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Radka Fenclová

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Jméno a příjmení: **Radka Fenclová**
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Zásady pro vypracování

Ani po sto letech od svého vydání příběh Frankenstein Mary Shelley nepřestal poutat pozornost. Dokladem jsou nejen četná filmová zpracování, ale i velká řada románů, které příběh Frankensteina a zrod jeho monstra líčí z rozličných úhlů pohledu. Radka Fenclová se ve své bakalářské práci bude věnovat vybrané skupině současných verzí příběhu, např. Dave Zeltserman: *Monster: A novel of Frankenstein* (2012), Mackenzi Lee: *This Monstrous Thing* (2015) či Elizabeth Rudnick: *Frankenweenie* (2012). Jejím cílem je provést komparativní analýzu a zmapovat, jak novodobé verze vykreslují postavy Frankensteina a jeho netvora. Sledovat bude zejména jejich osobností rysy, postoje k ostatním postavám a vztah s nimi. Autorka se také může zabývat rozdílným pojetím výstavby příběhu a rozuzlení. Práci uzavře kapitola, která z předchozích zjištění vyvodí obecnější závěry.

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doc. Mgr. Jiří Kubeš, Ph.D.
děkan

Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

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Annotation

This bachelor thesis focuses on postmodern retellings of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley and analyses the differences between the original story and the retellings. At the same time, the analytical part points out various literary techniques which are typical for postmodern literature. The bachelor thesis also contains a theoretical chapter which provides more information about these literary techniques.

Keywords

postmodernism, retellings, Frankenstein, monster

Název

Frankenstein a jeho netvor v současné próze

Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na postmoderní převyprávění díla *Frankenstein neboli moderní Prométheus*, jehož autorkou je Mary Shelley, a analyzuje rozdíly mezi původním dílem a jeho převyprávěními. Analytická část zároveň poukazuje na různé literární techniky, které jsou typické pro postmoderní literaturu. Práce také obsahuje teoretickou kapitolu, která poskytuje více informací o těchto literárních technikách.

Klíčová slova

postmodernismus, převyprávění, Frankenstein, netvor

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Introduction

Many postmodernists claim that it is very hard to define postmodernism, however, there are certain features which are typical for this movement. These features typical for postmodernism are also visible in the postmodern literature and one of the main ones is the tendency to retell history. As Ingeborg Hoesterey suggests, “confronted with the vast archive of the artistic tradition, the postmodern writer [...] consciously acknowledges this past by demonstratively borrowing from it, particularly from the classical archive.”¹ Postmodern authors extract from the past and project the information in their own works. Usually the past events are combined with fiction, therefore, this retelling of history serve as a bridge between fiction and ‘reality’. By this recycling, the authors sometimes express scepticism towards any objectivity and present to the readers more possible points of view.

Nevertheless, postmodernism is not pictured only in literature, but also in films or photography. Moreover, according to Linda Hutcheon, its roots lie in architecture². Diane Morgan in her chapter about postmodern architecture in *Companion to Postmodernism* define postmodern architecture as “more cautious about the uses the technology can be put to and more sceptical about the merits of industrialization”³. What is more, Charles Jencks, an American architectural historian, suggests that there are four forces behind the postmodern architecture, which have shaped it – social, economic, technical and ecological.⁴ It is obvious that the scepticism and the influence of the past is pictured not only in literature, but also in the architecture. The techniques used by postmodern architects and postmodern writers do not change much, they are, in fact, very similar. For example, the use of parody is very frequent in both fields.

Parody, which is one of the techniques used by postmodern writers, can be conspicuous in the already mentioned retellings of historical events, but also in story retellings. Retellings of other stories are very popular mainly because they provide interesting points of view or, as many postmodernists claim, give more space to characters which were marginal in the original

¹ Ingeborg Hoesterey, “Postmodern Pastiche: A Critical Aesthetic,” *The Centennial Review* 39, no. 3 (fall 1995): 496.

² Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), 2.

³ Diane Morgan, “Postmodernism and Architecture,” in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Sim (London: Routledge, 2001), 82.

⁴ Charles Jencks, *The Story of Post-modernism* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2011), 11.

story. Many postmodern authors focus on retellings of well-known classics and one of them is also *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*.

Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus by Mary Shelley is one of the most popular novels of the 19th century. This novel is unique not only for the choice of characters, but also for its timelessness. Many people consider *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* to be the first science-fiction story. Because of the recent prevalence of science-fiction and the development of technology, this novel became a classic with many retellings and film adaptations. This bachelor thesis focuses on six of these retellings, involving for example *Spare and Found Parts* written by Sarah M. Griffin or *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* by Dave Zeltserman. One of the retellings analysed in this bachelor thesis is also *Frankenweenie* written by Elizabeth Rudnick, which is also a film animated by a famous artist and animator Tim Burton. This permanent interest expresses that Shelley's work is inspiring for many other authors even two centuries later.

The overall aim of this bachelor thesis is to point out the differences between the retellings and the original novel *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*. It focuses on the ways the postmodern authors pictured the characters and the relationships between them, but also on the acceptance, or rejection, of the Monster by the society. Furthermore, it maps various postmodern literary techniques which were used by the postmodern writers of the retellings.

1. Features of Postmodernism in Literature

Many postmodernists argue that postmodern literature is known for its playfulness, mostly in the sense of rejecting any boundaries between high and low literature, different genres and forms of writing. Postmodern authors use various stylistic techniques, such as intertextuality, parody or pastiche, thereby create texts which are novel and creatively written. This chapter provides information about these techniques and it also summarizes the postmodern perception of the truth and reality. Moreover, there is also provided what the role of language is in this postmodern perception.

1.1. Retellings

Nowadays literature is full of various retellings of well-known fairy tales or classics and many of them are one of the best books on the book market (such as *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas or *My Plain Jane* by C. Hand, J. Meadows and B. Ashton). Its label – Retelling – already suggests that the author retells already known story. Many postmodernists argue that texts – novels, short stories etc. – are open to more interpretations, therefore, they are open to be retold from multiple points of view. As Christopher Butler claims in *Postmodernism – A Very Short Introduction*, “we can describe the ‘same’ event in many different ways,”⁵ which implies that it is possible to retell the same story and always highlight a different part of it, or highlight different characters, and create a completely distinct story out of the original one. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definition of a retelling is “a new version of a story”⁶ which means that postmodern authors do not try to copy the story, but that they try to create a new narrative out of an old story. By that, they can point out an issue, or creatively change the original story and project their own ideas. However, there are some difficulties after all, which Butler points out and claims that any text nowadays involves an obsessional repetition,⁷ which indicates the fact that several retellings of one story might be repetitive and not always unique.

Because this bachelor thesis is based on the analysis of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*’s retellings, an important feature of postmodern literature which should be mentioned in this chapter is intertextuality. According to James Fleming and his article about

⁵ Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 36.

⁶ “Retelling,” Merriam-Webster, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/retelling>.

⁷ Butler, *Postmodernism*, 31.

postmodern literature, intertextuality is “the acknowledgement of previous literary works within another literary work”⁸ and based on a definition in *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*, intertextuality is a label for the interdependence of one literary text with literary texts that have gone before it.⁹ From these definitions it is obvious that intertextuality is a term which suggests that one text, such as the retelling, is dependent on the other – the original story.

Brian McHale discusses intertextuality in his study *Postmodernist Fiction* and creates three intertextual zones. One of the intertextual zones is called ‘intertextual space’ and as McHale claims, “there are a number of ways of foregrounding this intertextual space and integrating it in the text’s structure”¹⁰. McHale adds that one of the ways is ‘borrowing’ a character from a different text¹¹, which Umberto Eco analyses in *Role of the Reader*. Eco writes about “the identity of a given individual through worlds”¹² and calls it a ‘transworld identity’ by which he means characters belonging to one specific world which were used as characters in a different fictional world. Mark Heller develops the idea of ‘transworld identity’ in *Transworld Identity for the Ersatzist* and writes about the ‘transworld identity relation’. According to Heller, this relation is based on interpretation and suggests that two worlds can picture the existence of a single object. However, the representation of the object in retellings is considered only as an interpretation of the original one.¹³

In conclusion, retellings provide new points of view and present the original characters in a new light, which attract the attention of all sorts of readers. The retellings are based on intertextuality, which makes the intertextual practises an essential part of this phenomenon. Nowadays, it is entertaining for many readers to read old stories in their new versions and experience the story once again, but a little bit differently. That is why the retellings are so popular and such a contribution to the book market.

⁸ "Postmodernism in Literature: Definition & Examples," Study, Last modified November 20, 2014, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/postmodernism-in-literature-definition-lesson-quiz.html>.

⁹ J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 424.

¹⁰ Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), 57.

¹¹ McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 57.

¹² Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 219.

¹³ Mark Heller, “Transworld Identity for the Ersatzist,” *Philosophical Topics* 30, no. 1 Identity and Individuation (Spring 2002): 89.

1.2. Postmodern Literary Techniques

Postmodern authors use various literary techniques which support the postmodern playfulness. These postmodern techniques involve metafiction, temporal disorder or minimalism, however, a technique used by postmodern authors, which Linda Hutcheon in *Politics of Postmodernism* claims to be central, is parody¹⁴.

Brian McHale considers parody to be “a form of self-reflection and self-critique, a genre’s way of thinking critically about itself.”¹⁵ His definition implies parody’s criticality, which many other authors agree with. One of them is, for instance, Linda Hutcheon who suggests that parody is “deconstructively critical and constructively creative, paradoxically making us aware of both the limits and the powers of representation.”¹⁶ Hutcheon indicates that parody points out not only the imperfections, but also the positive aspects. She also argues that the term can be seen in a wide range of forms and purposes, such as ‘playfully ludic’ or ‘seriously respectful’, and that it is not limited only to the notions of wit and ridicule as it was perceived formerly.¹⁷ To go back to retellings, Nasrullah Mambrol defines parody in her article *Postmodern Use of Parody and Pastiche* and argues that parody “imitates the manner, style or characteristics of a particular literary work/ genre/ author.”¹⁸ Her definition implies that parody is closely linked to intertextuality and therefore to retellings. Linda Hutcheon also claims that “postmodern parody is a kind of contesting revision or rereading of the past that both confirms and subverts the power of the representations of history.”¹⁹ As it was already mentioned, parody is a technique which evaluates and criticizes, therefore it can make the readers see some issues from a different point of view, which the retellings, both the retellings of stories and retellings of historical events, often provide.

