# The Ordeal of the Lynx: Peacemaking in the *Ruodlieb*

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The lynx – "a gift not lacking honor [*donis, expers quod non sit honoris*]" (*Ruodlieb*[1] V, 100) – was bound by its paws in a vat. It was given enough to eat and drink that it would be unable to hold its urine, from which a glittering gemstone could be formed and mounted into the rings of queens and the crowns of kings[2]. The description of the suffering of this poor lynx appears in the anonymous Latin poem *Ruodlieb*; a chance survival of only a few fragments, which were found in the nineteenth century and used as bindings for other book manuscripts. Although the author is not known, scholars seem to be in agreement that the poem was produced at the monastery of Tegernsee in Bavaria at some point between 1050 and 1070[3]. The poem tells how Ruodlieb was exiled from his home because of enmities incurred in his lord's service. Accompanied by his shield-bearer, his horse, and his dog, Ruodlieb finds refuge at the court of the greater king (*rex maior*) and enters his service. After a short war with a neighbouring king, Ruodlieb negotiates a peace treaty on behalf of the greater king and is rewarded in both good advice and treasure. Receiving news that he can return home, he starts his journey but becomes embroiled in a murder case, helps negotiate the marriage of his cousin, foils a thief, avoids a marriage to an unfaithful lady, and captures a dwarf who will lead him to untold riches. The tale ends abruptly at this point.

The poem has attracted close attention from literary and linguistic scholars as a work that does not belong comfortably in any genre (e. g. heroic epic, epic romance, courtly novel) and that contains features both of its time as well as ahead of it (e. g. revenge, mercy, courtly culture)[4]. Such studies have been essential in elucidating the author's learning, sources, environment, and possible purpose in writing. This article, however, is concerned with exploring fragment V – detailing the peace conference between the greater and lesser kings – to understand what *Ruodlieb* and its author can tell scholars about practices of peacemaking in the eleventh century. Through a careful examination of the description of the ordeal of the lynx, it will argue that the poem re-imagines familiar scenes of reconciliation between ruler and

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[1] *Text and translation quoted from the edition of Dennis M. Kratz (2018).*

[2] Ford, 1965, p. 106-109.

[3] Ford, 1965, p. 1-3; Kratz, 2018, p. xxv; Jaeger, 1985, p. 122; Gamer, 1954, p. 739.

[4] Ford, 1965, p. 5; Godman, 2000, p. 32-46; Jaeger, 1985, 129-31, 269; Gamer, 1958, p. 250-255; Hene, 1942, p. 21.

subject. Setting the ordeal of the lynx into the wider context of the conflict and the treaty between the greater and lesser king, the article will further explore the role of exiles and captives at the intersection between war and peace, and reveal the significance of the mention of an amnesty clause, cancelling all requests for redress of wrongs committed during the conflict. Ultimately, the article seeks to demonstrate the intrinsic interest of *Ruodlieb* to scholars of the history of peacemaking, diplomacy, and international law at a time when few detailed records of this survives.

Fragment V of *Ruodlieb* contains the description of the peace conference between the greater and the lesser king – usually thought to represent the German and French kings – following a short period of conflict. The author details how the two kings came together on a bridge, with the greater king bringing the lesser king's men captured during the conflict. Despite being the victor, the greater king exacts no further revenge or service from the lesser king. Instead, after confirming peace with oaths, they share a meal and exchange gifts[5]. Some scholars have considered that the author might have based this fragment of the poem on the 1023 meeting between the French king Robert the Pious and the Emperor (and German king) Henry II[6]. However, apart from the fact that the text itself does not date or locate the meeting, much of the description in *Ruodlieb* is at odds with many of the known details of the 1023 meeting as set out in the narratives of the Burgundian monk Ralph Glaber and the *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*[7]. Moreover, we know that a number of meetings took place in the eleventh century between these two rulers (e. g. in 1006, 1043, 1048 and 1056) and while it is possible that the author attended one of these meetings or recorded what he had heard about one or more of them, it is equally possible that he did not have any particular meeting in mind when composing the text in *Ruodlieb*[8].

