though its ash hue varnished that part of their lives for good. And while home became linked in their narrative accounts to death, it is also important to remember the degree to which its loss enabled a sort of freedom. No longer with a singular place and time as the centripetal force in their lives, Tenzin and Dawa were free to craft new meanings of home, free to literally and figuratively move through in the world in a way they had not before. Tenzin's description of returning to India after his 1982 visit to Tibet enabled him to set down roots – take a job, buy a house, have a child. The

death of Dawa's wife in 1995 set him and his son off for the United States. What both men seemed to suggest was the tepidness with which they approached the world after the loss of what they took to be home. Dawa put it as follows:

I was called when she was sick. I was not there when she died, so it is tough. I got there late, and the Englishman was there. I didn't want to see him. But I stayed in the room with her for a few minutes. Then I walked outside the room, pushed open some doors. The light in the hospital was so blinding and I was so sad. So sad. In some way I thought anything could happen now.

I am weary to locate turning points in an other's life, but the accounts of Dawa and Tenzin do seem to point towards instances wherein there was a significant shift in the openness of their worlds. Tenzin would never go back to Lhasa or Yangpachen again; what would be the purpose in doing so? Dawa had to flee, he felt. His exile transformed from overly political to overly personal. Whether or not these men would locate a home again was a question similarly left open. One thing was certain: New York was not what they took to be home. Tenzin had just been here a handful of years and was still getting settled, in his own words. Dawa, having resided in the city for a decade and a half but shorn of family, also did not take his current residence as home.

These accounts open up the relationship between home and its concretization through death and decay. Once gone, the loss of home permits a freedom in moving through the world, a freedom that is concurrently restrained and keeps home itself, in these lives, from being replaced. Tenzin touched on this in our final interview when he described his trip to Tibet in the 1980s, and then subsequent trips elsewhere in the world in the years afterwards:

It's hard to remember what my feelings were on the trip there. Maybe I was hopeful, but I don't know. And I think I probably felt the same way at other times in my life. Like I don't know what's next. When I was on scholarship to the U.S., a place I had never been before, or when I came here to look for a job, or elsewhere in India when I had to work away from my family. The sort of being alone feeling. Do you know? Some dread, some happiness. You just keep walking.

Is home, then, what happens just once, only to transform into a mode of movement that is endlessly forward-moving and never stops?

Exile as Noun and Verb

Whether or not exile was treated as a noun or a verb had to do, I believe, with one's placement in the socio-economic matrix. It is often neglected that the criteria for initial selection within New York's Tibetan population was resettlement began was divided into two categories: those with demonstrable leadership abilities, who were often of significant financial means, and those who were impoverished. None of my informants came to the United States during that first phase of resettlement in the early 1990s, however, those disparities do – I believe – continue to cast a perceptible shadow that is rarely discussed within the community itself.

There is, at times, a unique sense of privilege is being able to call oneself an exile, imbued with possibilities for resistance and freedom, evidenced and celebrated by a number of writers in the twentieth century. It is a term that is often further defined by its lack of synonymy to immigration. In the case of Tibet, however, primacy is given to the term exile rather than immigration because it implies a type of thrownness, a violence many Tibetans equate with their experience as well as their continued involvement from afar in the ongoing political turmoil

between Tibet and China. Since the creation of the Tibetan government in Dharmasala, built largely by those belonging to what was considered the upper, ruling class in Tibet prior to 1959, exile has been the preeminent experiential marker (Powers, 2004). The modern history of Tibet is indeed written as the history of exile, both in an overwhelming number of personal accounts and the more “objective” records of history.

Akhtar (1999), noted in the preceding pages, acknowledged the degree to which psychological investment determines the difference between being an immigrant and being an exile. All of my informants tended towards the term exile, but I believe in how they used the term there were socio-economic reflections. Those I encountered with significant means (and I speak here not only of the four individuals who are at the center of this dissertation but the dozen other Tibetans I met and conversed with in the process) did not hesitate to speak both personally and collectively as an exile. It was a noun – a status to be proud of, something that one has earned, even if just by birth. Kelsang exemplified this best. In several of my interviews with her she positioned herself as someone who could speak to what it meant to live in exile. She had a good job, and from what I could tell, lived a very comfortable life. Tenzin, too, lived comfortably, traveled regularly, had been all over the world on scholarship, and did not hesitate to explain what the responsibilities of an exile were: education, the attainment of citizenship, and political involvement in some form. For both Tenzin and Kelsang, home was not especially concrete. It was something that had been lost, but both of them had difficulty articulating what it was that had been lost. Does this tie at all to their status of being an exile? Does claiming one’s status as an exile negate home all together, replacing it fully? Perhaps that is so.

This was not so much the case with individuals who, from what I could tell, lived more modest lifestyles or who were struggling financially. Tashi and Dawa rarely invoked the term

exile. They did once or twice, but both individuals used the phrase “to be in exile” rather than “to be an exile.” I believe that on one level, the concerns of everyday life – making rent, working, childcare – were far more important than outlining the responsibilities of a somewhat nebulous term. But I also sensed that both Tashi and Dawa were uncomfortable with the term itself. They, unlike Tenzin and Kelsang, did not speak of the “government-in-exile” but rather the Tibetan government. They did not speak overly of being ambassadors for Tibetan culture in New York City. One could argue that their conceptions of home were just as nebulous as Tenzin’s and Kelsang’s, and while that may be so, Tashi and Dawa carried with them the tragedy of living in exile and seemingly not benefiting fully from what it can afford: possibilities for resistance and action. What they suffered in exile had not been converted into what Tenzin and Kelsang used exile for – a platform through which they could move through the world, and to a degree, ward off some of the effects of thrownness, a platform which was in part determined by their financial security.

The differences here might seem minute, but I believe they speak to both the economic complexities of New York City’s Tibetan community as well as the larger issue of how financial stability informs one’s status as an exile. In one sense, exile identity in its broad scope can flatten generational differences all together, as I believe is the case with Tibet. In another sense, I believe financial security ensures that one can remain an exile despite the passage of time. This developmental issue deserves some attention.

Kelsang spoke of her own birth as the “birth of an exile.” She never went without, she told me, until she came to New York and tried to subsist without the help of a wealthy relative, an endeavor that failed and resulted in a certain dependency, she admitted in our final interview, on that relative. Tenzin worked hard, traveled regularly on scholarship, and narratively situated

himself among students who were “outsiders” when he was at various universities in both India and the United States. In both accounts, a level of financial security seemed to guarantee the noun status of exile in their lives. In other words, they were never not exiles, nor would they ever cease being exiles. But the situation was noticeably different for Tashi and Dawa. Born into families who struggled like many others in the Tibetan settlements around Dharamsala, and suffering the deaths and ill health of loved ones, their resources were scarce. They emphasized the importance of sponsors in their settlement in New York (sponsors are often needed for Tibetans to live in the United States; neither Tenzin nor Kelsang spoke about this). Tashi and Dawa also spoke with less certainty about the future; they intended to stay in New York, I sensed, but they were uneasy forecasting too far into the future. Both had month-to-month leases on the apartments they rented, they told me in our later interviews.

*

Never have I found Michael Jackson’s (1995) critique of modern times as an era of uprootedness as true as I did in the accounts of Kelsang, Tashi, Tenzin, and Dawa. To go away is a multifarious act that can suggest a geographic departure, a departure from one’s self, an irredeemable loss, or time’s inevitable passing, among a host of other meanings that are implied when one is gone (a verb which itself is quite fluid) from the place they once were. Far from limiting the term home to a sort of dwelling, these individuals’ stories underscore the malleability of the term and the creativity – whether through a labor, through a dream, through citizenship – inherent in what home is and what it means.

In one sense, the creativity with which they narrated home must be understood in terms of my questioning, insistent at times, that they explore the permutations of what the term meant. This way, the creativity I ascribe here was, in part, prompted by my questioning. However, in

another sense, the uprootedness which my informants both inherited and experienced demanded that their own narrative accounts of home involve a deep engagement or negotiation, one that will likely continue to shift with distance and history. Home, its loss and creation, also has to be understood as a pillar of any inquiry into lives forced into diaspora that both experience expulsion or persecution and inherit it. Above all, these stories underscore the necessity of inquiring into the narrative modes through which home comes to fruition. Thus, home may even be understood as a central tension in narrative creation, a guiding force which leads stories in myriad directions.

I believe it is useful to close with a consideration of one of those directions in particular: the return home. While I have spoken some of the prospect of return as it functioned in my informants' accounts, I must emphasize the degree to which home is framed by the prospect or negation of the return itself. For numerous diasporic populations in the world, the return may be marked as an impossibility, the space of imaginative play, a remainder in tangible reach, among many other possibilities. Palestinians, for instance, have given concrete form to their hopes for a time when they will return in the shape of a participatory on-line campaign featuring brief notes that complete the prompt: "When I return to Palestine, I will . . ." Postings run the gamut from the intention to work with orphaned children whose parents died for the cause of liberation, to exchanging email addresses for opportunities teaching English, to sitting under olive trees and breathing in the spirit of their parents' youth. The overwhelming response to the website seems to meet the objective of binding together past, present, and future, demanding that participants engage, if only speculatively, with a time that will be other. The Palestinian right of return, the principle claiming that Palestinian refugees and their descendants have a right to return to the

property they or their forbears left as a result of the events of 1948 and 1967, becomes particularized through engagement with this project.

To my knowledge, there is no equivalent project that has taken shape in Tibetan-created online communities. As I will discuss in the following chapter, many community organizations may serve something of a parallel function insofar as those organizations are often responsible for creating idealizations of Tibet. During the time I spent in various Tibet-led organizations in Manhattan and Queens, I was regularly given Indian newspapers to thumb through while I waited, or selected issues of Tibetan intellectual journals. The plethora of these documents gave the impression of committed political engagement, a near main line to Dharamsala wherein one could readily imagine what was happening “over there.” Implicit in many of these documents was a vague sense of return. If certain circumstances were to coalesce – if the Chinese eased their hard-line approach, if there was a more focused international community working for Tibetan interests – the prospect of a return could be actualized.

My informants had very little interest in such documents, preferring to maintain understandings of home based more on memory and less on the minutiae of current events. In other words, the ever-changing yet little-changing political landscape did not alter their opinions about a possible return. Tashi reiterated that any return would be a return to India and the pastoral places she knew as a child. When I asked Dawa what returning would look like in his mind, he spoke quickly of perhaps seeing the house he lived in for 12 years with his wife and child on the outskirts of Dharamsala. Tenzin was uninterested in a return since his upsetting visit some 30 years ago. For each of them, any return – whether to India or Tibet proper – would be brief. Nothing, they seemed to say, would come of it other than the visualization of a particular place that was lodged in their memory.

As Kelsang noted in our final interview, “It’s odd. We have become so good at creating a new Tibet for ourselves based on what we think mirrored old Tibet. But maybe what we have is more of a palimpsest – like when some new text or painting is placed over the old one and we think the new one is in fact the old one.” Her metaphor stayed with me. Her vague hope of a return was in fact a return to a figment and not an actuality, not only because she never knew Tibet itself, but because – in her own rendering – what she longed for was the overlay. I was taken aback by her searing honesty about the matter. A return, she seemed to suggest, would confirm whatever lost or found Shangri-La she wanted it to.

And yet, threaded through these notions of return were decidedly if not implicit Buddhist echoes. After I asked Dawa to speculate some about a hypothetical trip to India during our final interview – a trip he saw as highly unlikely – he immediately changed gears and began to talk about his lack of Buddhist knowledge. “What I know,” he said, “is what millions of other people know because it’s popular. The major points.” Without my prodding he had talked about this in previous interviews, emphasizing his surprise that very little “had stuck” with him regarding Buddhist teachings.

“I do like the idea of another,” he said.

“Another what?” I asked.

“Returning as another, you know? You asked me about going back there, to India, but I can’t imagine doing that. I’m getting too old, too frail. But perhaps in another time, after this life.”

“In the next life you would return there?”

“Yes, that’s it. Sometimes I imagine myself as a simple crow flying over Tianshushai lake in Tibet, in the southwestern part.”

“Have you been there before?”

“No, never, but I think I would like to.”

“What would it be like there?”

“Just a simple lake, you know. Wide with some white caps if it was windy. And beyond there would be dozens of hills that make a lot of v-shapes. A nice place for a crow.”

“Have you dreamt about this?”

“No, not once. I just picture it.”

Dawa excused himself to retrieve some crackers and when he returned we changed subjects. His visualization of a next life was not especially specific; the mountains and lake he offered in his description fit many pastoral places. I was less struck by these images than by what he sketched out as a next life when he found another form. It was even unclear whether what he believed would constitute a return home. Returning seemed paramount to returning home.

CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION

*Even before the story begins, you endure
a hundred subtractions not accounted for
in this turning: a grimness coming down
that doesn't answer to your name, and wayward
urgencies of memory that have you stupefied,
engrossed. I'm thinking you don't know
how much. What do you know of it,
your spectral, green, small icehouse wound,
and under it, the wounds of others, owned
by a line of hominids with lips compressed,
concealing mossy teeth, and in the DNA,
a quiver of time defying ecstasies and ailments
gone underground for thirteen generations,
like cicadas, only to surface in you?*

-Mark Nickels (2000, p. 86)

The library was dark the final day Tenzin and I spoke. Rows of empty shelves – emptied on account of the library's remodelization – encircled the long wooden table we sat at just as we had during the previous three interviews. He opened the window after other employees left so he could smoke. I smoked too though I normally do not. He eyes were ever more bloodshot and the light was especially variegated given that it was the shortest day in the calendrical year. Without much prompting, he launched into a story about his daughter's frustrations at a local community college:

She could have gone to Brown [University]. I know this. All A's before, so bright, and a good cellist. She applied one year ago and they said *No*. But a Chinese girl in her class – grades not so good, but this background of privilege – she gets in! My daughter cried. She never does. I did too, though alone. Aren't we deserving of something good after 50 fucking

years? Even with a small scholarship that a Tibetan girl should get, my wife and I would have paid the rest. It's expensive, but I know that. The school had this exquisite campus in New England, unlike anything I had ever seen. I know some Tibetans nearby there. I imagine her there some days. But now she is at school here, a local place. She studies accounting. This is not the way – too narrow. But my hands are bound. Maybe she will learn what will help her but I can't control it. You hope a storm will not wreck your house but sometimes it does.

