PART III

ENGAGING WITH THE DISCURSIVE LIMITS OF TRANSGRESSION
CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ‘TECHNOLOGICAL MIND,’ DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW TYPE OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED CONTEMPORARY WESTERN BUDDHISM

The works of Lobsang Rampa, John Blofeld and Anagarika Govinda, discussed in the previous section, bear testimony to both the role of disciplinary/bio-power discourses in the constitution of subjectivity as a locus of perpetual conflict, and the immense difficulty that any attempt to reposition one’s subjectivity in relation to such discourses entails. Yet, on the one hand, instead of heeding their failure in this regard, a great deal of contemporary Western Buddhism in general, and contemporary Western Vajrayāna Buddhism in particular, has simply blundered forward blindly in their wake, by elaborating ever more enthusiastically upon the capacity of ‘traditional’ Buddhism to function as a panacea for all the social ills of the West. Arguably, this much is neatly evinced in the work of Robert Thurman, among others, and this chapter will commence with a brief consideration of some of his texts. However, on the other hand, because the respective works of Rampa, Blofeld and Govinda emerged at the beginning of, and as part of, the fourth phase of the discursive apparatus that mediated Western involvement with Tibet, the subsequent shift in focus associated with the later fifth phase of this discursive apparatus (of which the current work is part), has involved an increasingly critical approach to their texts. Aside from the well-known manifestation of such a critical approach in Donald Lopez’s *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, Rob Nairn’s perspective on their works, which has developed against the backdrop of his focus on the practicalities of meditation, is a case in point. As such, this chapter will continue with a brief overview of his more pragmatic stance on Buddhist meditative practice. However, although Nairn’s meditative practices, insofar as they render Buddhist meditation increasingly accessible to contemporary Westerners, constitute a significant advance on the works of Rampa, Blofeld and Govinda, arguably, his failure

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