

This article was downloaded by: [Trinity College]

On: 23 August 2010

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 917206162]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t777550184>

Norwegian *friluftsliv* and ideals of becoming an 'educated man'

Kirsti Pedersen Gurholt^a

^a Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Norway

To cite this Article Pedersen Gurholt, Kirsti(2008) 'Norwegian *friluftsliv* and ideals of becoming an 'educated man'', Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 8: 1, 55 – 70

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/14729670802097619

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14729670802097619>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Norwegian *friluftsliv* and ideals of becoming an ‘educated man’

Kirsti Pedersen Gurholt*

Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Norway

Norwegian *friluftsliv* or outdoor life is often identified as a ‘simple way of life’ and as exemplary of green life-philosophy and environmental practices. This paper argues that *friluftsliv* must be conceptualized as a complex social phenomenon and an example of long-standing Western discourse linking ideas of nature, gender and education. The expression *friluftsliv* was created in the mid-nineteenth century at a time of upheaval and inscribed in contemporary genderized contexts of practice and discourse. Thus *friluftsliv* was seen to be a vital part of what it meant to be a (bourgeois) male in the new-born Norwegian nation state (1905). These were ideas expressed and confirmed frequently in various ways in the early twentieth century and become a taken-for-granted grounding of Norwegian culture and identity. The aim of the paper is to trace the origin and development of the ideas linking the mastering of ‘free’ nature to ideals of male education and how these represent a contemporary contribution to themes, originated way back in European cultural history.

A critical approach

Over the last decades Norwegian *friluftsliv* has become familiar to outdoor educators, researchers and environmental philosophers world-wide. It is acknowledged as a relatively value-based green life-philosophy and environmentally friendly practices in contrast to what is often seen as being the more commercialized, skilled and risk-oriented activities denoted by the notion of *outdoor education* in English-speaking cultures (Henderson & Vikander, 2007; Reed & Rothenberg, 1993). In its native Norwegian context *friluftsliv* is widely recognized as a vital part of everyday life and seen as a key symbol of Norwegian culture and identity (Goksøyr, 1994; Ministry of the Environment, 1987; Nedrelid, 1991; Skirbekk, 1981). As such, it is frequently

*Department of Physical Education, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo, Norway.
Email: kirsti.gurholt@nih.no

conceptualized as an egalitarian social and cultural phenomenon, however veiling differences constructed by class, gender and ethnicity (Pedersen, 1999; Richardson, 1994). Owing to late modernization and urbanization *friluftsliv* as popular culture may be said to rest on two strands of origin: one in an aesthetic and adventurous approach inspired by, for example, English explorers and brought forward by a Norwegian bourgeoisie at the end of the nineteenth century, and another in the transformation of longstanding harvesting traditions of the rural regions (Breivik, 1978). The old Nordic tradition of the public's right to free access to outlying areas is the basic precondition for this.¹

Since the 1970s the ideas of *friluftsliv* have been heavily contested, not at least through its involvement as a subject in higher education. Among other sources it has been heavily influenced by the 'deep ecology philosophy' developed by the Norwegian philosopher and climber Arne Næss (1973/1989). Opposing positivist, instrumentalist and recreational perspectives *friluftsliv* was turned into a quasi-philosophical idea and a key-concept in the counter-cultural critique of the growing environmental movement (Faarlund, 1974; Reed & Rothenberg, 1993; Botne, Selle, & Strømsnes, 2002). More recently a critical-empirical *friluftsliv* research has developed and this paper aims to bring forward new arguments that can contribute to a more nuanced—and hopefully less ethnocentric—understanding of *friluftsliv* as a complex social phenomenon. I have earlier argued that the philosophical writings and the related academic practice must be criticized for the ways in which Norwegian culture is narrowly defined and for being biased in ways that express a self-evident and implicit connection between being a male and mastering the outdoors, concerning which it has not been seen necessary to pose questions or provide justification.² Thus women and understandings of how nature and *friluftsliv* might be related to femininity were largely excluded (Pedersen, 1999; Gurholt, in press).

***Friluftsliv* as male education: An example of long-standing Western discourse**

The chemical engineer, climber and mountaineer Nils Faarlund (1937–), one of the most influential instigators of *friluftsliv* as academic practice and discourse, describes the rise of Norwegian *friluftsliv* around 1900 as being analogous to *boyhood development*; from *birth* to *childhood*, *puberty* and *early manhood*, the latter he explicitly connects to the inter-war period (Faarlund, 1987, p. 13). Furthermore, he applies the well-known Norwegian male fairy tale character *Askeladden*³—the 'Ash-lad'—as a core symbol throughout his authorship. When *friluftsliv* in this approach is perceived to be concerned with challenges and excitement in unrestricted 'free' nature, or a *spirit of adventure*, *daring* and '*boy's stuff*' [*karsverk*], the scientist, polar explorer, skier, statesman, humanist and Nobel prize-winner Fridtjof Nansen (1861–1930) is a powerful source of inspiration (Breivik, 1989; Faarlund, 1974, 1993; Repp, 2004). However, the inspiration can also be traced back to eighteenth-century Romantic civilization critiques and narratives about culture destroying nature. According to this perspective mankind, too, is degenerating in culture's grasp. Amongst other

things, the romantic ideas also lie at the heart of another powerful metaphor; the one seeing *friluftsliv* as a 'way towards re-greening of society' or as a way home to nature, which is the home of culture (Faarlund, 1993). This mode of thought further implies an understanding that the 'true self' reaches fulfilment through its encounter with the so-called free, primordial nature. Since this 'true self' is first and foremost perceived to be male, the rise of the modern *Askeladden* through the mastery of an untouched and challenging 'nature', may—ironically speaking—be interpreted like an adventurous realization of the taken-for-given 'inner, real, and authentic' or *natural masculinity*, as if this were independent of historical or social context (Pedersen, 1999).

