



*Fortresses in Normandy
– the Boosting of a
Powerful Tradition*
— Charles Coulson

Fortresses in Normandy – the Boosting of a Powerful Tradition

In the monarchical and very typical post-war article by Jean Yver (1955-6), on ‘Les Châteaux forts en Normandie’, the monopolistic powers thought by Léopold Delisle and other French historians by nature to be exclusive to monarchy are axiomatically ascribed to the dukes.¹ Yver’s belief was based on two assumptions, which governed his use of the chronicle evidence – neither is at all satisfactory.

1. A Ducal Governmental Monopoly Asserted

Not before the 1080s, in the last years of his reign, says Yver, duke William I (*Le Bâtard* and ‘The Conqueror’) ‘forbade private war and also laid down the essential principles governing fortification, the bugbears of monarchy. To do this (says Yver) he had only to reassert (*remettre en vigueur*) the Carolingian imperial edict which ordered the destruction of castles, *fortes et haies* built without royal authorization’ – a reference to the famous ‘Edict’ of Pitres of the year 864, over two centuries previously in very different circumstances. At the time, this was an ephemeral peace-keeping measure of very restricted intention and, probably, of still more limited effect.² Yver also cites the much-quoted clause 4 of the joint declaration by William II, Rufus, and the Duke Robert, his elder brother, made after the Conqueror’s death, in 1091.³ This, too, was an emergency measure directed against local lawlessness in the duchy, symptom of which was the erection of minor palisaded earthworks, and the exploitation of natural lairs of lawbreakers ‘upon crags and islands’. Rufus and Robert also forbade the creation of any new castle-lordship (*castellum*), but without indicating whether it was the duke or his barons who dispensed (i.e. waived) the *ban* as of feudal right which is implied by such sweeping prohibitions.⁴ That licensing was a ducal monopoly, despite Yver’s conviction on the question, is more than doubtful. Certainly, he found no clear evidence for his assumption, restricting himself to a scatter of vague allusions.⁵ On the ducal and royal Capetian power to take over feudatories’ fortresses (‘rendability’), also declared in clause 4,

Yver can be more confident (p. 61), averring that the *détenteurs* of castles (custodians, not necessarily tenants-in-fief) had to hand them over when ever explicitly required by the duke (‘nobody might deny the strength of his castle to the duke...’). As he justly puts it: ‘this means that the castellans, even those in fief, could never think of themselves, with regard to the fortress-element of their holdings, as more than the duke’s agents’. This is an extreme, but acute, perception of the principle of fortress-custom, much earlier than the 1080s but from the imperial point of view now obsolete.

Some of this background of custom, which Yver describes from the stance of a quasi-royal duke, may have been taken to England in 1066 – although more than Norman influences were at work in the Settlement; and the element of joint-enterprise merged with the centrist traditions of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy.⁶

But Yver’s second questionable assumption, that ‘private castles’ and baronial jurisdictions (*châtellenies indépendentes*) were inherently hostile to the good order represented by ducal government, would have been shared only by churchmen and monks who were the duke’s *protégés* – and by modern scholars with whose own royalism clerical commentary struck a chord. Yver puts what he took to be the problem with clarity: he would have liked all castle-tenure to have been only custody-at-will, not hereditary tenure-in-fief, as it soon became. Had this ever been possible, ‘the achievement would have assumed decisive importance in the history of the restoration of public authority’ (*sic*). Private castles, Jean Yver asserts, were dangerous and ‘keeping them available to superior authority’ entailed constant resistance ‘to the tendencies which drew the fief out of the sphere of the over-lord’ (*du concédant*). To monarchically-minded French scholars this pressure ultimately extinguished the obligations owed for receipt of the fief by homage and infeudation. Yver’s picture is one of incipient or actual *anarchie féodale* which is the Leitmotif of anachronistic French national culture, still all-pervasive, denying the very nature of medieval pluralism.⁷

