

PSI IN HISPANIC AMERICA: A BIBLIOGRAPHIC GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Parapsychologists from different countries have conducted work that is completely unknown to the rest of the parapsychological community mainly because of the language barrier. In my opinion this situation is a waste of resources and hinders the field's attempts to explain parapsychological phenomena. This paper, inspired in part by Alvarado (1989), Krippner (1992), and by my own previous articles (Parra, 1993, 1995), is a summary of Spanish-language books published in recent years that have been generally ignored in the book review section of English-language psi journals. This state of affairs is clear from the situation summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Book Reviews in English-Language Parapsychology Journals, 1990-1995

	English		Non-English		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
<i>Journal of the SPR</i>	103	97.1	3	2.8	106
<i>Journal of the ASPR</i>	90	98.9	1	1.1	91
<i>Journal of Parapsychology</i>	39	97.5	1	2.5	40
<i>European Journal of Parapsychology</i>	5	45.4	6	54.5	11

Most of the books reviewed in English-language parapsychology journals have been in English. A journal that pays more attention to other languages is the *European Journal of Parapsychology*, which covers a geographical area that includes parapsychologists who read and write in at least two languages. Although the sample represented in the Table is small, I believe that a comparison to, say, the last two decades presents similar proportions. The literature in languages other than English (not only Spanish) is not considered by book reviewers. There are many publications from other countries but the language barriers make acquaintance with these works difficult even for those who want to keep in touch with international developments (Parra & Pedroza, 1991).

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO SPANISH-LANGUAGE BOOKS

To improve the language-barrier situation I will briefly review here books published in Spanish during the last ten years (1986-1996), which I have classified by topics. Few of these books have been reviewed in the English-language journals. The quality of the books varies; some are empirically based, and others are basically of regional interest. But the books are valuable because they present concepts different from those discussed in the English-

language literature. I have included mainly works written originally in Spanish, and four books translated into Spanish from Portuguese. The annotated bibliography is based on 481 books (part of the library of the Instituto de Psicología Paranormal of Buenos Aires). These are only some of the books that I have collected during the last decade.

According to the data in Table 2, taken from my compilation of Spanish-language publications published elsewhere (Parra, 1996), Hispanic authors are lower in proportion when compared with authors who have been translated from other languages.

Table 2

Proportion of Hispanic Authors and Translated Authors

	No. of books	%
Hispanic Authors	153	31.8
Translations	328	68.1
TOTAL	481	

Table 3 clearly indicates the proportion of parapsychological publications from those countries with a large publishing activity. The highest proportions are Argentina and Spain, while Mexico and other countries show a lower proportion.

Table 3

Proportion of Countries as Publishers of Parapsychological Works

Countries	No.	%
Spain	262	54.4
Argentina	158	32.8
Mexico	47	6.4
Other Countries*	14	2.9
TOTAL		

*Includes Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico and Uruguay.

General Parapsychology

Discussions of general topics are the most frequent category of publications. An example is *Psicología de la Energía Mental: Parapsicología de Ayer [The Psychology of Mental Energy: Yesterday's Parapsychology]*, by Ramón de Aguilar (1986). The book is an introduction to parapsychology and a discussion of the different definitions of the field. The author criticizes the two belief systems that dominate Hispanic American parapsychology. On one side there are several Catholic priests who criticize those that follow the spiritist approach. There are also the ideological factors that were present in J. B. Rhine's philosophy of psi in contrast to the philosophy of psi of the Russian

parapsychologist L. L. Vasiliev. Ramón de Aguilar presents his own studies of poltergeist cases and the heated polemics he had with spiritist groups regarding their etiology. The book is uncritical: the selection of pictures that illustrate the text present as genuine some dubious paranormal phenomena. However, within these limits, this is a good general introduction to the field.

In *ABC de Parapsicología* [*The ABC of Parapsychology*] Argentinean parapsychologist Antonio Las Heras (1992) presents a more popular version of parapsychology. In his opinion, psi has practical and daily applications, which may be used to modify bad habits and behaviours. The book also discusses popular myths and superstitions and attempts to show how parapsychology demystifies them.

