

**Subject:** Fantasy ENG-310

**Assignment No.:** 1

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### **Themes in The mortal immortal.**

Following are the possible themes in the mortal immortal by Mary Shelley.

#### **Loneliness as a theme or Immortality as a blessing and curse.**

A major theme in "The Mortal Immortal" lies in Winzy's struggle between wanting to die and fearing death. Winzy has outlived his family and loved ones and now lives in misery and loneliness. He claims to wish for death. He sees death as a final rest from the woes of life. Despite this, Winzy also claims that "the more I live, the more I dread death." While his immortality is a blessing that has extended his youth and life, it also acts as a curse: his immortality increases his fear of and need for death, forcing him to live in an indecisive state between fear and desire. This "curse" is reminiscent of the creature's predicament in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The creature was created outside the laws of nature, and by that was doomed to be reviled and feared by all who saw him. Since Winzy drank an elixir of immortality, he inadvertently broke the laws of nature by giving himself eternal life—an arguably unnatural state for a human to be in. Just as the creature in Frankenstein was created outside of the bounds of nature, so does Winzy exist outside the bounds of nature as a mortal immortal.

After drinking the elixir, Winzy's life dramatically improves but only for a short period of time because Bertha continues to age and she eventually dies. Although Winzy wishes to die as well, having lost his family and loved ones, he has not succeeded in doing so. Thus, what began as a pathway to his happiness morphs into a curse, which he is forced to endure forever. Shelley is able to comment on the human condition through Winzy's words. His life is a paradox with no easy solution, he finds no enjoyment in continued life. Since it goes against the established laws of nature—all men must die at one time or another. Hence, he is accordingly miserable. This shows the loneliness and psychological tension that Winzy faces in the mortal immortal.

#### **Poverty and Love as Opposed to Wealth and Status.**

The theme of poverty and love as better than wealth and status is shown through Bertha and Winzy's relationship. First, Bertha's kind and humble nature is shown to be corruptible by Bertha's wealthy caretaker and her sudden ascent into the upper class. Bertha acts cruelly and unfairly towards Winzy, who has done nothing but truly love her. However, when Bertha sees Winzy's changed demeanor after he drinks the potion, she agrees to marry him. Furthermore, Bertha's choice to marry Winzy is influenced by her being forced into a marriage with Albert Hoffer. With her power of decision lessened, Bertha suddenly and acutely felt the constraints of status and wealth. She then sees marrying Winzy as an escape into true love and freedom, claiming: "let me leave the detested luxuries and wretchedness of this noble dwelling—take me to poverty and happiness." Bertha's claim that marrying Winzy will lead to poverty but also happiness conveys that poverty, if combined with love and healthy relationships, is superior to living a wealthy but loveless life. For Bertha, this rings true for the early years of their relationship, but she is reduced to a "simpering" and "jealous" woman when confronted with Winzy's continued youth. Bertha begins to pay less attention to their love and more attention to aesthetics, which reflects Bertha's upper-class upbringing and original pettiness.