Reilly, Diane: *The art of reform in eleventh-century Flanders. Gerard of Cambrai, Richard of Saint-Vanne and the Saint-Vaast Bible (= Studies in the history of Christian traditions 1573-5664; v. 128, Studies in the history of Christian traditions; v. 128)*, Leiden, Boston: Brill 2006

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The sizeable three-volume Bible manuscript (Arras, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 559) is doubtlessly one of the most arresting creations of its epoch' (Walter Cahn) [1]. It was made in and for the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Vaast in Arras (Northern France) in the second quarter of the eleventh century. The appearance of large format Bible manuscripts in the eleventh and twelfth century is usually seen within the context of the church reform that started in the second half of the eleventh century, culminating under Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) [2]. Only few of these so-called Giant Bibles antedate the "Gregorian reform", and in fact, the Bible of Saint-Vaast is one of the earliest examples, that have come down to us. Its early date, its remarkable pictorial program and the coherence of its illustrations make the Bible of Saint-Vaast a work of preeminent importance for the development of Romanesque book illumination. A comprehensive study on this codex has long been a desideratum. Diane J. Reilly's book, based on her 1999 dissertation at the University of Toronto, and published in 2006, not only presents the first monographic exploration of this extraordinary codex, it also sheds light on the history of the monastery of Saint-Vaast and its scriptorium in the eleventh century [3]. The general theme of Reilly's interpretation is the analysis of the Bible as a product and visual manifesto of the reform in eleventh century Arras, instigated by abbot Richard of Saint-Vanne (970-1046) and bishop Gerard of Cambrai (1012-1051): "The Arras Bible should be seen as the preeminent tool of its creators in the construction of the political and theological identity of the monastery of Saint-Vaast and the diocese of Arras-Cambrai." (p. 2).

In her first chapter, Reilly provides an excellent overview of the history of Arras, of the abbey of Saint-Vaast and its scriptorium. Founded in the mid-seventh century, the monastery of Saint-Vaast enjoyed some prominence in Carolingian times, and a scriptorium was established. After being ravaged by the Normans, the monastery declined in the late ninth and tenth centuries, when it came under control of the counts of Flanders. Only at the beginning of the eleventh century, the community recovered; a period of renewal and prosperity began in 1008, when the great reformer Richard of Saint-Vanne was called to Arras. The Bible of Saint-Vaast, most likely produced under Richard's disciple and successor abbot Lebuinus in the second quarter of the eleventh century is doubtlessly a fruit of this monastic renewal. It has long been observed by scholars like André Boutemy, Sigrid Borries-Schulten and Walter Cahn that the style of the manuscript is rooted in the late ninth century local tradition of the Saint-Vaast scriptorium (the so-called Franco-Saxon style). A further source of inspiration to the painters of the Bible were works from southern English scrip-

toria, especially Winchester [4]. Building on the achievements of earlier research, Reilly renders the development of the Saint-Vaast scriptorium more precisely and provides a convincing account of the history of book illumination in Saint-Vaast from the beginnings to the Romanesque period. The Bible of Saint Vaast is somewhat eclectic in character due to the incorporation of Anglo-Saxon elements into the dominating late Carolingian framework. The fact that its decoration was executed in two campaigns adds to this heterogeneous appearance. The second campaign took place some decades after the manuscript was finished, probably between 1040 and 1090. Five images (author portraits and the miniature introducing the book of Wisdom) and some ornamental decoration were added in spaces that had been left blank in the first campaign. The manuscript's physical state would have been worthy of more attention; in the text, it is only mentioned in passing (p. 14-15); a description of the textual content and codicological information is found in the appendix, pp. 305-328. The three volumes of the Bible of Saint-Vaast are in a fragmentary state; the tight seventeenth century binding complicates a thorough examination of the quire structure. It has been estimated that of originally c. 624 folios, only 451 have survived the vandalising of the Arras manuscripts in the nineteenth century [5]. The losses of decoration are listed in a footnote (p. 15, note 4): They encompass the Incipits of Numbers, Judges, Ruth, Isaiah, Job, Epistle of Jacob, and the Apocalypse. Two of these - the pages introducing Judges and Ruth (fol. 81, 94) were replaced as early as the late eleventh or twelfth century (p. 309); a fact that remains unexplained; the other pages were removed in the nineteenth century. In respect to the missing pages, it would have been interesting to know, whether and how these books were illustrated in other surviving Bible manuscripts from the same cultural context.