The main part of the peace conference in fragment V of *Ruodlieb* is given over to the description of the gifts, many of which appear to be symbolic representations of people. For instance, C. Stephen Jaeger has argued that the gift of the dancing bears was a parody of the courtier's virtue[9]. Some of these gifts seem to have a specific connection to people involved in processes we typically see in negotiations for peace or in written treaties. Here, it is the gift of the lynx that is of specific interest, an animal the author describes as the offspring of a fox and a wolf. According to the author, such a gift brought significant honour "since from its urine there is formed a

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[5]   *Ruodlieb*, V, 1-222.

[6]   Ford, 1965, p. 2; Godman, 1997, p. 245-247; Gamer, 1955, p. 102; Schach, 1954, p. 357.

[7]   *France, 1989, p. 108-109; Bethman, 1879, p. 480. For commentary on this meeting, see Voss, 1992, p. 3-14; Benham, 2013, p. 6-17.*

[8]   *For the eleventh-century meetings, see (1006) Chartes et documents de Saint-Benigne de Dijon, vol. I, p. 31-33; (1048) Herimanni Augiensis chronicon, p. 128; (1056) Lamperti Monachi Hersfeldensis Opera, p. 68.*

[9]   Jaeger, 1985, p. 149.

brilliant gem, the gleaming ligure, that is precious as carbuncle [*eius ab urina quia crescit lucida gemma / ardens ligurius carbunculus ut preciosus*]" (*Ruodlieb* V, 101-102). The description is easily recognisable from a range of medieval encyclopaedias and also from bestiaries, composed primarily from the twelfth centuries onwards, in which the lynx is similarly depicted as producing this valuable stone from its urine. The origin of this knowledge can be found with Ancient Greek writers, such as Theophrastus, who in the fourth or third century BC apparently saw an example of this stone, which was believed to be solidified lynx urine. Theophrastus was not known in the Middle Ages, but the knowledge was likely carried into the medieval period through the Roman natural philosopher, Pliny the Elder, whose *Naturalis Historia* outlines that the *lyncurium* – crystallised lynx urine – had by some Greek writers been frivolously and falsely connected to amber (VIII, 57; XXXVII, 11[10]). In fact, we know that the author's monastery of Tegernsee owned an illustrated copy of Pliny in this particular period[11]. But even if he had not read Pliny's work directly, it is clear it was widely copied and used in the medieval world, perhaps most frequently through the seventh-century writer Isidore of Seville, who carried a significant amount of ancient knowledge into the medieval period in his *Etymologies* (XII, ii, 20), and whose work was itself widely copied[12]. It was also carried in the ninth-century encyclopaedia of Hrabanus Maurus, which lists the lynx among the beasts and likewise states that its urine turned into a stone called *ligurus*[13].

What sets the story about the lynx in *Ruodlieb* apart from how it appears in all of these ancient and early medieval works, as well as in the later medieval bestiaries, however, is the detailed description of how the urine was to be extracted. Unlike other texts, where it is simply said that the lynx urinated and buried the urine with sand to guard the solidified stone from humans, *Ruodlieb* anticipates a procedure whereby a wide vat would be prepared with iron spikes attached in four places. Then:

> Ruodlieb V, 108-118: put the beast inside, though it rebels and fights. / Take care to bind its paws securely to the spikes / And hang a woven chain around its neck (and bend / Its head so that it cannot break loose from its bonds). / Give it enough to eat and drink; however, what / It drinks must be a potent wine, sweet to the taste. / Thence drunk, it cannot, though it wants to, hold its urine. / Then let the urine drip away (…) and quickly flow / Into a basin through the hole drilled in the vat. / And if it cannot void this, it will cease to live. [*in quam pone feram licet invitam ve rebellem / ad clavosque pedes vincire sibi bene cures / et circa collum nexam*

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[10] Pliny, *The Natural History*, II, p. 310; VI, p. 397-398. On the connection to amber and ancient medicine, see Riddle, 1973, p. 3-17.

