

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

VOLUME SIX OF *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa* brings together thoroughly tantric, or vajrayana, material on the nature of mind and space and their interaction. These are teachings that are productive to study and worthwhile to pursue, yet they include much advanced material, which can at times be frustrating and perplexing to our “normal” ways of thinking. All of these teachings were given during Trungpa Rinpoche’s early years in the West. “The Bardo” is based on teachings given by Rinpoche in England in the 1960s. The remainder is from lectures in North America, the earliest from 1971, the latest from 1976. Yet, while these teachings were presented early on, most of them were not published until after his death in 1987, the exceptions being “The Bardo,” the “Foreword” and “Commentary” from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and “Femininity.”

Much of this material is genuinely esoteric and difficult to understand. Nevertheless, Trungpa Rinpoche presented this material in public seminars, for the most part. With the exception of one seminar that forms part of *Glimpses of Space*, he did not restrict access to these teachings, unlike his approach to much of the vajrayana material he presented to his advanced students. What makes these teachings hard to understand is not that they require a great deal of prior study of the Buddhist teachings. Based on the way that he presented the material, it is not necessary to know very much about Buddhism to grasp what he is saying. Rather, it is necessary to know something about mind or, more accurately, to be open to one’s own innate or instinctual relationship with space, mind, and awareness. If one approaches these teachings with a

genuinely “open” mind, they are not much more perplexing to the neophyte than they are to the initiated.

Transcending Madness, the material from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (the translation of the text itself is not included), and “The Bardo” all present teachings on the bardos. Next in Volume Six, *Orderly Chaos* presents teachings on the principle of mandala. *Glimpses of Space* explores the principles of space and feminine energy. The little volume *Secret Beyond Thought* presents teachings on the five chakras and the four karmas. The final article in this volume, “Femininity,” is a popular treatment of the feminine principle.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche presented the two seminars that make up *Transcending Madness* in 1971. The first took place in Allenspark, Colorado, about an hour outside of Boulder, and the second at Karmê Chöling, the first practice center he established in the United States, located in rural Vermont. He had barely been in North America for a year when these teachings were presented. In the introduction to Volume Three of *The Collected Works*, there is some description of the tenor of that first year, in particular relative to the chaotic but cheerful environment that surrounded Trungpa Rinpoche’s life and teaching in Boulder. The first seminars that Rinpoche gave in Boulder were edited to become *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*. It was only a little while after presenting the “Cutting Through” seminars that he gave the Allenspark material, “The Six States of Bardo.” It was attended by most of his students from Boulder.

In the short time since he had arrived in Boulder in the fall of 1970, he had drawn together a community of several hundred students. As Judith Lief, the editor of *Transcending Madness*, writes in her foreword to the book: “Trungpa Rinpoche had attracted many students with a background in higher education, psychology, and the arts. These early students were strongly interested in integrating their Buddhist training with their practice of Western disciplines” (p. 5). One might put it another way: Chögyam Trungpa was interested in integrating his students’ Buddhist training with the practice of Western disciplines—and they were generally interested in doing whatever interested him. To be sure, he attracted many students with an impressive background in a Western discipline, whether psychology, physics, anthropology, writing, painting, publishing, business, interior design, or any of hundreds of other possibilities. However, these students were often ready to give up whatever

they were pursuing in the world in order to become meditators and spiritual practitioners. It was not then, nor is it now, uncommon to associate becoming a spiritual person with giving up the occupations of the world.

It was Chögyam Trungpa who suggested: Why don't we start a therapeutic community? Why don't we write poetry? Why don't we start a business? Once the idea caught on, the students started bringing the possibilities to him, but it was largely his initial inspiration to join together spiritual and temporal activity in this unique fashion.

Already by the fall of 1971, when the Allenspark seminar took place, a group of Rinpoche's students were working with him on plans to start a therapeutic community to work with seriously disturbed individuals.¹ Trungpa Rinpoche and Suzuki Roshi, the founder of Zen Center San Francisco, had discussed this idea in May of 1971, just a few months prior to Roshi's death. When Trungpa Rinpoche gave the Allenspark seminar and the subsequent seminar on the bardos at Karmê Chöling, one of his motivations for presenting these tantric teachings was that he felt the material could be helpful to his students in understanding and working with mental illness.

While this sounds rather straightforward, in fact it was a revolutionary move. The bardo teachings connected with the *Bardo Thödröl*, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, are advanced teachings in the dzogchen or ati tradition within the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. It was remarkable of Rinpoche to connect them with the study and application of Western psychology.

In a number of areas of his work in North America, Trungpa Rinpoche joined together the study of vajrayana Buddhism with the practice of Western disciplines, particularly in psychology and the arts. Judith Lief reports that when she arrived in Boulder in 1972, many of Rinpoche's students belonged to one of the two main "camps" within the Buddhist community: one studying psychology and another group working with theater. Both groups were working with teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche had given them, based in both cases on advanced vajrayana material. The psychology group was studying the transcripts from the two seminars that make up *Transcending Madness*. (What the theater group was doing comes up in Volume Seven.)

Although he may have connected the bardo material with Western

1. For more information on this project, see Volume Two.

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

psychology, Rinpoche didn't simplify these teachings to show his students how to apply them practically. *Transcending Madness* is a precise and difficult-to-fathom presentation of the teachings of bardo as they relate to the six realms of existence. It makes its basic points very clearly, but the author didn't abbreviate when it came to the details. He was not presenting pop psychology. It requires commitment and a genuine letting go of concepts to connect with this material.

