

Reader-Parasitism in The Tibetan Book of the Dead

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Abstract

The Tibetan Book of the Dead is known for its emphasis on the meaning of death. However, this understanding is attained by underlining the relation between the Lama and the dead person. The right motivation of thought and purification of feelings are the main tasks which the Lama strives to communicate to the dead person. Mindfulness and concentration are at the core of the enlightenment process in order that the deceased achieves rebirth in the womb. During the *Bardo* voyage, the deceased is in a position of a guest who receives instructions from the Lama, his host. The deceased is not completely dead, hence can work through the communicated message. Communication runs at the risk of parasitical distortion, which is however, an inherent part of the message since it results in a perpetuated arising of consciousness. The narrative presents a parasitical transmission directed also to the reader who reaches a deep awareness of his life. The Lama offers information spread through memes, which become transmitted to the reader. Indeed, the Lama trains both the deceased and the reader to face death. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is not only considered a book constantly at work at the moment of death but also in every moment of life. The following article introduces a post-structuralist reading of the *Bardo Thödol*, which underlines the parasitical communication that takes place as a proto-parasitical allegory in the realm of the dead. Such a reading renders the book intelligible to the today reader through its auditory perception which is carried into the *Bardo* realm in a narrative of absence

Spiritual perception or enlightenment has been the focus of most thinkers, philosophers, writers and poets from the birth of civilization in the East, delineating the Sumerian civilization with *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Greek civilization with *The Phaedo*, the Vedanta philosophy with *The Bhagavad Gita*, the Egyptian Papyrus of Ani with *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, reaching the monotheistic contribution with *The Holy Bible* and *The Koran*. Socrates and Plato center their cognitive researches on the human being and on the codes that ally to him. Plato traces the human being not as an autonomous individual but as part of a cosmos. This cosmic world exists under physical and spiritual conditions that render him a valuable being. This implies that the human being is seen undermined under specific circumstances; these circumstances place him in a cavern. Therefore, Plato starts his pilgrimage with The Cavern Allegory, the “ascent from darkness to light.”ⁱ This Platonic awareness meets the Nirvanic liberation reached through the Liberation by Hearing on the After-Death Plane in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Also known as *The Bardo Thodol*, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* underlies a method of coming forth into the Nirvanic liberation, beyond the cycle of birth and death. This method is meant to be a guide for the dead person during the period of his bardo existence, an intermediate state of forty-nine days duration between death and rebirthⁱⁱ. So far, a number of critics have dealt with *The Bardo Thodol* from a therapeutic point of view. Robert Wicks, in *The Therapeutic Psychology of The Tibetan Book of the Dead* traces the psychological aspects in Buddhism and suggests that enlightenment can be reached at any level by endorsing the right interpretation of the world. The author conducts an explanatory study of the different stages of the bardo highlighting that the book addresses a wider audience.ⁱⁱⁱ Richard Sherburne, in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation Through Hearing*, advocates that the teaching of this book aims at recognizing the dissolution of the sense of self in the sense of reality, and traces the difference of approaches of *The Bardo Thodol* in the Evans-Wentz and Kazi Dawa-Samdub version from one side, and in the present version from another side.^{iv} Francesca Fremantle, in *Luminous Emptiness: Understanding the Tibetan Book of the Dead* clarifies and expounds upon the spiritual classic doctrine with a deep “intellectualism, readability” that contribute to a better understanding of the

bardos. The author comments on the 1975 Padmasambhava version translated by Fermantle and Chogyam Trungpa, shedding light on its high concepts and foundations.^v Unfortunately, a reading which takes parasitical communication into consideration has not been undertaken. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a proto-parasitical allegory in the realm of the dead, whereby the dead person, like the readers, is faced with the instructions of the lama and with the multiplicity of images presented by the deities; the audience realizes that these deities have to be acknowledged as such in order to complete the cycle of rebirth. It is well-known that we, readers, continuously take part in the same on-going process and, as such, we face the parasitical voices of the text. In this respect, *The Bardo Thodol* is seen under a new perspective and presents a challenging reading of the text.