Tenzin put out his cigarette and excused himself. When he came back some water that he had presumably splashed on his face dripped on to the table. He apologized, as he had done the previous two times he told me this story. The repetition in his diction was uncanny, and his face, too, creased just as it had before. In the recitation of his daughter's – I was never told her name – rejection from an Ivy League school, Tenzin was plagued by the fact that she had been denied that which dictated so much of the movement of his own life. I said that it is good she is nonetheless in college but he waved off my remark. "Denial of opportunity will now be inevitable," he said.

This story became the jumping-off point for Tenzin to discuss responsibility within the Tibetan community at large. It was always situated near the beginning of our interviews; I believe Tenzin wanted to make certain we got to it. The one instance I mentioned that we had already covered this issue, he called himself a "forgetful old man" and then launched into a re-telling. I was, of course, tired and bored of the story by its final recitation, but I must recognize it as both a response to my presence – in that I, as an outsider, was often given a "scripted" response that would take some time to penetrate – as well as a narrative maneuver that enabled

him to discuss the issues of action in a collective sense by first injecting a story with his particularity.

Tenzin's recitations were both stale and infused with emotion. Those recitations highlighted the importance of education as a mode of possible action for his daughter. And at the same time, there was a sense of hopelessness, as if her own possibilities to act on the world as he had were gone.

*

In the absence of a time in the immediate future when there will be anything but a degree of struggle – a social fact itself for Tibetans in the last half century – one must raise questions about possibilities for action. In the preceding pages, I have sketched out the ways in which stories move through generations and how an understanding of home fosters various ways of being-in-the-world. My first aim in this chapter is to understand the ways these four individuals act on and in the world, and where they are able to map what I will call sites of action in their daily lives – the places where action is made possible.

A population whose cause is often the province of celebrities, student organizations, and budding Zen aficionados may often lack particularity in the social imagination, as I believe is the case with Tibet. My argument is that while some of the popularization of Tibet may serve useful purposes (often of advocacy), such a process is concurrently limiting insofar as it does not account for the ways people engage in action and demonstrate agency in their everyday lives. In short, the rhetoric of independence that so characterizes the perception of Tibet can occlude the particular. This is not a population nor a cause that has been forgotten by and large; however, within the meta narrative of *Free Tibet!* are the everyday practices that stand discreetly in the background.

My aim in the second half of this chapter is to understand the ways in which the experiences of action are narrated. The possibilities for action are intimately tied to the mechanisms of how one remembers, what one remembers, and how that remembrance surfaces in their daily movement. I focus on three particular mechanisms that describe the means through which my informants narrated their accounts of resistance and forgiveness: testimony, hope, and the dependence on the body. Then, I will conclude with a brief discussion regarding the effects of those mechanisms on an interlocutor. What I will argue is that in discussions of the Tibetan exile community at large, those within the community depend on their interlocutors being “caught,” placed in the same betwixt that describes their psychological and physical lives.

Sites of Action

Community Involvement and its Gesture

“Have you contacted the Students for a Free Tibet? Or the Office of Tibet?” Regularly, I was asked these questions, at various points, by each of my informants. It mattered to them whether I had been in touch with those organizations and their leaders. When I assured them that I had, their concerns were allayed and the interview could continue. Both organizations were lauded, even by those who had little community involvement, as being the proverbial glue that bound together Tibetans in the New York area. What is more is that these organizations – and others, including youth congresses, more religiously-minded centers, as well as cultural organizations – served as especially active sites of resistance insofar as they demanded an engagement with a charged political situation from afar, an engagement that mattered both in practice and in gesture.

Dawa, whose social life was dictated by his role in a community organization, claimed that it was his volunteer work at a local Tibetan organization that kept him buoyant in the time following his arrival in the U.S. He told me:

It was hard, as I have said. I know this isn't smart, but I would drink alcohol sometimes. You know, not bad, but probably too much. My son was upset. So many changes for him – his mother, us moving, and I was acting unconscious. So he brought me there one day and we sat down, and I felt, you see? It was like we had not left. They had direct lines to Dharamsala there. The newspapers were the same, and we weren't floating anymore.

Dawa's narrative veers towards an account about overcoming addiction, though I am reticent to refer to it as such. For him, it was a space that allowed him to participate not so much in his own autobiographical past as the horizon of that time and place – most notably the contours of Tibetan identity in Dharamsala. I asked Dawa for the specifics of what this organization did. He was vague: "We plan a great deal. Lots of marches, protests, some youth-oriented events, too." I asked for more detail but he was again vague. I said that he must be very involved with the news coming out of Dharamsala, and the aims of the rest of Tibet's exile community in North America. "No," he said. "Others know about that. They tell us the news and we go from there."

What became clear in that interview – and in subsequent interviews – was the importance of the gesture of community involvement. Certainly, he played a role in one organization insofar as he attended their meetings every month and was responsible for overseeing aspects of their budget. But what I understood from Dawa was that his presence – the effort of attending – was what mattered most. He did not seem close with any other members; indeed, the effects of his work there were not large, according to him (the budget was in constant disarray, he admitted).

And his son's attendance petered out after a few months. With Tashi, I encountered a similar pattern. Her involvement at a Tibetan cultural center was prompted by the recommendation of her friend, Quinn, who saw to it in the months following Tashi's arrival that she had a weekly link, in some form, to what was left behind.

Tashi saw her involvement in an intensely personal way. At first, she described her volunteer work as returning the kindness that New York's Tibetan community had shown her, however, I could not get to her describe the ways in which the community had been so kind to her in the first place. As she continued to talk, Tashi described the building where her volunteer work occurred, the spiral steps that dizzied her, the accompanying garden outside where she ate lunch, and the photographs that lined the walls – some of small villages in Tibet of which Tashi had never heard.

“What did you do during your work there?” I asked.

“I would talk to him. Not out loud, because people would look. But silently, we would have these talks. He would have old enough to talk by then.” She was referring to her son who died in India as Tashi was traveling to the United States.

“What would you talk about?”

“I would show him the pictures, the photos of the villages. And to be honest I hadn't been to many of those places, but I would treat it like I had. I would tell him stories about those places.”

The stories she told bore a resemblance to the stories she had related to me about the pastoral places in India that she thought of often. I asked her when her work at the museum stopped, and she said it had not. She was planning to go the day after our interview.

There is also the issue of what forms of resistance are allowed by the community at large. McGranahan (2005) points to the example of the Chushi Gangdrug Tibetan resistance army, who fought violently against the Chinese until 1974. Their story is largely occluded from post-1959 renditions of Tibetan history, insofar as their resistance does not coalesce with the human rights narrative that is so embedded in Tibet's international discourse. In short, the community and its leaders get the final say on what constitutes forms of resistance.

Many of the Tibet-related organizations in the city that have had notable longevity have dealt with Buddhism and its American adoption (even those organizations which pre-existed the Tibet – U. S. Resettlement Project). As I have written elsewhere in this dissertation, all my informants identified as Buddhist, but with much variation. Despite this, Tenzin, Dawa, and Kelsang praised various Buddhist centers in the city as maintaining one of the most important facets of Tibetan identity in exile. Whereas concerns persisted across the accounts of all my informants that Tibetan language was beginning to enter into a slow disappearance, the various forms through which Buddhism has been adopted in American culture, and New York City specifically, was an encouraging sign to them this particular facet of Tibetan culture would spread infinitely. However, most admitted that the adoption was more in terms of Zen rather than the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition. Tenzin had in fact began attending meditative practice at a Zen center near his apartment but admitted to feeling adrift by the lack of Tibetans there.

I emphasize the gesture of community involvement because I believe that in some ways, it matters as much as actual involvement. The youth congresses and the various religious and cultural centers serve as mutually agreed upon sites of resistance insofar as these places – whether they are frequented by Tibetans or not – coalesce with what has become the metanarrative of Tibet in the social imagination. The community organizations that so define this

part of the exile population depend on furthering the human rights discourse that has best served Tibet's purposes over the last half century. Thus, as so-called sites of resistance, some of these organizations document abuses continuing in Tibet, and especially Lhasa, and engage from afar with changes in the exile government in Dharamsala. The protests and marches described by Dawa and others were never narrated in more detail than a script that bore a certain resemblance to a news report.

Kelsang, who seemed more apart from the community than my other three informants, participated in a recent event commemorating the Lhasa Uprising. She had to travel to Queens, "a place I frankly don't go very often," she said. She described the food, the people she met during the event, and the locale, but as far as what the commemoration itself involved, she seemed unable to relate very much. "There was someone close to His Holiness who spoke. He addressed the retirement issue. Afterwards, there was some great catering." When I would push for some detail, I would be met with some form of, "Didn't you see it in the news?"

Education

It is also important to note that Dawa and Tashi arrived in the mid to late 1990s, when the exile community in New York was still very much developing. Their involvement with various organizations has been quite long-term in that regard, spanning well over ten years. While described above as something of a gesture, I also believe their involvement began as a means to locate a form of home in the initial resettlement period in New York. What is additionally important to note is how Tibetan community organizations have shifted as the population has boomed in recent years. With a population that now includes several thousand, a very clear focus in the aims of these community organizations are now geared towards Tibetan youth. Buddhist

retreats in upstate New York, scholarship programs, and tutorials have been aimed at Tibetans in high school in the metropolitan area. Tenzin, who repeatedly championed the role of education in exile, believed that the continued influx of Tibetans in New York has led to sense that this area will remain the single most important North American city for the exile population, and therefore, the need to strengthen a commitment to education has become paramount.

In the story that opened this chapter, I pointed to Tenzin's frustration over his daughter's rejection from an Ivy League school. He couched his frustration in his belief that she would be denied subsequent opportunities to participate "on a global level." I asked if that meant returning to Dharamsala at some point. Tenzin said:

No, no, not at all. That's not the point, you see, to go back. What's done is done. But it would have helped her make money. Perhaps it would have been law that she would have gone into. I don't know. Maybe medicine. But a person needs a good job. I have a good job. That's why we came here. My father suffered in India because he could not get the work he deserved. No Tibetans want to go back there. You do what you can from afar, but we are over here.

Education became a mode of participation, but in the most general way. While Julia Hess (2009) argues that young Tibetans in India imagine participating in the exile community in myriad ways – infused with what she calls a "diaspora consciousness", I believe the situation is somewhat different in New York.

Dawa's son, who currently resides in California, moved there to begin an academic program in engineering in 2002. Dawa was vehemently against his son moving to the other part of the country, but Tsering rationalized it on account of the school's offerings at a low cost (which he could not find on the east coast) and the growing Tibetan community out there.

“But of course that was a lie,” Dawa told me. “Maybe not a lie, but not true, either. He made it through school, not very well, and now he lives in San Francisco and works at a restaurant. No Tibetans in his life. Who is he?”

“What would you have wanted for him?” I asked.

“To do better in his school. Me, I did okay. I have had jobs at banks. It is good. But he barely passed, only survived. Now what?”

“What would it have gotten him if he had done better?”

“So much, you see. He could move around. It’s hard enough for Tibetans to get jobs, but his laziness doesn’t make it easier. I imagine his other life, his other possible life. He wouldn’t go back to India, no. That’s gone. But an engineer! He could make such good money, almost anywhere. It would be getting back.” I asked him to clarify the last sentence and he said, “For everything. For all the movement we’ve had to do.” He meant Tibet’s post-1959 history in which his own is ensconced.

With both Tenzin and Dawa there is the belief that education could have been the mode through which their children resisted that which they had inherited, a freedom to pursue a “kind of American life,” as Tenzin put it. I asked him what this meant, and he said, “a life where one can make money, and if you move, it’s because of your own volition. That’s it.” However, despite the fact that Dawa’s son had earned a college diploma and Tenzin’s daughter was progressing well in college, both expressed a dissatisfaction – either with structural forces or agency – that all hope was already lost. The onus they placed on achievement was staggering. Such achievement hypothetically would have been a form of resistance insofar as the struggles of dislocation and financial distress would lessen. An engagement with a charged political situation would take place only through indirection.

Tashi, who is in her thirties, began a course of study in nursing at a nearby college several years ago. “In India, no, I couldn’t have done this,” she said. “It’s not so easy to leave everyone behind, to pick up one’s home and take it elsewhere. But here I can one day get a good job. Maybe by summer. Things are much worse in Dharamsala.”

As she went on, Tashi described how her part-time jobs taking care of children in and around her neighborhood yielded a small amount of money that goes back to the few relatives she has in India. “So that is not for me. That money is for them, because I lucked out, having found a sponsor here. Others couldn’t get it. So I owe it to them, and I don’t mind.”

“What made you start a program in nursing?” I asked.

“Dickyi was too young when we came here – just three. So I couldn’t then. But I also had too much sorrow to focus on school. Everything inside my body was not right. I was never very good at school, too. Quinn had a friend who did studies at my college, and we were talking one day, and it seemed like a good idea.”

“Why was that?”

“I took care of my parents in India, and some neighbors, too. When I had no work there this is what I would do. I never thought of it as nursing. But Quinn said it would be a way for me to do the same here. There are some Tibetans in my program. Maybe they feel like I do.”

Later, Tashi described her hope of a nursing job that pays well. She lamented the small apartment she lived in with her husband and son, the inattentive building superintendent, the bad water pressure and poor heating which left them wearing several sweaters on the coldest nights of December and January. Her goal was to earn a wage that would allow them to find a new apartment in the same neighborhood and would meanwhile allow her to send the same amount of money back to India. Her husband, however, knew nothing of the monthly checks she sent back

to Dharamsala. “He would be so angry!” she said. “He was not on good terms with his family when we came here. For him, it’s okay to leave all that behind. But for me, it is harder.” Tashi was connected to several worlds at once, hoping that her education could be the proverbial glue that kept those worlds together. A career in which she could devote focus to the body was one way of doing so.

