

Lazamon's *Brut*: King Arthur at Loch Lomond

Þat word com to Scotten; þær þar heo wuneden.
hu Ar[ð]ur þe king; com touward heore londe.
feond-liche swiðe; mid vnimete folke.
10845 Þa weoren ærhest; þat ær weoren baldest.
and gunnen to fleonnen; feondliche swiðe.
into þan watere; þer wunderes beoð inoze.
Þat is a seolcuð mere; iset a middel-ærde.
mid fenne & mid ræode; mid watere swiðe bræde.
10850 mid fiscen & mid feozelen; mid uniuele þingen.
Þat water is unimete; brade nikeres þer ba[ð]ieð inne.
þer is æluene ploze; in atteliche pole.
Sixti æit-londes; beo[ð] i þan watere longe.
in ælc of þan æit-londe; is a clude hæh and strong.
10855 þer næstieð arnes; & oðere græte uozeles.
Ðe arnes habbeoð ane laze; bi æuer-ælches kinges dahzen.
whænne-swa æi ferde; fundeð to þan ærde.
þeonne fleoð þa fuzeles; feor i þan lufte.
moni hundred þusen; & muchel feoht makieð.
10860 Þenne is þat folc buten wene; þat reouðe heom is to cumene.
of summes cunnes leoden; þe þat lond wulleð i-sechen.
Tweien dæzes oðer þreo; þus scal þis taken heo.
ær unkuðe men; to þan londe liðen.
zet þer is sellic; to suggen of þan watere.
10865 þer walleð of þan mæren; a moniare siden.
of dalen & of dunen; & of bæc%chen deopen.
sixti wateres; alle þer isomned

News came to the Scots where they were now living
That King Arthur was coming towards their own land,
Fantastically quickly with enormous force.
Then those were in most terror who before had been most bold
And took off in flight amazingly fast
Into that water where there are very many marvels.
This is an uncanny mere set upon middle earth
With marshland and reeds and the water is very broad,
With fish and with water fowl, with fiendish creatures!
The water cannot be measured; vast sea-monsters swim round within it;
There are elvish creatures playing in the terrible pool;
There are sixty islands stretching down the long water:
On each of the islands is a rock both high and strong
Where eagles make their nests and other huge birds;
The eagles have a certain custom in the reign of every king
Whenever any invading force comes flocking to the country:
Then all the birds fly far up into the air,
Many hundred thousands of them and create a huge contention;
Then the people know without doubt that a great trial is to come to them
From some kind of people who propose to visit that land.
For two or three days this sign occurs in this way
Until unknown men journey to that land.
There is still one more marvel to mention concerning that water:
There flow [into] that mere on many a side
From dales and from downlands and from deep vallers
Sixty different streams, all gathered together,

swa neuere ut of þan mære; na man no uindeð.
 þat þer ut wenden; buten an an ænde.
 10870 an imet-liche broc; þe of þan mere ualleð.
 & swiðe isemeliche; in-to sæ wendeð.
 Ða Scottes weoren to-deled; mid muclen vni-selen.
 3eond þa monie munten; þa i þan watere weoren.
 Arðour biseohte scipen; & gon heom to wenden.
 10875 & sloh þer vniuoze; moni and inoze.
 & ((moni)) þusend þer wes dæd; for heom trukede ælc bræd.

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Ðider þa wifes comen; þa i þan londen. wuneden.
 heo wæiden in hære ærmen; heore children ærmen.
 heo weopen on Arðure; wunder ane swiðe.
 10915 and heore uæx fære; wælden to volde.
 curuen heore lockes; & þer niðer læiden.
 to þas kinges foten; bi-foren al his duzeðen.
 nailes to heore nebbe; þat æfter hit bledde.
 Neh þan alle clæne; nakede heo weoren.
 10920 sorhliche heo gunnen clupien; to Arðure þan kinge.
 and summe þus iseiden; þer heo on sið weoren.
 King we beoð on ærde; ærmost alre uolke.
 we 3eorneð þine milzce; þurh þæne milde Godd.
 Ðu hauest a þisse londe; ure leoden aslæzen.
 10925 mid hungere & mid hete; mid feole cunne hærmen.
 mid wapnen mid wæteren; mid feole wan-siðen.
 vre children imaked faderlese; & frofre bidæled.
 Ðu ært Cristine mon; & we al-swa sunden.
 Sæxisce men beoð; hæðe[ne] hundes.

