Lock / Luck

Warren Stevenson

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POETRY

LOCK/LUCK
(for Barry Lord)

Landing in the rain
at north-of-London Stanstead
taking a gander
seeing the ripoff
car-rental man
holding up my name

Driving the almost
new Renault
sleepy-eyed to Cambridge
stumbling gratefully
into the first B & B,
dreaming of the local ghost

Betines next morning
noticing the faulty boot-lock,
asking the courteous
B & B man
who tries and almost—
then swears in elegant Spanish

On to Nottingham—
race-riot country—
Byron and Bertie Lawrence—
then southwest to dripping
ripoff Bath
(those thatchy buggers)

Thence to Wells
and fabled Glastonbury—
the ruined Abbey—
the hippies guarding
snake-like, portentous
the Arthurian exhibit
(Vivien, Merlin, Mordred)

Always the faulty boot-lock—
it would open, but you know—
trying not to get uptight.
On to Coleridge country:
standing in the rain
outside the old church
at Ottery St. Mary:
seeing the bride hike her dress
and gulp champagne
just before being transported.

North to Nether Stowey—the Conference—
Coleridge's playful ghost—
bafling the best minds
of Britain with my damned boot-lock—
doubling back on a dare
to Glastonbury, hill of glass—
climbing at long last
the legendary Tor
at 9 a.m. — just the two of us—
being passed twice by the same jogger

Standing on the summit
seeing—was it Cornwall?—the Channel—
being whipped by the bardic wind
feeling somehow purified

Descending expeditiously
retrieving near the base
a non-essential (throwaway)
piece of rubble,
then spontaneously singing

"And did those feet in Ancient Time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?"

—and so forth and so on, in my serviceable baritone.

Approaching the car
parked at the base of the Tor,
trying to lock the boot-lock
just once more, for the hell of it:
finding the blessed thing
work like a Celtic charm.
Then and thereafter.

Warren Stevenson