Although, the evolution of *culture* as a key-concept within anthropology and social sciences is also linked to Romantic ideas, it has since been re-valued on several occasions in various contexts (Larsen, 1999). The paired-concepts *culture* and *nature* are among the most connotative notions in Western languages (Williams, 1976), although only rarely clarified in national and international studies relevant for understanding outdoor adventure experiences. Therefore in the growing field of *friluftsliv* research it is an important task to identify and question the origin and development of practice, ideology and interpretation—*Gemeinschaft*; how the concept is inspired by European cultural history and has evolved and been used differently over time and space. This critical and comparative cultural approach does not comprehend such communities of actions, ideas and opinions as *nature-given*, but as something constantly (re-)created through human interaction: between women and men who are bodily situated geographically as well as in historical and social contexts. In this cultural-analytical perspective, the relationship with 'nature and male identity' will thus be interpreted *relationally*. From this it follows that *boy's stuff* should not be interpreted biologically, but as the expression of a socially-related need for the confirmation of a male identity—as a form of *modern masculine ritual*. I have earlier argued that this *overtly male friluftsliv*, however commonly interpreted as *taken-as-read* ideas, is a part of Norwegian and Western cultural *doxa*. It represents concepts that have, in turn, provided reference points for other ideas concerning culture and identity, e.g. the nature of a national Norwegian identity (Pedersen, 1999).

By means of an 'intertextual journey' through a selection of Faarlund's texts on *friluftsliv*⁴ and adjacent sources, for example, the text where the concept *friluftsliv* first appears (1859) written by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906)—this paper will show that the use of male-bound metaphors is not random, nor an accident. It fits well into European cultural history and mythology that links a mastery of challenging (Alpine) nature to not just adventurous experiences in nature, but the growth of (bourgeois) masculinity. To borrow a phrase from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977): the aim is to elevate the *overt* concept of a 'natural' connection between rambling for pleasure and challenge, mastery of—and over—nature and masculinity from *doxa* to *opinion*—from physically expressed, unspoken cultural axiom to open academic discourse and reflection. Faarlund (1987, p. 14) himself has guided the way: to 'pursue the investigation of *friluftsliv* as a characteristic element of Norwegian culture from nineteenth-century European cultural development'.

Fridtjof Nansen – the origin of Norwegian *friluftsliv*?

‘The strong Norwegian outdoor tradition’, according to Faarlund (1987, p. 5), goes ‘back to a group of people who did not live their daily life in the “freedom” of the outdoors—to citizens in towns and densely-populated areas, or to scientists, artists and the well-to-do who lived an urban lifestyle’. As mentioned earlier, among these Fridtjof Nansen is seen to be in a unique position; he is not only perceived as the creator of Norwegian *friluftsliv*, ‘his belief that free nature was our true home’ (Faarlund, 1993, p. 161) is an important source of inspiration for the shaping of *friluftsliv* as a critique of civilization and object of academic study in the 1970s.

Nansen towers over Norwegian culture—a legendary hero and key-symbol of a proud, independent Norwegian identity; as if he is a personification of the landscape as a basis for a nature-given national community and identity. Critical historical analyses have shown, however, that Nansen was influenced by a series of contradictory European ideas, including a direction of thought he adopted during the 1880s that was later to be labelled social Darwinism.⁵ In addition, he was a depressive and had an almost pathological desire to conquer and be acknowledged by women (Berg, 2004; Huntford, 1996; Moland, 1997). It is also clear that he actively contributed to the creation of myths about himself. Long after the first crossing of the Greenland Ice Cap and *Fram* expedition towards the North Pole (in 1888 and 1893–1896, respectively), he was working to *construct* images of ‘the northern landscape’ and deserted nature. One ongoing theme in his accounts is the *conquest of nature*, which he again links explicitly to images of virile men. First and foremost in contrast to less virile men, while women and womanly matters were seldom touched upon. Thus, the exploration of the Arctic can be said to stand out as virile man’s civilizing triumph over nature (Moland, 1997).

Nansen’s explicit contribution to the *construction* of the expression *friluftsliv* probably occurred for the first time in public as late as in 1916, when he used the expression as the title of a collection of hunting narratives, although without defining its meaning. In the same way, his spelling—*Friluftsliv*—indicates that the expression had not yet come into standard daily use. The Norwegian historian Moland (1997) claims that the next time Nansen used the expression in a public context was in the famous speech, *Friluftsliv*, that he gave to the youth, organized by *Den norske turistforening* [Norwegian Trekking Association] in 1921 (Nansen, 1922). Here, Nansen gave meaning to the expression *friluftsliv* through homage to Romantic ideals about deserted nature as a sanctuary that avoided cultural ruin. In his speech he idealized the character-forming qualities of what was defined to be a solitary encounter with the elements of nature. He challenged the young people to seek ‘a simple life in nature’ through *friluftsliv*, rather than learning book-knowledge by heart. Many see Nansen as a progressive in the question of women’s rights in society, as his first wife Eva was a skilled skier when they met. However, Moland claims that his view on women’s liberation was ambivalent. Urban environments and the need to use skis appeared to deem Nansen’s work gender-neutral, whereas leisure and sports skiing, on the other hand, were first and foremost for boys and men. Furthermore, the deserted landscapes had to be safeguarded against female access. These were areas

where boys and men, in particular, could form their character—and seek their true, virile self in solitary conditions.

The fact that Nansen was a particular model for boys' upbringing was expressed, amongst other things, by a flurry of edifying, Nansen-inspired books for boys that came out at the beginning of the twentieth century, and by personal accounts over several generations, especially accounts of manly exploration. Faarlund appears to have borrowed the metaphor of *Askeladden* from Nansen, who used the fairy tale in a story for children even *before* his Greenland expedition: conquering the Arctic was like *Askeladden* climbing the Glass Mountain, with the princess and half the kingdom as the reward⁶ (*Nansens røst*, 1942, p. 71, reproduced by Moland, 1997, p. 24).