[11] Scach, 1954, p. 356.

[12] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, p. 252. Mary Beagon (2016, p. 57) highlights that it is difficult to know if Isidore copied Pliny directly or from other secondary sources.

[13] Hrabanus Maurus, *De rerum naturis*, VIII, 1.

*suspende catenam / inclinando caput, ne vincula solver possit! / Ad manducandum sibi sat da sive bibendum, / quod bibat at vinum validum sit, dulce Bibendum! / Ebrius exinde, dum vult, nequeat retinere, / exeat urina, sed ut ignorante retenta, / et fluat in pelvim cito per butinam terebratam, / quam dum non poterit dispergere, vivere claudit.*]

Helena Gamer suggested in 1955 that these detailed directions were for 'manufacturing the precious stone *ligurius*' and likely "current popular knowledge[14]". To me, this does not seem to be the right context for this description. Instead, the whole process is reminiscent of an ordeal – certainly for the lynx itself – but also as in an ordeal of a judicial and religious nature, intended to prove innocence or guilt and to cleanse a person from evil and sin. Certain details of the description in *Ruodlieb* are clearly reminiscent of Christ on the cross. For instance, the four spikes in *Ruodlieb* to which the lynx was attached can be likened to the four points of the cross, said in poems such as that of John Scotus Eriugena to represent the four corners of the world[15]. Such familiar imagery captures the battle against the devil or sin in which Christ emerges victorious and the devil's strength is crushed[16]. Many medieval works also detail how Christ was pierced by a lance and wine/blood/water spilled from the wounds, with the flowing of substances having a sanctifying quality that washed or healed mortal souls of their sins[17]. The mention of giving the lynx food and wine to drink further echoes the Eucharist – the important Christian rite imitating the giving of bread and wine by Jesus to his disciples during the Last Supper. Indeed, it might be relevant that at the time that the author was writing the poem, the exact meaning and interpretation of this rite was hotly debated among ecclesiastics[18].

Imitations of the Eucharist and of Christ on the cross with its message of leading the soul from sin to redemption was closely linked to penance and participation in the liturgy and sacraments[19]. Many such rituals and gestures accompanied the making of peace, as demonstrated by scholars such as Gerd Althoff, Geoffrey Koziol, and Jean-Marie Moeglin[20]. The focus of these gestures tended to be on begging forgiveness for wrongdoing and demonstrating humility before the ruler in a public setting, and often the wrongdoer was barefoot and/or wore sackcloth – a physical demonstration of humility by being stripped of the things that outwardly showed their status. At times, additional measures accompanied such gestures, including

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[14]   Gamer, 1955, p. 80.

[15]   Ioannis Scotti Eriugenae *Carmina*, p. 59.

[16]   Chazelle, 2007, p. 9-11; Ryan, 2012, p. 84.

[17]   Haussherr, 1963; Chazelle, 2007, p. 12.

[18]   Radding, 2003.

[19]   Chazelle, 2007, 11.

[20]   Althoff, 1997, 99-125; Althoff, 2001, p. 270-284; Koziol, 1992; Moeglin, 1996, p. 11-65.

the wrongdoer being paraded in, or carrying, chains (to symbolise captivity), wearing rope around his/her neck (to symbolise having committed an offence for which hanging was usually meted out), being baptised or confirmed (symbolising their re-birth into Christianity), or giving hostages (thereby curtailing the wrongdoer's ability to act in the future)[21]. A show of penitence and complete submission before the ruler had mutual benefits in that the gestures had to be rewarded with forgiveness and absolution, allowing the wrongdoer back into the Christian community. The ruler could not easily deny this, as doing so would strike at the heart of his own office[22]. Gestures and rituals of penance as part of peacemaking could be performed in a wide range of scenarios, including where rulers had suffered defeat; as a voluntary gesture by an inferior ruler to gain or maintain power; or as a way for rebellious and/or exiled subjects to regain their ruler's favour. It is this latter circumstance that seems the most likely context of the story about the lynx in *Ruodlieb*.

