Anne S. Troelstra

Bibliography of Natural History Travel Narratives. Zeist: KNNV Publishing, 2016.

Pp. 482. Hb, €225.

Anne S. Troelstra's large and impressive reference work is a useful guide to a particular kind of travel narrative: "a chronologically ordered story of travel, located more or less precisely in time, in which natural history observations and the collection of natural history objects play an important part" (9), with "natural history" taken to include botany, zoology, mineralogy, and geology, but not ethnology. Troelstra, a guest researcher in the special collections of the University of Amsterdam library and an emeritus professor of mathematics at the same institution, here catalogues many hundreds of such texts in their various editions and translations—primarily books but also a small number of article-length narratives—from the mid-sixteenth to the twenty-first century. Arranged alphabetically by author, the entries offer concise sketches of the writers' lives and travels, a comprehensive list of the editions and translations of their narratives, and, in most cases, a short list of sources where scholars can find more biographical information. Entries range from less than half a page for relatively minor figures with few publications to considerably longer for well-known and influential authors. Charles Darwin, for example, merits seven and a half pages.

As Troelstra himself acknowledges, completeness in this sort of endeavor is inevitably out of reach. Natural history travel narratives have appeared in great numbers over the centuries, and physical copies are scattered around the world, making personal inspection of every edition of each text impractical for a single person. Troelstra instead mostly bases his bibliography on internet sources such as library catalogues and scanned books. This choice obviously allows inclusion of far more works than would otherwise be possible, but also makes the data less than entirely reliable. In Troelstra's own example, web-based catalogues often do not contain complete information, and sometimes contradict each other, meaning that this volume "cannot match a bibliography solely based on autopsy" (7). A second limitation the author acknowledges is his own linguistic ability. Writes Troelstra in the volume's introduction, "the coverage of publications in French, English, German and Dutch is good; in Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and the Scandinavian languages at least fair; the coverage of editions in other languages is fragmentary" (9). In a work of such ambitious scope, these limitations are understandable and do not, in this reviewer's opinion, outweigh its usefulness. It would no doubt be easy for some specialists of particular periods or linguistic traditions to identify texts that

arguably could have been included, but such is the nature of any work of scholarship that aims to provide a historically and geographically broad overview. And in any case, Troelstra does not hide the fact that what to include and what to leave out was ultimately a matter of his own judgment. The lines between botanical treatises, hunting stories, ethnographies, and other kinds of travel narrative are not, after all, always clearly drawn.

There are two features of the volume that gave me some pause. First among these is an apparent reliance on Wikipedia. Troelstra reports that in compiling each author's biographical sketch, he "almost always used Wikipedia, often in several languages" as a starting point, but opted to omit references to the crowd-sourced encyclopedia in the individual entries, reasoning that constantly citing it would be repetitive (10). In most cases, this is probably unimportant, because most entries point to at least one scholarly source. But in the smaller number of entries that cite no sources at all, the reader is left with the impression that Wikipedia was Troelstra's sole source. See, for just three examples, the entries for the contemporary Dutch authors Koos Dijksterhuis (130–31) and Paul-Tijs Goldschmidt (173), and nineteenth-century French explorer Jean Duchesne-Fournet (134). For those who, like me, remain wary of Wikipedia as a scholarly source, the biographical information in these entries seems less trustworthy than in the more traditionally sourced entries. A second aspect of the volume that I found somewhat unfortunate is the absence of any engagement with the existing literature on travel narratives in the analytical essay that immediately follows the volume's introduction. It is entitled "The evolution of the natural history travel narrative," and it traces the genre's general characteristics and change over time. It offers a clear enough typology of the corpus, but I cannot help but feel that Troelstra missed an opportunity to better situate his contribution within ongoing scholarly discussions about travel narratives, particularly since the "marked literary appeal" of such texts is part of what he says makes them interesting and worthwhile (7). Still, this essay is only a side dish to the main course that is the bibliography itself, so its isolation from relevant scholarship is, although regrettable for this reader, perhaps of minor importance.

All things considered, one cannot help but be impressed by the phenomenal amount of work that is on display in this volume, and by Troelstra's deep knowledge of a vast corpus. Aside from the small concerns mentioned above, this volume will serve well to provide a rapid orientation to individual natural history travel writers, to the publication history of specific texts, or, thanks to the geographical index, to writings from particular parts of the globe. For scholars of Jesuit studies, the volume offers no special tools that might make it particularly attractive, although a small number of members of the Society

of Jesus are included (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Franz de Paula von Shrank). In short, scholars interested in natural history travel narratives will find here a useful starting point for their research.

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DOI 10.1163/22141332-00502005-14