Editorial

Five years ago, we founded *Yeshe* as a journal of Tibetan literature, arts, and humanities to fill the existing gap between writing and the publication of creative and scholarly works in the field. Five years later, we have published eight issues, including three special and five regular issues, which demonstrates the field's potential and the need of journals like *Yeshe*. What's conspicuous about the content throughout these eight issues is how much of it is translated from the Tibetan language. Kati Fitzgerald, *Yeshe*'s nonfiction editor, testifies vis-à-vis our first nonfiction contest:

> Because of a myriad of factors, I thought that we might receive a majority of submissions in non-Tibetan languages. Much to my delight, all the submissions were written in Tibetan. Despite all the obstacles that the Tibetan language faces and the constant anxieties about the future of Tibetan oral and written communication, this fact demonstrates the vitality and strength of Tibetan writing.

Fitzgerald, the judge of the contest, applauds the winning authors for their "use of Tibetan flexibly and creatively to reflect their messy, agonizing, and capricious truths." We congratulate the winning authors and cite here the judge's comments on their respective works:

> Kelsang Lhamo's first-place essay, འཚོ་བའི་ཉམས་མྱོང་དུམ་བུ།

"A Fragment of Life Experience," is a fascinating account of a landlord-tenant dispute that will infuriate and bewilder you with its twists and turns. Not only is the essay linguistically interesting, as Kelsang Lhamo engages proverbs, humor, and witty metaphors in her narrative, but it also describes a part of the Tibetan experience that we rarely see portrayed on the page. Her experience of ludicrous American tenancy laws and a boldfaced squatter is certainly not unique to this one case, but Kelsang Lhamo brings her own philosophical interpretations that highlight some of the possibilities and pitfalls of engaged compassion in our contemporary world.

Tamdin Tso's second-place essay, དྲན་པ་དམར་རྩེན་མ། སེམས་ངོགས་ཀྱི་ཁ་ལོ་རྩེས་སུ་དྲན་པ། "Raw Remembrances: Memories of My Father on the Banks of My Mind," is short note to her late father. She remembers mundane details about his hobbies and character that create a patchwork of memories of a beloved and imperfect man. The result is honest and self-effacing, highlighting the unreliability of memory and various aspects, selfish and inspirational alike, of grief. She also points to a weight felt by so many in the diaspora – to succeed in life to honor those who sacrificed so much in the past.

The weight of memory that Tibetan exiles harbor is also felt in Tenzin Ju's historically attentive and articulate essay featured in the

nonfiction section. Tenzin Ju reflects on the cultural afterlife of Tibet, otherwise "melting from public consciousness much like the glaciers of the Himalayas," in the Tibetan objects displayed in museums, and the ritual of visiting these museums, despite several misrepresentations, as "a way to feel home from afar."

The mnemonic task of Tibetan objects in Tenzin Ju's nonfiction is done by a polaroid in Losang Gyatso's ghost story "Virginia Is for Lovers." A polaroid camera brings fragmented memories of a forgotten night of a couple's accidental entry into a long-destroyed dance hall inhabited by spirits. The cinematic visuals, such as "her shoulder blades down to her waist," evoke an eerie atmposphere, and little details, like the stale smell of air in a normal shop, deepen the uncanniness. The liminal atmosphere of Losang Gyatso's story lingers in Kyabchen Dedrol's elegiac story "Pale Songs" about a group of Tibetan sexworkers, labourers, and runaways, systematically marginalized by society, as they drift like ghosts through a blizzard-striken landscape. Translated from Tibetan by Gödod Norbu Amchok, the story, however, insists on beauty amidst despair and achieves it through poetic prose in phrases like "many straight beams of light like pillars stretched out one after another from between the white clouds." Tsering Döndrup "Masks," a story about the strangeness of recognition and the fragility of human connection during times of pandemic, resonates with other stories in the fiction section. The ambiguity of guesswork and intuition does the emotional work in "Masks" and leaves one with a mysterious longing for what remains seen and unseen behind the mask.

The poetry section centers around the theme of identity anchored in the experience of migration and memory intertwined with landscapes.

In Tashi Bhutia's "Epicenter," identity moves between dramatic shifts of terrian "from the hills of God / to the pit of misery," suspended along fault lines of place and the passage of time, "every passing moment reminding / what could be." Forged in the stigmatized geography of the suburban margins of Montreal, the self in Dorji Dhatsenpa's "*Pure Romantics (Hinterland)*" is stubborn - "i've driven all over the south shore, but i refuse to go into longueuil" - despite identifying as "a Longueuil boy, born and bred." In Sonam Chhomo's "Plants," "Faint memories of sunflowers… my excursion to the riverside… chewing on unknown but edible stem of a mentok" becomes the blueprint for self, recreated in her another poem "Mixtape" in a corner of a room, "dedicated to the gods, books, and guests," seamlessly merging in "aromas, forming a hybrid." The poems champion the continuity of memory and survival despite trauma and rupture.