Nansen was not alone in using the expression *friluftsliv* in around 1900. While *Den norske turistforening* (founded in 1868) wanted to promote the term *fotvandring* [walking], the expression *friluftsliv* was adopted by other associations (Nedrelid, 1991). Besides the distinction between the old Nordic term *idrett* [sport] and *friluftsliv* was not as clear as today; a distinction that grew in the beginning of the twentieth century, not at least inspired by Nansen, as a response to the expansion of competitive (English) sports. In contrast, the concept *friluftsliv* was tied to the enhancement of exploring nature for its beauty, challenge and pleasure and for the building of strong male character and a National identity. Still *friluftsliv* is viewed as an abstract concept in everyday language, as what people are actually doing is described far more concretely; they go for a walk, to fish, to pick berries, to climb, etc. (Pedersen, 1999).

There is much to suggest that the radically normative perspective and ideological view of *friluftsliv*, followed by a strong personal identification with Nansen's practices and ideas, and with mountaineering as an expression of a national identity, caused both Faarlund himself and others—in an anthropological sense—to be culturally blind at this point. When one fails to maintain an adequate critical distance and comparative perspective, it becomes nearly impossible to critically examine one's own cultural prejudices. From this follows a risk that too much of a one-sided emphasis would be placed on Nansen as the originator of Norwegian *friluftsliv* as a concept and in practice.

In order to reach 'a more durable explanation' of 'the distinctive character of *friluftsliv*', I shall follow Faarlund's notion of *vegledning* [conveyance/guidance] further and explore what he calls 'the circumstances surrounding its birth' (Faarlund, 1987, p. 13). This leads back to a time *before* Nansen becomes part of the story—to the breakthrough of modernity in Norwegian culture, society and literature.

Way up *On the heights*?

The first written use of *friluftsliv* as an expression may, as already mentioned, be traced back to Henrik Ibsen. In his epic poem *Paa vidderne* [*On the heights*], dating from 1859, Ibsen has a farmer's son while hunting 'up on the heights' to remark that he experiences '*friluftsliv* for my thoughts' (Ibsen, 1859/1991a). This poem of 64 stanzas portrays a Romantic motif. Caught between the lure of a free-roaming life in

the mountains and feelings for longing for his loved one down in the valley, the young hunter is transformed and ennobled through his solitary challenges in the wild and deserted nature and achieves 'a deeper view of life' and an existential independence. Without too much of a struggle he finally breaks off from constraints of 'the fumbling lowland life' and finds himself steeled, free, self-sufficient and firm in resolve: 'now I am man enough to fend for myself'.⁷

Paa vidderne is imbued with a sharp distinction between what is masculine and feminine. The masculine is symbolized by the heights, a breadth of vision, up, out, freedom, God, the individual, and with the high-quality, free, unspoiled, unbinding and *ego-forming* life in a wild nature. The feminine is symbolized by down there, fumbling, at home, unfree, bodily nature, the other, the masses and with inferiority, contemptible, domestic life, trivial, fixed, routine-ridden and binding lowland life. Ibsen develops a similar gender symbolism linked to the expression *friluftsliv*, with reference to a bourgeois and urban environment. In *Kjærlighedens komedie* [*Love's comedy*] (1862) we meet a couple in love who are about to break their engagement (Ibsen, 1862/1991b). While Falk [lit: falcon], the free bird of prey, goes out on a wandering summer journey in 'God's free nature' after the break-up, the charming Svanhild, the beautiful swan, expresses an opposing attitude to life and choices: 'Now I have finished with my life of freedom; now the leaf falls;—now let the world have me'. After that she dances in the arms of another man and is caught up in marriage; giving up the idea of liberation and of finding her individual identity through *friluftsliv*.

Paa vidderne was written after Ibsen himself had gone on long mountain excursions and had been inspired by the national Romantic interest in exploration, the beauty of nature and the ordinariness of village life.⁸ The interpretation I hold reasonable is that this European-oriented and society-engaged writer *creates* the phrase *friluftsliv* as a *poetic expression* of the new *aesthetic and adventurous view of nature* that was in the process of developing in Norway as elsewhere in Europe around the middle of the nineteenth century. No evidence exists that the concept was already in common daily use and if Norwegian philosopher Hjalmar Hegge (1990) is right; practices and perceptions that are inherent in modern *friluftsliv* must be traced back long before the concept was created.⁹ When Ibsen causes a young farmer's son and male student to pay tribute to the free life in unspoiled nature, he is giving expression to the political and ideological upheaval at the time, which is changing Norway from an agrarian society to a modern national state, *and* to the new bourgeois masculine ideals that were in the process of breaking through. Ibsen is, however, critical of the self-sufficient Norwegian national Romanticism and is also ambivalent about the unbound aesthetic, adventurous and freedom-seeking Alpine life, which is presented partly positively, partly as flight. Much later the old Ibsen disliked the worship of Nansen as a national hero (de Figueiredo, 2006, p. 247).

The expression *friluftsliv* was created at a time of upheaval and at the same time inscribed in contemporary *genderized* contexts of meaning and discourse. Approximately 20 years *before* Ibsen allows the young housewife Nora to break out of the *Doll's house* [*Et dukkehjem*] (1879), to liberate herself by leaving her husband and children at home (Ibsen, 1879/1968),¹⁰ neither middle-class young women nor

peasant girls could experience freedom in nature or *friluftsliv*. Thus interpretations that maintain that the hunter's free life in the mountains becomes an image of a generalized *humans'* liberation from all conventions, must be revised; according to 'time and space' this is to be understood literally as a possible liberation only of boys and men. Ibsen mocks the bourgeois ideals of marriage and describes features that are recognizable, for example, in Eva and Fridtjof Nansen's marriage a few decades later. According to the ideal of women and female education of that time, it was through marriage—as a wife and mother, women could realize their so-called inherently female properties (Martin, 1985; Blom, 1992)—not through *friluftsliv*. Eva's period as an active skier was limited to her youth prior to marriage, in marked contrast to her later role as a lonely and frustrated wife, kept waiting and partly giving up her career as a professional singer, while her husband explored the secrets of the polar ice to be the first (hu)man to reach the North Pole (Huntford, 1966).

