Laȝamon’s *Brut*: The End of British Rule

15900 Wa wæs Cadwalader; þe king wes on londe.
for scome he ne mihte fleon; no for hærme her beon.
Neodeles he hine biþohte; hu he faren mahte.
he nom his mâðmes alle; and his m[ê]n deore.
& bah suð ouer sæ. into Brutaine.

15905 and nom þe[r] wickinge; mid Alaine þan kinge.
þe wæs sune Salemonnes. þas sele kinges.
þe swîðe lufede Cadwaðlan; þe while his daiþes ilaste.
Þæ Alain þe king; Cadwalader under-ueng.
& funde him in þan londe; al þat he wolde.

15910 Þurh ellesouen þere; þe king wunede þere.
& ellesouen þere; þe sorhþe wunede here.
Þat wes hunger & hette; nefede þat folc nenne mete.
& þe qualm muchele; þe wes on moncunne.
Þat folc flah in-to wuden; & wuneden in þe cluden.

15915 leien in þa stan-graffen. & liueden bi deoren.
heo l[i]ueden bi wuden; heo l[i]feden bi wurten.
bi moren and bi rote; nas þer nan oþer boten.
Þa ellesoe þer weoren; on fast aþeongen
þa sunne gon to scine; þe rein bi-gon to rine.

15920 þe qualm gon to stunte; men gunnen to sturien.
ut of wude heo droþen; and wuneden in tunen.
Heo speken to-somme; & spileden bi-tweonen.
and nomen heore sonde; and sende in-to Sex-londe.
and cudden heore cunne; of heore quale-siðe.

15925 & hu heo ifaren hafden; ellesoe þeren.

The king of the country, Cadwalader, was distraught:
He could not flee, for the disgrace of it; for the danger, could not stay.
All the same, he thought carefully how he might proceed:
He amassed all his treasures and his favourite men
And crossed south over the sea into Brittany,
And there took up lodging with Alain the king,
Who was the son of Solomon, that saintly king
Who had so loved Cadwathlan as long as his days lasted.
There Alain the king received King Cadwalader,
Providing for him in the land all that he wanted.
For eleven years the king remained there,
And for eleven years the sorrows remained here,
Namely hunger and hardship (the people simply had no food),
And the virulent disease which the human race endured,
So that people fled into the woods and were living in caves,
They slept out in stone-quarries and lived [like] wild creatures:
They lived off bark and wood, they lived off bulbs and weeds,
Off berries and roots: there was nothing else to help them.
When eleven years had almost elapsed
The sun began to shine and the rain began to rain,
The disease began to abate and men began emerging:
From the woods they came and were living in villages;
They were speaking to each other and conversing together,
And they took up their messengers and sent them to Saxony,
Declaring to their kin how they had died from a disease
And what they had experienced for eleven years,
and how that illness had abated and how they were building villages,
and how they had productive land, plenty of gold and silver,
And asking them to come with speed, here right to their rightful country,
For the Britons who used to be here were still living in exile
And dared not mingle at all among English men,
And anyway they’d no idea of the affairs of the English.
These were the messages they sent out to Saxon lands.
The Saxon nobility listened to these messengers
And then fast towards the sea fifty thousand made off
Of men brave in battle, with shields and with byrnies,
With women and children; to this country they went.
In the first onrush came three hundred ships;
Then after that sailed here sixty in convoy:
In sixes and sevens, in tens and elevens,
In twelves and in twenties, in thirties and fourties.
With them came out of Saxony Athelstan the aristocrat;
In London they crowned him, and appointed him as king.
On a concubine this man was begotten by King Edward;
This was the first English man who acquired the whole of England:
He was crowned and anointed: this entire land was his own,
And afterwards he lived here for the length of sixteen years.
It happened in [former days] long [before] this time,
That there was a noble man here who was known as Ine.
The king went to Rome, to the supreme pontiff,
And there he visited with pleasure the altar of Saint Peter,
Taking there as a gift his own precious treasures.
He did still more then in respect for Saint Peter:
From every single house in which a householder was living
(If the wife he had wedded were in the same dwelling)
The King granted one penny to the House of St Peter;
Inne was þe uormeste mon; þe Peteres peni bigon. 
Þa Inne king wes him ded. and his læžen weoren aleid. 
Þa a-feol þat feoh here; fif and sixty þere. 
a þet Æðelstan com lïðen; in-to þissen londen.

