ABSTRACT

DANIELLE ELIZABETH GENTRY. Andromeda Bound: Erotic Male Fantasies in Victorian England. (Under the direction of Professor Sharon Setzer)

The legend of Perseus and Andromeda, derived from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, is considered to be one of the forerunners of the rescue narrative, in which a heroic male rescues a beautiful chained maiden from a deadly monster. Andromeda’s rescue has been the subject of countless works of art, with many depictions focusing on the exact moment in which the bound Andromeda is being approached by both Perseus and the sea monster, signifying a fixation with her suffering. Many artists and critics alike have rationalized and dismissed overtly erotic and brutal representations of Andromeda’s rescue, insisting that her chains and nudity are to be allegorically interpreted. Challenging this claim, my project explores the Victorian male artists’ erotic fascination with the image of the chained maiden, the rescue narrative, and ultimately, Andromeda herself. My analysis is informed by Adrienne Munich’s study on the Victorian male artists’ shared obsession with the rescue narrative, alongside Laura Mulvey’s concept of visual pleasure and the male gaze in film. I consider literary depictions by Robert Browning, Charles Kingsley, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, as well as the images of the chained maiden which inspired their devotion to Andromeda. I discovered that each of the previously mentioned poets utilized their artistic power to project their own personal erotic fantasies onto their respective Andromeda figures, objectifying her as an empty vessel waiting to be filled by their visions of the ideal woman.