The themes of self, survival, and landscape emerge once again in the performance section. In the Bhutanese folklore *"Oral Tradition: The Life of Domley Sonam Wangyal*," documented and translated from Dzongkha by Tenzin Dorji, the land coverges with the spirit and fate of the child herder Wangyal. Little Wangyal's tragic story, from his fragile efforts to assert his place as a competent herder to being overwhelmed by forces of nature and supernatural beyond him, suggests the necessity to attune to the spiritual ecology of our world for survival. In Rinchen's screenplay *The Wilderness Wrangler,* translated by Tsemdo, the orphaned seventh-grader Lobsang endures the literal wilderness of blizzards and predators and the emotional pain of abandonment and loss of sister and home. Lobsang's inward migration towards moral becoming in the Tibetan grassland gets juxtaposed in the performace section to young Kunsel and Passang's outward migration towards community integration

and moral recaliberation in the urban landscape of Toronto in an excerpt from Kunsang Kyirong's *100 Sunset*. The Q and A, following the excerpt, with Kunsang Kyirong reveals her ethics of resisting judgment in potrayal of her film's characters who are "contradictory, flawed, and sometimes both hurting and causing hurt at the same time."

Kelsang Lhamo's interview in this issue of *Yeshe* works as the theoretical framework for understanding the creative works in the nonfiction, fiction, poetry and performace sections as she speaks among other things about her early childood immersed in sacred geography, the hardship of eleven-month journey by foot to India, endurance and discipline during her nine years of retreat in Dharamkot, and her intellectually enriching work of cataloguing Tibetan texts under Gene Smith's guidance. Her interview justifies why Tibetan stories matter and should be told to a global audience.

The review section of *Yeshe* gives us a critical insight into what has been evolving in Tibetan humanities recently. Tsering Wangmo Dhompa's *The Politics of Sorrow: Unity and Allegiance Across Tibetan Exile* is reviewed by Jigme Yeshi Lama for its commitment to restoring the dignity of Tsokhag Chusum, the Thirteen leaders from Amdo and Kham, who, despite having played a crucial role in building exile settlements, were mislabelled as regionalists and castigated from mainstream exile politics. Rae Dachille reviews Jed Forman's *Out of Sight Into Mind: The History and Philosophy of Yogic Perception* as a groundbreaking study of yogic perception in Indian and Tibetan philosophy that engages with thinkers such as Dharmakīrti, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Tsongkhapa, Sakya Paṇḍita, and Gorampa, and introduces the concept of "omniphenomenology" to theorize the transcendental

potential of enlightened perception beyond dualistic, first-person phenomenology. *Living Treasure: Buddhist and Tibetan Studies in Honor of Janet Gyatso* is reviewed by Priyanka Chakraborty as an extensive interdisciplinary tribute that maps Janet Gyatso's intellectual legacy, providing a methodological model for studying Tibetan Buddhist texts not just as doctrinal sources but as embodied, lived, and even contested philosophical works. Mridul Surbhi reviews *Taming the Poisonous: Mercury, Toxicity, and Safety in Tibetan Medical Practice,* a landmark interdisciplinary study of Tibetan medicine and tantra, by Barbara Gerke, as a powerful critique of universalist science and neutral translation. In favor of epistemic pluralism, Gerke praises Sowa-Rigpa and Tibetan medical practitioners' comprehensive understanding of material substances as mutable and relational. And finally, Tenzin Nyima Bhutia's review of *Longing to Awaken: Buddhist Devotion in Tibetan Poetry and Song,* edited by Holly Gayley and Dominique Townsend, highlights this anthology's redefinition of devotion as a discerning, critical practice instead of blind faith, and repositioning of poetry from the periphery to the core of Tibetan Buddhist religious life in its capacity of transmission, dialogue, and awakening. These five reviews across interdisciplinary subjects of ethographic history, poetry, buddhist philosophy, and Tibetan medicine demonstrate the growing scholarship in Tibetan Studies that is methodologically grounded and ethically attuned to dynamic Tibetan subjectivities on a global stage.

Tibetan subjectivies once again take the center stage in the article section. Geshe Tri Yungdrung's article "The Culture of Tulma, Tsampa, and Tea in Tibet," written originally in Tibetan, adhers to Tibetan and not the western scholarly tradition vis-à-vis the "norms regarding dating, citations, and etymologies, among other conventions" as noted

by the article editor Andrew Taylor. Geshe Tri Yungdrung draws on Tibetan religious, historical, and medicinal texts and everyday nomadic practices in his article to affirm his argument that Tibetan food culture is an internally coherent indigenous epistemology and "not borrowed or influenced by neighboring Han or other cultures." Likewise, resisting external references, Eva Leick demonstrates in "Dzamling Gar Song and Dance: A Khaita Manifesto" how Khaita safeguards Tibetan culture and language while integrating Dzogchen teachings on cultivating presence, awareness, harmony, and joy. Both articles prioritize Tibetan sources and modes of knowing as benchmark for research on Tibet.

With this fifth annual issue of *Yeshe*, we hope that not only scholars and Tibetan writers will continue to trust us with their works but some insititution will come forward to support our labour of love so that it can be sustained in the future.

Patricia Vedani-Schiaffini and Shelly Bhoil
Founding editors