15960 & haþen iwuned here; fulle fiftyne þere. 
Þe king his fet custe; and faire hine igrette. 
& cft þat ilke feoh þete. þat Inne king dude ære. 
& swa hit haþē ist onde; æþer seoððe a þisse londe. 
Drihten wat hu longe; þeo læžen scullen īlæste.

15965 þa tiden comen sone; to Cadwaðlader kinge. 
into Brutaine; þer þar he wunede. 
mid Alaine kinge; þe wes of his cunne. 
me dude him to unde((r))-stone; of al þisse londe. 
hu Æðelstan her com lïðen; ut of Sex-londen.

15970 and hu he al Angle-lond; sette on his ævere hond. 
and hu he sette moting; & hu he sette husting. 
and hu he sette sciren; and makede frið of deoren. 
& hu he sette halimot; & hu he sette hundred. 
and þa nomen of þan tunen; on Sexisce runen.

15975 & ȝilden he gon rere; mucle & swiðe mare. 
& þa chirchen he gon dihten; after Sexisce ɾihten. 
and Sexis he gan kennen; þa nomen of þan monnen. 
and al me him talde; þe tiden of þisse londe. 
Wa wes Cadwaledere; þat he wes on liue. 

15980 leofere him weore on deðe; þeone quic on life. 
særi wes his heorte; and sorhful wes his duȝeðe. 
Wið his freond he spac ofte. 
hu he faren mihte. and iw[j]nnen his rihte. 
and wulchere wise he mihte; wið Æðelstane fihte.

15985 & i-winnen his cunde; æft to his honde. 

Ine was the first man who initiated Peter's pence. 
When King Ine was dead and his laws had been put aside, 
Then that silver tribute ceased for sixty-five years, 
Until Athelstan arrived here in this land, 
And had been living here for a full fifteen years. 
The king kissed [the Pope's] feet and saluted him respectfully 
And granted once again that tribute which King Ine had made before, 
And so things have [stood] ever since in this land: 
The Lord knows how long these customs will continue.

These tidings came soon to Cadwalader the king, 
Into Brittany where he was residing 
With Alain the king, who came from the same clan: 
He was given information about all of this nation: 
How Athelstan had come travelling here out of Saxon lands 
And how he had taken all Engle-land into his own hands, 
And how he appointed the law courts, and how he appointed his council, 
And how he established the shires, and created forests for deer, 
And how he set up manor courts and divided shires into hundreds, 
And the names of the villages in the Saxon language, 
And how he was creating guilds, great ones and glorious, 
And churches he was founding in the style of the Saxons, 
And in Saxon he identified the names of the people; 
And he as told about all the events of this land.

Cadwalader was distressed that he was still alive: 
He would have liked to be dead rather than to be alive; 
His emotions were sorrowful, his followers were sombre; 
With his friends he would frequently discuss 
How he might voyage, and regain his birthright, 
And in what manner he might against Athelstan fight, 
And win back his inheritance into his own possession.
Of all the men whom he could procure,
And assembled all the ships which were floating along the sea,
Intending with a show of strength to step upon this shore.
When the army was ready and the ships all equipped,
A wind came from the south, the direction which suited them.
Then the king announced: ‘Now aboard, and hurry!’
And the king went into church to perform his Christian duties
And there he heard mass sung by a celebrated priest.
They king remained on his knees, calling out to Christ,
And he prayed to Our Lord who governs our deeds
That from himself directly he would send him a sign,
If this were agreeable to the Heavenly Father,
As to whether he should advance or abandon the attempt.
As he was addressing God he fell into a trance,
And then he slept deeply, and gladness was granted him
From Our Lord himself who made this light of day.
Then the king dreamed, as he slept on his knees
That there came in front of him a wondrously fair man
Who addressed these words to the King of the Britons:
‘Awake now, Cadwalader; you are precious to Christ,
And prepare for your voyage and pass swiftly to Rome;
You will find there a pope, a priest among the very best,
Who will give you absolution for all your worldly actions
So that all your sins will drop away from you,
And you will become pure entirely by God’s provision
From all your misdeeds, through the might of Our Lord,
And seðen þu scalt i-witen; and faren to heofne-richen.
for no most þu nauere-mære; Ængle-lond aþe.
ah Alemainisce men; Ænglen scullen aþen.
and nauermære Brittiscе men; bruken hit ne moten.

