



**An exploration into the pursuit of human perfectibility in *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia, Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, and *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark***

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The 'Age of Reason', or simply the Enlightenment, was a cultural movement during the 'long' eighteenth century (1685-1815), a period of explosive political, philosophical, and scientific activity. Central to the Enlightenment was the pursuit of knowledge obtained by means of reason and empiricism, challenging traditional doctrines; an aspiration towards social progress and individual self-improvement, or "perfectibility". The humanist concept of perfectibility can be defined as the actualising of one's highest potential. In *Discourse on Inequality* (1755), Jean-Jacques Rousseau labelled *perfectibilité* the chief component differentiating man from other animals, the 'attribute which enabled human behaviour to develop in a progressive way'.<sup>1</sup> Yet, he also argued that this 'almost unlimited faculty is the source of all human misfortunes', producing man's 'vices and his virtues'.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, perfectibility is more accurately defined as a 'course of progressive improvement', rather than a final destination.<sup>3</sup> From an evangelical standpoint, Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas* (1759) explores the insatiability of man's desires, critiquing wholly external solutions to internal discontent. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) takes a more secular approach, documenting an increasingly melancholic search for the source of happiness, whilst examining the progress of human civilisation. Influenced by her mother's works, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) explores the scientific endeavours of the Enlightenment, 'the technical mastery of nature' and the by-products of such hubristic ventures.<sup>4</sup> This essay examines the portrayal of individuals whose journeys are characterised by a pursuit of knowledge, happiness, and/or fulfilment- a quest for perfection.

Johnson's *Rasselas* is an eighteenth-century travel novel, beginning in the seemingly utopic, Happy Valley: 'Here the sons and daughters of Abyssinia lived only to know the soft vicissitudes of pleasure'.<sup>5</sup> As Maria Edelson notes, it 'has all the appearances of an earthly paradise', designed to satisfy the needs and wants of the royal children and their stewards.<sup>6</sup> Yet, a closer examination of this "perfect" community reveals a perverse logic and *anti-*

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Wokler, 'A Reply to Charvet: Rousseau and the Perfectibility of Man', *History of Political Thought* (1980) 1:1 (81-90), p.87.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* (New Zealand: The Floating Press, 2009), p.27

<sup>3</sup> William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.16.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Cook, 'Perfecting Monstrosity: Frankenstein and the Enlightenment Debate on Perfectibility', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* (2019) 41:3 (243-253), p.243.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2009), p.9.

<sup>6</sup> Maria Edelson, 'The Happy Valley in Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* as an Anti-Utopian Allegory', *Folia Litteraria* (1993) 34 (29-39), p.29.

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utopian attitudes. Employing self-imposed methods of control, including propaganda and social patterning, the inhabitants are 'daily entertained with songs, the subject of which was the happy valley', lulled into believing that their lives are of the "utmost pleasure".<sup>7</sup> This monotonous and uniformed existence characterises the ironically named 'Happy Valley' as, in fact, a place of *unhappiness*, or more specifically, 'a valley of inexperience'.<sup>8</sup> Its 'iron gate', 'always watched by successive sentinels', infers a state of captivity, with the use of sibilance echoing its subtly, deceitful nature.<sup>9</sup> Outwardly a place of security and tranquillity, the Happy Valley is, paradoxically, a prison, controlling the lives of its inhabitants. According to Northrop Frye, like the Edenic world, the Happy Valley produces a 'feeling of malaise and longing to enter a world of action', enacted by the protagonist, Rasselas.<sup>10</sup> Whilst the others 'rose in the morning [...] pleased with each other', Rasselas grew restless and withdrawn.<sup>11</sup> Rising 'abruptly in the midst of the song', he 'hastily retired beyond the sound of music', disrupting the "harmony" of his surroundings, and no longer enticed by its cult-like chanting; the repetitive adverbs ('abruptly', 'hastily') emphasise his desire to escape.<sup>12</sup> Invoking Rousseau's concept of perfectibility, the prince questions, "What [...] makes the difference between man and all the rest of the animal creation?"<sup>13</sup> Unlike the 'beasts that stray beside [him]', Rasselas, although 'pained with want', isn't 'satisfied with fullness', vocalising man's instinctive desire to learn and progress, disillusioned with peacefulness and routine.<sup>14</sup> Determined to escape, he proclaims, "I am resolved to judge with my own eyes [...] and then make deliberately my choice of life"; thus, Rasselas' quest for his own 'choice of life' argues for 'individual inquiry – that each person should seek the summit of contentment for him or herself'.<sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup> In turn, the allegory of the Happy Valley runs parallel to the Fall, venturing from paradise into the "real" world; yet, unlike Adam and Eve, Rasselas' escape is a conscious act, driven by a pursuit of knowledge and happiness. Through Rasselas' dissatisfaction with a seemingly "perfect" life, Johnson recognises the 'insatiable demand of new gratifications, which seems particularly to characterize the nature of man'.<sup>17</sup> Arguably, this perpetual thirst for something new foreshadows the unattainability of "perfection", implying a continuous search, rather than an absolute arrival.

