

# The embodied imagination:

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*affect, bodies, experience*

Submitted by Leila Alexandra Dawney to the University of Exeter

as a thesis for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

January 2011

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## *Abstract*

This thesis offers a critical interrogation of the relationship between and co-production of bodies, texts and spaces. It introduces and develops the concept of the embodied imagination through the philosophy of Spinoza and recent Spinozist thinkers as a way of informing a materialist account of the production of experience. The embodied imagination, as material and affective, can supplement a Foucauldian account of subjectivation through its ability to offer an account of experience ‘after the subject’ – of experience as the surface effects of the movement of affect through and across bodies, texts and spaces that are productive of transsubjective social imaginaries. This can contribute to a fuller account of subject production and to a formulation of embodied politics based on a political analytic of feeling.

These conceptual arguments are mobilised through exemplars from ethnographic fieldwork based on the geographical concerns of landscape, embodied practice and place imaginaries. In particular, I point to specific outdoor practices, techniques and regimes that, in their imbrication in certain imaginaries, contribute to a sense of place and belonging. Through a ‘thoroughly materialist’ approach to these concerns, bodies’ involvement in material relations with other bodies and with the world are shown to be central to experience-production. I argue too that this approach can expose the relations of power that produce the very materialities of bodies, and as such can shed light on the politics of the nonrepresentational and its centrality to the production of embodied subjectivities. In doing so, a postfoundational sociology of embodied experience is formulated that operates according to a politics of radical contingency. This postfoundational perspective foregrounds an ontology of the encounter over presence: an ontogenetic account of the emergence of bodies, texts and spaces from their material imbrication in a world charged with affective resonance.

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