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Educational relationships: Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and social justice.

Abstract

I consider educational relationships as found in Rousseau's *Émile* (and elsewhere in his writing) and the critique of his views in Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Wollstonecraft's critique is a significant one, precisely because of her partial agreement with Rousseau. Like Rousseau, her concern is less to do with particular pedagogical techniques or even approaches, more to do with the full complexity of educational relationships. The educational relationships they consider include those between human beings now and in the future, between teacher and student(s), between students, and between human beings and the rest of the natural world, the more-than-human. Both Rousseau and Wollstonecraft wanted education to produce social justice in the future as well as being a benefit to young people in the present, but while he specified that future, she wanted to create the conditions in which future generations could construct it for themselves, when sex equality was put into practice. Gender relations are key to understanding their differences, as I discuss, with particular emphasis on Wollstonecraft's understanding of our human relationship to the rest of the natural world, the more-than-human. These relationships are seldom recognized as contributing to a more socially just education, so I consider them at a little more length, drawing from observations by Kathleen Jamie and using an example from outdoor education to suggest possible implications for educational practices.

Introduction

A wild wish has just flown from my heart to my head, and I will not stifle it though it may excite a horse-laugh. - I do earnestly wish to see the distinction of sex confounded in society, unless where love animates the behaviour. (Wollstonecraft, 1994 [1792], p. 126)

I consider educational relationships as found in Rousseau's *Émile* (and elsewhere in his writing) and the critique of his views in Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. I argue that we can benefit not only from her critique of Rousseau but also from her alternative approach. Rousseau and Wollstonecraft discuss educational relationships which contribute to a more socially just world: between human beings now and in the future, between teacher and student(s)[1] (individually and as a group), and between human beings and the rest of the natural world, the more-than-human. I argue that their educational approaches point to a significant difference in their understanding of social justice i.e. of how to live well, here, now, and in the future, as individuals always in relation with their human and more-than-human contexts[2]. This difference is connected

to their conceptions of how human beings become who and what they are. I begin by placing the two authors in their historical contexts and then go on to outline how their views of educational relationships differ, starting with how they see education as contributing to a more just future and moving on to a consideration of relationships between teacher and students with regard to freedom and to individualized learning. Finally, I consider relationships between human beings and the more-than-human. These relationships are seldom recognized as contributing to a more socially just education[3], so I consider them at a little more length, drawing from observations by Kathleen Jamie (2005, 2012) and using an example from outdoor education to suggest possible implications for educational practices.

Rousseau's *Émile* and Wollestonecraft's *Vindication*.

Rousseau's book *Émile* published in 1762 reads as something between a manual and a (very long) fervent letter about how to educate a boy, Émile, and also a girl, Sophie, so they grow up to be ideal citizens of an ideal republic. Very briefly, the book takes the following form. The boy is removed from his family from the age of two, and put under the guidance of a tutor who ensures that the child's education matches his natural stages of development. He is taught on his own, being allowed only the occasional social event with other children, so that he does not get contaminated by contact with the imperfect, over-mannered, social world around him. He then moves through more stages of learning, all of which are tightly controlled, until he becomes a man, at which point he meets and marries Sophie. She, meanwhile, has been carefully taught, at home, by her mother, to be dependent, obedient and pretty because these are qualities which are all natural to her and which need to be encouraged for Émile's sake and also for the sake of the citizenry as a whole (Martin, 1985, 1986). The adult Émile has the virtues of a man: an autonomous, rational citizen in control of his emotions. The adult Sophie has the virtues of a woman: a dependent, obedient, loving partner.

Émile was immensely influential at the time, as well as being extremely controversial. Many of Rousseau's educational ideas draw on some of those found in other significant authors, such as Comenius and Locke, but the way he brought them together with his

political commitments electrified his generation. The book was soon being discussed throughout Europe, having been translated into a number of languages. His influence on Kant's philosophy is well known, for instance (Bloom, 1979; Steinkraus, 2010)[4]. At the same time, the book was found to be so deeply offensive, especially in relation to his criticism of religion, most clearly evident in the character of the Savoyard priest who appears in Book IV, that Rousseau had to flee the mob.