Dealing with parasitism and its relation with both the dead person and the readers makes it imperative to highlight that the essence of a conversation lies in its ability to reproduce and convey ideas. Richard Dawkins believes that the human mind is itself an artifact created when memes restructure a human brain in order to make it a better “habitat” for memes.^{vi} When the brain encodes preconceived ideas, he becomes infected with new notions, and his reasoning alters accordingly. This causes the infected to want to share his ideas and expose others to the “virus”. Susan Blackmore, a professor of psychology at the University of West of England, asserts that memes obviously exist and are defined as whatever they imitate,^{vii} hence, encoded ideas are memes. When communicated, these ideas are metamorphosed, evolved, very often mutated and a slight disturbance is caused. This disturbance has a parasitical quality. Grey Zulu in *Youths Shouldn't Be Parasites* advocates that parasites are not able to feed themselves,^{viii} therefore, they feed on others. Parasites are recognized as such through their relation with their hosts in a “host-parasite association.”^{ix} This parasite-host relation makes the parasite not only live next to the host but benefit from him. The relation between host-parasite alternates; parasites exchange things with their hosts, and in turn, hosts become parasites. The message in *The Bardo Thodol* passes from the mouth of the lama right into the ear of the deceased, accordingly, the lama acts the part of a parasite when he communicates already existing material to his host and becomes simultaneously host of all his post- notions. Readers take part in the host-guest relationship; they are the recipient of the parasites ensuing from both the lama and the dead person, yet participants in the bardo voyage. The combination of the lama’s previous knowledge is articulated in his conversation with the dead man in which the audience is infused. Though parasitical, the conversation of the lama is essential to achieving rebirth. Auditory narrative becomes, under this angle, joint to oral narrative; the deceased is tasked to repeat verses bearing in mind their significance. Not only does the narrative invite the deceased to iterate words, but it distillates in his soul the *Sraddha* or sincere faith through parasitical infection. The dead person is to put faith in the wisdom of the *Dharma-Dhatu* throughout the “dangerous ambush of the *Bardo*”^x as to acquire the identity of a host.

The lama confers an auditory narrative to the dead person by “putting the lips close to the ear [of the body] without actually touching it.”^{xi} Michel Serres views that human nature is basically parasitic rather than predatory.^{xii} In this respect, communication, being composed of the message and the channel for transmitting it, generates noise. Noise makes reading the message a lot more difficult because it needs decoding. However, there could never be a message without resistance. Noise becomes a means of transport and this is why it is considered as an inherent part of a message.

O nobly born ...

Act so that thou wilt recognize the *Bardo*. At that time, all the *Sangsara* will be in revolution; and the phenomenal appearances that thou wilt see then will be the radiances and deities.^{xiii}

Communication runs at the risk of probable distortion, whereby the initial message is transformed, making the message quite different from what it initially was. The dead person who receives data from his host captures parasitical information and undergoes an evolutionary perception from the moment he/she becomes bound to the voice of the lama. The guest receives translated data from his host. However, the original message undergoes transmutation through the lama's own rhetoric. The infiltration of the initial message is essential for its transference. Therefore, the narrative of the host is highly influential; through oral speech, it displays the perceptive faculty of his guest by initiating him on the Clear Light. The narrative responsibility of the lama grows intensely when he tries to unbound the link with the relatives of the deceased as to soothe his potential split. The language of the lama is parasitical, yet directed towards voidness. The lama becomes the voice that teaches muteness and the noise that teaches silence. At this level, the dead person's auditory and perceptual parasitical faculties are on display as he/she sees and hears the weeping of his relatives:

[H]e can see them and can hear them calling upon him,
they cannot hear him calling upon them,^{xiv}