On the whole, Trungpa Rinpoche was suspicious of attempts to simplistically merge two distinct disciplines. Nor was he generally enamored of "borrowing" ideas from Eastern spirituality and applying them to Western concepts. There was a good deal of such experimentation during the 1960s and '70s, much of it well intentioned but poorly thought out or poorly executed. The results were often more like a creation in Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory than an evolutionary process. It was rare that a genuine hybrid emerged, carrying the strengths of its ancestry. Chögyam Trungpa's criticism of the problems with the New Age mentality, however, did not stop him from introducing teachings from his own lineage into the stream of Western thought and art.

A number of people who were applying very small discoveries from the East to something in the West were making bold claims about themselves and the importance of their discoveries. In contrast, Rinpoche's approach was much more understated. He didn't say, "Now I am presenting some of the most ancient and precious teachings of my lineage, and I'm going to show you how these can be practically applied in your culture. This is the first time in the history of humankind that anyone has ever done this, and it's a radical and fantastic thing to do." His method was much more subtle and ultimately much more profound. He told the people at the Allenspark seminar: "Everybody here is involved in a very dangerous game because we are working on the karmic pattern of America. We are trying not only to fight it, but we are trying to infiltrate it . . . we are working on the infiltration of the materialistic world."

Thus, *Transcending Madness* is not a how-to book about applying Tibetan bardo teachings to working with the mentally ill. It is rather a book about how to apply these teachings to one's own state of mind. The premise of Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation is that madness is not an aberration experienced by some people who have something wrong with them to begin with, people who are different from you and me. Rather, insanity is something that we all experience, although it may be

in a more embryonic form. By seeing how we work with sanity and insanity in ourselves, we can begin to understand what others are experiencing and perhaps be helpful to them.

Trungpa Rinpoche had known the psychiatrist R. D. Laing in England in the 1960s. Laing believed that there was a great deal of sanity in madness, and he and Chögyam Trungpa undoubtedly had some interesting and productive discussions on this topic. Unfortunately, there is no record of their communication, and neither man is alive to tell us about their conversations. Trungpa Rinpoche said many times that he admired Laing and respected his views, and one can only assume that this was a mutual feeling. Just as Rinpoche's interest in starting a therapeutic community came out of a dialogue with Suzuki Roshi, it is not unlikely—although there is no confirmation for this idea—that his inspiration to present the bardo teachings as applicable to Western psychology may have been influenced by his association with Laing and his ideas.

Bardo is a Tibetan word that means an “intermediate” or “in-between” state. The idea of bardo is most commonly understood in connection with teachings in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and generally people associate bardo with what occurs at the moment of death and in the after-death state. The traditional teachings on bardo speak of six bardo states, several of which are associated with the process of dying and experiences that occur after death. Other bardo states include birth, the dream state, and the state of meditation. In *Transcending Madness* and in the foreword and commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Rinpoche stresses that these teachings are also about how we live. As Francesca Fremantle, the coauthor and translator of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, says in her introduction to the book: “The fundamental teaching of this book is the recognition of one’s projections and the dissolution of the sense of self in the light of reality.” In *Transcending Madness*, working with these teachings in each moment of our lives is clearly the focus.

As Trungpa Rinpoche puts it, “Everyone must go through different phases of so-called normality and so-called abnormality, such as tension, depression, happiness, and spirituality. All these phases that we go through constantly seem to be what we have been talking about in this seminar. Unless we are able to apply this to everyday life, there is no point to it” (p. 139).

In her foreword to the book, Judith Lief clarifies the meaning of bardo and how it relates to the six realms of existence, the fundamental

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

framework that Trungpa Rinpoche uses in presenting the material in *Transcending Madness*. “This volume . . . is based on the interweaving of two core concepts: realm and bardo. The traditional Buddhist schema of the six realms—gods, jealous gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings—is sometimes taken to be a literal description of possible modes of existence. But in this case the schema of the six realms is used to describe the six complete worlds we create as the logical conclusions of such powerful emotional highlights as anger, greed, ignorance, lust, envy, and pride. Having disowned the power of our emotions and projected that power onto the world outside, we find ourselves trapped in a variety of ways and see no hope for escape.”

She continues: “The six realms provide a context for the bardo experience, which is described as the experience of no-man’s-land. The bardos arise as the heightened experience of each realm, providing at the same time the possibility of awakening or of complete confusion, sanity or insanity. They are the ultimate expression of the entrapment of the realms. Yet it is such heightened experience that opens the possibility of the sudden transformation of that solidity into complete freedom or open space” (pp. 6–7).

As Lief also states, Chögyam Trungpa “presented teachings on the realms and bardos as a way of understanding madness and sanity and learning to work directly and skillfully with extreme states of mind. Based on direct observation of mental patterns, these teachings provide a way ‘to see our situation clearly along with that of our fellow human beings’” (p. 6).

In terms of mental illness in others, there are important implications that arise from this view of madness and sanity as intertwined or coexisting in us all the time. For one, the preparation for working with disturbed individuals is first of all to work on oneself and to understand sanity and madness within one’s own state of mind. Because we don’t regard mental illness as something alien, it is not something to fear. In fact, it is quite familiar ground. We realize that we have the ability to understand what other people are experiencing and to relate directly with them in their pain and confusion, because their state of mind is also part of our own experience. This teaching becomes a powerful tool to build identification and compassion in working with others. Judith Lief has shown this in her own work with dying people, which she describes

in her book *Making Friends with Death: A Buddhist Guide to Encountering Mortality*.