From Chapter XV, Rasselas and his companions venture outside of the Valley, undertaking an archetypal journey from innocence to experience; however, their hopeful pursuits are met with perpetual disappointment, and the 'choice of life' remains inconclusive. Along their journey, the group meet several individuals who, having dedicated their lives to the acquisition of knowledge or happiness, are now withdrawn from society. Although the hermit has 'lived fifteen years in solitude', he has 'no desire that [his] example should gain any imitators'.<sup>18</sup> Inverting Rasselas' own journey, the hermit initially 'withdrew from the

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, p.10.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Einbond, *Samuel Johnson's Allegory* (Paris: Mouton & The Hague, 1971), p.95.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, p.16.

<sup>10</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p.200.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, p.10.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.35.

<sup>16</sup> Mohammad Zadeh and Hossein Pirnajmuddin, 'The Orbit of Pursuit in Johnson's *Rasselas*', *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* (2013) 4:2 (401-405), p.402.

<sup>17</sup> Raymond. D. Havens, 'Johnson's Distrust of the Imagination', *ELH* (1943) 10:3 (243-255), p.249.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, p.50.

disquiet of the world to seek quiet in the wilderness', yet, he now regrets this isolation, seeking reintegration into society.<sup>19</sup> Escaping 'the example of bad men', he subsequently lost 'the counsel and conversation of the good'.<sup>20</sup> In *The Principles of the Rousseau System*, Victor Goldschmidt argued that 'Rousseau formed the word *perfectibilité* by analogy with *sociabilité*', relating the 'coalescence of people into communities' with mankind's desire to improve 'their own nature'.<sup>21</sup> Thus, rejecting all human contact, the hermit's unable to achieve personal growth through the company of others, consequently 'disturbed with a thousand perplexities of doubt'.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, in Chapter XL, Imlac meets 'one of the most learned astronomers [...] who has spent forty years in unwearied attention to [...] celestial bodies'; pursuing forbidden knowledge, the astronomer has, literally and figuratively, 'drawn out his soul in endless calculations', relinquishing his humanity.<sup>23</sup> Claiming to have obtained meteorological powers (see Appendix A), it's clear that his obsessive pursuits have transpired into mental illness. These personal quests for fulfilment and happiness could be interpreted as 'a rejection of the facile assumptions and assurances of philosophical Optimism in the context of the Enlightenment', exposing the insatiability of man's desires, and it's destructive influence on the human psyche.<sup>24</sup> Relocating throughout the novel, avoiding stagnation, the group concede to 'return to Abissinia', acknowledging, 'Of these wishes [...] they well knew that none could be obtained'.<sup>25</sup> Although Jose Landa argues that this circular narrative 'empties it of meaning', Earl Wasserman's notion that, 'although there's no explicit conclusion, the implicit conclusion is a recourse to traditional Christianity', seems more apt.<sup>26 27</sup> Consistent with Johnson's Christian outlook, 'nothing can be ended in the final chapter, since the traveller's earthly existence has not terminated'.<sup>28</sup> According to the Old Testament, "perfection" may be promised in the afterlife, therefore, one can only strive towards it whilst on earth. According to James Boswell, Johnson spoke 'with an uncommon animation of travelling distant countries; that the mind was enlarged by it'.<sup>29</sup> Arguably, for Johnson, the 'choice of life' resides in the fervent pursuit of knowledge and happiness- despite both being unattainable- and enriching the self through lived experience.

