Editor's introduction

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Welcome to the second issue of *Body and Religion*! Following on from the excitement of the first issue, we now offer you yet more evidence of the importance and the range of the journal's topics. Again, all three words of the journal title ('body', 'religion' and 'and') are generative in this issue. It is precisely the many and varied relations between religion and body – and/or religions and bodies – that we examine. Indeed, our ambition in developing the journal is to provide colleagues, students and other readers and respondents with opportunities to examine the bodily doing of religion(s) in many contexts. We also want to encourage reflection on the bodily doing of the scholarly study of religion(s) ... and of bodies too. Thus, this issue contains two articles which place methods and theories in the foreground and two which demonstrate what particular approaches can achieve. Perhaps more interestingly, the first two chapters propose that far more biology needs to be considered when we examine religion and the second two chapters test religious embodiment in relation to (im)mortality and possession.

Sam Gill's article 'Moving: the core of religion' begins with a reflection on the dystopian film *Mad Max: Fury Road* and moves towards seven powerful propositions. He takes issue with what he sees as the way in which prevalent academic norms 'tend to halt the moving richness of religions' and presents an alternative that 'prefers kinesiology to autopsy'. The inspiration or provocation of the propositions he develops should, at the very least, enliven our discussions, our research and our teaching.

Tom Ellis also proposes an alternative to some dominant ways of approaching and understanding what passes for religion in his article 'Let's get physical: the ethology of religious submissions and intimidations'. It

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may seem straightforward to assert that scholarly explanations of religion should eschew appeals to supernatural realities. This is a commonplace theme in differentiations between Theology and the Study of Religions. Ellis enables us to consider a more robust physicalism in which postures of submission to putatively 'supernatural' or 'counter-intuitive' agents place religious acts firmly in continuity with easily observed behaviours in other socioeconomic contexts.

In the third article, 'The physical immortalist and the guru who died: the relationship between Leonard Orr – originator of rebirthing – and his immortal guru Haidakhan Babaji', Catherine Christof Dada presents a detailed examination of the responses of an 'immortalist' community to the death of a guru who, (seemingly) against his and their expectations, died. In all religious encounters with mortality, religious people – and those who study them – are confronted with a significant (if not always welcome) test of the relations between bodies and hopes, expectations, desires and fears. Christof's article considers advances discussion of the doing of religion by those whose most cherished expectations have apparently been disconfirmed.

A final chapter 'Incorporating spirit: ritual possession in Brazilian Umbanda' by Emma Stone focuses on the phenomenon of ritual possession within the Afro-Brazilian religion Umbanda. The collocation 'ritual possession' is significant – not because 'ritual' is sometimes used to mean 'an act or pretence' – but because it points to the bodily performances involved. Stone's discussion tests another of those putative boundaries between bodies and 'disembodiment', between the doing of religion and the ideological constructions of practitioners. Ritual possession provides opportunities for 'spirits' to act and speak. It is, nonetheless, experienced as definitively corporeal and corporate.