Having presented a seminar on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* at Karmê Chöling in the Summer of 1971, Trungpa Rinpoche gave the seminars that form *Transcending Madness* in quick succession that fall. He gave one other seminar on the teachings from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, in the summer of 1972 at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center. That was the last seminar he taught on the bardos. When he originally presented these talks, there were perhaps as many as two hundred people in the audience at each seminar, with many overlaps from one seminar to the next. All together, perhaps five hundred individuals heard these teachings directly. A few hundred more may have read the transcripts over the course of the next fifteen years. The material in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* of course has reached a large audience, but it is only since 1992, with the publication of *Transcending Madness* twenty years after the original talks were given, that most of the material on the bardos has been widely available. The majority of students who studied with Chögyam Trungpa, who encountered him well after 1971, may never have studied this material or even known of its existence.

Between 1970 and 1976, Trungpa Rinpoche taught more than three hundred seminars, some of them consisting of ten to fifteen talks, in which he presented the principles behind many important tantric teachings he had received in Tibet. The role of the Trungpa Tulku lineage in preserving the teachings of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is an excellent example of the preciousness of the material that he transmitted in the early days in America. In his foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* he writes: “The *Bardo Thödröl* is one of a series of instructions on six types of liberation. . . . Padmasambhava buried these texts in the Gampo hills in central Tibet. . . . Many other texts and sacred objects were buried in this way in different places throughout Tibet, and are known as terma, ‘hidden treasures.’ Padmasambhava gave the transmission of power to discover the termas to his twenty-five chief disciples. The bardo texts were later discovered by Karma Lingpa, who was an incarnation of one of these disciples. . . . Karma Lingpa belonged to the Nyingma tradition but his students were all of the Kagyü tradition [to which Chögyam Trungpa belonged]. He gave the first transmission of the six liberation teachings to Dödul Dorje, the thirteenth Karmapa, who in turn gave it to Gyurme Tenphel, the eighth Trungpa. This transmission was kept

alive in the Surmang monasteries of the Trungpa lineage, and from there it spread back into the Nyingma tradition” (p. 269).

Thus, Trungpa Rinpoche’s lineage and his monastery, Surmang, were instrumental in the preservation and the propagation of this material, which was transmitted personally to him as a precious inheritance, starting when he was eight years old. It is remarkable that he trusted Westerners with this material, especially in those first years that he taught in America. This is typical, however, of the confidence he had in Western students to receive, preserve, and transmit the heart teachings of his lineage.

He presented all of this material in a way that was “self-secret.” He was always careful not to give away tantric secrets, particularly by presenting material too soon or to an inappropriate audience. In the early 1970s, he did not expect or want people to undertake advanced vajrayana practices. Until 1973, the main practice for all of his students in America was the sitting practice of meditation. Then, beginning with the first Vajradhatu Seminary in that year, he began to introduce the preliminary practices of the ngöndro to a small group of students. The number of students involved in tantric practice grew slowly over the years.

However, in the early 1970s, partially because people were *not* engaged in vajrayana practice at this stage, he was able to present many of the principles of vajrayana and many significant teachings in a way that flew in under the radar of people’s conceptual minds. He just bypassed the normal circuits in people’s minds with this material. They knew that something extraordinary was being said and taking place, but in general they didn’t grasp its depth, not having the tools or the training to do so. Nevertheless, the teachings left an imprint on people, which for some allowed them to keep a kernel of this material in their minds over the years. The seeds he planted in people drew them back to this material many years later and led, for example, to the editing and publication of a book such as *Transcending Madness* following his death.

There are many other seminars from this period that remain unpublished, unedited, and in many cases untranscribed. These are teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche gave to the West as a precious treasure of knowledge and wisdom. The publication of early material was one of the inspirations for Shambhala Publications to launch the Dharma Ocean Series, in which *Transcending Madness* and many other titles based on early teachings appear. The series has proven to be a great vehicle for making

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

this material available, and hopefully there will be many more volumes to come. Additionally, Vajradhatu Publications—the publishing arm established in the mid-1970s by Rinpoche within his own association of meditation centers—has taken on a role in editing and making available many of the early seminars. Several books published by Vajradhatu appear in Volume Six. This publishing program is certainly related to the fact that Judith Lief has been heading up Vajradhatu’s editorial efforts since 1989. She continues to focus much of her editorial energy on the early seminal teachings given by Chögyam Trungpa.

The earliest days in the Vajradhatu Buddhist community coincided with a time in North America when young people were often unkempt, undisciplined, and revolutionary. Many were exploring Eastern spirituality; some were protesting the war in Vietnam and the corporate culture in America; some were dropping acid and dropping out—a well-known story. The Buddhist community was no exception to all this, and the “scene,” as it was called in those days, reflected all of these elements. Looking back on this period, there may be slight embarrassment on the part of those who were part of the scene, although a twinge of nostalgia is also likely to arise. For those who came later, there may be a tendency to dismiss the formative period as childish and misguided at best. It would be unfortunate, however, to dismiss the teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche gave during this period. The students may have been naive and untamed; the teachings he gave were not.