A postmodern technique which is closely related to parody is pastiche. Barry Lewis discusses pastiche in *Companion to Postmodernism* and claims that it is a kind of permutation, which “arises from the frustration that everything has been done before.”²⁰ As well as parody, pastiche is based on intertextuality, however, it is not their only similarity. Christopher Butler argues in *Postmodernism – A Very Short Introduction* that pastiche, together with parody and

¹⁴ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 89.

¹⁵ McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 145.

¹⁶ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 94.

¹⁷ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 90.

¹⁸ “Postmodern Use of Parody and Pastiche,” *Literariness*, Last modified April 5, 2016, <https://literariness.org/2016/04/05/postmodern-use-of-parody-and-pastiche/>.

¹⁹ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 91.

²⁰ Barry Lewis, “Postmodernism and Literature,” in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Sim (London: Routledge, 2001), 125.

irony, expresses critical attitude.²¹ While Butler points to the similarities between parody and pastiche, Chris Baldick refers to their differences. Baldick in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* provides the definition of pastiche and writes that “pastiche differs from parody in using imitation as a form of flattery rather than mockery.”²² Therefore, even though both parody and pastiche can be considered as critical tools, pastiche offers more positive reaction than parody.

While pastiche and parody are examined by many authors, Barry Lewis also mentions less discussed fragmentation and vicious circles as dominant features of postmodern fiction. Fragmentation, according to Lewis, in postmodernist sense expresses that the writer “distrusts the wholeness and completion associated with traditional stories, and prefers to deal with other ways of structuring narrative.”²³ By this, he suggests that the structuring is not traditional, but more chaotic and one of the features of fragmentation is for example the attenuation of themes, because of which, it is harder to specify what the story is about. Another example of fragmentation can be multiple endings of one story.²⁴ Regarding vicious circles, Lewis claims that “vicious circles arise in postmodern fiction when both text and world are permeable, to the extent that we cannot separate one from the other.”²⁵ In practice it means, for example, that the author steps into his own text or ‘real-life’ historical figures appear in fictions.²⁶

A feature which resembles vicious circles is the postmodern authors’ tendency to mix not only historical figures with the fictional, but also fictional events with the historical ones. Many postmodernists mention this technique and for example James Fleming defines it as ‘faction’ and claims that it means “the mixing of actual historical events with fictional events without clearly defining what is factual and what is fictional.”²⁷ It is evident that both vicious circles and faction focus on the past, and both these techniques are very frequently used by postmodern writers.

It is obvious that postmodern literature is full of various techniques, genres, and features and it is this variability that makes it so distinct. Apart from the critical attitude expressed by parody and pastiche, there is also the postmodern tendency to mix fictional events with historical ones delivered by faction. All these techniques, together with fragmentation and vicious circles, characterize the postmodern movement and express its creativity.

²¹ Butler, *Postmodernism*, 66.

²² Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 186.

²³ Lewis, “Postmodernism and Literature,” 127.

²⁴ Lewis, “Postmodernism and Literature,” 126–127.

²⁵ Lewis, “Postmodernism and Literature,” 131.

²⁶ Lewis, “Postmodernism and Literature,” 131.

²⁷ Study, “Postmodernism in Literature.”

1.3. Postmodern perception of the truth and reality

The reason for discussing the postmodern perception of the truth and reality is that the postmodern perception of the truth and reality varies from the former beliefs and assumptions. Postmodernism, being a movement of a post-war period, was influenced by the former course of events, therefore, as Christopher Butler claims, postmodern attitude is very sceptical about totalizing claims and explanations. It leads to the fact that the postmodernist conclusion about truth is that universal truth is impossible.²⁸

One part of postmodern perception of truth and reality is deconstruction, which, according to Mark Currie, the author of *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, became notorious in the 1980s. He also claims that the intent of deconstruction is the doubt and “the celebration of irreducible complexity.”²⁹ Basically, deconstruction reveals the postmodern scepticism towards any universality and complexity. According to Butler, the central argument for deconstruction depends on relativism, by which he means the idea that the truth is relative to various points of view and that the truth also depends on the person, in this case called the ‘judging subject’.³⁰

In *Keywords in Creative Writing* by Wendy Bishop and David Starkey, the authors discuss the role of language in constructions of truths:

At the heart of postmodernism is the unreliable nature of language. What we think we’re saying is never exactly what we intended. [...] Since no finite set of grand narratives governs past events, postmodernists renounce the responsibility of conveying Truth with a capital T and begin, instead, to investigate the contradictory, many-voiced nature of small t truths.³¹

The authors express that language is a major element in the postmodern perception and verbalization of truth and reality and that it, in a way, limits the teller. Barbara Foley discusses the perception of the truth in *Telling the Truth* and suggests that “truth is being told, with ‘facts’ to back it up”.³² Hutcheon adds to Foley’s statement that the difficulty of this is that it is the

²⁸ Butler, *Postmodernism*, 15.

²⁹ Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 4.

³⁰ Butler, *Postmodernism*, 16.

³¹ Wendy Bishop and Starkey, David, “Postmodernism” in *Keywords in Creative Writing* (Utah: Utah State University Press, 2006), 133.

³² Barbara Foley, “Mimesis, Cognition, and the Problem of the Referent,” in *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 67.

teller who constructs the truth and chooses the facts.³³ Therefore, there is only the teller's point of view, which means that there will always be something left out.

Regarding the postmodern apprehension of the reality, the postmodern idea is, as Joseph Natoli claims in *A Primer to Postmodernity*, "different narratives of reality can be made and therefore people can live in widely different realities."³⁴ Natoli by this statement suggests that one person's representation of reality is different from another person's representation, even when it comes to the same event. Christopher Butler then proposes that the representation of reality is constructed by language, which cannot be justified by a simple statement that this is the way that such things 'really are'. For this reason, truth can be perceived as a kind of fiction, reading as a form of misreading and understanding as a form of misunderstanding.³⁵ Butler also adds that because of the reality's inexhaustibility, the representations tend to be incomplete, however, it does not mean that they are not accurate.³⁶

In conclusion, postmodern attitude is very sceptical and doubtful. Postmodern idea, based on the scepticism, is that truth and reality is constructed by language and that a significant part in it represents the teller. Because of that and because of the fact that there is always something missing, postmodernists claim that the truth and reality is different for each person.

³³ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 56.

³⁴ Joseph Natoli, *A Primer to Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998), 18.

³⁵ Butler, *Postmodernism*, 21.

³⁶ Willie Thompson, *Postmodernism and History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 56.

2. Characters

Characters are an integral part and a building block of every story. Moreover, every character is always special in its own way and especially characters in *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley are unique, fascinating and worth attention. Therefore, it is in place to dedicate this chapter to them and compare the characters, such as the Monster or Victor Frankenstein, created by Mary Shelley with their postmodern interpretations. This chapter focuses on the transworld identity relation between the original characters and the retelling versions; thus, it gauges the extent to which postmodern authors altered and respected their original personalities, relationships and appearance.

2.1. Victor Frankenstein and his Monster

The first character from *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* that comes to mind is Victor Frankenstein. Mary Shelley presents Victor as a person who is smart, good, creative and a character with whom everybody sympathises. His love of science and experimenting makes him a victim of his own creation. Shelley foreshadows the consequences of the creation right at the beginning, where the reader discovers what effect did the Monster's actions have on Frankenstein's physical and psychical state through Walton's letters. He writes, "his limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition."³⁷ Walton then continues and says that "his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness [...] but he is generally melancholy and despairing, and sometimes he gnashes his teeth, as if impatient of the weight of woes that oppresses him."³⁸ Thanks to Walton's description, the readers detect that the time since creating the Monster did not sign only on his appearance, but also on his psychical side.

Postmodern authors, however, propose the idea that Frankenstein is an evil person without any morals. They interpret Victor as a villain even more monstrous than the Monster himself. This critical standpoint, expressed by parody, that anybody who revives the dead must be a dangerous madman can be nicely seen in *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* by an American novelist Dave Zeltserman. The parody mostly lies in Zeltserman's approach to the character of Victor Frankenstein. This retelling is narrated by the Monster; therefore, the reader

³⁷ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited Cumberland House, 1993), 14.

³⁸ Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 15.

has access to his thoughts and emotions towards Frankenstein. Through Monster's eyes it is revealed that Zeltserman pictures Victor as a clever man, but on the other hand depraved, with twisted thoughts and hobbies. Frankenstein's way of thinking about the Monster, and the way he treats him, just proves his depravity, but it also points out Zeltserman's exaggeration of this character's insanity: "How are we now, my magnificent creation? Still unable to move? Not to worry. That will pass as you grow stronger. You can see me, can you? Oh [sic] how I wish you could answer me!"³⁹ It is evident that Zeltserman chose to work with the character of Frankenstein in a completely opposite way than Mary Shelley. Instead of horrified reaction, which Shelley's Frankenstein had on his creation, Zeltserman's version of Frankenstein treats the Monster as his pet. It only proves that Zeltserman does not imagine Victor Frankenstein as well-behaved as Mary Shelley did.

