Conclusion

In concluding this study, I want to turn from Canadian popular culture to survey a set of works by major international scholars—mainly in media studies—that build on McLuhan’s media theory to globally distribute his Frankenpheme of technology. This survey will establish a point from which to suggest some tentative conclusions to be drawn and some possible further directions in which to take this work, in terms of its possible implications for adaptation studies generally and for studies of Frankenstein in particular, and in terms of other national or regional sites of Frankenstein adaptation in cultural practice. These transnational considerations in turn prompt a return to the question of what precisely is Canadian about these adaptations and about the discourse of technology, and whether, accordingly, the long-standing socio-cultural mode of Canadian technological nationalism (Charland 1986) might warrant rethinking or reconfiguring as something more like a “technocratic transnationalism.”

McLuhan’s Frankenpheme of Technology in Global Scholarship

Widely misread as a techno-enthusiast, McLuhan personally opposed technological change: “No one could be less enthusiastic about these radical changes than myself” (1969, 158). He argued individuals and societies respond to the tumult and havoc new media bring about by going into shock or enduring “autoamputation”: “With the arrival of electric technology, man extended, or set outside himself, a live model of the central nervous system itself” ([1964] 2003, 65). The spectre of artificial intelligence and the imagery of “amputation” that pervades McLuhan’s work amplify his Frankensteinian sense of technology as modern, manufactured, and monstrous.

If we see the postcolonial conditioning of McLuhan’s discourse of technology in his Cambridge training, his reliance on British literary touchstones (such as Blake, Byron, and Joyce), and his popularization via
the “global underground” counterculture (Rycroft 1998) and US advertising and media industries, we then see the global circulation of McLuhan’s discourse of technology in its receptions, relays, and reformulations by scholars of media and technology around the world. The international corpus of media theory, communications, and technology studies that has built on and extended McLuhan’s legacy has also reproduced and reinforced his specifically Frankensteinian trope of technology as one of this corpus’s central keywords.

In the United States, two major studies of the theory of technology explicitly link McLuhan and *Frankenstein*: Langdon Winner’s *Autonomous Technology: Technics-out-of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought* (1977) and Avital Ronell’s 1991 *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech*. In *Autonomous Technology*, Winner credits McLuhan and Jacques Ellul (to whom his study more specifically responds) with the “ability to sensitize modern audiences to something they had overlooked: we are surrounded on all sides (possibly even the inner side) by a myriad of techniques and technologies” and speculates their work warrants contemplating new approaches for social science and theory (1977, 6). Winner refers repeatedly to McLuhan’s idea of technology as prosthetic or cybernetic “extension” (178, 202, 285). He observes how the word technology itself “is applied haphazardly to a staggering collection of phenomena” (10) and provides his own three-part definition of technology as apparatus, techniques, and organizations (11–12), on which he then builds a theorization of it as less determinist than substantivist—that is, a theorization that attributes autonomy and agency to technology. Significantly, Winner concludes his extensive study with a chapter called “Frankenstein’s Problem”: an explication of Mary Shelley’s novel that crystallizes his own point about “our involvement with technology”: that “we are dealing with an unfinished creation, largely forgotten and uncared for, which is forced to make its own way in the world” (316). Winner insists early on that his central argument is “not . . . that technology is a monstrosity or an evil in and of itself” (316), but his alternating critique and reproduction of technology as autonomous—together with his acknowledgement of McLuhan’s influence and his discussion of *Frankenstein*—demonstrate a redeployment of McLuhan’s distinctive vocabulary and figuration of this quintessentially modern term as a specifically manufactured kind of monstrosity.
Ronell’s *Telephone Book* is a deconstructive treatise on the telephone, a communication technology that, the author argues, is strangely absent from mainstream media studies. In the course of her analysis, Ronell develops an extended comparison of Alexander Graham Bell to Victor Frankenstein:

> We can ask the same question of the Frankenstein monster as we do of the telephone. After all, both inventors—Bell and Victor Frankenstein—were invested in the simulacrum that speaks and hears; both, we might add precipitously, were elaborating works of mourning, memorializing that which is missing, in a certain way trying to make grow the technological flower from an impossible grave site. Both inventors were motivated to reanimate a corpse, to breathe life into dead body parts. ... He [the monster] shares in the atotality of the telephone that seeks its other in the remote possibility of a long-distance summoning. (1991, 194)

