

Preface

Pious Fictions and Pseudo-Saints in the Late Middle Ages offers a remarkable collection of fictitious saints' lives to a general audience. The legends translated and edited here represent only a third of the texts found in a sixteenth-century Icelandic legendary known as *Reykjahólabók*, the *Book of Reykjahólar*. The Icelandic legends are translations of Middle Low German narratives by an anonymous German author, which were transmitted in a manuscript that no longer exists.

Our research on the saints' lives in the Reykjahólar legendary dates back more than thirty years; it resulted in Marianne Kalinke's monograph *The Book of Reykjahólar: The Last of the Great Medieval Legendaries* (1996) and Kirsten Wolf's edition of *Saga heilagrar Önnu* (2001), a translation of the *Sunte Annen legend und all oeres geschlechtes* printed by Hans Dorn in 1507 and commonly referred to as the *St Annen Büchlein*. Most of the legends in *Reykjahólabók* are those of well-known saints, of martyrs and doctors of the church, whose *vitae* and *passiones* have otherwise been abundantly preserved in Latin versions. Transmitted in *Reykjahólabók*, however, are also stories of pseudo-saints as well as the lives of saints whose legends have in part or as a whole become novelistic narratives exemplifying a fictionalization of hagiography, partly in response to courtly romance, in the late Middle Ages. These narratives are otherwise unknown, except in the sixteenth-century Icelandic translations; hence our translations and editions of the eight fictitious Icelandic legends.

We have chosen to translate and edit the legends of three royal saints – Oswald, Emperor Henry II, and his wife Queen Cunegund – whose hagiographic and historiographic records have been transformed into bridal-quest romances. Two doctors of the church, St Jerome and St John Chrysostom, have major interpolations in their *vitae*: Jerome's contains a variant of the folkloristic tale of Androcles and the lion, while the *vita* of John Chrysostom is prefaced by the so-called "hairy-anchorite" tale as an exemplum of the saint's penitential life. The legends of the martyrs St Christopher and St George came to include the folkloristic Christ-bearer tale as preface to Christopher's martyrdom, while the dragon-slayer tale was interpolated into the legend of St George as prelude to his

missionary activity. We conclude by translating and editing two legends of pseudo-saints: the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and Gregorius, the Good Sinner.

Agnete Loth published a diplomatic edition of the legendary, entitled *Reykjahólabók: Íslandske helgenlegender*, in two volumes in 1969–1970. Perusal of this edition of the Icelandic translations reveals an extraordinary admixture of Middle Low German lexical and syntactic loans, a vast number of orthographic peculiarities, and occasional grammatical obscurity, which make the legendary virtually inaccessible to all but the seasoned scholar of late-medieval Icelandic. Therefore we include an appendix with editions of the eight legends in normalized contemporary Icelandic. Readers of the translations will potentially include students of hagiography; of medieval English, French, or German literature; and students of Old Norse-Icelandic. The edition of the Icelandic texts should prove useful to a broad range of readers.

Pious Fictions and Pseudo-Saints presents a noteworthy collection of apocryphal legends, the translation and edition of which has been a collaborative endeavor throughout, necessitated especially by the intrusion of Low German in the sixteenth-century Icelandic texts, as well as the complexities of the Icelandic translator's grammar and syntax. Whereas Marianne Kalinke was primarily responsible for the translations and Kirsten Wolf for the editions, we have read, criticized, and suggested revisions in each other's work. Moreover, the translations are based on Wolf's normalized editions, not on Loth's diplomatic editions. The introduction to the book was written by Marianne Kalinke, but in collaboration with Kirsten Wolf.

Two of the legends were previously translated by Marianne Kalinke. A translation of *Ósvalds saga* is included in a monograph devoted to the German transmission of the legend (*St Oswald of Northumbria: Continental Metamorphoses*, 2005); the translation has here been revised. The legend of St John Chrysostom was previously translated in an essay in a memorial volume for Phillip Pulsiano (*Beatus vir*, 2006), and it, too, has been revised here.

The research that ultimately resulted in this volume was conducted over the course of several decades in the Arnamagnæan Institutes in Copenhagen and Reykjavík, where we were able to work in environments conducive to both contemplation and interaction with other scholars. We are greatly indebted to the scholars at both institutes. In Copenhagen, we are grateful to Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, editor at the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, for repeated assistance over the years with early sixteenth-century vocabulary. Ragnheiður Mósesdóttir, librarian at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Denmark, procured photocopies of various Middle Low German legends in the 1492 imprint of *Dat Passionael* from the Royal Library in Copenhagen, and of the leaves of *Ósvalds saga* in the manuscript

Perg. fol. nr 3, held by the Royal Library in Stockholm. In Reykjavík we benefited from conversations with and help from a number of individuals, especially Stefán Karlsson and Ólafur Halldórsson regarding paleographic and linguistic matters, and Sverrir Tómasson pertaining to hagiography. Davíð Erlingsson of the Department of Icelandic Literature at the University of Iceland was a trusty guide through sixteenth-century Icelandic grammar. We owe thanks to Úlfar Bragason, director of the Stofnun Sigurðar Nordals, for sponsoring an introductory public lecture on *Reykjahólabók* in 1991, and also for providing assistance and lodging for us over extended periods in the institute's guest apartment. Additionally, he earned our gratitude for a memorable pilgrimage to Reykhólar in the Westfjords, the birthplace of Björn Þórleifsson's *Reykjahólabók*. For assistance in the preparation of this volume, we also wish to acknowledge help from Dr Todd Michelson-Ambelang, senior librarian for Scandinavian humanities and South Asian studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Emely Beyer, MA student in the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We thank the anonymous external readers for their careful questioning, helpful suggestions, and constructive criticism of our manuscript. Thanks also to Jonathan Brent for his superb editing of our manuscript. We thank Megan Jones for her meticulous care and editorial rigor in seeing our book to completion and into print. Finally, we are indebted to Fred Unwalla, editor in chief and Socratic midwife, as it were, of our *Pious Fictions*. From the very beginning, he has been a mentor in seeing our manuscript to its final state with his encouragement, gentle criticism, and expert guidance throughout the process of revision, and even some sleuthing to solve a textual conundrum for us. We are deeply grateful.

