Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sutra. By Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. xii., 264 pp. Hardcover: $39.50; paperback: $15.95.

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"Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me." As everyone knows, this old childhood rhyme is far from the truth. Anyone who has carried a compliment or rebuke days or even weeks beyond when it was given knows only too well the power words have, both to heal and to hurt. This point is beautifully illustrated by the story Donald Lopez recalls in the introduction to his book, *Elaborations on Emptiness*. He tells the Japanese story, "Miminashi Hōichi," the story of a blind boy who is threatened by a family of ghosts. He is protected by the monks of the local monastery, who inscribe the words of the *Heart Sūtra* all over his body, which renders him invisible. They forget his ears, however, and though he lives, his ears are torn off by the ghosts. This visceral, somatic example begins Lopez's latest book on the *Heart Sūtra*, and while the other uses of words and language are not as graphically concrete, they all deal with the same basic questions: how does language function, and how is it efficacious in ritual performance? In short, how is language *used*? While Lopez uses one of the most popular Buddhist *sūtras* to illustrate his arguments, the questions he raises are of concern not only to Buddhist scholars, but those in many other areas of study as well, such as comparative philosophy, linguistics, and ritual performance. This fact makes this book valuable not only for the experts, but also for those with more general interests in language and religion.

Elaborations on Emptiness, a sequel of sorts to his earlier book, *The Heart Sūtra Explained*, offers full translations of eight different Indian and Tibetan commentaries of the *Heart Sūtra*, organized thematically and paired with detailed, insightful essays by Lopez. The commentaries include those of Vimalamitra, Atīśa, Kamalaśīla, Śrīsimha, Jñānamitra, Praśāstrasena, Mahājana, and Vajrapāni. In his introduction, Lopez states his intention to balance the commentaries with essays of his own, in order to provide an introduction into some of the larger questions that are then explored in detail in the specific commentaries themselves.

After an excellent introduction which is not to be skipped, Lopez begins his work with the essay "Who Heard the Heart *Sūtra*?" In this essay, Lopez examines the debate surrounding the question of the identity of the hearer of the *sūtra*, the "I" in the "Thus have I heard." This issue is important, in that it goes directly to heart (so to speak) of

the credibility of the *sūtra* as a whole. If the *Heart Sūtra* is to be attributed to the Buddha, then it is of the utmost importance that the one reciting the *sūtra* have the necessary credentials. Also of concern here is the question of the implied audience of the *sūtra*—who is qualified to hear it, which in turn raises the issue of orality. What is the relationship between sound and meaning in the *Heart Sūtra*, and what are the changes that occur when something that is to be heard can now be seen and read? Lopez engages all these issues in a lucid, intriguing presentation. This essay is followed by the commentaries of Vimalamitra and Atīśa, both of which deal with the *samgītikartr* question in the most detail.

The second essay is titled "The *Heart Sūtra* as Tantra," and here Lopez discusses the debate surrounding the categorization of the *Heart Sūtra* as *sūtra* or *tantra*. He notes that it has been classed in various canons under both headings. By necessity, this raises the vexing of question of how to define *tantra*, and Lopez's discussion in this section, which begins with quotes by Levi-Strauss and Wittgenstein, is quite interesting. He observes how the definitions of *sūtra* and *tantra* have actually played off one another, and that it is the context in which a text functions that plays the critical role in assigning the words a definition. In other words, to use Wittgensteinian language, a definition of *tantra* cannot be found apart from the language game in which it functions. The two commentaries that follow this chapter, those of Kamalaśīla and Vairocana, reflect this *sūtra-tantra* debate.

The next essay, "The *Heart Sūtra* as Sādhana," continues this conversation, with a twist. Lopez argues that the question of whether the *Heart Sūtra* is to be categorized as a *sūtra* or *tantra* is complicated by the fact that there are two *sādhanas* ("means of achievement") in the Tibetan canon which are based on the *Heart Sūtra*. This is significant, for, as Lopez writes, "the *Heart Sūtra* may be the only *sūtra* (if it be a *sūtra*) to have a *sādhana* associated with it."(p. 14). After a brief discussion of the function of mandalas and visualization, he details at length the visualization sequence in Dārikapa's *sādhana*, and uses a heavy dose of Freudian psychoanalysis to interpret it. In this chapter he also introduces the issue of *mantra*, which is the subject of the next essay. The two commentaries that follow this chapter are those of Jñānamitra and Praśātrasena.

The next essay deals perhaps most directly with the issues of language potency and use raised at the beginning of this review. Lopez opens this essay, "The *Heart Sūtra's* Mantra," with a question: "How are we to understand ritual speech?" (p. 165), and uses the popular *mantra* that ends the *Heart Sūtra*—*[om] gate gate pāragate pārasamgate bodhi svāhā*—as his example. In this chapter, he takes up the question of how

a *mantra* functions, and suggests that several aspects of this *mantra* in the *Heart Sūtra* violate some of the key characteristics a *mantra* supposedly typifies. For example, the *Heart Sūtra's mantra* contains no instruction as to how it is to be used, no deity who is to be propitiated, no specific end at which it is aimed. (pp. 166-167). Furthermore, there is the complication that, although the *mantra* was written down, contrary to traditional Indian practice, it was not translated but transliterated, in order to "duplicate and preserve" (p. 172) the original sound of the speaker's voice. Again, then, we are back to the question of understanding/meaning versus use/function. Lopez's use of Austin's analysis in *How to Do Things with Words* is helpful here. The commentaries that follow this chapter are the final two, those of Mahājana and Vajrapāni.

The last category in which Lopez treats the *Heart Sūtra* is that of exorcism ("The *Heart Sūtra* as Exorcism"). He begins with a personal experience of his own unwitting participation in an exorcism rite, which is the most common use to which the *Heart Sūtra* is put in Tibet. From this personal account, he goes on to give a detailed explanation of one such ritual. After the ritual has been described, Lopez raises some important issues latent in the performance of the ritual, including the questions of sacrifice, mimesis, and sorcery. He ends the chapter with a treatment of "Lamaism" in relationship to Buddhism.

The last chapter is a gem. It wraps up the whole preceding dialogue by introducing the larger question of what the commentators were trying to accomplish, and what methods they employed, specifically their use of folk etymology. This leads him to a discussion of comparative philosophy, and the way in which Asian texts have often been treated by Western scholars. His whole discussion here is extremely insightful, and I want to quote just one passage from the chapter. In his treatment of comparative philosophy he notes the pitfall that often occurs by interpreters who try to lift out a "crude ideology" from complex texts. He writes, "Even the most abstract systems (with which Buddhism is replete) cannot be regarded merely as bodies of propositions. They must also be treated as located utterances, the rhetorical purposes of which one must seek to determine if they are to be understood." (p. 254). He then lays out three requirements that must be fulfilled for genuine understanding to take place, and ends the book with a hopeful theory about the function of commentaries, and the way in which they contribute to and create new meaning.

This book is worth reading on a number of levels. Those who are serious scholars of Buddhist texts will appreciate the thoughtful, well-noted translations Lopez has made of the various commentaries. Those who are lovers of the *Heart Sūtra* will appreciate all the nuances of the text Lopez elucidates, and the different functions it has in various

traditions. Finally, anyone who has an interest in the function of language, the different methodologies guiding textual commentary, or the possibilities of cross-cultural interpretation will enjoy the conversation Lopez begins, and most likely carry his ideas long after the book itself has been put down.