The expulsion of individuals who had committed reprehensible acts was one of the ways in which rulers and communities dealt with law and order. Some of these offences were falling under what we might think of as treason, and through the development of the just war theory, treason – in particular taking up arms against a ruler – was a breach of the faith that held Christian society together[23]. Ziv Bohrer has recently argued that this shows that "treason was considered an international crime, and traitors/rebels were considered international outlaws[24]". Furthermore, serious crimes such as murder, theft, robbery, or arson could be condemned as crimes against humanity, and therefore considered international, if they did not have the sanction of just war or royal authorisation. Of course, what one ruler resolved through expulsion could become the problem of another ruler, posing a threat to peace and security on an 'international' level. Primarily this was because, once expelled, such individuals, shorn of their social and economic status, often committed further reprehensible acts and/or engaged in conflict against the entity from whence they had come. It is hardly surprising, then, to find that one of the foremost purposes of concluding treaties between rulers was to ensure that those who had been expelled from one political entity did not find shelter in another. Indeed, almost every treaty across every historical period and geographical area has some form of such a clause[25]. Not only did treaties usually have a clause for dealing with such displaced individuals, but we further know that rulers could, and did, request that wrongdoers were apprehended and returned if found within another

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[21] On this, see Benham, 2011, p. 97-99, 158-160.

[22] Benham, 2011, p. 97.

[23] Benham, 2022, p. 56-58, and especially p. 57 for list of the various crimes.

[24] Bohrer, 2016, p. 433.

[25] Benham, 2022, p. 58-65.

political entity. Peace conferences provided the opportunity and the public location for such returns and reconciliation ceremonies to take place – just as the poem records[26].

That the process of extracting the urine described by the author of *Ruodlieb* is an allegorical ordeal symbolising penance and reconciliation, seems confirmed by the author's choice to focus on the lynx. As with the details of how to extract the urine, the stated origin of the lynx sets *Ruodlieb* apart from other ancient and early medieval texts, as well as later bestiaries. Both Isidore of Seville and Hrabanus Maurus, following Pliny, describes the lynx as resembling a wolf, with spots and a split back like a leopard[27]. By contrast, the author of *Ruodlieb* states that the lynx was "born of a fox and a wolf [*de vulpe lupoque creatum*]" (*Ruodlieb* V, 99)[28]. Both of these animals have quite clear connections to human characteristics, social and legal status in medieval society: the wolf, as a symbol of evil and sin, to the outlaw or the exile[29]; and the fox with its cunning, deceit and trickery to the rebel and traitor, but also to the clever advisor or ambassador *par excellence*[30]. It is interesting that all three of these animals – the lynx, the wolf and the fox – appear in a second eleventh-century Latin poem, also written in the German kingdom but probably just slightly earlier than *Ruodlieb*, known as the *Ecbasis*[31]. In this latter poem, the wolf is portrayed at several levels as sinful, dangerous, banished and living outside the elite community at court, a state created by the trickery of his great enemy, the fox, who subsequently with many cunning schemes also manages to place himself on the throne of the kingdom[32]. The lynx appears only in a small role, as someone carrying out and implementing orders at the court (*Ecbasis* 500-508, 653), and unlike its role in the late twelfth-century or early thirteen- century *Reinhart Fuchs*[33], where, although "born of both the wolf and the fox [*von beiden geborn / von wolve unde von vuchse*]" (*Reinhart Fuchs* 1072-1073) just as in *Ruodlieb*, the lynx is therefore a kinsman of both trying to reconcile the two in their dispute (*ibid*. 1070-1096). The lynx in *Ruodlieb* then has a different narrative role to those in the *Ecbasis* and *Reinhart Fuchs*, yet it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the author has merged the well-known characteristics of the wolf and the fox in the lynx as an

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[26] On how wrongdoers were chased, apprehended, and/or returned, see Benham, 2022, p. 69-77.