When one sees photographs or films from this era, Rinpoche’s audiences often appear disheveled. Nevertheless, they were a remarkably intelligent group, amazingly tuned in to what he was teaching, even though they may not have grasped the inner meaning. This simultaneous understanding and ignorance may sound contradictory, but it is not uncharacteristic of Rinpoche’s effect on people. In many teaching situations throughout the time he taught in North America, he was able to evoke the interest and intellect of his audience and to inspire them, almost beyond themselves. If one listens to the questions and answers from these early seminars, one sees how penetrating and precise the discussions were. There was the occasional question about astral projection or auras that completely missed the mark, but by and large people were engaged and open to what he was teaching, although not fully aware of its deeper significance.

Since Rinpoche’s death, there has been an effort to archive and

preserve recordings and transcripts of all of his teachings, particularly this early material. There are more than five thousand audio recordings of his talks, which are now housed in the Shambhala Archives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the international headquarters of the Buddhist organization he founded. Presciently enough, on his part, from the time that he arrived in the United States, Rinpoche requested that all of his lectures be taped. Most of the recordings are of high quality, both in terms of the tape and equipment that were used and the skill of the volunteer recording “engineers.” Nevertheless, audio tape does not last a long time. There are now significant problems with many of the original recordings, and there is an ongoing effort to transfer the material to new media. In the future, many important and unique teachings should emerge from this treasury of dharma.

Trungpa Rinpoche did not like to repeat himself too many times. Once when I was working with him on a book, I asked if he would dictate material on a topic for a chapter. “Haven’t I already done that?” was his reply. With a little research, I found that he had indeed presented the material I needed in an earlier seminar. He trusted that I would find what I needed. Similarly, in this case, having presented the bardo teachings in 1971 and 1972, he didn’t feel the need to present them again. I’m sure he expected his students to rediscover them at the appropriate time.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo was, as noted above, the result of the collaboration between Francesca Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa. She was a Sanskrit scholar who first met Trungpa Rinpoche in England in the 1960s. In an interview she said, “I was translating a Buddhist tantra and was having a lot of difficulties with it. So, that led to my meeting Trungpa Rinpoche.”² From that initial meeting, she recognized Rinpoche as her teacher and began studying with him. He suggested that they work together on a new translation of the *Bardo Thödröl*. She reports:

When the Vidyadhara first suggested translating the *Bardo Thödröl* I was not very enthusiastic about the idea. I had not been particularly attracted to it by the only translation available at that time [the original English version translated by Kazi Dawa-Samdup and edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, commonly known as the Evans-Wentz transla-

2. *Shambhala Review* 4, no. 5 (March/April 1976).

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

tion]; in fact I don't think I had even managed to get through the whole book. But in 1971 Rinpoche gave a seminar directly based on the text, as well as two others on closely related themes [the bardo seminars], which revealed it in a completely new light. As he explained the bardo teachings, it became clear that this text was very close to his heart, and as it had already been translated into English, he particularly wanted a more accurate version to be made available. That seminar became the basis of his commentary to the *Bardo Thödröl* in our 1975 publication, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The tapes of his talks were transcribed and the subject matter was slightly condensed and rearranged, but it was edited very lightly, as I wanted to preserve his unique way of expressing himself as far as possible.³

In 2002 Shambhala Publications published another volume by Francesca Fremantle on the teachings from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. In *Publishers Weekly's* review of her new book, *Luminous Emptiness: Understanding the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the reviewer comments: "The 1975 version of Padmasambhava's original eighth-century text, translated by Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa, strengthened a bridge between Tibetan Buddhism and the West." At the time of publication it was a groundbreaking translation, and it made these teachings accessible to a much broader audience. If Francesca Fremantle, a Sanskrit scholar, had trouble relating to the original translation, one can imagine the difficulties it posed for the average reader. This is not to denigrate the original effort; Evans-Wentz deserves recognition for his great contributions in bringing sacred texts from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition into the Western language. Nevertheless, a new translation was needed and appreciated.

Trungpa Rinpoche had worked on translations from the Tibetan with a number of students in England before coming to North America.⁴

3. "Reminiscences on Translating *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* with Trungpa Rinpoche," communication to Carolyn Rose Gimian, December 2001.

4. In the introduction to Volume Five of *The Collected Works*, there is a discussion of Rinpoche's collaboration with Richard Arthure on the translation of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, quite remarkable in that Richard did not speak any Tibetan! In Volume One, there is mention of the work that Rinpoche did in England with Rigdzin Shikpo, then known as Michael Hookham, and a group of scholarly minded students. The article "The Bardo," which appears in Volume Six, was edited by Rigdzin Shikpo. To this day, few of the early translations done in England have been published.

However, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was the first translation that Rinpoche worked on which was published as a book, and it remains the most influential, in terms of the size of its readership.

The Evans-Wentz translation was associated in the 1960s and early '70s with the “psychedelic” movement in the United States. Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, better known as Ram Dass, felt that the “visions” described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* had similarities to the “visions” experienced by people under the influence of psychedelic drugs.⁵ The new translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* did much to dispel the idea of the bardo states as extreme hallucinations or states distant from everyday experience. Rinpoche and Francesca Fremantle’s approach to the text brought these teachings into the realm of how life is lived day to day and how confusion and awareness interact in our minds all of the time. The earlier comments on *Transcending Madness* discuss the central role of the bardo teachings in the Trungpa lineage. Rinpoche—as a custodian of these teachings through many lifetimes—had strong reasons to want to see a genuine understanding of this text in the West. It must have been something of a shock to him to see the sacred teachings of his lineage expropriated as aids to psychedelic explorations. In characteristic fashion, he didn’t attack this approach head on; he simply took the discussion to another, more profound level, rendering the earlier views largely irrelevant.

