

Kirsten Wolf. *An Annotated Bibliography of North American Doctoral Dissertations on Old Norse–Icelandic*. Islandica 50. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998. 378 pages.

The titles of doctoral dissertations accepted in the United States have been published in yearly lists since 1933 (*Doctoral Dissertations Accepted by American Universities*, later *American Doctoral Dissertations* [ADD]). In 1938, copies of entire dissertations began to be solicited, archived, and reproduced on demand by a commercial organization, University Microfilms, and abstracts prepared by the authors were published by University Microfilms in a journal, *Microfilm Abstracts*, later *Dissertation Abstracts* (DA), which conveniently served both as a research tool for scholars and as advertising for the company's microfilm products. The microfilm business boomed in the Cold War (see Nicholson Baker, "Deadline," *The New Yorker*, 24 July 2000, 42–61, especially 47–51, and now his *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper* [New York: Random House, 2001], passim), and by 1954, the editors of ADD could announce that the number of dissertations available on microfilm was growing so rapidly that they were giving up the practice of indicating this availability for each individual title. By the time *Dissertation Abstracts* changed its name to *Dissertation Abstracts International* (DAI) in 1969, adding a small number of dissertations from European universities, its yearly editions had swollen to thousands of pages, and most American universities required doctoral degree recipients to deliver an abstract and a copy of the dissertation to University Microfilms—later University Microfilms International (UMI). According to a UMI blurb in the latest edition of the *Comprehensive Dissertation Index* (CDI, a combined index to ADD and DAI), dissertations from 1997 onward (and abstracts from 1980 onward) are even available "in downloadable digital format" through its database (CDI 1998, vol. 1, x); this information is repeated at the UMI Web site www.umi.com. (UMI was acquired by Bell & Howell in 1985, according to its Web site, and

its correct name at present is "Bell & Howell Information and Learning," but it also continues to use the name UMI.)

All in all, modern American dissertations are more accessible than their Canadian, British, or Scandinavian counterparts. UMI itself (CDI 1998, vol. 1, viii) claims to offer "comprehensive coverage of Canadian dissertations" only from 1990 onward (copies of older dissertations, even those represented by an abstract in DAI, are sometimes available only from the Canadian National Library), and its coverage of British and Scandinavian dissertations remains spotty (copies of dissertations accepted at most British universities in the past twenty to thirty years are available through the British Thesis Service of the British Library, and the corresponding database with abstracts may be searched at www.theses.com or in the printed *Index to Theses Accepted for Higher Degrees by the Universities of Great Britain and Ireland*). But there are gaps in UMI's coverage of American dissertations, too: well into the 1960s, a number of American dissertations were not subject to even the limited form of publication "on demand" offered by UMI and hence did not appear in DAI; some of these are today accessible only at their home university libraries. Harvard University, for example, did not begin to cooperate with UMI until the 1980s. UMI has acquired the rights to some dissertations in this older group, but in its present state the UMI system is still a far cry from, for example, the long-established German requirement of publication in a prescribed number of bound copies, a system which guarantees that practically every German dissertation produced in the twentieth century is available to scholarship in book form. A catalog of the type under review here is thus a research tool of unquestionable value, even though it may not be in every dissertation, to borrow a phrase of Elisabeth Frenzel's, that "die Tatze eines späteren wissenschaftlichen Löwen spürbar wird" (*Stoffe der Weltliteratur* [Stuttgart: Kröner, 1962], xiii).

In some cases, sadly, borrowing or purchasing a UMI copy of an otherwise unpublished dissertation is only half the battle; scholars who get that far may encounter a further impediment: legibility. UMI

retains only a master *microfilm* copy of each dissertation, from which it makes fiche, film, or bound paper copies. Although UMI enforces rules for the preparation of manuscripts for microfilming, including, of course, a minimum type size, the copies it sells will be only as good as the master microfilm. This, in turn, may physically deteriorate with time (Baker, "Deadline" 55–58; *Double Fold* 40–46), and different copying techniques may produce different results. I have ordered paper copies of my own dissertation several times since its appearance in 1992 and have noticed a steady decline in legibility; that the problem lies with UMI's technology and not with the original manuscript is proved by comparison with the first, perfectly legible, UMI copies made in 1992, and by the fact that the "Information to Users" on the UMI cover leaf, which among other things warns that "The quality of this reproduction is dependent on the quality of the copy submitted," itself contains faint, blurred, and broken print in the newer copies. To make matters worse, the most recent printings I have seen (1998) bear a cover leaf notice to the effect that they have been prepared by a "digital xerographic process" (as opposed to the plain, analog "xerographic process" of older copies), that is, the *microfilm* master has been *scanned* into a computer graphic file which is then treated as the new master—with predictable results for a text that was already just barely legible in places. Apparently, UMI intends to go the route of full digitalization: existing microfilm masters will be scanned in, while new dissertations will be archived directly in digital form (cf. the statement cited above). In doing so, it studiously overlooks the fact that the very proliferation of computer technology makes possible an alternative or parallel solution that would restore to paper manuscripts the primacy they deserve: desktop publishing having become so easy, why not implement a printing requirement like the German one, taking archiving, reproduction, and distribution out of the hands of the UMI monopoly?