Yet out of that mere no man has ever found one
 Which flows outwards there, except at one end
 A normal sized brook which discharges from the mere
 And trickles very tranquilly down to the sea.
 The Scots were scattered and in much distress
 Over the many mountains situated in the water;
 Arthur commandeered ships and proceeded towards them
 And slew them without number, many and in plenty,
 And many thousands there had died for total lack of bread.

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To that place came the women who were living in that land,
 They were carrying in their arms their unfortunate children;
 They were crying in Arthur's presence amazingly bitterly,
 And tossing their lovely tresses down to the earth,
 Cutting off their locks and laying them down there
 At the king's feet in front of all of his soldiers,
 [Dragging] their nails down their faces and leaving them bleeding;
 They were nearly all of them practically naked.
 In great distress they started calling out to King Arthur,
 And some of them spoke like this in their [affliction]:
 'King, we are upon this earth the most abject of all people!
 We beg for your compassion, for the sake of God's care.
 In this country you have slaughtered our own compatriots
 With hunger and distress and with many kinds of harm,
 With weapons and with water and with misfortunes,
 Have made our children fatherless, bereft of every comfort.
 You are a Christian man: we ourselves are Christian too;
 The Saxon men are merely heathen hounds:

10930 Heo comen to þisse londe; and þis folc here a-qualden.
 zif we heom hereden; þat was for ure hermen.
 for we nefden nænne mon; þe us wið heom mihten griðien.
 Heo us duden swiðe wa; & þu us dest al swa.
 þa heðene us hatieð; & þe Cristine us sari makieð.
 10935 Wær scullen we bicumen; queðen þa wif to þan kinge.
 A-3ef us zet þa quicke men; þa liggeð 3eond þas cluden.
 and zif þu 3iuest milze; þisse moncunnen.
 þi mon-scipe bið þa mare; nu and æuere-mære.
 Lauer[d] Arður ure king; leoðe vre benden.
 10940 Þu hafust al þis lond inomen; & al þis folc ouercumen.
 We beoð under uote; a þe is al þa bote.
 Þis iherde Arður; aðelest kingen.
 þesne wop & þesne rop; & reouðen vniuo3e.
 þa toc he to ræde. and reosede on heorte.
 10945 he uunde on his ræde; to don þat heo ((hine)) beden
 he 3æf heom lif. he 3ef heom lumen; & heore lond to halden.
 He lette blæwen bemen; and þa Scottes bæcnien.
 & heo ut of cluden; to þan scipen comen.
 an auerælchen siden; si3en touwar[d] londe.
 10950 Heo weoren swiðe iharmede; mid scærpen þan hungre.
 aðes heo sworn; swiken þat nalden.
 and heo þa i3efuen; 3isles þan kingen.
 and alle ful sone; þas kinges men bi-comen.
 & seoððen heo gunnen fusen; þat folc þer to-delden.
 10955 ælc mon to þan ende; þer he wes wuniende.
 and Arður þer grið sette; god mid þan bezste.
 Whær ært þu Howel mi mæi; monne me leofest.
 isixst þu þisne muchelne mære; þer Scottes beoð amærrred.
 isihst þu þas hæh3e treon; and sihst þu þas ærnes teon.