The fact that the dead individual calls upon his relatives confirms his/her auditory perception. On this level of interpretation, the dead person becomes aware of his/her actual death and is, therefore, ready to engage a parasitical communication with his/her relatives. However, the latter, is representative of the guest's past karma from which he/she should be delivered. The parasite-host relationship of the deceased with his/her own genealogy is, therefore, dismissed. Again, the lama is urged to build recognizable configurations for his patient. Recognition is the kernel in understanding the apparitions which are the thought forms of the deceased all throughout the bardo expedition. Without recognition of the deities, the deceased becomes lost in a traffic of images, thus bound to a vicious web of death and rebirth:

May I not fear the bands of Peaceful and Wrathful [Deities],
mine own thought-forms,^{xv}

The narrative becomes momentous as it determines the destiny of the guest; he is called to familiarize with the parasites and, concurrently, to know himself through the "Infallible Mind of the Dharma-Kaya."^{xvi} This parasitical reading of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* bestows on the text a new depth; not only does the audience learn to approach death through decreed instructions, but to decipher the parasites transferred to him through noise. In his acceptability of the lama's teaching, the deceased opens way for "the two kinds of spaces are reconciled and integrated,"^{xvii} the subjective space of the dead person and the objective space of his instructor, which allows a parasitical percolation of the message in its wholeness.

Interference of memes takes place. A meme is simply a pattern of information, wrapped in a form that makes people repeat it. Typical memes would include stories, inventions, etc.^{xviii} Blackmore believes that as species we have co-evolved with our memes. Thus, our ability to comprehend and communicate complex memes is a survival trait. Humans infect one another with memes in an attempt to discover the most attractive one. These people, therefore, attract mates and have an offspring.^{xix} The lama voluntarily infects the dead person with a load of memes by instructing him/her to pray as such:

May the Divine Mother, the Faithful Tara, be [my] rear-
guard;
May [I] be led safely across the dangerous ambush of
the *Bardo*;
And may [I] be laced in the state of the All-Perfect

Buddhahood.^{xx}

Not only is the dead person recurrently empowered by the whisperings of the spiritual instructor but becomes a channel that transcripts the complex memes of his/her host. The lama plays the role of a virus injecting organic substance into the system of his patient; the dead person becomes outside the outside since he is alien to the injection; as such the deceased echoes Maurice Blanchot's concept:

[O]ne is outside the outside, which is never figured,
only incessantly hinted at by the whiteness of its absence,^{xxi}

Not only does the person transmitting the meme infect the other, but continues to carry it himself, and generates new carriers: the dead person and the deceased. Therefore, the lama becomes molded in his own network of memes through the transference process and becomes himself a host for the virus he carries. The dead person becomes a parasite logic who is held the task of his own replication of memes, hence of rebirth. By becoming his/her own host, the deceased registers new memes, thus a new identity. He becomes an auto-host, the host who nourishes his own guest with essential memes. The deceased's ability to encode and to interact with complex memes is crucial in determining his becoming state. Blackmore asserts that memes are capable of being copied to another person's memory.^{xxii} The lama goes further; not only does he open a meme replicating passage right into the memory of the deceased but he makes the mental body of the deceased respond to the definition of a meme, which is, *liberation*. Gradually, a copy of memes is replicated into the readers' memory rendering them members of the bardo clinic. Both the transmitter and the infected are parasites and hosts. Memes could be transmitted between any two individuals; they need seconds to replicate themselves, and, as such, they have a fast rate of spreading. This Darwinian evolution^{xxiii} makes the memes similar to parasites. The parasitical information of the lama breeds a memetic evolution which requires additional effort from the part of both host and guest. At this level, variation and selection takes place in the mind of the dead person. The readers, imperatively, take part in the auditory perception presented by the lama:

[T]he blood-drinking Wrathful Deities will come to shine.
Act so as to recognize them without being distracted.^{xxiv}