To help in the preparation of the introductions to *The Collected Works*, Francesca Fremantle sent me some information on her work with Trungpa Rinpoche, a few lines of which were quoted above. She had this to say about their work together:

For our work on the text itself, I would prepare a draft translation, and then we would go through it together. We did not have time to cover the whole text in detail, but I would ask him about anything that seemed difficult or especially important. Any mistakes are en-

5. An interesting and rather offbeat development connected with this was the use of psychedelics by Stanislav Grof and Joan Halifax Grof in working with terminally ill patients. The Grofs taught at the Naropa Institute in 1975. There is a video tape of a panel in which Stanislav and Joan Grof present their work alongside Chögyam Trungpa and David Rome, Rinpoche’s private secretary. Rinpoche’s earthy and direct discussion of death and dying stands in stark contrast to the energetic but highly confused presentation made by the Grofs.

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

tirely my responsibility, as it means that I did not identify them as problems that should have been brought to his attention. We came across several idiomatic phrases and words that are not found in dictionaries or that are used here in unusual ways. There are also certain words that have special meanings in the context of the iconography of tantric deities. Apart from these examples, Rinpoche's help was particularly valuable in some of the descriptive passages, where colloquial expressions occur, conveying vivid impressions of light, colour, texture and sound.

Most of our time was spent in discussing how best to translate technical terms. This was always fascinating and a wonderful opportunity to hear him talk about dharma in the most profound and illuminating way. . . . Rinpoche had very strong views on the translation of dharma terms, but at the same time he was always open to suggestions; after all, he was continually enriching his own knowledge of English. He loved language, whether it was Tibetan, Sanskrit or English, and always approached it with the sensitivity of a poet. He often played with words, delighting in synonyms, puns, and allusions (he used to do this occasionally with Tibetan words, too, although hardly anyone in his audience was aware of what he was up to!). He was determined to avoid language that suggested a theistic approach, and equally any kind of theosophist or new age syncretism. He also disliked the lavish use of capital letters common in spiritual writing, which, he felt, gave the same kind of impression. In his later work with the Nalanda Translation Committee, he formulated these principles even more clearly. All of this arose from his wish to present Buddhism as simple, ordinary and straightforward: the expression of basic sanity.

We had many long and passionate discussions about various words, but I cannot remember any serious disagreements at the time; somehow we always managed to reach a decision we could both accept. This does not mean that I have not had second thoughts over the years, and there are certain terms that I would now translate differently. If I had the chance to ask his opinion, I feel sure that he would consider them all carefully and might agree at least to some of them. But there are remarkably few such cases, and I am continually struck by the precision and profundity of Rinpoche's interpretations and his intuitive way with a language that was not his own. Many of the terms that he first introduced in his talks and translations

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

have been widely adopted, and he has had an enormous influence on the way Buddhism, especially vajrayana, has subsequently been expressed in English.⁶

In the introduction to Volume Two of *The Collected Works*, there is a discussion of how Chögyam Trungpa chose to present the Buddhist teachings in the West in the language of psychology rather than the language of religion. In her introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Fremantle goes into this phenomenon:

It is noticeable that several of the words which best express the teachings of Buddhism are part of the language of contemporary psychology, for the attitudes of certain schools of Western psychology often come closer to Buddhism than do those of Western philosophy or religion. . . . Concepts such as conditioning, neurotic patterns of thought, and unconscious influences seem more appropriate in this book than conventional religious terms. In the Commentary, words such as *neurosis* and *paranoia* are used to describe not pathological conditions but the natural results of this [ego's] fundamental state of mind. [1975, p. xvi]

The basic understanding of bardo presented by Rinpoche in his commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is the same view that is presented in *Transcending Madness*. In the opening passages of the commentary, Trungpa Rinpoche writes:

There seems to be a fundamental problem when we refer to the subject of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The approach of comparing it with the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* in terms of mythology and lore of the dead person seems to miss the point, which is the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly in this life. One could refer to this book as 'The Tibetan Book of Birth.' . . . It is a 'Book of Space.' Space contains birth and death; space creates the environment in which to behave, breathe and act; it is the fundamental environment which provides the inspiration for this book. . . . *Bardo* means gap; it is not only the interval of suspension after we die but

6. "Reminiscences on Translating *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* with Trungpa Rinpoche," communication to Carolyn Rose Gimian, December 2001.

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

also suspension in the living situation; death happens in the living situation as well. The bardo experience is part of our basic psychological makeup. [pp. 271–272]

From this basic premise, Rinpoche goes on to discuss the six realms of confused existence, which appear and beckon to us in the bardo at the same time as peaceful deities appear, representing the principles of the five wisdoms, or the five buddha families. The choice is always between ego's entanglements and the freedom of the egoless state, which is both irritating and terrifying from the viewpoint of ego. Trungpa Rinpoche also details the visions, or experiences, of the wrathful deities that arise in the bardo after death. He repeatedly relates the after-death state to the energies and the challenges that we face in life—after all, he says, we have suppressed or lost our memory of the state between death and rebirth, so it is speculation to discuss it. Yet he also lets these teachings speak for themselves, without psychologizing. He conveys the terrifying vividness of these experiences. His commentary lets the reality of the bardo speak for itself in its naked array. At the same time, Rinpoche shows us that the best preparation for death is in how we live our lives.