They came to this land and these folk here they killed;
 If we gave them allegiance it was to avoid trouble,
 For we had no man at all who might reconcile us with them.
 They caused us great disaster, and you are doing just the same:
 The heathen men hate us and the Christians gave us grief;
 What will become of us?' cried the women to the king.
 'Give us back those men still living lying on the crags there,
 And if you show compassion to those human creatures
 Then your honour will be greater, both now and hereafter!
 Lord Arthur, our king, loosen our fetters;
 All this land you have captured and all this people overcome:
 We lie beneath your feet; with you lies our entire release.'
 All this heard Arthur, most admired of kings,
 This weeping and this lamenting and untold desolations
 Then he gave it consideration, and he felt compassion;
 As he deliberated he found he could do as they asked:
 He gave them life, he gave them limb and their own lands to manage.
 He had brass trumpets blown and summoned the Scots
 And down from their crags they came to the ships;
 From each and every side they sidled towards land;
 They were very badly harmed by the sharp pangs of hunger.
 Oaths they then swore that they would never be traitors,
 And then they handed over hostages to the king,
 And all of them immediately became the king's men,
 And then they hurried off; the hosts separated there,
 Each man to the area where he had his homestead,
 And Arthur established a peace there, good among the best.
 'Where are you, my cousin Howel, the man I love most?
 Are you looking at this great mere where the Scots have been harmed?
 Can you see these lofty trees, can you see the eagles soaring?

10960 Inne þisse uenne; is fisc unimete.
 Isihst þu þas æit-londes; þe 3eond þas watere stondeð.
 Seollic þuhte Howel; of swulchere isihðe.
 and wond%drede wide; bi þan watere flode.
 and þus þer cleopede Howel; hæhes cunnes.

10965 Seoððen ich wes mon iboren; of mire moder bosme.
 no isah ich a none londe; þus seolcu[ð]e þinges.
 swa ich here biuoren me; mid æ3enen bihælde.
 Wundreden Bruttes; wunder ane swiðe.
 Ða cleope[de] Arður; aðelest kingen.

10970 Howel min a3e mæi; monnen me leofest.
 lust mire worden; of mucle mære wunder.
 þat ic þe wulle tellen. of soðe mine spellen.
 Bi þisse mære enden; þer þis water wendeð.
 is an lutel wiht mære; monnen to wundre.

10975 He is end-longe; feouwer & sixti munden.
 he is imeten a bræde; fif & twenti foten.
 fif foten he is deop; alfene hine dulfen.
 Feower-noked he is; and þer-inne is feower kunnes fisc.
 and ælc fisc an his ende; þer he his cun findeð.

10980 ne mai þer nan to oðere; buten al swa tacheð his icunde.
 Nes næuer nan mon iboren; ne of swa wise crafte icoren.
 no libbe he swa longe; þe mazen hit vnder-stonde.
 what letteð þene fisc; to uleoten to þan oðere.
 for nis þer noht bitwenen; buten water clæne.

10985 Ða 3et cleopede Ar[ð]ur; aðelest kingen.
 Howel i þissen londes ænde; neh þere sæ-stronde.
 is a mære swiðe muchel; þat water is un-fæle.
 and whænne þa sæ vleded; swulc heo wulle aweden.
 and falleð inne þene mære; vnimete swiðe.

Within this vast fen there are fish beyond counting:
 Are you looking at the islands which are lying in the water?
 The whole vista seemed to Howel uncannily strange,
 And standing by the surging water he was extremely surprised,
 And like this responded Howel of noble rank:
 ‘Since I was born a male child lying at my mother’s breast
 I have never seen in any land such surprising things
 As before me right now with my eyes I behold.’
 The Britons were exceedingly surprised and amazed.
 Then Arthur called out, most admired of kings:
 ‘Howel, my own cousin, the man I love the most,
 Listen to my words, about a most famous marvel
 Which to you I will recount by my own true account:
 At this mere’s end where this water leaves
 Is a little tiny pool which people wonder at:
 It is in its length sixty-four handbreadths,
 Measured in its width it is twenty-five feet;
 It is but five feet deep; it was dug out by elves;
 It possesses four corners and there are four kinds of fish in it,
 And each fish is in its area, where it finds its species,
 Nor can any reach the others except for those which match its type;
 No man was ever created who was in any skill so far advanced,
 No matter how long he might live, who might ever understand
 What it is that stops one fish from floating off to the others
 Since there is nothing between except just pure water.’
 Then Arthur, most admired king, once again continued:
 ‘Howel, at the limit of this land, close to the sea shore,
 Is a loch extremely vast; its waters are unpleasant,
 And when the sea is surging as if madly raging
 And spills over into the loch in huge quantities,