The text informs the disembodied consciousness that these deities have no substantial reality of their own. Indeed, according to Evans-Wentz this is "the central illuminating principle of the text."^{xxv} Facing this leading principle, both the dead person and the audience are faced with a psychological dilemma of whether acknowledging the deities as such or as simple visions. Through the instructions of the lama, both guests decrypt the images of the deities as their own projections. The dead person is to recognize that the lion is only a stuffed lion, a schematic parasite, or else he will be caught in a web of viruses which further infects his present state. Moreover, when the blood-drinking deities appear with their huge bodies and thick limbs filling the space, the dead person is to recognize them as his inherited parasites, his own projection or *yidams* so as to arise from darkness to luminosity. Parasitical communication is crucial for the understanding of the message. At this standpoint, the mind of the dead person massively presents the already encoded memes, and, simultaneously, readers show readiness in encoding and authenticating with the narrative of the lama. The memetic narrative of the lama witnesses a turning point with respect to the readers; it processes parasitical sounds from the outside to the inside. The readers capture parasitical data from the lama and receive greater parasites from the silence of the dead person undergoing this transmission. This movement is described by Teresa De Lauretis as:

[T]hese two kinds of spaces [which] are neither in opposition to one another nor strung along a chain of signification, but they coexist concurrently and in contradiction.^{xxvi}

The audience is to encode the memes of the lama and the dead person simultaneously, and to enfold them in his own system. Parasitical communication is crucial for the understanding of the message. The minds of the dead person and of the readers become programmed by evolution. The mind, being a friendly environment to the parasites presented by the host, becomes a virus. Overtaken by this parasitical infection, the dead person becomes a patient-host; from one side he receives therapy from his lama and from the other side he is a host of inherited parasites. At this level, the lama is fully conscious of the causes of distraction facing his patient; therefore, he condenses his memes and directs them towards the mother-meme, the Mother Reality.^{xxvii} The audience reads the parasites directed to the deceased and meets Gerard Genette's "reading time,"^{xxviii} whereby the audience consumes the parasitical data articulated by the lama and actualizes it in an instantaneous, practical time through encoding. Not only does the lama envision the parasites of the guest's post-karma but also those of his becoming bardo-parasitical state; he is capable of intertwining the future moment with the present time forwarding new parasites. The soul's entry to the radiant Godhead during *hchhi-kha bar-do*^{xxix} or the experience of death^{xxx} commences with the cognitive interaction of the deceased with the parasites. This narrative is necessarily parasitical; it builds up a higher knowledge in the mind of the deceased, this knowledge is instantaneously replicated into the readers' minds as to reach the *chhos-nyid bar-do* or the experience of reality.^{xxxi} The readers move in continuum with the dead person and investigate in the healthy replication of data, anticipating the faculties of "clairvoyance and clairaudience."^{xxxii} This parasitical dissemination puts *The Bardo Thodol* on a high platform and offers the modern reader an eloquent understanding of the text.

Evans-Wentz asserts that "The Tibetan Book of the Dead characterizes consciousness as it is in itself."^{xxxiii} This implies that the universal conscience is a web of interacting parasites. By listening to the noise of the parasites conferred between lama-deceased and deities-deceased, the audience becomes guest to these parasites, and by encoding these parasites in his system he becomes a host to other parasites. This memetic evolution requires conscious human effort from the part of the human mind. Memes are replicated through communication between individuals. By interfacing with the lama and the deceased, the readers become parasitical disciples of the lama. The reader is a free person, he is not dead. Having life as asset, he undergoes a more acute reading of the parasites. However, once the reader is aware that he/she might be a reflection of these deities -some of which are animalistic forms of consciousness- he loses contact with his inherited parasites, and begins to experience spiritual rebirth by concentrating on the deities:

Do not be distracted. Earnestly concentrate thy mind upon
[T]he tutelary deity.^{xxxiv}

The readers, in the process of becoming hosts, build a two-folded narrative: a narrative of absence which alternates a narrative of presence. At this standpoint, the narrative shapes itself under what German theoreticians refer to as temporal duality, that is "the opposition between *erzahlte Zeit* (story time) and *Erzahlzeit* (narrative time) "is a typical characteristic not only of cinematic narrative but also of oral narrative,"^{xxxv} This "narrative time" bestows upon the readers an additional function; more than passive observers of events, they become active contributors in the parasitical transmission. Envisioning their potential state, the readers become guests of the parasitical evolution offered by the instructor, thus collaborators in the dissemination of the message.

