

Almost Human: Adolescent Feminine Sexuality in Supernatural Fiction  
Lucia Gambetti-Bracco

The massive popularity of the Twilight franchise triggered a new wave of vampire fiction that has since been largely criticized by feminist theorists for promoting antiquated notions of adolescent feminine sexuality. The Twilight series has borne the brunt of this critique as the story is interpreted as advocating abstinence, idolizing feminine passivity, and romanticizing abusive relationships. The human female protagonists of vampire fiction reflect a general trend towards post-feminist ideologies, as this figure conveys conservative gender politics through a seemingly progressive genre. In order to excavate the beliefs embedded in new vampire fiction, this paper compares the figure of the vampire's human girlfriend with another supernatural figure marketed towards young women: the witch of the 90s, a figure who is imbued with third-wave feminist beliefs. These two female figures interact with and embody the monstrosity of adolescence through both the supernatural genre they inhabit and by engaging with the struggles of adolescence as a liminal period. Both 90s witch fiction and aughts vampire narratives present feminine figures who reflect and communicate popular conceptions of adolescent feminine sexuality of their historical moments. By comparing and critiquing the two, this paper explores the larger shift in popular culture from embracing third-wave feminist values to a more insidious presentation of "feminist" beliefs in the form of hypersexualized characters who embody regressive sexual politics.