[27] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, p. 252; Hrabanus Maurus, *De rerum naturis*, VIII, 1; Pliny, *The Natural History*, VIII, 28 and 30.

[28] There is one similar description to this in the tenth-century glossary of Ælfric, where the lynx is described as derived from a wolf and a dog. Ælfrics *Grammatik und Glossar*, p. 308; Thornbury, 2009, p. 163-166.

[29] Unruh, 1957, p. 1-40; van Houts, 2004, p. 13-28; Pons-Sanz, 2007.

[30] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville, p. 253 (XII, ii, 29); Sudre, 1892; Plunkett Newlin, 2004; Godman, 2000, p. 40.*

[31] *On the date, see Ecbasis cvivsdam captivi per tropologiam, p. 5-6.*

[32] *Ecbasis cvivsdam captivi per tropologiam*, p. 22-95. For analysis, see Glück, 2021, 73-79; Tedeschi, 2009, p. 161-175.

[33] Quoted from the edition of Patrick del Duca (2022) with my own translation. This editor identifies the lion with Henri VI and supposes the text to be composed in Alsatia by Heinrich between 1197 and 1214 in the troubled interregnum which began after the emperor's death (2022, p. 10).

anthropomorphised representation of a sinful individual who has committed serious wrongdoings, and, as a consequence, has become expelled from the kingdom. In short, an individual who could be expected to become reconciled with their lord, only after an elaborate penitential procedure to purge and cleanse them of sin.

The author of the poem had a specific interest in exiles and outlaws: Ruodlieb – the main character – is himself described as such [*exul*] at various points (*Ruodlieb* I, 75; I, 114; II, 43; V, 301; V, 578; XIII, 40). At the start of the poem, the author laments how despite serving his lords well, Ruodlieb receives nothing but broken promises and enmity in return, and so leaves his homeland to seek foreign kingdoms (*Ruodlieb* I, 12-17). Subsequently, the author states Ruodlieb "on account of many feuds he had incurred / He must depart from his dear land and go in exile [*et propter faidas sibi multas undique nactas / A patria dulci quod debuit exiliari*]" (*Ruodlieb* I, 63-64). As noted above, this is the exact same context of many individuals expelled in this period. Furthermore, the author makes Ruodlieb's empathy for the lynx evident in a rare comment spoken in first person: "And, lynx, you stand there fastened to your golden chain [*stas et inaurata connexus, lince, catena*]" (*Ruodlieb* V, 169), thereby seemingly connecting the two and their fates. That Ruodlieb himself in some ways can be identified with the lynx is evident also in him having the same origin and characteristics; not only is he an exile (a wolf) but also a trickster (a fox), using the herb *buglossa* to play a trick on wolves[34]. The author describes how Ruodlieb imitates their howls to attract them, and when they then eat a *buglossa*-treated goat, they go blind from it (*Ruodlieb* II, 36-65). According to Monika Otter, having dealt successfully with the wolves in this way, it "strangely, not only advances Ruodlieb's career, but peace in the realm: the previously hostile populations on the kingdom's fringes become pacified and engage in commerce and even intermarriage across the border[35]". This is of course, less 'strange' if we equate the wolves to outlaws and exiles attempting to find refuge in the great king's realm and causing a significant threat to peace and security within the kingdom but also threatening peaceful relations with his neighbouring ruler. What the author is seemingly describing is the common practice of 'poacher turned gamekeeper'; that is, employing one displaced individual to deal with the threat of other exiles[36]. The fate of the main character then in some ways mirrors that of the lynx, and the poem emphasises the redemptive power of good deeds and good service to enable Ruodlieb to eventually become reconciled with his lords and return to his land. Ruodlieb through his tribulations becomes a model knight who with his deeds

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[34] On the *buglossa*, see also Borst, 1994, p. 226-227.

