Within the metaphors and fictions of postmodern discourse, much is at stake, as electronic technology seems to rise, unbidden, to pose a set of crucial ontological questions regarding the status *and* power of the human. It has fallen to science fiction to repeatedly narrate a new subject that can somehow directly interface with – and master – the cybernetic technologies of the Information Age. . . .

Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity*

For my final chapter, I want to reinvoke the Frankenstein scenario with which I started. But, alongside the notion of the young Mary Shelley, listening in near silence to the debates of Byron, Shelley and Polidari, I will locate the monster his/her/itself as others like Laura Kranzler have done, as a metaphor for the idea of monstrousness as pertaining to a woman ‘out of place’ or ‘aberrant’. While, as Brian Aldiss has pointed out, Shelley’s biography invites an analysis which allies her act of creation to the (mis)creation which the monster represents, I read it also as a precursor of Haraway’s cyborg: in other words, as an image of manumission or a parable of restructured identity and thus a highly charged political trope. In the same way that the cyborg is able to be imagined by selves that are ‘out of place’, and enjoyed as a fluid construction based on outsider identities, so the monster can also be appropriated by those of us that resist both essentialism and the biologically determinist constructions of patriarchal culture, as a myth which codes that resistance.

In James Whale’s 1936 film of *Frankenstein*, the monster’s violent behaviour is explained by the fact that Frankenstein’s assistant, detailed to steal a ‘normal’ human brain from a lab, drops and breaks the jar in
which it is contained and, fearing retribution, replaces it with one labelled ‘criminal brain’. Whale thus offers an acceptable justification for both the monster’s deeds and the manner of its demise; acceptable, that is, in terms of behaviourist principles\(^5\) and in terms of contemporary ideological constructions of what counts as ‘normal’. It can thus be safely relegated by the same laws, attitudes and assumptions that structure ideas of good and evil. Mary’s monster, on the other hand, is infinitely more complex. It comes to consciousness unknowing and childlike and, like a child, must learn to speak: in effect, to enter the symbolic order, the world structured by language. It is only when it understands that to speak of itself it must apply the signification of otherness, of demonism, that it becomes as it is named. The imagery that Shelley employs in elucidating the transition is instructive for an understanding of the monster as cyborg. While Frankenstein himself belongs to the city, the university, the monster, when once rejected by his creator, takes refuge in the forest and is thereafter associated with the natural world. So, while the scientist is, throughout the text, found within the architecture of authority, the place of orthodox ideas, the monster’s habitat locates it outside of orthodoxy, in the wildness of the landscape and, in terms of orthodox epistemology, in the place where the resources for knowledge making are found, which is also, of course, the place where women are understood to find their identity. The monster is exiled from the community of males to which his biology would dictate he belong. However, his psychic positioning allies him more to the community of females,\(^6\) and his refusal to disappear, to retreat to his assigned locale, once he has understood his exclusion, marks him as both transgressive and aberrant. What ensures his/its cyborg status is the way in which it refuses to establish either community as either natural or consistent. It does not die so that the scientist can live but brings him, instead, into the wilderness where he is unable to survive. And its threat to be with Victor ‘on your wedding night’ effects a disruption of the institution which, more than any other, interpellates us as spliced subjects of the patriarchal order. Like Haraway’s cyborg constructions of modern ethnography who ‘refuse to disappear on cue, no matter how many times a ‘Western’ commentator remarks on the sad passing of another primitive, another organic group done in by ‘Western’ technology’,\(^7\) Victor’s ‘hideous progeny’ refuses the abject status to which Victor’s marriage and entry into ‘normal’ life should relegate him. He thus symbolically disrupts the ideological complacency of ‘science-as-usual’,\(^8\) while at the same time pre-figuring Haraway’s cyborg ‘others’ who write themselves out of the text of Western historical