

ENG-310

Group#3

Roll no. 03. Areeba

Roll no. 09. Salsabeel Arif

Roll no. 13. Umaira Ashiq

Roll no. 26. Tooba Irfan

Roll no. 30. Hafsa Shabbir

Roll no. 40. Fajar Farooq

Roll no.49. Salwa Shoukat Bajwa

Roll no. 54. Fakiha Faryal

Roll no. 96. Hadeeqa Saleem

Roll no. 100. Maha Jabeen

Assignment on:

"Robbie" by Issac Asimov

"The Mortal Immortal" by Mary Shelley

Date: 02-06-2020

"Robbie" by Issac Asimov



Qno.1: Theme of Technophobia in "Robbie":

Roll no. 03: Areeba

Roll no.40: Fajar

Roll no.54:Fakiha

Isaac Asimov is a Hugo award winner, prolific science fiction writer, probably the first person in the history who placed more faith in machines than in his own kind. He created a fictional world of robotics. His insight on human-machine interaction opens the gates to some thought-provoking questions on the modern age human psychology and morality. With each passing day, man is striving to be better than before, more modern than before, creating machines, entering new galaxies and uncovering the hidden truths.

[Add a few lines here to make the para relevant as to why Asimov focused on technophobia.] Man created robots and placed foot in a new modern era. But soon his irrational fear of being overthrown made him wary of his own complex and genius creation. When the robots resembled less human and more machines, the fear was justifiable so in order to make his creation closer to himself, man modified the robots to resemble less machines and more humans, with the ability to communicate verbally. This step made them more machine-like and dehumanized them. And the technophobia was inculcated in the minds of the people. They were unable to normalize the presence of robots in their lives. Robots were looked upon as unnatural and anti religious entities, with spark of intelligence, reflecting no soul in their eyes. In a way they were free of human errors. They were different from humans, a better breed than humans. This progress in technology affected human way of thinking. Because,

"Sooner or later, the different scares people."

With the advent of the robotic industry, labor union was facing a new competition which threatened their livelihood. Furthermore people thought of the invention of the robots to be a kind of meddling in nature.



[A line here to link it with the previous]

Issac Asimov defined technophobia as “a morbid fear of technological advance”. Technophobia is a major theme in his short story “Robbie”. Asimov considers technophobia an irrational fear of humanity. Although new technology intrigues people and makes them curious about what can be achieved with it, the flip-side of the human reaction to anything new is suspicion and even fear. **Technophobia** means **fear of technology**, and it can stem, for example, from not fully understanding how something works, possibility of danger and negative impacts or risk of malicious misuse of the machines. Another form of technophobia is anxiety over one’s personal competences to deal with new technologies and the downright possibility of social exclusion if someone lacks the access or skills to adopt them.

Man's fear of machines is illogical because machines like **robots** are harmless and they are programmed only to follow the commands of its creator. As writer proves his point in Robbie. **“Robbie” is a science fiction short story by American writer Isaac Asimov.** [No need to repeat]

He brilliantly describes the beautiful relationship of a robot, **Robbie** and an eight year old **Gloria** in this short story. Robbie is the nursemaid of Gloria. Their relation is of mutual trust, friendship and affability. Mrs. Weston however is distrustful towards Robbie. As she thinks he has no soul and no one knows what he is thinking and he may go berserk, so she is adamant to remove him from Gloria’s life. Not only this, Mrs. Weston treats Robbie as an antipathetic piece of metal. She **dominates** Robbie as if he is a mere servant. Mrs. Weston becomes concerned about the effects a **robot nursemaid** would have on her daughter, since **Gloria** is more interested in playing with **Robbie** (a robot) than with the other children. Mrs. Weston thinks Gloria cannot learn social skills as long as she remains with Robbie. Mrs. Weston is a very egoistic and frigid woman and she considers Robbie a **terrible, distrustful, and awful machine**, which was not good for Gloria. This is her **fear of machines** that makes her think in this way. Mrs. Weston expresses her technophobia in the form of her repulsion for Robbie.

Issac Asimov delves deep into some of the perceptions and motivations that drive human behavior towards the machines in general and the robots in particular. Whereas early writers painted **robots** as **villains** in their writings and thought that **robots** are the machines that kill their creator, Isaac Asimov wanted to prove that this concept was wrong. And that was why he introduced **Three Laws of Robotics**, that his robots, as well as science-fictional robotic characters of many other stories, followed:

- (I) A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
- (II) A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
- (III) A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

These laws are also employed in "**Robbie**" because Robbie was a harmless robot and he and Gloria had a relationship full of trust, love and affection. And he would never harm her rather he saved Gloria's life in the end.