[35] Otter, 2017, p. 342.

[36] Benham, 2022, p. 65-69; Coupland, 1998, p. 89-101.

adorns and augments the power of the great king, and he returns home to do the same to his lords, just like the glittering ligure – the stone produced from the urine of the lynx – adorns the crown of kings (*Ruodlieb* V, 129).

The description in *Ruodlieb* of how the urine of the lynx should be extracted effectively created an accurate image of the important legal process necessary both to ascertain that an individual had repented and to ensure that that individual could be reintegrated into Christian society to shoulder communal responsibilities and functions. Ultimately, these were important processes of what we might think of as transitional justice: providing symbolic redress for wrongs committed and enabling disputing parties and communities to transition from conflict to peace. Such legal redress stands at the heart of treaties as sources of international law, and frequently went hand-in-hand with material redress – that is, compensation for damages and injuries caused during hostilities. No actual reconciliation ceremony between Ruodlieb and the lords is described in the poem, but because only fragments survive now, it is not possible to say if the original may have included some such. What is clear, however, is that the author anticipated that Ruodlieb would make a payment – material redress – to "win his lords' good will by generosity [*atque suos dominos dent praestita mente benigna*]" (*Ruodlieb* V, 318), so again the narrative in the poem reflects actual practices in the medieval period[37].

The author of *Ruodlieb* had a very acute and accurate understanding of the practice of peacemaking in the eleventh century. His account of the ordeal of the lynx divulges this knowledge in many ways, and in particular in the small details where the poem diverges from other medieval sources. That the author's knowledge extended beyond the penitential reconciliation ceremony – in itself not necessarily an unusual feature of any monastic writer of the period – is, furthermore, evident. For instance, in the negotiations leading up to the peace conference, the author records the two main terms of the agreement between the greater and lesser kings; namely, that the greater king would return captured military men, including the count who had started the conflict, and that both kings would dismiss whatever folly and injuries had been committed on either side and establish peace (*Ruodlieb* V, 24-25, 37-41, 64-68)[38]. With regards to the first of these, the return of those captured during conflict, there is widespread agreement among scholars that the eleventh century saw significant changes in warfare and the treatment of those captured. In previous centuries combatants would usually kill, enslave, or, at best, despoil opposing combatants who surrendered or were defeated, as well as non-combatants. Only occasionally were high-status individuals captured and ransomed. In the eleventh century, ransoming warriors who had surrendered or been captured

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37    Benham, 2022, p. 119-123.

38    On the negotiations, see also *Ruodlieb* IV, 81-125.

became more common, and non-combatants were less likely to be targeted for enslavement[39]. *Ruodlieb* gives clear evidence of this by recording the captivity of not only the count, who led the war against the greater king and Ruodlieb, but also his fellow fighters (*Ruodlieb* III, 8-29, 53-70). The author then emphasises the piety (*pietas*) and mercy (*clementia*) shown by the greater king in allowing these men to be held captive by his nobles and bishops (*Ruodlieb* IV, 23-30, 98-117), and contrasts this with the behaviour of the lesser king's men who captured, killed and injured non-combatants (*Ruodlieb* III, 64-5; IV, 94-97; V, 60-67). As argued by Stefan Vander Elst these descriptions of ideal behaviour are "very much in keeping with the directions of the Peace and Truce of God movements of the late tenth and eleventh centuries", which sought to safeguard places of economic and religious importance (e. g. markets, churches), along with non-combatants (e. g. clergy, merchants, widows, orphans)[40]. A monk writing at a Cluniac monastery promoting these ideals hence seem unsurprising, and confirms the wider trend across Europe in this period to attempt to limit war and its effects on society. More broadly, the evidence in *Ruodlieb* provides a link between treaties of the ninth and tenth centuries, which frequently record that captives – mostly perceived as non-combatants and almost never as high-status individuals – were to be returned to their homeland, and treaties of the twelfth century, which regularly make provisions for the ransoming of high-status captives but rarely for the return of captured non-combatants[41]. The evidence in *Ruodlieb* that the return of the count and his men (without ransom) was one of the articles of the peace is important, because there are fewer written treaties surviving from the eleventh century than from those centuries preceding and succeeding it. Even though the author may not have had a specific treaty in mind when writing the poem, it is significant that he thought that such a treaty could have this particular stipulation.

