

BOOK REVIEWS

PSYCHICS, SENSITIVES, AND SOMNAMBULES: A BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY WITH BIBLIOGRAPHIES by Roger I. Anderson. Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2006. Pp. ix + 250. \$49.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-7864-2770-1.

There are several instructive encyclopedic books that provide (sometimes fairly extensive) information about the lives, works, and lasting influence of those who have devoted, and sometimes maybe even sacrificed, parts of their lives and academic careers to active parapsychological research. Pilkington (1987), Berger (1988), and Berger & Berger (1991) are pertinent examples from the past two decades. However, so far there has not been a comparable volume, in any language, to portray the individuals who became known, and sometimes even made a career, as the human subjects of that research: the psychics, sensitives, mediums, clairvoyants, somnambules, and psychokinetes (or however we may call them) who are believed by many to have produced evidence for psychic phenomena of various sorts. Roger I. Anderson's welcome book tries to fill that gap, and it does so with circumspection and at least partial success.

Anderson, well known both for his articles about historical aspects of spiritualism and psychical research (e.g., Anderson, 1985) and for his bibliographic work in this field (e.g., White & Anderson, 1990), presents in this book much useful information about more than 300 selected individuals "who claim to experience the paranormal on a fairly routine basis" and who "actually provided some evidence of genuine ability" (p. 2). Anderson makes it clear from the outset, however, that he is not attempting to decide, or even to suggest, whether the phenomena and experiences ascribed to these individuals require more than normal explanations. After all, "many of these same people have also provided much of the best evidence for the view that deception, self-deception, and general credulity explain everything in the psychic realm that needs explaining, with coincidence taking care of the rest" (p. 2). Decisions about genuineness or otherwise of the reported phenomena thus are basically, and sensibly, left to the reader. The author provides only an overall evaluation when, in his preface, he states:

Though the primary focus of this book is on the real rather than the bogus, an actual count of those psychics that I regard as genuine is sobering. Of the 330 candidates considered, I would judge only about 50 to have produced phenomena that are genuinely inexplicable in terms familiar to conventional science. An equal or greater number I consider fraudulent, delusional or both, leaving

a whopping two thirds about which I can come to no firm conclusion one way or the other (p. 5).

The preface also describes the inclusion criteria that Anderson adhered to (numbering is mine; G.H.H.). First of all, sufficiently detailed information had to be available about individuals to allow a comprehensive summary of their careers, thus excluding those like Apollonius of Tyana whose fame is mainly based on hearsay, anecdotes, or legends. Second, Anderson emphasizes deceased individuals because, he says, their careers are complete and all the evidence is in. Nevertheless, a few living psychics are included as well. Third, Anderson's prime focus is on psychics in the usual meaning of the word, i.e., people who have manifested marked paranormal abilities over protracted periods of time before multiple witnesses, thus admitting fewer presumed focus persons of poltergeists and hauntings, protagonists of reincarnation or possession cases, and saints and other wonderworkers into the book. Fourth, Anderson tries to avoid inclusion of too many cases with phenomenological resemblances to each other:

This dreary similarity of cases is particularly noticeable in those of the poltergeist and reincarnation types, but it also holds for virtually every other category of psychic experiences as well. Such a close conformity to type among cases in other respects so bizarre is itself a significant finding, suggesting a certain lawfulness about the phenomena that might not otherwise be apparent, but it accomplishes little to pile on case after case of the same type once the pattern has been established (p. 4).

Fifth, in addition to the most prominent, "leading" psychics, "[s]everal minor and even obscure figures appear as well, to provide an idea of the historical richness of the subject and the manifold forms the psychic life can take" (p. 3).

Obviously, these inclusion and exclusion criteria are not always fully consistent with each other. As a consequence, the reader will find some entries he or she may not have expected after reading the preface. The relatively lengthy entry for "Mary of Nazareth. First-century Jewish woman whose first-born son, Jesus, would be venerated after his death as a god. . . ." (p. 113) is a case in point. As Anderson admits, this entry is in considerable conflict at least with the first and main inclusion criterion that demands detailed biographical information. Inevitably, given the sheer number of possible candidates for inclusion in a book like this, a number of such inconsistencies must be accepted. The volume, according to Anderson, is primarily intended as "an information and research tool" (p. 3), and as such it is a very valuable, highly informative, and welcome addition to the literature.

