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In Memoriam
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V I S E U · 2 0 1 1

MONSTROUS FEMALE AUTHORSHIP IN GOTHIC LITERATURE: THE RODENT-WOMAN IN FEDERICO ANDAHAZI'S *THE MERCIFUL WOMEN*

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The primordial relationship between writer and reader presents a wonderful paradox: in creating the role of the reader, the writer also decrees the writer's death, since in order for a text to be finished, the writer must withdraw, cease to exist. While the writer remains present, the text remains incomplete. Only when the writer relinquishes the text, does the text come into existence. At that point, the existence of the text is a silent existence, silent until the moment in which a reader reads it. (...)

All writing depends on the generosity of the reader.

— Alberto Manguel. *A History of Reading*, 179.

Palavras-chave: Goticismo, monstrosidade feminina, autoria e autoridade femininas, paternidade literária.

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Victor Frankenstein is still a *haunted* man. Beginning in the Swiss mountains, the scientist throws himself at the mission to *hunt* “his” monster with a view to terminate him. *Haunted* by the possibility of monstrous progeny, he finds his *hunt* just and morally correct. However, Mary Shelley, the female author who controlled her male creations in the manner Frankenstein wished he could control his, succeeded in making the monster thrive and prosper. In spite of all attempts against his life, Frankenstein's monster lives well beyond the 1818 novel. Gaining mythic quality, authors now wish to make him live longer though still wanting to appropriate themselves of his bodily and symbolic meaning. In that perspective, the monster is still hunted as well. From Brian Aldiss to Katherine Dunn, Garfield Reeves-Steven and Kurt Vonnegut, authors continue to struggle for a piece of him, trying to snatch him from Mary Shelley's arms, his mother. This paper presents another rewriting, another snatch if you will, but one that is aware of the issues concerning female authorship and anxiety as well as the sexual politics of the literary industry. With *The Merciful Women* (2000), Federico Andahazi questions not only