Politics and Deferral

As of this writing, the most recent position advocated by the Dalai Lama reaffirms a decade-long commitment to the so-called “middle way” approach. Such approach does not call for China to vacate Tibet entirely, but rather advocates genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living within the three traditional provinces of Tibet. Genuine autonomy would mean that the provinces would be governed by a popularly-elected legislature, but at the same time those provinces would not seek to separate from China. China would remain responsible for Tibet’s international relations, whereas the Tibetan people would manage internal affairs such as religion, culture, healthcare, and education (The Office of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, n.d.).

In a statement released by the Dalai Lama in March, 2008, he said he had “no intention to split Tibet from the country or cause a rift between the Han and Tibetan peoples,” (Ram, 2008). Still, significant changes are abreast. Most recently, the exiled Tibetan Parliament accepted the Dalai Lama’s proposal for retirement. Typically, high priests locate a successor to the Dalai Lama through a long process of interpreting omens, portents, and meteorological signs, a process itself which can take over a decade. Though of course, the overwhelming presence of China in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, added to the enormous worldwide diaspora and heavily-charged political situation, complicate this process. The Dalai Lama – at the age of 75 –

has explained retirement as a useful alternative to the practiced method of leadership selection insofar as a slow transfer of power would not create an indefinite vacuum of leadership in the case of his death. Well-organized as Tibetans have been in the years following 1959, the threat of disunity causes the future to be even more nebulous. Thus, this past spring, Tibetans elected Lobsang Sengey, a Harvard-educated legal scholar as the next prime minister. Born in a refugee camp in India after his father fled Tibet in 1959, Sengey has never set foot in Tibet proper. Many Tibetans I spoke to believed that his Western legal training will be crucial in inaugurating a new era of Tibetan politics. They even speculated that his election may result in a new narrative for the people in exile, but they did not know what that narrative might be. Like the Dalai Lama, he has so far advocated the Middle Way approach.

*

One of the most discernible roles community organizations played in the lives of my informants was displaying collective outrage at China and occasionally the United States. In my last interview with Kelsang, she spoke about a conversation she had with some Tibetan friends regarding a recent meeting between Hu Jinbao (the President of the People's Republic of China) and the U. S. President.

[Obama] met with him – what a pig! And when His Holiness comes, he has to come in the back door. Literally, your president won't call it an official visit. At least with Bush, he would call it an official visit. I remember when Obama campaigned. In India many of us were hopeful. "Maybe now the most significant changes will come" – that's what we thought. But he doesn't touch the issue. Same rhetoric – "human rights abuses shouldn't tolerated." Yeah, yeah, we've heard that before. But it is standing off to the side and just watching, commenting occasionally.

And then, seemingly in the next breath, she said, “It would just be nice, you know, if your president acted in more than gesture. I mean, what happened once – with China coming in – was awful, but now, maybe it’s not so bad.”

I asked her to clarify and Kelsang said, “I can’t speak to the specifics, because, as you know, I grew up in India. But I have some friends who have been to Tibet, and let’s be honest: health care is better, more people are educated, there are more jobs.” I reminded her that she had told me several of her friends had been possibly imprisoned after the March 2008 protests in Lhasa.

“Yes, and that’s what happens also. How could we ever forgive the Chinese for what they have done?”

Her comments were both vague and paradoxical. On the one hand, she praised the Chinese-led improvements and on the other hand, lamented their treatment of Tibetans who protested against their presence. Both comments were directed at a place she had never even been. And yet, I have to believe that Kelsang’s comments speak to the complex ways in which politics become a site of both resistance and resignation, and how individual lives become entrapped within the narrative devices that move between Lhasa, Dharamsala, Beijing, and Washington. From her position – as someone who proudly wore the badge of being an exile and had, at the same time, never been to Tibet – autobiographical experience with political circumstances was scarce. In her upbringing, she said she had never “gone without.” Indeed, what she could imagine resisting or forgiving had much to do with the larger narratives that circulated about Tibet and China.

Like many Tibetans I spoke to, Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang were less than optimistic about the prospect that forgiveness was ever possible. When I raised the question, I

was often met with their own questions of what, in fact, would they be forgiving? What happened to their parents or grandparents? What they took no part in but nonetheless configured the arc of their lives? What continues to happen in a place where they do not live? I felt at times that their identity was so rooted in non-forgiveness, or rather the acceptance of the historical contingencies under which they lived and under which they had been born, that to forgive would, in a way, be shattering. Not only that, the enormity of a fifty-year conflicted and violence-soaked relationship with China meant that there was not a single act to forgive but rather an unfathomable number of wrongs.

Political involvement has a number of connotations within New York City's Tibetan community. Several organizations coordinated trips to Washington to protest when Jinbao met with Obama in January, sending back news of their apparent success via social networking sites that their voices were heard. Other organizations use their communal space for discussions and debates of issues emerging in and around Dharamsala. There are, no doubt, many activists within the Tibetan community here, and they are often in leadership positions within these various organizations. But while collective, political engagement occurs routinely in these spaces, it also takes shape in a number of other forms, as these accounts showed me.

For Tashi, one form of engagement upon her arrival in New York was the daycare where she would bring Dickyi. "So many different women there – some had Indian backgrounds, Chinese backgrounds, Latin American backgrounds. I could talk to them about it, about what my family would tell me was happening in Dharamsala." The fleeting half hour she spent daily at this daycare, lingering while Dickyi continued to play, was hugely important to her in those first few years, she said. "We had all come from something, in some way, so we had common ground. There were no arguments. I even became close with some of the Chinese moms." But Tashi, in

fact, claimed that she did not know much about the politics in Dharamsala both then and now. I asked her what she would discuss and she said “what’s out there” – what was in the newspapers, the internet. She could not remember specific conversations. Instead, what she did remember was passing along news of a part-time job to a Vietnamese woman who had just arrived in New York, and the brief subway ride between two stops she shared with a Guatemalan woman. These encounters did not seem overly political to me, but for Tashi they reinforced what she called a “necessary sense of distance. I understood through them how you wear all the political stuff each day without talking about it.”

As for Tenzin and Dawa, they held pointed political opinions about the role of the United States in the Tibet – China issue, and their engagement took the form of simply talking about it. “I don’t care to get involved much with it,” Tenzin said, “but we have to be disgusted on some level. That this issue isn’t front and center in the meetings with Jinbao says enough.” Dawa echoed similar sentiments, as he wondered several times if the election of John McCain would have better served Tibetan interests. Neither had much to say in regards to the developing news that the U.S. Senate began a staff mission to seek ways in which the U.S. might work with China to preserve the cultural autonomy of the Tibetan region. They had not, in fact, heard that news, nor were they particularly interested in talking about it. This was a recurrent trend in the accounts both Tenzin and Dawa gave: they would discuss a “headline” or piece of news I too had heard, but seem unable or unwilling to offer any details. What so often resulted was a stale story that expressed a sort of frozen outrage, by which I mean a story that would begin with a powerful emotion and disappear into what sounded like the many accounts circulating Tibetan-run media – that is, a story that would stop at its outrage, its generality. An excerpt from my third interview with Tenzin illustrates this well:

As I said, we had some family in Tibet. They were not there when I returned in 1982. But I do know one of them – a physician, my cousin – was tortured badly. I always feel weak when I imagine his pain – his arms shackled, and his legs too, pinched by metal each step he took. His nose was dislocated and he could not breath well. When I think of this, I am furious. Why? I didn't know him. I know he lived but so much time was spent thinking over his crimes in solitary confinement. More happened to him. I know it did. He was never the same.

I asked how he had heard about this. Tenzin could not remember. He said, “In the end, I may be mixing up some details. But it has happened to so many, it is true in some way.”

Narrative Mechanisms

Testimony

Of the causes espoused by the exiled Tibetan population, there is a recurring emphasis on the need to testify about the atrocities committed by the Chinese. Oftentimes, this takes the form of an oral narrative from an individual tortured or abused during one of the many crackdowns in Lhasa. I should note that this is not just a historical footnote; in the years of the most virulent reform by the Chinese – the early 1980s, as well as the last three years, especially – the testimonies of Tibetans who suffered abuse and torture have become even more present on the world stage. Such narratives are carried through Tibet's well-organized exile community and oftentimes make their way into mainstream newspapers and internet media to serve as general reminders to the public at large that the atrocities committed by the Chinese still continue. These instances speak to the role of testimony in the Tibetan exile community. Indeed, the entire history of Tibet since 1959 could be, and in a sense is, a history of testimony. Added to these points is the argument made by Donald Lopez (1998) in which he states that Tibetans,

Tibetologists, and many in the West have contributed to the Shangri-La image of Tibet that denies Tibetans agency and obscures them in a mythology forever dotted by snow-capped mountains and exoticism.

The issues that these discourses produce are complex. Namely, it forces many Tibetans into a position wherein they must select a metanarrative that inevitably falls short. Jean-Francois Lyotard (1989) would refer to this phenomenon as the *differend* – “a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for a lack of a rule of a judgment applicable to both arguments” (p. 9). Caught within a sort of language game, the wronged party seeks to but ultimately cannot articulate their position in the vocabulary of another framework. Thus, one is often forced to use a metanarrative since there is not predetermined space to express what one may need to express.

It is understandable why testimony persists in representations of the China – Tibet issue. And while the emphasis to testify plays out especially in Lhasa, the story is somewhat different in New York. On the one hand, I could understand the reticence to speak in detail about the charged political issues as a matter of my status as an outsider to the community. Yet I also believe that the impetus to testify was not necessarily as strong for these Tibetans in New York given their physical distance from the triangular relationship between Dharamsala, Beijing, and Lhasa. When it did occur in the interviews I conducted, it most often took the form of personal stories of resistance or stories of being wronged. The story that opens this chapter in which Tenzin describes his daughter’s rejection from Brown is an example of this. It was delivered to me several times, wrought with the same emotion in each telling, conveyed with the matter-of-fact-ness inherent in testimony. Dawa’s rendition of how U.S. politics has treated the Tibet issue over the past 20 years falls into the same category; not only was this a story I heard several

times, it was also conveyed each time with the same anger and puzzlement. In both cases, the desire to testify was not surprising since, as I describe above, the act of doing so has been such a part of Tibetan identity. However, it is almost as though the absence of what constitutes testimony in and around Tibet is filled by an account that serves a related function.

Julia Hess (2009) notes in her work with younger Tibetan exiles in the Indian community that there was often a refusal by the younger generation to provide little more than a personal testimony when asked about their own life history. Hess says that this speaks to the responsibility and engagement that is inherent within the Tibetan exile community, a responsibility and engagement that cannot be flattened under the guise of a universal Tibetan identity. Kelsang, who told me that she spent a good deal of her teenage years among Tibetan activists in India, would often default to using *We* instead of *I* in questions I asked her about her life as a teenager, about the specifics of where she volunteered and where she worked. It was not long before I was frustrated by her negation of my questions all together in favor of a response that delineated the activities of young Tibetans in Dharamsala who one day hoped to work for the exile government.

The way Kelsang rendered her community in India turned it into something of an interlocutor in our interviews, yet that rendering was turned on its side in her descriptions of her community in New York wherein it served a triangular function. In other words, the “pull” of community to act as something of a ventriloquist lessened significantly in New York. In this sense, that which was left behind could stand in and speak on one’s behalf, but as both individuals left those communities behind, they were more willing to invoke particularity and meanwhile use their new community as a point of reference. Perhaps this is why the forms of resistance I described in previous pages occurred on intensely personal grounds – Tashi’s silent

narrations, Tenzin's focus on education, Kelsang's burgeoning friendships with other Tibetans she met at protests in which she was not especially engaged.

With forgiveness, I believe the story is different. Unwilling to speak much about the possibilities for forgiveness, most of my informants stepped back into the distance of what would be best for the community. I cannot forget Tenzin's response to my inquiry about what friendships have persisted from the years he spent studying abroad: "Many. But if I had to cast aside those friends who are Chinese, who I liked – well, I would do what's best." I asked him to clarify, since I was uncertain what circumstances would occur that would terminate those friendships. He answered, "One never knows. It's good to show compassion. We have to right now." The immediate depersonalization regarding the prospect of forgiveness highlights its nebulous place in the Tibetan community in New York.

Hope and the Subjunctive

The expression of hope characterized so much of the subterranean dynamics in my interviews with Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang. Hoping for a better job, the return of a family member, or – in a more collective sense – specific changes within the positions taken by the exile government towards China, hope became one of the primary means through which their praxis was narrated. In its most general sense, it may denote a horizon that is either attainable or the embodiment of a remainder long out of reach. It nonetheless posits a narrative direction; hope became the means through which many stories are generated.

I saw the role of hope in narration most clearly as my informants talked about education. Tenzin's sorrow about his daughter's rejection from a prestigious university, and Dawa's wish that his son had been more successful in his studies in engineering both pointed to a certain loss

of hope. Via their imaginations, Tenzin and Dawa would resurrect a hope in which the outcome was more along the lines of what they desired. When they had to engage again in the facticities of everyday life, they tried to maintain a shred of hope. “Perhaps things will still work out,” Tenzin would say in his recitations of this story. Dawa said that “it’s too late for him,” referring to his son. “Maybe he will have a change of heart. Perhaps I did once but I can’t remember.” Whether these statements were a form of posturing, I do not know, but I do believe the negation of their original hope – something that was encapsulated by the promise of education – left them in a suspended state of waiting. Indeed, in their waiting, they promulgated the value of learning and what it could bring a person. They praised the community organizations that were aiming more and more to the betterment of Tibetan youth. But the generality of these statements belied the loss of hope’s particularity in this arena of their lives.