Rinpoche concludes the commentary with a discussion of relating compassionately and directly to a dying person. The publication of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was one of the forces that helped to transform the field of working with death and dying within the Western psychological and medical realms. When the translation was first published, there was very little being offered in the way of hospice or other services for the terminally ill. This translation was one of many factors that helped to open up the whole discussion of dying and helped to make death less of a taboo. This was clearly one of Chögyam Trungpa's wishes for this book. In his foreword, he discusses his own training, which included visiting dying people four times a week. He speaks of the beneficial effects of being in close, continual contact with the process of death, "so that the notion of impermanence becomes a living experience rather than a philosophical view" (p. 270).

Francesca Fremantle has continued to work with these teachings for many years. Although she describes herself as having taken a long vacation from this material before embarking on her recent book, *Luminous Emptiness*, it is clear that neither these teachings nor her strong connection with Trungpa Rinpoche were ever far from her heart. In the remi-

niscences that she sent me to help prepare this introduction, she included a very touching story connected with her work on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It seems fitting to end the discussion of the book with that story:

Undoubtedly the biggest problem in working on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was the difficulty of making time for our meetings in Rinpoche's schedule. At one point, when our deadline was approaching, I became so frustrated at yet another cancelled appointment that I burst into tears and had a fit of hysterics over the telephone; I told him that if he was not interested enough to finish the translation, I would take it with me to India and find someone else to help me. I don't know which of us was more shocked by this outburst, but it got results! Emissaries were sent to calm me down, and within the next few weeks Rinpoche found the time to complete our work.

As a postscript to these reminiscences, I did indeed go to India (although not as a result of my threat) before the final draft of the book was finished. There someone advised me to visit Khunu Rinpoche, a very great scholar and yogin who was renowned for his knowledge of the bardo teachings. I was extremely fortunate to meet him at that time, as he died about two years later. He immediately solved a couple of remaining problems, and spoke of the bardo deities in a most fascinating way, as though he knew them all intimately. But what impressed me most was his reaction to hearing news of Rinpoche. His face lit up with such a mixture of joy, love and devotion that I felt impelled to give him the photograph I carried everywhere with me. He pressed it to his forehead, murmuring "Trungpa Rinpoche, Trungpa Rinpoche!" over and over again. It was extraordinarily touching to see this display of emotion, especially towards a much younger man, from such a great lama.⁷

How fortunate for all of us that Francesca Fremantle persevered in her translation work with Chögyam Trungpa. Together they created a translation that has stood the test of time; and, just as important, she helped to provide the space in which Trungpa Rinpoche could present these incomparable teachings to a greater world.

The final material on the bardo states in Volume Six is an article enti-

7. Ibid.

tled “The Bardo,” which was published originally under the title “The Nyingma Teachings on the Intermediate State” in England in the late 1960s or early 1970s in the journal *Creative Space*.⁸ Rigdzin Shikpo, who worked with Rinpoche on this material in England in the ’60s, reports that the article is “edited from various others I worked on with Rinpoche: these include ‘The Way of Maha Ati,’ another on breaking away from the primordial ground, another on Maha Ati terminology, yet another on the yangti dark retreat, something on the bardo itself, how to meditate in relation to it, etc.” He has also described it, in an earlier e-mail, as “a bringing together of two other texts, ‘Emergence from the Alaya,’ and ‘Bardo and the Alaya.’” It contains some material similar to the commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* but with a slightly different emphasis. It expands the understanding of bardo as a *practice* that one can do in the here and now, and relates the bardo states very directly to how we create ego and confusion on the spot in every moment of existence. This article has not been available in published form for many years; its inclusion here will be welcomed by many readers. For its publication in *The Collected Works*, Rigdzin Shikpo kindly went over his original notes from his work with Trungpa Rinpoche and prepared a definitive and new version of the material.

The next book included in Volume Six is *Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle*. This too is based on early material presented by Trungpa Rinpoche, in this case during two seminars at Karmê Chöling in 1972 and 1974. Rinpoche established this rural center as an intensive practice environment for his students. Students living on the East Coast traveled frequently to Tail of the Tiger, as it was called in the early days, to attend Rinpoche’s seminars there. Many students came to Karmê Chöling for a week or a month of intensive practice, and there were also facilities for solitary retreats. In the early days, seminars in the summer took place in a tent outside the main house. In the winter, small seminars were held in the original small farmhouse on the land; larger gatherings took place in a rented hall in Barnet, the nearest town. A major renovation in 1975 and ’76 added additional living quarters and several shrine rooms, including a main shrine hall—also used for lectures—that can accommodate several hundred people. However, when the seminars that make up *Orderly Chaos* took place, these facilities did not yet exist.

8. Only a photocopy of this article has been preserved in the Shambhala Archives, and this editor has been unable to obtain definite information on the date it was published.

In addition to the “city people” who came to Karmê Chöling, there was a core of students in residence. In many respects, it was the closest thing to a monastery within the Buddhist community that Rinpoche established. It was not monastic in the sense that people wore robes or took vows of poverty, abstinence, or silence. Rather it provided a very tight and intense container in which people lived, practiced, and studied. The environment was not particularly seductive; it was in fact a claustrophobic situation, yet people became processed and tamed by living and practicing there, often in a much shorter time than in most ordinary living situations.