Ideas of this kind – put simply, that the only good castles and good governance are the duke’s (or the king’s – Yver blurs their rôles) – have been antiquarian shibboleths at all levels of debate. The results (‘medieval mayhem’) can be expected to be long-lasting. Since many such ideas were carried over into English history it will be useful to examine Yver’s weighty discussion of the relationship of ducal authority to castles with care: his Norman patriotism is a complicating factor. The sub-title to his long article – ‘contribution à l’étude du pouvoir ducal’ – makes his purpose plain. The county or duchy of Normandy was exceptional, he claims, among late-Carolingian provinces in the degree of its identity and dual personality (e.g. p. 28). Early medievalists’ scenarios of castle-building in a ‘scramble for lands and power’ in the collapse of central authority, epitomized by Flack’s phrase ‘brigand today, count tomorrow’, Yver dismisses as ‘simplistic’, referring to the trenchant article in 1938 by Robert Aubenas⁸ which demonstrated the relatively orderly process of change. Unfortunately, this thesis is over-extended by Yver. Rather than ‘a throng of usurpers lacking all right but their own strength’, Yver agrees that it was locally semi-official. Carolingian counts and local governors who took over power, evolving the hereditary counties, marquisates, duchies (and even bishoprics and abbeys) from the time of Charles II (843-77). As disintegration and adjustment to new conditions continued, including the ‘barbarian invasions’, (Yver is quiet about *Normands* or ‘Norsemen’) these great provinces themselves broke down into castle-based territories, the *châtellenies indépendentes*. It is at this stage, placed by Aubenas in the late-tenth and the eleventh centuries, that Yver, writing in a provincial journal and mindful of his *Normannitas*, sees ‘usurpation’ coming in as the political force, and the *châtelains* as the villains, basing themselves on old or new fortresses built with, or without, royal (*sic*) authorization. In this fashion, Yver retains while exaggerating, but puts later, the ‘disorder’ against which his dukes of Normandy were to fight. He would like to think ducal authority had been legitimately acquired – including, in fact, by the new baronial castellans.

This pattern he then discerns in other regions, citing a consensus of provincial historians (the North, Burgundy, Mâconnais, Anjou, Maine and Poitou). These authorities (even as he quotes them) waver between asserting the sub-Carolinian authority of the new, but still large, *châtellenies*, on the one hand, and regarding ‘les châtelains’ as ‘private’, unofficial upstarts, arrogating governmental powers and making themselves ‘independent’, on the other. But this second tendency, the traditional ‘anarchy’ view deriving ultimately it seems from Eudes de Mézeray (d.1683), is very much downplayed conformably with Robert Aubenas’ argument (1938).⁹ The proliferation of jurisdictions which were the *raison d’être* of the new lordship-centres, not structurally defined except by importance and rank, Yver generally judges to have occurred from the late-tenth century, but to have been greatest in the mid- and later-eleventh. Propagandist under-currents may be discerned. Yver’s defence of the legitimacy of the early provincial dynasties was at its most difficult in the case of Normandy, since the Normans had seized control, allegedly recognized as late as 911 at St Clair-sur-Epte. How swiftly they acclimatized themselves, adopting the culture and most visibly the allusive ‘Roman’ architectural style of their unwilling hosts (once called ‘Romanesque’), is one of the many wonders of this extraordinary people.¹⁰ Other questions involve much speculation, with none of the decisive finality which has been attached to 1066 in English history: when and how did lordship fragment and multiply; was it necessarily associated with castle-building – and, if so, with what sort, urban or rural. Why did the Normans disappear?¹¹ Even in England and Wales these are difficult questions to answer.

The earliest *lieux forts* in Normandy (Yver wisely avoids the contemporary title of *castrum* for them) were the late- and sub-Roman walled towns. Some became seats of bishoprics and centres of administration containing ‘palaces and fortresses ... built by *nos ducs*’¹² (Rouen, Évreux, Bayeux) during the tenth century – others (Lisieux, Coutances, Avranches, Sées) lacked the means to figure *sur le plan militaire* – an unfortunate but revealing phrase. It is,

indeed, in terms not of demography, politics, or of economics, but of a strategic network of defence points, that Yver proceeds. This tradition has proved all but ineffaceable. These supposedly military centres he is happy to call ‘castle’ (*château*), although the original nomenclature is various in the extreme; and to see them as superseding the urban communal *castra*. Major dynastic seats (Ivry, Eu, Brionne) were associated with the title ‘count’, often assumed by major and aspirant castle-lords such as the ‘counts’ of Nogent-le-Rotrou and of Ponthieu (*avoué* of S-Riquier) but ‘regularized’ by Yver as received by ducal conferment or sufferance (this at a time when the duke’s own title was often ‘count’ or ‘consul’), and as part, always, of a programme of duchy-defence.¹⁴ The same belief has dominated discussion of castle-building in England after 1066 or, more particularly, after 1071. Thus, the fact that Brionne is not situated in a strategic position (*à un poste capital de surveillance, aux angles du duché*) is still justified as in keeping with such a *politique* or *pratique ducale* because ‘there is every reason to believe that this too must have been a really ancient ducal fortress, before Richard II gave it (permanently) to his brother Geoffrey. The fluctuating frontier of ducal power is also admitted.