In 1988, Phillip Pulsiano published *An Annotated Bibliography of North American Doctoral Dissertations on Old English Language and Literature* (East Lansing, Michigan: Colleagues Press), explaining in a thoughtful

and clearly written preface (ix–xiii) the motivation for his bibliography, its scope and classification system, and the structure of the individual entries. Pulsiano closed his preface with the words, "Compiling a bibliography necessitates accuracy, an anticipation of an audience's needs, clear sign-posts throughout to direct the reader in the search, and perhaps most of all, a 'feel' for the field combined with common sense," and he apologized graciously in advance "if I have failed in any of these areas" (xiii). Having consulted Pulsiano's bibliography repeatedly since its publication, I may add that I have noticed only a handful of omissions and minor lapses, and Kirsten Wolf, a distinguished professor of Icelandic studies and longtime collaborator of Pulsiano's, evidently finds his bibliography as exemplary as I do, since she takes it as her "immediate model" for the book under review (viii) and gives him credit for help of various kinds, including preparation of the camera-ready copy (ix). Wolf has produced a handsome volume; there are 459 entries, roughly half as many as Pulsiano's, but since her annotations are much longer, on average, the volumes are equally thick.

Wolf's preface (vii–x) covers much of the same ground as Pulsiano's, occasionally in the same words, in fact, but it is substantially briefer, and certain differences between the two bibliographies become evident immediately. While Pulsiano claims to include European dissertations listed in *DAI* (Pulsiano ix), Wolf adheres strictly to her title. On the other hand, while Pulsiano demurs that his section on "historical, cultural, and miscellaneous subjects . . . is not intended to be comprehensive, but records various dissertations that might be of value to Anglo-Saxonists" (Pulsiano xi), Wolf makes no such disclaimer, so the reader can expect complete, interdisciplinary coverage of medieval Scandinavia: "The first part comprises dissertations dealing exclusively with Old Norse–Icelandic language, literature, and culture. A variety of disciplines is covered, ranging from linguistics, philology, literary history, literary analysis, and studies of scholarship to history, anthropology, archaeology, and folklore." Even Wolf's second part, "Interdisciplinary and Related Studies"—this distinction is an innovation of hers—"seeks to be inclusive

rather than exclusive; it was considered wiser to risk the criticism that a dissertation is not particularly concerned with Old Norse–Icelandic than to omit a potentially useful source” (viii). Similarly, Pulsiano adds a disclaimer after explaining that some of his annotations are followed by a list of additional primary sources not mentioned in the annotation: “This list is not intended to be inclusive, but to provide the reader with a general idea of the range of authors and works considered” (Pulsiano xi); Wolf omits the disclaimer in her description of the feature (ix) and thus seems to have striven for complete lists. Nor does Wolf provide a disclaimer like Pulsiano’s to the effect that he was unable to see or get information about certain dissertations (Pulsiano xi); the reader can only conclude that she managed to inspect all 459 of hers first-hand without any difficulties worth mentioning. “All the entries in the volume are annotated,” she writes (ix), where Pulsiano had only been able to claim, “Virtually all entries are annotated” (Pulsiano xi). To Pulsiano’s system of two indexes (authors and subjects) Wolf has added two more (dissertation directors and institutions), and unlike Pulsiano, she also provides bibliographical data for reworked dissertations later published as books.

The two prefaces differ also in their motivation of the bibliographies. Pulsiano and Wolf both sketch out the problems involved in locating dissertation work on a particular topic; but while Pulsiano commiserates equally with students and senior scholars faced with this task, especially when the latter “are called upon to don the hat of ‘dissertation director’” (ix), Wolf intends her bibliography “primarily as a reference work for graduate students” and conjures up the scenario of what happens when students discover that they are “duplicating existing unpublished work” or, worse, when the dissertation committee makes such a discovery, which “will render their work useless and necessitate their abandoning the original topic and embarking on an entirely new project” (vii). Almost as an afterthought, Wolf does mention that “it is also hoped that seasoned scholars will benefit from the volume” (vii)—though not in their capacity as dissertation directors? In any case, I can

find no evidence in the book itself that it was geared more toward students than toward senior scholars, so the point is moot. In an additional paragraph (vii–viii), Wolf describes a “secondary aim” of her bibliography, namely, “to provide an impression of trends and tendencies” in the history of Old Norse–Icelandic scholarship in North America. That aim is certainly met.

Wolf makes ambitious claims for her bibliography, and no one who leafs through it can fail to be impressed by the sheer number of the entries, the extensive annotations, frequently containing long lists of primary works mentioned, and the four indexes, especially the full subject index (333–68). Part 1, “Old Norse–Icelandic Studies,” contains 161 entries arranged in three subsections, “General Works” (dictionaries and concordances, manuscript studies and editions, studies in language, style, and vocabulary, history of scholarship), “Historical Works” (history, culture, anthropology, archaeology, and folklore), and “Literary Works” (with a subdivision for “Studies of Themes and Topics” followed by subdivisions for the individual poetic and prose genres). (The use of the word *works* in the three subsection headings in the sense of “dissertations” is confusing, since under “Literary Works [i.e., dissertations]: Prose” there is a subdivision called “Historical and Legal Works” in which the word *works* means “Old Norse–Icelandic primary texts”!) This arrangement (though not the use of the word *works*) corresponds essentially to Pulsiano’s, and as in his bibliography, the dissertations have been placed in chronological order within each subdivision. What is new in Wolf’s adaptation is the creation of a part 2, “Interdisciplinary and Related Studies,” which mirrors part 1 in that it repeats the tripartite structure “General Works,” “Historical Works,” and “Literary Works,” though with certain differences in the subdivisions: linguistics dissertations make up 105 of the 123 “General Works” here, the 48 “Historical Works” include runology, and the 127 “Literary Works” are subdivided into “Old Norse–Icelandic Influence on Modern Literature,” “*Beowulf* Studies,” “Studies of Themes and Topics,” and “Miscellaneous Studies.” The omnivorous approach to bibliography that Wolf has brought to bear on her work (as