Another possibility that would make the readers look at the story differently is the perception of Frankenstein as a crazy person, who is a patient in a madhouse. This possibility is suggested in *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* by Peter Ackroyd. The information about Frankenstein's mental state is provided at the end of the story, which proposes that there are more possible interpretations. The first one would be that Frankenstein has become crazy after creating the Monster and the whole story of bringing him alive is truthful. The second one is that Frankenstein has been insane the whole time and the only monster he has ever created is only in his head. According to Nasrullah Mambrol, postmodern works are very often fragmented, which means that they are ambiguous and provide multiple interpretations.⁴⁰ Therefore, this retelling can be considered as an example of fragmentation, because of the way the author chose to end the story. Nevertheless, Ackroyd slowly foreshadows Frankenstein's illness throughout the last pages of the story. Firstly, there are hints by Frankenstein's 'friends' pointing to his illness, such as: "You have lived in your imagination, Victor. You have dreamed all this. Invented it."⁴¹ Secondly, Frankenstein himself points to the fact that he is crazy: "Then we wandered out, the creature and I, into the world where we were taken by the watchman."⁴² And finally, there is a little note, which ends the whole story: "Given to me by the patient, Victor Frankenstein, on Wednesday November 15, 1822. Signed by Fredrick Newman,

³⁹ Dave Zeltserman, *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* (The Overlook Press: New York, 2012), 12.

⁴⁰ "Postmodernism," Literariness, last modified March 31, 2016, <https://literariness.org/2016/03/31/postmodernism/>.

⁴¹ Peter Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Frankenstein* (The Random House Group Limited: London, 2008), 260.

⁴² Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Frankenstein*, 260.

Superintendent of the Hoxton Mental Asylum for Incurables.”⁴³ It is a short note, yet it breaks down the whole story and initiates approaching it from a new perspective.

Victor Frankenstein is pictured in many ways, but his personality always imprints on the relationships with other characters, such as Elizabeth or the Monster. A retelling which pictures the relationship of Victor and Elizabeth the most is *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* by Kiersten White. Kiersten White is an author of many retellings which share the fact that the main characters, as well as the narrators, are mostly women. Likewise, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* is narrated by a female character – Elizabeth Lavenza. Thanks to Elizabeth’s point of view, the readers have the insight to Elizabeth’s feelings towards Victor: “What I could not survive was losing my Victor. I needed Victor. And that little girl who had done what was necessary to secure his heart would still do whatever it took to keep it.”⁴⁴ It is self-explanatory that since she was a little girl, Elizabeth stayed completely devoted to Victor and that she would do anything for him. In this concrete retelling, this devoutness made her view of Victor distorted. As Butler claims, “we can only ‘know’ what they [those with power] permit us to know about reality.”⁴⁵ Elizabeth knew about Victor only what he wanted her to know to preserve her love and loyalty and vice versa: “I no longer pretended for him, and he did the same. His true self was revealed. It was like looking at a portrait – flat, lifeless, no soul beneath the strokes.”⁴⁶ It is obvious that the way they saw each other until that moment was the way they had chosen to be seen. Its part also plays language which is the tool that they use to dupe each other. This retelling display that language is what constructs the would-be truth and what empowers the speaker to say only what he/she needs to say to get what he/she wants.

Apart from the relationship of Victor and Elizabeth, postmodern authors describe the relationship of Victor and his Monster. They express this relationship from a lot of different perspectives; therefore, the variety of emotions is iridescent. On the one hand, in *Frankenweenie* by Elizabeth Rudnick, there is apparent pure love both from Victor’s and the Monster’s (in this case, it is Victor’s dead dog) side:

Sparky let out two loud barks and jumped into Victor’s arms. His tail whipped back and forth as Sparky gave his boy wet, sloppy kisses. In fact, it was wagging so furiously that it came off and flew across the room. [...] ‘I can fix that,’ Victor

⁴³ Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Frankenstein*, 260.

⁴⁴ Kiersten White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* (Delacorte Press: New York, 2018), 17.

⁴⁵ Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002), 19.

⁴⁶ White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 242.

said. Then he went back to hugging his dog. Tail or no tail, it was great to have Sparky back.⁴⁷

There is visible a strong bond between Victor and his dog. Victor loves his creation even though it looks a little scary. On the other hand, in the already mentioned retelling *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*, there is an evident shift – this relationship is full of hate and manipulation. As it was said previously, everything is discovered through Monster’s eyes: “Here he was, my most detested enemy [...] ‘Why is it that you wish to murder me, my pet?’ he demanded, his voice soft but snapping at me as if a whip.”⁴⁸ While the Monster thinks about his creator as an enemy whom he hates the most and wants to kill, Frankenstein, on the contrary, is proud of his creation and tries to manipulate and control the Monster to make him cooperate. This retelling captures the features of black humour and parody – for example, the very way Frankenstein speaks with the Monster is ridiculous, as it can be seen at the example above, where he addresses him as ‘my pet’. Taking into consideration the original story, Shelley’s Victor is afraid of the Monster and the consequences of his creation. However, Zeltserman’s version is that Victor’s creature is the one who is scared, and Victor is a fearless, manipulative and cruel character. Zeltserman’s criticism, highlighted by parody, is based on the fact that even though the Monster looks terrifying, it could be Victor who is actually the monster and not his creature. That is why he exaggerates Victor’s horrific behaviour, because it points to Zeltserman’s idea that it is the actions that make the person a monster and not the appearance. Therefore, he pictures the creature as a victim, whose task is to obey Frankenstein: “There was little difference between them [Frankenstein’s friends] and the devil worshippers that I had encountered, except that I was powerless against them, as I equally was against Frankenstein.”⁴⁹ Zeltserman exchanges the roles of the Monster and Frankenstein typical for the original story. While originally Frankenstein feels powerless, now it is the Monster who is disadvantaged.

Not to be completely black and white, postmodern retellings provide even a mostly positive relationship, but also full of doubts, secrets and complications. Such as in the novel *This Monstrous Thing* by Mackenzi Lee. Frankenstein – Alasdair, in this case – thinks about himself as the monster for bringing his dead brother back to life. However, his intentions were not evil, which is obvious from the way Alasdair thinks about his brother: “I wanted Oliver back the way he had been – the boy who’d stolen strawberries for my birthday and skated with

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Rudnick, *Frankenweenie* (Disney Press: New York, 2012), chapter 5.

⁴⁸ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 127.

⁴⁹ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 146–47.

me and knocked out a man's teeth when he tried to hurt a clockwork beggar.”⁵⁰ He has doubts about himself but also about his brother. He is not sure, if the brother he knew is still inside the Monster, but he loves him anyway.

In all the retellings, as well as in the original story, Victor's passion is science, he has dedicated his life to it and his major goal is to bring something dead to life. Postmodern playfulness is evident when reasons for doing such a terrifying thing as resurgence are considered. One of the reasons is love. Either the need to be loved by someone, such as in *Spare and Found Parts* written by Sarah M. Griffin, or the loss of someone beloved, such as in *This Monstrous Thing*. Another reason, which can be found in *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, is simply a curiosity about the possibilities of science and what people are able to do with its help.

To provide an example of at least one of the reasons, *Spare and Found Parts* can be used. Not only is Frankenstein a girl, but also, she is a very special person, whose heart was replaced by a pacemaker, which was made by her father, scientist, to save her life. For most people, the ticking is annoying, and they do not want to spend time with her. Therefore, she wants to create somebody who would love her despite her flaws. She pictures her creature as: “a kind person. A person who spoke softly and made her laugh and liked her just the way she was, who didn't ask her questions she couldn't answer.”⁵¹ It is evident that she is lonely, feels unloved and these negative emotions bring the idea of creating the creature.

Frankenstein's character has attracted massive attention of postmodern authors. In their retellings, they mainly focus on Frankenstein's personality, relationships, needs and passions. He is presented in ways ranging from positive to negative and it is this flexibility that makes his character so interesting. Similarly, authors of postmodern retellings have attended to Frankenstein's creature. While Frankenstein is presented more negatively, the Monster interpreted by the postmodern authors is in many cases presented in more positive light. However, the appearance of the Monster and the process of creating him is always expressed as something terrifying and almost brutal, such as in the original story *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*. Mary Shelley gives the readers detailed description of the Monster's nightmarish appearance:

⁵⁰ Mackenzi Lee, *This Monstrous Thing* (Katherine Tegen Books: New York, 2015), 127.

⁵¹ Sarah M. Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts* (Titan Books: London, 2018), 56.

His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath, his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing, his teeth of a pearly whiteness, but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.⁵²

It is obvious that Shelley presents the Monster as a horrible imitation of a human being. This representation can be found in many of the retellings, nevertheless, there are some differences after all. For example, Mackenzi Lee in *This Monstrous Thing* and Sarah M. Griffin in *Spare and Found Parts* show another way of how the Monster could be created – and that is with the help of technology. According to Linda Hutcheon, the postmodern authors “establish a relationship between the past they write about and the present in which they write.”⁵³ In these novels, Lee and Griffin use the combination of some knowledge from the past (the original representation of the Monster) and the present-day knowledge (the knowledge concerning technology). This combination is the fundament of their novels and it is also what makes them different from the other retellings.

While in *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* the Monster was made from various bodies, which contributed to the terrifying appearance, in *This Monstrous Thing*, Lee presents the Monster, Oliver, as a partial human being whose some body parts were replaced with clockwork parts. This composition brings about the change in the way he looks:

The resurrection had robbed him too of the bone structure that had given him sharp cheekbones and a square jaw before. Now one eyelid sagged, and the skin of his face, like the rest of his body, was rippled and perpetually bruised from the machinery that pressed against it from inside.⁵⁴

Lee adds that there is nothing human inside Oliver anymore: “Inside, Oliver was pure machine, all gears and pins like an engine.”⁵⁵ It points to the fact that the Monster is perceived as an unsearchable machine without any emotions, even though it resembles a person from the outside.

⁵² Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 47.

⁵³ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 67.

⁵⁴ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 22.

⁵⁵ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 23.