Before analysing the Bible's pictorial program, however, Reilly in her second chapter on "The Lectern Bible and Eleventh-Century Monastic Reform" gives an overview of the function of Bibels in monastic contexts. She assesses the evidence from sources as well as from the codices themselves that help establishing the different uses of these manuscripts for study or for the liturgy. Drawing on a wide range of material from the Carolingian pandects to the Flemish and Northern French Bibles, the Bible of Saint-Vaast is placed into a broader context. Like other Bibles for the monastic readings, the Bible of Saint-Vaast lacks the Gospels and the Psalter (which would have not been part of the readings and thus have been available in separate codices). This chapter is tremendously useful to the student of Bible manuscripts and shows the admirable depth of Reilly's knowledge. Her approach is most appropriately interdisciplinary, building on the results of research in theology, the history of the liturgy, and general history.

In the following chapters, the Bible’s pictorial program is analysed and interpreted against the cultural, theological and historical background of the reform in Saint-Vaast. The main part of Reilly's argumentation rests on the iconographical analysis of selected miniatures, which are presented under three aspects: "Priestly Prophets", "Kings, Princes, and Politics", "Lessons for a Queen". The third chapter, "Priestly Prophets", deals with the miniatures introducing the books of Jeremiah and Ezra. Reilly interprets both images in the light of Richard of Saint-Vanne's as well as Gerard of Cambrai's ideas and writings, and argues that the miniatures encode the ideal of religious and secular rulers under the guidance of divine law. The prophet Jeremiah - very unusually - is depicted as a standing bishop enclosed by a mandorla, beneath a quatrefoil with the lamb of God. The miniature for the book of Ezra shows the prophet - also dressed in Episcopal garments - and a king. Reilly interprets the scene as a depiction of Ezra being send out to preach the Law by the Persian king Artaxerxes. Neither of the protagonists is identified. Although in my view an identification of the

king as Cyrus is more likely, since his name appears in the page, that does not significantly alter Reilly's argument. The encounter between king and priest/bishop is taken to present a model case for the collaboration between royal and ecclesiastical power. Chapter four, "Kings, Princes, and Politics", expands and elaborates the argument of sacred rulership and the fruitful relationship between both powers, for example with the miniatures showing the priestly King Solomon. Accordingly, in chapter five, Reilly looks at the images of model queenship. Under this category, she deals with the illustration introducing the Song of Songs, one of the most ambitious and complex images in the Bible of Saint-Vaast. The Christ-Logos sits enthroned within a circle with the signs of the zodiac, to his left stands a woman. This striking composition is an early example of a depiction of Christ as the Groom and the Virgin/Ecclesia as the Bride, which became a frequent topic in the Romanesque period. Whether Reilly's interpretation as a commentary on the marriage of the laity (and even more specifically: on the circumstances of the marriage between Henry I and Anne of Kiev) is plausible, seems questionable. Maybe the historical argument is a little overstretched here. The illustration at the beginning of the book of Esther is also taken do allude to the theme of royal marriage. It shows Esther before king Ahasver standing in for her people. The scene is conclusively interpreted as a model representation of queenship, promoting the queen as consort of the king and as intercessor. Female virtues and themes like "virtuous motherhood" the devout family and the pious education of children' (p. 255) are fore-grounded in the interpretation of the miniature introducing the Passion of the Maccabees [6]. As Reilly argues, the miniatures of the Bible, which elaborate female themes are designed to put different queenly virtues before the eye of the beholder (p. 285). Once again, one does not have to follow every detail of Reilly's argumentation to benefit from this chapter, which is greatly informative regarding the eleventh century discourse of queenship.