Whereas Asimov's robots are shown to be logical and rigidly abiding by the laws that have been programmed into them, his human characters are shown to be highly irrational, often spurred by the fear of the very robots they created. In the beginning, man perceived **robots** as **dangerous technological ventures** that would someday lead to the **demise** of the human race, either by outsmarting or outmuscling people and taking over the world, or by turning human beings into completely technology-dependent beings who passively sit by and program robots to do all of the work. **Elon Musk**, a renowned inventor and investor, insists:

"I think human extinction will probably occur, and technology will likely play a part in this."

Asimov shows how this irrational fear drives man to commit acts of folly. Mrs. Weston ends up depriving her own child of her greatest source of happiness and comfort just because of her irrational fear of the robots. Her actions almost lead to the death of her daughter, Gloria. Mrs. Weston wanted to get rid of Robbie because she had a fear that Robbie might end up hurting Gloria. This is highly ironic because it is not Robbie rather it is Mrs. Weston who ends up hurting Gloria in her efforts to keep her safe.

Asimov does delineate differences between the human and non-human figures, he also shows how the societies have started to blend the two. He endows the robots with a technology called a **“positronic brain”**, giving them a form of consciousness that humans also possess. He uses this positronic brain to **anthromorphize** the robots' actions, behaviors, and thought processes. He endows the robots with human-like qualities through names and pronouns. He uses the pronoun **“he”** instead of **“it”** for Robbie. This simple reframing of language shows how he thinks about the robots—not as mechanical operating systems, but as sentient beings. This becomes clear in the story when Gloria insists that Robbie is her friend: **“He was not no machine!”**. She further says to her parents, **“He was a person just like you and me and he was my friend”**. Even though Robbie cannot talk or emote like a person can, the way that Gloria thinks about him makes him just as human to her as anyone else in her life.

Man has a natural tendency to exercise power on the weaker beings. He considers himself the **tenant of the whole world**. Therefore, he has created emotionless, subservient machines he could control. Robot performs his tasks diligently for the calculated time and is then thrown into the garbage to be discarded and never to be used again. Isaac Asimov is forcefully conveying the message that machines are not a piece of junk and they should be acknowledged and trusted. He depicts this message through the nature of the trusted relationship between **Gloria and Robbie**. Gloria has a very friendly and lovely relationship with Robbie. In a nutshell, people should overcome their irrational fears towards machines. Because, modern technology is not harmful rather it is useful.

Q no.02: Character sketch of Robbie:

Roll no.03: Areeba

Roll no. 09: Salsabeel Arif

Robbie is the titular character of **“Robbie”**, the opening short story of Isaac Asimov's **“I, Robot”**. Asimov is an amazingly prolific author who penned hundreds of short stories, science guides, essays and novels and greatly developed the genre of science fiction. He exploited the ongoing developments of Science in 20th century to his own literary advantage and completely revolutionized the face of Sci-Fi literature. He promulgated the

notions “**Positronic**” robots and “**Three Laws of Robotics**”, which provided the moral implication of the technology and also greatly influenced other writers and thinkers in their treatment of the subject.

Asimov’s collection “I, Robot”, of which “Robbie” is a part, is a collection of nine short stories linked by a ‘**frame narrative**’ involving a reporter’s interview with Susan Calvin, a former Robopsychologist at U.S. Robots and Mechanical Men, Inc. Robbie is a **non-vocal, mute RB series robot** that was designed and sold in 1996 to be a nursemaid. His head and torso are made of hard silver metal in parallelepiped shape and his eyes are glowing red that can be covered by thin metal foils acting as eye-lids. Not only this, his body maintains the constant temperature of 70 degrees by high resistance coils within. He has metallic arms and legs to give him humanoid mobility. The Westons bought him as a caretaker and companion for their little girl, Gloria Weston. Both become very fond of each other and when later in the story Gloria is separated from Robbie, she goes into an emotional spiral.

Asimov paints the character of Robbie in so vivid and lively colours that he appears to be a person of flesh and blood. Gloria adores him and it is clear from his interactions with her that all he wants to do is to take care of her and ensure her happiness and safety. He is highly sympathetic, faithful and kind robot. At the onset of the story he is playing hide-and-seek, and gives Gloria rides on his back which shows his playful nature. He obediently follows whatever Gloria directs him to do and proves himself to be an ideal best-friend and a playmate to a little girl. His emotional side is reflected when he attentively listens as she recounts stories like Cinderella for him. As Mr. Weston says,

“Robbie was constructed for only one purpose—to be the companion of a little child. His entire ‘mentality’ has been created for the purpose. He just can’t help being faithful and loving and kind. He’s a machine—made so.”