Griffin pushes the representation of the Monster even further and focuses more on the technology itself. Nell, a representant of Frankenstein, creates a figure of a boy whose core is a computer and has a music box instead of a brain. Basically, his whole body is constructed out of electronic components: “Eye technology, now that was something utterly unreal. The eyes would light up and glow, she hoped. They’d respond to a central computer. They’d see her. They’d like her. He’d like her.”⁵⁶ As it was previously mentioned, Nell wants to have someone who would love her and therefore she creates this android, who is programmed to do so. After he is brought to life, he focuses on the word love. Because of Monster’s point of view, which is also provided, the readers discover how he processes it: “Love. There is the ceiling above me. My first blink. Love. I suddenly know so much and so little all at once.” Obviously, he is confused, but he tries to focus on the one thing he was made for. The way he was created makes it easier, because he has no real emotions.

To provide an example of a non-technological creation of the Monster, the process of creating the Monster in *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* can be used. In this retelling, Victor buys a body of a man who was dead for only two hours. There is an obvious shift from the original story, where Frankenstein sewed together parts of different bodies. Peter Ackroyd decides to present the Monster in a nicer, perhaps less violent, way, although, it is still morbid and scary. He writes about the man’s body that it is “mascular and firmly knit [...] the hair was full and thick, curling at the back and sides, and I noticed that there was a small scar above the left eyebrow. That was the only defect I could find.”⁵⁷ Even though the body seems to be perfect at first, the process of resurrection makes it look differently: “I noticed first the alternation to his hair: from lustrous black it changed by degrees to a ghastly yellow [...] his skin seemed to quiver, with a motion like that of waves.”⁵⁸ There is expressed the change from a beautiful person to a horribly looking creature. Even though the process of creating the monster is different than in the original story, the result is the same.

From one of the previous examples it is obvious that Nell’s Monster in *Spare and Found Parts* had positive feelings towards her, however, not every Monster, created in the postmodern retellings, reacts positively towards their creator. In *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*, the Monster wants to revenge for the way Frankenstein leaves him. He complains,

⁵⁶ Griffin, *Spare and Found parts*, 192.

⁵⁷ Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*, 119.

⁵⁸ Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*, 120.

my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. [...] Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of the mankind.⁵⁹

Similarly, in *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* or *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* the Monster hates his creator and feels betrayed. However, postmodern authors play not only with the relationship between the Monster and Victor Frankenstein, but they also display the Monster's stance towards himself. In *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*, the Monster hates his creator, but also himself. It is the self-awareness of his appearance and actions which makes him doubt and hate himself: "Is this what I have become? A creature who can only save the innocent by ripping out their hearts or by crushing their skulls? I tilted my face upwards and roared."⁶⁰ While in Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* the Monster has no problem to murder someone, this retelling provide a different approach, which suggests that murdering someone is not an act of revenge and that it brings no joy. Rather, it is felt as a punishment, which makes the Monster hate himself even more.

This self-hate, which is the result of self-awareness and the reaction of the society, is pictured also in *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*. The way the Monster feels about himself engenders that he begs his creator to end his life:

'I wish that I had joined them [women he murdered].' 'Do you mean that you wish to die?' 'Look at me. Do you see me clearly? Why would I wish to live? [...] I find no rest in the darkest night, or comfort in the brightest day. Is not death easy in comparison? Is it not to be desired?'⁶¹

In *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*, the Monster wants somebody as a companion, a mate with whom he could spent the rest of his life, whereas in this example, the Monster feels that the only way out of his misery is death. Without any doubt, the crimes he committed out of revenge were not the source of satisfaction and instead of ending others' lives without any purposive reason, he decides to end his own.

As well as the Monster's form, his needs and wishes differ. In some of the retellings the Monster wants a companion, similarly as Shelley's Monster, on the other hand, there are cases

⁵⁹ Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 90.

⁶⁰ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 134.

⁶¹ Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*, 238.

in which the Monster does not feel this need to be accompanied. This case was already mentioned in connection with the novel *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*. To provide another example, in Elizabeth Rudnick's *Frankenweenie*, the relationship of Victor and his Monster maintains positive, therefore they accompany each other without the need to be joined by somebody else. However, the positive relationship is not a rule for satisfaction, as the novel *Spare and Found Parts* suggests. Even though the Monster is programmed to love his creator, Nell feels that because he is basically a computer shaped as a human, their relationship will never be equally satisfactory for the Monster, and even for her, as a relationship with someone created the same way:

She hadn't built him to watch him interact with things like him, he wasn't another exercise or a steel sprite to add to her collection. She'd built him for herself, for her world, but she had never considered for a moment that maybe he would prefer the company of someone more like him.⁶²

Nell feels very selfish and tries to consider their relationship from the Monster's point of view. She even suggests to her creation that she will make another 'person' this way, which could be his friend. The Monster, however, prioritizes her wishes: "If you want to build me a friend, I will have a friend. [...] But I am happy to be your friend, just yours, if that is what you wish."⁶³ Even though he would want to have a friend of his origin, he is still devoted to Nell and her conclusions.

However, the retellings also provide a progressive stance towards the wish to be accompanied. In the novel *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein suggests to the Monster that he will bring the creature's dead loved one to life, which means that he would put the brain of his lost beloved to a body of a beautiful young girl. The Monster firstly agrees with this suggestion, but then slowly realizes that his loved one would become something similar as the Monster himself. This realization engenders that he decides to rather spend his life alone, than doing such a horrible thing to someone he loved and to the poor girl:

I could not allow her to be brought back to me. 'It was not cowardice on my part, my beloved,' I whispered. 'I knew that you would have felt the same warm

⁶² Griffin, *Spare and Found parts*, 277.

⁶³ Griffin, *Spare and Found parts*, 278.

feelings toward me regardless of what body I resided in. But it would have been wicked act to allow harm to come to an innocent girl [...]'⁶⁴

This act shows that in the body of a Monster remains a man who would never condemn innocent people to such a frightening destiny as his own.

The Monster's behaviour and actions are also influenced by his mental state. Regarding Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*, the Monster wakes up confused and without any knowledge. Therefore, he is dependent on other people, mainly on Frankenstein, in order to gain the knowledge he needs to start his new life. Postmodern authors, on the other hand, rely in many cases on the creature's knowledge from the previous life and it is reflected on the way he acts. For example, in *Frankenweenie*, Rudnick describes the relationship of Victor and the Monster very positively, mainly because the Monster remembers what happened before he died and remembers even the former relationships. Therefore, he behaves the way he did before the resurrection: "“There you are! Good boy!’ Victor said happily. He leaned down and gave Sparky a hug. [...] Sparky just wagged his tail.”⁶⁵ The dog acts normal, does not express any aggressivity, as if nothing happened, as if he never died. In this retelling, the Monster has a completely different personality and behaviour, in comparison with *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*. While originally the Monster is pictured very negatively, he murders people out of revenge and threatens Victor, in *Frankenweenie*, on the contrary, he saves people and loves his creator. It is more than probable that it is conditioned by the shift regarding his memory. A different case is *This Monstrous Thing* by Mackenzi Lee, which shows problems with memory. The Monster's memories return slowly and gradually and sometimes he needs some help to remember: "“Can I ask you about something? It's been bothering me that I can't remember.’ Oliver held up his flesh-and-blood hand for me to see. A thin white scar ran across the knuckles. ‘What's this from? It's different than the others.’”⁶⁶ It is obvious that the Monster struggles with remembering. Lee points out that revivification leaves marks not only on the physical side, but also on the mental side.

The main characters, Victor Frankenstein and the Monster, have a blustering relationship which differs in each retelling. Apart from a hateful relationship, there are some examples of a loving one. Also, their personalities and needs are remodelled by the postmodern authors who promise to the reader new versions of a well-known story and characters. Victor

⁶⁴ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 210.

⁶⁵ Rudnick, *Frankenweenie*, chapter 6.

⁶⁶ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 23.

Frankenstein is pictured as a dangerous madman, a patient of a lunatic asylum, but also as a clever and good man and even a woman. Victor's Monster is originally a revengeful creature with vicious intentions; however, postmodern authors display him also as an android or an adorable pet. It is these shifts in the characters' representations that also changes the relationships between individual characters or their needs and wishes.

2.2.Minor Characters

Postmodern novels are marked by, as Linda Hutcheon claims in *Politics of Postmodernism*, paying attention to the marginal and borderline characters.⁶⁷ Regarding Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* there are female characters which are important for the story, but there is not enough space given to them. They are pushed to the borderline of the story, which also pictures the position of women in society at Shelley's time. Postmodern authors, however, give them the space and create stories which are, in a way, very feminist. According to Hutcheon, feminist practices had a very powerful impact on postmodernism.⁶⁸ The postmodern retellings serve as proofs of the shift in the perception of female characters in literature. Apart from the feminist approach, many postmodern authors also mix together fiction with history and add into their retellings famous historical figures and their stories. They present wide range of characters and play with the way they are pictured.

While the characters of Elizabeth and Justine are marginal in the original, they become the main characters in the postmodern novel *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* by Kiersten White. White provides to the readers a story which is narrated by Elizabeth Lavenza and thus also Elizabeth's point of view on the creation of the Monster. But most of all, the reader has the chance to explore the characters' relationships from her point of view. Even though Victor and the Monster figure in the story, they are pushed to the background and the female characters, on the contrary, step out.

Elizabeth is in the original story a character which becomes a victim of the Monster's revenge. As well as her death, Elizabeth's descent is in Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* very sorrowful:

She was [...] the daughter of a Milanese nobleman. Her mother was a German, and had died on giving her birth. [...] He [Elizabeth's father] became the victim

⁶⁷ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 82.

⁶⁸ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 138.

of its weakness. Whether he had died, or still lingered in the dungeons of Austria, was not known. His property was confiscated, his child became an orphan and a beggar. She continued with her foster parents and bloomed in their rude abode, fairer than a garden rose among dark-leaved brambles.⁶⁹

Elizabeth's descent is no different in *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, however, White pictures her as a self-reliant and strong woman who became even tougher because of her unfavourable origin. To her tenacity also contributes the way she is treated. In the retelling, as well as in the original story, Elizabeth is given to Victor as a present which should please him and accompany him so that he is not so lonely. Many postmodern authors claim that one person's reality differs from other persons' realities and this assumption is also the case of this retelling. White's retelling proposes the idea that even though Elizabeth comes out of the original story as a toy intended to Victor, she, in fact, could have her own intentions to be perceived this way, which she hides from Victor and his family and it is also hidden to the reader.