Through the voice of the lama, the dead person presents to the audience his configuring data which helps the latter decipher the actual parasites entangling his soul. The audience becomes, up to a certain point, absorbed in the parasitical-bardo realm. The bardo itself becomes a parasitical web; while the lama spells out instructional parasites, the deities display emotional parasites. Reason verses emotion becomes the leading vessel that nourishes the minds of the readers. Furthermore, the visions of gods and demons are reflections of the dead person's psychological states,^{xxxvi} since the dead person does not always succeed in recognizing them as his own parasites, parasitical perception takes place. The deceased should distinguish two key factors: the form of the visions and their content. To Serres, as human beings, we pursue in our social interactions the same parasitical existence,^{xxxvii} along this line, the parasite becomes a significant link in the relationship between the vision and its form. The parasite is ever hoping vacating places; it falls between the form and the vision. The dead person is to distinguish form from vision, noise from order:

[T]he Red Lion-Headed...the Green serpent-Headed
O nobly born, ... At this vitally important time, recollect
[T]he select teachings of the *guru*.^{xxxviii}

By calling the dead person to recollect the encoded instructions, the lama or the guru opens a terrain of self-articulation of the parasitical resultants, first for the deceased and second for the readers. The former allows a connection between listening and living, while the latter undergoes a connection between listening and reviving. Revealing the realistic appearance of the bardo visions as deceptive does not, according to Wicks, imply that the psychological content expressed by these visions is itself illusory. Wicks takes the analogy of a dream; if the objects in a dream are shown to the dreamer to be none other than a figment of his or her imagination (e.g., as one teaches a child to see that the objects of a nightmare are simply imaginary), it does not follow that the psychological structure which that dream objectively presents is also a figment of the imagination (e.g. an imaginary monster within a young child's nightmare could very well express the child's inner anxiety).^{xxxix} In this respect, the deities become the parasitical tool that instigates into their guest as to render him distant from his karma. The role of the guest is to detect the underlying parasites, the figments of his imagination that the gods and demons symbolically express. The dead person, having become a host, enters in conflict with his/her own guests, that is, his former parasites. The dead person is faced with two psychic realities: the reality offered by the lama and the reality displayed by the visions. In parallel, as the dead person moves through the many stages of the bardo, the readers move through the text and are subjected to Bakhtin's dialogism.^{xl} The readers are faced with the voice of the lama, then with the multi-voices of the deities. The deities and the lama constitute the ground for the readers' memetic exploration. In this dialogical "betweenness,"^{xli} the audience becomes the recipient of a two-folded parasitical narrative, yet antagonistic. From one side, the audience is disturbed by the flow of data presented by the lama, and from the other side he is equally annoyed by the lack of data presented from the dead person. In this respect, Blanchot denotes that the outside cannot present to itself a positive presence.^{xlii} Whenever the audience frames himself as an outsider, he articulates a narrative of dichotomy translated in an inner split between accepting the parasites and rejecting them. The mental parasitism of the deceased sets forth a perceptual narrative for the readers. Through "a glass darkly,"^{xliii} the readers articulate a narrative of consciousness capable of perception. Describing the deities from afar, the lama presents to his readers a battlefield of perception and another of audition. Respectively, the readers face parasites of perception and others of audition. Time and space reinforce the readers' position since he is stepping in an alien environment. Therefore, the readers are faced with a narrative of anachrony; anachrony being "the various types of discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative."^{xliv} The audience seeks to register the story of the lama concomitantly with his own narrative. Thus, the readers become not

only a labyrinth of auditory parasitical communication but individuals of resistance by displaying his parasites or via his psychological, social and moral inevitability. This inevitability, according to John Richetti, builds up the readers' own construction.^{xlv} Facing these deities, the audience consumes his parasites and becomes a guest to the dead person. The presence of the readers unveils parasitism in the underlying tones of the text, which coincides with Gerard Genette's analysis of anachronies:

[T]he future has become present but does not resemble the idea of it that one had in the past.^{xlvi}

The readers' experience with parasitical sounds gives to the text an insightful reading. At this level, the audience overshadows more particularized forms of consciousness and is able to perceive his karma on the light of parasitical data. The audience is faced with a triangular parasitical game which involves the lama, the dead person and the deities. His capacity of intermingling with the parasites makes him a ready contributor in transmitting these parasites to others. Taking part with the dead person, the readers become educated in parasitical recognition "Listening, reflecting, and meditating ... the three stages of discipleship."^{xlvii} Attuned to these stages, the audience becomes the target in *The Bardo Thodol*, a fact echoed in Wicks' viewpoint that *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* addresses a wider audience and suggests that enlightenment can be achieved instantaneously at any level by adopting the correct interpretation of the world^{xlviii}. Wicks, however, restricts his audience to:

Only he who has opened his inner eye can see the redeeming visions. Those, however, who have neither developed the faculty of inner hearing nor that of inner vision, cannot be benefited by merely listening to the recital of the Bardo Thodol.^{xlix}

This quote, directly warns the audience that he has got to be among the selected as to share in the repeated opportunities of rebirth during the bardo experience as to pass into a womb of flesh and blood:

At length the deceased passes out of the *Bardo* dream world into a womb of flesh and blood, issuing thence once more into the waking state of earth-experience.¹

At this standpoint, the parasites of the lama are in continuum as to reach a Birth Consciousness in the physical womb of living beings. In parallel, the reader lives the transmigration of parasites in the human soul into sub-human bodies via auditory perception. The memetic narrative is in equilibrium between the host and his guest from one side, the guest and the new guest or the audience from another side, accordingly, a movement is drawn from:

[T]he space of representation [which entails] the image produced by representation in a discursive or visual field, to the space outside the representation... a movement from the space represented by and in a representation, by or in a discourse..., to the space not represented yet implied (unseen) in them.ⁱⁱ

The narrative of the lama confers on the deceased a space of representation which allows the readers a perceptual space intermingling with their "formal realism"ⁱⁱⁱ in their parasitical engagement. The readers become hosts of the world transferring significance through parasites. Acting as parasites of the world, the readers become protagonists in propagating an auditory perception around them, thus becoming potential lamas for the living people, yet dead in their souls. However, before helping others, the readers are called to help themselves. By doing so,

they reach Vivien Jones' "new autonomous identity"^{liii} that dissolves the parasites of their past life and teaches them to become better listeners of the memes presented by the peaceful deities. They become faced with the "notion of I and Thou" by engendering from the silent meeting of souls to the diversity of communication.^{liv} The audience is part of the mass, as such, he is in a state of re-evaluation of his past karma and feels that the memetic construction addresses him primarily:

It is more reasonable to interpret the text as directed more toward the living than toward the dead,^{lv}

Evans' quote renders us, readers directly involved in the liberation process and in the parasitical network. In this approach, parasites become grounded in prescriptions that alleviate suffering. Therefore, *The Tibetan Book for the Dead* could be interpreted as mainly written for the "dead" of this world; those whose lives are entangled within parasitical cycles of desire, jealousy, hatred, greed.^{lvi} The audience is carried by the parasites into the bardo web and is projected into one of the images of the deities; he faces luminosity yet, gradually descends into more and more hellish conditions according to his karma. Wicks goes beyond the physical death and gives a notable interpretation; he points out that though we usually conceive of death as the endpoint of life, there is an important sense in which death, as an aspect of change and renewal, is ever present throughout life: each passing moment "dies" as it becomes past experience; a new moment is constantly "born" as the future becomes present. From moment to moment, beginnings and endings perpetually coincide.^{lvii} In this sense, from moment to moment the readers are faced with parasites and are active hosts ready to internalize, instantaneously, new memes. On a higher level of interpretation, the rebirth is not only attainable only after the physical death, each time one encodes intelligent memes based on love and compassion, he/she is reborn. The audience, having before him a demonstrated mechanism of his karma, anticipates a new rebirth.