Enrique de Vicente is a Spanish reporter who writes about paranormal topics and directs the best-known magazine on these topics in the Hispanic world, *Año/Cero*. In his book, *Los Poderes Ocultos de la Mente* (The Hidden Powers of the Mind), de Vicente (1995) presents an intelligent synthesis of experimental research conducted during recent years and analyses classic cases. His book provides good sources of information and has a selected bibliography that includes Hispanic authors.

Similarly, Argentinean parapsychologist Naum Kreiman (1994) presents an overview of psi phenomena in his *Curso de Parapsicología*. The book reads like a series of lessons or lectures, many of which have been used as teaching material at the parapsychology Institute directed by Kreiman. The book also includes several chapters about the practical application of psi, and its relationship to yoga. The bibliography of the book only goes as far as 1978.

Philosophy, Psychology and Psi

There are several books with a philosophical orientation, which vary in quality. Most of them present metaphysical concepts (and frequently mystical concepts) related to psi. One of them is *Espacio, Tiempo y Parapsicología* [*Space, Time and Parapsychology*] by the Spanish biochemist Sinesio Darnell (1989). The author presents speculations regarding the nature of psi, causality, time and space, and how all of this affects, or explains, psi. He is convinced that parapsychology will explain the enigma of survival of death.

In *Hacia una Psicología y Parapsicología Unificadas* [*Towards a Unified Psychology and Parapsychology*], Ramón Marqués Sala (1988) presents a general introduction to parapsychology, including its relationship to psychoanalysis, hypnosis, and neurology. The concept of parapsychology that this author has is so vague and imprecise that these relationships are not clear. In addition, some metaphysical concepts seem to be forced to fit the author's ideas.

Survival

Many books have been published about different aspects of survival. These include out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, apparitions and reincarnation. However, most of these works are translations from other languages. For reasons of space, and to focus on what I consider are the best among many incoherent publications, I will mention three books useful to those interested in the study of spontaneous cases.

Two spiritist publishing houses in Bogotá (Colombia) and Caracas (Venezuela) have published two interesting books. *Ocho Casos de Reencarnación* [*Eight Cases of Reincarnation*], by Hernani Guimaraes Andrade (1994) is a painstaking study of cases of presumed reincarnation. The author, a spiritist engineer and well known as a spiritist in Brazil since the 1960s, has covered thousands of kilometers in Brazil looking for reincarnation-type cases, following Stevenson's methods of investigation. Here the author reports only eight cases, which he believes are scientific proof of reincarnation.

The reprint of a classic book on reincarnation is *Fundamentos Científicos y Filosóficos de la Supervivencia con Reencarnación* [*The Scientific and Philosophical Basis of Survival with Reincarnation*], written by José S. Fernández with the collaboration of Luis di Cristóforo (Fernández & di Cristóforo, 1994). The authors discuss their topic historically from the beginnings of civilization to the more recent studies of parapsychology. Fernández also includes parapsychological studies conducted in the United States around the middle of the century.

A book that may serve as a popular introduction to the topic is *Después de la Muerte* [*After Death*], edited by the Spanish psychiatrist Fernando Jimenez del Oso (1992). He compiled papers from 16 authors about such topics as OBEs, NDEs, poltergeists and apparitions, among other phenomena related to survival. The book is illustrated with a number of photographs.

Poltergeists

There are few books in Spanish that focus on particular phenomena. A recent exception is *Las Casas Embrujadas: Poltergeist* [*Haunted Houses: Poltergeist*], written by the Brazilian psychologist André Percia de Carvalho (1992). The author introduces us to his topic using a regional perspective. That is, he presents Brazilian cases studied by Jesuit priest Edvino Friderichs and spiritist engineer Hernani Guimaraes Andrade. He points out that poltergeists are affected by popular culture and follows the psychological models previously presented by A. R. G. Owen and William Roll. In addition, the author has conducted original investigations of poltergeist cases in his own country.

The Panamanian psychiatrist Ramón de Aguilar Merlo (1995) published *Las Casas que se Incendian Solas: Psicopirosis en Panamá* [*Houses that Burn by Themselves: Psychopyrosis in Panama*]. This is a study of five cases of spontaneous fires. He relates these cases to the characteristics of poltergeist cases he has studied. In addition, the author also presents ten cases investigated by researchers from other countries. Aguilar's work deals with a neglected topic in parapsychological literature and discusses several possible explanations, ranging from natural physical causes to paranormal ones.

