

# Carlos S. Alvarado: An Irreplaceable Landmark on the International Arena

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“It sounds interesting.” This was one the most frequent remarks by Carlos S. Alvarado when I (and others) submitted to his judgment new information, a proposal for an original study, preliminary conclusions of studies, or when we talked of ongoing research performed by university students for their theses or by private enthusiasts. Faced with the possibility of new good-level additions to common knowledge, his reaction was steadily characterized by acceptance and enthusiasm, without rejecting anyone or anything. He was firmly convinced that parapsychology should come out of the fringe area where it is traditionally enclosed and gain well-deserved respect by science and culture representatives. So, he gladly accepted everyone seemingly able of helping the growth and development of the discipline. As a result of such a “politics of inclusion,” and for his very wide knowledge of the field (Zingrone et al., 2015), he became a recognized leader at the international level.

It was in the field of historical studies that the international scope of his engagement was most evident. In a 1989 article, Carlos (Alvarado, 1989a, pp. 5-6) pointed out that historical studies in parapsychology should follow the two approaches, internal and external, described by Thomas Kuhn: “An internal history emphasizes the subject matter of the field,” while according to the external or social approach “parapsychology historians could... study the institutions of the field... the funding organizations... the constituency... and the dissemination of concept and research findings in the popular press.” Then, expanding that program, he underlined that a “particularly problematic limitation of most current work on the history of parapsychology” was represented by “the absence of studies that consider developments in countries other than America and England... More in depth research on different countries is still needed.” Significantly, in the subsequent decades he conducted himself many studies along those lines.

He rediscovered in the past of many countries many “forgotten pioneers” of par-

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apsychology, personalities gone unnoticed who proposed interesting studies, suggestions, and hypotheses, and described ways to remedy the distortions –caused by the emphasis on English–language–in reconstructing the history of psychical research (Alvarado, 2012). He dealt with the negative effects of language barriers on the sharing of information (Alvarado, 1989b), and focused on the International Congresses of Psychical Research on the first half of the twentieth century, where the exchange of opinions and information between peers has been crucial to keeping alive and sustaining psychical research (Alvarado, 2017). Furthermore, he identified specialized journals as the main tool for the dissemination of information at an international scale (Alvarado et al., 2006), and analyzed the role and social impact of “psychics” and “gifted subjects” studied in a number of countries (Alvarado, 1993).

It may be appropriate to point out here one of Carlos’ productive ideas which was the basis of the recently published study on Emelie Sagée (Hövelmann et al., 2019). That work began in 2011 from Carlos’ intention to understand how a story of apparent OBEs with vision at a distance, initially recounted by Robert Dale Owen on 1860, was identified, picked up, and used by later authors all over the world. His purpose was to “map” the circulation of information and related ideas over the time and in different cultural contexts. Carlos asked Gerd Hövelmann and me to trace old references in the literature of our countries. After some time, the study took another direction (we chose to deepen true details of the story) and was interrupted by the illness and then death of Gerd. It was revived only a few years ago and clearly shows the usefulness of such an inquiry. Like many of his stimuli, proposals, and contributions, this idea deserves to be taken into consideration and applied again to further cases. It would be an unjustified regression in our part to forget his many proposals, or not to continue on the paths that, with so much skill, delicacy, and expertise, he pointed out to all of us.

However, the study of historical issues is not an end in itself, but also serves to further research proposals (Alvarado, 2010, 2013) and express broad-spectrum considerations of parapsychology and its place within the sciences (Alvarado, 2002, 2003). Carlos’s articles have been published in mainstream journals as well parapsychological ones and magazines, and have been translated in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and other languages, so they have reached scientists and parapsychologists, as well as simple lovers of parapsychology in many countries.

Besides historical studies, during the years he also carried out studies on neglected issues of possible relevance also for psychology, such as inquiries on hauntings (Alvarado & Zingrone, 1995), OBEs and spontaneous cases (Alvarado 1996, 2015), perception of auras (Alvarado & Zingrone, 1994), and synaesthesia (Simmonds-Moore et al., 2019). In most of these investigations he sought the collaboration of scholars

belonging to institutions other than his own and often in different countries. One of the indexes of the growth and reaching maturity of a science is a consistent number of papers with multiple authors.

Opening up to new ideas and going beyond cultural and linguistic barriers were policies actively pursued by Carlos. In the early 2000s he consolidated his role within the Parapsychology Foundation, thanks to the collaboration of his wife Nancy Zingrone (who often shared his ideas) and the support of the Foundation's Presidents, Eileen and Lisette Coly. In that position he favoured the creation of a board of friends of the PF, a list of "International Affiliates" that included representatives from 26 countries in 4 continents (PF International Affiliates, 2021). In 2008, by organizing the "Utrecht II" Conference, he invited scholars and researchers from many areas of Europe and America. And when he was an editor of the *International Journal of Parapsychology*, he wanted all the articles followed by abstracts in six languages, in order to make them accessible to the greatest number of people in the world. He showed the same interest as a consultant to the Bial Foundation, and when he worked as a book reviews editor for parapsychology journals.

Finally, let me conclude this brief remembering of Carlos Alvarado by saying how grateful I am to him for not only having included me as a co-author in studies, but also for his friendships and the fruitful exchanges of ideas and information maintained for decades.

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