Since Asimov has given Robbie more humanity than many humans, he is directly contrasted with Mrs. Weston and also acts a **foil character** to her. She does not think of Robbie as anything more than a machine inspired by his exceptional treatment with her daughter. It places her in the heart of

irony, as she herself lacks ethos that she thinks is missing in a robotic playmate. Not only does she hate Robbie, she is also harsh to Gloria and comes to believe that her daughter should not be raised by a robot. She lacks compassion, attention, playfulness that her daughter seeks and has found in Robbie. She comments about Robbie,

"It has no soul, and no one knows what it may be thinking. A child just isn't made to be guarded by a thing of metal."

The strong bond of Gloria Weston and Robbie is viewed with technophobic dislike by Gloria's mother who insists her husband to remove Robbie from the household. Her character reflects the true reality of what society thinks of robots like Robbie in spite of their amazing services. She makes various comments, such as ***"There's bad feeling in the village", "terrible machine", "most of the villagers consider Robbie dangerous", "nasty old machine"*** to convey people's distrust and contempt of machines and even references to unions and dislocation are interpolated through her dialogues. She acts as a mouth piece of technophobic society. Gloria terminates these accusations against Robbie in her child-like innocence and says,

"He was a person just like you and me and he was my friend"

However unlike Mrs. Weston, Mr. Weston is pretty fond of Robbie and claims that Robbie is, ***"darn sight cleverer than half my office staff"***. When Mrs. Weston has Robbie sent away, Gloria is devastated until she and Robbie are reunited in a robot factory all planned out by Mr. Weston. He is of the view, ***"A robot is infinitely more to be trusted than a human nurse-maid."*** Robbie also appears to be useless among other robots in the factory because,

"Robbie wasn't designed for engineering or construction work."

In the final scenes, Gloria becomes so excited at seeing Robbie again that she runs in front of a moving vehicle, and Robbie is the only one who is able to save her life. ***"It was Robbie that acted immediately and precisely"***, and his agility once again made him superior to humans. Thus, Robbie becomes the first primary example of how robots can actually be more

ethical, more helpful, and even more compassionate than human beings. However, Gloria has to give up on him eventually, when between 2003 and 2007 most of the world governments ban robots unless for research purposes.

Since Robbie was the first Robot introduced in the book, Robbie also kind of sets the stage for how the reader should think about robots. His character centers on the technophobia that surrounds robots, and how it is misplaced. Asimov has consistently held the belief that the **Frankenstein complex** was a misplaced fear, and the majority of his works attempted to provide examples of the help that robots could provide humanity. The most popular theme that 'robot turns against creator' is aptly put to rest through Robbie.

How Asimov removes misconceptions about robots?

Issac Asimov delves deep into some of the perceptions and motivations that drive human behavior towards the machines in general and the robots in particular. Whereas early writers painted **robots as villains** in their writings and thought that **robots** are the machines that kill their creator, Isaac Asimov wanted to prove that this concept was wrong. And that was why he introduced **Three Laws of Robotics**, that his robots, as well as science-fictional robotic characters of many other stories, followed:

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- (VI) A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

These laws are also employed in **"Robbie"** that Robbie was a harmless robot and he and Gloria had a relationship full of trust, love and affection. And he would never harm her rather he saved Gloria's life in the end.

Asimov does delineate differences between the human and non-human figures, he also shows how the societies have started to blend the two. He endows the robots with a technology called a **"positronic brain"**, giving them a form of consciousness that humans also possess. He uses

this positronic brain to **anthromorphize** the robots' actions, behaviors, and thought processes. He endows the robots with human-like qualities through names and pronouns. He uses the pronoun “he” instead of “it” for Robbie. This simple reframing of language shows how he thinks about the robots—not as mechanical operating systems, but as sentient beings. This becomes clear in when Gloria insists that Robbie is her friend: **“He was not no machine!”**. She further says to her parents, **“He was a person just like you and me and he was my friend”**. Even though Robbie cannot talk or emote like a person can, the way that Gloria thinks about him makes him just as human to her as anyone else in her life. Asimov also mentions how human dehumanized the robots by giving them the ability to speak by drawing a comparison between the **talking robot** and Robbie. A talking robot's ability is limited. He cannot show human emotions that Robbie exhibited.