The possibility that it could have been otherwise – and “it” can have a number of connotations – haunted many of my informants. Many of their stories took place in the subjunctive, pointing to an unreality, an event in the past that could never be changed despite a daily engagement with the stale hope that it could – a hope that was recognized as an impossibility. Tashi’s weekly trips to a cultural center in which she would tell her lost son – via silent conversations – about places she did not know in their totality, illustrates this. The fact of contingency haunted Tashi. Had her parents not been forced to flee in the 1970s, had they lived in a settlement with better health care, had she not left for the hope of a better life, had she simply left a few days later for the United States, something, she believed, would be different. Her form of engagement with what history had wrought for her was an empty hope insofar as she recognized its unreality, but at the same time I believe this engagement provided her with something she could not, or would not, narrate to me. Perhaps within these weekly conversations

at the cultural center she was able to create a space of resistance and forgiveness all her own. Her praxis, I believe, was intensely personal.

Yet hope also manifested itself in these narrative accounts in more collective ways. I asked my informants to speculate on what would happen in the coming years in regards to China's power over Tibet, whether a certain degree of cultural autonomy would be restored, and whether conditions could ever be right for many of those in exile to return to Tibet. They did not frame their responses in the form of blind hope; Tenzin and Kelsang, who spoke directly to this issue, acknowledged changes that would likely happen: minute shifts in cultural autonomy such as slightly more freedoms in monasteries, occasional smatterings of protests on important anniversaries that will circulate the world news media, and some significant, but not lasting, concern when the Dalai Lama transfers power. In short, they were forecasting rather than hoping. Having had a certain, physical distance from the events in Lhasa and Dharamsala, I believe the contours of their hope dealt more the facticity of their exile and less with a political situation they viewed from afar. What they did hope for was an increase in the number of places that would offer Tibetan language programs within the metropolitan area, and fewer logistical entanglements with U.S. immigration that would allow more friends and family members to come. To hope for a collective goal here was tied to some form of cultural survival and continuity. Indeed, it was not a solution to the China – Tibet issue that they were waiting and explicitly hoping for; it was the management and improvement of daily life that so characterized their collective renditions of hope. Perhaps this is an instance where a clear solution to a long-term political struggle cannot be the subject of one's constant hope if only because its longevity denies to the one hoping anything discernible.

Although I am pointing to the prevalence of the subjunctive in these narrative accounts, I am referring to its function in English, as a verb mood used when the contents of a clause appear doubtful, hopeful, or simply less than certain. An element of translation enters the picture here; my informants spoke, of course, Tibetan as their first language. Several – Tashi and Kelsang particularly – often called attention to whether or not they were translating what they wanted to. Therefore, I tread carefully when invoking their use of the subjunctive to make psychological assumptions.

A few times, my informants invoked the subjunctive in their speculations about issues of forgiveness. Without my prompting, Dawa and Kelsang spoke some about this. Dawa said in our closing interview, “Were I ever in a position to offer forgiveness, I don’t know what that would be, or to who exactly. I think I would turn it down in the end.” Tashi, too, imagined that if she was ever asked for forgiveness by someone who had participated in the oppression in Tibet, she would offer the gesture of forgiveness, but “in my heart,” she said, “I don’t know how real it would be.”

Of course, the place of forgiveness within Buddhist culture is complex. There is an oft-cited story told by the Dalai Lama in which one of his senior monks was imprisoned in a Chinese labor camp for several years. Upon the release of this monk, he came to visit the Dalai Lama in India, where he was asked if he faced any dangers in returning to Tibet. Replying in the affirmative, he went on, “sometimes there was the danger of losing compassion for the Chinese” (Henderson, 2005, p. 5). Tenzin told me this story, and so did Tashi. It illuminated very little for me, though, for while unrelenting compassion may be inherent in some forms of Tibetan Buddhism, it was not so much the norm in the lives of the four individuals at the center of this work. If forgiveness could come, they believed it would have to be from those who first suffered

– or suffered the most. Kelsang put it simply in our final interview, “We – by which I mean those who got out – it isn’t up to us to figure that out.” In that sense, there was no forgiveness to hope for, no end.

Narrating the Liminal Body

How does the body serve as a point of narration in these lives? Indeed, as a mode of action, the body figures heavily into many of the accounts of Tibetans I spoke with. The sorrows and winds inside the body felt an onerous past that often pointed to what a narrative account would not. The ways in which the body experiences a degree of liminality has been noted by Kotef and Amir (2007), who write about checkpoints spread through the Palestinian Occupied Territories, and note that the conditions of occupation have simultaneously occupied the bodies of Palestinians. The result is a gender binary which links femaleness and suffering (the figure of the woman giving birth at a checkpoint and being denied basic amenities), and masculinity and violence (the figure of the suicide bomber); though that binary collapses into the possibilities of explosiveness when, for instance, a pregnant woman has to have her body inspected to make certain that she is not carrying a bomb. The experiential and narrative breach initiated by inhumane treatment of the soldiers places the bodies of Palestinians in a liminal state. What exactly does it mean when one’s body signifies death? It is a consequence of the interpersonal dynamics at the checkpoints, but it is more largely a result of mainstream discourse that sees Palestinian bodies as bodies on the threshold of ceasing to exist and subsequently terminating others’ bodies.

For these women, the body thus becomes a site where trauma and pain can be enacted – where a self can become territorialized – but it is also a site where possible trauma can be

refuted. Kotef and Amir underscore the importance of Checkpoint Watch in this vein – an all-women Israeli organization designed to protest the occupation and intervene in instances of violence or maltreatment directed at Palestinians from soldiers. The presence of women at the various checkpoints creates a corporeal excess – moments when one of the many axes that characterize the body gains disproportionate dominance over other axes, thereby subverting a given norm and facilitating a trade-off where they in part reenact certain gender stereotypes (as mother-of-the-soldier, as sexual object) to persuade soldiers to treat civilians moving through the checkpoints more humanely. This excess forces gender to function on multiple plateaus – some negative, others positive.

Although Tibetans in New York City encounter a much less charged political situation, there are still ways in which the body becomes an intersection of individual and collective forces and histories. This played out particularly in several interviews I had with Kelsang. Perhaps more than my other three informants, she was intent on providing me with something of a stale description of exile that I believe she did not fully embrace. And yet so often, when she had seemingly tired of providing a form of testimony to my questions, she would rub her neck and launch into a story related to her job as a masseuse.

“My friend, she is Tibetan, too, and she works in the same profession as me elsewhere in the city. We go to trainings together sometimes. She has a relative who is in Tibet, in Lhasa. And this relative will marry a Chinese man next year. I could not believe it,” Kelsang told me.

“What was her reaction?” I asked.

“She had not many words, but she felt tension all over. I worked on her back and it would not leave. And then I became affected by it – I don’t know why. Maybe the thought of how something like that shouldn’t happen. Like it was giving in.” Forgiveness, she would later

explain, was impossible in any form. For her, it coincided with significant trouble relating to the body.

Tashi, too, defaulted to bodily explanations in so many of her narrative accounts. Her desire to earn a good nursing job was also described in terms of strengthening her own health and the health of those around her. She wanted to earn a livable wage in order to send more money back to her family in India, and perhaps enough to travel there to see them again in the future. But I believe the concerns about money were periphery to what she was actually learning about health. In other words, the best form of resistance Tashi could develop in her life in New York was attaining the knowledge to strengthen the body. “Dickyi will know, and my husband will know, the best ways to stay strong and handle one’s sorrows after I’m done,” she told me in our final interview. “That way I think we will be less vulnerable.”

Her point echoes the sentiments of Dawa when he speculated on the future of the Tibet – China conflict during one of our interviews. “I am old, so I won’t see the end of it. But once there are changes and His Holiness dies,” and he paused to knock wood twice, “I hope no one will forgive what has happened. That would be impossible. If I forgave, I would fall ill. My heart could not take it.” I asked if he had ever thought otherwise. Dawa said, “I don’t remember if I did, but probably not. These things have worn me down for so long.”

By narrating the liminal body, the Tibetans I interviewed could articulate that which is occluded by a metanarrative. In other words, while resistance and forgiveness are couched in the political arena in a discourse that focuses on human rights abuses and individual rights, the more nuanced ways in which those actions play out can be found in a description of one’s bodily sorrows and physical maladies. As Vincanne Adams (1998) argues in her commentary on exile politics, suffering is so often depicted by Tibetans in Buddhist terms because of the foundational

place Buddhism occupies in Tibetan culture. While enormous variations exist in lay knowledge and practice of the religion – as was the case with Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang – Buddhism nonetheless provides the proverbial ground, the frame, to center the suffering body. In narrating the body, one finds a language that circumvents what has become rhetoricized, but a language that still engages with a charged political past, present, and future. And yet, as that language circumvents what may be stale, it is limited by the body's tendency to escape what can be told at all. Returning briefly to Dawa's comments on the physical exhaustion the Tibet – China conflict has caused him, he started to tell me what would happen if he had to deal with the conflict for the next 20 years, which he speculated would mark the time around the end of his life. He tensed his shoulders and placed a hand on his forehead as though he were feverish and looked at me without saying any more words for a long period of time.

*

To be “caught” was the effect that best describes many moments in these interviews, moments in which I was told a story and then found myself in a difficult position of finding an appropriate response. This is not wholly unlike the interlocutory slippage I wrote in Chapter Two. However, in this case, the stakes felt higher since such stories dealt with collective issues that I could not enter through an intellectual effort alone. Kelsang's question, “What would you do?” echoed in different forms by other informants, angered me in the months following our interviews. They knew I could not, nor would I, put myself in their position, but nonetheless I was expected to answer something I could not answer. In the opening of this chapter, I noted Tenzin's recitation about his daughter's rejection from Brown University. After telling me the story, he would pose a version of the following question: “So imagine you are me, and you know that education buoys you through life. Do you not get angry, at the university, at where life has

put you, and at the Chinese in general? What would you do?" The question was not rhetorical; I was supposed to answer. On one occasion I raised the obvious point to Tenzin that perhaps part of the frustration he and many other Tibetans expressed was rooted in the fact that the Tibet – China relationship has long been predicated upon forms of violence and colonialism which contradict the encouraged nonviolence espoused by the exile government. He kept talking and did not address my point.

In one sense, this dynamic amounted to a sort of bullying – I could do nothing else but empathize with their unease – though in another sense, I believe it was a means to convey what they felt. The testimonies which were often stale, the sense of hope which inevitably amounted to an endless waiting, and the effects of the exile experience on their bodies conveyed to me the frustration they encountered everyday – the frustration of both resistance and forgiveness. To be caught was to understand the challenges of everyday life and the difficulty of acting on and in the world at all. To me, it was the clearest manifestation of what it meant to reside in a betwixt. It was not simply that one carried with them the inheritance of a wound, nor was it just that the very notion of home ceaselessly slipped away. To reside in the betwixt – the phenomenological description that best embodies these individuals' lives – was to experience a sort of ill-defined space conditioned by collective and personal history in which acting on and in the world depended on a constant engagement with forms of resistance and forgiveness that they took on their own volition and those that were cast upon them as well.

To inherit the memory of loss is one thing; to act upon that inheritance is another. What the accounts of Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang made clear to me is that in the absence of finding a proverbial ground on which one can base their actions, the role of community is hugely important, for it becomes a space (especially in exile) wherein the parameters of responsibility

are outlined. That is why, I believe, the gestures of community and political involvement was as important as actual involvement. Put differently, action mattered just as much as belief. As Vincanne Adams (2005) writes in her commentary about the ill-fitting use of quantification techniques by the Chinese in understand aspects of Tibetan health, “In Tibetan religious and medical theories, the primary basis for human life, for physical existence, is morality. . . and this relationship extends beyond the corporeal being. The effects of perception are also external. Perceptions are, in essence, expressions of morality (the presence or absence of greed, anger, and ignorance) that produce effects on the world and on the body” (p. 96). How one engages in resistance and forgiveness matter in the same vein as how one adopts a stance, passively or actively, towards those issues.

Playing out in the accounts of Dawa, Tenzin, Tashi, and Kelsang, as well as many other Tibetans to whom I spoke, is an unsettling dialectic, a tension between highly deterministic thinking and committed collective action. Tenzin felt damned by his daughter’s rejection from an Ivy League school; Dawa lamented his son’s relocation to California and the subsequent lack of a familial presence in his life; Tashi was reeling, and said she always would be, from the loss of her son; Kelsang lived comfortably yet seemed to embody a certain malaise symptomatic of exile. On the one hand, such determinism may be explained by the myriad difficulties that have amounted to a particular worldview or belief in a template for how things will play out. On the other hand, the presence of Buddhism in varying degrees in their lives may concurrently account observation and acceptance of a certain degree of suffering, most evident in the refrain “What can you do?” which was echoed numerous times by my informants. Perhaps they were noting that their interlocutor – me – could not comprehend their experiential totality, or perhaps they addressed the question inward towards a reflection of accumulated suffering. And yet, the role of

community and the dedication to collective action could not be negated from the descriptions of these four individuals. Listening to each of them, I had to believe that beyond the achievements of the exile community, beyond the discernible goals that were being met with varied success around the world, the true benefit to collective action – even if it is merely a gesture – is a sense that others also know what it is like to be apart.

*

Finally, I would like to close this chapter by turning my attention to one specific way in which Tibetans have brought the issues that are dear to them to light: theater. It should be noted that the first institution formed by the Dalai Lama in exile was the Tibetan Institute of the Performing Arts as a means of promoting and preserving the performing arts of Tibet (Calkowski, 1991), and as the diaspora has spread West, the subsequent collaborations between Tibetan and European theater has often dealt with testimonial issues. Claudia Orenstein (2002) offers one account of this in her description of a theatrical production about Tibet by the French theatre company Théâtre du Soleil titled *Et soudain des nuits d'éveil* (*And Suddenly Nights of Awakening*). The production – a collaboration between Arianne Mnouchkine and Hélène Cixous – is meant to engage the viewer and provide a glimpse into the long-term political struggle of both a population and a government in exile. As Orenstein describes, the production transforms the spectator into a committed participant, though initially the distance is quite great. The piece opens with a presentation of Tibetan dance – a dance without context where one is clearly an outsider, disengaged, looking in on a cultural tradition. Suddenly, there is unfortunate news: a Tibetan diplomatic delegation that had intended to meet the French government has been turned away on account of pressure from Chinese officials. The actors portraying audience members convince the theatre to accommodate the Tibetans. Through two nights, the logistical problems

of housing and feeding two hundred refugees come to the fore. One girl – a teenager working as an intern with little knowledge about Tibet’s situation – becomes enraged when her parents lack compassion towards the refugees. Others follow her lead. Later, the refugees perform the Tibetan stag dance as a show of appreciation to the audience for the support they have offered. But there is also reason for pause: several members of the Tibetan delegation decide to immolate themselves as a form of protest against the French government. The audience, committed to Tibet’s cause but dismayed at this possibility, is caught.