The fact that she becomes a gift is, in a way, a gift for her. It provides her an opportunity to escape the terrible life she lives. Her first impulse to charm the Frankensteins comes when her foster mother menaces her: "‘Make them love you,’ she demanded as a gentle knock sounded at the door. [...] ‘If they do not take you, I will drown you in the rain barrel like the cat’s last litter of runty kittens.’"⁷⁰ Apart from this threat, her later actions are also engendered by the vision of a positive future: "Madame Frankenstein had brought me out of the darkness and back into the light. [...] Determination filled my child’s body. I would be whatever her son needed if doing so gave me back this life [her once good life]."⁷¹ The fear for her life and the prospect of a better one motivates her to act polite, to be the best version of herself and to be Victor's best friend. This determination, to be Victor's mate and to keep him close to provide herself a better life, makes her do anything he could possibly want her to. Elizabeth's relationship with Victor is in a way very complicated, but at the same time very simple. On the one hand, they both hide something from each other – Victor hides his creation and the consequences of this creation and Elizabeth hides her intentions and her reasons for staying with him. On the other hand, Elizabeth knows that it is only Victor who can guarantee her a

⁶⁹ Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 24–25.

⁷⁰ White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 14.

⁷¹ White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 14.

better life and Victor is aware of Elizabeth's loyalty, which he appreciates and wants to preserve.

The breaking point for their relationship is Victor's creation, which causes the death of her beloved friend Justine when she is accused of murdering Victor's younger brother. Elizabeth's relationship with Justine is the purest thing in the whole story. Justine's descent is equally woeful as Elizabeth's; therefore, she sympathizes with Justine. While she pretends to be the perfect friend, daughter or lover to everyone else, when it comes to Justine, she feels that she can be herself:

It was a tremendous relief not to have to choose each word and expression with care. Sometimes, though, our relationship felt as false as the one with my benefactors. I wondered if she truly was *that* good, or if she merely acted that way to avoid being sent back to her monster of a mother.⁷²

While Elizabeth feels safe not to pretend in front of Justine, it is evident that she has doubts whether Justine does not use the same trick with Elizabeth, which Elizabeth applies on other people. However, she considers Justine to be her best friend in spite of these doubts and that is why the death of Justine does not just break her heart, but it also causes damage on Elizabeth's nurtured image:

I lost a week to the madness of grief. I would see or speak to no one. I hated them all for being alive while Justine was dead. For being men and being unable to save her. William's death was a tragedy. Justine's was a travesty. [...] I finally came down with enough strength to at least pretend not to hate everyone in the house [...].⁷³

After Justine's death it is almost impossible for Elizabeth to keep pretending to love the Franksteins and to behave as everything is perfectly fine. White also points to the imbalance between men and women when it comes to their possibilities to change something. She expresses the power of men which could prevent Justine from being executed if they wanted to save her and the hopelessness of women if they wanted to make a change on their own, when nobody listens.

⁷² White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 36. Italics original.

⁷³ White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 156.

Shelley gives just very little information about Justine, Kiersten White, however, let the readers get to know Justine's character through Elizabeth's point of view. Their friendship reveals her qualities, her origin and the way she got into the Frankensteins' house. Justine is probably mostly remembered for being accused of murdering Victor's brother and later sentenced to death for her alleged crime. White gives to this character more space and provides the chance to get the readers familiar with her life. She pictures her as the nicest person, very polite, humble, and even though her life was full of cruelty, she managed to stay optimistic and kind: "It was so odd that our separate origins – similar in cruelty, though different in duration – had had such opposite outcomes. Justine was the most open and loving and genuinely good person I had ever known. And I [Elizabeth] was – well. Not like her."⁷⁴ It is obvious that their origins signed on the way they behave and the persons they have become, but as Elizabeth describes, Justine is an epitome of a good person, which Elizabeth only pretends to be.

Justine's origin is very sad and cruel, as well as Elizabeth's, which was already mentioned. Justine's mother is a mean woman who hates Justine and takes her anger out on her. Elizabeth is a witness of one of the attacks, saves Justine from her mother and, with the approval of the Frankensteins, gives Justine a job as a nursemaid of Victor's younger brothers. This act ensures their future positive relationship and they serve each other as a pillar. However, it also points to the fact that women are able to take care of themselves and that when women pull together, they are able to make a change. Kiersten White's female characters are usually very strong and self-contained, and this retelling is no exception.

Another feminist version of the original story is the idea of Frankenstein being a girl. Nell, which in the novel *Spare and Found Parts* represents Victor Frankenstein, serves as a proof that even a girl could be able to create 'a person' with the help of science and technology. She is the proof that it is not only men who are clever, innovative and creative. Griffin did a great job in creating a female character which is self-sufficient, who is not scared to take a risk and who is able to use her voice to make a difference. Nell's version of the Monster is, as it was mentioned, created by technology only. The core of the Monster is a computer, which is a machine forbidden in the society in which Nell lives. Computers are scarce goods and getting them needs a lot of courage and special contacts. The protagonist – Nell – shows that she is not scared of what could happen to her, she wants something and goes after it no matter what.

⁷⁴ White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 11.

Griffin succeeds in picturing a strong female character, which is a feminist move popular in postmodern literature.

There was said a lot about the creation of Nell's Monster, but what was not discussed, was Nell's harsh journey to become such a strong, self-sufficient woman. Her father teaches Nell everything about technology, which she later uses to create the Monster. What is more, he also teaches his friend's son – Oliver. Nell cannot stand Oliver, but also cannot say anything. She knows she is better and that even her studies would be better without Oliver studying with her. Instead, she is silenced by her own father:

You turn the key over and over; you can't do anything else to it. It looks exactly as the blueprints intended. [...] Oliver shoots you a jealous look, he'll be at least five more minutes to get the last corner done. [...] 'Da, I'm done,' you offer sweetly, pushing smugness down. Your father waves you off and continues to hover around Oliver. 'All right, Nell, calm down just a moment.'⁷⁵

It is obvious that her father priorities Oliver's success and that Nell's abilities are not valued enough. Griffin chooses this way to point out the problem of not appreciating women's work enough and that it is sometimes overshadowed by men's work, even though women's work might be better. What is also very interesting about this retelling is the choice of narrative point of view. Griffin proves postmodern playfulness by combining three points of view. The book is divided into two parts – *Assembly* and *Alive* – whereas the first part *Assembly* is narrated in the second-person point of view, as it can be seen in the extract above, and the second part *Alive* is narrated in combination of the first-person and the third-person point of view.

Apart from this playfulness and feminist approach, postmodern authors also tend to mix fictional characters with 'real-life' historical figures. According to Lewis, this technique is called vicious circles⁷⁶. Regarding the retellings, in many of them the authors decided to take the author of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*, Mary Shelley, and significant persons from her life and present them as characters. And what is more, in *This Monstrous Thing*, Mackenzi Lee presents to the readers a version of how Shelley wrote the story of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* and suggests that Mary Shelley was in fact a witness of the resurrection. This move is the example of faction, which means that the author mixes together

⁷⁵ Griffin, *Spare and Found parts*, 69.

⁷⁶ Lewis, "Postmodernism and Literature," 131.

fictional and historical events.⁷⁷ Harold Blooms claims in *The Mary Shelley Reader* that originally *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* was a product of an agreement to write a horror story between Mary Shelley, her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Claire Clairmont and John Polidori. They were stuck in a cottage during rainy days and this was supposed to be their way of spending the time there.⁷⁸ In *This Monstrous Thing*, Lee provides her version of Shelley's story inside her retelling of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*:

‘I tried to leave it [the resurrection] behind [...] but it was still haunting me. [...] So I wrote it all down, just to try and be free of it. It started with just you bringing your brother back from the dead. [...] But then my husband found it. I couldn't tell him it was real, so I said I'd made it up. They were all writing horror stories while we were here, and I told him that was mine. And he liked it so much he wanted me to write more.’⁷⁹

Lee's suggestion is that Shelley's attempt to write a horror story was actually based on her experience with the resurrection. Another fact which Lee incorporates into the story is that *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* was firstly published anonymously in 1818.⁸⁰ By this she tries to support her thought that Shelley actually experienced the revivification of someone: “People had already taken it as fact. ‘It's too strange to be fiction,’ I said. ‘There's got to be a reason someone wrote it.’”⁸¹ It is obvious that Lee proposes that the story makes people wonder why someone wrote it and that its uniqueness is what makes it harder to believe that somebody made it all up. Also, the fact that it was published anonymously is what contributes to the doubts.

Apart from mixing Mary's story of writing *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* into the retelling, there is another fascinating factor and that is that Lee pictures Mary as a character in the story. She presents her as a friend of Alasdair who represents Victor Frankenstein – and his brother Oliver who is later transformed into the Monster. Because Lee mixes together the present time, in which Oliver is already revived, and flashbacks from the past when Oliver was still alive, the readers have the chance to get to know Mary as a young girl and as a married woman. Mary is displayed as a girl with a spark in her eyes, very enthusiastic about dangerous activities and always looking for some adventure. However, after

⁷⁷ Study, “Postmodernism in Literature.”

⁷⁸ Mihai A. Stroe, *A Mary Shelley Reader* (Bucharest: Contemporary Literature Press, 2012), 6.

⁷⁹ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 249.

⁸⁰ Stroe, *A Mary Shelley Reader*, 5.

⁸¹ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 184.

the marriage she seems to be distant and reticent: “Mary, I have told you *everything* about me. [...] So why couldn’t you tell me that you were engaged?”⁸² Apart from Mary Shelley being one of the characters, Lee also give some space to her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, even though he is only a marginal character.

