

Castle in the Air

Cliff, crevasse: scan the topmost rocky crag –
there, butting the clouds and buttressed on air
where only, it seems, wildest birds would dare,
the castle scowls above the pass. Way back
in tougher times than ours, not one fort here
but castles topping castles, rock-cold walls
successive answers to destructive skills,
were strength. security, a “No” to fear.

The guards departed through the gaping door.
Black crows make nests on broken battlement.
A motorway commands the valley floor
and thousands pass with free entitlement.
Stones crumble, give in to the rain’s slow wear
and wind sieves through the castle in the air.

Barry Tempest

The Castle

Look at the peasants' fields
their fruits already forfeit
to a hard lord who grasps
in linen, silk and fur,
dines of the very best
and wills with cruel power.

No retribution touches
the curtain wall,
the battlemented gate,
the cold, impassive stone.

Do not now bemoan
these rocks and ruins.
Look at the fields,
their warm prosperity.
Be pleased with history.

Barry Tempest