Like Johnson's *Rasselas*, Wollstonecraft's *Letters* is also an eighteenth-century travel narrative, documenting the individual's pursuit of happiness and fulfilment. Contrasting Johnson's evangelism, however, Wollstonecraft employs a secular approach, utilising the rhetoric of the sublime and a Wordsworthian-like prose, to explore the profound relationship between nature and self- demonstrating the shift from religion to secularism during the Enlightenment. Importantly, the *Letters* is a hybrid, both travel literature *and* Romantic autobiography. Roy Pascal defines the latter as a 'search for one's inner standing' in which 'life is represented, [...] not as something established but as a process', 'a sense of

<sup>19</sup> Duane Smith, 'Repetitive Patterns in Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* (1996) 36:3 (623-639), p.631.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, p.50.

<sup>21</sup> Olga Vinogradova, 'The Birth of the Idea of Perfectibility: From the Enlightenment to Transhumanism', *Russian Journal of Philosophical Science* (2019) 62:4 (113-131), p.116.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, p.50.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p.88.

<sup>24</sup> Zadeh and Pirajmuddin, p.401.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, p.109.

<sup>26</sup> Jose Landa, 'Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*: The Duplicity of Choice and the Sense of an Ending' *Spanish Journal of English Studies* (1990) 19:20 (75-99), p.91.

<sup>27</sup> Earl Wasserman, 'Johnson's *Rasselas*: Implicit Contexts', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, (1975) 74 (1-25), p.24.

<sup>28</sup> Landa, 'Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*', p.91.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Donaldson, 'Samuel Johnson and the Art of Observation', *ELH* (1986) 53:4 (779-799), p.784-5

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discovery'.<sup>30</sup> In the opening letter, Wollstonecraft likens herself to 'a particle broken from the grand mass of mankind', isolated in city life; yet, upon immersing herself in the Scandinavian landscape, she's overcome with 'some involuntary sympathetic emotion', replacing this lonesomeness with a sense of belonging, as 'part of a mighty whole'.<sup>31</sup> Here, Wollstonecraft fashions an 'archetypal spiritual consciousness, alienated from society but alive [in] nature'; awakening a deep and self-conscious sensibility, the natural world allows the writer to embrace her authentic self, evoking an inner happiness.<sup>32</sup> Through these subjective experiences, Wollstonecraft demonstrates that reason and empiricism, central tenets of the Enlightenment, aren't the only ways to gain a better understanding of the self. Moreover, in Letter XIV, Wollstonecraft desires to travel 'farther northward' in search of a *supposed*, Romantic utopia and its primitive tribe; 'the inhabitants', who are 'without depravity of heart', echo Rousseau's notion of the *original* man, in a pure state of nature.<sup>33</sup> Rousseau argued that humans were born with a "natural goodness", motivated by *amour de soi*- a love of self, or self-sufficiency- deemed perfect for being closest to nature. Thus, one could argue that Wollstonecraft associates man's perfectibility, alongside her own personal development, with a natural existence, uncorrupted by the problems of civilisation. Yet, 'reason drags [her] back, whispering that the world is still the world', curating a deeply melancholic tone; because, as Mitzi Myers notes, this ideal primitivism is 'a perfection unattainable in the [real] world'.<sup>34 35</sup>