expounded in the quotation from p. vii cited above) pays off; even experienced Old Norse scholars will hardly be familiar with *all* the dissertations in part 1, and browsing in part 2 can be recommended to everyone. To cite an arbitrary example of the variety of information available in Wolf's book, one might point to the three dissertations on J. R. R. Tolkien's fiction listed in the subdivision "Old Norse–Icelandic Influence on Modern Literature" (and easily locatable in the subject index under "Tolkien"), none of which appears in Pulsiano's bibliography—though at least two of them might have done so, since according to Wolf's annotations they also address Old English literature.

Browsing aside, it is the reviewer's primary job to determine how well the author performs the specific task she has laid out for herself; in the case of a scholarly bibliography, the first step is to read how the author defines her subject matter and sets geographical and chronological limits on the bibliographical coverage. The reviewer runs into difficulties already at this stage. The restriction to North America is clear, but what was Wolf's cutoff date? Neither title nor preface have anything to say on the matter—highly unusual for a scholarly bibliography. In the listings themselves I find only one dissertation from 1996, so systematic coverage cannot have extended that far. But coverage for 1995, though fuller, is not complete either, since two obviously relevant Toronto dissertations from that year are missing: Karin Edith E. Olsen, "Metaphorical Language in the Early Poetry of Northwest Europe (Old English, Old Icelandic, Irish)" (*DAI* 56 [1995–96]: 4765A), and Marc Stuart Cohen, "The Ethnographic Dimensions of Conversion: A Study of Conversion Narratives in the [*sic*] Northern Europe in the Middle Ages" (*DAI* 57 [1996–97]: 1789A). Apparently, then, systematic coverage does not extend beyond 1994. This conclusion is confirmed in a press release from the publisher distributed on OldNorseNet in May 1998: Wolf's bibliography offers coverage "to late 1995." Why is this information not in the published book?

The delimitation of the subject matter is a thornier question still. Wolf has preempted complaints by stating, as cited above, that she preferred to err on the side of inclusiveness.

Fair enough. But a bibliographer who adopts extremely generous standards for inclusion must face the consequences for the reliability of the finished product: if dissertations can meet Wolf's criterion of relevance for Old Norse–Icelandic studies simply by referring to (or "sketching") Old Norse literature, history, or religion in passing in an introductory chapter (e.g., nos. 290, 298–301, 304–8, 322, 386, 431, 451) or by citing a few Old Norse words as linguistic examples (nos. 176–273 *passim*), then surely part 2, at least, must be regarded as open-ended, that is, incomplete. (In such cases Wolf thoughtfully includes a pointer in her annotation, "Of interest to Old Norse–Icelandic scholars is . . ." or "The following Old Norse–Icelandic words are treated: . . .," but sometimes there does not even seem to be anything to point to: e.g., nos. 196, 211, 214, 215, 283, 319.) Wolf nowhere describes her search procedure, but if the criteria just mentioned were applied systematically to the hundreds of thousands of North American dissertations through 1994 (and with criteria as generous as these, a systematic search entails sifting through the full texts, not just titles or abstracts), would not the resulting listings number substantially more than 459? Measured by these standards, the mass of "relevant" research is a bottomless pit, or—let us invoke a more positive image—an inexhaustible cornucopia. Even Þórr, with the utmost effort, was able to drain off only a small amount of the contents of Útgarða-Loki's horn.

Can the reader assume that the bibliography is complete at least for dissertations directly anchored in Old Norse–Icelandic studies? For the traditional core area of Old Norse–Icelandic *literature* the answer may be yes. But spot checks in the area of medieval Scandinavian history, one of the additional disciplines that Wolf claims to have covered, yielded alarming results. I checked the listings in *CDI* for the decade 1980–89 under "History, Medieval" for promising North American titles (disregarding those from Swedish or Finnish universities, for example), then read the abstracts of these titles in *DAI*, and found that from this decade alone Wolf was missing two historical dissertations devoted exclusively to Old Norse studies and three others that would certainly qualify as relevant by her