The author includes a great variety of entries representing individuals from different time periods, national and educational backgrounds, and scientific or ideological orientations. We encounter poltergeist agents (e.g., Angélique Cottin, Annemarie Schneider, Tina Resch), mesmeric subjects (e.g., the Didier brothers), saints (e.g., Teresa of Avila, Bernadette Soubirous), individuals with stigmata (e.g., Anna Katherina Emmerich, Therese Neumann, Padre Pio), persons who claim to remember previous lives (e.g., Shanti Devi, Sumitra Singh), some slightly obscure figures from the annals of occultism (e.g., Cagliostro, Nostradamus, Rasputin), mentalists such as Joseph Dunninger (Stuart Cumberland is missing, however), and even animals (e.g., Lady Wonder, Sugar the Cat, Gef the Talking Mongoose). The major focus, however, is on the mediumistic heavyweights such as Eileen J. Garrett, Florence Cook, Kathleen Goligher, Marthe Béraud ("Eva C."), Daniel Dunglas Home, Henry Slade, Gladys Osborne Leonard, Eusapia Palladino, Mina "Margery" Crandon, Willi and Rudi Schneider, and Leonora Piper, as well as on well-known psychics including Gerard Croiset, Pascal Forthuny, Stefan Ossowiecki, Raphael Schermann, Mary Craig Sinclair, Nina Kulagina, Alex Tanous, Uri Geller, and Ingo Swann. Some entries are collective ones, such as "Estabrooks' Subjects," "Gasparin's Subjects," "Gurney's Subjects," "Rhine's Sensitives," the "Philip Group," and "Sabom's Subjects"—but not the "Bindelof Boys" (cf. Ullman, 2001; Pilkington, 2006). Sometimes particular individuals, such as Rhine's subjects A. J. Linzmayer and Hubert E. Pearce, are identified, but in most cases their names remain unknown and were never published in the first place.

Entries for Ken Batchelder, Haakon Forwald, Rosalind Heywood, Carl-Gustav Jung, and Gilbert Murray serve as valuable reminders of the fact that there is not always, and not necessarily ever, a clear-cut line that separates psychics from those researchers who set out to investigate them. Other entries are about little-known individuals and unusual phenomena. An example is Philip S. Haley (p. 77), who used himself and his wife as subjects in studies of the multiplication of food. Another is the fascinating tale of Caroline Randolph Chapman, described as "perhaps the only person in history to become a medium on her doctor's advice" (p. 27). Alas, the reviewer's hope that he might find some fresh information about William H. Lake, a persistently elusive American physical medium who was the subject of a remarkable privately published book by ASPR member John B. Reimer (1930), was not fulfilled.

The average length of individual entries runs to about half a page, and each entry has bibliographical references presenting biographies or other primary and secondary sources about the person in question. The actual references, more than 1,700, are listed at the end of the book (pp. 191–244)—over 50 pages of books and articles (some of them annotated) from which the biographical and other information was compiled. As indicated in the beginning, Anderson's book fills a real gap in the field

of parapsychological reference sources. Although there is a handful of reference works in several languages with information about psychics, mediums, and other relevant personnel (e.g., Bonin, 1976), there is nothing in print that even remotely compares to the specific coverage that Anderson provides. The extensive bibliography allows readers to obtain further information on the subjects that interest them. The book is well researched, very scholarly, and highly recommended.

Having said (and meant) this, I would nevertheless like to offer a few critiques about the book's scope and contents in the hope that they will be considered in a future edition of this valuable biobibliographical dictionary.

When one tries to do justice to the biographies and performances of no fewer than 330 individuals in little more than 180 printed pages, space economy is absolutely essential. Information in the individual entries must be extremely condensed, and many important aspects of a person's life and career simply cannot be represented in a way that is even remotely adequate. Skipping certain bits of information altogether often seems more recommendable than squeezing in a few barely adequate words and risking that they might become the source of future misunderstandings. Inevitably, therefore, any pioneering work such as this will suffer from a number of nontrivial errors, gaps, and omissions. Some entries are simply too brief to be really useful.

Consider, for instance, the entry for Marthe Béraud. There is hardly any mention in this entry of her mediumistic career before she became more widely known under the name of "Eva C.," even though that period with her materialization séances at the Villa Carmen in Algiers, in the presence of Charles Richet, was very important for both the medium's career and the adverse impact it had on the educated public's views of psychical research (Le Maléfan, 2002). Again, Marthe's later career as one of Schrenck-Notzing's once-celebrated subjects cannot be fully understood and appreciated without a careful consideration of the almost impenetrable role of Eva's overprotective mentor, Madame Bisson, who arguably had more than a marginal function in the production of at least some, and probably very many, of her materialization phenomena (cf. Brühl, 1928; Klinckowstroem, 1928). Also, it certainly is not correct to state that the original photographs of the medium's performances in Munich "have evidently been lost and cannot now be assessed" (p. 15). In fact, many of the original photographic plates have survived in Schrenck-Notzing's estate. For decades they have been preserved in the archives of the IGPP in Freiburg, and used for various publications (e.g., Chéroux et al., 2005). There are similar nontrivial omissions in a considerable number of the other biographical entries¹—and, given the size and scope of the book,

¹For instance, the rather brief entry for Eusapia Palladino (p. 132) remains silent about many important and rather influential investigations, nor does it mention Eusapia's very early "career" as a potential adolescent poltergeist agent (Damiani, 1873).

they seem hardly avoidable. Therefore, the many references that go with the individual entries and the extensive bibliography in the final part of the book are particularly important.