In contrast to the natural world, Wollstonecraft's *Letters* also pose various sociological questions on the point of civilisation, and its attempt to progress towards "perfection". In Letter VII, she comments on the process of mummification, 'a desire of preserving the body [which] seems to have prevailed in most countries'; labelled a 'treason against humanity', Wollstonecraft critiques man's attempt to immortalise the past and trap it in a "perfect" state, hindering future progression.<sup>36</sup> Sailing towards the small town of Rusoer in Letter XI, she resumes this pessimistic tone, contemplating 'the future improvement of the world' and 'how much man had still to do'.<sup>37</sup> Despite her 'view of [the] wild coast', an expansive and untouched landscape, Wollstonecraft imagines a place 'so completely peopled, as to render it necessary to inhabit every spot'- a world of over-population and 'universal famine'.<sup>38</sup> Fearful of an environmental crisis, she extends this melancholia to the natural world. As 'Blossoms come forth only to be blighted; fish lay their spawn where it will be devoured', she describes an apocalyptic world, pervaded by death and ecological collapse.<sup>39</sup> Hence, Wollstonecraft fashions herself as 'a prophetess warning against the perils that attend advancing civilization', 'worried about overpopulation' but also 'disturbed by the despoiling of nature that accompanies progress'.<sup>40</sup> In spite of its flaws, however,

<sup>30</sup> Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), p.182.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, ed., Tone Brekke and Jon Mee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.12.

<sup>32</sup> Mitzi Myers, 'Mary Wollstonecraft's Letters Written in Sweden: Toward Romantic Autobiography', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (1979) 8 (165-184), p.174.

<sup>33</sup> Wollstonecraft, p.86.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Myers, p.180.

<sup>36</sup> Wollstonecraft, p.48.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p.68.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p.120.

<sup>40</sup> Myers, p.180.

Wollstonecraft still values the advancements of civil society. In Letter IX, she proclaims, it's 'physically impossible that [man] should have remained in Rousseau's golden age of stupidity'; critiquing Rousseau's idea of the "nascent society", idealising primitivism and its simple virtues, like *Rasselas*, Wollstonecraft remains unfulfilled and restless. Instead, she yearns for 'the polished circles of the world', desiring civilisation's advancement of knowledge and refinement. In the appendix, she marks out a final trajectory for future improvement, accomplished through 'the growth of each particular soil, [...] not forced by an unnatural fermentation'; utilising an extended, natural metaphor, Wollstonecraft emphasises 'the necessity for very gradual social change', contrasting society's fervent, and potentially destructive pursuit of "perfection".<sup>41</sup> <sup>42</sup> On the one hand, Wollstonecraft's *Letters* associate the natural world with self-improvement, and a reawakening of one's highest potential. Paradoxically, she also acknowledges that this state of perfectibility is unattainable, and even if it were, ultimately, it would be unfulfilling. For Wollstonecraft, the civilised world may only strive towards "perfection", but it must do so at a measured and organic pace.

Shelley's gothic novel, *Frankenstein* was influenced greatly by Wollstonecraft's ideas, most notably, her unease with the preservation of the dead, attempting to capture "perfection". In turn, *Frankenstein* can be read as a critique of the Enlightenment quest for human improvement. Although an extreme example, Shelley's novel exposes the recklessness of scientific experimentation, raising ethical concerns over the creation of a "perfect" being. Arguably, Victor Frankenstein's motives for his transhumanist creation are deeply ambivalent, split between genuine, scientific ambition, and grandiose narcissism, usurping the power of Creator. These conflicting interpretations are demonstrated in Vol. I, Chapter IV (see Appendix B). Initially, Victor speaks of breaking through the 'ideal bounds' of life and death, pouring 'a torrent of light into our dark world'; his utilisation of light imagery positions knowledge as the main source of illumination and enlightenment- a seemingly genuine desire to aid social progress through scientific advancement.<sup>43</sup> However, he also boasts of 'A new species [which] would bless me as its creator'.<sup>44</sup> Shifting from the welfare of society towards his own personal gain, Victor reveals himself to be an egotist with a God complex. In Vol. I, Chapter III, having attended a lecture by M. Waldman, likely on galvanism, Victor proclaims, 'So much has been done, [...] far more, will I achieve', unfolding 'to the world the deepest mysteries of creation'.<sup>45</sup> A Faustian figure, aspiring after forbidden knowledge, Victor's pursuit of "perfection" is predicated on outperforming the works of others, craving power and status. This invokes Rousseau's concept of *amour propre*- self-love or selfishness- arguing that, although socialisation allows man to undergo self-improvement, it also enables him to 'compare [the] self with others, never satisfied and never can be', making him 'a tyrant over himself and over nature'.<sup>46</sup> <sup>47</sup> Victor's insatiability, much like *Rasselas*, though less innocent or naïve, leads him to abandon the creature upon "birth", dissatisfied with a reality that cannot match his desires: 'now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished' and 'I rushed out of the room'.<sup>48</sup> Due to this abandonment,