CHAPTER FIVE: *DEATH AND NATALITY*

“Our figure on earth is only the second third of an incessant pursuit, a point, upland.”

- Rene Char (1992, p. 119)

These closing pages sketch out the issues of death and natality in my informants' lives. I want to consider the ways in which the facticity of those issues relate to the act of narration itself, especially in lives so marked by the experience of exile. I want to argue that death and natality become driving forces, both collectively and individually, in a narrative. Such forces, I believe, are often what one narrates towards or against. Certainly, this was the case with the Tibetans with whom I spoke at length during this work.

Later in the chapter, I speculate on what the stories of these individuals opened up for me both theoretically and methodologically. By looking across the accounts of Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang, I draw out some general heuristics that could be used by narrative psychology – the proverbial umbrella under which this work sits – to understand better the issues of inheritance, home, and action, issues which are central not only to Tibetans in exile but to many other populations around the world that have been forced into transit. Finally, I attend to the methodological issues of voice and metaphor, writing, the place of the body, and the demand of a life history in my encounters with these four individuals, issues which extend beyond the population at hand.

Death and Natality: Culture, Language, Religion

Death provides the final sanction on what one can tell, Walter Benjamin (1969) observed, a story that one may edit and revise endlessly, but can never seal with a stamp of finality through

one's own volition. Others, and other circumstances, will do that. Dawa joked in my final interview with him that I will have the last word on how others remembered him. He laughed and I laughed as well, but I believe we both recognized a grain of truth in what he said. By and large, death did not explicitly characterize many of the conversations I had with Tibetans I met. Not only was it a subject not easily broached, and fraught with perhaps damaging, transgressive qualities, it also rarely came up during our interviews with the exception of discussing loved ones now gone. However, one cannot write accurately about those who have lived in exile, often *in extremis*, as Tibetans have, without considering the ways in which the end of life has materialized in terms of cultural extinction.

Tenzin and Dawa were well into their adult lives by the 1980s when, as both men described, there was significant talk in the exile community in India that complete cultural extinction would occur. Tenzin told me,

I returned [to Tibet] in 1982, and things were quite bad. But people did have enough food, enough water. It was not as bad as we had been told. For me, I was horrified to go back and see it, but that's another story. But monastic life was not good. And you could tell people were tired of fighting the Chinese. Their polices were better by then, but you know, badly livable. So we thought, 'It will take many more years, but Tibetans will vanish.' It was very, very upsetting, and what can you do?

The middle part of the 1980s saw a revitalized exile government in Dharamsala strive for greater international recognition, a feat that was largely achieved. Though little seemed to change in Tibet, the boost in morale that came with several countries outright condemning China seemed to alleviate such a fear. Dawa called this, "the time of anything," a period in which he first believed that several decades worth of work was worth more than naught.

At the same time, Dawa – and Tenzin and Tashi as well – expressed dread about the disappearance of the Tibetan language. The prevalence of Mandarin in schools in Tibet seemed to increase, and as the exile community has spread to other corners of the globe, it has become more difficult to establish or maintain Tibetan language schools that are located at a far geographical distance from Tibet. To reiterate a point I made in Chapter Three, this is another example wherein the family can serve as a diaspora space, actualizing or maintaining elements of identity in a way a larger community cannot. Tenzin and Tashi, who both still live with their children, worried in general ways about the loss of the language, but seemed certain that their own children would maintain enough fluency to even pass it on one day.

Of significantly less concern was the continuation of Buddhism. Tenzin, the most outwardly devout of the four, described how the revitalization of Tibetan morale in exile coincided with a greater international adoption of Buddhism in the 1980s.

“What exactly did happen to make it so, I cannot say, but now, no one worries Buddhism will go away,” he told me. He went on to explain that the American attraction to Buddhism has created a sort of translation of how it was practiced in the settlements surrounding Dharamsala when he first came to study it. “People pick what they like, and discard what they do not,” he told me, adding, “It could be worse. At least it has some life here, and many other places, too.”

Its life in the United States, and New York in particular, exfoliates through myriad Zen Centers, the influx of monastic practitioners to an ever wider audience, and shelves of contemporary books written on the subject for an English-speaking audience. Tenzin’s concern that it will become more diluted as it continues to spread was trumped by satisfaction that, in general, Buddhism flourishes in most geographies where the exile community has established roots.

The collective survival of this culture has depended largely on the transmutations and shifts that Tenzin and others describe. In a tumultuous half century in exile, there reside the germs of despair, loss, wandering, and hope. The fact that Tibetan culture has indeed survived is a testament, on the one hand, to an extremely well-organized exile community, and on the other hand, to a real engagement with collective issues of death and natality that have perhaps driven the agenda of that community.

For so long, death was tied to physical Tibet, and regaining its autonomy and independence that so few can in fact remember. The recognition that this may not ever be possible, acknowledged by the Dalai Lama in the past decade, signals something of a change in the way of understanding cultural death. That is to say, while the exogenetic transmission of Tibetan culture will continue to shift, it will in all likelihood continue. Somewhat conversely, many younger Tibetans living in India, Hess (2009) notes, prefer a less compromising approach that strives for the full autonomy and independence akin to what the exile government advocated in the years and early decades following 1959. One could argue that while the demands of those who are now elders were framed within a discourse of death and cultural extinction, the now similar demands of Tibetan youth are framed within a discourse of natality, one grounded in the independence of a country many of them have never known.

Often my informants were uninterested in having long conversations about a future and the changes that may or may not happen. Those conversations were a result of my prodding much more than the natural direction of what they wanted to talk about. Whether the questions merely struck them as irritating, I do not know, but I inferred in their answers a practiced resignation. Tenzin once noted, after listing the ways in which he and others in his family had been denied opportunities by the Chinese both here and abroad, “these things happen.” Such a

remark coalesced with Tashi's feeling of being overwhelmed by the contingency of her own life circumstances, which included the death of her first son and years of feeling adrift and unwelcomed while living with a man who could be tyrannical. "These things are all part," she said, making a grand sweeping motion with her hand and trailing off at the end of our first interview.

What I took to be the acceptance of contingency was perhaps felt by my informants as the totality of a life arc in the way that is explained by the concept of *samsara*, foundational to much Buddhist thought. In Tibetan Buddhism, *samsara* is loosely translated as the wheel of suffering, and refers to recurring rebirth and continuous movement through a world of endless sorrow and suffering (Sambhava, 1994). I found it to be a term each of my informants mentioned at least once, usually invoking it in broad, politically-minded discussions of the Tibet – China conflict. Perhaps it was the clearest example of an appropriation of Buddhist thought into their worldviews. I also believe it was a way of situating death and natality in a scheme of endurable unknowing, especially in regards to culture, language, religion, and politics. That is, the deferral of responsibility I saw so clearly in the accounts of many Tibetans I spoke with was less a deferral and more of an attitude towards this world.

Of course, the issues of death and natality will likely forever characterize Tibet's exile community. Such issues now deal with more nuanced questions of death and natality in light of an exile population that is already strong, questions such as: what elements of Tibetan culture will come to an end? What elements of the culture will be reappropriated? What will have to be translated from the past for purposes pertaining to the present? This is not to downplay the seriousness of a tumultuous political situation. Simply put, death and natality now mean

something different in light of the facticity of the culture's history, and will continue to shift with the demands of history.

Death and Natality: Four Lives

It is also necessary to consider what death and natality mean in an individual sense for Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang, but it is important to conceive of such terms on both literal and metaphorical grounds. As the anthropologist Michael Jackson (2007) writes,

Every life crisis involves a death and a birth – the simultaneous loss of something that gave ontological security and the possibility of a new beginning. But the terms death and birth must be understood existentially as metaphors for the experiential difference between being a subject who can act confidently on the world on the assumption that she or he knows what she or he is doing and an object who simply suffers the actions of others, not knowing what she or he might do. (p. 213)

Lives in exile are rife with these occasions for rebirth – occasions where one is both thrown into a situation and forced to act, or is acted upon, in addition to the enormous geographical challenges that come with exile and entail a new beginning, one that is often inextricably and intimately tied to a *before*.

I have written elsewhere in this dissertation, my informants were uninterested in recounting a chronology of their lives. When they did eventually talk about the inception of their first memories, I was struck by the degree to which those memories coalesced around a physical betwixt. Tashi's first memory (detailed in the Introduction) featured her leaving Tibet with her family and hearing an animal outside the ambit of a fire. Tenzin did not cite a first memory, but he did note that one of the initial images lodged in his memorial life was the silence and

uncertainty adults felt when they camped in the woods on the way to India. Dawa's birth literally took place in transit, an instance he, of course, does not remember, but claimed to see shards of this experience during tumultuous nights of sleep, as though he was looking into a window that reflected the reflection of another window. Kelsang discussed the inception of her memorial life, too. She was taken to her grandmother's house, several hours away, on the day her mother was to leave for Tibet, a visit that was ultimately ensnared by incomplete paperwork.

Whether these were in fact their first memories, it is not my place to question. I have my doubts, but such is the nature of broaching that topic. What is particularly interesting is the degree to which their memorial lives begin in transit; the birth of memory comes with a loss of a place they may have called home. Death and natality are joined early on. These narrative accounts link the end of infantile amnesia with a clear sense of *elsewhere*, a poignant and tragic throwness, as though their own lives began long, long before their memories allow them to recall anything. For Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang, to begin to remember anything was simultaneously inscribed with a loss that one normally associates with forgetting something very important but could never remember, wrought with a quality of *saudade*.

In several accounts of the days and months following relocation to the United States, both Tashi and Kelsang described a sort of physical paralysis that I understood as a paralysis having to do with residing in a betwixt they could not articulate fully. Tashi's "heartaches" and shortness of breath might be easily written off as symptoms of anxiety that come with such a major change. However, to end an interpretation there ignores the phenomenology of what those descriptors actually mean to her. Similarly, Kelsang's shooting pains that coursed through her neck and left her essentially bedridden for weeks must be understood as more than just extreme anxiety. In both cases, their narrative accounts show a degree of personal volition and throwness,

circumstances over which they had some control, but ultimately responded more to that which was given.

Both women elected to come to New York; it was not forced upon them. Tashi's trip to the United States was tied to the concurrent death of her first son. Tashi was forced to leave him, ill, in India with her parents, and he died when Tashi, her husband, and her other son, Dickyi, were on a plane bound for the United States. Months later, her father died, and she was unable to travel back to see him. Kelsang claimed to depart from India bravely, leaving behind her "loser boyfriend" and fulfilling a vague geographic promise she had made to herself based on the suggestion of a successful U.S.-based relative. But money was tight when she arrived, finding a job proved challenging, and she ended up in a series of dead-end living situations. The subsequent health-related issues were, as I argued in Chapter Two, embedded in, and intimately connected to, shifts in geography and the remembering body. Moreover, I think the body's pain served as a symbolic link between *here* and *there*, between one life and another. And I believe that in regards to death and natality, the body was the stage on which these crises played themselves out.

Finally, I want to consider the ways in which death and natality can freeze and enter a sort of suspended temporality. Dawa's primary loss, as I describe in Chapter Three, was his separation from his wife, Dia, when he was still living in India. She knew she was terminally ill, and elected to leave him for another man, a longtime friend, as Dawa pleaded for her to spend her final months with him. Months later, in early 1996, he relocated to New York with his son, and his son moved to San Francisco when he was college-aged, in 2002. Dawa's life crisis of significant loss prompted a desire for distance, and perhaps in imagining such distance there existed possibilities for natality, possibilities which did not fully materialize.

As Lacan (2005) might say, Dawa is between two deaths. He died a symbolic death by learning that his wife was lost to breast cancer after they separated, and as his own countenance faded (his words), I sensed that he too was fading in some respect. Lacan said the gap in between dying symbolically and the death of the body can be filled with either the monstrous or the beautiful – it becomes the space where tragedy plays out most poignantly. Dawa’s life showed shades of both. His disheveled appearance, his lack of friends and acquaintances, and his poor health indicated the former – the monstrous. But his mode of speaking, his candor, and his generosity stood in contradistinction to those qualities. I believe Dawa had no sense of how much longer he would live, or wanted to live. He was, I believe, in a temporality wherein he did not invest wholly in the past, the present, or the future. His work with community organizations was perhaps his best attempt at engaging in natality and finding a means through he could extend his reach into another life. And death waited, he would say often. He felt caught.

I see in these accounts of first memories, physical displacement, and death of kin, a fluid use of what death and natality even mean, which are also intimately tied to a change in worldview, a shift in how one sees slants of the day and the shape of one’s own quotidian life. Natality becomes associated with a remainder, a person, thing, or place that has been forcefully or voluntarily left behind, and though its traces haunt the memorial life and narrative accounts of these four individuals, its loss propels them forward in myriad ways that do not wholly close off the prospect of a return. Death, too, becomes linked to a remainder, though it is without hope, closed forever, never to return. Michael Jackson is correct in writing, “Of only one thing am I sure: we are never born once, but over and over, and every new beginning entails the loss of something we hesitate to let go” (p. 215). I would add to his claim that we similarly never die just once. Lives in exile upend several temporalities and geographies, revealing in the most

emphatic ways how natality and death manifest themselves not just once but a multitude of times.