Richard Dawkins likens the human mind to a haven or sanctuary for memes. He believes that the human mind's ability to process information is comparable to a computer virus' ability to replicate information within a system. Entrances and exits to the human mind become a recurrence.^{lviii} The psychic data that builds a parasitical narrative of absence between the lama and the corpse is transmitted to the readers in a parasitical narrative of presence, which implies a constant relationship of narrative-memetic discourse. Genette elaborates his view around narrative discourse and claims that:

[I]t constantly implies a study of relationships: on the one hand the relationship between a discourse and the events that it recounts..., on the other hand the relationship between the same discourse and the act that produces it,^{lix}

Genette's narrative discourse adequately responds to the narrative received by the audience. The narrative of *The Bardo Thodol* draws a parasitical transmission mainly for the audience. The latter becomes as keen as the dead person in sketching a "descent into a new life which shall bear [him] nearer to his final goal."^{lx} From this standpoint, the parasitical narrative of the lama becomes a necessity, it instructs the soul on a series of climaxes ending with parasitical flow in the physical rebirth in the womb at the Sidpa Bardo stage. Since it is a period of decision, the parasitical parameters of the text are outstretched to the whole humanity. No one to whom the text speaks is a perfectly enlightened personality, at each stage of the after-death experience; the dead person is subject to parasitical therapy as to overcome his/her unconscious inclinations. The weight of the readers' role lies in their contact with the realm of the unconscious, vouchsafing liberation through parasitical bondage. Hence, they face a narrative of absence that delineates a presence sealed with silence "It is a book which is sealed with the seven seals of silence."^{lxi}

The Tibetan Book of the Dead is, therefore, a narrative which invokes an image of progress in the recent history of ideas. Lama, dead person and reader cooperate in an auditory workmanship and outstretch to the fallen humanity the spiritual perception vouchsafed by Europe's classic predecessors. Nonetheless, the role of the lama is basic in the liberation process; he is the voice that teaches silence; he utters a highly suggestive narrative, wordy yet directed towards voidness as to prepare the dead person to the cycle of rebirth. In the realm of the dead, this triangular interrelation addresses a living doctrine which gives the fallen body a mental eye. The proto-parasitical allegory underlying the guiding process of the lama contributes to a new understanding of *The Bardo Thodol* which is inherent to the outstanding of literature. Literature is a system, Serres states that no system operates without disturbance or noise, and books are the core of the system. Accordingly, individuals "seek, in short, not victims to devour but hosts on which to feed."^{lxii}

The system is itself disturbed by the creation of set memes, parasites superseding their hosts. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is one manifesto of parasitical interference. Dealing with the instructional method for the liberation of the dead, makes it imperative to seek the underlying threads of the book. Beyond helping the deceased in the bardo stage, the message is directed to a larger audience, to every living individual who wishes to unbound him/herself from the Dionysian chains. In this respect, the text could be easily called the Tibetan Book of Birth^{lxiii} as Fremantle advocates, it is a manual continually at work in every moment of life. As discussed in the above annotation, it is commonly said that *The Tibetan Book "of" the Dead* is a book for both the dead and the living, the present interpretation suggests that it is a book for the living who are dead in spirit; it is then be called *The Tibetan Book "for" the Dead*^{lxiv} Wicks remarks that, though couched in religious terms, the text's underlying message is commonsensical; people who do not change their ways are doomed painfully to repeat themselves.^{lxv} Therefore, the reader becomes the nucleus of this large audience that moves along with the dead person and lives inwardly the diverse visions of deities which are but mere reflection of his/her tendencies. *The Bardo Thodol* is, indeed, of a cosmological nature independently of the reader's capacity of abstraction. Moreover, the text presents information inevitably spread via memes which inject viruses in the mind of the initiate, hence, offers an insightful approach to the modern reader. The dead person becomes a living parasite and a guest to his host. Being subjected to the on-going parasitical process of death and rebirth, he/she dwells in the reincarnation milieu as to become established in the parasitical network. Parasites interact with their guests and render them hosts. Auditory perception is the thread that conducts this dialogism conferred through a parasitical narrative, yet essential for the transmission of the message. Correspondingly, the auditory perception presses an ontological denouement articulated in the oneness with the Godhead through parasitism. Therefore, the parasitical nature of literature lies, generally in its ability to replicate, copy, and distribute memes. Each idea combines with a previous one, mutating and mingling with a new or a preconceived idea being born out of their struggle. Lama, deceased and reader function as parasites feeding on and benefiting from a long line of traditions. They produce their own set of memes and their parasitical canons presented via *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The reader is mostly infected with these memes, relating and comparing their appeal with others in his memory and discarding any which does not fit his schemata. In fact, he is parasitically invading the writer's ideas through his cognitive analysis and distribution of memes. This is an inevitable part of life. Ideas are weighed, evaluated according to previous knowledge and put to experience, discarded or acknowledged according to ratings, and forever parasitically spread.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Miller, Ed. L. 1998. *Questions that Matter* (The United States of America: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.), 267.