Modern *friluftsliv*-education: A reproduction of adventure as a male's domain?

Faarlund and others have toned down Ibsen's significance with regard to an understanding of *friluftsliv*, on the basis that it was Nansen who made this expression famous, defined its content and inspired people's practice (Faarlund, 1993; Repp, 2003). Seen from a critical gender and cultural analytical perspective, it becomes clear that the view of nature and *friluftsliv* cultivated by the bourgeoisie and upper middle classes, with Nansen as its highest-profile exponent, did not just trickle down the Norwegian people and become common property: it became part of a more or less conscious struggle—among men—concerning power and status in Norwegian society (Goksøyr & Solenes, 2004; Richardson, 1994). Although Ibsen never was a hero of the 'great outdoors' or a prototype for practical *friluftsliv* in the same way as Nansen and other explorers, his contribution should not be overlooked. Ibsen's realistic society dramas expressed a critical view of the individualized male search for freedom and the romanticizing of nature and history that Nansen's footprints implied. The Ibsen trail thus inspires a historical-sociological analysis of nuanced and complex processes of formation, where the mythological and utilitarian relationship with nature of earlier times is reformed into poetically energetic ways of modern 'free-life-in-free-nature'. At the same time, it becomes evident how the new contemporary nature practices and an understanding of *friluftsliv* were inscribed in, and incorporated, concepts of femininity and masculinity in ways that expressed a polarized, but none the less more open and debatable understanding of gender. Here no male or female 'real, natural nuclei to disentangle' was seen to be found beneath the many layers of the psyche. Whereas Nansen's footprints may, from a female perspective, be interpreted to be backward-looking, male elitist and confined, Ibsen's trail points to modernity's departure from 'imprisoning' gendered traditions.

The Norwegian narrations on heroic male adventures and *friluftsliv* as central ideals of what is associated with becoming an 'educated man'—to borrow a phrase from Martin (1985)—fit well into a long-standing European tradition. According to

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), the need to explore areas of the world where no humans have ever stepped on before, can be traced to the Homeric Odysseus (von Wright, 1993). However, explorations of a human's boundless search for everything new, untried and unexplored can be traced in a variety of texts; for example, in Goethe's *Faust* and in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. The narratives share a common taken-for-granted structure: the safe harbour which rescues the male hero from destruction is embodied in a female character whose designated role is to wait patiently for *his* return (Ryall, 2004). Until recently the hegemonic discourse of *friluftsliv* and outdoor adventure has been characterized through the symbolic representation of gender relations which juxtaposes masculine and feminine principles; ideas which became strong with the breakthrough of the Enlightenment and modern era. Then for example, the metaphor of nature as a fertile woman and mother was gradually replaced by the image of a clock or a machine; a change that has been interpreted, in that industrialization replaced earlier organic views of nature by a mechanical view, sidelined with a marginalization of women in society (Merchant, 1980). At the same time, the earlier perception of women as incomplete men and the gender relationship as *differences of degree* was replaced by a view that perceived women as *qualitatively* different from, and subordinate, to men – both physically and psychologically. In other words, common humanity was split in such a way that the male also came to represent the universally human, whereas the female became synonymous with the less important. The basis for the modern polarized gender perception may also be linked to the growth of new biological and medical knowledge and to the educational philosophy of Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and his complex interpretations of the 'nature' of men and women (Martin, 1985; Laqueur, 1994; Connell, 1995). These were ideas that from early onwards influenced the Norwegian bourgeoisie (Christensen, 1993).

In his novel *Émile ou de l'éducation* (*Émile: or, on Education*), published in 1762, Rousseau makes a sharp distinction between male and female social traits and areas of activity. While boys are seen to have a natural right to their own childhood and to be free and authoritative, girls should be trained in maternal pursuits and to serve the needs of man (Martin, 1985; Wollstonecraft, 1792/2003). Rousseau argues that boys through 'natural' observations, experiments and studies of surrounding nature, should have the freedom to pursue and develop their own inner self, while the task of the educator was to facilitate and convey them. Thus, boys could develop their physical strength and their characters be tempered—according to the ideal of 'the noble savage'. Free play in nature was thus perceived to have an ennobling quality: a wise man must first have been a shrieking, jumping and playful young boy. Rousseau's philosophy paved the way for a modern understanding of childhood and education. What was seen as most revolutionary was the link he established between *self-sufficiency* and *freedom*. An upbringing in (political) freedom required (pedagogic) self-sufficiency, *not* tutelage, he argued and tried to solve this new at the time educational paradox—how to provide an upbringing in freedom with the help of an external authority—by referring to *nature as the mother of all education* (Korsgaard & Løvlie, 2003, p. 13). The nature that Rousseau wished to 'return to' was thus that which, in

an ideal way, may serve self-awareness through an understanding of the outside world. His concern was thus with (the male) human nature, not that of the outside world (Løvlie, 1990; Larsen, 1996).¹¹

Also the ideas of the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) came to have a decisive influence on European cultural history, including Danish and Norwegian Grundtvigianism (Korsgaard & Løvlie, 2003)—and, in my view, on Norwegian ideas concerning *friluftsliv* as education, as exemplified in Faarlund's thinking. Whereas Rousseau perceived education as a double-sided process, where nature is the basis of personality formation and culture the point of departure for education in society, Herder maintained that a natural unity or symbiosis existed between nature, language and nation (*das Volk*). What Rousseau and Herder did agree on, however, was the understanding that the (male mountain) peasant represented the original and authentic individual, not yet spoiled by culture and civilization.