Including the reigns of Richard II (996-1026), Richard III (1026-7) and Robert I (1027-35), Yver enumerates from documents ‘about a dozen’ ducal *châteaux*. Chronicle references found by him to non-ducal castles (*châteaux privés*) are taken as still fewer before William I’s minority (1035), falling below his horizon of interest – although they were undoubtedly much more numerous. ‘Castles’ came in all sizes, many in contemporary England also being palisaded ringworks (thegns’ *burhs*), mottes having apparently developed later. The title ‘castle’ was moving down the social (and correspondingly the structural) scale but there is no warrant for supposing with Yver that because chronicle references to them are ‘very rare’ and ‘very localized’ they were necessarily scarce on the ground. To infer ducal control prior to 1035, so that special factors must account for such dynastic castles as Bellême, and

the counts of Perche, Domfront and Alençon, and a few others, is implausible. Yver acknowledges, indeed, the great difficulties here for the question of ducal ‘licensing’, which he wanted to believe in, as it was a matter *très importante pour notre thèse* (argument). But whatever doubts he had regarding frontier castles, he had none regarding ‘private castles’ elsewhere in Normandy, which he avers were *peu nombreux* in the first quarter of the eleventh century. It was the death of Duke Robert the Magnificent (on pilgrimage to the Holy Land) and the contested succession of his bastard son William (aged 7) which ‘no doubt gave the signal for their proliferation’. Very much the same scenario has been advanced for England from c.1139, after the death of Henry I (1135) when King Stephen ran into difficulties.¹⁶ The hypothesis for Normandy is perhaps equally fragile. At its heart is the belief that the building of castles, to which lordship, seigniorial esteem and economic exploitation were inseparably linked at all levels of aristocratic hierarchy, was in all circumstances inveterately hostile to orderly government, itself thought to be the monopoly of established ducal (or royal) authority. Controlling castle-building by this view (a mutation of the rape and pillage scenario refuted in 1938 by Robert Aubenais), kept the lid on ‘feudal’ chaos. Without it, says Yver, ‘L’anarchie se manifeste dans le duché’ (p. 42).

A ‘sudden multiplication of fortifications’ was the chief symptom, according to the clerical chroniclers, with churches subjected to armed lay occupation (*incastellatio*). Coincidentally, it was remarkably widespread: there was a pandemic of castellation, allegedly, afflicting several provinces. ‘Anarchy indeed, broke out in the duchy’, we are told; ‘lords killed each other, churches were transformed into lairs of robbers’, some of the boy-duke’s own household were murdered. Doubts as to whether William could lawfully inherit, and the lens of clerical reportage, have to be allowed for – but so also does the persistent conviction that ‘private castles’ and expansive aggressive lordship were bad. Ecclesiastics who lost protection and stood to lose property put out often lurid horror stories only too acceptable to royalists. Their ‘his-

tory' was a peculiar sort. Given the wide estimates of much archaeological dating, unless timber fortuitously survives for dendrochronology (had it been available then), Yver's assurance is odd that 'this is just the period when, as we know, the independent power of the *châtelains* was strengthened'. It harks back to the doctrinal castro-phobia of Achille Luchaire (1890), taken by him from the early twelfth-century invective of Abbot Suger of Saint Denis, chief minister to Louis VI and 'Gothic' builder of the Abbey. Suger added that 'even within his Crown lands (*domaine*) King Henri I (1031-60) could no longer (*sic*) move about without bumping into powerful castles'. He instanced Montlhéry. The same, we are told, was happening in Normandy – but, in fact, the terms dated to 1091 are quite distinct. These new works were not 'castles', in the proper sense, but 'entrenchments', 'earthworks' all over the place, and 'very safe redoubts' (*munitiones*). These are the sort of extempore 'field-works' depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry and castigated with exact definition by Rufus and Robert in 1091. But Orderic's and others 'castles' have swept all before them.¹⁷ The 'privatization' of elements of town walls recorded at Rouen and at Bayeux, Yver would also like to attribute to the breakdown of 'public' authority after the death of Duke Robert the Magnificent – circumstances such as inevitably led to the sort of scramble for power on the ground which occurred in England after 1066-71 and of which there were faint echoes after 1139.

2. Fortification and Rebellion

It is as the classic manifestation of the 'feudalism-means-castles-causes anarchy' doctrine, which has set its stamp upon English castles, that Jean Yver's statement requires attention. He goes on to enquire who were *les auteurs de ces châteaux rebelles*, this question being 'of capital importance to our *researches*'. The culprits, as in England for 'the Anarchy' of 1139-54, are not named by the chroniclers¹⁸ but Yver seeks to associate his 'rebel castles' with certain much later magnate 'conspiracies'. The villains he distinguishes (p. 44) are the group of sub-comital greater lords who,

