

FURTHER BOOK OF NOTE

The Last Farewell Embrace: Spirituality, Near-Death Experiences, and Other Extraordinary Events among Nurses by Alejandro Parra. Nova Science Publishers, 2019. 155 pp. \$95.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-153-6153-43-9.

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Alejandro Parra, a psychologist who teaches at the Universidad Abierta Interamericana, is the author of several books, including one on the history of parapsychology in Argentina. In his latest, he writes about his interviews with dozens of nurses and professional caregivers regarding exceptional experiences that they either witnessed in patients, often at the end of life, or had themselves. As an example, a psychiatric nurse in Buenos Aires told about a patient who woke up at four o'clock one morning, shouting "My house is on fire, my house is on fire!" The distraught woman tried to leave the hospital and eventually had to be sedated with medication. Two days later, relatives arrived with objects that had been rescued from a fire at her house, which had occurred at four in the morning.

The book includes no systematic analysis of the reports, and such gems are unfortunately sprinkled only sporadically through a narrative that is too often unfocused. Dr. Parra has done his homework and includes references in 334 endnotes. He sometimes cites studies without an adequate explanation of their findings, however, and the material doesn't really add up to a coherent whole. The book frequently moves back and forth between different kinds of phenomena and between a focus on nurses' experiences versus ones that patients have. For instance, it says that "one of the problems associated with . . . near-death experiences is that there are no studies of nurses about possible

related psychological variables” (p. 90) and then explores at length the question of whether the stress of the job, along with abnormal psychological functioning, may lead nurses to have anomalous experiences. But what does the psychology of nurses have to do with the NDEs and other end-of-life phenomena that many patients and their families experience?

All this being said, Dr. Parra displays obvious compassion for both dying patients and their caretakers, and some of the nurses’ reports are undeniably intriguing.

