ABSTRACT

DIANA BRYAN “You are mythical after all”: Young Adult Paranormal Romance and the New Folklore. (Under the direction of Dr. Barbara Bennett)

Young Adult Paranormal Romance is a genre that takes a great deal from folklore to tell its stories. However, since it is a new genre, there is little scholarship about how it uses the folkloric structures, or what the effect of the use of these structures is. By examining the folkloric influence on Paranormal Romance and showing how it has created a similar structure of its own, this paper shows that Paranormal Romance is a new kind of folklore. Beginning with tracing the path of folklore through popular culture and into Paranormal Romance, the paper shows how figures such as the vampire are sanitized and romanticized and explains in detail the general structure of Paranormal Romance.

The essay discusses the creation of a new folklore that, while using similar structures to the older varieties, creates the story of a kind of empowerment of the female character. This empowerment is wrapped up in the salvation of a man, and ends with the female character as his superior in every way. In the comparison to folklore, the essay finds some deviations which hint that Paranormal Romance is created a new kind of folklore, which, while fulfilling many of the functions of the old, creates new roles and positions for young women. While seeming to promote a return to traditional roles and structures, the essay argues that Young Adult Paranormal Romance creates roles, structures and folklore that look traditional, but rather are wrapped up in the heroine acting as both protected and protector, growing beyond societal restrictions.