After Rousseau's death, *Émile* caught the imagination of future educators, many of them influential in their own right: Pestalozzi, Froebel, Steiner, Montessori and Dewey are just a few of them. Darling and Nordenbo trace the history of progressivism and emphasize the significance of Rousseau, stating that Comenius is 'nothing more than an overture to the history of the classics of progressivism: Rousseau' (2004, p. 290). As Darling and Nordenbo argue, the main strands of progressivism are easily traceable to Rousseau but are primarily pedagogical rather than broadly political in intent. They argue that the main features of progressivism are a consideration of the child's nature, personal growth, creativity, and natural motivations. I would add to this list the importance attached to children learning by experience, through activities with physical objects, especially natural ones. All of this is now so commonplace that it has become part of so-called 'best practice' for much primary (and some secondary) education. Rousseau's pedagogical ideas no longer seem radical to a modern reader.

Mary Wollstonecraft was three when Rousseau's book was published; as a young adult she had been persuaded and excited by many of his educational ideas. However, she also denounced many of his educational ideas in her extended polemic, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Her polemic was primarily directed at his proposals for girls' education. This is not surprising. Not only was she was female and so likely to notice Sophie – as generations of male commentators have not – but also she was herself far from fitting Rousseau's ideal of a submissive, unintelligent, modest, flirtatious, virtuous woman trying to be pretty. Not for nothing was she called a 'hyena in petticoats' by Robert Walpole.

Wollstonecraft was like Rousseau in that she had a difficult childhood and grew up to be a charismatic, difficult, often personally unhappy misfit in society. Like Rousseau, she stirred up controversy by writing best-selling books that were both widely admired and widely vilified. Also like him, she is difficult to categorize as straightforwardly 'Enlightenment' or 'Romantic'. She asserts her adherence to reason, and her two *Vindications*, first of the rights of men, and then later of the rights of woman were thought to be masculine in approach. (In what follows, all references to the *Vindication* refer to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.) Other books, especially her *Letters written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark,* were praised for their female sensibility. She appeals to reason throughout the *Vindication*, but does so with 'energetic emotions', (rather than with 'pretty feminine phrases'). In spite of these similarities Wollstonecraft's ideas were soon forgotten, while Rousseau's lived on.[5]

Wollstonecraft's polemic in the *Vindication* is fun to read – and usually apposite – and the book could be read simply as an indignant response to contemporary statements about the inferior position of women, including Rousseau's view of Sophie as naturally dependent and lacking in reason. To do so would be to miss what is more significant for current educational practices. I turn to Wollstonecraft because she provides a (now submerged) response to *Émile* that suggests an educational approach which, in my view, would be productive of more socially just educational relationships than those proposed by Rousseau. Her proposals form an implicit critique of many of Rousseau's basic assumptions in *Émile* as well as constructing an alternative approach. Education had been a continuing preoccupation for her, and she had written several successful books on the subject, grounded in her own experiences of teaching in school and as a governess. In the *Vindication* she suggests alternative approaches and makes some concrete, constructive proposals about education in general. Some of these appear in the penultimate chapter, 'On national education'. However the chapter is not a summary of her approaches and proposals. These can also be found scattered throughout the book in the form of comments on educational practices, as she considers the harm she thinks they do to both boys and girls.

It is important to note that there is no simple polarized difference between Rousseau and Wollstonecraft. Her proposals demonstrate that there are significant similarities between them. Both of them not only pay attention to the place of education in creating a just society, but also to the happiness of children during their education. Unlike most writers on education at the time (and since) each considers the implications of the education of *both* boys *and* girls for the future shape of society. Further, they share a critique of society as corrupt and unequal, and disliked the refined manners of polite society. They both explicitly say they want to be honest and straightforward in expressing their views. Finally, they each express a wish for a more equal world of smallholders/tradesmen to replace class divisions between the aristocracy, the middle classes and, to some extent, the poor.

