Preface

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Zeydel, Edwin H.
Ruodlieb: The Earliest Courtly Novel (after 1050).

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For numerous reasons the fragmentary novel *Ruodlieb*, written in Latin, some time after the decade 1040–1050, and found in the Benedictine monastery of Tegernsee, Bavaria, is second to none in importance as a document of the eleventh century in the field of imaginative literature. While revealing almost none of the common characteristics of its age, it foreshadows the literary development of the next two hundred years in Western Europe to a surprising degree. Burdach calls it the earliest freely invented novel of chivalry. Yet it surpasses even the best of them in its down-to-earth realism, its sympathetic treatment of the peasant as well as the noble, and its freedom from the artificial restraints which characterize the chivalric literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It also sheds a flood of light upon many matters pertaining to the early history of European civilization.

*Ruodlieb* has never before been translated into English. The only critical edition – in German – by Friedrich Seiler, unsatisfactory in many respects, appeared in 1882 and is now rare, indeed. A new critical text edition, by Norbert Fickermann of Berlin, announced some years ago for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, has not appeared to date and has now been indefinitely deferred because of unfortunate circumstances. The single easily accessible translation, also in German by Karl Langosch (1956), with the Latin text as edited by Seiler and amended by others, on opposite pages (but not checked against the manuscripts), is meant only to be a popular edition, with obvious flaws, such as a sketchy commentary and notes, too much dependence on Seiler in textual matters, some mistranslations, misprints, and even poor German and trivial stop-gap rimes.

My prose translation, which follows the Latin text line for line, and renders even fragmentary lines wherever they yield any meaning at all, strives to be literal. For that reason the tenses, which in the original often fluctuate in a single sentence from present to past, and *vice versa*, will sometimes seem inconsistent. I have, however, not gone as far as the original does in this respect.

The fragmentary text, full of gaps and partially missing lines,
has had the benefit of conjectural emendations by at least eight critics since 1807. I have worked intensively for many months with the two existing manuscripts (both far from complete) in the Munich Staatsbibliothek (the work of the author himself) and the St. Florian Chorherrenstift near Linz in Austria, as well as with a photostat of the former and a film of the latter. On the basis of the manuscripts I have myself made over four hundred changes in the hitherto accepted texts and ventured over thirty new emendations and completions recorded in the Textual Notes. Thus the incomplete lines, numbering well over 30% in the manuscripts, are now cut down to less than 4%. However some textual problems still remain.

The Latin text appears face to face with the English translation because it is felt that many may wish to see Ruodlieb in the original form, while those who read Middle Latin will no doubt want an opportunity to compare it conveniently with the English.

In the Latin text, words or letters inside a square bracket (e.g. Pro], I, 25) indicate conjectural readings. Italicized letters (e.g. Nun]quam ridentem, VI, 36) indicate unclear characters which can, however, in many cases be definitely supplied from the context. Symbols for words like et, quoniam (qūō), -bus (b.), tunc (tē), quoque (qi), pro- (p) have been resolved, and e has been normalized to ae where it stands for the diphthong.

In our sequence of plot and chapters we follow Laistner's order, adopted by Langosch (see Introduction). The theory of von Winterfeld that X, 50, should be followed by XI and then by X, 51–132, does not seem an improvement and has not been adopted.

Anyone comparing my Latin text with Seiler's (and Langosch's) will note that I have marked many more words or letters as conjectural or unclear. This may be due to an uncanny ability on Seiler's part to decipher what is practically obliterated, or, possibly, the Munich manuscript has deteriorated since 1882, when Seiler and Laistner read it.

The rather full, lengthy Introduction aims to present over 150 years of research, supplemented by whatever I have been able to add. The work of those who have contributed most to our knowledge of Ruodlieb – Schmeller, the Grimms, Seiler, Laistner, von Winterfeld, Strecker, Hauck, and Langosch – has been used gratefully and to good advantage, but those whose contributions are of a minor nature have not been neglected, either. While a bibliography as such is not given, the Introduction cites all the pertinent bibliographical helps as they are referred to.

Two sets of notes were deemed necessary. One is devoted entirely to textual matters on the basis of a first-hand study of the two manuscripts, superseding the treatment given the text in Seiler's edition, to which I am much indebted, and aiming to give an ade-
quate picture of the Latin text. The other set of notes, called Commentary, aims to offer information of a linguistic, historical, and cultural nature over and above what is found in the Introduction.

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Edwin H. Zeydel