The second aim of the agreement – that both kings would dismiss whatever folly and injuries had been committed on either side and establish peace – is even more significant. Clauses such as this, which effectively wiped the slate clean, stipulating that all violence, damage and injuries done by one party to another during conflict would be forgotten, are known as amnesty clauses. With amnesty clauses rulers denied the right of their subjects to be compensated for losses incurred during conflict[42]. This denial could include material redress for crimes and violence committed by individuals who had been exiled for wrongs committed both during and/or before any conflict, and as such symbolic redress through gestures of

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[39]  Gillingham, 2012, p. 55-72 and especially p. 60-61; Gillingham, 2008, p. 242-265; Strickland, 1992, p. 41-60; Barthélemy, 2007, p. 186-92.

[40]  Vander Elst, 2011, p. 2-3. See also Götte, 1981, p. 86-88.

[41]  For two examples, see *Pactum Hlotharii I*, p. 131; *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174–1328*, p. 2-3.

[42]  Benham, 2022, p. 99-105.

repentance by them took on added importance; perhaps explaining the vivid account of the ordeal of the lynx. The complex balance between peace, amnesty, redress and exile are issues which are hotly debated even in the contemporary world. In conflicts with an element of civil war, amnesty clauses can be the only way towards reconciliation of two warring communities, but this also means that any individual who has, as an example, committed war crimes is also forgiven and may indeed be part of the governance of that political entity going forward[43]. In these situations, saying sorry or making humble protestations of innocence against accusations of crimes can be important tools for transitioning societies from conflict to peace. The author of *Ruodlieb* had a clear grasp of this, and it is significant that he perceives the setting of the conflict as two border communities that usually have frequent peaceful interactions with each other:

> *Ruodlieb* V, 52-57: The people bordering our realm were very well / Disposed to ours, and this love was preserved by ours. / They travelled back and forth to purchase what they wanted / Sometimes collecting the toll and sometimes paying it. / Our daughters wed their sons, their daughters married ours. / They were godparents (even those who were not were / Thus called). [*Alterius regni marhmanni valde benigni / nostris, a nostris is amor servatur et ipsis. / Alterutrique meant emptum, quodcunque volebant, / vectigal dantes vectigal et accipientes, / nubunt hinc illuc natasque suas dederant huc, / compatres fiunt vel qui non sunt, vocitabant.*]

Most narrative sources in the period before 1200 do not record amnesty clauses; these are usually recorded only in written treaties. As recently discussed, the one other such description comes from an early thirteenth-century Icelandic saga depicting the end of the Norwegian civil war. Like *Ruodlieb*, this saga, called *Baglarsaga*, is one of the least known sagas, especially outside the small circle of Nordic civil wars scholarship, but unlike *Ruodlieb* its wording can be linked quite clearly to the late tenth-century treaty between the English king Æthelred II and three Viking leaders, one of whom was Olaf Tryggvason, sometime king of Norway[44]. In any case, what is significant about all of this is that since so very few written treaties survive from the eleventh century, the mention of an amnesty clause in *Ruodlieb* fills a very important gap in our current knowledge of peace- and treaty making.

Scholars should rightly be careful not to read too much into *Ruodlieb*. The poem is fragmentary and the lack of information surrounding its author and composition hinders interpretation and analysis of it. It seems unlikely, for instance, that the author had any specific peace conference in mind when he wrote fragment V, even

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43  On this, see Portilla, 2014, p. 169-194; Lyons, 2013, p. 799-842; Scharf, 2006, p. 339-376; Sadat, 2006, p. 955-1036.