more or less 'officially', had exercised governmental powers in the counties, namely the *vicomtes*. Originally, he says, they had not infringed his cherished 'unitary nature of authority in Normandy' nor the dukes' 'sovereign power', being mere appointed representatives (*vicarii*) – but when later they became 'independent castellans', relying on the strength of the castles they 'had built for themselves' and upon their hereditary tenure, this united polity was destroyed. Custody became vested in-fief and so castles were 'privatized', exercising power within territories acquired around them: with the result that 'the cohesion of the great principalities was broken into pieces during the eleventh century'. It is a thesis fraught with contradictions. Whatever may be thought of this theory of primaevial order, destroyed by later castle-building, the vice-comital dynasties discussed (pp. 45-) at length by Yver and blamed by the chroniclers for the great revolt of 1047, can have had little to do with the anonymous upwardly-mobile 'robbers' of William's minority, builders of the 'rebel castles'. These works, physically trivial to judge from the terms used to describe them, Yver believes were doomed by William's great victory of Val ès Dunes (1047). They, together with the greater castles (termed e.g. *arx, turris, palatium, munitio, castellum* etc.) offered little resistance but for three sieges and that of Brionne after the great battle mentioned by Yver.²⁰ Certainly, William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers trumpeted the downfall of many, branding them as the nerve-centres of rebellion – but this is standard royalist panegyric: it does not mean more than saluting an act of power by the patron-in-chief William.

Territorial castle-based power, increasingly vested in feudatories, was ancient, inevitable and continuous. Notions of a centralized state, allocating only terminable custodies at will of castles isolated in the countryside without revenues to meet the costs of their keeping (constantly 'garrisoning'); and implying that all castle-building was by ducal authority, whether great seats or small, simply ignore the contemporary realities of power and government on the ground.

Pride in the image of strong government, and an intolerance of the pluralism represented by aristocratic participation, a prejudice reinforced today by undiagnosed modern statism, have often caused rulers to be praised for demolishing and seizing castles ‘contrary to law, truth and justice’. Bashing barons was, in fact, very unwise but can be taken to be proof of monarchical virility – whereas cooperation was the normal pattern of relationships.²¹ It is a persisting popular misconception that medieval rulers (even such as Henry II) were autocrats ruling by edict, instead of by consensus backed on occasion by the judicious use of force.

Apart from ideology, it is a serious weakness of Yver’s treatment that the social range of castle-ownership is not only restricted to magnates, bishops and the baronage but is carefully minimized even here.²² Archaeological survey in the 1950s was still at an early stage – but the conviction is crucial which Yver represents that provincial rulers in later ninth, tenth and eleventh century France possessed a monopoly power over seignorial castles (at whatever level), such as even late-Carolingian and early Capetian kings could only claim. It is a very hierarchical view.²³ In reality, forts were not built by authority and rendability was seemingly sporadic, little more than a theory, even one of pure nostalgia of late Roman reminiscence.²⁴ Certainly, these ancient regalian rights were vital principles – but the process of rebuilding central power with their aid had barely begun in Duke William’s reign. Indeed, in the north-west of France, ancient Neustria, worst affected by the Norse invasions, more reconstruction was needed than in the Midi. The Norman dukes’ title to inherit that almost sacral authority was much weaker and apparently owed much to Carolingian kingship in England.

Yver’s brief digression (pp. 59-60) to castle-building in England as part of the Norman settlement, whereby Anglo-Saxon thegn’s seats of lordship were superseded, supplemented, destroyed or, in a few known instances, obliterated by new and grander ‘fortifications’, then follows. The clue of *burhs*’ early church sites is important but quite beyond his scope.²⁵ Yver

explains the supposedly much larger number of castles in England by assuming that their construction was *une oeuvre royale*, like the few known urban sites, by taking literally Orderic Vitalis’ famous excuse for the collapse of resistance after Hastings, despite the Saxons’ warlike qualities – namely that ‘fortifications such as the Gauls call castles (*castella*) were very few in England’. Together with Norman cavalry-tactics this (forgetting the Danes and Harold’s bad luck), allegedly, made all the difference. Yver also pleads Orderic’s defence of his English compatriots’ honour in support of his curious belief that ‘the intervention (*sic*) of castles on the Continent cannot have been so ancient, if it had not yet had the time (like mottes) to spread across the Channel’. This combined several fertile errors, not the least that it ignores the late-Roman, post-Roman and Carolingian *castrum* whose affinities with the defensive townships (*burhs* in English) of Alfred the Great (871-99) were very close. Yver’s fall-back position, suggesting some lack of confidence, was to be echoed by R. Allen Brown and must be given as written: *Quoi qu’il en soit, Guillaume le Conquérant a importé le château fort en Angleterre*. If the neologism *château fort* be construed as meaning ‘castle by our understanding’, this might be accurate – but not in the sense which Jean Yver intended.