Wollstonecraft's critique is a significant one, precisely because of her partial agreement with Rousseau. She demonstrates that there is a different way of approaching the good things to be found in Rousseau, while avoiding some of the unfortunate implications of his system. The different threads of Rousseau's educational thinking in *Émile* weave together into a whole cloth that has been found to be attractive down the centuries. Wollstonecraft suggests a way of using many of these threads while discarding others, in order to weave a different cloth that would serve education better. In other words, both thinkers understand how details of pedagogy must cohere with its wider purpose educationally and politically. Like Rousseau, her concern is less to do with particular pedagogical techniques or even approaches, more to do with the full complexity of educational relationships. The educational relationships they consider include those between human beings now and in the future, between teacher and student(s), between students, and between human beings and the rest of the natural world, the more-than-human.

Educational relationships in the present affecting relationships in the future

The education of the young is always concerned with the future as well as with the present, since the relationships cultivated in young people will affect the kinds of relationships they are able and willing to form in adulthood. Hence education is looked to

as a way of producing a better future. It is hoped that the future may be, variously, happier, healthier, more productive, more democratic, more prosperous, more dynamic, more peaceful and/or more just. It is the last of these that most concerned both Rousseau and Wollstonecraft. Both of them wanted education to produce social justice in the future as well as being a benefit to young people in the present. Their different understanding of how to achieve it is reflected in the kinds of educational relationships each of them favours.

One view of social justice, dating back at least to Plato's *Republic*, takes the form of a blueprint for a perfect society. In this view, we know what it would be to live well, and what conditions would be needed to allow it. Rousseau took this view. He was an admirer of the *Republic* and was self-consciously and explicitly emulating it. His aim was to devise a blueprint for a socially just republic in which education is as key as it was for Plato. Once a blueprint has been drawn, all that remains is to construct it accurately, at least as far as possible. His educational proposals for Émile and Sophie are designed so that as adults they would inhabit an ideal republic.

Wollstonecraft appears to have held an alternative view: that social justice is always in the making, and necessarily responsive to changing conditions, especially those conditions which are themselves the result of a struggle for social justice. It is probably relevant that the *Vindication* was written against the tumultuous background of the French Revolution. So while Wollstonecraft agreed with Rousseau that education could lead to a more socially just society, her aims remained at the level of general principle rather than providing specific proposals about what such a society would be. Her proposals seek to change contemporary educational practices so that it would be possible to create a more socially just society but she is content not to see beyond the horizon, knowing that at the horizon somebody else may be able to see further:

> It is difficult for us purblind mortals to say to what height human discoveries and improvements may yet arrive when the gloom of despotism subsides, which makes us stumble at every step… (1994 [1792], p. 102)

Wollstonecraft has been described as reformist rather than radical, but as Ferguson (1999) argues, it is right to call her radical even though she stopped short of challenging either the class basis of society, or the assumption that mothers had the primary responsibility for children.[6]

Indeed the contradictions at the heart of her wish that women should both be employed in the professions, and also take responsibility for the home, are ones that she could hope would be resolved when the first principle of sex equality was put into practice. In other words, she wanted the society 'reasonably organized' but had no blueprint for what it might look like.

Between teacher and student(s)

Rousseau intends that Émile will learn personal autonomy and independence through the experience of exercising them. But this is a strange kind of personal autonomy, perhaps not surprisingly given Rousseau's felt tension between harmony and individual freedom, something which appears and reappears in his various books (Rorty, 1998). It is a personal autonomy that is entirely controlled by the tutor, though intended to be felt as a rugged, individual independence. The tutor knows precisely what Émile should learn as he grows through various broad stages of development. Each learning objective is controlled by the tutor. However, the child himself thinks that he is freely choosing what he does and attending to the consequences. This pedagogic approach is described by Rousseau as 'purely negative' (1979, p. 93). The tutor is never to demand obedience either through force or reason. Rather, he makes sure the boy's education is one of 'well-regulated freedom…One enchains, pushes, and restrains him with the bond of necessity alone without his letting out a peep' (1979, p. 92). Meanwhile, Sophie is being made well aware that she must do as she is told by her mother. That is how she is to learn a proper docility. Rousseau says that little girls must become accustomed to being interrupted in the midst of their games without grumbling. They must feel their dependence. They must not be allowed, ever, to know themselves free of restraint (1979: 370).