standards. Devoted exclusively to Old Norse studies are Grethe Jacobsen, "Guilds in Medieval Denmark: The Social and Economic Role of Merchants and Artisans," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison, 1980 (*DAI* 41 [1980–81]: 4470A), and John J. Kudlik, "The Medieval Scania Fairs: Danish Herring Fishing and Maritime Adaptation in the Middle Ages," Ph.D. diss., Harvard Univ., 1986 (*DAI* 47 [1986–87]: 2276A). Clearly relevant, on the basis of their abstracts, are Janet L. B. Martin, "Treasure of the Land of Darkness: A Study of the Fur Trade and Its Significance for Medieval Russia (x–xvi Centuries)," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Chicago, 1980 (*DAI* 41 [1980–81]: 3214A — draws on "Scandinavian sagas"), Richard Philip Abels, "Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England," Ph.D. diss., Columbia Univ., 1982 (*DAI* 44 [1983–84]: 3771A — treats changes wrought by "the Viking invasions"), and John Thomas Maple, "The Irish Sea Region, 850–1254 A.D.," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Kansas, 1985 (*DAI* 46 [1985–86]: 3128A — includes "the political hegemony of the Norse"). From the same decade I noted eight additional historical dissertations (by Walck, J. H. Fowler, Horodysky, Cote, Dearagon, Reisman, Jolly, and Takayama on the Normans, the Rus, the Anglo-Saxon charms, and "early Germanic marriage patterns") the full texts of which seem likely to yield material relevant to Old Norse studies, though there were no relevant references in their abstracts. These dissertations were not in Wolf's bibliography either; can readers rely on Wolf to have checked them and found them of no interest?

If spot checks show that the bibliography is missing even dissertations exclusively devoted to medieval Scandinavia, then not even part 1 can be regarded as complete, though it is certainly much more complete than part 2. Giving Wolf the benefit of the doubt, let us consider the possibility that she excluded Jacobsen's and Kudlik's dissertations because they were on *East* Norse topics. (This would excuse the omission only of Jacobsen and Kudlik, not of Martin, Abels, and Maple.) The title adjective "Old Norse–Icelandic" is not defined, which is in itself an unusual license for a scholarly bibliographer. (In fact, until the preface, this adjective is not even supplied with nouns to modify—

language, literature, culture, etc.—so the title is ambiguous; at first glance, the book seems to be a linguistics bibliography.) At some time during the planning of the volume, Wolf may indeed have intended the term as synonymous with "West Norse"; previous volumes of the series *Islandica*, such as *Old Norse–Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, do offer a precedent for this narrow interpretation. In part 2 of Wolf's bibliography, moreover, there is a subdivision for linguistic studies of "Modern Icelandic, Norwegian, and Faroese," but none for Danish and Swedish. Did Wolf not find any dissertations specifically on Danish and Swedish? That is difficult to believe, since a quick check of *CDI* through 1972 turned up half a dozen dissertations on Danish and Swedish language, plus one on the late medieval Danish ballads, that do not appear in Wolf's bibliography. Was it, then, really a conscious decision to restrict the field to West Norse? But this would be even more difficult to believe, because it would lead to the astounding conclusion that Wolf considered dozens of dissertations in Indo-European and West Germanic linguistics (to name just two topics) to be more relevant for Old Norse studies than dissertations in Danish and Swedish linguistics (or Danish and Swedish medieval history, or Danish and Swedish medieval literature). The total number of North American dissertations on East Norse topics is so small that coverage of them could hardly be considered a burden for any bibliographer, least of all for a bibliographer whose topic is Old Norse! In any case—and this is the decisive point—Wolf's bibliography is de facto *not* restricted to West Norse topics, since nos. 264, 287, 291, and 324–28, for example, are devoted exclusively to the East Norse area. The gaps in its coverage of medieval Scandinavia are indeed gaps.

The classification system employed in the bibliography takes some getting used to; the sections overlap, and alternative classifications frequently spring to mind. Why is a dissertation on the supernatural beings in Heinrich Heine's poetry (no. 318) registered under "Folklore" in the "Historical" subsection of part 2 instead of under "Old Norse–Icelandic Influence on Modern Literature" in the "Literary" subsection, which seems tailor-made for it? Why classify a dis-

sertation on “Runes and Magic” (no. 89) under “Themes and Topics” in the “Literary” subsection of part 1 and not under “Runes and Art” in the “Historical” subsection of part 2? For that matter, why is the runology subdivision in part 2 at all, since most of the dissertations listed seem to treat Scandinavia exclusively? But even the best classification system will give rise to quibbles of this kind, and they are not intended to detract from the value of Wolf’s classification system itself or its implementation. (The one serious misclassification I found is discussed below in connection with the annotations.) Although Wolf dispenses with Pulsiano’s practice of adding cross-references at the end of each major section of the bibliography, many ambiguities in the classification system are compensated for by the subject index, which, like Pulsiano’s, “includes not only titles of works and proper names, but also concepts” (ix; cf. Pulsiano xii). In its design, this index follows Pulsiano’s closely, even down to the structuring of the long entries “language,” “manuscripts,” and “word studies,” except that Wolf did not continue Pulsiano’s practice of identifying principal references by setting them in bold type.

The advantages of such an index are obvious. A dissertation on “The Maiden King” (no. 84), for example, which bridged two of the bibliography’s subdivisions, “Mythical-Heroic Sagas” and “Romances,” and hence evidently could not be classified under either one, landed instead in the catch-all “Themes and Topics,” but the reader will find it registered under both “mythical-heroic sagas” and “romances” in the subject index. In some cases, however, more cross-references might have been helpful. The entry “folklore,” for example, excludes ballad research and does not cross-refer to the entry “ballads.” A dissertation on “Figures of Speech in Anglo-Saxon and the Edda” (no. 447), which failed to qualify for the “Style and Language” subdivision in part 1 presumably by virtue of its including a non-Scandinavian language area, was relegated to the “Miscellaneous” subdivision of part 2; helpfully, the subject index registers this dissertation under “rhetoric” and also gives it its own subentry “word studies (B): ‘figures of speech,’” but it omits it, unfortunately, under “style.” One runological

dissertation (no. 329) is missing in the subject index under “runes and runic inscriptions.” A dissertation on “Understatement in Anglo-Saxon Poetry” (no. 382) had been registered by Pulsiano in his subject index under “lito-tes” (listing just this one dissertation), with a cross-reference under the heading “understatement,” but Wolf retained in her subject index only the entry “litotes” (also listing just this one dissertation), deleting the cross-reference “understatement,” despite the fact that her summary of the dissertation, unlike Pulsiano’s, uses only the word *understatement* and nowhere mentions the term *litotes*.