10990 no bið næuere þæ mere; on watere þa mare.
 Ah þenne þa sæ falleð in; and scen warð þa uolden.
 and heo bið al inne; in alden hire denne;
 þenne swelleð þe mære; and swærkeð þa vðen.
 vðen þer leppeoð ut; vnimete grete.
 10995 fleoð ut a þat lond; þat leoden agriseð an hond.
 3if þer cumeð æi mon; þat noht ne cunne þer-on.
 þat seollic to iseonne; bi þere sæ-stronde.
 3if he his neb wendeð; touwærd þan mære.
 ne beo he noht swa loh iboren; ful wel he beoð ibor3en.
 11000 þat water him glit bisiden; and þe mon þer wuneð softe.
 after his iwille; he wuneð þer uul stille;
 þat no bið he for þan watere; nað%ðing idracched.
 Ða sæide Howel hæh mon of Brutten.
 Nu ic ihere tellen; seolcuðe spellen.
 11005 & seollic is þe lauerd; þat al hit isette.
 Ða cleopede Arður; aðelest kingen.
 Blaweð mine hornes; mid hæh3ere stafne.
 and suggeð mine cnihtes; þat ic fare forð-rihte.
 Bemen þer blewen; hornes þer stureden.
 11010 blisse wes an hirede; mid bisie þan kinge.
 for ælc wes ifreoured; & ferde to-ward his ærd.
 And þe king for-bæd heom; bi heore bare liuen.
 þat na mon on worlde; swa wod no iwurðe.
 no swa ær-witte gume; þat his grið bræke.
 11015 and 3if hit dude æi mon. he sculden dom ðolien.
 Æfne þan worde; fusde þa uærde.
 þer su[n]gen beornes; seolcuðe leoðes.
 of Ar[ð]ure þan kinge; & of his. here-þringen.
 and sæiden on songe. to þisse worlde longe.

Even so there is no more water added in the mere;
 But when the sea gushes out, and the earth shines with moisture,
 And when it's gone back in, into its former gulf,
 Then the mere swells up and the waves grow dusky,
 Waves are spilling out there, enormously huge ones,
 Flowing out on the land so people instantly get fearful;
 If any man comes by there not knowing anything about it,
 To see the strange sight beside the sea-shore,
 If he turns his face towards the mere there,
 No matter how low born he is, he'll be very well protected,
 The water will slip by him and the man will stay there gently,
 According to his desire he remains there very quiet,
 So he's not any way damaged by the action of the water.'
 Then remarked Howel, high-ranking in Britain:
 'Now I hear described wonderful accounts,
 And wonderful is the Lord who established all!
 Then called out Arthur, most admired of kings:
 'Blow all my horns with resounding echo,
 And announce to my knights that I shall travel straightaway.'
 Brass trumpets were blowing, horns there were resounding:
 There was acclamation in the army beside the active king
 For each was reassured and was marching to his region,
 And the king made proclamation, by their pure existence,
 That no man in the world should become so insane,
 Nor any soldier so stupid as to break his truce,
 And if any man did this, he must endure punishment.
 After these words the army advanced:
 Men were there singing unfamiliar songs
 About this King Arthur and about his warriors,
 And they said in their songs that while the world lasted

11020 neo[re] neuere-mære swulc king; ase Arður þurh alle þing.
king no kæisere; in næuere nare kuððe.

There would never again be such a king as Arthur was in everything,
No other king nor kaiser in any country whatever.

Source of translation: *Lawman, Brut*, ed. and trans. by Rosamund Allen (New York: J.M. Dent, 1992). Line 10958 has been slightly shortened.