

BOOK REVIEW

Poltergeist: La Conexión Entre Nuestra Mente y Otras Realidades

[Poltergeist: The Connection Between Our Mind and Other Realities] by David López Bueno. Privately printed, 2018. 140 pp. \$17.26. (paperback). ISBN 978-1-9808-4492-1.

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Poltergeist: La Conexión Entre Nuestra Mente y Otras Realidades (Poltergeist: The Connection Between Our Mind and Other Realities), is one of the few books about poltergeists originally published in Spanish during the last several decades (for another exception, see Jordan Peña 1982). The book was privately published by David López Bueno, presumably in Spain, who is described on the book's back cover as having worked in radio and television on different topics related to "the world of mystery, mysticism, and esoterism."

Readers unfamiliar with the topic of poltergeists will find López Bueno's summary of cases useful. They include some that took place in Spain in the cities of Barcelona, Cáceres, Ceuta, Madrid, Valencia, and Zaragoza. There are also summaries of cases from other parts of the world such as California, Enfield (London), and Tennessee (Bell family). In addition, the Rosenheim and the Columbus (Ohio) case of Tina Resch are summarized. Interestingly, the case of the Borley Rectory, generally regarded as a haunting, is also included. In the author's words:

Borley Rectory was really a catalyst for paranormal activity. There was something in the place itself that seemed to encourage the energy inside and also acted as a battery to which Marianne Foyster could connect in some way. The house showed three different types of phenomena . . . the ghosts who interacted with the investigators, a haunting [that was] possibly something lingering from the nun . . . and the poltergeist type activity produced by Mrs. Foyster. (p. 103)

There are also brief discussions of the features of poltergeists. The author mentions specific phenomena such as sounds, movement of objects, levitation of objects, thermal variations, and electrical phenomena. He

contends that there are cases in which sounds show evidence of intelligent communication. While there are cases of this sort (e.g., Colvin 2008), it is not certain how common communications via raps is. Roll (1977) found in his analysis of 116 published poltergeist cases that there was some form of communication reported in the accounts of 47 cases (41%). But out of the 47 cases there were only 11 (23%) in which raps provided the information.

Although López Bueno is open to the possibility of discarnate agency, like previous writers he has a psychological approach to poltergeists. In his words:

In most cases, these types of phenomena are produced in the habitat where adolescents, mostly of the feminine sex, live, who may be passing through a period in their lives in which they are going through an altered state of tension, stress, or hormonal change, etc., that makes the subject in question end up in a serious psychopathological syndrome that involuntarily manifests as psychokinesis, which source is a strong repressed psychic energy projected in a violent way toward the exterior . . . (p. 17)

Regarding poltergeist psychology, it is argued that the phenomena produce various forms of “excitation” in the agents. These may include changes in the processes of imagination, memory behavior, mood, and psychomotor activity. In this part of the book the author could have mentioned the discussions of medical problems with poltergeist agents presented in the past by Owen (1964) and Roll (1977).

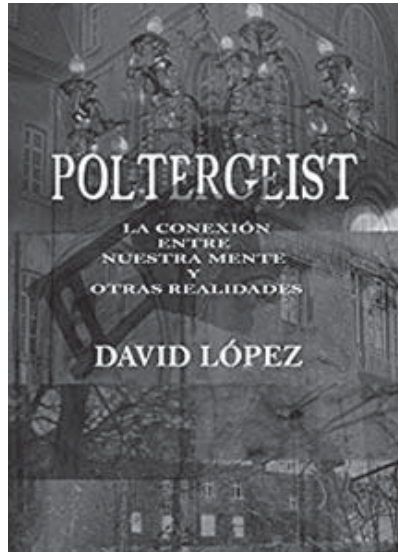
The book includes some unusual terminology and classification of cases. It is mistakenly stated that poltergeists are known today as a “Syndrome of Polymorphic Action,” basically the frequent appearance of a group of paranormal phenomena that “appear without any type of order” (p. 17). However, such a designation is not common at all in the literature on the subject.

The syndrome is supposed to have three aspects. These are “hebemorphic” (phenomena in adolescents, mainly females), “non-specific” (no apparent relation to surrounding persons, may be place-centered, and may include apparitions), and a “conditioning of group action” (group agency, affected by factors such as beliefs). While the content of those factors make sense, it is questionable if such use of terminology is necessary. In any case, there is no estimate of how common each type is.

López Bueno places himself in the tradition of those who believe in the projection of a physical energy from the body to account for poltergeist activity, an idea that has been widely used in Spiritualism and psychical research to explain physical mediumship (Alvarado 2006). In his view poltergeists are caused by “the liberation of energy from the nervous

system” (p. 39), an idea that could be connected to more recent speculations (Roll & Joines 2013).

On the positive side, the strength of the book is that its author presents to readers of the Spanish-speaking world interesting cases and ideas about poltergeists. He states that these cases are not necessarily the product of a discarnate agency, a corrective I think that is necessary in the popular literature. Similarly, he informs his readers, many of whom will not be familiar with the poltergeist literature, that poltergeists have been seriously investigated for a long time. He also reminds us that poltergeists can be distressful for those who experience them.



In addition to the above, López Bueno also considers fraud in some cases, and cautions his readers about problems of exaggeration in testimony, sometimes caused by “an auto suggestive process reinforced by supposed ‘professionals’ to whom the witnesses report . . .” (p. 77). Similarly, he mentions conventional explanations that may explain some cases, such as normal sounds, seismic activity, and electromagnetic effects. Related to this, the author mentioned a poltergeist case in Madrid in which “a bathtub acted as a radio receptor presenting transmissions from the National Radio of Spain” (p. 79). Unfortunately, no details are given.

In his brief conclusion, the author emphasizes how difficult it is to document these cases, but speculates about the possibility that poltergeists represent a connection between our reality and a different reality. While unclear about the idea of “another reality,” the speculation was presented that poltergeists “could be the interrelation between two realities, ours and another reality that leads to the manifestation of facts in our plane” (p. 139).

As for weaknesses, the book is problematic on many counts. The author does not cite the specialized literature about the subject. It is important to provide further information for readers, even though the book is addressed to the general public, some of whom may have interest in the subject beyond the brief discussion presented here, and may want to follow up on the topic to increase their knowledge. For example, although the author states that poltergeists have been reported since antiquity, and that they have been

investigated, he fails to provide bibliographical references to this research. The readers of *Poltergeist* could have been introduced to important past overviews of the topic such as the work of Gauld and Cornell (1979), Owen (1964), and Roll (1972), among others. The same may be said about the lack of mention of many important cases, among them the one in Miami (Roll & Pratt 1971). But more important than the mention of cases, one finds missing from this book the findings of many investigations reported in the specialized academic literature regarding both physical (e.g., Roll, Burdick, & Joines 1973) and the psychological aspects of the cases (e.g., Roll 1970). It is not clear if the author is familiar with this literature.

In addition, other problems include some theoretical concepts the author presents as physical “facts” without evidence for their support, among them ideas of exteriorized nervous force and of morphogenetic fields. Another one is that, typical of enthusiasts for psychological explanations of poltergeists, López Bueno does not recognize some of the problems behind those assumptions and their application (e.g., Martínez-Taboas 1980, and Martínez-Taboas & Alvarado 1981). To complicate matters, some discussions about the human nervous system, particularly the functions performed by the brain hemispheres, seem to reflect pop psychology more than current scientific thinking (Corballis & Häberling 2017).

One hopes that a second edition of the book will improve its content, particularly the evident lack of connection with the poltergeist literature. The general public deserves accurate and complete information about the topic discussed.

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