In a nutshell, Asimov makes this point home through Robbie's character that man has a natural tendency to exercise power on the weaker beings. He considers himself the **tenant of the whole world**. Therefore, he has created emotionless, subservient machines he could control. Robot performs his tasks diligently for the calculated time and is then thrown into the garbage to be discarded and never to be used again. Isaac Asimov is forcefully conveying the message that machines are not a piece of junk and they should be acknowledged and trusted. He depicts this message through the nature of the trusted relationship between **Gloria and Robbie**. Gloria has a very friendly and lovely relationship with Robbie. Thus, people should overcome their irrational fears towards machines. Because, modern technology is not harmful rather it is useful.

“The Mortal Immortal” by Mary Shelley :

Qno. 1: Mary Shelley as a Writer:

Roll no. 03 : Areeba

Roll no. 26: Tooba Irfan



Roll no. 96: Hadeeqa Saleem:

Mary Shelley was a British Romantic novelist, essayist, and a travel writer. She is best known for penning the novel **"Frankenstein ;or The Modern Prometheus"** at the age of nineteen. This novel gave birth to one of the most popular genres in the world- Science Fiction. That is why she is referred to as **"The Mother of Science Fiction"**. Her legacy is embedded in rich English literature that ranges from Fiction, liberalism to feminism. Besides **"Frankenstein"**, she wrote several other novels including **"Valperga"**, **"The Fortunes of Perkins Warbeck"**, **"Lodore"**, and **"Falkner; The Last Man"**. Her travel book **"History of a Six Weeks' Tour"** recounts the continental tour she and Percy Shelley took in 1814.

Mary Shelley was heavily influenced by both of her parents; the feminist author **Mary Wollstonecraft**, and the political philosopher **William Godwin**. What makes Mary Shelley stand out in her field is her **"stunning originality and, in particular, to the way she decisively broke with the Gothic and other supernatural literary traditions by which she was so heavily influenced in order to invent Science Fiction"**. She moves away from more established myths and religious tropes and creates a sort of scientific myth based upon recent scientific discovery. She employed Luigi Galvani's discovery of bioelectricity in **"Frankenstein"** thus creating a scientific myth of **"the possibility of cognitively based speculation as established by the most advanced science of the day"**.

Mary Shelley is known for her great contributions in the genres of supernatural phenomena, gothic literature and fantasy, which eventually led her to create one of the most popular genres today--science fiction. It was her combination of science and the supernatural, that created new elements in literature. She makes full use of the themes that were popular during the time she wrote **"Frankenstein"**. She is concerned with the knowledge for good or evil purposes, the invasion of technology into modern life, the treatment of the poor or the uneducated, and the restorative powers of nature in the face of unnatural events. Since the **Industrial Revolution** had pervaded all parts of European and British societies by the time of her writing, Shelley questions how far the current

wave of advances should push the individual in terms of personal and spiritual growth.

One of the major themes Mary Shelley writes on is going against the nature and the due consequences of this folly. Her work **"Frankenstein"** and **"The Mortal Immortal"** are centered on the misery, alienation and loneliness brought on by dabbling in unnatural phenomena and defying nature. The whole existence of Frankenstein is unnatural, while Winzy has avoided death. Fighting the natural events leads to dire consequences and miserable condition of the characters. She also discusses **immortality** as way of going against the nature and its dire consequences. This is the major theme of her short story **"The Mortal Immortal"**. Shelley tries to explain that the apparent charm of immortality is nothing but a glossy disguise that. At first immortality appeared to promise Winzy an eternal tranquillity but soon he realises his misfortune. Immortality proves a curse for him and he reaches the conclusion that,

"...someone could never conquer nature's law so far as to imprison the soul forever within its carnal habitation."

Mary Shelley explores life and everyday emotions through her characters. **Life and death; love and hatred; joy and misery**, all kinds of emotions are present that develop her characters as they discover life and their place in it lead the reader to explore life through the eyes of her characters. In other words, her characters may be supernatural but they face the world like other people and explore the very essence of life. Hence life is another major theme of Mary Shelley's work.

Another theme that holds importance in her works is the **struggle of the characters as they face problems created either by chance, circumstance, or their own foolishness**, from which they emerge as broken, dysfunctional, or utterly destroyed. Thus, at a single glance, her works seem to be based on **horror, tragedy, or gothic novel** but with detailed study, many unique themes emerge. Whether it be life, death, family, alienation, nature, revenge, or ambition; Mary Shelley seems to have written of all.