To sustain this narrative and theoretical analogy between Bell and Victor Frankenstein, and between the telephone and Frankenstein’s monster, Ronell, very tellingly, calls on McLuhan. “It cannot suffice to say, with McLuhan, that this machinery extends the body in a way that would not be discontinuous,” she writes; the monster “was an answering machine of sorts, one whose call was to hang up and disconnect” (194–95). Here, the analogy is informed by McLuhan’s idea of media technology as extension; elsewhere in the book, it is informed by his imagery of amputation, which is also resonant for Ronell’s purposes and prompts her to ask Frankensteinian questions of McLuhan’s own work. She notes that in the fourth chapter of *Understanding Media*, McLuhan writes that “with the arrival of electric technology, man extended, or set outside himself, a live model of the central nervous system”—and that this “outering,” as McLuhan would call it, also represents for him “a desperate and suicidal auto-amputation” (quoted in Ronell 1991, 89). Why a “live model”? Ronell asks. “The live model of the electric switchboard sounds more like a constative statement about Frankenstein’s monster than anything else. This is not bad, since electric currents no doubt compel scrambling devices to recode the philosophical opposition of life/death, body/machine.” Ronell reads McLuhan’s major work as developing “a hermeneutics of despair,” a “shock registry” that includes (unlike many media studies) the telephone among its “other live electric extensions” (1991, 89–90). The resonance of
McLuhan’s “live modelling” and “hermeneutics of despair” then echoes in Ronell’s subsequent discussions of technology, as when later in the book she links *Frankenstein* to the trope of “technological revolution” (340), and, more tersely, asserts that “technology . . . is inseparable from catastrophe” (341).

Another notable American reception is Neil Postman’s work. With his explicit elaboration of McLuhan’s work as media ecology and his popular-audience publications, Postman has been positioned as McLuhan’s successor as pre-eminent media theorist. Postman cites McLuhan as a major influence in his 1985 book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*—recognizing that it was then “fashionable” to disavow him (1985, 8); McLuhan’s reputation would be rehabilitated in North America in the early 1990s. The influence has persisted and echoed throughout Postman’s work, with particular reverberation in his 1993 book *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (note in the title the play of both terms that name McLuhan’s institutional home at the University of Toronto). In this book, technology is a central keyword, but one Postman does not clearly define, except, following McLuhan, as a determining, material and ideological social force: “The uses made of any technology are largely determined by the structure of the technology itself” (1993, 7). Like both McLuhan and Winner, Postman is concerned with the potential of technology to achieve autonomy, a potential he sees as a threat. Any technology, he writes, “has a tendency to run out of control” (138); it “tends to function independently of the system it serves. It becomes autonomous, in the manner of a robot that no longer obeys its master” (142). The echoes of *Frankenstein* and McLuhan are equally clear here: in the former’s popularization as a drama of technological backfire; and in the latter’s evocation of this drama to state his personal position on technology in the *Playboy* interview (as discussed in chapter 4). Postman’s chief illustration of potentially autonomous and rebellious technology is the computer: “There has never been a technology that better exemplifies Marshall McLuhan’s aphorism” (118). For Postman, the McLuhanesque “message” of the computer, then, is a Frankensteinian message: “that we are machines—thinking machines, to be sure, but machines nonetheless. . . . The computer claims sovereignty over the whole range of human experience, and supports its claim by showing that it ‘thinks better’ than we can” (111). And the computer is, accordingly, the pre-eminent technology pivotal to the state of “technopoly”—a state
of “totalitarian technocracy” in which all forms of cultural life submit to the sovereignty of technology—a state that Postman argues the US has attained in the postwar period (52).

To Winner, Ronell, and Postman, we could add many other anglophone media and technology scholars who have adapted and amplified McLuhan’s Frankensteinian discourse of technology: Donna Haraway, Arthur Kroker, Olivia Harvey, Stelarc, and Cavell, whose *Spectres of McLuhan* project documents and exemplifies the revenant discourse in question. But here I want to consider two European scholars: Jean Baudrillard and Friedrich Kittler. Addressing them means attending to differences in language and to translation: this is both problematic, given my focus on the globalization of technology discourse in English, but also productive, given the influence of Baudrillard and Kittler on anglophone scholars.