Medicine and Psi

Probably the most attractive aspect of applied psi is that of paranormal healing. Neurophysiologist Jacobo Grinberg Zylbelbaum (1990) is the author of *Los Chamanes de Mexico: Pachita* [*Mexico's Shamans: Pachita*]. This is a biographical study of Mexican healer Barbara Guerrero, who has been a healer since she was 30 years old using a variety of techniques. Among these techniques were hand passes and cuts with knives and razors that supposedly

were made to extract tumours in front of witnesses and cameras. In Grinberg's view the performance of the healer needs to be explained through recourse to a psi agent. Although this is not a critical and scientific work, it is valuable for its compilation of many cases and experiences (including some personal ones) that require explanations other than mere fraud.

The well-known Spanish journalist Pepe Rodríguez (1992) has written the book, *Curanderos: Viaje Hacia el Milagro* [*Healers: A Journey Towards Miracles*]. Although the author is better known for his critical books about dangerous sects and cults in Spain, here he analyses healing as a social phenomenon with a folkloric approach that includes a guide to the best-known healers of the Spanish provinces, where their genuineness is assumed. Rodríguez does not focus much on psi phenomena, nor does he make a clinical study of healings with follow-ups. This is a descriptive dossier of the forms of healing and the techniques of healers in Spain.

Similarly, in *Los Curanderos: Mis Colegas* [*Healers: My Colleagues*] physician Samuel Tarnopolsky (1994) argues that healers are an alternative resource for health practised in some towns as compared with urban medicine.

History of Parapsychology

Most of the Hispanic parapsychological literature includes a historical review. In most cases this is presented as an introduction to a topic, as an attempt to summarize precedents to the topics in question.

I will comment on three works of historical interest. *Historia de la Parapsicología* [*History of Parapsychology*], by the Venezuelan psychologist Jon Aizpúrua (1995), presents a historical synthesis from antiquity to mesmerism (1778), spiritism (1857), particularly the work of Allan Kardec, psychical research (1882), including the first psychical research societies, and modern parapsychology (1930), starting with J. B. Rhine's work. Aizpúrua is a leader of an important Latin-American spiritist organization, the Confederación Espiritista Panamericana [Panamerican Spiritist Federation]. This book is a revised edition including recent developments and a glossary.

Julio Ungaro (1992) has published an exceptional historical study of a field tangentially related to parapsychology. In *Las Radiaciones Humanas* [*Human Radiations*] the author presents a review of material since the 19th century, starting with Franz Anton Mesmer's animal magnetism and including later developments of the study of these radiations, including attempts to photograph or detect this 'biological energy' in other ways. Ungaro provides an exhaustive bibliography and includes in this the studies of Albert Abrams, who developed radionics.

Another study, but one of a regional interest, is my own *Historia de la Parapsicología* [*History of Parapsychology in Argentina*], the only book that compiles information about the history of parapsychology in a Hispanic-speaking country. I divided the history of these developments in my country into spiritist (1869), magnetic or mesmeric (1896), metapsychic (1923) and parapsychological (1953 to date). The book attempts to document the literature, experimental activities and institutional connections of the field. It also discusses the main researchers in the field.

Religion and Parapsychology

The problem of the relationship between parapsychological phenomena and religion is not only that of interpersonal differences between many Hispanic parapsychologists, but one associated with strong ideological issues coming from all the relevant orientations.

The clearest example of these polemics is the book, *Antes que los Demonios Vuelvan* [*Before the Demons Return*], written by Jesuit priest Oscar González Quevedo (1993). González Quevedo is one of the best known parapsychologists of the Hispanic world. In 1982 an order to burn his book was issued by someone high up in the Jesuit order, because the book denied the existence of the devil. This led González Quevedo to be inactive in parapsychology for seven years.

Finally, in 1989, when Father Quevedo was able to practise as a priest again, the book was revised. In the book the author introduces the reader to the topic of demonic possession through historical and anthropological observations, and includes a chapter about the physical existence of the devil. He presents demonic possession cases as cases of dissociation, with neurological problems but associated with psi phenomena such as levitation, changes in environmental temperature, movement of objects, and spontaneous fires. A review of the publications of Father Quevedo is helpful for understanding a fair amount of the technical language many Hispanic parapsychologists use. This was particularly the case during the 1970s (for a general review of terminology see Zingrone & Alvarado, 1987). Some of his books, such as *Las Fuerzas Físicas de la Mente* [*The Physical Forces of the Mind*], *El Rostro Oculto de la Mente* [*The Hidden Face of the Mind*], and *Los Curanderos* [*The Healers*], had more than ten reprintings (the most recent in 1992) in Spanish and Portuguese. The possession book sold 100,000 copies in a year.