Mary Shelley is known for her perfect **art of characterization**. Her most popular work, "**Frankenstein**" has such powerful characters that the monster Frankenstein became a mascot for horror stories, and continued to be featured in both children and adult horror themed novels, movies and other such paraphernalia. Mary Shelley introduces each character with a particularly unique flavour. **Her characters have substance**. They are not dull, but powerful. She describes them with a vivid imagination, such that they become **true to life** and we begin to relate them to individuals we encounter daily. **Her descriptions enable her characters to become not only akin to real life personas but also unique to themselves**, and they cannot be mistaken as copies of other characters from fantastical literature.

In "**The Mortal Immortal**", Mary perfectly showcases her skill in the art of characterization. We encounter two major characters, Bertha and Winzy among some minor characters. **Bertha is the definition of a selfish, ungrateful, manipulative, and a bitter woman**. The best thing about her character development is that the circumstances Bertha's character evolves in, wholly explain her behavior and mannerisms. It is not a surprise how she turns out to be a cynical and jealous woman at the end. Similarly, Mary Shelley describes Winzy's pain and loneliness that result from his foolishness, in a manner that makes his character believable. As a young man, he was silly and a slave to his desires. His immortality came as a result of his being blindly in love and submitting to the whims and desires of Bertha, whom he could not resist despite knowing her true self as a coquettish and a selfish woman.

Mary Shelley portrays all kinds of emotions through her characters, pain, loneliness, suffering as well as love, desire, and greed. We understand her characters and the reasons for their actions. This is what makes her characters human and gives them human qualities and makes them relatable to real people. Mary Shelley has made her characters memorable by making them unique and relatable. This is the best quality about her art of characterization.

Shelley follows various Romantic, Gothic and



fantastical traditions in her writing style. She uses frame narrative in her works to add complexity to them. Her style is rich in vocabulary and is highly descriptive especially when describing the landscape. She followed the techniques of many different novelistic genres, most vividly the Godwinian novel, Walter Scott's new historical novel, and the Gothic novel. **"Frankenstein"** and **"The Mortal Immortal"**, like much of the Gothic fiction of the period, mix a visceral and alienating subject matter with speculative and thought-provoking themes. Both works foreground the **mental and moral struggles of the protagonists**.

Shelley uses **vivid imagery** in her works. Both **"Frankenstein"** and **"The Mortal Immortal"** feature **frame narrative**, which is an outer story that introduces the central narrative. The description of scenery often reflects the characters' mental state at the time of the scene. The description of the elixir in **"The Mortal Immortal"** is vividly beautiful. Shelley describes the elixir as possessing **"flashes of admirable beauty, more bright than those which the diamond emits when the sun's rays are on it, glanced from the surface of the liquid; an odour the most fragrant and grateful stole over the sense;"**. There are various biblical allusions in the story such as that of **"The Wandering Jew"**, and **"The Seven Sleepers"**

Shelley has also employed various **motifs** in her works. Death and immortality appear as motifs in **"The Mortal Immortal"**. She uses the motif of **alchemy** as well. The concept of alchemy is a famous mystical concept of Shelley's age. According to this concept, "everything holds a universal spirit within" and all matters are composed of fire, water and earth. Alchemists were believed to be magicians and some aspects of their studies helped shape modern chemistry. She uses dark, brooding and mysterious motifs of life, death, immortality and human emotions to prove the futility of human desires. There are certain **autobiographical elements** in Shelley's writings. Certain sections of her writings are often interpreted as masked rewritings of her life. Critics have pointed out the recurrence of the **father—daughter motif** in **"Mathilda"**. The three central characters in this novella are interpreted as versions of Mary Shelley, William Godwin, and Percy Shelley.

"Frankenstein" is constructed much like Isaac Asimov's famous collection *I, Robot* in that the former takes place along the cutting edge of (contemporary) modern science. In *I, Robot*, Asimov discusses the impact of intelligent robots upon humanity (as well as humanity's impact upon the robots) both from a scientific and social perspective. Mary Shelley combines two major scientific themes in *Frankenstein*, Grave robbing and electricity. Victor is moved to reject the ideas of Cornelius Agrippa and Albertus Magnus when he is moved ? by the sheer power of a lightning storm. Asimov even gives credit to Shelley's work, calling it a **"precursor text of his own robot stories"**. *Frankenstein's* monster is even much like Asimov's robots in that their creators doubt their humanity and abandon them to a life of misery and servitude.