The Romantic perception of nature established culture and civilization in earnest as a negative contrast to the world of nature. Thus the distinction between culture and nature, between *mankind* and its surroundings, became absolute. With Rousseau, ideas about a self-sufficient male (bourgeois) subject emerged that had to be shaped into a force in its own right. One way in which this subjectivity could be realized was by freeing himself from a dependence on nature. At the same time, the individual could experience, in just the same way, the deepest sense of interdependence with nature and find his true self by seeking, conquering and mastering its untouched and challenging aspects. With the Romantics, the focus changed from a landscape of civilization, which in itself 'embodies' what is beautiful, to a wild, untouched 'virgin' nature, a process that took several centuries. The further process of transformation can broadly speaking be described thus: whereas the eighteenth century was distinguished by a distant admiration for high mountains, nineteenth-century (male) educational travel ventured into the wildest glacier landscapes and to the top of the highest mountains. During the twentieth century, the world's poles and its highest summits and peaks were conquered. In parallel with this, an enthusiasm for the joys of verticality and fear was expressed to a greater and greater extent (Macfarlane, 2003). This rationality follows the record spiral of modern sports achievements: their unifying aim is that of first ascents and conquests.

The French literary critic and philosopher Roland Barthes (1915–1980) (1957/1973, p. 104) calls this blend of nature worship, 'Protestant puritanism', and the belief in cultivating one's inner depth and spiritualism by visiting the mountains 'morally uplifting walks'. Several other researchers have linked the attractiveness of the sublime; the mastery of (Alpine) nature, aesthetic elevation, individualization and (bourgeois) male identity formation and education to the breakthrough of modernity (Frykman & Löfgren, 1979; Macfarlane, 2003; Simmel, 1895/1991). By projecting oneself into nature, the individual (man) could experience 'swelling' confirmation of the self (Bache-Wiig *et al.*, 1999, p. 13). The British historian Robert Macfarlane (2003, pp. 158–159) claims that the attractiveness of altitude 'coincided perfectly with the Romantic glorification of the individual. A summit was somewhere one could stand out—could be outstanding'.

In Norway similar processes happened over a few decades during the second part of the nineteenth century and were strengthened because they coincided with the time of Norwegian urbanization, international race for the poles, the formation of the Norwegian national state (established 1905) and the need to establish and proclaim a common national identity which differed from those of Denmark or Sweden, the countries that had ruled Norway for 500 years.

With Romanticism also the transition from science to the arts, from an objective knowledge of nature to a subjective experience of/in nature—‘from *logos* to *poiesis*’—was accomplished (Løvlie, 1990).¹² In the didactic thinking on Norwegian *friluftsliv* as an academic subject this was expressed by natural science’s understanding and exploitation of nature as a raw material being rejected in favour of a Romanticism emphasizing a feeling of the male mind’s deep roots in nature. Combined with an intense interest in climbing and a personal engagement in environmental conservation, deep ecology, ‘pre-modern’ lifestyle of Nepal and inspiration from a critical and anti-authoritarian dialogue pedagogy, *vegledning* [conveyance/guidance] emerged as a ‘serious pedagogical’ method. On the one hand, the didactics of *vegledning* emerged as a visionary critique on society, (self)-reflecting and forming ‘experience of an alternative green lifestyle’, including ideas of mutual responsibility, dialogue, heterogeneity and democracy. On the other hand, it was built on a *doxa* that construed *friluftsliv* as a form of male poetic education. Further the presumptions for the romantic and idealized concept ‘free nature’ forced education in/through *friluftsliv* to the most remote (mountainous) areas, and was seen to be fulfilled by means of intense training and development over several years, including long absences from whom *he* holds dear. In this company of mountain masters only few women have been creditable. Thus the eco-philosophical perspective, which should actually recognize all forms of life as having an equal right to self-realization (cf. Næss, 1973/1989), has not provided the means to recognize women’s (and children’s) connections, perspectives and competence (Gurholt, in press). Instead, the language and metaphors used and the practice employed has emerged as authoritarian and male elitist and thus as exclusive and limiting.

When modern ‘*Askeladden* figures’ of our time have shouted *I found it, I found it!* and have sought to limit the ‘distinctive character of *friluftsliv*’ to nature experiences that arise from masterly mastering (and being a gentleman) in the so-called free, untouched nature—somewhere between the spirit of adventure, daring and ‘boy’s stuff’—they have placed *friluftsliv* in a gender conservative ‘grip’. Instead of distancing themselves from the male-biased ideas of the past, they (unconsciously) have become spokesmen for a male-oriented educational tradition that stretches far back into European cultural history, which has had difficulty reflecting women’s education or recognizing women’s rights to equal citizenship (cf. Martin, 1985). Thus, the hegemonic discourses on nature adventure and *friluftsliv* education can be said to oppose the twentieth-century democratic changes in society and a feminist critique where the hierarchical gender order is reconceptualized as a dynamic system of power relations, in which multiple masculinities and femininities are constantly being constructed.

Extending the dialogue: *Friluftsliv* as ideas of the 'educated woman'

The Romantic illusion that separates nature from culture and seeks a life in nature which it is claimed exists outside history and beyond human scope has to be challenged. However, Romanticism also offers a way of interpreting human beings as creators of culture (Larsen, 1999) and as creators of culture, human beings must always respond to practices, ideas and interpretations that have already been created by others. What is called *nature* and *friluftsliv* has a history of practice and meaning; ambiguous, complex and contradictory. One alternative to the Romantic understandings may therefore be to establish compound expressions that comprehend nature and *friluftsliv* as gendered historical, social and cultural categories; an approach that includes a space dimension, biological and political processes, knowledge production, as well as journeying and nature (adventure) experiences as a way of environmental ethics and practices. Thus *friluftsliv* must be conceptualized as a dynamic, variable and society-related phenomenon, anchored in *situated* human beings' bodily practices and experiences; as lived experience and reflection. This opens for a cultural-analytical approach and phenomenological-hermeneutic interpretations that re-conceptualize *friluftsliv* according to concrete historical, geographical, sociological and cultural contexts, including a development of non-sexist, inclusive, (self)reflective and critical concepts.