The annotations in Wolf’s bibliography average two to three hundred words in length, the longest running to over five hundred words—longer than the official abstracts in *DAI*; these figures include the lists of additional texts mentioned, which account for up to two-thirds of the length of each entry. (I have not counted those older dissertations which Wolf simply labels as missing from their university libraries, such as nos. 225–28. The presence of such entries, incidentally, contradicts the claim in the preface that every entry is annotated—unless the one-line “missing” verdict counts as an annotation.) By contrast, the entries in Pulsiano’s bibliography are half as long, on average, many consisting of just a few lines. Besides length, there seem also to have been other differences in the planning and preparation of the two bibliographies. For one thing, Pulsiano clearly made a conscious decision to accord older, less accessible dissertations more space, whereas no such tendency is visible in Wolf’s bibliography; on the contrary, her longest annotations are devoted to dissertations of the past thirty years. The greater length of Wolf’s annotations is partly the result of her policy of supplying complete chapter titles (which she does with unflinching consistency, even if it requires forming sentences like “The four chapters are summarized in the ‘Conclusion’” [no. 440]) and more complete lists of the primary texts mentioned in the dissertation. For the dissertations in part 2, greater length is also a natural consequence of Wolf’s pointing out the specific parts of the dissertation that she considers potentially useful for Old Norse studies. These are the annotations in which

it is clearest that Wolf has done original and useful legwork. In many entries in both parts, however, aside from the lists of chapter titles and primary text titles, the annotation consists of a patchwork of quotations from the dissertation itself, its abstract, or the corresponding entry in Pulsiano (the “*Beowulf* studies” and certain other sections display a high rate of overlap with Pulsiano’s bibliography); despite their greater length, Wolf’s annotations contain distinctly less original phrasing than Pulsiano’s. Quoting the dissertation authors or Pulsiano is not a bad thing in itself; Wolf could hardly have chosen more reliable authorities, in fact, since the authors are often the leading experts on their subjects, and Pulsiano’s annotations, though brief, are competent and to the point. But this practice is so extensive in Wolf’s bibliography that one wonders, in many cases, whether it might not have been more efficient to reprint the author’s official abstract (or Pulsiano’s entry) in toto. Equally troubling is the extent to which quotation and close paraphrase are used without attribution—an especially surprising result in light of the self-assured tone of Wolf’s preface.

The first checks I made on reading through the bibliography, spot checks of Wolf’s summaries of three dissertations from my graduate department, including my own (nos. 108, 219, and 439), showed that two consist of extremely close paraphrasing of the authors’ abstracts, including the copying of a typographical error (in line 19 of no. 219, “strong weak” should read “strong/weak”). The annotation of the third dissertation, mine, differs in that it begins with a sentence—in quotation marks—ostensibly cited from p. 1 of the dissertation (recte: p. III), but it continues with a mosaic of phrasing—without quotation marks—drawn from two different sections of the dissertation and from the abstract. None of these three lengthy summaries is inaccurate, but 98% of the text is the authors’, masquerading as Wolf’s own wording. If Wolf had explained her procedure in the preface, she might have been able to make a case, in the interests of impartiality, space, or readability, for omitting the quotation marks and page references that scholarly convention requires. Some entries do contain extensive, formally correct, direct quotation,

and Wolf has clearly invested considerable effort in compiling her material. But in too many entries, she appears to take credit for text that is not hers.

A related problem is that of the balance and relevance of the statements in the annotation: the patchwork procedure carries with it the double danger of missing the big picture and elevating a thesis writer’s passing aperçu to the status of a main point. For a dissertation from 1910 on “The Relations between Prose and Metrical Composition in Old Norse Literature” (no. 83), Wolf’s annotation, apart from the list of work titles, consists solely of an extended direct quotation from the author’s introduction, which ends with the following sentence: “The concluding passage [of the dissertation] contains a certain amount of prophecy, the accuracy of which can be demonstrated only after further investigation in other fields.” If they are anything like me, most readers of Wolf’s bibliography would have preferred to learn what this prophecy was; given the extremely limited accessibility of this dissertation, they will probably never find out. Similarly, no one who reads Wolf’s summary of dissertation no. 436, on “The Stories of Attila’s Death,” which consists of little more than two quoted aperçus and the chapter titles, will suspect that the author’s official abstract (*DAI* 53 [1992–93]: 1512A) contains a barrage of compactly and intelligently formulated statements on his procedure and quite specific results, even for the final chapter, about which Wolf, for her part, has just this to say: “V: ‘Conclusion.’” In her 250-word summary of a dissertation entitled “Aarne-Thompson Type 480 in World Tradition: A Comparative Folktale Study” (no. 312), Wolf quotes and paraphrases the author’s description of his procedure and results, but it never occurs to her to tell her readers the *name* of this folktale (as she does for the tale investigated in dissertation no. 321). The frustrated reader who looks up this type number in the Aarne-Thompson index, as I did, is rewarded not only with the name of the folktale but also with the bibliographical data for the printed version of dissertation no. 312, missed by Wolf, which is the standard work on the subject: Warren E. Roberts, *The Tale of the Kind and the Unkind Girls: Aa-Th 480 and Related Tales*, *Fabula*:

Supplement-Serie B.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1958).