The English word “technology” finds two approximations in French, “la technique” and “la technologie”: these can each be defined more or less expansively than their English counterpart (Ellul [1954] 1964, xxv). Early French reviews of McLuhan tended to use “la technique” (Riesman, quoted in Genosko 2005, 194; Morin, quoted in Genosko 2005, 209). Baudrillard adopted and adapted McLuhan’s ideas (Hussey 1989), including McLuhan’s main idea of media as prosthetic extensions (Genosko 2005, 238); and like Postman, Baudrillard has been hailed as “a new McLuhan” (Kellner 1989). His canonical essay on postmodernity, “The Precession of Simulacra,” in *Simulations*, amplifies the monstrous and revenant resonance of McLuhan’s media theory in its references to “artificial resurrection” (1983, 4), its use of sciences long associated with *Frankenstein*—the “nuclear and genetic”—to describe the “operation” of simulation (3) and its echo of Frankensteinian presumption in the suggestion that God is a simulation (10). “Precession” invokes neither “la technique” nor “la technologie” explicitly, though Baudrillard’s work does elsewhere (quoted in Hussey 1989, 13); and (in much the manner that media and technology were virtually interchangeable terms for McLuhan), as Douglas Kellner notes, “the theory of autonomous media also returns with Baudrillard; thus the critiques of autonomous technology can usefully and relevantly be applied to Baudrillard, and, more generally to postmodern social theory” (1989).

In “Precession,” too, occurs the image of “the desert of the real” (Baudrillard 1983, 2)—which gets sampled, along with many other Baudrillard references, in *The Matrix*, a film that rehearses a familiar “technological
reduction” of *Frankenstein*, but also bases its “rise of the machines” version on the premise of a literalization of McLuhan’s image of humans as “the sex organs of the machine world.” Baudrillard’s writings on the real as technologically overdetermined dystopia—and his intertextual appearance in a film dramatizing the same—amplify the “demonology of technology” (Haraway 1991, 181) that McLuhan codified and popularized.

There is a further sense, too, in which Baudrillard’s construction of the postmodern mediascape on the model of the simulacrum resembles McLuhan’s world-historical anthropomorph, “electric man,” as a Frankensteinian figure; Baudrillard describes the overdeveloped modern West as “a world completely catalogued and analysed and then *artificially revived as though real*” (1983, 16, emphasis in original). Baudrillard theorizes the simulacrum as a copy without any original, much like Frankenstein’s creature is not a simulation but a simulacrum of humanity. As an attempt to improve on human biology and anatomy, Frankenstein’s creature is both more human than human and not quite human; as Mellor has observed, significantly (1988, 112), the creature is composed of not only human but also animal parts, a detail Victor Frankenstein makes explicit in describing how he gleaned materials from “the dissecting room and the slaughter-house” as well as “the unhallowed damps of the grave” (Shelley [1818] 2012, 81). For Baudrillard, the globalized corporate media institutions traffic not in images that simulate or refer to external referents in the so-called real world, but rather in “irreferent” images (1983, 5) that have dispensed altogether with referentiality and construct instead a kind of self-enclosed, self-sustaining virtual ecology. The apocalyptic implications of this “phantasmagoria of the social contract” (29) leads Baudrillard, elsewhere on this same subject, to deploy the discourse of demons ([1984] 1987, 13) and the “diabolical” (14)—precisely the discourse Victor Frankenstein uses often to describe his creature (Shelley [1818] 2012, 60, 84, 106, 209).