In a nutshell, Mary Shelley's art of writing can be summarized in the words of Sir Walter Scott who praises Shelley's works **"in which the laws of nature are represented as altered, not for the purpose of pampering the imagination with wonders, but in order to shew the probable effect which the supposed miracles would produce on those who witnessed them"**.

Q no. 2: The Theme of Immortality in "The Mortal Immortal":

Roll no. 49: Salwa Shoukat Bajwa

"The Mortal Immortal" is a short story written by Mary Shelley in 1833. Originally commissioned by and published in the literary annual **"The keepsake"** in the following year. The main themes of the story are of love, jealousy, immortality and the futility of human desires. Due to its popular theme of immortality, it remains as her most anthologised short story. Shelley in **"The Mortal Immortal"**, conveys the fact that apparently immortality appeals people but inwardly it bears horrific consequences that reveal themselves only after one takes the step forward into that realm, after which there is no turning back.

The story recounts the life of **Winzy**, a man who gained

eternal life after drinking a **mysterious Elixir**, misinterpreting it as an antidote for his unrequited love. Misguided by his professor **Cornelius Agrippa**, Winzy drank potion out of rage and anger in order to overcome his obsessive love for **Bertha** but he was unaware of the fact that he got caught up in the snare of his own ill fate. Consequently he got **immortality** which could not be reversed.

After drinking the Elixir of life, Winzy's life dramatically changed. For sometimes, **immortality proved as blessing** for him. It gave him **peace** of mind and **tranquillity** of heart. After quaffing half of the most delicious liquor, he began to feel light hearted. The enjoyment filled his soul and earth appeared heaven to him. His steps towards castle where Bertha used to live, were free from all human fears. He became fearless. He began to watch high turret with lightness of heart. It also caused him to avoid derogatory remarks of old lady for him, and he started respecting her rank. He secured his love, won Bertha's love and hand in marriage and two enjoyed some years of happiness. He himself proclaimed

"... that delicious draught of a divine elixir, which instead of curing me of love, had inspired me with courage and resolution, thus winning for me an inestimable treasure in my Bertha."

The love between them started growing more and more. It painted their lives in hues of splendour. Their love became more vigorous, mighty and blissful. The gay, mirthful and carefree mood of Winzy was noticed by Bertha too. Winzy acknowledged;

"Bertha often wondered at my lightness of heart and unaccustomed gaiety, for, before, I had been rather serious, or even sad in my disposition. She loved me the better for my cheerful temper and our days were winged by joy."

Shelley slowly unfolded bitter reality of artificial world in **The Mortal Immortal**. She tried to explain that the apparent charm of gothic world is nothing but a disguise. At first immortality appeared to promise him eternal tranquillity but soon Winzy realised his mistake. It

soon became clear that his happiness was not long lasting instead he was cursed to endure eternal psychological torture. The potion which provided gladness to the heart and vigour to the limbs started diminishing in its effect. His good fortune began to die its natural death. He perceived no change in his features during the time of five years. He persuaded himself by negating Agrippa's abilities but in reality he was wrong he satisfied himself by saying;

"...someone could never conquer nature's law so far as to imprison the soul forever within its carnal habitation."

Ultimately he realised that permanency in his features was not due to longevity in his age but due to immortality. Through the life of Winzy, Shelley issued warning to future generations who desired for immortality. The writer tried to highlight the consequences of immortality, which always led to **despair** and **meaningless** life.

For Winzy, immortality turned out to be a curse. Immortality started to have adverse effects on his life. He became notorious as the **scholar bewitched**. Things were getting worse altogether. No one dared to buy anything from the produce of their farm, for which they had to journey long distances to sell anything. They were **universally shunned** and **alienated** and Winzy was regarded with horror and detestation. Ultimately they became obliged to make great **pecuniary sacrifices** as well as departure from their own home secretly due to Winzy's immortality.

Immortality also took away all his hope of death, **"the peace of grave"** and **"the deep silence of the iron-bound tomb"**. He got wearied of the long eternity, **"never ending time"** and **"the tedious passage of the still succeeding hours"**. He wanted to die but at the same time he feared death. His immortality forced him in an indecisive state between fear and desire. He claimed that **"the more I live, the more I dread death, even while I abhore life"**.

Winzy's untarnished youthful look, his untrenched brow, cheeks and eyes began to tease Bertha too. With her getting old and

her husband remaining the same, ***“Bertha herself grew uneasy. She became jealous and peevish and at length she began to question”*** him. love started to deteriorate into jealousy. She became resentful of him and used to disgrace him among her acquaintances and told them that there was ruin at work which led a fault in his frame. Winzy described Bertha’s derogatory remarks;

“She affirmed that the worst symptom about me was my apparent health. My youth was a disease, she said, and I ought at all times to prepare, if not for a sudden and awful death, at least to awake some morning white-headed, bowed down with all the marks of advanced years.”