More concrete problems surfaced in further checks. In piecing together phrases from the introductory text of a linguistics dissertation (no. 210), again without quotation marks, Wolf did not even bother to make the subject and verb of two grafted phrases agree: “It is argued that factors shared by almost all previous discussions of ‘Auslautgesetze’ is [!] the reliance upon trimoric law and the pre-occupation with deriving the endings in the later dialects from those found in Gothic . . .” For the dissertation on understatement mentioned above (no. 382; Pulsiano no. 372), as for many others, Wolf followed Pulsiano both in her summary and her list of primary works. She did make some adjustments and additions to the latter, so she must have inspected the dissertation itself, but she copied the one outright error in Pulsiano’s list verbatim: through a slip of the apostrophe, Pulsiano had made Rudolf von Ems, the author of one of the most widely read books of the High Middle Ages, into “Rudolf von Em” (“Rudolf von Em’s *Weltchronik*”), and Wolf registers him as “Em, Rudolf” both in the work list to this entry and in the subject index. A dissertation entitled “The Lyric Moment in Pre-Romance Verse” (no. 407) is summarized by Wolf in the following sentence: “The dissertation studies conceit in Late and Middle Latin, Old Norse–Icelandic, Old English, and Early Irish literatures.” Accordingly, Wolf has classified the dissertation under “Themes and Topics,” and it appears as the only entry under the heading “conceit (in literature)” in the subject index. So far, so good; or so it seems. The annotation continues, however, with the names of the chapters: “The Clear Conceit,” “The Conceit from Two Sides,” “The Extrinsic Conceit,” and so on. Here, English speakers will notice that something is wrong: *conceit*, as a synonym of *arrogance*, is an uncountable noun and cannot appear together with the article, while the phrase “the conceit” can only be interpreted as the countable noun with the meaning *conchetto*—a completely different word that requires the article. So who is right, Wolf or the dissertation author? Is the dissertation about arrogance or about ingenious literary metaphors? A glance at the abstract decides the

question (*DAI* 34 [1973–74]: 7699A): “This dissertation,” writes the author, “treats major examples of the pre-Romance lyric as permutations of a basic conceit . . . The simplest form of the conceit . . . is the explicit comparison of two things which are both described from a single viewpoint.” How could Wolf have gotten the idea that the dissertation “studies conceit”? The answer becomes obvious when one compares the corresponding entry in Pulsiano’s bibliography (no. 310): “Studies the conceit in medieval Latin, early Irish, O[ld]N[orse], and O[ld]E[n]glish lyric poetry.” This summary is criminally short, but it is not, strictly speaking, wrong; the misrepresentation of this dissertation in Wolf’s bibliography is solely a result of her misreading and miscopying Pulsiano’s sentence without its definite article. It is an almost unbelievable irony that Pulsiano had cited just this dissertation in his preface as an example of why annotation is “especially important” when the title is unspecific: “We might not guess, for instance, that ‘The Lyric Moment in Pre-Romance Verse’ studies *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* in addition to Old Norse, early Irish, and medieval Latin lyric poetry” (Pulsiano xi). Important it is. Was Wolf’s text not proofread by anyone with a firm enough command of English to know that *conceit* and *a/the conceit* are two different things? Had Wolf not even read the abstract, let alone the dissertation? Someone did, in fact, go through the dissertation, collect the chapter titles (which appear neither in the abstract nor in Pulsiano), and add to the list of primary works some mentioned neither in the abstract nor in Pulsiano. But whoever it was—a research assistant?—evidently performed these tasks so mechanically that he or she did not notice what the topic of the dissertation was.

The summary of a dissertation entitled “Scandinavian and Other Influences on the Tristan Story, with Special Consideration of the Morholt Episode” (no. 410), the longest in the bibliography, contains examples of several different types of inaccuracies. It opens with an ostensible quotation from pp. 4–5 of the dissertation (recte: 3–4), in which the author declares that one of his tasks is “to study the dual in which the two opponents engage.” The misspelling *dual* for *duel*—this