Wollstonecraft does not describe the details of pedagogy, since she focuses on the students and their perspectives rather than on teaching. However, her few remarks intimate an approach in which the teacher makes space for students' ideas to influence the direction of the lessons. She speaks of the business of education as conducting 'the shooting tendrils to a proper pole' (p. 190). But she is also keen that children are encouraged to work out their ideas in conversation with each other, without too much interference from an adult.

> In order to open their faculties they should be excited to think for themselves; and this can only be done by mixing a number of children together, and making them jointly pursue the same objects. (1994 [1792], p. 241)

She seems to be advocating a social pedagogy of principles rather than objectives, and in which children learn from each other in social groups rather than individually on their own.

Gender relations are key to understanding these differences. Rousseau's proposal requires single sex education; Wollstonecraft's requires co-education. Émile's education is intended to make him hardy and tough. He is to be guided by reason not emotion, while Sophie learns to be soft and to express emotion, though not to exercise her reason. In adulthood, the two sexes and their different capacities would be perfectly combined to create a just republic governed by reason in public and by appropriate emotions in private. Wollstonecraft wanted all children to learn both reason and affection. That would lead, she hoped, to a more just society in which the understanding had enlarged the heart of all men and women (p. 281). For this, social relations between children and within the family are key.

> To make men citizens two natural steps might be taken, which seem directly to lead to the desired point; for the domestic affections, that first open the heart to the various modifications of humanity, would be cultivated, whilst the children were nevertheless allowed to spend great part (*sic*.) of their time, on terms of equality with other children. (p. 242)

She sees independence as coming not from solitary living or self-sufficiency but from everyone being able to make a living: 'to earn their own subsistence' (p. 250).

Rousseau has a dualist, tightly-linked set of assumptions in which naturally manly characteristics (independence, strength, rugged self-sufficiency and action) are in opposition to naturally womanly ones (dependence, weakness, tenderness towards others and a concern with personal appearance). He thought:

> A perfect woman and a perfect man ought not to resemble each other in mind any more than in looks… woman is made to please and to be subjugated… there arises…the audacity of one sex and the timidity of the other, and finally the modesty and the shame with which nature armed the weak in order to enslave the strong. (1979 [1762], p. 358)

Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, draws no dualistic links like the ones for Rousseau:

> Yet thus to give a sex to mind was not very consistent with the principles of a man who argued so warmly, and so well, for the immortality of the soul – But what a weak barrier is truth when it stands in the way of an hypothesis. (1994 [1792], p. 110)

She was not alone among philosophers or educationists in proposing the radical view that the sexes were intellectually and morally equal. Rousseau's contemporaries, Voltaire and Diderot, both thought so too (Clinton 1975)[7]. Wollstonecraft herself cites *The History of Sandford and Merton*, a didactic children's book published in the 1780s, which advocates that girls as well as boys should be educated in reason and philosophy (p. 108). Her contribution, similar to Rousseau's, is to draw together these current ideas and knit them into a structure, in which connections are made between an educational present and the good of a future society.

Feminist theory over the last 40 years has drawn attention to the ways that Rousseau's kind of dualism is embedded in the stuctures of much modern thinking in a way that distorts what it is possible to think and to do. Feminists have long argued that the existence of dualism in thinking is associated with the binary of sex (Irigaray, 1985, Fox Keller, 1986, Whitford, 1991, Langton, 2005). Dualistic thinking goes beyond the more obviously gendered concepts such as mind/body, nature/reason,subject/object or emotion/reason. Its implicit gendering extends to many of the concepts used in everyday

educational life to describe young people: boy/girl, active/passive, strong/weak, clever/diligent, autonomous/dependent and so on. Dualism lives, for example in current stereotypes of big strong boys playing football and taking up most of the playground, and the neat and tidy groups of girls chatting round its edges. This dualism has been given a recent impetus from some neuroscientists. The feminist neuroscientist, Cordelia Fine usefully presents a critique of their attempts to give a rationale for gender duality in spite of evidence to the contrary (Fine, 2010). I am reminded of previous feminist scientists' struggles with gender determinism in biology (Sayers, 1982), psychoanalysis (Bernheimer and Kahane, 1985) and sociobiology (Haraway, 1991).