Theoretical Considerations

Inheritance

In a recent book titled *Inheriting the city: Children of immigrants come of age* (2008), Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway look to five immigrant groups to ask how the children of immigrants fare amidst urban struggles. In their focus on post-1965 immigration, the authors look beyond structural factors to examine the ways in which children of Chinese, Russian Jewish, South American, West Indian, and Dominican parents hold on to their cultural heritage while making significant social and economic inroads parallel to their peers. The authors also work with very clear notions of what generation means: second generation refers to those born in the United States to immigrant parents; generation one and a half refers to those born abroad who came to the United States by age 12; and so on. Understandably, these notions make sense and reaffirm the ways in some individuals speak of immigration. However, in the case of Tibet, the migrations are quite layered, as individuals sometimes come from Tibet to the U.S. or another Western country, or from one of the refugee settlements in India, Nepal, or Bhutan. The U.S. tends to use the term displaced immigrants to describe the status of Tibetans in the country, meanwhile affording Tibetans no federal funding, as other refugee groups receive. The terminology of immigrant, exile, and refugee remains complex within the Tibetan community, and I believe, is intimately bound up with what generation means.

First-, second-, and third-generation become artifices that map onto a history a comprehensible timeline, but those are terms – in the case of Tibet – the province of academics

and commentators. *Young* and *old* were the words my informants used; no one identified by generation (nor did I ask them to do so). Kelsang saw herself as a young Tibetan, and Tashi, too, to a lesser degree. Tenzin and Dawa were ensconced in their self-descriptions of being old Tibetans. In one sense, I believe the terms young and old provide a certain fluidity that not only resonates with Buddhist conceptions of the self as impermanent, but also speaks to the importance of collapsing the disparities in the exile community for the purposes of unity.

I believe the fluidity ascribed to generation infused that very term with active possibilities that transcended the notion of mere inheritance and its passive connotations. Too often, discussions of the inheritance of memories and stories fail to account for the agency in which younger generations participate in such an inheritance and reframe the past in light of present or future agendas. As Iain Chambers (1994) writes in his meditation on migrancy and identity:

To talk of this inheritance, to refer to history, as to refer to translation or memory, is always to speak of the complete, the never fully decipherable. It is to betray any hope of transparency. For to translate is always to transform. It always involves a necessary travesty of any metaphysics of authenticity or origins. We find ourselves employing a language that is always shadowed by loss, an elsewhere, a ghost: the unconscious, an “other” text, an “other” voice, an “other” world; a language that is powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. (p. 4)

The implications of this point are quite far-reaching: the original – be it a text, a memory – is lost, and what is retrieved is what is translated in the light of the present day. As I discussed in Chapter Two, we must focus on the mechanisms through which one engages in the past, rather than treat the past as staid and forever unalterable. To do so is a constant confrontation with natality and death, and I believe Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang demonstrated this in their own narrative accounts.

The power of translation, for them, often resided in its didactic feature; a story is told from their autobiographical past, often to younger people in their lives, about the maintenance of identity, the importance of silence, and so on. Here, inheritance moves beyond its passive, genetic connotations. The act of narration is inextricably tied to a generative movement of survival – vestiges of their own lives take new form to offer tools for others. If, as the American poet Jim Harrison (2009) writes, “Death steals everything except our stories” (p. 5), we must be cognizant of how those stories factor into our own lives and the lives of others, though recognizing in the end that the facticity of natality will often drive others to appropriate those stories as they see fit.

Home

These accounts dislodge the notion of home as a dwelling – a fact that is accounted for perhaps by the experiential (exile) and religious (Buddhist) status of my informants. Home constantly slips away – it is both fetishized in their accounts in tandem with my questioning, and also recognized as impermanent, a world that has faded. Once it is gone, a new birth can begin. Tenzin spoke of this in his description of a return trip from a decaying Tibet in which he proverbially closed the door on home and could allow himself rootedness elsewhere. Dawa, too, in the most melancholic terms, described the trepidation he felt in a sorrowful world once his wife died, a trepidation that came with the fact he felt he could go anywhere. Kelsang was thrown into the world as a self-described exile, bearing that mark from her first days forever onward. Having inherited that status, there was – for her – no home to return to; she could move through the world unencumbered. Tashi lost a significant part of her life (her first son) as she left the place in India she had known as home, leaving Tashi to long for a pastoral place she could not access, an idealized place in which her first child had not died.

Although I emphasize the difference between the decay Tenzin and Dawa associated with home, juxtaposed to the impossibilities with which Tashi and Kelsang associated with home, such differences do collapse in light of a consideration of death and birth. If we conceive – as Michael Jackson suggests – of birth (and death, too) as an event that happens more than once in which a person is confronted with the loss of something she or he does not want to let go, then home deserves a prominent place in such a conversation. As the term itself moves beyond that of a dwelling, it is important to recognize its psychological placement in a narrative account, especially one given by an individual who suffered or inherited exile. Its loss may open up a new freedom, however tragic or wonderful, providing the circumstances for forms of death and rebirth.

Exile is quite malleable; to return, which is not always a possibility for the exiled, could mean a return to India for my informants, the place of first exile. I believe none of them will do so as another long-term relocation. What they experienced and what they inherited is at once both particular and somewhat generalizable. Few contemporary populations can speak to the prolonged experience of exile as Tibetans can. Yet in their myriad experiences of home, its loss creates a constant reckoning with the issues of death and birth which apply to so many in the world. Perhaps the magnitude of Tibetans' loss makes this all the more clear: home becomes a site – actual, remembered, imagined – where death and birth intimately play out and foster new modes of being-in-the-world.

Additionally, it is important to call attention to the narrative modes through which home comes to fruition. What I point out in Chapter Three – when a narrative stops or stumbles on account of impossibilities; death as a centripetal, tactile point of narrative action; and the semantics of exile – speaks in a larger sense to the necessity of examining how home is

produced. Perhaps most importantly, an examination of such modes calls attention to one's relationship to home. The reclaiming of Tibetan independence takes shape in the collective narrative as the reclaiming of Tibet proper ("home," for so many), however the accounts in these pages illustrate the ways in which individuals resist and subvert the dominant narrative in their own renderings of home.

Action

How does the ability to engage in action relate to death and natality? I believe the myriad actions taken by members of an exile population are often intimately tied to the hope of natality and a confrontation with the issues of death. As I argued in Chapter Four, the tendency to provide testimony as a form of narrative even outside of atrocities occurring in Lhasa creates a sort of continuity within the Tibetan community, a form of speaking that serves the purpose of imparting a discernible effect on one's interlocutor. The experience of being "caught", which I so often felt, becomes a mode of narrative survival for the speaker. To entrap one in a narrative is an effective tactic wherein the interlocutor can only empathize.

However, while the effects of many narrative accounts I heard placed me in a betwixt wherein I felt as though I had lost my bearing (a betwixt they too may have felt), and while the experience of exile itself may be described as a sort of in-betweenness, I believe that Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang were not paralyzed by that fact. Rather, I believe they engaged in various forms of action in their daily lives, whether through the imagination of a continued relationship with a loved one long gone, or using a community space less for its outwardly political purposes and more as a place to establish the social rootedness of a life. These are not even very visible forms of action, but I would argue that they matter hugely in these individuals' lives.

With Buddhism providing the proverbial ground on which these lives played out, suffering stood inherently in the background, present both in religious scope and historical fact. To contend with that was, to quote Dawa, “like walking through the woods in a pitch dark night.” In other words, to act was – despite Tibet’s extraordinarily well-organized exile community – a gesture that involved the unknowable. As Hannah Arendt writes in *The Human Condition*:

...He who acts never quite knows what he is doing, that he always becomes “guilty” of consequences he never foresaw, that no matter how disastrous and unexpected the consequences of his deed he can never undo it, that the process he starts is never consummated unequivocally in one single deed or event, and that its very meaning never discloses itself to the actor but only to the backward glance of the historian who himself does not act (1958, p. 233).

Action, in this sense, stretches forward infinitely into an indeterminate future. In these four lives, the ways in which they acted on and in the world involved an embrace of what they had been born with – their histories, their stories, and indeed their wounds. Thus, it is that embrace which I see as intimately tied to natality – their own – as it is also an engagement with death if only through negation. For the Tibetans in this work, to act was so often a means of cultural survival, a movement against collective death.

Concurrently, it is also essential to highlight the relationship between inheritance and action. The mere fact that something is inherited – be it genetic material, a narrative, a wound – demands some form of action, taken through compliance, resistance, denial, and many other movements. In other words, the immensity of what my informants inherited from the cradle on

provided an impetus that outlined an ever-changing horizon line towards which they could act. Action, like inheritance, is never complete.

Methodological Considerations

If, as Hannah Arendt (1958) suggests, personal history is subsumed by social and historical agendas, and reified into mythology, then one could look to a life historical account as a deconstructive act, a movement back to the origin of what has become overwrought with generality. A life history, such as the four presented in this dissertation, exist in their respective singularities but shed some light on the larger Tibetan community of the New York City area. However, none of these stories can be appropriated to represent a diasporic community in its entirety, nor can these stories stand as finalized accounts of these four individuals. To reiterate a sage point noted by Gary Gregg (2007):

A life narrative collected at a single point in time yields but a still photograph and cannot be used to assess how open or closed a person may be to change, development, or involution. . . I believe that no cross-sectional investigation can do that, because too much fluidity is built into personality – much more than recognized by most psychologists – to predict how an individual will respond to novelty. As a system of integrated multiplicity, personality remains fundamentally open. Not only do contrasting identities organize our personalities as dialogue and dispute but also our subjective experience continually eludes, escapes, and overflows the confines of the discourses we design to render it meaningful. As Erikson recognized, identity guarantees no stability, and at some historical and life-historical moments, it leads beyond its own boundaries. (p. 332)

And indeed, I believe act of rendering a life historical account can lead beyond its own boundaries. What follows is a meditation on how my engagement with these individuals led me to consider and reconsider several methodological issues that are at the heart of a life history encounter. As I mention several times in this dissertation, Tibetans and issues relating to Tibet are vastly underrepresented in psychological literature, and even narrative psychological literature. Plenty can be gained by asking what the stories of Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang mean in a theoretical sense, relating such stories to other accounts of exile and diaspora. I also believe it is worthwhile to consider the ways in which an engagement with one's informants allows one to rethink questions of method all together. Such questions in regard to the life history as a mode of inquiry fall into five categories: voice, metaphor, writing, the body, and the demand of an encounter.

The Role of Voice

Amidst exile and Chinese efforts to both obscure and promulgate a specific history of events, the value of writing one's own or another life history has shifted a great deal in Tibet from its religious origins. I believe the life histories written by and about Tibetans provide a unique opportunity to question exactly what the life history is, what its values are, and what its limitations are. The Buddhist doctrine of impermanence, beliefs about rebirth, and various functions of the life history in Tibet since 1959 – the testimonial, the informative, the counter story – call attention to the contortions of life writing and to our own conceptions of what that may index about a life.

The project of including a life history within the purview of psychology proper has been carried out admirably by McAdams (1993), Raggatt (2000), Singer (2001), Rogers (2007), and

many others for a number of years. The question of what is knowable through the use of life histories and narrative research has been taken up recently by Josselson (2006), who argues for an assimilation of narrative understanding at the conceptual level. Among the many areas of inquiry of assimilation is linguistic. She writes that there is value in looking across narrative studies to understand how language is experienced. Building off of Josselson's argument, I would like to add that there is indeed value in considering the role of voice as a major experiential facet of language in narrative studies.

This has been given little attention in narrative psychological circles, however, an important exception comes from the work of Skinner, Valsiner and Holland (2001) on the analysis of a Nepali adolescent boy named Hari (while this research is often highlighted in narrative psychological circles, I must point out that Skinner et al. are engaged in a largely anthropological endeavor). Drawing on Bakhtin's ideas of heteroglossia, voice, and utterance, the authors show how an individual draws upon and orchestrates myriad voices to create an image of self and concurrently imagine future social positions. What they emphasize is the degree to which "words arise out of dialogue that has gone on before in situations that have left residues of meanings in the words, but her words are not entirely relics of the past. The speaker orients them toward ongoing dialogues, anticipating the rejoinders, arguments and agreements of her audience" (2.2). Hari, the boy at the center of their work, is a 16-year old member of the "untouchable" caste who hopes to leave his village in Nepal and become a doctor, then return one day. The act of narrating, the authors argue, is an act of becoming wherein Hari does not simply internalize the figured world of caste relations, but rather finds in the voices of others voices he can appropriate in order to position himself in a community and imagine a future in which he can command respect and reconfigure caste relations.

Skinner, Valsiner, and Holland (2001) provide a worthwhile example of how voice is created that I would like to extend into the present work. Buddhism insists that following death, a karmic impress remains in the mindstream of consciousness, and that is the thing which is reborn, not a sense of self (Sambhava, 1994). Again, I would err by speculating what sort of karmic impress materialized in my informants' lives. However, what I did understand to transcend any sense of self was the voice. In my interviews with the four individuals who feature into this dissertation, there was both a historicity to what they voiced – in that their utterances anticipated future rejoinders and gathered relics of past dialogues – as well as a timelessness in which their words were somewhat ahistoric. This paradox deserves some unpacking.

What I mean is that while I heard my informants' utterances as responses to what I was asking, at the same time I sensed that at least some of what they said transcended the dialectic of engagement in an interview encounter and its immediacy. Elsewhere in this dissertation, I attributed this to the fact that the telling of exile is, I believe, inscribed in Tibetan identity. However, by considering this issue in regards to voice, it more closely approximates the role of the past, present, future and its permutations in an individual's utterances. Similar to the conclusions drawn by Skinner et al. (2001) on Hari, I believe my informants orchestrated several communal voices and positioned themselves in a time to come. However, in the case of these four individuals, I believe what I was hearing mattered more as a spoken utterance itself rather than as an utterance that indexed an informant's particular autobiographical experience. Such a conception goes a certain distance in re-imagining a narratable subject (Tamboukou, 2008). In this vein, the Buddhist concept of no permanent self makes sense. It is the voice that endures.