A retelling which gives more space to Mary’s husband than Mary herself is *A Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* by Peter Ackroyd. Ackroyd also mixes the history with fiction and suggests that Mary Shelley and her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley are Victor Frankenstein’s friends. In this case, Victor Frankenstein is Percy Bysshe’s best friend and therefore Bysshe, as he requires in the story to be called, appears in the story very frequently. Ackroyd, however, engages also Bysshe’s ex-wife, Harriet Westbrook, who is drown by the Monster and therefore serves in the story as a victim of the Monster’s brutality: “I walked along its length, hoping to locate that spot where Harriet had been strangled and thrown into the water, I wished to see if I could find any traces of the creature.”⁸³ By picturing Harriet’s death this way, Ackroyd points to Harriet actual death in 1816 – Harriet drowned herself probably because she was left by Percy Bysshe Shelley for Mary Shelley.⁸⁴

A novel which serve as another example of faction is *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*. Even though many authors present Mary Shelley and her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley as characters in their stories, Dave Zeltserman incorporates Marquis de Sade as Victor’s depraved friend. Marquis de Sade is known for his perversion in the form of sadism⁸⁵ and as John Phillips further claims, the term is even derived from his name.⁸⁶ Sadism is a big part of Zeltserman’s retelling, but also a big part of Sade’s works, such as *The 120 Days of Sodom* which is also incorporated into this retelling of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*. Therefore, apart from faction, Zeltserman also uses pastiche. According to Chris Baldick, pastiche is “a literary work, composed from elements borrowed [...] from various other writers.”⁸⁷ Zeltserman borrows Shelley’s story *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* and mixes it with Sade’s *The 120 Days of Sodom*: “He led me from the hall into a corridor, and as he did he explained that they were in the process of restoring the castle as well as readying it for a great drama that would commence on the first of November and would run for a hundred and twenty days.”⁸⁸

⁸² Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 147. Italics original.

⁸³ Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Frankenstein*, 133.

⁸⁴ Stroe, *A Mary Shelley Reader*, 110.

⁸⁵ John Phillips, *The Marquis de Sade: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 107.

⁸⁶ Phillips, *The Marquis de Sade*, 115.

⁸⁷ Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 185.

⁸⁸ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 136.

Zeltserman's use of pastiche and the choice of minor characters, such as Marquis de Sade, only highlights the vicious characteristics of Victor Frankenstein and emphasizes the Monster's humanity.

Another minor character in *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*, which the reader can already know from Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*, is Captain Robert Walton. In his retelling, Zeltserman suggests that *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* was published after Frankenstein told his story to Captain Walton and what is written there are just lies:

My hands trembled as I read the lies that Frankenstein recounted to Captain Walton during his last remaining months aboard the icebound ship. I understood the reason for this; my enemy knew he was dying and he sought to protect his reputation, regardless of how soiled it truly was.⁸⁹

Captain Walton only knows what Frankenstein has told him; therefore, he does not have any other point of view. For this reason, Walton shares what he supposes to be the truth, which pictures the Monster in the worst light, but Frankenstein, on the other hand, in a better light than he deserves. Zeltserman probably criticizes Walton's lack of scepticism towards Frankenstein's narration which the postmodernists, on the contrary, promote.

Postmodern authors use many techniques in their retellings and one of them, which was pictured for example in *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, is recreating the minor characters as main characters. There is also visible the influence of feminism on the picturing of female characters as strong, self-reliant and independent. What is more, many postmodern authors incorporated 'real-life' historical figures as characters into their retellings, and some of them even used the technique vicious circles, which mixes together historical events with the fictional ones. Both the minor and main characters are worth attention for their fascinating incorporation and the way they were pictured.

⁸⁹ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 242.

3. The Fight of the Monster with the Society

The Monster is a character which attracts the attention mainly because of its appearance. There are no doubts about the Monster being very eccentric and odd in comparison with the rest of the society. For this reason, his relationship with the society is sorely tricky and the responses of the society to the creation of the Monster in the retellings differ. According to Hutcheon, people which are in some way different than the rest can be labelled as ‘Others’⁹⁰, which can be applied on the Monster as well. Based on his ‘otherness’, the society either refuses the Monster, or accepts him. However, the acceptance or refusal of the Monster is not always unequivocal.

3.1. Refused by the Society

The differences between the Monster and the society are usually visible at the first sight. This ‘otherness’ in the case of the Monster lies mainly in his appearance. As it was discussed previously, in the original as well as in many of the retellings, the Monster’s visage is frightening and simply nightmarish. It is the feature that makes his character so distinct from the rest of the society, beside his later terrible actions. The society is in many cases not ready to accept him and, as Simon During claims, “refuses to turn the Other into the Same.”⁹¹ It can be interpreted as that the society is not willing to acquiesce the differences and share the space with someone of the Monster’s origin.

In Shelley’s *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*, the Monster is not accepted to be part of the society. This can be nicely seen in the reaction of the family, which the Monster watches from distance and secretly helps:

At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted, and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward [...] in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick.⁹²

⁹⁰ Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 38.

⁹¹ Simon During, “Postmodernism or Post-colonialism today,” *Textual Practice* 1, no. 1 (1987): 32–47.

⁹² Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 128–129.

It is true that they do not know that he was helping them the whole time, but the appearance of the Monster is enough for them to deprecate him. The Monster does not get a chance to prove that he is able to be useful and good because of their prejudices.

The retellings provide many cases in which the Monster is refused by the society as well as in *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* and the first example is *This Monstrous Thing* by Mackenzi Lee. Lee creates a fictional world where the society is divided into two parts and in which technology plays a huge part. There are people with mechanical, clockwork, parts and people without these replacements who despise the clockwork men and women:

People like Jiroux thought that as soon as metal was fused to bone and muscle it took something fundamental and human away, and that men and women with mechanical parts were machines, somehow less than the rest of us. The clockwork men either lived broken, or hated.⁹³

Because of this rejection of clockwork men and women, the Monster has no chance to be accepted by majority of the society. That is why Alasdair, who represent Victor Frankenstein, tries to keep him away from the rest of the people as long as possible:

‘[...] I’m a monster!’ ‘You’re not a monster,’ I said [...] ‘Then I suppose you lock me up for my own safety, is that it?’ he said. ‘Because I’m fragile and you want to protect me, not because men would run screaming if they saw me.’⁹⁴

Lee’s incorporation of the publication of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* into the retelling supports the wave of fear and hate of the clockwork men. Therefore, the Monster, Oliver, is the representation of their biggest fear, because of the way he was created. Both Alasdair and Oliver expect that the reaction of the society will be harsh once Oliver leaves the safe place.

Because Oliver already thinks he is a monster who does not belong anywhere, Alasdair helps him to hold on to his humanity by giving him books by his then favourite authors. Lee decides to incorporate Coleridge’s poetry and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* into the story. Apart from the whole retelling being the example of intertextuality, the use of quotations from Coleridge’s and Milton’s works are further examples of an intertextual figure. Not only do the

⁹³ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 22.

⁹⁴ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 34.

poems help him with his memory issues, but they also connect Oliver with his former life. Lee makes Oliver cite from Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*:

‘Coleridge,’ I prompted. ‘You used to like him. [...]’ [...] ‘What does he write?’ [...] ‘Poetry. He’s a poet, I think. I don’t really know.’ [...] ‘*Like one, that on a lonesome road ...*’ I stopped. ‘What?’ ‘That’s...’ He screwed up his face, eyes closed in concentration. ‘*Like one, that on a lonesome road / Doth walk in fear and dread, / And having once turned round walks on,* [...]’⁹⁵

The poem represents a connection between Oliver’s former and current life. That is why it improves his memory but also gives a hope to Alasdair that there is his brother inside this creature. At the same time, this connection protects Oliver from losing his humanity.

There are no doubts that seeing the Monster shortly for the first time might be confusing, and many people would think that it was just a delusion. It is also the case of Elizabeth in *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*. However, seeing the Monster a few more times after the first experience, the opinion changes:

And then, in a flash of purest white, the monster was revealed. This was no creature of my mind’s making. No creature of God’s making, either. Neither my mind nor God’s could have conceived of such a perversion of humanity. I screamed and turned to run.⁹⁶

Because Elizabeth is a representative of the society she lives in, her reaction to the Monster reflects the reaction of the society in case they would come across the Monster. As well as in the previous examples, Elizabeth’s respond to the detection of the Monster is running away. That is a natural reaction to something terrifying, however, there is also another possibility in the form of destruction. When Elizabeth realizes that the Monster is Victor’s creation and that he is the one who probably murdered Victor’s brother for which was Justine executed, Elizabeth’s approach changes from running to thinking about killing the Monster. This thought is also supported by her belief that Victor could be his next victim: “In order to protect him, I had to know the truth of all things. Whatever power this monster had over him, I would discover it so I could break it and free Victor. And then I would kill the creature.”⁹⁷ Even though the Monster varies mainly in the appearance from the rest of the society, Elizabeth wants to kill

⁹⁵ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 36. Italics original.

⁹⁶ White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 145.

⁹⁷ White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 162.

him for all the disasters he has probably left behind. The appearance is not what she wishes to destroy, it is the injustice and threat that he represents. That is also why she would never be able to accept him or at least forgive him.

As well as Mackenzi Lee, Kiersten White also uses quotes from another work in her retelling of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*. To be more concrete, she incorporates *Paradise Lost* by John Milton into her retelling and uses quotes from Milton's work as titles of all the chapters. Therefore, not only it is an example of intertextuality, but also pastiche. According to C. Hugh Holman and Addison Hibbard, the authors of *A Handbook to Literature*, pastiche, a technique based on imitation of other works, is also a term "applied to literary patchworks formed by piecing together extracts from various works by one or several authors."⁹⁸ That is also the case of *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*. For example, the title of the twenty-fifth chapter, "Did I request thee, maker, from my clay, to mold me man?"⁹⁹, nicely proposes that the Monster is not responsible for being alive and does not understand the hateful reactions he gets.