An alternative to dualism, equally problematic, is the phallogocentric imaginary which assumes a worthwhile humanity to be masculine, if not actually male. Perhaps it is not surprising that many commentators have not really noticed Sophie or have thought of her as an anomaly. They think Émile is just a child,which is to miss one of Rousseau's main arguments, as pointed out by Martin (1985, 1986). As mentioned earlier, Rousseau's utopia depended as much on the existence of an adult Sophie, domestic, emotional and obedient as it did on an adult Émile, citizenly, reasonable and autonomous. Inattention to Sophie means that the Rousseau's ideal boy becomes the ideal child: who 'climbs trees, fires catapults, swims in streams' and who appears in fiction as :

> Tom Brown, Just William and Huckleberry Finn, and includes such honorary boys as Tarzan, Richard Hannay and Alan Quatermain. (Griffiths and Smith, 1989, pp. 286-7)

The effects in current educational thinking are to make a stereotypical masculine life desirable for all human beings, forgetting the dependence of this life on the physical and emotional work of women[8]. So it is taken for granted that girls should do as well as boys in 'boys' subjects' (though when they do better, then it seems to be a matter of concern). But boys are not expected to do well in 'girls' subjects'. The ideal pupil is still masculine – even if the high attaining one is a girl.

In our own time, education largely remains caught between new dualisms (that look much like the old ones), either in which women know their place as supportive to men, or

in which the ideal citizen is masculine and nobody is left to do what has been traditionally women's work (at least in a society of equals). Wollstonecraft offers an alternative. She wants both men and women to have the same virtues: both the domestic ones and the citizenly ones.

The significance attached to this masculinist autonomy by educators remains strong. Yet, as my dialogue with Richard Smith (1989) shows, the concepts of autonomy, dependence and independence in educational settings are multiple, and often mutually incoherent while remaining enmeshed in a Rousseau-like disdain for dependence. We point out:

> Most teachers take friendship patterns very seriously, and attach importance to their own personal relationships with the children in their class. They are also likely to pay a lot of attention to the importance of the home, community and culture as an influence on the child. The importance of other people in the development of children remains, however, insufficiently acknowledged as far as the development of self and of knowledge are concerned. In literature, whether with a psychological or philosophical flavour, it is far more common to find 'autonomy' and its cognates posited as the end to which development tends than any recognition that most of us gladly choose a world in which our autonomy is constrained by personal relationships. (Griffiths and Smit1989, p.286)

Current calls for individualism, 'personalization' and also, at the same time, team work or group work, are, arguably, tensions inherited from Rousseau.

Between human beings and the more-than-human

Rousseau uses 'nature' or 'natural' in more than one way, for instance describing the more-than-human world, the physical and psychological development of human beings and in distinguishing artifice from what is authentic. However, as Wain points out:

> These are not, however, contradictory or inconsistent uses but complex ways of using the same term in different contexts of meaning. It is neither necessary nor usual for a word to carry one constant meaning whenever it is used, provided that the different uses are clearly signalled by the context. (2011, p. 47):

In short, Rousseau's view of nature is Romantic. He re-theorizes nature as good, against views of his time that the rationality or spirituality of human beings is manifested in a transcendence of nature. Rousseau's view, radical at the time, was significant because, if nature is the source of our goodness, then a natural man can trust his conscience which will not have been corrupted by society. Nature has a double use. It is needed to allow a boy to develop into a man. Then, as a man, he can return to Nature as a source of sublime feelings and restoration. Taylor describes Rousseau's approach:

