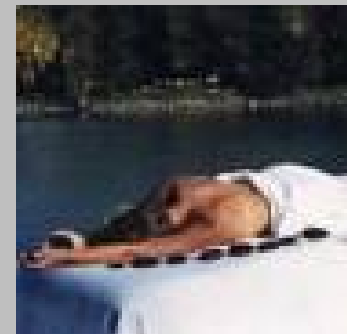




Fit farms and fat camps: new perspectives on nature, well-being and the body



Jo Little
University of Exeter, UK
ESRS Congress, August, 2011



Structure of the paper

- The therapeutic industry
- Key theoretical directions in understanding the relationship between well-being and the body
- The role of nature, the natural and wilderness in the construction of therapeutic spaces



Transformative holidays

yoga, meditation, weight loss, pampering,
healing, spas, fitness centres, retreats.

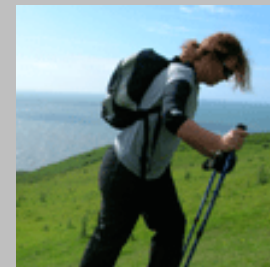








“We’re booked out for the rest of the year. 25 on each course, three weeks in each month. Lots of repeat visits. We are starting to ‘niche’ – over 50s, high BMI etc. The ‘Fat Men’ courses are building up”
(Fitfarms)



“Lots of the courses are fully booked. People love it and 100% say its good value. Its becoming more normal within the holiday market. People are getting more stressed and more health conscious. They want exotic – it’s the ‘bragability’ factor”
(Wildfit)

- Care of the self
- The disciplined body

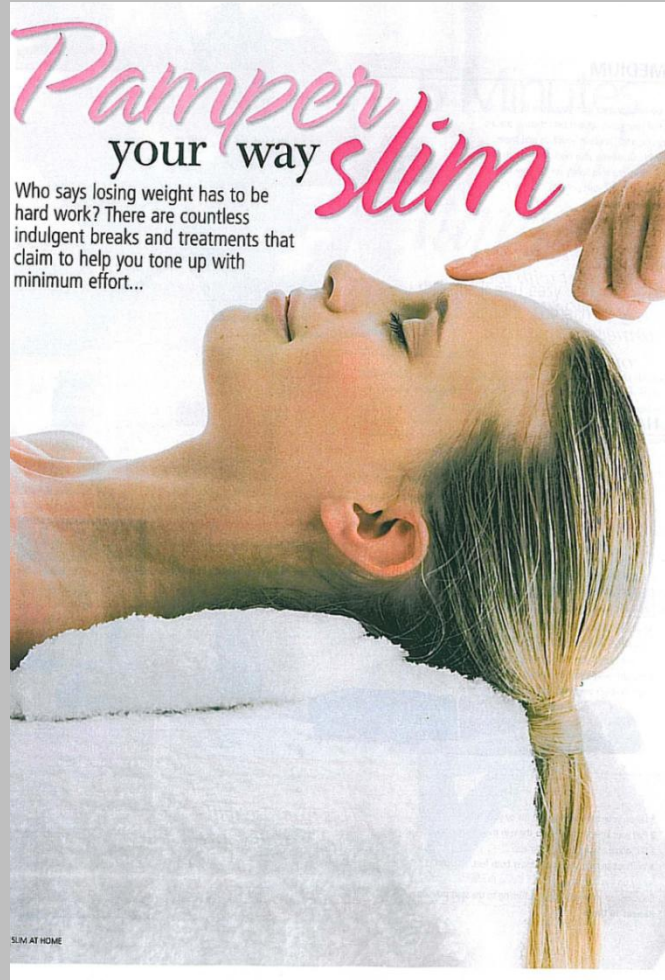


The disciplined body

“(i)ndividuals and their bodies are increasingly subject (and subjecting themselves) to knowledges which produce particular Westernised medical understandings of what a healthy body should consume, how it should move and what it should look like” (Parr, 2002).

Pamper your way *slim*

Who says losing weight has to be hard work? There are countless indulgent breaks and treatments that claim to help you tone up with minimum effort...



SIM AT HOME

Transformative

"The fitness element of the holidays involves exercising among trees, forest, lakes, rivers and the sea...in ways in which humans did too, many generations ago... 'Wildfitness' is not just an experience that will change your perception of fitness holidays, it may well change your life."

“Lots come (to the fit farm) with low self esteem and low body image. ...Its life changing and about empowerment. There’s a shift in their heads – its quite motivational” (Fit Farm)



Rurality, Nature and Therapeutic Practices

“a ‘return to nature’, a life of the open air, clean and pure food and the companionship of animals”.



“Nature is hugely, hugely important. To get out, in the fresh air. Its so good being outdoors and being in nature definitely builds up their energy and makes them feel good” (Fit Farm)

“It’s a magic location, a stunning place. The whole idea is to take people back to nature – to sleep as it gets dark and have no lights. The true luxury is to be able to sleep in complete silence and be woken up by the chimpering of monkeys” (Wildfitness)

“We believe people need to touch nature and feel it again. They come from London ...and you see them shed their layers of stress. Some of them are so divorced from nature they are a bit scared” (Wildfitness)

"A 16 mile walk on Exmoor is one of the highlights of the fitness course. They aren't used to wild nature and don't make use of what's on their doorsteps. They don't realise its enjoyable." (Fit Farm)

“One of the things (with our philosophy) is that you have the wild humans and the zoo humans. This (London) environment is incredibly alien... We’re like caged animals a little bit. Its like if you take an animal out of its natural environment and the city is like the human zoo. ”

“It sounds extreme but our theory of fitness is that if you take a wounded animal and put it back in the wild it will heal. So our theory is that we are taking zoo humans and putting them back in the wild to heal” (Wildfitness)

“– we’re not eating the food we evolved to eat, we’re not moving in the way we were evolved to move, we’re not sleeping.... We’ve not got the views”

“Put them back in their natural environment and they eat naturally and move naturally. They heal. There’s all this medical science and research but nature is the best guide”.

“The recent surge in the performance of aesthetic surgical procedure has provokeda vigorous dialogue about the social and cultural significance of the industry. Some see surgical beautifying as an advance in individual freedom, an indication of posthuman possibilities for identity and community, and a cure for feelings of inferiority. Others fear increased intolerance of physical difference, further entrenchment of conventional and oppressive beauty ideals, and the exclusion of low-income individuals from the psychological and health benefits that aesthetic surgery can offer” (Corvino, 2004, p106)

“In Crete we get them climbing through trees, crawling through grass, over rocks. That natural, tactile thing”

“swim in rivers, swing from trees, discover your inner animal”

“We don’t use technology. Just heart rate tests. We use Functional Fitness techniques. They are holistic and prepare the body for what it should be doing”

Conclusions

- Importance of linking current concerns about food production, availability and consumption to more specific attitudes to the body
- Links to health policy but also wider social and cultural shifts and practices
- Role of nature and the rural 'body industry'