is a study in literary motifs, not historical morphology—is Wolf’s, not the author’s, and Wolf uses it consistently: further on in the annotation she states, “Chapter VIII (‘The Island Combat’) discusses the dual on the island . . .” (Wolf’s phrase is derived from the author’s words in the first sentence of this chapter: “. . . the duel, fought on an island . . .”) Wolf’s characterizations of the individual chapters are a patchwork of the author’s phrases, and as in the summary of no. 210 cited above, there are visible seams: “Chapter II (‘The Early Celtic Legend’) considers names (Tristan, Isolde, Morgan, Mark) in the light of Celtic and Welsh forms, turning brief attention to a Germanic origin for the name in a discussion of *Piðreks saga af Bern*.” A Germanic origin for *which* name? Wolf lifted this particular phrase from a discussion of the name Isolde (p. 44 of the dissertation), oblivious to the fact that out of context, “the name” has no referent. The phrase “Celtic and Welsh forms,” incidentally, is of Wolf’s own creation. Wolf: “The author then presents a summary of **Drunstans saga*, noting the parallels between this reconstructed Tristan legend and that of the **Estoire*, and concluding that the **Estoire* is descended from a Celtic original.” No such saga exists, not even as a reconstruction; the author’s term, borrowed from Sigmund Eisner, had been *Drustansaga*, with *-saga* in the sense of German *-sage*, legend: the (early Pictish-Irish-British) legend of Drustan (a Pictish name). Not a word of identification is given for the name **Estoire*, the reconstructed French *Ur-Tristan*, and unlike the doubly erroneous form **Drunstans saga*, **Estoire* does not even appear in the subject index. Continuing her summary, Wolf writes that chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 “treat the Morholt episode,” but she neglects to point out that chapter 7 discusses the Old Norse–Icelandic version in depth, with extensive quotations. In the dissertation, the author refers repeatedly to an article by Gregor Sarrazin, “Germanische Sagenmotive im Tristan-Roman,” *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte* 1 (1887): 262–72, unfortunately truncating the name of the journal to *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literatur* and giving incomplete page numbers. For Wolf, this reference was important enough to include in her summary, but

evidently not important enough to check: she retained the author’s errors and introduced misspellings of her own in the titles of the article and the journal. One of these, “Sagermotive” for “Sagenmotive,” may have been caused by the poor legibility of a UMI copy. The copy I examined was blurry in places; moreover, the *m* of the typewriter tends to crowd out the preceding letter, so that the letter *n* in “Sagenmotive” might at first glance look like an *r* to someone unfamiliar with German. The *e* in “duel” is also a bit smudged on the relevant pages (4 and 177). But isn’t this what dictionaries are for? And where were the proofreaders? It should go without saying that the introduction of errors in spelling and logic in a reference bibliography is a double offense, since it reflects poorly not only on the bibliographer but also—undeservedly—on the authors whose work is summarized.

The list of primary works at the end of this entry (I am still referring to no. 410) raises additional questions. There are forty works listed, and as in every such list, Wolf has carefully normalized the authors’ names (where applicable) and the work titles and alphabetized the list, registering everything in the subject index. The list includes numerous works of peripheral importance mentioned just once in the dissertation, such as German folktales and Italian fabliaux, and among the listings for the various versions of the Tristan material there are even doublets: *Folie Tristan*, *Bern Folie*, and *Folie Douce* appear as three independent listings, although the first term properly subsumes the latter two. One can only conclude from this that Wolf strove to include every work title, medieval and modern, mentioned in the dissertation, regardless of importance. This is also the impression conveyed by the annotations derived from Pulsiano’s bibliography, in which Wolf has clearly taken pains to make Pulsiano’s lists more complete, and by her own preface, which simply says, “Additional works not mentioned in the annotation are listed in brackets immediately following the annotation” (ix), omitting the disclaimer Pulsiano had made in the corresponding place in his preface (see above). It was all the more surprising, therefore, to discover that in this case, Wolf’s list included fewer than 50% of the

works actually mentioned in the dissertation. I counted some sixty-five titles missing, in fact, including Old Norse poetry and prose, Celtic, German, French, and English romances, and even such central texts as the *Prose Tristan* and the versions of Thomas and Béroul. (The subject index has an entry for Thomas, but it does not register this dissertation.) Many of these titles are mentioned in the dissertation just once, but on average, they are no less important than the titles Wolf included. Checks of the lists of primary work titles in other annotations confirmed that Wolf did not apply a uniform standard of completeness; for nos. 431 and 439, for example, such a list was not attempted at all. But if she was not striving for completeness, what, then, were her criteria?

A number of other minor inaccuracies and omissions must be mentioned. In general, the proofreading was satisfactory (for Icelandic titles it was impeccable), and some of the typographical errors I noticed were insignificant, such as the singular “index” for the plural on p. ix or the misspelling of the author’s own name as “Kristen Wolf” on the half-title page. But there are more serious ones (in addition to those already reported): the linguist’s name that appears in the annotation to no. 186 (and as a headword in the subject index) should read “Benveniste”; the Faroese title *Høgna táttur* (in both the subject index and the work list to no. 388) and the Latin titles *Profectio Danorum* (in the subject index only) and *De antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* (in both the subject index and the work list to no. 294) are misspelled; the word *våsen* in the Danish title cited in the annotation to no. 40 should read *væsen*; the name of the dissertation writer Þórhallur Eypórsson is misspelled in his entry (no. 224), though correct in the index of authors; that of the dissertation writer Joaquín Martínez Pizarro is misspelled in both his entry (no. 416) and the index of authors.

For dissertation no. 419 the UMI order number seems accidentally to have been omitted; it is 7912865. Otherwise, spot checks indicate that Wolf has transcribed the order numbers carefully. It is regrettable, however, that her preface includes less information about ordering—and about the confusing format of older UMI identification numbers—

than Pulsiano’s had done, and that there is no list of abbreviations. The abbreviations *DA* and *DAI* are explained in her preface (viii), but readers who encounter bibliographical data such as “Publication No. 13, 198; MicA 55-2149” (no. 125, with an erroneous space after the comma in the five-digit publication number) or “Publication No. 5875; Mic A53-1411” (no. 312, with erroneous spacing of the “A”) are left to fend for themselves.