I believe that a larger consideration of voice could be of use in psychological life historical terms, for perhaps the life history itself could be viewed as a form for the voice, a form

that may even benefit the voice. Steiner Kvale (as cited in Josselson, 2006) has written that what is produced in an interview encounter approximates postmodern conceptions of knowledge, that is, linguistic, narrative, and interrelational. Even more, a consideration of voice may approximate the ways in which what is said during an interview transcends the interview itself, and perhaps also transcends a sense of self by focusing on the ways in which one's words echo and reverberate across time and place. As my informants related the stories they heard when they were growing up, I believe they were calling upon and appropriating voices (often in recalled dialogue) long past. Concurrently, I argue that the concept of voice is not only pertinent to the cultural milieu of my informants, but also functions as a useful heuristic that addresses the architecture of how one's words may be inhabited by others.

The Ubiquity of Metaphors and Images

Striking in the narratives of Dawa, Tenzin, Tashi, and Kelsang is the ubiquity of metaphors and images. Dawa's metaphors veered towards danger – having the door shut on him, skating on thin ice, floating; Tashi's metaphors figured her body as a house, often in need of repair; Tenzin was given to using metaphors to describe impossibilities, such as cracks in the sidewalk akin to the number of atrocities committed by the Chinese; and Kelsang's metaphors had a distinctly complex tone – communion as a means of describing the “gift” of a dream, a homeless man to delineate exile, and a palimpsest to convey memory. These metaphors figured quite centrally in their narrations, replete with elements of surprise or beauty, and despite the spontaneity with which they were produced also appeared well-thought out.

It is also worth noting that my informants' lineages stretch back to a Buddhist culture that plays itself out in varying degree in each of their lives. Still, I hesitate to speak overly of

rebirth. Through a mere intellectual effort, I cannot conceive of what it is like to hold such a belief, nor am I certain to what degree my participants endorsed such a belief. Though at the same time, I would like to argue that Buddhism, in various forms, provided the proverbial ground on which rebirth – at least on a metaphorical level – played out in their own narrative accounts. Such “ground,” on the one hand, provides individuals with the language to describe, implicitly or explicitly, significant life changes, and on the other hand, opens a particular temporality, a new way of being-in-the-world in time. As I described in the preceding pages, I believe the fluency with which my informants thought of death and birth can be, in part, attributed to a Buddhist background, especially as Buddhism is treated in western countries where the metaphorical aspect of rebirth is often emphasized. Though I would like to add the metaphorical status of much Buddhism, particularly the strains of Zen and Vajrayana that my informants drew upon. Zen, especially – the school of Mahayana Buddhism that emphasizes experiential wisdom and dharma practice over theoretical knowledge – depends much on metaphor for didactic purposes.

There was also an abundance of images in their narrative accounts that dealt with a lack of light, or uncertainty and the darkness that may come with it. The tendency to use night, darkness, and dimness as a central motif or metaphor in their recitations about dreams, the body, and moments of difficulty brings to mind a comparison to parts of Rene Char’s poetry (1992). Char, who often uses the guiding metaphor of a “talismanic night”, offers the possibilities for regeneration in his descriptions of a limitless night, an endless continuum on which human dynamism may play out and in which one may see the cosmic in a clump of mud, for instance (La Charite, 1976). Yet unlike Char, my informants seemed very much caught by the metaphors they themselves produced with little ability to extricate themselves. Tashi and Dawa especially

were so seized by what they often described, and the words they used to describe it, that it affected a sort of bodily response: tensing one's shoulders, leaning back in exhaustion, Perhaps they were entrapped by the memory itself, or perhaps the entrapment was an effect of being caught *between* the memory and the language they used to make it other.

In a broader sense, an attention to metaphor and image may be beneficial from a narrative psychological perspective especially in instances wherein an individual or group's reliance upon both becomes a leading narrative strategy. I believe such a move away from literalism often provided my informants with a form to approximate upheaval in the way Desjarlais (1992) speaks of Yolmo wa Buddhist tendencies to rely on poetic expressions when talking about death or great pain. Furthermore, as a point of analytic focus in the accounts of these four individuals, I believe the ubiquity of metaphor, especially, calls attention to the responsibility many Tibetans feel to tell their story. In the previous chapter, I discussed the ways in which my informants relied on testimony as a narrative strategy. In a somewhat different maneuver, I believe the reliance on metaphors that I heard – which, I must add, were particularly robust and not at all veering towards banality – had the effect of invigorating what may otherwise be stale or glossed over by a metanarrative. What was often transferred or carried across in the metaphor was a broadness, a surprising swath of their existential plight.

Writing and Poeticization of Experience

Form, the poet Charles Olson (1950) once noted, should always be an extension of content. Such an adage may be transposed into life writing within the social sciences, and indeed it is what I have tried to abide by in this work: a form that demonstrates experiential fidelity to the individuals with whom I met and conversed. The philosopher Garry Hagberg (2008) points to

language as a means through one enters selfhood; one comes to resemble what they narrate. If that is the case, then finding a form which extends the content of a life is an ethical imperative.

What I seek to call attention to is the importance of considering writing as a method itself. My point is that the act of writing is not merely situated at the latter stage of a research project but can be part of the process of both collecting “data” and analyzing it. Thus, the place, the diachronic place of writing in qualitative research may not be merely situated continuously in the research project. Is writing a mere record of an encounter, a post-hoc that is meant to reflect, in however a convoluted mirror, the contrails of a time now past? Or does the writing itself create what constitutes data to qualitative researchers? I believe the answer lies in the betwixt of those two questions.

The process of rendering an experience to paper transcends the mere recording of that experience. The act of rendering involves myriad decisions of editorializing, silencing, and accentuating that are themselves neither simply a record of an encounter nor just its textual aftermath. If, as Jerome Bruner has suggested (1990), the act of narrating creates meaning where perhaps there was not meaning before, I would like to add, in an analogous way, that the act of writing may similarly create meaning, or at the very least, piece together disparate elements of meaning.

I tape recorded some of my interviews, but did not record each one for myriad reasons. I spoke out loud into a tape recorder in the time following an interview, and then I wrote some. Themes and answers to the research questions I posed emerged *as I wrote*, but it was not a mere act of note-taking. I believe it was an analytic method in and of itself. The “data” existed in what I heard, what I transcribed, and what I experienced, and the means through which that data was analyzed was through a mode of writing that did not rely on any sort of coding or thematic

analysis, but rather on the transformative and somewhat ineffable aspect of writing itself. Put another way, the writing produces an effect.

Relatedly, the mode of writing I employ here may be seen, in part, as an answer to Mark Freeman's (2000) call that psychology begin to privilege poetics over theoretics. In that article, Freeman suggests that by doing so, psychologists open up to consideration a larger domain of experience, "dimensions of thought and feeling that theoretical discourse, in its customary forms, cannot readily accommodate" (p. 75). While Freeman points to religious and artistic lives as especially pertinent examples of that which eludes theorization, he adds that the narrated quality of so much human experience is similarly elusive. The violent, scientific frame imposed on narrative psychology – while understandable – constitutes an ethical shortcoming, one that often strips a described reality of one of its most important facets - the unsaid.

Annie Rogers (2007) has written in this vein by placing primacy on what she calls a poetics of the unconscious. In Rogers' poetics, "whatever we as psychologists or as narrative researchers say about one another (or about relationships) with certainty is sure to hold a gap, a lack. And whatever we say in language is left amorphous, ambiguous, its meaning(s) deferred" (p. 73). She calls attention to an "artful science" as a way of doing narrative research; that is, a mode of writing that grounds rather than abstracts our experiences of the world. Relying on Lacan, Rogers works with a method of textual analysis that reads with an eye towards the negated or the ambiguous. I would argue that the employment of this sort of writing is essential as narrative psychology moves forward, a writing that further distances this branch of psychology from the natural sciences and meanwhile preserves the complexities of human issues. Of course, poeticization can be dangerous, especially in regards to the subject matter of these pages exile, oft-romanticized itself. In elevating an other's experience to a somewhat

romantic dimension, one runs the risk of glazing that person's experience with an ethereality that negates the difficulties of a life in transit. The answer is not, as Freeman suggests, a step back towards analytic distance and the safety of theorization. But by moving beyond theorization, does one lose the possibility of relevancy? Perhaps not, but the danger of doing so in the case of those who have experienced exile is that their stories can fail to create any authentic social framework for memory. I have attempted to avoid doing so in this work, meanwhile following Erika Apfelbaum's (2000) call for a psychology that practices a contextual mode of inquiry in which individual stories come together to reclaim a group's history.

The Place of the Body

I must ask why physicality as it plays out in an interview encounter is unmentioned in the vast majority of narrative psychology. Plenty of theorizing has been done in recent decades regarding the body, its placement in a midst of social and cultural matrices, but researchers who have collected life histories have by and large ignored their own bodies and those of their informants as they function in interviews themselves. Perhaps this has to do with the nature of so many interviews, conducted in staid rooms, seated, with movement restricted to nuanced shifts in posture and gesturing with one's hands. The interviews I conducted with Tibetans in New York City called my attention to this, if only because several of my informants insisted that we walk if we intended on talking.

In the Introduction, I discuss how the proverbial floodgates of memory opened for Tashi once we were moving. I am weary to draw blanket generalizations about what walking might mean in Tibetan culture, however, I can infer that in the lives of several of my informants - particularly Tashi, Kelsang, and to a lesser degree, Tenzin - walking occupied a particularly

meaningful act. I also believe it was a means of showing. Was it a transfer of geography? Was I being shown what Kelsang, for instance, transferred from her settlement town in Gangtok, India to the Upper West Side? Of course, I cannot know. I would speculate, though, that it was at the very least a means of circumventing some of my more abstract questions about home. So often, when I would ask about the quotidian differences in life both here and in India, my informants would respond with a degree of puzzlement. Taking me to the market, or walking to the bakery, was a form of answering my question that, at the time, I did not recognize as an answer. I cannot forget the interviews in which Tashi, and later Kelsang, explained their physical journey from India to the United States, tracing the bureaucratic entanglements, anxiety, and exhaustion. I only realize it now, but I cannot forget those interviews because I walked between three and four miles as they told me about those experiences.

As a methodological strategy, it allowed for less eye contact, and could at least momentarily negate - during difficult moments - the fact that we were engaged in an interview. Walking provided me with a great deal of freedom in what I elected to ask; questions came amidst observations about surrounding stores, speculations on restaurants, changes in the neighborhoods. Indeed, I believe my mode of questioning, and the way in which my informants answered, bore a resemblance to our physical movement, that is, circuitous. I would add that walking was a form of escape from silence. The silence between questions and answers that can so paralyze an interview were felt less, by me, while foot weary and outside amidst city noise. I would not go as far as to promote walking as the new heuristic for an interview strategy, but I believe that this particular technique demonstrated a sort of experiential fidelity to those with whom I spoke. I should add that it was nothing my informants ever talked about, nor was it

anything I ever inquired into. I accepted it immediately as the means through which several interviews would happen.

The Demand

I believe that in asking my informants to construct a life history, I demanded something that they – and later I – came to see as occasionally intrusive, discomfited, and in many cases, baffling. When I read through the questions I asked, especially in the first few interviews, many of them appear stiff, lacking in any sort of empathy, and occasionally produced with an epistemophilic's signature.

Robert Desjarlais (2003) has written about such a demand as it materialized in his work with the Yolmo Buddhists of Nepal. In his well-wrought ethnography, he speculates on what the task of a life story means to several elders he encounters. He writes:

What does it mean to generate a life story in a place where people often advance the idea that a life is, by nature, impermanent, forever changing, perhaps ultimately illusory, yet also highly consequential? ...Ghostly echo, illusion, reverberation and manifestation, remainder, reminder, afterimage: *bhaja* carries these many connotations. Any life story told by Mhme or written about him, I slowly came to understand, would effect a similar whirl of echoes. (p. 277-284)

Indeed, as I noted in Chapter One, the act of telling one's story has served several functions in the 50 years of Tibetans' exile. Oftentimes, personal history is eclipsed by the larger shiftings in treatment by the Chinese; personal history becomes a means through which one can narrate history or counter it. To a degree, those movements took place, but again, I must return to the notion of a form for the voice. However, in this context, the form I refer to is the life stories I

created with Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang. My informants showed no interest in seeing a finished copy of this work. Tenzin noted in our last interview, “I’m sure I would like it, but it is done. It has been spoken,” sentiments which, I believe, echoed the feelings of the others I interviewed. Again, the voice matters.

The completed product was of little concern to all of them, but I would argue that the process through which these stories were created was of much greater concern. Kelsang took the least amount of interest in the project itself; she was courteous and talked at length, though I sensed she was happy when our final interview was complete. An end point was less definitive with Tashi, Tenzin, and Dawa. Life circumstances – work, school, travel – punctuated our interviews. Each told me they wanted to keep talking, though inevitably, we slipped out of touch.

Dawa’s comments in our final interview speak to the importance of process. I asked him, in response to his statement that he liked participating in the interviews, why that was so, he said, “Who else wants to hear me? At the meetings, they whisper that I talk too much, so it is good now.”

“Do you imagine other people reading what you have told me?”

“Oh, no. Perhaps they will, but I won’t know them, and they won’t know me, so I don’t picture it. But to do it was nice. It’s like my father, who would build roads when we were in India. He would finish, and maybe never see the road again. But it was there and he knew it was there. So, you see.”

I believe I did see. What mattered was that it had been spoken, that the experience of telling – or rather co-constructing – the story had happened. My concerns with finality were eclipsed by my informants’ concerns on process.

Finally, I believe the demand for a life story may be understood, somewhat belatedly, as a desire to find in an other an aspect of oneself that eludes easy verbalization. In this vein, Nicholson (2005) uses Sartre's conception of an existential "project" as a heuristic for researchers to practice a degree of reflexivity. How can we see in one's research the constellation of long-standing concerns, some of which are rooted in autobiographical experiences? Such a question undoubtedly factors into the demand one may make in an interview, though I would like to add to Nicholson's conception a consideration of what one's informant represents to a researcher in a way a researcher may not initially recognize.