Each place that Rinpoche taught had its particular quality, which flavored his teaching there. When he taught at Karmê Chöling, he had a “captive” audience. There was a quality of attentiveness on the audience’s part and a sense of mutual communication, almost on an instinctual level. People seemed to grasp what he was saying faster and more directly, noticeably “clicking” to what he was talking about. The seminars that he gave at Karmê Chöling were often more in-depth and reflective. In the questions and answers in *Orderly Chaos*, he and the audience members often seemed to finish one another’s sentences, as though they were very much on the same wavelength.

In both *Orderly Chaos* and *Transcending Madness*, Trungpa Rinpoche seems to embody the material when he presents it. There is a way in which both of these books defy attempts to logically understand the material in an ordinary, sequential fashion. In *Transcending Madness* one feels oneself going through highlights of the bardos and the realms as one progresses through the book. Judith Lief reported to me that the tendency of this particular material to embody itself was very hard on her family while she was editing the book!⁹ In *Orderly Chaos*, one finds oneself in a world with no straight lines to connect things. Understanding and insight are possible, but only if one drops the reference points usually applied to “studying” or “reading” a book. This quality may frustrate some readers, but for others it will provide an experiential glimpse of the material that is being discussed.

Mandala is a Sanskrit word with many meanings. Literally, it refers to anything circular, a globe, or a wheel, and it also means a collection, group, society, or organization. Commonly, when people think of a

9. E-mail communication from Judith Lief to Carolyn Rose Gimian, February 2002.

mandala, they think of a circular drawing or a diagram that shows the arrangement of various deities, symbols, or energies. Many thangka paintings depict the mandalas, the palaces or environments, of vajrayana deities. There are also three-dimensional mandalas, or models. Both thangkas and three-dimensional mandalas show the details of a particular vajrayana deity's palace and iconography as an aid to visualization. In addition to its association with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the term *mandala* has also been applied to similar representations in other spiritual traditions. The usage of mandalas in the Hindu religion is quite ancient, and undoubtedly predates their use in tantric Buddhism. Mandala-like representations are also found within various Native American traditions. The term has also been applied to some abstract and semi-abstract modern paintings. Many of these paintings were an outgrowth of the psychedelic movement in the 1960s and '70s, after people first came into contact with Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist mandalas and thought that they were visions or artistic expressions, failing to understand their relationship to Hindu tantra or the practice of vajrayana Buddhism. Trungpa Rinpoche distinguishes between any of these approaches to mandala as symbolism and the understanding of mandala as the principle of orderly chaos. It is the latter that is the focus of *Orderly Chaos*.

Mandala principle is about how both confusion and wisdom manifest in a pattern. The pattern of orderly chaos describes both the patterns of confused, or samsaric, existence and the patterns of enlightened awareness. More fundamentally, it is about the space that underlies all experience and how it operates in terms of energy and form. The first seminar in *Orderly Chaos* was originally entitled "The Mandala of Unconditioned Being." Here, Rinpoche approaches the subject of mandala from the point of view of the mandala of samsara, or the mandala of confused existence. As he says, "We should discuss the idea of orderly chaos, which is the mandala principle. It is orderly, because it comes in a pattern; it is chaos, because it is confusing to work with that order. The mandala principle includes the mandala of samsara and the mandala of nirvana, which are equal and reciprocal. If we do not understand the samsaric aspect of mandala, there is no nirvanic aspect of mandala at all" (p. 305). It is only in the last two talks of the seminar, chapters 6 and 7, that he introduces the buddha mandala, or the principle of the mandala of enlightenment.

In the second seminar, originally titled "Mandala of the Five Buddha

Families,” Rinpoche talks about the principle of mandala in terms of the energy that arises from the basic ground of unconditioned space, taking the form of the five buddha families or five buddha principles. These have both a confused and an awake aspect. He describes them as “aspects of the basic totality that accommodates things and allows them to happen. So it is not so much a matter of five separate buddha qualities; rather there are five aspects of the totality. We are talking about one situation from five different angles” (p. 358). The five families are buddha, vajra, ratna, padma, and karma. There is an excellent discussion in *Journey without Goal*¹⁰ of the quality, symbolism, and significance of all five families, which are basically different qualities of energy, emotion, and wisdom that arise within oneself and can also be experienced in our perception of the world. Here, in *Orderly Chaos*, Rinpoche presumes the reader’s basic familiarity with the buddha families. In discussing the buddha mandala, he describes how they are related to the five skandhas, not so much in terms of the skandhas as the constituents or building blocks of ego but from the perspective of confusion transmuted into the wisdom of the five buddhas.

Glimpses of Space: The Feminine Principle and EVAM, edited by Judith L. Lief, was published in 1999 by Vajradhatu Publications. It consists of two seminars given by Chögyam Trungpa in 1975 and 1976. As the subtitle implies, the first seminar is on the feminine principle, the second on the principle of EVAM. In the Tibetan Buddhist teachings, space is understood as the feminine principle. Understanding what is meant by space altogether is part of the reader’s challenge in reading this book. Again, as with *Transcending Madness* and *Orderly Chaos*, the material is not entirely linear. At times, it seems as though space itself is speaking or presenting itself, which is highly disconcerting. Trungpa Rinpoche tells us: “We are not talking about outer space. We are talking about that which is—that which *isn’t*, at the same time.” Various aspects of the feminine principle are presented: space as the mother principle; the feminine attributes of space as unborn, unceasing, with a nature like sky; and finally, the feminine manifested in the dakini principle, or *prajnaparamita*, the principle of space as a playful consort who gives birth to wisdom and to all the buddhas.