> We return to nature because it brings out strong and noble feelings in us…Nature is like a great keyboard on which our highest sentiments are played out. We turn to it, as we might turn to music, to evoke and strengthen the best in us. (1989, p. 297)

Rousseau sees nature as something that draws a response from the solitary individual of sublime appreciation. Nature requires him to be able to deal with its challenges with rugged strength, endurance and courage. All of this is evidently a nature that is always, and necessarily, other than human except for the natural boy or man who experiences it. This nature, at least as found in man, is perfected by civilization (as is made clear both in *Émile* and in the *Discourse on Inequality*). Ironically, this understanding is reminiscent of a rational, scientific Enlightenment that Rousseau rejects. It could be argued that he advocates using nature, just as a rationalist like Bacon wanted to use it for the benefit of men. In both cases the preservation of nature can be understood as enlightened self-interest. For followers of Rousseau this means advocating outdoor education in order to experience a response to nature (Jickling, 2009, Bonnett, 2007); for followers of Bacon it means advocating Sustainable Development because the ecosystem needs to be preserved if human beings are to survive at all. (Kopnina, 2013)

Wollstonecraft offers a different approach from either of these. For her, nature nourishes the spirit in several ways, all of which are to be found through a proper education. In her pedagogical proposals she does not impose a sharp demarcation between what is inside walls and what is outside them, neither does she distinguish a wild nature from one influenced by human beings. The sublime is significant, as is also clear throughout her

Letters written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark where she describes the Scandinavian landscape. However she is also attentive to the (more social) pastoral landscape as well as the (non-human) sublime. For Wollstonecraft, nature is both good and bad, restorative and dulling. The outdoors provides the pleasures of being in shady lanes or sitting on stiles, and the nuisance of muddy lanes and wet weather – and the pleasure of returning home, out of it.

> I still recollect with pleasure, the country day school; where a boy trudged in the morning, wet or dry… [to] return alone in the evening to recount the feats of the day close at the parental knee …I appeal to many superiour men, who were educated in this manner, whether the recollection of some shady lane where they conned their lesson: or, of some stile, where they sat making a kite, or mending a bat, has not endeared their country to them. (1994 [1796], pp.242-3)

She writes of her spirits being restored by lakes, fir groves and rocks, but she also writes of being 'bastilled by nature' (2009 [1796]. p. 69) in a place where rocks and sea shut people out from finer sentiments.

> Nothing genial, in fact, appears around this place, or within the circle of its rocks. And, now I recollect, it seems to me that the most genial and humane characters I have met with in life, were most alive to the sentiments inspired by tranquil country scenes. (2009 [1796]. pp. 69-70)

Sublime nature can be enhanced by human additions. She mentions with approval a carefully placed stone seat (2009 [1796]. p. 21). She remarks how the place 'bastilled by nature' becomes 'extremely fine' when viewed from the sea: 'In a recess of the rocks was a clump of pines, amongst which a steeple rose picturesquely beautiful' (2009 [1796]. p. 70). But the non-human is not there simply for our exploitation. Kindness to animals is a significant virtue for her, partly, though only partly, because it connects with the treatment of one human being by another.

> Humanity to animals should be particularly inculcated as a part of national education, for it is not at present one of our national virtues. Tenderness for their humble dumb domestics, amongst the lower class, is oftener to be found in a savage than a civilized state…where they are trodden under foot by the rich, to

> domineer over them to revenge the insults that they are obliged to bear from their superiours. (1994 [1792], p.258)

She wants book learning and the real things to be integrated with play in the outdoors, valued not only for itself, but also because:

> These relaxations might all be rendered part of elementary education, for many things improve and amuse the senses…to the principles of which, dryly laid down, children would turn a deaf ear. (1994 [1792], p. 253)

These relaxations also allow natural animal spirits to improve body and mind:

> With what disgust have I heard sensible women, for girls are more restrained and cowed than boys, speak of the wearisome confinement, which they endured at school. Not allowed, perhaps, to step out of one broad walk in a superb garden, and obliged to pace with steady deportment stupidly backwards and forwards, holding up their heads and turning out their toes, with shoulders braced back, instead of bounding, as nature directs to complete her own design, in the various attitudes so conducive to health. The animal spirits, which make both mind and body shoot out, and unfold the tender blossoms of hope, are turned sour and vented in vain wishes or pert repinings, that contract the faculties and spoil the temper. (1994 [1792], pp. 248-9)

Wollstonecraft's educational proposals suggest the relevance of the more-than-human in the education of children in ways that are neither in the long shadow of Rousseau's Romantic conception, nor in its converse of rationalist instrumentalism.

Outdoor education as an example

I have been discussing different approaches and proposals about educational relationships: between human beings now and in the future, between teacher and student(s) (who also have relationships with each other), and between human beings and the rest of the natural world, the more-than-human. All of these are significant because they concern the social justice issue that faces all human beings: how to live well, here, now, and in the future. In this section I focus on one of these sets of relationships: the more-than-human.

Wilderness and the outdoors. Human beings in relationship with the more-than-human

In this section I draw attention to how the world can be described using the terms which do not fall easily on one side or another of Rousseau's dualist distinctions between Nature and what is natural, on the one hand, and what is social and civilized, on the other hand. There is an alternative to seeing ourselves as distinct from an innocent, good, wild, non-human nature; instead, like Wollstonecraft, we need to employ no sharp demarcations between what is indoors and outdoors, what is wild from what is social. Kathleen Jamie's two recent books of essays (2005, 2012) demonstrate a way of understanding our natural selves that is much closer to Wollstonecraft's perceptions than to Rousseau's. As Jamie puts it in her trenchant critique of Macfarlane's *The Wild Places* (2008), the dominant imaginary in the Romantic tradition of nature writing is, following Rousseau, a 'lone enraptured male' in search of the spiritual resources of remote places seen as 'wild' (2008). Her work asks us to notice that nature is more complex. It is all of: organic, inorganic, indoors, outdoors, and both; of our bodies, in our bodies and beyond them; made/created/formed by people; growing, inanimate; beautiful, grim; huge, minute, and all sizes between; mysterious, wild, ordinary, unspoilt, worked over, innocent and a force to be struggled with. Like Wollstonecraft, she thinks that what we term 'nature' is not there to be exploited, though it is to be engaged with; that it can seem benign or malign; and that it demands an ethical response from us.

Jamie's essays may seem to be just simple, careful, attentive descriptions of her observations. But each of them is an implicit criticism of the dominant, Romantic approach to descriptions of nature. She challenges the usual distinctions made between indoors and outdoots; the wild and the common place; the wild and the domestic; attention to what is non-human and attention to human beings. For instance, in her essay, 'Peregrines, Ospreys, Cranes' she does all of this. She begins by noting the call of a peregrine both outside and inside the house:

> The sound enters my attic room through its window, and if I turn from my desk to glance out of that window I see the hill. (2005, p. 29)

Later, on a bike ride she discusses the peregrines with a grumpy old man:

> ‘Ach – the young ones have no interestit,’ he’ll say, shaking his head. (2005, p. 31)

Later still, she comes across a young mechanic at the garage who is concealing a telescope on a dirty oil drum so he could watch them. She writes:

> Between the laundry and the fetching kids from school, that’s how birds enter my life. I listen. (2005, p. 39)

In ‘Skylines’, she demonstrates the artificiality of Rousseau’s dualism. The outdoors is linked to buildings, people, passersby, her own everyday working life, the weather, geology, history and, most of all, to looking with attention. She starts an article about looking at Edinburgh skylines through a telescope on Calton Hill, by saying:

> One afternoon last November I was crossing Charlotte Square and, happening to glance up, saw a comet. …this beautiful brass comet, a shining ball towing a deeply forked tail. (2005, p. 147)