When Winzy was fancied by other women due to his youth, Bertha would intentionally make him look old and one time she even bought him a grey wig. Winzy described the jealousy of his wife as;

“Her jealousy never slept. Her chief occupation was to discover that, in spite of outward appearance, I was myself growing old.

The jealousy destroyed the love of Bertha. It was also the jealousy which led Winzy to enter into an immortal world. He thought that ***“she should die beneath my vengeance”*** but unknowingly harmed his own self. On the other hand, Winzy cherished his aged Bertha. His love for Bertha did not get affected due to her diminished beauty. Although he could not ignore her old age, her mincing, simpering manners but deep inside his heart still idolized her and adore her. It was the love for Bertha which forced him to risk his life in the alchemist’s shop because he knew very well that working for Agrippa would be harmful for him.

In a nutshell, mortality is a blessing because immortality leads to loneliness. It drains out enthusiasm and true spirit of life and can make a person empty from inside. Through the life of Winzy, Shelley suggested that the joy of everlasting life can only truly be enjoyed when everyone can have the same experience otherwise it will lead to despair due to the death of loved ones.

Q. no. 03: Major Themes of “The Mortal Immortal”:

Roll no. 03: Areeba

Roll no. 13: Umaira Ashiq

Roll no. 26: Tooba Irfan

Roll no. 49: Salwa Shoukat Bajwa

“The Mortal Immortal” is a short story written by Mary Shelley in 1833. Originally commissioned by and published in the literary annual “The keepsake” in the following year. Mary Shelley is known for her works in the genres of supernatural phenomena, gothic literature and fantasy, which eventually led her to create one of the most popular genres today, that we know as science fiction. It was her combination of science and the supernatural, that created new elements in literature. The main themes of the story are of love, jealousy, immortality and the futility of human desires. Due to its popular theme of immortality, it remains as her most anthologised short story. Shelley in “The Mortal Immortal”, conveys the fact that apparently immortality appeals people but inwardly it bears horrific consequences that reveal themselves only after one takes the step forward into that realm, after which there is no turning back.

The story recounts the life of Winzy, a man who gained eternal life after drinking a mysterious Elixir, misinterpreting it as an antidote for his unrequited love. Misguided by his professor Cornelius Agrippa, Winzy drank potion out of rage and anger in order to overcome his obsessive love for Bertha but he was unaware of the fact that he got caught up in the snare of his own ill fate. Consequently he got immortality which could not be reversed.

Since prehistoric times man has thought highly of immortality. This quality typically given to gods is revered as defiance of that which plagues all namely death. From the same vein stems the idea of prolonged youth, as youth is viewed as the **prime condition** to have. Yet there are **drawbacks** to an eternal life which are artistically explored by **Mary Shelly** in "**The Mortal Immortal**". The protagonist of the story **Winzy** accidentally becomes **immortal**. Firstly he relishes his everlasting youth. He calls his beloved **Bertha** "**silly old woman**" because of her **dark eyes** and **dark hair**. But, later on his youth proves **curse** for him and he says that "**could I imagine that the despicable gifts of youth and good looks outweighed disgrace, hatred, and scorn?**". Due to his youth people started to call him "**Scholar Bewitched**". Sometimes **Bertha** taunts him, "**youth was a disease and I ought at all times to prepare for a sudden and awful death**". They become **homeless** and **friendless** due to the immortality of **Winzy**. At certain part of his life after the death of **Bertha** he has no one to talk to share his moments of happiness and grieves. He elaborates his condition by comparing him with several things such as he says, "**a sailor without rudder or compass, tossed on a stormy sea, a traveler lost on a wide spread heath, without landmark or star to guide him: more lost, more hopeless**". **Winzy** has no beacon except the **hope of death** and he feels trap.

Mary Shelley uses time as a significant element in "**The Mortal Immortal**". The theme of time and its **dualistic** and **pluralistic** nature is fully explored in the story. **Winzy** becomes immortal due to **cruelty** of time as he does not want to do job at professor **Cornelius Agrippa's** laboratory and at first he does not want to drink **elixir** but he ends up drinking it thinking of it as a cure for his obsessive and unrequited love for **Bertha**. All of this happens because of the role of **chance** and **time**.