ær cume þe time; þe iqueðen wes while.
þat Merlin þe witeæ; bodæde mid worde.
þenne sculle Bruttes sone; bùsen to Rome;
and draþen ut þine banes alle; of þene marrow-stane.
and mid blissen heom uerien; worð mid heom-seoluen.
in seoluere aþ in golde; in-to Brutlonde.
þenne sculle Bruttes anan; balde iworðen.
al þat heo bi-ginneð to done; iworðen after heore wille.
þenne scullen i Bruttene; blissen wurdan riue.
wastmes and wederes sele; after heore i-wille.

Þa awoc Cadwalader; wu[n]der him þûhte.
strongliche he wes auþred; ladliche of-furhte.
to wulche þìnge hit ðeow wolde; þat him wes itacned þere;
Ofte he lette runen; ofte he lette ræde.
and seowede hit þan kinge; þe wunede in þan londe.

Þe inemned wes Alain; Cadwalader nexte þæm.
Þe king sende his sonde; þeond al his londe.
and lette beoden alle. þa bocares wise.
and talden heom þa tacni[n]ge; of Cadwalader kinge.
Þær heo gunnen ræde; þer heo gunnen rune.

& radden him to taken on; al swa Godd him hafde itakned to don.
þer he bi-lafde; his scipen and his leode.
his wæi and his iwille; He cleopede heom to stille.
Yuni and Iuore; beþen heo weoren him deore.
Yuor wes his step-sune; and Yuni his suster sune.

beien heo weoren him leofe; beine heo weoren him deore.
They were both of them knights and very well equipped. Like this spoke Cadwalader, who was the King of Britain: 'Both Yuni and Ivor, you two are of my people: Listen to my instruction; I will not regret it ever! From heaven there have come to me signs from most high God That I must journey to Rome, to the illustrious Pope. The pope is called Sergius, who has charge of Peter's Hourse; Me and my wife he is to bless and to shrive, And there we shall both live out the last of our days. As long as is for ever, me again you shall see never; But here to you two I am handing what I still hold of Welsh lands, So take this great army and travel to the land, And rule it in delight as long as you can defend it, And I entreat both the two of you, by the King of Heaven, That each of you two must love the other as if he were his brother, Then have that land for ever more, to your own lives' end, And possess it in joy, and all your progeny. Yuni, it has all been revealed to me, as you will now perceive (For Merlin the wise declared this to me in words) Concerning my departing and of my excessive grieving, And Sibyl the sagacious set it down in book-form That I am to fulfil all my Lord's will. Let each now go his way; I bid all farewell and good day!' Cadwalader hastened until he reached Rome, Where he found Sergius, the saintly man who was Pope: He absolved Cadwalader who had been the King of Britain. The king had not lived there above four-and-a-half years When a sickness came upon him, as God wished things to happen; Eleven days before May he passed away from this life And sent his soul forth to the heavenly King.
His bones are securely encased in a golden coffin,
And there they shall still remain until the days have arrived
Which Merlin in days of yore determined with his words.
Let us now go again to Yuni, and to Ivor his sworn-brother:
They assembled an army far and wide throughout the country;
Forwards they journeyed fast, with five hundred ships:
It was not at all long before they came to the Welsh lands:
All the British had been scattered across crags and across cliffs,
Around churches and monasteries, around woods and across mountains.
As soon as they were told that there had sailed into their land
With Ivor and Yuni ten times fifty
Ships which were brimful with very bold Britons,
From every region these Britons travelled to the Welsh lands,
And they loved their own laws and the customs of their nation,
And so they still live there, and they will do for ever more.
And the English kings hold sway in this land,
And the British having lost this land and those who live here,
Since then have never more been the kings here;
So far it hasn't come, that actual day, let future things be as they may.
Let come what must come: let God's will be done!
Amen