In her essay, ‘Pathologies’, Jamie blurs another set of distinctions; the wild and the outdoors, the wild and ourselves. When her mother dies, somebody uses a phrase about nature taking its course. Shortly after, she attends a conference where people are pontificating about humanity’s relationship with other species, and how we have to ‘reconnect with nature’, as if, she notes, we are not bodily, mortal beings, using vaccinations and eating meat. She thinks more about this issue, and gets permission to attend some biopsies. She looks at bacteria grazing on a stomach lining:

> It was an image you might find in a Sunday-night wildlife documentary. Pastoral but wild, too. …in the wilderness of our stomachs. (2012, p. 35)

The Outdoors in Educational Practice

The influence of Rousseau on education in the outdoors is clear. Orthodox educational approaches see the outdoors as providing real experiences in order to meet the pre-defined objectives of the science, geography or history curriculum. Alternatively, it provides adventure and a chance to develop physical skills in response to risk. Or it allows children to find the spiritual resources missing when they are suffering from

‘nature deficit disorder’ (Louv, 2008; Moss, 2012). The critique presented by Wollstonecraft and Jamie suggests that a better approach would be to acknowledge the rich complexity of human life in and of the world. It would be to acknowledge that nature is not only ’out there’ but also ‘in here’ and ‘around here’. Within education an approach like this would mean asking students to pay attention and then reflect using various forms of symbolization and expression. However, as Haluza-Delay (2001) argues, this needs to be done in familiar places and in the midst of ordinary social events, acknowledging them not bracketing them. Attention and reflection can be done alone or in a group, but in either case it thrives on conversations whether in the moment or remembered, and then on collaborative reflections, learning with peers as well as with tutors, in order to come to independent, unforced ways of understanding ourselves, in and of the world.

It is possible to find such an approach in some practices of ‘outdoor education’. Higgins and Wattchow (2013) describe how a canoe journey down the Spey can be the occasion for students coming to attend reflexively to the many ways in which they are connected to the canoes, to the river, to its past, to present inhabitants, and to each other. I suggest that if this approach were more integrated into an understanding of education then the ethics – the social justice – of living a good life together with each other and the rest of the world (benign and malign) would permeate education and give more hope for the future. With such an education, we may hope with Wollstonecraft that the next generation and the next one after that will be able to imagine a more ethical – a more socially just – world than any we are able to imagine today:

> These would be schools of morality – and happiness of man, allowed to flow from the pure springs of duty and affection, what advances might not the human mind make? (1994 [1792], p.254)

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Endnotes

1 Where there is a group of students, as in most classes, the students will have educationally relevant relationships with each other.

2 Social justice is, as Walzer (1994) argued, a thin concept. This sentence thickens the concept a little, expressing the most recent result of my evolving understanding of social justice over the last two decades (See Griffiths, 2013, Griffiths forthcoming, 2014)

3 There are notable exceptions. See, for instance, work byMichael Bonnett (2004, 2007, 2012), Bob Jickling (2009), Helen Kopnina (2013a, 2013b), and Andrew Stables (2010) on aspects of ethics and social justice in relation to the outdoors, to sustainability and to the environment

4 Kant wrote:

> There was a time...when I despised the masses, which know nothing. Rousseau has set me right. This blind prejudice disappears; I learn to honour men, and would find myself much more useless than common labourers if I did not believe that this view is able to give worth to aIl others, to establish the rights of humanity. (Quoted in Steinkraus, p. 265)

5 It is interesting in this context to note that the canon of progressive educational thought includes hardly any women: in Darling and Nordenbo (2004), only Montessori makes it into the list.

6 This assumption should be seen in the context of there being no reliable form of contraception, so many married women would have been pregnant much of the time.

7 Also see Voltaire's marginal note on the *Discourse on Inequality*, at the point Rousseau asserts that women as a sex ought to obey men: 'Ought to obey? Why?' (Rousseau, 1984 [1755], p. 179n)

8 Mary Midgley comments on: 'the absurdity of men's viewing themselves as totally detached individuals in relation to the rest of society, while still expecting to go home to a wife who would always have their dinner hot for them in the evening' (Midgley, 1988, p.36). It may also depend on relations of social class and race.