Turning to German, we find a similar translation pattern. The English word’s closest German equivalent is perhaps *Technologie*; however, the term used in Martin Heidegger’s seminal STS essay—“*Die Frage nach der Technik*” (1954)—is not *Technologie* but *Technik*. Like its French equivalent, *Technik* can mean “technique, craft, skill” (Weber 1989, 981)—it is used more broadly and capaciously than the English word “technology” that has become common since William Lovatt’s 1977 translation of Heidegger’s essay as “The Question Concerning Technology.” Both *Technologie*
and Technik appear in Friedrich Kittler’s Gramophone, Film und Typewriter (1986, translated into English in 1999). A media discourse analyst, Kittler rigorously and dynamically develops McLuhan’s discourse of technology. He integrates McLuhan’s ideas with those of Foucault and Lacan in critical historicizations of relationships “between the history of technology and the body” and “between modern technologies and modern warfare” ([1986] 1999, 34). For Kittler, the “so-called” human subject is a “discourse network” structured by media technologies: “technical media are models of the so-called human” (36). Moreover, these developments Kittler shows consistently to be productions of warfare: “the development of all previous technical media, in the field of computers as well as optical technology, was for . . . military purposes” ([2002] 2010, 30). In Gramophone, Kittler elaborates an unsettling understanding of modern subjectivity as a kind of simulation program both sustained and subverted by a kind of “discourse network 1900”: the industrial proliferation of recording media, namely gramophone, film, and typewriter, the last of which also ushers in the postwar computer ([1986] 1999, 251). Kittler’s method is to work backward from the Lacanian argument that the Cartesian cogito is an effect of language mistaking itself for a cause, to the Foucauldian premise that historically contingent discourses structure language practices, to arrive at a McLuhanesque a priori that discourses depend on equally contingent media technologies.

Like McLuhan, Kittler theorizes the modern humanist subject as the content of media—but also as increasingly vestigial and tangential to a nascent, globalizing regime of ascendant cybernetics, automation, and artificial intelligence: here is a more concrete theory, then, of humans “as the sex organs of the machine world.” In Gramophone, Kittler writes that “once the technological differentiation of optics, acoustics, and writing exploded Gutenberg’s writing monopoly around 1880, the fabrication of so-called Man became possible. His essence escapes into apparatuses. Machines take over functions of the central nervous systems” ([1986] 1999, 16). The book’s historicization of media technologies at the advent of the age of mechanical reproduction teems with Frankensteinian imagery of spectres (12), doppelgängers (149), and dissected bodies (151). “Media-technological differentiations opened up the possibility for media links,” he writes in one especially resonant passage that describes the discourse network of 1900 as a Frankensteinian assemblage: “After the storage capacities for optics,
acoustics, and writing had been separated, mechanized, and extensively utilized, their distinct data flows could be reunited. Physiologically broken down into fragments and physically reconstructed, the central nervous system was resurrected, but as a Golem made of Golems” (170). A manufactured monster of ancient Jewish legend, the golem has been suggested as a pretext for *Frankenstein* and here figures similarly as both piece and whole of a modern subject radically imagined as a “resurrected” linkage of media technologies (terms Kittler tends to use together, not interchangeably as McLuhan did). Like Baudrillard’s amplification of McLuhan in his apocalyptic critiques, Kittler’s extension of McLuhan to historicize technology as the engine of subjectivity, and war in turn as the engine of technological change, represents a scholarly engagement with McLuhan’s work that illustrates its international reach and influence in globalizing its distinctive discourse of technology. Consider this summary of *Gramophone* in *The Guardian’s* obituary for Kittler:

> Kittler . . . tapped into humanity’s fear of being neutralised by its own tools. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* was written in the wake of such science-fiction fantasies as William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984). . . . Kittler’s point was not that machines will exterminate us; rather that we are deluded to consider ourselves masters of our technological domain. (Jeffries 2011)

Like Baudrillard’s, Kittler’s work in English translation has done as much as that of anglophone scholars to consolidate and popularize McLuhan’s Frankensteinian discourse of technology.

We find a suggestive coda to McLuhan’s global influence on the imagery and discourse of modern technology in the architecture of Berlin. Berlin’s Canadian Embassy, built in 2005, features a high-tech, multimedia “McLuhan Salon” (Government of Canada 2012). And the new embassy literally shadows the ruins of the Führerbunker, site of Hitler’s last proverbial stand in the German capital, now a grassy knoll, conspicuously neglected and just as conspicuously unmarked. The renovated site for a new global assertion of Canada’s technological nationalism shadows the demolished site of Germany’s prior assertion of similar technological nationalism, and both sites are just south of a monument to one of the twentieth century’s most emblematic catastrophes of technological nationalism: the Holocaust Memorial. In this juxtaposition emerges the spectre
Conclusion

197

of Frankensteinian hubris and ruin that Canadians would do well to heed, susceptible as Canada and indeed many nations have been, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, to political populism, ultra-nationalism, and corporate protectionism, principles widely recognized as associated with and symptomatic of fascism.