Time is the **enemy** of human kind. It **destroys** the **youth** and **love** life of a man. The **tragedy** of **immortality** is time as **Winzy** is immortal so time is the greatest tragedy and dilemma for him but for **Bertha** the passing nature of time acts as an adversary. It is difficult for him to **form lasting**,

strong relationships with those who do not possess a similar extended life span. That is why he abhors the idea of longevity as he is left alone. And he says, **"can time indeed be healer of all wounds?"**. Winzy is physically **alive** but his soul and spirit are **dead** because of the perpetual despair he experiences. He mentions his time span by saying **"the weight of never ending time – the tedious passage of still succeeding hours"**

Enemy of human beings and biggest **threat** to them is death and this is the **universal truth** that everyone has to taste death and no one can deny it. Death particularly for humans is commonly considered as **sad** or **unpleasant** occasion , a calamity that terminates social and familial bounds. But death is denied to the immortals as they have no fear of death and this is artistically explained in **"The Mortal Immortal"**. Winzy is immortal and he defines death as, **"mysterious, ill- visage friend of weak humanity"**. Because of his everlasting life he wants death but due to horrors of death he is afraid to die. People taunt him and are fearful of him due to his immortality that is why no one gives him job and he remains alone and says **"The more I live the more I dread death, even while I abhor life"**. Then he decides to yield his body for the experiments and in the service of humanity.

Every individual wishes for a life that is **long** with **good looks**, **pleasures** and with all the **materialistic goods** with **no lurking fear of death**. These things **fascinate** human mind and heart but these are **foolish** thoughts. Human wishes are **vain** and **meaningless**. In every human **wish** there is a **pain** and in every desire there is **suffering**, whether one desires something great or small, the result is same. The ambition, wish, desire after all just give the **sufferings**. As Winzy is the happiest man on the earth when he knows that he is immortal. He enjoys his looks and admires his youth but afterwards his longevity proves **curse** for him. He becomes **homeless** and **friendless** and spends his days in **miserable** and **pitiable** condition. He wants to end his life. On lamenting his desire he says, **"I was laughed at for my vanity in consulting the mirror so often, but consulting the mirror so often but consulted in vain"**.

The themes of **love and jealousy** are also very prominent in **"The Mortal Immortal"**. Shelley describes the dual effects of immortality on love in the forms of deteriorating love of Bertha and the everlasting love of Winzy. Winzy's untarnished youthful look, his untrenched brow, cheeks and eyes began to tease Bertha too. With her getting old and her husband remaining the same, ***"Bertha herself grew uneasy. She became jealous and peevish and at length she began to question"*** him. The **love of Bertha started to deteriorate**. She became resentful of him and used to disgraced him among her acquaintances and told them that there was ruin at work which led a fault in his frame. In his own words, Winzy described Bertha's derogatory remarks;

"She affirmed that the worst symptom about me was my apparent health. My youth was a disease, she said, and I ought at all times to prepare, if not for a sudden and awful death, at least to awake some morning white-headed, bowed down with all the marks of advanced years."

When Winzy was fancied by other women due to his youth, Bertha would intentionally make him look old and one time she even bought him a grey wig. Winzy described the jealousy of his wife as;

"Her jealousy never slept. Her chief occupation was to discover that, in spite of outward appearance, I was myself growing old."

The jealousy destroyed the **love of Bertha**. It was also the jealousy which led Winzy to enter into an immortal world. He thought that **"she should die beneath my vengeance"** but unknowingly harmed his own self. On the other hand, Winzy cherished her old aged Bertha. His love for Bertha did not get affected due to her diminished beauty. Although he could not ignore her old age, her mincing, simpering manners but deep inside his heart still idolized her and adore her. It was the love for Bertha which forced him to risk his life in the alchemist's shop because he knew very well that working for Agrippa would be harmful for him.

Shelley has also employed various **motifs** in her works. Death and immortality appear as motifs in **"The Mortal Immortal"**. She uses the motif

of **alchemy** as well. The concept of alchemy is a famous mystical concept of Shelley's age. According to this concept, "everything holds a universal spirit within" and all matters are composed of fire, water and earth. Alchemists were believed to be magicians and some aspects of their studies helped shape modern chemistry. She uses dark, brooding and mysterious motifs of life, death, immortality and human emotions to prove the futility of human desires. Thus, at a single glance, **"The Mortal Immortal"** seems to be based after the traditions of **horror, tragedy, or gothic novel** but with detailed study, many unique themes emerge. Whether it be life, death, family, alienation, nature, revenge, or ambition; Mary Shelley seems to give an enlightened insight into all.

Marks:18

