

**Zoya Wassif: TO THE WITCHES AND GHOSTS AMONG US:
CREATING SPACE FOR NON-HUMAN AGENTS WITHIN ACADEMIA**

Thesis assessment

Zoya Wassif chose for her diploma thesis in the field of historical sociology a topic that is not particularly common but is undoubtedly relevant for historical sociology. She deals with what is referred to in her work as "supernatural encounters" which in popular science literature is usually associated with the term "paranormal phenomena". Fundamentally, the author deals with three types of such phenomena: 1. haunted buildings 2. churails, (similar to witches) 3. curses. The assessed work has a theoretical-empirical character. In the theoretical part, the focus is mainly on explaining the significance of the chosen topic for social scientific knowledge. In the research part, the findings were obtained through interview questioning regarding the three mentioned types of phenomena, which were reproduced. The author emphasizes the sociological relevance of the topic by pointing out the importance of observed phenomena in non-Western cultures. References are made to specialist literature, primarily of ethnological or cultural-anthropological provenance. In the empirical part, the ambition to use grounded theory methodology in the student's own research was declared. I personally believe that neither of the two parts of the diploma thesis is processed at such a level that it does not cause serious critical objections.

When it comes to the starting points of the research that Zoya Wassif focuses on, it is necessary to remember that similar efforts are not only typical of ethnologists or non-Western researchers but can also be found in Western sociology. Above all, it is possible to recall the French sociologist Bruno Latour and his research regarding the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes. It is this research that could probably best indicate to the student what possibilities the sociological perspective offers for researching these phenomena.

Overall, it can be stated that some passages in the theoretical part of the work resemble a synopsis from a reading rather than an author's text (e.g. pp. 36-42, where there are references to only one work by Edward Evans-Pritchard). In the methodological part, the author gives a relatively detailed report on the grounded theory method and the coding that is carried out within it, but in the part where these procedures should be demonstrated in the analysis of findings from the conducted research interviews, we rather encounter a narrative about paranormal phenomena, in which they also bring popular books and magazines that focus on this topic. The sociological significance of the three observed types of "supernatural encounters" can be doubted to a great extent. From reading the thesis, it is also clear that its author did not make sufficient use of the opportunity to consult her work process with Mgr. Lucy Brown, who is an expert in the theoretical and methodological aspects that the thesis touches upon.

I recommend that this thesis be given the grade of 'good' (3).

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