The name of the dissertation director is frequently missing from the bibliographical entries, reducing the value of the corresponding index. When older abstracts and dissertations are missing the name, it may indeed be difficult or impossible to reconstruct, but surely Wolf could have asked active colleagues, such as the authors of nos. 107 and 108, for the names of their advisors. On the other hand, Wolf occasionally adds a name that had been missing in the corresponding entry in Pulsiano (e.g., no. 285; Pulsiano no. 18).

Both Wolf and Pulsiano provide publication information for those older dissertations which were published to fulfill a degree requirement (often by the university itself in an in-house journal or series), and in at least one case, Wolf has improved upon Pulsiano’s bibliographical entry for a particular dissertation by adding reprint information (again no. 285; Pulsiano no. 18). Further, as mentioned at the outset of this review, she has also undertaken to provide bibliographical data for later published versions of dissertations, even for “complete revisions” which “may be distant from the original works” (ix). Some are missing, however. In addition to Warren E. Roberts’s dissertation (no. 312), mentioned above, Karen C. Kossuth’s dissertation (no. 26) was published under its original title as volume 271 of the series *Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1980), and Richard L. Morris’s (no. 329) under the title *Runic and Mediterranean Epigraphy* as NOWELE supplement vol. 4 (Odense: Odense Univ. Press, 1988). Also, taking Wolf at her word, it is difficult to understand why she did not list several other well-known monographs that derive at least “distantly” from dissertations in the bibliography: Carol Clover (cf. no. 110), *The Medieval Saga* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982); Jesse

Byock (cf. no. 70), *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982) and *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas, and Power* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988); Marianne Kalinke (cf. no. 157), *King Arthur North-by-Northwest*, Bibliotheca Arnarnaeana 37 (København: Reitzel, 1981).

Spot checks of the indexes brought additional misprints to light. In the index of authors the entry number for J. E. Abbott should read "297," not "292," and that for L. E. Janus should read "32," not "147"; the same correction must also be made in the entries for Janus's dissertation director, A. Liberman, in the index of directors, and his institution, the University of Minnesota, in the index of institutions, and "32" must be added to the entry *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* in the subject index. The reference under "word studies (B): *Fratze*" should read "177," as should that under "word studies (B): *guter Dinge sein*." The list of missing references and cross-references in the subject index (see above) can be extended almost indefinitely. The medieval authors named in the chapter titles of dissertation no. 398, for example, are not included, nor are nine ballad titles referred to in the annotations to nos. 317, 448, and 453. The entry *Peterborough Chronicle* (= the Peterborough recension of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) should be subsumed in, or at least cross-referenced to, the entry *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; this is the same problem of not seeing the forest for the trees that was noted above in connection with the recensions of the *Folie Tristan*. Moreover, the index covers—at best—only those titles and names mentioned explicitly in the annotations; all others lie outside its purview. The index entry "Heusler, Andreas," for example, contains only one reference, but it would be false to conclude that only one dissertation in the bibliography contains extensive discussion of Heusler's ideas. Not even no. 126, the annotation to which also names Heusler directly, is registered here (though the other scholars named in the annotation to no. 126 are correctly registered).

A source of constant irritation is the semi-Scandinavian alphabetization system employed in the lists of primary works (Ælfric after *Widsith*) and in the indexes ("Märchen" after "myths," *König Rother* after

Kyng Alisaunder). It could hardly be more out of place (cf. the review of *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano et al., in *Alvíssmál* 5 [1995]: 122b). Nor has Wolf done her readers a service by silently re-Icelandicizing the names of Icelanders who defended dissertations at North American universities; the reinstatement of the special characters and diacritical marks means that the form of the author's name in certain entries in her bibliography will not agree with the name in the dissertation itself or in the standard reference works (*DAI*, *CDI*, etc.)—a surprising goal for a bibliographer. And in the indexes, Wolf alphabetizes all Icelanders, even those with non-patronymic family names (Nordal), under their given names, with no cross-references. (There are also alphabetization errors: Ellegård should follow Elizabeth; Sigurður Fáfnisbani should precede Sigurður Bjarnason and Sigurður Nordal.) None of these practices is explained, let alone justified, by Wolf anywhere in the book; I wish her unsuspecting readers happy hunting.

The book under review is a treasure-trove of information, and it will, of course, be used with profit. But is it mean-spirited to speculate about The Book That Might Have Been? What if Wolf had informed her readers fully about her search procedure, the scope of the bibliography, and the structure of the annotations? As the book stands, its annotations must be used with caution, nor is it complete, not even for the narrowly defined group of "dissertations dealing exclusively with Old Norse-Icelandic language, literature, and culture," and it will have to be consulted in conjunction with the standard dissertation indexes (and Pulsiano's bibliography). Let us hope we will not have to wait too long for a supplement volume in which the author defines her objectives clearly and ties up the loose ends with the scholarly rigor and intellectual honesty that she is capable of and that one expects of a reference bibliography. That might be a welcome opportunity to expand coverage to British, Scandinavian, or other European universities.

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