



## Charming Cadavers: Horrific Figurations of the Feminine in Indian Buddhist Hagiographic Literature (Women in Culture and Society)

By Liz Wilson

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In this highly original study of sexuality, desire, the body, and women, Liz Wilson investigates first-millennium Buddhist notions of spirituality. She argues that despite the marginal role women played in monastic life, they occupied a very conspicuous place in Buddhist hagiographic literature. In narratives used for the edification of Buddhist monks, women's bodies in decay (diseased, dying, and after death) served as a central object for meditation, inspiring spiritual growth through sexual abstinence and repulsion in the immediate world.

Taking up a set of universal concerns connected with the representation of women, Wilson displays the pervasiveness of androcentrism in Buddhist literature and practice. She also makes persuasive use of recent historical work on the religious lives of women in medieval Christianity, finding common ground in the role of miraculous afflictions.

This lively and readable study brings provocative new tools and insights to the study of women in religious life.

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