

EDITORIAL
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Welcome to Volume 5 of *Indialogs* dedicated to *bodies* in all senses of the term. The representation of the human body in Indian culture differs enormously from the West. Women were closely associated with fertility, abundance and prosperity rather than sin and temptation, and sexuality has been embraced openly as can be seen in many temples all over the country. Likewise, beauty was seen to be an essential aspect of the divine. Sanskrit has a large number of words that describe beauty or physical and sexual attraction and literary texts abound with imagery related to the body. The call for articles encouraged authors to go beyond the literal meaning of bodies and explore the idea from diverse angles.

The six academic articles in this issue have responded to the call in highly original ways by dealing with various aspects of the notion of *bodies*. Linda Hemphill discusses the representation of divine bodies in the Bollywood genre known as mythologicals. She provides an overview of the evolution of the genre and points to reasons why it should have declined in popularity. Òscar Figueroa's article focuses on the Tantric tradition, one of the religious traditions that developed in ancient India. He argues that it offers one of the most vigorous efforts at vindicating the powers of the imagination and analyzes the meaning of *bhāvanā*, literally the "act of bringing something into being", as it is used in the *Vijñānabhairava Tantra*. Edgar Tello applies both classical Hindu theories from sources like the Vedas and Western traditions such as nihilism to Akhil Sharma's novel *Family Life*, which shows the possibility of living after mental death. Tello claims that it is egotistical illusion rather than mysticism, which can shed a light upon political or social bodies.

The embodiment of poverty and subalternity in contemporary narratives features in both Clara Ballart's and Regiane Ramos' work. Ballart's article offers an innovative approach to one of Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories. Using Gramsci's and Spivak's work on the subaltern, she argues that the tragedy of the prostitute Saugandhi's life is

her growing awareness of her total lack of voice and inability to free herself from her social position. Ramos gives visibility to *hijras* or transgender people in India through her detailed reading of an autobiography by the political activist A. Revathi. The autobiography points out the social and cultural prejudices that hijras need to overcome in order to achieve some kind of respect and visibility in Indian society. The last article in this section by Laura Molina Vicente analyzes kinetic drawing by Heather Hansen, which is a blend of dance, yoga and painting through performances. Molina Vicente claims that the audience can contemplate Heather Hansen's encounter with herself from the movement of her body as an element of artistic expression.

The first text in the miscellanea section by Víctor Vélez proposes that nation-branding, as an important issue in the capitalist economy, is a dangerous tool which transforms culture into a product that can be consumed worldwide while it is culturally appropriated in simplistic terms. The following six essays are the work of UAB students who are about to graduate in English Studies. They have all taken the novel *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha and examined the main character's physicality and the boundaries that differentiate the human from the non-human. Alex Girona explores the identity conflict that is embodied in Animal because of the tragedy that crippled him for life. Oriol Jiménez focusses on speciesism and the rights of the non-human. Albert Muñoz argues that Animal can be seen as a postmodernist Oliver Twist. Helena Style suggests that the body in this novel is used as a tool to redefine what it means to be human. Òscar Port envisages a direct correlation between Animal's damaged body and the destruction meted out on the environment while Paola Nicolás claims that Animal uses his physical disability as self-protection even though the novel charts his evolution as a human being. Finally this issue closes with two review essays. Joan Martínez-Alier, a prestigious environmental economist, discusses a recent book by activist Sunita Narain and situates her work within India's green movement. Ioana Luca has reviewed Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru's exciting study of the fiction of Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Vikram Chandra.

We hope this issue fulfills our readers' expectations and provides food for thought as regards the concept of bodies. The editor wishes to thank all the people – authors, reviewers, copyeditors - who have collaborated in the success of another volume of *Indialogs*.