From Technological Nationalism to Technocratic Transnationalism

Given the Canadian government’s prioritization of the business interests of global capital, a prioritization that is exclusive neither to any one governing party, nor to the Canadian state in this age of globalized “neoliberal empire” (McNally 2011, 168); given the continuing centrality of technology to capital—as seen in hegemonic policy terms like technology transfer and the technological imperative (Lorimer, Gasher, and Skinner 2008); and given the corresponding privilege accorded “STEM” disciplines (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) above others: for these reasons, among others discussed in this study, it might be worthwhile to reconsider technological nationalism, now, as something more like technocratic transnationalism: less an endeavour in applying technology to build a nation, as Charland’s (1986) theory argued, and more a prevailing arrogation of governance by global capital through advanced technological means.

At late capital’s intersection of the “technological imaginary” popularized by McLuhan (Genosko 2005, xxxvi) and the “transnational matrix” theorized by Gibson (Moylan 1995, 184), technological nationalism may be productively reconfigured in terms of transnationalism, which describes the transformation, transgression, and transcendence of national borders—and national forms. As Watts comments wryly in Maelstrom: “National identity was so irrelevant that nobody’d even bothered to dismantle it” (2001, “Complicity”). The notion of revising technological nationalism as technocratic transnationalism emerges in reading the McLuhanesque Frankenpheme of technology against the grain of—or as the dangerous supplement of—the primacy of technology in capitalist modernity. The patterns and traditions of McLuhanesque Frankensteins in Canadian popular culture not only prompt us inevitably to think of Frankenstein when we talk of technology, they also share an intriguing commonality in consistently and critically representing corporate business and its neoliberal hegemony with Frankensteinian figures of technology. McLuhan discussed
the modern corporation often in his works; while he tends to use the language of the corporate in a more general and abstract way as a synonym for the collective or the community, sometimes he invokes corporate business specifically and explicitly, and in suggestively Frankensteinian terms, as in his aforementioned, incisive claim about how media “lease our central nervous systems to various corporations” (McLuhan [1964] 2003, 99–100).

And if, since Shelley’s hideous progeny first entered political and public discourse as an allusion, it has been invoked widely by conservative commentators to advise caution against progressive policies, to criticize certain scientific and technological experiments (St. Clair 2004; Turney 1998) and to demonize labour (Baldick 1987), Frankenstein has also been invoked by progressives and radicals to caution against conservative policies, to criticize certain scientific and technological experiments, and to vilify corporate business (sometimes citing Marx’s aforementioned image of capital as vampire). As Hitchcock (2007) notes, the early twentieth-century predations of robber-baron capitalism that triggered the Great Depression prompted representations of corporate business like Mitchell Dawson’s 1930 article “Frankenstein, Inc.,” which criticizes the corporatization of legal practice. Today, ongoing corporate campaigns to arrogate more rights and privileges unto themselves, often at the expense of democracy, citizens’ rights, and the public interest, suggest that the nullification of government about which Dawson warned may be well underway, under the auspices of neoliberalization and globalization. The Frankenstein image of corporate business has been vividly reanimated in the Canadian documentary The Corporation (2003), which describes the profiteering mandate of a corporation as a “monstrous obligation,” and in which two interviewees suggest that an apt metaphor for the modern corporation is none other than Frankenstein’s monster: “Corporations are artificial creations; you might say they’re monsters, trying to devour as much profit as possible, at anyone’s expense,” says one interviewee early in the film, immediately after which, another elaborates: “Dr. Frankenstein’s creation has overwhelmed and overpowered him, as the corporate form has done with us” (Achbar and Abbot 2003).