In the late 1980s a feminist critique of outdoor life, education, and research grew simultaneously in North America and European countries (Eskilsson, 1999; Henderson, 1992; Humberstone, 1986; Pedersen, 1999). An alternative vision emerged; to *denaturalize* hegemonic male-biased interpretations, to make various groups of women's lived outdoor experiences visible, and to show how the incorporated and taken-for-granted ideas of masculinities and femininities were historically and socially related power-relations, and as such dynamic and changeable (Humberstone & Pedersen, 2001; Pederson, 2003). To speak with Martin (1985), it was argued in favour of a need to reclaim a new gender-sensitive conversation and expand the dialogue to include ideas of the 'educated woman'.

Historical and comparative studies show that women's—like men's—nature competence, experiences, understandings and interests have varied over time, but also within the same community, for example, during the 1880s and 1890s *friluftsliv* became a practice and a symbol of emancipation among Norwegian bourgeoisie women. For the Norwegian Women's Liberation Association (founded 1884) the reformation of women's clothing and the making of a special tourist dress became an important issue. When the women threw away their corsets and headed for the mountains it was seen to broaden their sphere of actions socially, culturally and geographically, as a principle of the female body's right to free development and free movement, and as an expression on women's social rights as human beings. It was, however, the unmarried and well-educated, and in the beginning the middle-aged, who were able to take part in *friluftsliv* as liberation from a constrained and trivial domestic life and view on women (Bugge, 1961; Ryall & Veiteberg, 1991; Lyngø & Schiøtz, 1993; Ryall, 2004).

One hundred years later a new wave of Norwegian women, individually and in groups, are actively challenging the male-dominated *friluftsliv* practices and discourses. Their main intention seems not necessarily to be to compete with men but to develop the competence needed to feel confident when journeying in different types of landscape. In addition, they want to explore and 'harvest' the pleasures and quality of life and richness in experiences of nature and social life that comes from journeying different landscapes and from just being within the elements with family and friends (Pedersen, 1999). The premises for the new wave of female hikers and adventurers are to be found in feminist critiques of society and the long-drawn-out struggle to improve women's living conditions, which in the Norwegian welfare state has given groups of women more control over their lives, more space for action, and an increased freedom of movement and joy in life.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the Norwegian Research Council, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences and Finnmark University College for supporting the research underpinning this paper. Special thanks to Siri Gerrard, University of Tromsø for her supervision, critical commentary and academic collaboration over many years. Mary Jones, University of Tromsø has translated the original Norwegian text (Gurholt, 2007) into English on which the paper is further developed. The insightful comments of two reviewers are sincerely appreciated; these helped with clarifying structure and arguments. An early version of the paper was presented at the International Association of the Sociology of Sport's Symposium in Oslo, 28 June–1 July 1997.

Notes

1. The 'everyman's right' allows the population to move freely, also on uncultivated private land and to pick mushrooms, flowers and berries, and with some restrictions to go fishing and hunting. Included is also the right to tent for a short period of time, and a general obligation to be considerate. This right is a recognized judicial principle, established in an Act of Parliament (1957).
2. In the few cases where male dominance nevertheless has been openly discussed, it was mostly evolutionary and biologically determined explanations that were employed (Pedersen, 1999). This interpretation framework fits within what Macfarlane (2003, p. 90) terms 'masculine Darwinism', which heavily influenced upon British and European mountaineering from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. It also fits with Connell (1995), who claims that socio-biology's scientific theoretical basis has generally had wide-ranging consequences for the understanding of masculinity and the order of rank between males in Western thought.
3. *Askeladden* is the main character in several Norwegian folk tales; dynamic, smart, creative, individualistic, free-thinking, and knowledgeable – an adventurer and a hero who always succeeds when others fail (Hodne, 1999). de Figueiredo (2006, p. 338) sees *Askeladden* as a parallel to *Alladin* in ancient mythology.
4. Four selected key texts from Faarlund's productive output have been closely studied. These texts are in English translation: What, how, why *friluftsliv* (1974), *Askeladden* (1987), *Friluftsliv – a way home* (1993) and *Nature-life philosophical thoughts in folk-tale times* (2000) and might

- be seen as representative of, respectively, early authorship, 'mid-point in life', international breakthrough and 'afterthoughts'.
5. Moland (1997) further maintains that Nansen's predilection for *being first* is strongly inspired by the biologist and Darwinist Ernst Hæckel's claim that the struggle for existence 'must be hard'; a struggle which ensures that mankind's best qualities are brought forth.
 6. This specific folk tale involves rescuing a princess held captive in a land east of the sun and west of the moon. *Askeladden* is typically portrayed as the youngest of three brothers. The older two try first to heroically overcome some major crises or problem to rescue the princess but fail. Their conventional ways of thinking is seen to be the main reason for this. In contrast, *Askeladden* comes up with creative solutions so that he can outwit trolls, etc., and also find a smart way to climb the Glass Mountain.
 7. At around the same time, Ibsen wrote his poem *Høijfeldsliv* [*Alpine life*], which idealizes mountain folk and life in the summer mountain pastures. The quotation here is taken from one of the final stanzas and reproduced in Ibsen (1859/1991a).
 8. During the summers of, for example, 1856 and 1862 Ibsen walked in the mountains and among other things collected stories and legends that would later be used, e.g. in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*. The young hunter in *Paa vidderne* is often seen as a romantic predecessor to *Peer Gynt*. de Figueiredo (2006, p. 247) characterizes *Kjærlighetens komedie* as Ibsen's first contemporary drama.
 9. Hegge (1990) argues that the history of how nature is conceptualized in modern Norwegian *friluftsliv* must be traced back to the fundamental changes in European civilization since the late Middle Ages; to how people's relationship to nature changed from mythical consciousness to an attitude of conquest, from being dependent on nature to liberation from it.
 10. The *Doll's house* was highly controversial when first published, as it sharply criticized the nineteenth century marriage norms. It is often called the first true feminist play and is perhaps Ibsen's most famous play. The first English production was in 1893. Nora is of Latin origin, meaning 'the bright one'.
 11. Thus the misunderstanding linked to the slogan 'back to nature', subsequently used, amongst others, by progressive and anti-authoritarian educationalists in the 1970s, becomes visible.
 12. *Poetic* derives from the Greek *poiesis*, which signifies creative production (Løvlie, 1990).