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<sup>41</sup> Wollstonecraft, p.132.

<sup>42</sup> Myers, p.180.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*, ed., Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.55.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

<sup>46</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* ed. P. Jimack, trans. B. Foxley (London: Dent and Rutland, VT, 1993), p.209

<sup>47</sup> Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, p.27.

<sup>48</sup> Shelley, p.58.

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several of Victor's loved ones are murdered, and he himself becomes fatally ill. In March 1818, a review in the *Edinburgh Magazine* claimed, 'it might, indeed, be the author's view to show that the powers of man have been wisely limited, and that misery would follow their extension'.<sup>49</sup> In turn, *Frankenstein* serves as a warning against hubristic, overreaching science, exposing the dangers of pursuing human perfectibility when driven by egotism. As Rousseau suggests, although man's pursuit of 'perfectibility had ensured our progressive development from barbarism to civilization', 'it had engendered our moral and political decline'.<sup>50</sup>

Arguably, however, 'the problem isn't the thirst for knowledge, [but] a failure of sensibility and understanding'; abandoned by Victor, and spurned by society, the creature's doomed to a life of misery and alienation.<sup>51</sup> In turn, Shelley utilises him as an allegory for mankind's prejudices and intolerance, ultimately rejecting 'the theory that humanity could be "perfectionised"'.<sup>52</sup> Vol. II provides an inset story from the creature's perspective, documenting its decline from innocence to monster. At "birth", the creature appears entirely innocent and child-like; instantly it 'saw, felt, heard and smelt at the same time', experiencing, for the first time, bodily sensations and the unfamiliar world around him.<sup>53</sup> In stating, 'No distinct ideas occupied my mind [...] I felt light, and hunger, and thirst', the creature exemplifies John Locke's theory of *tabula rasa*.<sup>54</sup> In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke argued that, 'the child's mind, when born' is 'a "blank slate"', not 'an image of cognitive formlessness, but of a state that requires correct instruction [...] to form representations of true moral principles'.<sup>55</sup> Yet, abandoned at "birth", the creature's not only stripped of parental nurture, but also an "adequate" education, compelled to discover it alone. Alongside 'a leathern portmanteau, containing [...] some books', the creature also acquires knowledge and morals whilst observing the De Laceys.<sup>56</sup> Reading from Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, Felix's narrations 'inspired me with strange feelings', questioning, 'Was man, indeed, at once [...] so virtuous' and 'yet so vicious and base?'.<sup>57</sup> Establishing his principle education on such a profoundly anti-establishment text, the creature forms a distaste for society, unable to comprehend the dichotomy of human nature. Rousseau, as demonstrated in *Emile* (1762), describes an education that would allow man to survive the corruption of society, developing towards their fullest potential; therefore, in many ways, the creature is 'a parable of pedagogic failure', as the 'acquisition of "literary refinement" fails to humanise' him.<sup>58</sup> Desiring socialisation, he's continually rejected by society, outcast as *other*, including the "beloved" De Laceys: 'Agatha fainted', whilst Felix 'struck [him] violently with a stick'.<sup>59</sup> Retaliating, he declares 'an ever-lasting war against the species' who've caused his

<sup>49</sup> Alexander Cook, 'Perfecting Monstrosity: Frankenstein and the Enlightenment Debate on Perfectibility', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* (2019) 41:3 (243-253), p.243.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Wokler, 'A Reply to Charvet: Rousseau and the Perfectibility of Man', *History of Political Thought* (1980) 1:1 (81-90), p.89.