It may be that the idea of absolute control of castles, explicitly advanced by Yver’s next passage, was partly due to exaggerating William’s role in the takeover of England and to down-playing his partners’ collaboration²⁶ – not just based on his lofty conception of ducal authority in Normandy. Giving fortresses such a large rôle in William’s (presumably patriotic) ‘re-organization of the public peace’ followed from regarding castles as rivals and opponents of central government, very much as the legist Denis de Salvaing had done (c. 1665) when he called them ‘gall-stones in the bowels of the state’. It is a view which only the most royalist contemporary might have shared: certainly the legist Beaumanoir (c. 1280) did not; nor did castle-lords who justly saw themselves and their privileges as an integral part of a balanced and pluralistic polity, in which they were the

rulers' partners in government. To 'defend the realm', consequently necessitated 'the saving of privilege'. The scenario presented by Yver, under the heading *Le monopole des fortifications*, is inadmissible, even as the sort of legal fiction in which the vanished Carolingian power largely consisted. Whatever authority the dukes derived from remote Carolingian affinity, or by apeing royal Capetian propaganda, or merely by force, it did not 'reserve to the duke alone the right of possessing strong-holds'.²⁷ William evidently learned from the troubles inseparable from minority and his dubious title that he had to maintain the leadership which he achieved in 1047, an ascendancy completely beyond his eldest son, Duke Robert. 'Private war' is one of the most hardy modern anachronisms. For his other explanations, Yver relies on the declaration of 'the most necessary' of his rules put out four years after his death, (it is calculated as in 1091) by his sons Robert and Rufus, as noted, and from this he takes only clause 4, the one dealing with fortifications, from the fourteen items.

The *Consuetudines et Justicie* represent both long-term and purely ephemeral concerns, just as does Magna Carta (1215). It was an important vestige of late Carolingian doctrine, held on to by the early Capetians. In 1091, it was an optimistic back-projection contained in the statement that 'nobody in Normandy was allowed to deny the fortress of his castellary (*fortitudinem castelli sui*) to the duke should he wish to have it in his own hand'.²⁸ This is readability. The word used for 'deny' (*vetare*) is characteristic, in various synonyms, of the Languedoc – evidence of its wide diffusion, put in to glorify William I's record. Takeover at will, but for a known purpose and a term expected to be brief, did not amount to 'possession'; nor, by analogy, is the right likely to have been confined to the duke. It was probably restricted, in any case, to castles held in-chief.²⁹ Another sentence, apparently tagged on, is the statement 'and nobody was allowed to make a *castellum* in Normandy'. this is to be understood in the usual way for such invitation-to-treat in the guise of prohibitions. It might be taken as a claim to authorise all castles-build-

ing, were it not unsupported as well as impracticable. The clear analogy is with similar retrospective imperial Capetian pretensions long-since obsolete. In addition, *castrum* and *castellum* also meant the whole castle-lordship or castellary – as the sense of the readability phrase requires.³⁰

Neither of these longer-term provisions has disastrously aroused much interest. Ducal (and magnatial) takeover under readability has been largely ignored by following Yver, or assumed to date from the reassertion of monarchy in France effectively begun in the latter years of Philip Augustus (1180-1223). It ran counter to the prejudice against 'private castles'. Why the supposed *ban* on the pilloried *châtellanie indépendante*³¹ was also buried in silence must be explained partly by its oddity; but mainly because of the excitement generated by the earthwork-specification comprising the bulk of the item (in a list of 14) in English minds taken up by the motte-and-bailey castle-image. Yver did think that 'the castle' was a recent 'invention' in France, but having a much wider perspective than the 'Norman Conquest', he did not suppose that it was an exclusive 'Norman invention'. That was Armitage's distortion.³² More soberly, he acknowledged that 'regarding the majority of baronial castles', William the Conqueror could not act so ruthlessly.³³ The 1091 inquisition is unequivocal he accepts: it does not dispute the legitimate existence of more ancient 'private castles' found everywhere in France in the post-Roman world, from Episcopal walled towns to ephemeral redoubts. British scholars, with J. H. Round and Ella Armitage to the fore, have conjured up a narrowly 'English' 1066 scenario which has lasted.

Sober reflection might have gone rather further. Between the type of earthwork 'in one line without palisading or wall-walks' and limited to the ditch-to-crest height achievable by 'one unaided cast of earth', which lay within the tolerance of the 1091 declaration (compare the robber lairs 'upon rocks or islands', which did not), on the one hand, and the extempore, nameless Norman fortlets castigated by the chroniclers in 1035-47, there is a clear link. It extends

also to the similar ‘adulterine’ (i.e. ‘misbegotten’) fieldworks of the Anarchy, described by Angevin apologists denouncing the incompetence of King Stephen’s reign in England (1135-54).³⁴ All these were symptoms of the disorder deplored in similar language by the obsolete ‘Edict’ of Pistes. Fortifying was then, and since, blamed for the defects of peace keeping. Duke Robert’s incompetent government of Normandy lasting from his father’s death (1087) and then his absence on the First Crusade,³⁵ effectively until he was removed after being defeated at Tinchebray (1106) by Henry I of England, the third son of William I, was perhaps a reminder of the troubles of William’s minority – but there is little indication that the brief *entente* between Robert and Rufus which produced the 1091 declaration had lasting effects. Certainly, clause 4 cannot be taken as establishing, implementing or proving any ducal practice of licensing fortification. It was purely a peace-keeping measure directed at local ambitions.³⁶

In other respects, ducal power at its episodic best did succeed in making a reality out of early Capetian fortress-theory (e.g. in the takeover of fortresses) – but its antecedents were tenuous and its legacy to England rather different. Nobles in Normandy in 1087 simply expelled ducal custodians from their fortresses. Henry I in England was able to take some pre-emptive action but purely opportunistically.