Another example of the Monster refused by the society is in *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*. Victor's creation in this retelling is of a horrific appearance, but the cause of his nonacceptance by his creator are also his actions. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the victims of the Monster's revenge is also Percy Bysshe's ex-wife Harriet Westbrook. However, the Monster's reasons to kill his victims and the fact that he does not feel any regrets is what supports the fear of him and the disability to accept him:

'I wished you to think of me. To consider my plight.' 'By killing Harriet?' [...]
'I cannot understand anything so devoid of principle, so utterly malicious.' 'Oh, surely you have some inkling? I am hardly unknown to you.' I realised then that his was the voice of youth [...] and that a cause of horror lay in the disparity between the mellifluous expression and the distorted appearance of the creature.¹⁰⁰

The Monster murders people so that Victor notices he is still nearby – this attitude, together with his appearance, is what shocks and frightens Victor. Nevertheless, it is not only Victor

⁹⁸ C. Hugh Holman and Hibbard, Addison, *A Handbook to Literature* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Pub., 1980), 320.

⁹⁹ White, *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 227.

¹⁰⁰ Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Frankenstein*, 149.

who is terrified. There is also a family which has the chance to see the Monster whose gruesome appearance brings about their dismay:

It took a moment for her eyes to become accustomed to the gloom – but then she saw me. I have never seen such a look of horror and fear upon any other face. [...] Her father [...] rushed towards her. He caught sight of me at once. ‘Great God! What are you?’ The look of anguish and terror upon his face is one I shall never forget. He took his daughter up in his arms and [...] ran quickly from me across the fields.¹⁰¹

The way the father denotes him as ‘what’ and not ‘who’ proves that they would never consider him as one of a humankind, but rather an unidentifiable creature. The fear that overtakes them is what restrains them to see something more in the creature.

Last, but not least, the example of a nonacceptance is pictured in the novel *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*. Zeltserman also creates a character with a nightmarish look, which makes the Monster a target:

‘You are lying on hallowed grounds, daemon!’ he [a member of the clergy] swore at me, his eyes wide as they reflected a mix of fear and self-righteousness. ‘Do not blaspheme this area any further with your presence. Begone!’ ‘And what makes you so certain that I am a daemon?’ I asked. ‘Your hideousness marks you as such!’¹⁰²

It is obvious that one look at the Monster is for the man enough to judge him. Immediate reaction based on the first impression is expulsion of the Monster. However, the creature’s actions are bighearted. He tries to protect people who deserve his protection and his memories on the former life are what makes him more human than his creator. Unfortunately, that is what stays hidden because people spurn him because of his visage.

Many of the retellings follow the example of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* and suggest that the Monster is too different for the society to accept him. His ‘otherness’ lies mainly in his appearance and that is what people frightens the most. Apart from being refused by his creator, the Monster also experiences the rejection by others, which leads him to the desire to revenge. However, it only magnifies the fear and antipathy.

¹⁰¹ Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Frankenstein*, 156–157.

¹⁰² Zeltserman, *Monster*, 71.

3.2. Accepted by the Society

Apart from the negative response to the creation of the Monster, there are also examples which prove that even the 'otherness' can be celebrated, or at least accepted. The idea behind it is that the society focuses more on the actions than the appearance. However, for some people even the whole process of creating the Monster is interesting and fascinating, which plays its part in the acceptance.

The first novel to be discussed in this subchapter is *This Monstrous Thing*. This retelling was already mentioned in the previous subchapter concerning the Monster's rejection; however, the society's division provides the space for Oliver, the Monster, in the clockwork part of the society. Because of the way Oliver was brought to life, he epitomizes the symbol of rebellion of the clockwork men and women:

'People don't treat us right, so we're going to make them. We won't be pushed down and stepped on anymore.' [...] 'This man [Oliver]' [...] 'is going to come for us, and he is going to lead us. We show him that we're ready for him, and then he'll come and save us.'¹⁰³

While he means threat to the non-clockwork part of the society, he also represents hope to clockwork men and women. They believe that he is the one who is able to make a change in the social relationships and that he will save the clockwork men and women from the abusive attitude towards them. Luckily, Oliver's response to the calling for help is positive, and he is ready to fight for them:

'This is retribution!' he [Oliver] shouted over me. 'For Mary Shelley, and *Frankenstein*, and for every wrong done to every clockwork man in Geneva.' [...] 'You're throwing away your life, and the lives of all these people who worship you. The only message you'll send Geneva is that clockwork men are monsters!' [...] 'If they want monsters, we shall be their monsters.'¹⁰⁴

Oliver wants to fight for a better future for the clockwork men and that is why all his followers admire him. His determination is what makes him the best leader; however, it is mainly his 'otherness' that helps him command respect.

¹⁰³ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 202–203.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, *This Monstrous Thing*, 279. Italics original.

Another novel which suggests acceptance by a part of the society is *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*. The Monster in *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* wants his creator to accept him, however, Victor only spurn him. This retelling suggests that the Monster is accepted by the creator, but despite this acceptance, the Monster hates and rejects Victor. Dave Zeltserman, the author of this retelling, proposes that Victor and his companions treats the Monster with admiration: “‘This abomination of yours,’ the Marquis sputtered, his voice strangled. ‘It is magnificently horrific, far surpassing what I had imagined.’”¹⁰⁵ They do not just accept him. They are fascinated by him, appreciate the differences, the spooky appearance and the way he was created. However, in this case, the admiration and acceptance are not welcomed by the Monster. He knows that Victor is a depraved man, that is why he does not want to be near him. The Monster is not like Victor. For him speaks his actions, depicted by saving innocent people, which prove that he is much better person than Frankenstein. An example of his good intentions to help people who need it is when he saves a girl who was labelled as a witch and who was going to be burned to death:

‘I suppose if you had ill intentions toward me you would have acted on them already. It is true that you only wished to save my life?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Thank you then,’ she said. ‘And thank you also for covering me with your cape to keep me warm.’¹⁰⁶

Zeltserman do not follow Shelley’s scheme which suggests that the Monster is a bloodthirsty creature. Instead, he suggests that the appearance do not define a person. It is a paradox that the creature who looks like a monster but acts as a human being is accepted by those who maybe look like people but act as monsters.

The retelling *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* provides another example of the Monster being accepted by others for his otherness. Once the Monster escapes from Victor’s castle where he was brought to life, he meets creatures like vampires, but also Satanists. These Satanists are waiting for someone like the Monster to be their leader:

‘Oh Dark Lord, you have come as we have begged you to.’ He dared to look up at me, his face hidden under his black robe so that all I could see were his eyes shining with a mix of fear and delight. ‘We are your most humble servants. Once

¹⁰⁵ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 94.

hearing how you have been traveling the country, we assembled here from a great distance to bring you forward so that we may serve you.’¹⁰⁷

The appearance which makes the Monster so distinct ensures him a lot of attention, which he in many cases does not appreciate. As well as Victor’s admiration is unwelcomed, the adoration by a Satanic cult is also unwanted.

One of the retellings which does not picture the Monster as a horrifying human being with a nightmarish appearance is *Spare and Found Parts*. There are no doubts that he is different than the rest of the society, however, the process of creating him and the tools used for this process are perhaps more fascinating than frightening. That is why Nell, Frankenstein, decides to get the attention of other people and introduce the Monster to them: “‘There are people who are ready, and those who aren’t. I’ll – I’ll show them why they should try. There’s so much about our nation that we could learn from sleeping computers.’”¹⁰⁸ Her determination expresses that she has hope that people will be able to accept her creation. That is why she decides to introduce him to those who are willing to give him a chance: “‘The curtains open, and the light floods all around you. [...] You walk toward the microphone and the silent, waiting crowd. 01001101 [...] free.’”¹⁰⁹ The first signal of the acceptance is that the crowd is waiting in silence, which means that they are ready to hear Nell out. The second hint is that the Monster claims that he is free. It can signify that now when they know about him, he can finally stop hiding and start living his life.

Last, but not least, in *Frankenweenie* by Elizabeth Rudnick, the reader has the chance to experience a positive relationship of the whole society with the Monster. In this case, it is caused by the Monster’s heroic action, which the people of the small town are witnesses of. Sparky, the Monster, saves Victor’s life, but unfortunately loses his own life, again, while saving Victor. Because all the people find Sparky to be a loving creature, they are willing to help Victor to bring him back to life. Once they succeed, their reaction is priceless: “‘As the crowd around them cheered and applauded, Victor pulled Sparky in for a big hug, happier than he had ever been.’”¹¹⁰ There are no doubts that this version of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* is more fairy-tale like. However, it is only gratifying that there is a version like this one which expects the best outcomes for both the Monster and his creator.

¹⁰⁷ Zeltserman, *Monster*, 111.

¹⁰⁸ Griffin, *Spare and Found parts*, 313.

¹⁰⁹ Griffin, *Spare and Found parts*, 317.

¹¹⁰ Rudnick, *Frankenweenie*, Chapter 16.

It is obvious that the relationship of the Monster and the society is very complicated. In some of the retellings, authors suggest that the Monster is accepted by a part of the society but spurned by the other. Nevertheless, there are also retellings in which the Monster is only either accepted or deprecated. The main factors of the Monster being accepted or refused are his appearance, which is in many cases very horrific, and his actions. However, its role also plays the society and its stereotypes, such as in the retelling *This Monstrous Thing*, and its openness about someone being different, such as in *Spare and Found Parts*.

Conclusion

The analysis, which is based on the comparison of *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley with its postmodern retellings, proves that the retellings provide various approaches to the story and the characters in it. Moreover, there are visible many literary techniques which are typical for postmodern literature. Apart from intertextuality, which is a basis of the retellings, there are also examples of parody, such as in *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* written by Dave Zeltserman, or pastiche in *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* by Kiersten White. What is more, both of these retellings also picture the shift in the perception of the truth and reality.

Furthermore, the authors of the retellings presented diverse postmodern interpretations of the characters known from *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*. Victor Frankenstein is pictured as a madman, depraved person, but also as a good man and his creature is perceived in many cases more positively than in the original novel. For example, in *Spare and Found Parts* by Sarah Maria Griffin, the creature is an android which is supposed to change the society's opinion about computers.

