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Abstract

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The child in gothic fiction is often interpreted as a symbol of adult fears, and childhood in this context is therefore stripped of intentionality. This article discusses the representation of childhood as performed through acts of agency in children's gothic fiction, with Angela Sommer Bodenburg's famous novel series *Der kleine Vampir* as a case study. Previous research into the novel series has focused primarily on the human protagonist, the boy Anton Bohnsack, and neglected childhood as performed by the vampire children Rudiger and Anna. These two characters diverge from previous representations of vampires within the vampire sub genre and challenge the very concept of childhood.

In terms of space made available for agency, the human sphere differs from the vampire sphere. Whilst the former emphasizes protective measures on behalf of the child the latter seems to emphasize agency. However, there is a dialectic relation between the two spheres. Neither protection nor agency is favoured, instead *Der kleine Vampir* offers the possibility of a fusion between them through a number of different images of childhood, or rather, multiple childhoods.

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SommerBodenburg's *Der kleine Vampir*, the issue is different.