

# A commentary on binary elements through study of rhetorical schemes

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In this passage of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we uncover a more developed realization of Victor Frankenstein's character as he encounters the devastating passing of his mother. In this pivotal event of the novel, Shelley fully exploits its deep and moving subject by emphasizing the binary that exists throughout the book - life and death. This contrast is especially elevated through the usage of rhetorical schemes such as imagery, personification and more specific elements such as epistrophe, periphrasis and metaphor. These devices are sewn within the prose to highlight the emotional and literary integrity of this passage.

Through this use of literary devices, Shelley effectively brings forth the concept of life and death that acts as an undertone in the development of Frankenstein's monster through characters like Victor Frankenstein's mother and Elizabeth. Within this passage, Shelley employs imagery to enhance the descriptions and assertions of life and death, calling death "the most irreparable evil ... the void that presents itself to the soul." (Shelley 24) Through Victor Frankenstein's character, death is accused to "take the brightness of a beloved eye ... extinguished," suggesting that life before one's death is comparable to a fire being put out. This traumatic antithesis is immediately coupled with a glowing testimonial of Elizabeth, who had "recalled the sunshine of her smiles" (Shelley 24) to act the comforter. The immediate change between words such as "extinguished," "void" and "evil" are rivaled with gleaming ones such as "sunshine," "smiles" and "comfort" which further emphasizes the polarity of life and death. In personifying these opposites in characters such as Frankenstein's mother and Elizabeth, they are presented in a closer way.

The reader's senses are heightened and these elements are further accentuated. These themes continue to develop as Mary Shelley uses personification to further perpetuate the themes of life and death, enabling a more dynamic reception of these themes in the reader. For example, in describing the passing of his mother, Victor Frankenstein says "the sound of a voice so familiar and dear to the ear can be hushed, never more to be heard" (Shelley 24) which corroborates with other phrases found in the text, such as that alluding to death extinguishing one's life. The reader feels the vacancy associated with these emotions, fully understanding the author's intention to provoke feelings of dissonance and discomfort by personifying the intangible element of death. Conversely, Elizabeth symbolizes the life of this relationship, having had "vied her grief" (Shelley 24) to act as a façade to console and pacify those around her. Elizabeth's character represents life and humanity, posing another refutation to the theme of death.

Lastly, Shelley uses specific examples of literary devices to create depth and colour in her prose while reiterating major themes. An example of this would be epistrophe, which is the repetition of a word at the end of successive phrases or clauses to highlight a point. An example of this is seen in Victor's lament: "Why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt, and must feel?" (Shelley 24) stating that death is a certain and permanent fate that favours no one. Even Victor's sentiments towards death themselves are negative in nature, suggesting a disconnection between Victor and other humans. This notion is carried along further with Shelley's use of periphrasis, wherein one substitutes a descriptive word or phrase for a proper noun. This can be seen <https://assignbuster.com/a-commentary-on-binary-elements-through-study-of-rhetorical-schemes/>

when the book reads “ the house of mourning,” (Shelley 24) symbolizes the tragedy and its effects echoing throughout this passage, touching Victor Frankenstein and those around him.

The house is emblematic of unification of humans, in their common trait of living to conclude in death. Finally, Shelley uses a metaphor to drive further her impression of death, the “ rude hand.” This metaphor could encompass this entire passage, rendering it an extended metaphor: the hand that snuffs the fire of life and guides the passage of fate. This metaphor lends itself well to Shelley’s other examples of personification, where the intersection of the two creates a vision of death purported to haunt and chill the reader. These aspects of the novel reflect Frankenstein’s monster, in its literal personification of creating life without life. Frankenstein’s creation is a hybrid of both life and death, possessing neither the brightness of life nor the desolation of death.

However, he exists as though he were alive though his creation was by no means through life. Shelley’s use of personification, vivid imagery and skilled utilization of other literary devices allow these thematic elements to thrive within specific characters such as Elizabeth and Victor Frankenstein’s mother, developing their characters whilst developing that of Frankenstein’s monster. In conclusion, Mary Shelley masterfully crafts a maturation of characters within this passage by employing different literary devices to bring them to life. These characters embody aspects of life and death that are embedded throughout the entire novel. However, in this passage, Shelley’s particular use of imagery, personification and metaphor are all in

effort of creating a concept of dualism and polarity that exist within all, binding us together. It may be through this common trait where Frankenstein's monster is alienated, propelling his significance in the novel forward as a creation of meaninglessness and isolation.