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- ⁱⁱ Evans-Wentz, W. Y. 1985. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), xvi-xxxv.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Wicks, Robert. 1997. "The Therapeutic Psychology of 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead.'" (University of Hawai Press): 479.
- ^{iv} Sherburne, Richard. 1992. "The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo" (American Oriental Society): 668.
- ^v Fremantle, Francesca. 2001. Review of *Luminous Emptiness: Understanding The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *Cahners Business Information*: 83.
- ^{vi} Dawkins, Richard. 1993. "Viruses of the Mind: The Human Mind and its Absorption of Ideas" (Council of Democratic and Secular Humanism, Inc.): 34.
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- ^{xvii} De Lauretis, Teresa. 1987. *Technologies and Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), 28.
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- ^{xxi} Blanchot, Maurice. 1990. *The Thought From Outside* (New York: Zone Books): 29.
- ^{xxii} Blackmore, 3.
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- ^{xxiv} Evans-Wentz, 136.

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- ^{xxv} Ibid., 4.
- ^{xxvi} De Lauretis, 26.
- ^{xxvii} Evans-Wentz, 100. The Mother-Truth is the Fundamental Truth, experienced only after death while the Knower is in the bardo state of equilibrium, before karmic propensities have erupted into activity.
- ^{xxviii} Genette, Gerard. 1982. *Narrative Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press), 34.
- ^{xxix} Wicks, 496.
- ^{xxx} Ibid., 496.
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- ^{xxxiii} Wicks, 7.
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- ^{xxxviii} Evans-Wentz, 144.
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- ^{xl} Gurevitch, Zali. 2000. "Plurality in Dialogue: A Comment on Bakhtin" (British Sociological Association Publication Ltd.): 243.
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- ^{xliii} Mendel, Sydney. 1963. "From Solitude to Salvation: A Study in Development" (Yale University Press): 45. The purpose of the essay is to underline how Jean-Paul Sartres shows the reader, albeit through a glass darkly, the road to Consciousness.
- ^{xliv} Genette, 35-36.
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- ^{xlviii} Ibid., 479.
- ^{xlix} Ibid., 16.
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^{li} De Lauretis, 25.

^{lii} Watt, Ian. 1974. *The Rise of the Novel*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 34.

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^{liv} Gurevitch, 243.

^{lv} Evans-Wentz, 10.

^{lvi} Wicks, 491.

^{lvii} Evans-Wentz, 479.

^{lviii} Dawkins, 34.

^{lix} Genette, 26-27.

^{lx} Evans-Wentz, li.

^{lxi} *Ibid.*, liv.

^{lxii} Baran, 3.

^{lxiii} Fremantle, 84.

^{lxiv} Wicks, 499.

^{lxv} *Ibid.*, 484.