However, postmodern authors also changed the role of some characters and presented the minor characters as the main ones. That is the case of *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, which presents Elizabeth as the narrator of the story and Justine as one of the main characters. In addition, this retelling was influenced by feminism and presented its female characters as strong, self-reliant and cunning. Postmodernism is strongly affected by feminism, and another example of this influence is also *Spare and Found Parts*, which presents Victor Frankenstein as a clever and independent girl.

Postmodernism is marked by its interest in the past events and that is why many authors use techniques like faction and vicious circles. These techniques are based on mixing together historical events with the fictional ones and combine historical and fictional figures. The examples of retellings where the authors used these techniques are *This Monstrous Thing* by Mackenzi Lee, or *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* by Peter Ackroyd. Both Lee and Ackroyd presented Mary Shelley and her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley as characters in their stories and Lee also incorporated Shelley's story behind writing *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus*. The retelling *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* is also the example of vicious circles, but unlike other authors, Zeltserman incorporated Marquis de Sade as one of the minor

characters. It is obvious that the postmodern playfulness is apparent on the choice of characters and the way they are incorporated into the retellings.

Beside the minor characters, there is also analysed the main character Frankenstein's creature. His relationship with other people is in many cases very complicated and as the last chapter discusses, the acceptance of the Monster into the society is mostly question of prejudices. His differences are visible at the first sight, because one feature which is the same in both the retellings and the original story is the gruesomeness of the Monster's appearance. Another aspect of the Monster being refused or accepted are his later actions. However, because of the horrible appearance, the creature becomes in many cases a renegade, even though his actions are not monstrous. The example of this approach is *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*. On the other hand, there are also cases where in spite of this appearance is the Monster accepted and loved – such as in *Frankenweenie* by Elizabeth Rudnick.

In conclusion, postmodern authors present in Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The modern Prometheus* many features of postmodern literature. As Willie Thompson claims,

the same event or situation can be described in different ways which, while factually identical, can contrive to give wholly different impressions according to the way in which the account is organised and the manner in which the language is deployed.¹¹¹

This is also the case of the retellings. Even though all the postmodern authors describe the process of bringing someone, or something, dead to life, the way they decide to present the story is always different.

¹¹¹ Thompson, *Postmodernism and History*, 41.

Resumé

Frankenstein neboli moderní Prométheus, jehož autorkou je Mary Shelley, je jedno z nejznámějších děl 19. století. Kvůli jeho popularitě a originalitě bylo toto dílo mnohonásobně zfilmováno, ale také převyprávěno. Mezi jeho převyprávění patří například díla jako *Frankenweenie* od Elizabeth Rudnick, nebo *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* od Dava Zeltsermana. Právě těmito převyprávěními, spolu s pár dalšími, se zabývá tato bakalářská práce, která poskytuje jejich porovnání s původním dílem. Tato práce zároveň poukazuje na postmoderní techniky, které byly využity ke zpracování již zmíněných převyprávění.

Tuto bakalářskou práci otevírá kapitola, která poskytuje informace o jednotlivých technikách postmoderních autorů a zároveň se zaměřuje na myšlenky postmodernismu, týkající se vnímání pravdy a reality. Nicméně, jako první je rozebíráno samotné převyprávění a jeho místo na současném knižním trhu, a také intertextualita, která je jeho základem. Intertextualita, která vyjadřuje vztah jednoho textu k druhému, je zároveň základem technik jako jsou parodie a pastiš, které jsou v této kapitole porovnány. Další technikou, která je vydefinovaná v této kapitole, jsou i bludné kruhy, které v postmodernismu poukazují na zájem postmoderních autorů o historii a historické postavy. Spoustu postmoderních autorů totiž čerpá ze znalosti historie a míchá historické události s těmi fiktivními, a stejně tak pak pracují s postavami. Častokrát je zasazená nějaká veřejně známá osobnost do fiktivního světa a figuruje zde jako postava v příběhu. Všechny tyto techniky, spolu s dalšími, jsou ukázané v analýze na konkrétních případech z rozebíraných převyprávění.

Co se týče postmoderního pojetí pravdy a reality, teoretická kapitola ukazuje, že podle postmodernistů je jediná, univerzální pravda nemožná a že realita jednoho člověka se liší od reality někoho jiného. Zároveň je zde poukázáno na řeč, která hraje velkou roli v sestrojování a komunikování pravdy. Stejně jako postmoderní techniky, i toto postmoderní vnímání pravdy a reality je v analýze demonstrováno na konkrétních převyprávěních, ve kterých hraje tento postmoderní postoj důležitou roli.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá postavami jako jsou Victor Frankenstein, jeho monstrum, či Elizabeth Lavenza. Konkrétně poukazuje na způsob jakým byly tyto postavy vyobrazeny postmoderními autory a jak se liší od jejich původní předlohy. Dále se zabývá vztahy mezi jednotlivými postavami na kterých se v mnoha případech odráží jejich charakterové vlastnosti. Protože Victor Frankenstein a jeho monstrum jsou hlavními postavami v románu Mary Shelley,

je jim věnována první podkapitola. Ta se zabývá především tím jaké jsou rozdíly mezi původními postavami a jejich postmoderními interpretacemi. Co se týče Victora Frankenstein, postmoderní autoři ho v mnoha případech představili jako zápornou postavu, přestože v románu Mary Shelley je tato postava převážně kladná. Například Dave Zeltserman, autor díla *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein*, pomocí parodie vyobrazil tuto postavu jako zvrácenou a manipulativní. Na druhou stranu Frankensteinovo monstrum je ukázáno v lepším světle, třebaže je původně postavou pomstychtivou a nebezpečnou. Tato interpretace, která ukazuje Frankensteinovo stvoření jako kladnou postavu, je viditelná například v díle *Frankenweenie* od Elizabeth Rudnick. Dále se tato podkapitola zabývá vztahy mezi Frankensteinem a jeho monstrem, která se liší v každém převyprávění, a také poukazuje na vztah Frankenstein s Elizabeth. V neposlední řadě je zde rozebrán i proces vytvoření monstra, který v mnoha případech přidává na jeho strašidelnosti, či odráží současnou dobu a možnosti. Spolu s tím tato kapitola zobrazuje přání a potřeby, týkající se vytvoření družky, kterou v původním díle netvor požaduje po Frankensteinovi.

Nicméně, postmoderní techniky jsou především patrné na práci s vedlejšími postavami, kterým je věnována další část druhé kapitoly. Zaprvé je zde zjevný posun v ženských postavách, kterým je díky vlivu feminismu věnováno více prostoru a i způsob jakým jsou zobrazeny se změnil. Dalším viditelným znakem postmodernismu je věnování pozornosti okrajovým, vedlejším, postavám, které jsou v převyprávěních často hlavními postavami, jako je tomu v románu *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, jehož autorkou je Kiersten White. Mezi vedlejší postavy v převyprávěních patří i známé historické osobnosti, které se častokrát opakují. Nejčastější takovouto vedlejší postavou je samotná autorka původního díla Mary Shelley a její manžel Percy Bysshe Shelley. Nicméně, autor převyprávění *Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein* Dave Zeltserman představuje jako vedlejší postavu Markýze de Sade, francouzského šlechtice a autora. Toto zapojení historických osobností je jednou z mnoha technik postmodernismu a většina autorů postmoderních převyprávěních právě tuto techniku využila ve svém díle.

Práci uzavírá kapitola, která vyobrazuje vztah společnosti s Frankensteinovým netvorem. Zabývá se především jeho přijetím do společnosti a zároveň ukazuje jak je jeho odlišnost vnímána okolím. Jeho odlišnost je viditelná na první pohled a to z toho důvodu, že jeho vzhled je většinou hrozivý a nahánějící strach. Právě to bývá důvodem jeho odmítnutí a předběného odsouzení. Dalším faktorem, který rozhoduje o jeho postavení ve společnosti jsou jeho činy, které ale mnohdy bývají přehlíženy, nebo nedoceny. Na druhou stranu, jeho vzhled a činy jsou v některých převyprávěních právě tím, co je podnětem jeho přijetí. Tato kapitola je

rozdělená do dvou podkapitol, přičemž první z nich se zabývá odmítnutím Frankensteinova netvora a druhá se soustředí na jeho přijetí. Avšak jeho odmítnutí, či přijetí, není vždy jednoznačné a v mnoha dílech je nabídnuta možnost obojího, kdy část společnosti monstrem přijme a druhá odmítne. Tento rozpolcený postoj společnosti k monstrem navrhuje třeba román *This Monstrous Thing* od Mackenzi Lee, který je zde rozebrán z obou úhlů pohledu.

Co se týče odmítnutí monstra, tento postoj zaujímá společnost už v původním románu, ale spousta těchto postmoderních převyprávění tento postoj nemění. Jedním z nich je například *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*, jehož autorem je britský spisovatel Peter Ackroyd. Naopak dílo *Frankenweenie* napsané Elizabeth Rudnick ukazuje na pozitivní vztah mezi monstrem a společností a zároveň mezi monstrem a Frankensteinem. Je zřejmé, že svou roli ve vztahu k netvorovi hrají i zavedené stereotypy a otevřenost společnosti vůči odlišnosti, která je v případě monstra jeho nepostradatelnou součástí.

Všechna analyzovaná převyprávění ukazují, že postmodernismus je velice hravý a že nabízí spoustu odlišných technik k vytvoření pozoruhodných příběhů. Kromě zajímavé práce jak s hlavními, tak vedlejšími postavami, autoři těchto převyprávění pozměnili i jednotlivé vztahy mezi postavami, ale také vztahy společnosti s Frankensteinovým monstrem. Dílo *Frankenstein neboli Moderní Prométheus*, které sloužilo jako předloha, neustále fascinuje spousty autorů a je vidět, že jeden příběh může mít nespočetné množství interpretací a i tak být originální.

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