Although the *Consuetudines et Justice* were an ephemeral product of 1091, however great their value for Norman law in other respects, Jean Yver annexes them to the (unquestionable) ‘achievement’ of William the Bastard. Everything broke down again under Robert Curthose (1087-1106). Normandy under Henry I (1106-35) has comparative value for the situation of castles in twelfth-century England, but as an exemplar of the older historiography the remaining three-fifths of Yver’s long article (pp.66-74) must be reviewed more selectively. Duke Robert’s tumultuous nine years, nearly four of them absent on the First Crusade (1096-9), appal the statist (Yver pp.64, 78): they ‘almost annihilated’ the achievements of William

I, whose death was the cue ‘for the barons to raise their heads’. Robert had pawned the duchy to Henry, ruler of the Cotentin as yet. Drawing heavily on Orderic Vitalis’ account, Yver echoes his condemnation of the ‘powerful and savage’ Robert de Bellême. He and other magnates regained possession of their own fortresses (1087) – no doubt justly, in their eyes, but to Yver overthrowing ‘the whole policy of public order’. The large faction of Norman barons cultivated by William Rufus, as king of England, and the activities of Count Henry in the Cotentin, greatly worsened the situation. Castle-building, spontaneous or subsidized in return for use by Rufus, flourished exceedingly. Castle-pacts seemingly went hand-in-hand with the rendability in this fashion, so that with the resources of England at his command Rufus at his sudden death (1100) had reduced his elder brother to little more than titular duke. In addition, the chivalrous generosity for which Robert was famous as a crusader, and the grants he made to raise the money to take troops to the Holy Land, reversed his father’s power-politics, the result of which to Yver (and to Orderic) was anarchy. Robert’s policy, faced with two predatory brothers, was more akin (as a note recognizes) to the traditional Frankish style of rule by patronizing generosity (*de distributions et de magnanimités*).³⁸

Conclusions and Reflections

Without more substantiated and less partisan advocacy it is difficult to discern the legalities of fortress-customs observable elsewhere. Yver detested lay protectorships (*avoueries*) of monasteries but mentioned lay occupation (‘incastellation’) of churches in defiance of *les prérogatives souveraines* claimed for the duke. He wanted to see an imperial power now destroyed in France revived in the province of Normandy. English ‘Normanists’ and Latinists were delighted at the cultural transformation, which Yver helped to bring about in English historiography.

Given the extremely tenuous inheritance in eleventh century Normandy of late-Carolingian comital powers, it may be that the courteous aspects of the recognitory function of Conti-

mental castle-law were submerged, likewise the multiplicity of lesser castellans.³⁹ The remnants, however, combined with successful force and Anglo-Saxon monarchy, in the personality of Henry I (1100-35), have given scope to historians such as Yver to create an enduring tradition. Of authentic Normandy we have hints in the 1091 *démarche*, in Languedocien terms moreover, of rendability and aspirations to license – but whether only excessively, arbitrarily, and as an act of force during one of the episodes of effective ducal government (e.g. 1047-87) is a question requiring careful elucidation. The same applies to Anglo-Norman England, although more plentiful sources including records should make the task of distinguishing right from right rather less difficult.

Royal/ducal power, for Yver, was always right: Henry I's reign as duke (1106-35), whatever his spoiling acts in the Cotentin, had 'rebuilt the Conqueror's rather improvised achievement'.⁴⁰ Renewed civil war between Duke Robert and King Henry culminated in Robert's complete defeat and capture attempting to remove Henry's blockade of Tinchebray castle.⁴¹ Norman castles were given up (some rendered, perhaps) and thereafter cautiously 'controlled'. Yver would like to think that Henry renewed 'the prohibition on feudatories to fortify anew', thus fixing on posterity the endemic conflation of 1091 Norman works with 'castles'. He wrote out of the record the seats of the thegns in Anglo-Saxon England. Yver had, he said, given the true character of those 'rules for fortresses'; unsurprisingly he had no evidence to offer – but he does cite Orderic Vitalis to the effect that Henry demolished 'adulterine castles', taken to mean 'illegitimate' because irregular. This is the term (*adulterine castella*) upon which much of the Angevin allegations of incompetence were made against King Stephen.

