Charlotte Eubanks' book begins with a historical account from medieval Japan: the Buddhist priest Myoe (1173-1232 CE) cuts off his ear as an offering, hoping that his sacrifice will rewrite the sutras (Buddhist scriptures) to include his name as an attendant of the Buddha (1). Although extreme, such an act was not unprecedented in Buddhist literature, which includes stories of religious virtuosos sacrificing their bodies to feed others or incinerating their bodies as offerings. Eubanks uses the example of Myoe to highlight the importance of the relationship between text and body in the Buddhist "textual culture" of medieval Japan (4). Since sutras are found wherever there are Buddhists, she contextualizes her study with a consideration of Japanese *setsuwa*, sermons which draw on sutras, to show how sutras were received and interpreted in medieval Japan (3).

In this wide-ranging textual study, Eubanks considers two major themes: the rhetoric of the body in sutras and *setsuwa*, and the complex relationships between readers' bodies and the form and content of readers' texts. In Chapter One she adopts a trope from the texts themselves and personifies the sutras, calling them a "nervous genre" aware of their own mortality (23), which seek to control how they are received, interpreted, and reproduced (28), and which prescribe an ideal reader (39; 55). She considers Japanese sutra reception in Chapter Two, examining *setsuwa* collections that draw on local tales and tropes to interpret sutras, and how these collections discuss bodies and are themselves metaphorically embodied (64) and gendered (89). This section focuses mostly on the history and production of *setsuwa* collections, rather than on readers' receptions of these collections.

The third and fourth chapters build on the rhetorical relationships between body and text, specifically examining the relationship between the decomposition of the profane body and the composition of sutras and the spiritual body (Chapter Three), and the way in which sutras could be embodied and the human body could be a vessel for sutras (Chapter Four). Chapter Three examines the relationship of the fragment of body or text to the whole, such as in narratives of
decomposing one's body into skin and blood to be used as tools to copy the sutras (117) and of offering one's body in order to re-compose a sutra (128). Chapter Four considers how sutra texts were represented as personified and embodied, both in literary tales and in the materials of books. Here Eubanks includes tales of sutras incarnating to save those who have protected them (163; 165), as well as tales of flesh rendered incorruptible through devoted recitation of sutras (158). She also includes examples of books with features meant to mimic the body of the Buddha (142), and paintings which play with the boundary between image and word (171). Her book concludes with a consideration of book history and reading practices in Japan, suggesting that alongside reading practices like recitation, memorization, and reading for meaning, circumambulation of sutras is a "spatialized" method of reading found in turning cylinders containing sutras (181), in Noh drama (186), and in mantras printed on DVDs (194).

This book is an excellent contribution to the study of sutras, their relationship to the body, and their reception in Japan. Reading *setsuwa* as local interpretations of the sutras is a novel and fruitful approach. In some parts of her discussion of *setsuwa* it is unclear whether Eubanks writes about the hypothetical reception of these sermons or if she is writing solely about their rhetoric. If she wishes to expand the historical angle, Victor Mair's two books *T'ang Transformation Texts* and *Painting and Performance*, both studies of Buddhist storytelling practices and sermons in China, could be consulted to raise useful questions and to contextualize practices and texts transmitted to Japan. Similarly, sutra commentaries, monastic biographies, and aristocratic writings such as letters and diaries might also further ground the discussion of the *setsuwa* in their historical setting. This historical concern aside, the characterization of sutras as agents concerned about reproduction is academically fruitful, as well as true to the rhetoric of the sutras themselves. All in all, this book is an insightful consideration of embodied reading and texts about bodies, and could resonate with audiences outside of Japanese buddhology, including book historians, theorists of the body and religion, and scholars of Japanese literature.

Nicholas Field
Centre for the Study of Religion
University of Toronto
nicholas.field@utoronto.ca