44  Benham, 2022, p. 130-131, note 40.

though he clearly knew a great deal about what happened at such peace conferences. Indeed, by examining features such as the ordeal of the lynx, the return of captives and prisoners of war, and the amnesty clause, and by putting these aspects into a wider context of the rest of the poem as well as other narratives and treaties of peacemaking between rulers, it is possible to draw a few tentative conclusions. The ordeal of the lynx can be read and interpreted in many ways, and likely it was composed in that spirit. The ordeal re-imagines familiar scenes of the Eucharist; the heart of Christian worship and a hotly debated topic in the eleventh century when the author was composing the poem. It also re-imagines familiar scenes of reconciliation between rulers and rebellious subjects, those who had been exiled for serious breaches of social norms and laws, and for whom any re-entry into Christian society had to be humiliating, painful, cleansing, and public. The ordeal of extracting the urine – details not usually found in other ancient and early medieval texts – was hence not an actual procedure or common knowledge of how to produce the gemstone as some scholars have thought, but the anthropomorphised retelling of the act of reconciliation. The focus on the lynx as a creature born out of the wolf and the fox – again, a feature found in few ancient and early medieval sources – and the poem's narrative focus on the main character's own exile; his redemption by dealing with the "wolves" plaguing the realm and by bringing victory to the greater king in the conflict with his neighbouring ruler; and his eventual return and anticipated reconciliation with the lords of his homeland, all highlight that the author had a clear and precise knowledge of one of the main threat to peace and security in the medieval period. In short, the author knew how and why someone became an exile, where they might go and what they might do there, and how and in what circumstances their return could be obtained.

More broadly, it is evident that the author had knowledge of practices of peacemaking that scholars now can mainly glean from written treaties. His portrayal of the return of captives as one of the main terms of the agreement between the greater and lesser kings, highlight that the author was writing at a time when attempts to limit warfare and its effects on society and, in particular on non-combatants, was promoted through the Peace and Truce of God movements. This, in combination with other economic, political and social changes, was transforming how warfare was conducted. Here, *Ruodlieb* provides a very important piece of evidence from the eleventh century when fewer written treaties survive, which shows that treaties had moved away from the ninth- and tenth-century stipulations concerning the return of captive non-combatants – essentially those who had been enslaved – towards the return of high-status combatants. The lack of any mention of ransom for these individuals is difficult to qualify through this single mention in the form of a fragmentary poem, but certainly confirms that ransom was not yet always demanded in the way later treaties, of the twelfth-century and beyond, tend to do[45].

Finally, the most significant finding concerns the amnesty clause: a feature of peacemaking, which can almost exclusively be perceived through written treaties. This fact raises many questions over the literary models and sources the author used to compose *Ruodlieb*. Tegernsee was a thriving cultural and monastic centre and much has been made by scholars of what the author and the composition of the poem owed to this milieu[46]. The author certainly used a wide range of ancient and medieval texts to compose a text full of allegories and symbolism, and, by doing so, he provided a significant commentary on the process of peacemaking. However, the amnesty clause hints at the content of some medieval treaties, at a specific point in time when fewer written records of these have survived. Its inclusion in the poem demonstrates that the author's knowledge of peacemaking went beyond any Christian framework of reconciliation, such as that perceived through the ordeal of the lynx. It also went beyond the promotion of the ideals of the Peace and Truce of God movements in limiting the effects of war on medieval society. The amnesty clause highlights that while the author may have been engaging in nothing more than a literary experiment or a didactic exercise aimed at a few fellow monks at Tegernsee, his knowledge of how peace was made in the eleventh century was profound, real, and grounded not only in Christian doctrine but in actual practice.

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[45]   On ransom, see also Kosto, 2012, p. 163-197.

[46]   Godman, 2000, p. 33.

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