The second seminar presents both the feminine and the masculine

10. See Volume Four.

principles and how they come together in the nondual experiences of bliss and wisdom. This is not a gender study. Rather, the book is an investigation of masculine and feminine qualities or principles that exist in all experience. The title of the second seminar, “EVAM,” is a Sanskrit word that means “thus.” The beginning of every sutra, or discourse by the Buddha, begins with the phrase “evam maya shrutam,” which means “Thus I have heard.” In Vajrayana Buddhism, EVAM represents the union of the feminine and masculine principles, the container (E) and what is contained (VAM). A monogram of the word *evam* is employed as one of the seals of the Trungpa tulku (see illustration on page 466). It had a very personal meaning for Chögyam Trungpa, the eleventh incarnation of the Trungpa lineage. He always wore a signet ring with the symbol *evam* on it, and a gold-leaved carving of the *evam* symbol hung above his head when he taught from a traditional Tibetan throne in the main shrine hall in Boulder, Colorado.

Next we have *Secret Beyond Thought: The Five Chakras and the Four Karmas*, a small volume published by Vajradhatu Publications in 1991. This contains two talks on the principles of the chakras and the karmas, which are teachings from the tantric tradition of Buddhism. *Chakra* is a Sanskrit word that means “wheel.” In the practice of both Hindu and Buddhist tantra, the chakras refer to psychophysical centers of energy in the body. While acknowledging this understanding of the chakras, Trungpa Rinpoche suggests that we can relate the chakras to both everyday life and “to their essence in the universe, the cosmos.” The second talk discusses the four karmas, or enlightened actions, that are associated with yogic activity. These are actions that are appropriate to situations, rather than imposed on them. They are pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and destroying. Rinpoche also discusses the obstacles, or maras, that arise in connection with realizing each of the four karmas. Karma here, which simply means “action,” is quite distinct from the usual understanding of karma as the chain of cause and effect. As Rinpoche says, “there are two types of karma, which could be called greater karma and lesser karma. Greater karma is these four types of karma, which are deliberate, which do not involve chain reactions any more, because the whole purpose of greater karma is to break the chain reaction. It is applied to action in the moment, on the spot. The other karma is the chain reaction process, or lesser karma” (p. 542). As always, he recommends the sitting practice of meditation as the starting point for working with

these teachings. The seminar on which this book was based was given in Boston, Massachusetts, in February 1971, another example of the advanced level of teaching he was presenting to the public in his earliest days in North America.

Volume Six ends with the article “Femininity,” which originally appeared in *Woman: Maitreya 4*, published by Shambhala Publications in 1973.¹¹ By far the most accessible piece in this entire volume, it is a rather lighthearted and playful article about feminine energy and its role in the Buddhist teaching. Trungpa Rinpoche pays homage to the feminine principle as the mother and consort of the buddhas, as the source of inspiration, and as a playful but very powerful maiden. He touches on the limitations of the cultural attitudes toward women in the early development of Buddhism, and ends with the statement that “as long as you respect your manhood or your womanhood, your masculinity and femininity will be an integral part of your being on the spiritual path.”

With the end of Volume Six, we also come to the end of the presentation of the strictly Buddhist teachings in *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*. The remaining two volumes take us into the realms of dharma art and the Shambhala path of warriorship, not unrelated to Buddhism but presenting distinct areas of his work. In these six volumes, we have seen Trungpa Rinpoche already in many guises: In Volume One he is a biographer of his own life, in *Born in Tibet*; a humble Buddhist teacher, in *Meditation in Action*; and a yogi poet in *Mudra*. In Volume Two he manifests as meditation master and teacher of compassion, in *The Path Is the Goal* and in *Training the Mind*, and as psychologist, educator, and ecumenical pastor, among his many roles in the articles included in that volume. Volume Three shows us Trungpa Rinpoche the pioneer, bringing a new view of the Buddhist teachings and a new language of Buddhism to the West, through his best-selling volumes *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* and *The Myth of Freedom*. In Volume Four we see him once again mapping out new territory and establishing the ground to present the tantric journey in *Journey without Goal*, *The Dawn of Tantra*, and *The Lion’s Roar*. In Volume Five we see him as devoted child of the

11. The Maitreya series was inaugurated by Shambhala Publications in the early 1970s as a forum to present short offerings from many of its authors. Each volume had a different theme. Chögyam Trungpa’s article “Spiritual Farming” from *Gardening: Maitreya 3* appears in Volume Two of *The Collected Works*. His article “Relationship” from *Relationship: Maitreya 5* appears as part of *The Heart of the Buddha* in Volume Three.

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

lineage, bringing the stories of his ancestors and heritage to Western practitioners, in *Crazy Wisdom*, *Illusion's Game*, *The Life of Marpa the Translator* and *The Rain of Wisdom*. In this volume, we will see him as master of space and as master of the teachings that join life and death in nondual awareness.

There is much more to come, not only in the remaining volumes of this series but in the many volumes that will be produced in years to come. As far as the Buddhist aspect of his teachings is concerned, it will be many generations before we have the *complete* teachings of Chögyam Trungpa.

By this merit, may all attain omniscience.
May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness, and
death,
From the ocean of samsara, may we free all beings.¹²

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN
April 19, 2002
Trident Mountain House
Tatamagouche Mountain,
Nova Scotia

12. Dedication of Merit, translated from the Tibetan by the Nālandā Translation Committee. Used (with a slight alteration) by permission.