As I have shown elsewhere (note 16), clerical polemic was not so legalistic; nor was any supposed rule of royal/ducal licence infringed – since no such Anglo-Norman system existed, but only a remote regalian precedent.⁴² *Aldulterinus* is best translated not as 'illegal' but as 'misbegotten' or 'improper' i.e. put up by up-

starts arrogating the right and (which was crucial) trespassing on Church possessions in the process, the sense it has in 1216 *Magna Carta*. Concessions had for many years to be made by Henry, notably to Robert de Bellême, and to other 'nobles, counts, castellans and presumptuous tyrants', as Orderic put it (Yver, 81). The feelings of the Norman nobility, in contrast, may well have inclined them towards Duke Robert's son, William Clito (died 1128) rather than to 'the fearsome, harsh and inflexible King Henry'. It would seem that ruthlessness acceptable in William I and Rufus was not so. Yver describes the castle-politics of successive crises in Normandy (1111-14, 1118-19, 1123-4) and their accompanying brutalities.⁴³ Closer examination in the light of fortress-customs might yield many insights. Unfortunately, such events have been considered purely from a military perspective, scarcely at all with the tenurial and feudal factors (but *feudal* to Yver was almost a synonym for 'anarchic') in mind, important and fundamental though they were to noble society.⁴⁴

In fact, it does not seem that Henry I's 'castle-policy' (if it may be so dignified) was at all successful in encouraging loyalty among castle-lords – although many regarded William Clito as heir to Normandy, especially after both Henry's legitimate sons were drowned in 1120 in the White Ship disaster, until Clito's death eight years later. Henry's power in his last seven years was troubled only by the difficulty of assuring the succession to his daughter Mathilda.⁴⁵ It is time to turn to a rather different atmosphere. The Robert Curthose style, aptly encapsulated by Yver as one of 'giving away and of magnanimous gestures', represents the noble *milieu* with greater fidelity. Yver seems to have sensitively felt its attraction but obviously preferred the 'blood and iron' approach embodied in *Normannitas* and espoused by the consensus of royalist chroniclers.

Charles Coulson

Fortresses in Normandy – the Boosting of a Powerful Tradition

Abbreviations to Notes

In order of occurrence:-

<i>BSAN</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie</i>
<i>CMS</i>	<i>Castles in Medieval Society</i> (Oxford, 2003)
<i>NMS</i>	<i>Nottingham Medieval Studies</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>LMA</i>	<i>Le Moyen Age</i>
<i>ASC</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>

Notes

1. Yver, J., 'Les Châteaux-forts en Normandie jusqu'au milieu du xiii^e siècle: contribution à l'étude du pouvoir ducal', *BSAN* 53 (1955-6), 28-115.
2. Yver, 61, 95, *CMS*, 20, 40 etc.
3. Yver, 61-2, 111; C.H. Haskins, *Norman Institutions* 4 (p.282); Coulson, 'Freedom to Crenellate by Licence – an Historiographical Revision', *NMS* 38 (1994), 86-137 (many subsequent references).
4. Cf. Counts Garnier and Thierry, already in 911, agreed re Lestorf, *CMS*, 27-8.
5. Yver 50, 53, 55, 60-1, 76, 80, 81, 101, 105: nothing definite emerges.
6. For all this see A. Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, (Woodbridge, 1995); and J. Dunbabin, *France in the Making, 843-1180*, (Oxford, 2000).
7. M. Chibnall, 'Orderic Vitalis on Castles', *Studies Presented to R. Allen Brown*, 43-56; Yver, 111-2, 114 (top); not at all conceivable to Brown, 'List of Castles', *EHR*, 291 (April, 1959), vol. 74 (249-80); *CMS* Index, 'Feudal'.
8. R. Aubenas, 'Les Châteaux Forts des Xe et XI^e Siècles: contribution à l'études des origins de la féodalité', *Revue Historique de Droit Français et Etranger*, 4: 1938, 548-86. Dunbabin, xviii-xxi, 40-3, 54, 62, 145, 200, 235 etc.
9. Yver, 30-2; the infant Louis XIV, A. Luchaire thought, was lulled to sleep by Mézeray.