As for other omissions, a possible future edition of the book could usefully include several individuals for whom there is sufficient information to provide entries. These include, for instance, German medium Anna Rothe (1850–1907) and her materialization of flowers. Her séances were the subject of a number of sensational trials with surviving court documents and many expert opinions from well-known researchers and critics, including Max Dessoir. Even the *New York Times* sent an observer to a Berlin trial who, on April 11, 1903, reported:

After a trial lasting six days, Anna Rothe, the famous “flower medium,” has been sentenced to eighteen months’ imprisonment. The case afforded many interesting and remarkable features. One almost forgot that the defendant was up on a charge of fraud, and the whole matter appeared to resolve itself into a consideration of spiritualism and other phenomena of occult science. The question, however, is asked by the whole Berlin public, even by those who consider the manifestations of Frau Rothe deceptive, whether the showing of these alleged wonders was deserving of such a long sentence as has been imposed on the medium. (E.T.H., 1903, p. 2)

Other useful additions would have been Léonie Leboulanger, studied by Pierre Janet and Charles Richet (Janet, 1889), Heymans’s subject A. S. Van Dam (Heymans, Brugmans, & Weinberg, 1921), astral projector Sylvan J. Muldoon (Muldoon & Carrington, 1929), Czech psychic Pavel Stepanek (cf. Pratt & Keil, 1972), who in the present volume is introduced only as one of “Ryzl’s Subjects” (p. 149), or the elusive Emélie Sagée and her no less elusive recurring apparitions or “doubles” (Alvarado, Biondi, & Hövelmann, submitted).

The major problem of Anderson’s otherwise excellent and very informative book, however, is its exclusive reliance on English-language material. As stated before, his biographical dictionary portrays 330 different individuals. Of these, no fewer than 98 (30%) were born and spent most of their lives and “psychic careers” in the non-English world, i.e., outside the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland, South Africa, or India. Consequently, almost all the relevant publications about these individuals appeared in languages other than English, with only a few translated works and not always reliable or representative summary reports in English. On the other hand, of the (if my count is correct) 1,714 references in Anderson’s extensive bibliography, *not a single one* was published in a language other

than English.² Inevitably, this sometimes is detrimental to the adequate coverage of the lives and performances of those being portrayed. A wealth of information remains unconsidered because it was never published in English and therefore did not come to the author's attention. Thus he seems unaware, for instance, of Wilfried Kugel's extensive and definitive biography of Hitler's favorite clairvoyant, Eric Jan Hanussen (Kugel, 1998), of the full story of the "Seeress of Prevorst," Friederike Hauffe (Kerner, 1829), of the wealth of medical literature on stigmatists Anna Katharina Emmerich and Therese Neumann, of George Zorab's important Dutch and Italian books on D. D. Home (Zorab, 1980a), and Florence Cook (Zorab, 1980b), and of very many other non-English sources that would have been highly relevant for his individual portraits.

This is not necessarily meant as a criticism. It is legitimate for an author to concentrate on the material that is available to him in a language in which he feels at home. Anderson's book no doubt is one of the best current reference works in parapsychology, and the only one worth mentioning that concentrates on psychics and sensitives. So we must be grateful for the immense amount of work that is reflected in this volume. However, for a second edition, the author might consider consulting or collaborating with those who are adequately familiar with the non-English literature.

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² Also, the frequent tendency of American authors to anglicize non-English names is a deplorably bad habit that can be more than irritating to non-native speakers of English. Whereas it would never even cross the minds of Spanish, Italian, or German authors to adapt the spellings of American names to their own languages, this continues to be common practice especially in the United States. There are quite a few examples of this in Anderson's book, which obviously is due to his exclusive reliance on sources in English. Thus, French medium Marthe Béraud has become "Martha Beraud," Anna Katharina Emmerich is presented as "Anne Catherine," Friederike Hauffe's first name is turned into "Frederica," and so on. Umlauts and accents are sacrificed throughout.

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