In the sixth and final part, "Continuitiy and Change in the Saint-Vaast Scriptorium", Reilly discusses the images that are not 'part of the Bible's program of secular and ecclesiastical leadership' and that she describes as 'relatively straightforward images of the transmission of the text itself' (p. 286). This chapter also deals with the decoration added in the course of the second campaign, among them one of the most sophisticated miniatures in the manuscript, the representation divine wisdom introducing the book of Ecclesiasticus. A large part of the Bible's illustrations, however, consists of author portraits or scenes that are combined with initials, sometimes taking the form of historiated or inhabited initials. The intimate connection between figure and letter, between author and word is in fact a novelty in the history of illuminated Bibles as is the coherent decoration of every biblical book. This aspect would have been worth emphasising, because it highlights the great importance of the Bible of Saint-Vaast for the development of Romanesque Bible illustration.

In conclusion, Reilly's study is a thought-provoking book. It approaches the topic of Bible illumination from a variety of angles. The Bible of Saint-Vaast is a seen as manifestation of the monastic reform and as a reflection of the ideas of its reformers, Richard of Saint-Vanne and Gerard of Cambrai. As a general argument, this is convincing. More problematic is the notion that the book's pictorial program and its message was actually addressed to kings, queens and bishops, since it is difficult to establish whether the images of the Bible would have been accessible to an audience outside the monastic community of Saint-Vaast at all. Reilly might not have said the last word on the Bible of Saint-Vaast, but her study is a great step forward not only in our understanding of the Bible of Saint-Vaast, but of the illumination in Flanders in the eleventh century, and of the impact

of the reform North of the Alps on the production of Romanesque Bibles - a topic we know significantly less about than about the Italian Giant-Bibles. Reilly's book not only provides a valid basis for further research on a capital work of early Romanesque illumination, but it puts forward a lot of ideas that might stir discussion about the role of art and politics in the Middle Ages.

As an addendum, two publications not included in Reilly's bibliography should be of interest to the researcher in this field: Hirschfeld's comprehensive article on Richard of Saint-Vanne [7], and the catalogue of an exhibition that took place in Arras in 2002 [8].

[1] Walter Cahn: Romanesque Bible Illumination. New York 1982, pp. 109-114, quote p. 109.

[2] Cf. Larry Ayres: Italian Romanesque Manuscript Illumination, Salzburg and the North: Patterns of Perception and Renewal, in: L'Europa e l'arte Italiana, ed. Max Seidel (Collana des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz, 3). Venice 2000, pp. 40-73. - Le Bibbie Atlantiche. Il libro delle Scritture tra monumentalità e rappresentazione, eds. Marilena Maniaci, Guilia Orofino. Milan 2000.

[3] The book is based on her PhD thesis: The Saint-Vaast Bible. Politics and Theology in Eleventh Century Capetian France. Toronto 1999.

[4] André Boutémy: Une Bible enluminée de Saint-Vaast à Arras (Ms. 559), in: Scriptorium 4 (1950), pp. 67-81 (and other publications). - Sigrid Schulten: Die Buchmalerei im Kloster St. Vaast in Arras im 11. Jahrhundert. PhD-thesis Munich, 1954 (accessible in typescript); id.: Die Buchmalerei im Kloster St. Vaast in Arras, in: Müncher Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst 7 (1956), pp. 49-60. - Cahn 1982, pp. 109-112.

[5] André Boutémy: Une Bible enluminée de Saint-Vaast à Arras (Ms. 559), in: Scriptorium 4 (1950), pp. 67-81, esp. pp. 68-69.

[6] This apocryphal paraphrase of Maccabees IV is one of the rather unusual features of the Bible, which is also discussed and contextualised in the paragraph on Flemish Bible manuscripts, pp. 73-82.

[7] Frank G. Hirschmann: Klosterreform und Grundherrschaft. Richard von St. Vanne, in: Grundherrschaft - Kirche - Stadt zwischen Maas und Rhein während des hohen Mittelalters, ed. Alfred Haverkamp (Trierer Historische Forschungen 37). Mainz 1997, pp. 125-170.

[8] Enluminures arrageois. Le scriptorium de l'abbaye Saint-Vaast d'Arras des origines au XIIe siècle, ed. by Laurent Wiart, exh. cat. Arras 2002.

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