For instance, with Tashi, more than anyone else I met during this work, I found myself "caught," often unable to respond, formulate a question, or compartmentalize what she had just said. In the Introduction, I discuss her story about the death of her young child. I was nonplussed, and each time in subsequent interviews when she would discuss the silent conversations she had with this boy in the years after his death, I was similarly at a loss. On the one hand, I was concerned that any response would be inadequate, or worse, offensive. Through the process of writing about such an experience, I recognize my bewilderment as rooted partially in a related life experience: my own sister had died very young. I did not know her, though a complex relationship with her has evolved in absentia through my own imagination and silent conversations. Tashi said what I could not say, what I did not recognize as a significant aspect of my own life – silenced as it was – until she narrated it first.

To reiterate a point I made in the previous pages, I believe it was only through writing that I was able to see that; I did not recognize this when Tashi and I spoke, though I was unquestionably moved when we sat on a bench in silence one afternoon in late September. By chance – I believe – we encountered each other, and what I demanded, implicitly, from her

became two-fold: the construction of her life story, and the creation of a frame of reference through which I could understand a related experience in my own life. The demand for a life story must always be interrogated in intersubjective terms: how does the other understand your demand, and who is the other for you?

*

In order to begin to understand the figurations of lives that have been forced into transit, I believe a life historical approach can go a great distance in exploring the interplay of history and biography. Foucauldian approaches, while often useful, can strip social actors of agency and reduce one's entirety to the effects of social structures, thereby negating the nuanced and myriad ways individuals orchestrate, resist, and internalize the givens of their lives. I believe that in the case of Tibetans living in exile, such an approach would be understandable but dangerous. At stake are issues of death and natality, home and its destruction, loss and inheritance. These issues are best approached and interrogated through a life history, practicing what the method's early pioneer Henry Murray called, "a bent of empathy and curiosity toward all profound experiences of individual men and women."

And yet, the stories of Tashi, Dawa, Tenzin, and Kelsang reaffirmed for me that much of our experience in the world is undescribed, and while a narrative psychological approach may go a great distance in demonstrating experiential fidelity in a way other modes of inquiry do not, remainders and outliers elude any approach, creating a negotiable horizon that makes so much social scientific work more of an approximation than an exact entrapment of another's reality.

So then, how does one punctuate a life, much less four? Tashi wrote to me in early March and said she was halfway through a difficult semester that would be her last. The tone of her email was celebratory and ended by wondering what type of people she would encounter as a

nurse. I have not heard from Tenzin or Kelsang in the months since we last spoke. Through a mutual acquaintance, I know that Tenzin continues his work at the library, quite happily. And from the same person, I know that Kelsang is collaborating with a friend to open her own masseuse business.

Shortly after spring began, I received an email from Dawa's son, Tsering, in which he told me that his father was very ill and hospitalized for an unspecified reason. His message was short, and I wrote back, asking that he pass along my wishes for good health to his father. Days later, I was shaken after a particularly disturbing dream in which Dawa had died and his body was carried through the same ten blocks in Queens I once walked with him on my way back to the subway (the one and only time we walked together). Tsering did not respond to my subsequent emails and the hospital could not give me any information. Late in March I went to Dawa's apartment and rang for him but there was no answer. The day was particularly dark, with rain falling from seemingly all angles. I waited for a long time underneath the awning of his building before going home.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, N. (1994). Notes on the phantom: A complement to Freud's metapsychology. In N. Abraham and M. Torok (Eds.) *The shell and the kernel: Renewals of psychoanalysis, Volume I*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 171-176.
- Adams, V. (2005). Saving Tibet? An inquiry into modernity, lies, truths, and beliefs. *Medical Anthropology*, 24, 71-110.
- Adams, V. (1998). Suffering the winds of Lhasa: Politicized bodies, human rights, cultural differences, and humanism in Tibet. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 12(1), 74-102.
- Akhtar, S. (1999). The immigrant, the exile, and the experience of nostalgia. *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 1(2), 123-130.
- Altounian, J. (1990). *If you only could open the road to Armenia: A genocide at the limits of the unconscious*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Apfelbaum, E. R. (2000). And now what, after such tribulations? Memory and dislocation in the era of uprooting. *American Psychologist*, 55(9), 1008-1013.
- Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). The problem of speech genres. In *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin, University of Texas Press. pp. 60-102.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1969). *Illuminations: Essays and reflections*. New York: Schocken.
- Bowie, M. (1987). *Freud, Proust, and Lacan: Theory as fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Broch, H. (1994). *The death of Virgil*. New York: Vintage.
- Brodzki, B. (2007). *Can these bones live? : Translation, survival, and cultural memory*.
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Calkowski, M. (1991). A day at the opera: Actualized performance and spectacular discourse.
American Ethnologist, 18(4), 643-657.
- Cappelletto, F. (2003). Long-term memory of extreme events: From autobiography to history.
Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 9, 241-260.
- Chambers, I. (1994). *Migrancy, culture, identity*. London: Routledge.
- Char, R. (1992). *Selected poems*. New York: New Directions Books.
- Cho, G. M. (2006). Performing an ethics of entanglement in still present pasts: Korean Americans and the “Forgotten War.” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 16(2), 303-317.
- Christou, A. (2006). Deciphering diaspora – translating transnationalism: Family dynamics, identity constructions and the legacy of ‘home’ in second-generation Greek-American return migration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(6), 1040-1056.
- Cohler, B. J. (2008). Two lives, two times: Life writing after Shoah. *Narrative Inquiry*, 18(1), 1-28.
- Crapanzano, V. (1980). *Tuhami*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- de Certeau, M. (1992). *The writing of history*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Desjarlais, R. (2003). *Sensory biographies: Lives and deaths among Nepal’s Yolmo Buddhists*.
Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Desjarlais, R. (1992). *Body and emotion: The aesthetics of illness and healing in the Nepal Himalayas*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Dilthey, W. (1989). *Introduction to the Human Sciences: Volume I* (M. Neville, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Originally published 1883).
- DIR – Department of Information & International Relations. (1993). Tibet: Proving truth from facts. Dhamarmsals: Central Tibetan Administration of H.H. the Dalai Lama.
- Erikson, E.H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Evans, D., Buxton, D. C., Borisov, A., Manatunga, A. K., Ngodup, D., and Raison, C. (2008). Shattered Shangri-la: differences in depressive and anxiety symptoms in students born in Tibet compared to Tibetan students born in exile. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 43(6), 429-436.
- Fallon, J. (1997). Undermining Tibet's moral claims: Immigration to the U.S. tends to support China's occupation rationale. *The Social Contract*, 7(4), 252-258.
- Falcone, J. and Wangchuk, T. (2008). "We're not home": Tibetan refugees in India in the twenty-first century. *India Review*, 7(3), 164-199.
- Freeman, M. (2000). Theory beyond theory. *Theory & Psychology*, 10(1), 71-77.
- Freud, S. (1955). *Studies on hysteria. Standard edition II*. London: Hogarth Press. (Originally published 1893-1895).
- Freud, S. (1953). *Totem and Taboo*. In *Standard Edition XIII*. London: Hogarth Press. (Originally published 1913).
- Gergen, K. (1991). *The saturated self*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Goldstein, M.C., Jiao, B., and Lhundrup, T. (2009). *On the cultural revolution in Tibet: The Nyemo Incident of 1969*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Gregg, G. (2007). *Culture and identity in a Muslim society*. Oxford University Press.
- Gyaltag, G. (2003). Exiled Tibetans in Europe and North America. In D. Bernstorff and H. von Welck (Eds.) *Exile as challenge: The Tibetan diaspora*. New Dehli: Orient Longman.
- Gyatso, J. (1998). *Apparitions of the self: The secret autobiographies of a Tibetan visionary*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hagberg, G. (2008). *Describing ourselves: Wittgenstein and autobiographical consciousness*. London: Oxford University Press
- Harrison, J. (2009). *In search of small gods*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press.
- Henderson, M. (2005). *Forgiveness: Breaking the chain of hate*. New York: Arnica.
- Hermans, H. J. and Kempen, H. J. (1993). *The dialogical self: Meaning as movement*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Hess, J. M. (2009). *Immigrant ambassadors: Citizenship and belonging in the Tibetan diaspora*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hess, J. M. (2006). Statelessness and the state: Tibetans, citizenship, and nationalist activism in a transnational world. *International Migration*, 44(1), 79-103.
- Hodges, H. A. (1969). *Wilhelm Dilthey: An Introduction*. New York: Howard Fertig.
- Howe, M. (1991). U.S., in new step, will let in 1,000 Tibetans. *New York Times*, August 21st.
- Jackson, M. (2007). *Excursions*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Jackson, M. (1995). *At home in the world*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Josselson, R. (2006). Narrative research and the challenge of accumulating knowledge. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 3-10.

- Josselson, R. (2004). The hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of suspicion. *Narrative Inquiry, 14*(1), 1-29.
- Kapleau, R. P. (1969). *The three pillars of Zen*. New York: Random House.
- Kasinitz, P., Mollenkopf, J.H., Waters, M.C., and Holdaway, J. (2008). *Inheriting the city: The children of immigrants come of age*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Khetsun, T. (2008). *Memories of life in Lhasa under Chinese rule*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kraft, R. (2006). Archival memory: Representations of the Holocaust in oral testimony. *Poetics Today, 27*(2), 311-330.
- La Charite, V. A. (1976). Rene Char and the ascendancy of night. *French Forum, 1*(3), 269-280.
- Lacan, J. (2005). *Ecrits*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Levi, P. (1988). *The drowned and the saved*. New York : Vintage.
- Lejeune, P. (1975). *Le pacte autobiographique*. Paris: Seuil.
- Lopez, D. J. (1998). *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lytoard, J. (1989). *The differend: Phrases in dispute*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- MacPherson, S, Bentz, A., and Ghoso, D. B. (2008). Migration information source. Retrieved December 1, 2010 from: <http://www.migrationsource.org>.
- McAdams, D. & Pals, J. (2006). A new big five: fundamental principles for an integrative science of personality. *American Psychologist 61*(3), 204-217.
- McAdams, D. (1993). *Stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: Guilford Press.

- McGranahan, C. (2010). Narrative dispossession: Tibet and the gendered logics of historical possibility. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52, 768-797.
- McGranahan, C. (2005). Truth, fear, and lies: Exile politics and arrested histories of the Tibetan resistance. *Cultural Anthropology*, 20(4), 570-600.
- McNay, M. (2009). Absent memory, family secrets, narrative inheritance. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15, 1178-1188.
- Nagata, D. K. (1993). *Legacy of injustice: Exploring the cross-generational impact of the Japanese-American internet*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Nicholson, I. (2005). From the Book of Mormon to the operational definition: The existential project of S.S. Stevens. In T. Schultz (Ed.), *Handbook of Psychobiography*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 285-298.
- Nickels, M. (2000). *Cicada*. New York: Rattapallax Press.
- Nowak, M. (1984). *Tibetan refugees: Youth and new generation of meaning*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Office of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://www.dalailama.com/messages/middle-way-approach>. March, 1, 2011.
- Ogden, T. H. (1999). The analytic third: Working with intersubjective clinical facts. In S. A. Mitchell and L. Aron (Eds) *Relational Psychoanalysis: The Emergence of a Tradition*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press. pp. 459-492.
- Olson, C. (1950). *Projective verse*. New York: Totem Press.
- Orenstein, C. (2002). A Taste of Tibet: The Nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil Ling Nunnery and the Theatre du Soleil. *Asian Theater Journal*, 19(1), 212-230.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics*. London: Routledge.

- Patt, D. (1993). *A strange liberation: Tibetan lives in Chinese hands*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Ping, Hu. (2005). On exile. *Justice and June 4th: China Rights Forum*.
- Powers, J. (2004). *History as propaganda: Tibetan exiles versus the People's Republic of China*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Raggatt, P. T. F. (2000). Mapping the dialogical self: Towards rationale and method of assessment. *European Journal of Personality*, 14, 65-90.
- Ram, N. (2008). The question of Tibet. *Frontline*, 25(10).
- Roberts, J. S. and Rosenwald, G. C. (2001). Ever upward and no turning back: Social mobility and identity formation among first-generation college students. In D. P. McAdams, R. Josselson, and A. Lieblich (Eds.) *Turns in the road: Narrative studies of lives in transition*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. pp. 91-119.
- Rogers, A. (2007). Camille Claudel and August Rodin. Toward a Lacanian Poetics. In R. Josselson, A. Lieblich, & D.P. MacAdams (Eds.). *The meaning of others: Narrative studies of relationships*. Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association.
- Rosenwald, G. (2003). Task, process, and discomfort in the interpretation of life histories. In R. Josselson, A. Lieblich, & D.P. MacAdams (Eds.). *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. pp. 135-150.
- Sambhava, P. (1994). *The Tibetan book of the dead: Liberation through understanding in the between*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Shakya, T. (1999). *Dragon in the land of snows: A history of modern Tibet since 1947*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Skinner, D., Valsiner, J., & Holland, D. (2001). Discerning the dialogical self: A theoretical and methodological examination of a Nepali adolescent's narrative. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung* (on-line journal), 2, 3, 34 paragraphs.
- Singer, J. A. (2001). Living in the amber cloud: A life story analysis of a heroin addict. In D. P. McAdams and R. Josselson (Eds.) *Turns in the road: Narrative studies of lives in transition*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 253-277.
- Smith, W. W. (1996). *Tibetan nation: A history of Tibetan nationalism and Sino-Tibetan relations*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Ueda, S. (1995). Silence and words in Zen Buddhism. *Diogenes*, 43(170), 1-21.
- Yoshi, P. Personal communication (October 7, 2010).
- Young, S. (1995). *Dreaming in the lotus: Buddhist dream narrative, imagery, and practice*. London: Wisdom Publications.
- Zangpo, K. (1994). Namtar: The tradition of biography in Tibet. *Biography*, 17(1), 20-31.