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Reprezentace spiritismu v českých odborných diskusích konce 19. a počátku 20. století

Abstract:

My thesis deals with the representations of spiritism in Czech expert discourses from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It is based on the analysis of the representations, following the approach of Stuart Hall. To be more exact, it focuses on the way spiritism, which can be characterised simply as a belief in the existence of spirits, was represented in the texts of Czech authors who spoke critically against it as representatives of one of the respected scientific fields (most often psychiatry or psychology, but also biology). The attention is given not only to the representations of spiritism itself but also to the representations of its supporters and the so-called mediums (i.e., people capable of being the mediator between the world of the living and the beyond) and their activity. By analysing the way the authors of the inspected texts wrote about spiritism and everything that was associated with it, the thesis explores how the representatives of “modern” science were involved in the delimitation of what could be considered possible, acceptable, and scientific, and how they were involved in the production of shared meanings, power relations, social roles, and inequalities.

Key words: spiritism, medium, séance, representation, Czech expert discussions, Czech scientists, psychology, psychiatry, metapsychology