As an intensification of the global, technologized flow and accelerating concentration of capital, the modern corporation and the neoliberal globalization processes it demands provide a common target for many Canadian adaptations of Frankenstein that reproduce the McLuhanesque
Frankenpheme of technology. Among these, *Videodrome* and *Neuromancer* remain globally recognized and significant exemplars. In these Canadian *Frankenstein* stories, technology in general and media technologies in particular are monstrously figured, as insidious programming; as tools of colonization, domination, and exploitation; as supplements that threaten humanity with obsolescence; as weapons. As Robins and Webster claim, “The global space that has been instituted through the new information and communication technologies has turned out to be a catastrophic space” (1999, 130). By monstrously figuring technology and the “new flesh” it makes, Canadian *Frankenstein* relate transnational capital’s technological futures back to its industrial origins, reinscribing the robustness of a text that identified, at the advent of industrial modernity, an epistemic limit for that modernity.

In addition to corporate business, Canadian adaptations of *Frankenstein* also show a common preoccupation with media, evincing McLuhan’s abiding influence. Texts like Cronenberg’s, Gibson’s, and the myriad analogous *Frankenstein* adaptations that follow them consistently represent media—especially new media—as technologies that are not just routinely vulnerable to backfiring or running amok but also vital instruments of globalizing corporate hegemony and the technocratic governance structures that privilege, sustain, and subsidize it. By constructing Frankenstein figures of technologies and corporations, these adaptations become legible as critiques of capital itself.

Every week, evidence of the consolidation of technocratic transnationalism and of the McLuhanesque Frankenpheme of technology that shadows it is audible in the CBC Radio program *Spark*. The program discusses “tech, trends, and fresh ideas” and it is hosted by Nora Young, for whom McLuhan and Foucault are strong, acknowledged influences (Gunn 2012). We hear this influence in several recurring claims Young consistently makes in numerous episodes: “technology” means more than just what’s new and “high-tech”; technology is about more than tools or devices, it’s also about their “social contexts”; and technology often harbours significant, unintended consequences. That is, each week *Spark* reproduces and disseminates McLuhan’s Frankenpheme of technology in its wide-ranging discussions of new software, devices, and systems, new and old media technologies, algorithms and artificial intelligence, and scholarship and journalism in STS and related areas, as well as the social
costs and benefits of the various items under discussion. Several recurring concerns in Spark’s diverse reporting on technological development illustrate the constant circulation of the McLuhanesque Frankenpheme of technology in the radio show (which is also available in podcast and web streaming media). One of these recurring concerns is automation’s displacement of human labour: what happens “when your boss is a piece of software” is a topic in one episode (Young 2015b). Another is the discourse of technology itself:

What do we talk about when we talk about tech? Is it an engine of economic growth? Instrument of oppression? An extension of our identity and emotions? . . . In an age when our tech is more powerful and more intimately connected to us than ever, we’d better choose those metaphors carefully. (Young 2015a)

And another significant concern is the spectre of technological autonomy. “What if there really is a Skynet?” Young asks, introducing an item on a group of scientists’ recent announcement that the achievement of artificial intelligence is imminent—and a danger. Of one group member, Young asks: “We’ve seen some startling examples of autonomy in computers and machines . . . but how pervasive is this in our society now?” And she subsequently asks: “So what should we be doing as a society to safeguard ourselves from this technology getting hideously out of control?” (2014a). In addition, in light of the discursive pattern this study has traced, the program’s subject matter often leads Young and her interviewees to explicitly cite Frankenstein: for instance, a Microsoft representative describes his tablet stylus development project by saying, self-deprecatingly, that “we’re building these bizarre Frankenstein devices with wires hanging out of them and so forth” (quoted in Young 2014b). And for Spark’s Hallowe’en 2017 episode, Young (2017) drew together some of these recurring ideas and issues in the show, speaking at length about Frankenstein as “the governing metaphor for our fears about out-of-control tech,” with specific reference to emerging critiques of the unexpected consequences of social media. As suggested by even this cursory sampling, the McLuhanesque Frankenpheme of technology enjoys regular circulation in CBC Radio’s popular technology show. So, it must be said, does a cultural and philosophical problematization of technology and the discourse of technology, which occurs about as often as does the show’s usage of technology as
Frankenpheme. Some of the show’s sophistication is encapsulated in its very title, which evokes an image of electrical engagement that is popularly identified with new ideas—and with the “spark of being” (Shelley [1831] 2000, 60) that animates Frankenstein’s monster.

