

## **Contemporary Tibetan Women's Writing in English** (Reading group + seminar)

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (Wednesday)**  
**Venue: H204, Humanities Institute, UCD**  
**Time: 10:30am- 4pm**

**Speakers: Tenzin Dickie, Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, Tsering Yangzom Lama**

**Event organiser: Thinley Chodon, PhD candidate, School of English, Drama and Film, UCD**

The marginalisation of Tibetan women is evident in Tibetan literature in English, where Tibetan poetry and fiction have primarily been written by male writers like Tenzin Tsundue, Jamyang Norbu, Bhuchung D. Sonam, Tsering Wangyal, Thubten Samphel, among others. Women are “eclipsed” in the history of Tibetan literature and are “rarely discussed in historical writing at all, except for the briefest mention of someone’s mother, or consort, who not infrequently is nameless or referred to only elliptically” (Gyatso and Havnevik 2005: 8). The erasure of women’s participation in the anticolonial struggle is also commented on by Tibetans who note the elimination of Tibetan women from the Tibetan Resistance Army- the Chushi Gangdrug (1956-74). The phrase that is cited most often by Tibetan war veterans is: “There was not one woman” (*Bu mo gcig kyang yod ma red*) (McGranahan 2010: 771). Even though there were women who organised political uprisings in Tibet (Butler 2003) and in exile against the oppression inflicted by the People’s Liberation Army of China, these instances of real historical erasure, further adds to women’s narrative dispossession and the lack of “social recognition of the [female] individual as historical actor” (McGranahan 772). This narrative dispossession is central to shaping the cultural organisation of Tibetan history in gendered ways, that influences not just how the past is recorded but also how the present is represented, including how communities make and remake their collective stories. It is in this vein that the representation of Tibetan women has been affected in Tibetan literature as well, both historically and in the present.

In the context of this literary erasure, this event offers a corrective by highlighting and disseminating knowledge about the Tibetan female literary figures who have produced credible, critical and innovative work. The contemporary literary world of Tibetans in exile is now gradually moving towards elaborating on a more nuanced vision of Tibet vis-a-vis its female subjectivities. In the varied yet specific fictive worlds of Tibetan women there lie representations of struggle, resistance, small freedoms and hope.

This event comprises a **reading group** followed by a **seminar** where three of the most celebrated and emerging Tibetan female writers- Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, Tenzin Dickie and Tsering Yangzom Lama, in their capacities as writers, editors, translators, come together to introduce, inform and critically discuss their work as well as the future of Tibetan literature in English from the perspective of many combinatory concepts like exile and diaspora studies, neo-colonialism, resistance writing, among others.

This gathering aims to put Contemporary Tibetan Women's Writing on the World Literary map by providing a platform to such writers who are working on a burgeoning field of literature. Contemporary Tibetan writing has been moving beyond the traditional perception and production of classical Tibetan literature which was solely monastic and spiritual and/or scriptural in its themes. With the writing that is being produced in English, specifically by the exiled Tibetan community, there are new forms, genres and thematic choices that are being experimented with. Tenzin Dickie, Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, and Tsering Yangzom Lama all delve into the various literary innovations that have shaped contemporary Tibetan literature. Tsering Wangmo Dhompa is a poet, memoirist, and scholar. Her upcoming monograph titled *The Politics of Sorrow* will be published by Columbia University Press. Tsering Yangzom Lama, a young female novelist, wrote *We Measure the Earth with Our Bodies* (2022), a novel that challenges masculinist portrayals of anticolonial dissent, Chinese neo-imperialism and global capitalism. Tenzin Dickie is a writer and translator who has edited anthologies of Tibetan fiction and non-fiction, taking on roles within the publishing industry which have historically been monopolised by male figures.

This event will tie together many literary and non-literary areas of research including postcolonial studies; Asian studies; World literary studies; creative writing; exile, diaspora and migration studies; and editing and publishing in the global literary market. We welcome you to learn more about Tibet, Tibetan literary production and the politics of Tibetan identity (gendered and exiled) in the contemporary world.

This event has been generously funded by the **College of Arts and Humanities at UCD**, the **UCD Humanities Institute**, and the **School of English, Drama and Film, UCD**.

**Programme:**

10:30am- 11am	Registrations and Welcome note
11am- 1pm	Reading group+ workshop

1pm- 2pm	Lunch break and interactions with the speakers
2pm- 4pm	Seminar: “Occupied Subjectivities: Writing Women, Writing Tibet in Exile”

Places are free but please register for the event [here](#)

CONTACT: [thinley.chodon@ucdconnect.ie](mailto:thinley.chodon@ucdconnect.ie)