Another Jesuit priest known for his studies of radiesthesia, Father José María Pilón (1993) published the book, *Biblia y Parapsicología* [*The Bible and Parapsychology*]. This is a question-and-answer book about issues that worry people. Although the book has a number of mistakes, Father Pilón gives good critiques of many practices and religious beliefs considered to be pagan. On similar lines, the Spanish priest Miguel Lucas (1992) wrote *El Otro Lado del Hombre* [*The Other Side of Man*]. The contents are based on issues of popular interest. Many of Lucas's arguments are based on the books of Father Quevedo and he discusses such topics as witchcraft, voodoo and psychic surgery, among others.

The last two books I will mention here are more open than the previously-mentioned ones regarding religious orientation. In *Control Mental: Una Perspectiva Cristiana* [*Mental Control: A Christian Perspective*], physician and theologian Fernando Saravi (1994) is sceptical about the existence of psi phenomena, and quotes from neurophysiological studies and Christian theological texts in his arguments. The book is a critique of meditation practices, Silva Mind Control, and other similar systems that he considers to be prejudicial to Christian ethics and morals. The author is a member of CSICOP.

Another book deserving attention is *Fenómenos Paranormales en el Yoga Clásico y en el Cristianismo* [*Paranormal Phenomena in Classical Yoga and in Christianity*] by Walter Gardini (1993). The author is a well-known professor of comparative oriental religion at the Universidad del Salvador and has published many books about sociology, religion, and oriental anthropology. In this book he discusses Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms with special attention to psi powers, altered states of consciousness, and the mysticism of yoga practitioners. The author also has a section on the phenomena of Sai Baba (although he maintains a sceptical position about him) and a brief introduction to similar cases in Christian hagiography. Walter Gardini's book is an objective introduction to historical and anthropological studies of parapsychology and religion.

Technology and Psi

Those who expect to find in this literature some descriptions of rigorous experimental approaches should realize that books of this sort are rare in the Hispanic literature. An exception is *Los Fenómenos Parapsicológicos: Psi en el Laboratorio* [*Parapsychological Phenomena: Psi in the Laboratory*] by Enrique Novillo Pauli (1984). Additionally, there are some recent books that discuss technical issues in parapsychology.

Carlos Fernández (1995), a Spaniard specializing in electronics, recently published *Parapsicología y Electrónica* [*Parapsychology and Electronics*]. This is a brief handbook on building instruments for conducting psi experiments, such as an instrument to randomly select ESP cards, a detector of electronic voices, and devices to work with plants, among others.

A Brazilian author, Clovis Nunes (1993), published in Spanish *Transcomunicacion Instrumental* [*Instrumental Transcommunication*], a handbook providing an introduction to technical procedures that, according to the author, can catch voices or images of deceased human beings. Although it has a spiritist approach, the book presents information about procedures to deal with television and tape recorders.

Several books have dealt with the Kirlian effect and the construction of psychotronic devices that are supposed to detect 'psi energy' from living organisms. But I will not discuss such publications here.

DISCUSSION

Hispanic psi literature has not been prolific in recent years, even though some specialized periodicals (*Psi Comunicación, Revista Argentina de Psicología Paranormal*) and popular ones (*Año/Cero, Más Allá, Enigmas, Nueva Dimensión*) have appeared. This is closely related to the popular interest in sensational literature that has become fashionable in Hispanic America, which has affected the frequency of publication of the better-quality literature. Since there is more demand for sensational literature, publishers pay less attention to the more serious books on the subject. Consequently it is not easy for beginners to obtain good and reliable introductory parapsychology books (Parra, 1994).

However, I agree with Alvarado (1995, p. 81) regarding the need to pay attention to psi literature in languages other than English. Editors of the main

English-language psi journals could help this situation by soliciting or encouraging the publication of book reviews in languages such as French, German, Italian and Spanish.

I hope this article inspires other authors with the necessary language skills to summarize the recent literature in other languages that is completely unknown to many of us.

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