**Amplifying Adaptation Studies**

The myriad ways in which *Frankenstein* has cast a long shadow over technology discourse, taken together, suggest a richness, resonance, and above all a profound ambivalence. The discourse of technology, in which technology is so widely figured as a McLuhanesque Frankenpheme, thus represents, somewhat contradictorily, both an instance of and counterexample to the gestures of simplification and interpretive closure for which *Frankenstein* allusions have been historically used in political, economic, and scientific discourse and debates (Baldick 1987, St. Clair 2004). The McLuhanesque Frankenpheme of technology instantiates the gesture of interpretive closure in its consistent intimation of hubris and ensuing catastrophe; it represents a counterexample in its diversity of iterations and inflections. And what opens up or reopens receptions of *Frankenstein* to such varied and even contradictory readings is a more expansive, more minutely attentive approach to adaptation studies: more expansive in the range of forms, genres, and media to which it attends; and more minutely attentive in its readings of both the formal details and social contexts of the texts and other cultural practices given consideration. While this book has engaged with a variety of forms and media both extensive and ephemeral, both popular and scholarly, there are of course many others that invite reading for evidence of the McLuhanesque Frankenpheme of technology: advertising, comics and cartoons, digital games, food products, toys, curricular materials (fig. 10), and graffiti (fig. 11) to name just a few.

Similarly, there are many other sites of cultural practice that would invite such a reading. Canadian adaptations of *Frankenstein* demonstrate recurring preoccupations with the discourse of technology, media, corporate business, and globalization—the latter of which also puts in question the very category of the nation-state, of Canada itself. In light of these preoccupations—and mindful of the qualifying question that puts the context of the national under nominal erasure—what might be identifiable preoccupations or emphases of *Frankenstein* adaptations in other regional or national sites, such as the United States or India? Relatedly, how has
the McLuhanesque Frankenpheme of technology circulated across the English-speaking postcolonial world? The above survey of salutary articulations of it among major US and European scholars’ works perhaps only shows the tip of a massive cultural iceberg.

Figure 10 “My Frankenstein” as a second-grade school assignment, Hallowe’en 2014, illustrating both the common use of the creator’s name for that of his creation and the text’s pedagogical adaptability. Courtesy of the author’s daughter.
When I first undertook this study, my mentor and friend, the late Constance Rooke, asked me a pointed question: “What’s Canadian about all these adaptations of *Frankenstein*? Because, you know: it could be nothing.” This interrogative caveat has stayed with me through the pursuit and completion of this work. The short answer, I suppose, is that McLuhan is what’s Canadian about these adaptations, since they all connect his theory to Mary Shelley’s story. But Rooke’s caveat has taken on few different meanings—not least of which is this question of Canada’s existence under a neoliberal world-system of technocratic transnationalism. What is Canadian about these adaptations of *Frankenstein* is that they are also
simultaneously adaptations of McLuhan’s media theory; however, in the process, they have constructed and popularized a nationally contextualized discourse of technology that—sometimes subtly, sometimes stridently—renders unsettling and uncanny technology’s place of privilege and presumption in the modern capitalist world order. As Mark Kingwell observed in a *Globe and Mail* editorial, “fear remains the dominant emotion when humans talk about technological change” (2017, F7). Kingwell’s subject is artificial intelligence, an area rife with Frankensteinian anxieties, allusions, and adaptations; and even in this quite short prose piece on the subject, McLuhan gets cited as one of “the best voices in the critical literature about technology” (F7)—though Kingwell reproduces the popular reception of McLuhan as a voice counselling understanding, not fear, when as we’ve seen, he more ambivalently articulated both.

And as was pointed out to me in one of the early talks that formed the basis of this book, there is a good deal of irony in the gender politics of technology discourse and its historical provenance. The globalized discourse of technology is a pivotal discourse of capitalist modernity—which is also a patriarchal and paternalistic modernity (Haraway 1991). And technology, in its pride of place in this world-system, has become widely understood as a gendered discourse, a domain of boys and their toys. How ironic, then, that the epistemic foundations of this discourse were set down, one unseasonably, erratically cold summer, by the prodigious and audacious imaginings of one well-read teenage girl.