Author biography

Dr Kirsti Pedersen Gurholt is an associate professor in *friluftsliv* and physical education at the Department of Physical Education, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, prior to which she taught for more than 20 years at Finnmark University College, far north of the Polar Circle. Her research focuses on social and cultural diversity, and gender relations within *friluftsliv*, physical education and dance.

References

- Bache-Wiig, H., Lombnæs, A., & Lærkesen, I. (1999). Innledning [Introduction]. In I. Lærkesen, H. Bache-Wiig, & A. Lombnæs (Eds.), *Naturhistorier. Naturoppfatning, menneskesyn og poetikk i skandinavisk litteratur* (pp. 9–17). Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag.
- Barthes, R. (1975). *Mytologier* [*Mythologies*]. Oslo: Gyldendal. (Original work published 1957)
- Berg, K. (2004). *Fridtjof Nansen og hans kvinner* [*Fridtjof Nansen and his women*]. Oslo: Schibsted forlagene.
- Blom, I. (1992). Vestlige verden 1750 til våre dager [The Western world from 1750 up until to day]. In *Cappelens kvinnehistorie. Bind II* (pp. 309–354). Oslo: Cappelens forlag.

- Botne, Ø., Selle, P., & Strømsnes, K. (2002). *Miljøvern uten grenser [Environmental preservation without limits]*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *An outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Breivik, G. (1978). To tradisjoner i norsk friluftsliv [Two traditions in Norwegian friluftsliv]. In G. Breivik, & H. Løvmo (Eds.), *Friluftsliv fra Fridtjof Nansen til våre dager* (pp. 7–16). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Breivik, G. (1989). F. Nansen and the Norwegian outdoor life tradition. *Scandinavian Journal of Sport Science*, 11(1), 9–14.
- Bugge, A. (1961). *Touristinder og andre sportspiger [Female tourists and other sporting women]*. Oslo: Tanum.
- Christensen, O. (1993). *Skiidrett før Søndre [Skiing before Søndre]*. Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal.
- Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- de Figueiredo, I. (2006). *Henrik Ibsen. Mennesket [Henrik Ibsen. The human being]*. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Eskilsson, L. (1999). Fritid och demokratisering [Leisure and democratization]. In K. Sandell, & S. Sörlin (Eds.), *Friluftshistoria* (pp. 67–83). Stockholm: Carlssons Bokförlag.
- Faarlund, N. (1974). *Hva, hvordan, hvorfor friluftsliv [What, how, why friluftsliv]*. Oslo: Norges idrettshøgskole.
- Faarlund, N. (1987). Askeladden [The Ash-lad]. In T. Ydegaard (Ed.), *Om å gripe og bli grepet av fjellet* (pp. 13–20). Slagelse: Nordisk Forum for Vejledning i Natur- og Friluftsliv.
- Faarlund, N. (1993). *Friluftsliv – a way home*. In P. Reed, & D. Rothenberg (Eds.), *Wisdom in the open air* (pp. 155–175). Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Faarlund, N. (2000). Natur-livsfilosofiske tanker i Per-og-Pål tider [Nature-life philosophical thoughts in folk-tale times]. In H. Kolstad (Ed.), *Har fjellet ansikt? Naturfilosofiske essays* (pp. 211–219). Skien: Naturfilosofisk seminar.
- Frykman, J., & Löfgren, O. (1979). *Den kultiverade människan [Humans as cultivated beings]*. Lund: Liber Förlag.
- Goksøyr, M. (1994). Nasjonal identitetsbygging gjennom idrett og friluftsliv [The development of national identity through sport and friluftsliv]. *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift*, 2, 182–193.
- Goksøyr, M., & Solenes, O. (2004). Nature and the Norwegian working class: A historical study of discourse and practice ca. 1900–1940. In J. M. Delaplace, S. Villaret, & W. Chameyrat (Eds.), *Sport et nature dans l'histoire*. Proceedings of the VIIth ISHPES Congress, Montpellier, 2001. *Academia Verlag*, 10, 387–393.
- Gurholt, K. P. (2007). Askeladden – vegviser i friluftslivets og maskulinitetens kulturhistorie [The Ash-lad – a guide to the cultural history of friluftsliv and masculinity]. In A. McD. Sookermany, & J. W. Eriksen (Eds.), *Friluftsmannen, veglederen, klatreren og naturfilosofen Nils Faarlund* (pp. 288–300). Oslo: GAN Aschehoug.
- Gurholt, K. P. (in press). Norwegian *friluftsliv* as 'Bildung' – a critical review. In P. Becker, & J. Schirp (Eds.), *Other ways of learning*. Marburg: BSJ.
- Hegge, H. (1990). Det moderne friluftsliv i historisk og filosofisk perspektiv [Modern friluftsliv – a historical and philosophical perspective]. In G. Andersen (Ed.), *Momenter til en dypere naturvernforståelse* (pp. 43–57). Oslo: Vett & Viten.
- Henderson, B., & Vikander, N. (Eds.) (2007). *Nature first. Outdoor life the Friluftsliv way*. Toronto: Natural Heritage Books.
- Henderson, K. (1992). Invisible pioneers? The impact of women on the recreation movement. *Leisure Studies*, 14, 139–153.
- Hodne, Ø. (1999). Midgard og Utgard. Natursynet i norske folkeeventyr og sagn [The image of nature in Norwegian folk tales and legends]. In I. Lærkesen, H. Bache-Wiig, & A. Lombnæs (Eds.), *Naturhistorier. Naturoppfatning, menneskesyn og poetikk i skandinavisk litteratur* (pp. 19–36). Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag.
- Humberstone, B. (1986). Learning for a change: A study of gender and schooling in outdoor education. In J. Evans (Ed.), *Physical education, sport and schooling* (pp. 195–213). London: The Palmer Press.