10. Seminal context P. Héliot, 'Sur les résidences princières bâties en France du 10^e siècle au 12^e siècle' *LMA* ser.4, 10 (1955), 27-61, 291-319 (recently taken up).
11. R.H.C. Davis, *The Normans and their Myth* (London, 1976), 9, 15 etc.: exemplary scientific deconstruction, to give vociferous Normanists pause for thought.
12. Yver even quotes Wace that Caen was 'without castle, wall or kernel' (p.58).
13. *CMS* Index 'Terminology'; Yver (34) has Fécamp in William of Jumièges as *castrum*, with Dudo of St Quentin. Arques (34-5) was apparently the town.
14. Yver (36, 37, no.37) distinguishes 'genuine counties' (*authentiques comtés*).
15. Yver 39: Bellême was 'en terre non-normande'. Orderic says their authority came from a Carolingian official in the 10th century; with 34 castles in Normandy c.1100. Sub-baronial ones are ignored (72, 98) but many in c.1138 (105).
16. Coulson, 'Castles of the Anarchy', King, *Anarchy of King Stephen*, (Oxford 1994), ch.2.
17. Almost every elementary book starts with the sand-castle 'motte and bailey'.
18. The great exception being the Peterborough ASC 'E' continuator, see *CMS* Index.
19. Saint-Jacques-de Beuvron was founded by William I with the castellary from the first (Yver 47, cf. 52). Taking 'castles' as 'military posts' has never made sense.
20. Brionne, Yver concedes, had 'nothing' in common with the timber entrenchments (49). Reducing it took a dual blockade of 3 years *per* Orderic. Yver offers no rationale.
21. Allen Brown (*EHR* vol. 74, esp. 257-8) nuances 'Angevin castle policy' sympathetically.
22. Yver 51-9 e.g. (57) 'knights (*chevaliers*)' did not have castles, since 'la possession d'un manoir est autre chose que celle d'un château', which was a rarity.
23. Yver 55 contrasts *les châteaux légitimes* with the 'illegal' ones of William's minority.

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24. Coulson, 'The French Matrix of the Castle-Provisions of the Chester-Leicester Conventio', *ANS* 17 (1995), 65-86, examines Hugh de Lusignan's pact with Duke William of Aquitaine (c.1022-8) which assumes these early fortress laws.
25. Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, (London, 1989) e.g. 252-6, ch.6, etc.
26. See e.g. *CMS*, Index, 'castellans', 'castlephobia', 'castellarities', etc.
27. Allen Brown, 'List of Castles', 259, distinguishes with difficulty 'royal' and 'baronial'.
28. Yver translates *les fortifications de son château* as being *les parties essentielles militaires* (p. 62 bottom), by ignoring the full meanings of 'castle'.
29. Pp. 61-2; confusing rendability (see *CMS* Index) with 'the system of custody' blurring a vital issue out of ignorance of rendability in France at large (p.63 n.21).
30. Clause 4 thus discouraged the acquisition of lordship on a grand scale, thus protecting existing castellans. Many items were conciliatory not hostile to them.
31. Yver (63) differentiates the 'private' rights of the lord from the 'public' functions of the fortress. Custody in fief belongs. Jean Richard (1960) on rendability in Burgundy.
32. Richard Eales, 'Royal Power and Castles in Norman England' (Liddiard 2002) 41-6.
34. Yver (42) has the useful term *fortifications de campagne* for 'fieldworks'.
35. Robert 'count of Normandy' looms large in the *Gesta Francorum* and other sources.
36. Text taken as 1080, part of the Council of Lillebonne, but re-dated by Haskins to June-July 1091 as the only time the brothers usefully met. Armitage's misconceptions included taking its prescriptions as the standard temp. Wm I exceeded by 'castle'.
37. Christopher Brooke suspected Henry of long-term designs on the Crown, and of encompassing Rufus' death: *Saxon and Norman Kings*, e.g. 157-60; Yver 77-8.
38. But Yver quotes Lucien Musset's defence of Curthose, p.74 note 48.
39. E.g. Coulson, 'The Sanctioning of Fortresses in France: "Feudal Anarchy" or Seigneurial Amity?', *NMS* 41 (1998), 38-104; K. Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France; the County of the Perche, 1000-1226* (Woodbridge, 2002).
40. Yver, 77-94 *passim*. He praised Henry's fortifying in and beyond the peninsula in western Normandy, arresting 'feudal disintegration' (n. 34); he expelled Bellême.
41. Robert kept in Gloucester castle, possibly blinded: Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages*, p.153. Unprecedented treatment of a crusader and brother.
42. A distant echo in *castellatio trium scannorum*, *Leges Henrici Primi*, Stubbs Charters (9th edn.) p.125, x (l.7), alleging royal prerogative as for Henry I.
43. Yver (p.84) on 'the menacing and impregnable fortress of Bellême', taken in 3 days and torched. Robert de Bellême was 'typical of the Norman baron at his worst'. A. L. Poole, *Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, p.105. Yver apparently agreed.
44. The 'opening' of castles to Henry responded to force, with no allusion to rendability; e.g. Rainard de Bailleul's *Maison forte*; Montfort-sur-Risle, 1123: Yver, 86, 92. After victory at Brémule over Clito and Louis VI, the Bellême heir was restored, but Henry put his own *excubitatores* in the symbolic donjons (p.89).
45. In pp. 94-115, Yver discusses chroniclers' castles temp. Henry I and Stephen to 1151.