<sup>51</sup> Cook, p.251.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.246.

<sup>53</sup> Shelley, p.105

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p.106.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Duschinsky, "'Tabula Rasa" and Human Nature', *Philosophy* (2012) 87:342 (509-529), p. 510, 515.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.130.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p.122,

<sup>58</sup> Maureen McLane, 'Literate Species: Populations, "Humanities", and Frankenstein', *ELH* (1996) 63:4 (959-988), p.959.

<sup>59</sup> Shelley, p.137.

'insupportable misery', because, as Wollstonecraft notes, 'People are rendered ferocious by misery' and 'misanthropy is ever the offspring of discontent'.<sup>60</sup> <sup>61</sup> Thus, *Frankenstein* can be read as a satire on William Godwin's 'utopian vision of the social future' in *Political Justice* (1793), which outlines an 'inevitable progress of improvement' towards 'universal justice'.<sup>62</sup> However, Shelley also critiques *humanity's* inability to accept a true state of "perfection". Importantly, the creature isn't born evil, and thus, the origin of evil doesn't 'lie in Frankenstein's act of creative hubris'.<sup>63</sup> Instead, the creature's tyranny is perpetuated by 'failures of sympathy— the initial parental rejection and the myriad rejections that followed'.<sup>64</sup> Born of "natural goodness", Shelley suggests that, even if society were to achieve "perfection", it's unable and unwilling to accept it.

Rousseau's account of perfectibility 'joined together a highly optimistic idea of human potentialities with a deeply pessimistic vision of man's worldly accomplishments'; this antagonism is examined across all three texts.<sup>65</sup> *Rasselas* conveys man's insatiability, depicting an orbital quest for knowledge and happiness in keeping with Johnson's evangelism. Although more extreme, Shelley's *Frankenstein* also explores the protagonist's pursuit of knowledge, allured by the power and potential of science. As *Frankenstein* demonstrates, this desire for scientific advancement, without regard for societal consequences, can prove devastating for the individual and others. Sociability is crucial to man's perfectibility, with Victor and the creature, alongside the Hermit and astronomer, ostracised from society in pursuit of knowledge or happiness, to the detriment of the psyche. The creature's "natural goodness" exhibits man in his "purest" form; this association between nature and man's perfectibility is also evident in Wollstonecraft's *Letters*. However, in both, this natural state is deemed unattainable and futile, exemplified in the creature's demise, and Wollstonecraft's demystification of the primitive, Northern tribe. Arguably, each author exercises a different worldview: Christianity, secularism, and the entire removal of Creator. Yet, common themes reside in their ultimate dismissal of "perfection", advocating, instead, for civilisation's natural progression, and redefining perfectibility as a *striving* towards, rather than a *fulfilment* of, one's highest potential.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.138.

<sup>61</sup> Jill Lepore, 'The Strange and Twisted Life of "Frankenstein"', *The New Yorker*, February 12 2018, Life And Letters, p.8.

<sup>62</sup> Cook, p.244.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.247.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Wokler, p.89.

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## Appendices

**Appendix A:** Sourced from Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2009), p.90.

“I have possessed for five years the regulation of weather, and the distribution of the seasons: the sun has listened to my dictates, and passed from tropick to tropick by my direction; the clouds, at my call, have poured their waters, and the Nile has overflowed at my command; I have restrained the rage of the dog-star, and mitigated the fervours of the crab. The winds alone, of all the elemental powers, have hitherto refused my authority, and multitudes have perished by equinoctial tempests which I found myself unable to prohibit or restrain...”

**Appendix B:** Sourced from Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*, ed., Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.55.

‘Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source, many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve their's’.