- Humberstone, B., & Pedersen, K. (2001). Gender, class and outdoor traditions in UK and Norway. *Sport, Education and Society*, 6(1), 23–33.
- Huntford, R. (1996). *Fridtjof Nansen. Mennesket bak myten [Fridtjof Nansen. The myths behind the human being]*. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Ibsen, H. (1968). Et dukkehjem [Doll's house]. In *Henrik Ibsen. Nutidsdramaer 1877–99* (pp. 67–114). Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag. (Original work published 1879)
- Ibsen, H. (1991a). Paa vidderne [On the heights]. In *Henrik Ibsen. Samlede verker 2* (pp. 479–483). Oslo: Den norske bokklubben. (Original work published 1859)
- Ibsen, H. (1991b). Kjærlighedens komedie [Love's comedy]. In *Henrik Ibsen. Samlede verker 1* (pp. 131–168). Oslo: Den norske bokklubben. (Original work published 1862)
- Korsgaard, O., & Løvlie, L. (2003). Indledning [Introduction]. In R. Slagstad, O. Korsgaard, & L. Løvlie (Eds.), *Dannelsens forvandlinger* (pp. 9–36). Oslo: Pax Forlag.
- Laqueur, T. (1994). *Om könens uppkomst. Hur kroppen blev kvinnelig og mannlig [Making sex: body and gender from Greeks to Freud]*. Stockholm: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag.
- Larsen, S. E. (1996). *Naturen er ligeglad. Naturopfattelser i kulturel sammenheng [Nature is indifferent. Concepts of nature in a cultural context]*. København: Munksgaard-Rosinante.
- Larsen, T. (1999). Antropologiens kulturbegrep [Culture as a concept within anthropology]. In S. Gerrard, K. Melby, & P. Repstad (Eds.), *Kulturforståelser i fagene* (pp. 49–100). Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget.
- Lyngø, J., & Schøitz, A. (1993). *Tarvelig men gjestfritt. Den norske turistforening gjennom 125 år [Frugal but hospitable. The Norwegian Tourist Association through 125 years]*. Oslo: Den Norske Turistforening.
- Løvlie, L. (1990). Den estetiske erfaring [Aesthetical experiences]. *Nordisk pedagogikk*, 1(2), 1–18.
- Macfarlane, R. (2003). *Mountains of the mind. A history of a fascination*. London: Granta Books.
- Martin, J. R. (1985). *Reclaiming a conversation. The ideal of the educated woman*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Merchant, C. (1980). *The death of nature: Women, ecology and the scientific revolution*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Ministry of the Environment (1987). *Friluftsliv. St.meld. nr. 40*, Oslo.
- Moland, T. (1997). *Fridtjof Nansen. En mann [Fridtjof Nansen. A man]* (Master's dissertation, Universitetet i Oslo, Oslo).
- Nansen, F. (1922). *Friluftsliv*. In *Den norske turistforenings årbok 1922* (pp. 3–5). Oslo: Den Norske Turistforening.
- Nedrelid, T. (1991). Use of nature as a Norwegian characteristic. Myths and reality. *Ethnologica Scandinavia*, 21, 20–33.
- Næss, A. (1989). *Ecology, community and lifestyle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. *Økologi og filosofi*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. (Original work published 1973)
- Pedersen, K. (1999). 'Det har bare vært naturlig!'. *Friluftsliv, kjønn og kulturelle brytninger* ['It has just been natural! Friluftsliv, gender, cultural change and discourse] (Doctoral dissertation, Norges idrettshøgskole, Oslo).
- Pedersen, K. (2003). Discourses on nature and gender identities. In K. Pedersen, & A. Viken (Eds.), *Nature and identity. Essays on the culture of nature* (pp. 121–150). Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget.
- Reed, P., & Rothenberg, D. (Eds.), (1993). *Wisdom in the open air*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Repp, G. (2003). Eventyrlyst, meistring og karsverk. Nansen som føredøme [Spirit of adventure, mastering of skills and 'boy's stuff'. Nansen as a model]. In V. F. Moe, & S. Løland (Eds.), *I bevegelse – et festskrift til Gunnar Breivik på hans 60 års dag* (pp. 184–197). Oslo: Gyldendal Undervisning.
- Repp, G. (2004). Friluftsliv and adventure: Models, heroes and idols in a Nansen perspective. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 4(2), 117–132.

- Richardson, H. (1994). *Kraftanstrengelse og ensomhet. En analyse av det norske friluftslivets kulturelle konstruksjoner* [Exertion and solitary. An analysis of Norwegian friluftsliv as cultural construction]. Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen.
- Ryall, A. (2004). *Odysseus i skjørt* [Odysseus in skirts]. Oslo: Pax Forlag.
- Ryall, A., & Veiteberg, J. (1991). *En kvinnelig oppdagelsesreisende i det unge Norge. Catharine Hermine Kølle* [A female explorer in early Norway. Catharine Hermine Kølle]. Oslo: Pax Forlag.
- Simmel, G. (1991). The Alpine journey. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 8, 95–98. (Original work published 1895)
- Skirbekk, G. (1981). Nasjon og natur. Eit essay om den norske væremåten [Nation and nature. An essay on Norwegian manners]. In S. S. Bjugn, O. Hageberg, & S. Time (Eds.), *Eit våpen mot vanen* (pp. 119–129). Oslo: Det norske samlaget.
- von Wright, G. H. (1993). *Myten om fremskrittet* [The myth of progress]. Oslo: Cappelens upopulære skrifter.
- Williams, R. (1976). *Nature. Key-words: A vocabulary of society and nature*. London: Fontana.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (2003). *Et forsvar for kvinnens rettigheter* [A vindication of the rights of woman]. Oslo: Pax Forlag. *A vindication of the rights of woman*. London. (Original work published 1792)