



JUDITH OF FLANDERS

ART, BOOKS, AND WAR IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE



Judith of Flanders: Art, Books, and War in Medieval Europe (working title)

Pitch for a graphic biography by Mary Dockray-Miller

Pitch deck art by Frankie Paradise

Premise: This graphic biography narrates the life of Judith of Flanders (c.1031-1094), a medieval noblewoman who lived through almost constant warfare yet managed to successfully craft a fulfilling and creative life; she is still renowned for her collection of deluxe art objects and her religious faith. Through her childhood in Bruges and her two marriages into England and Germany, she

spoke many languages and travelled more extensively than almost all European women of her time. Defying many of our conventional stereotypes about women in the Middle Ages, Judith created ways to develop her own sense of style and expression in clothing, book design, needlework, and architecture, building her own life and legacy for herself and her community.

Author: While I have published widely in academia, this project is my first foray into writing for a general audience. I've combined my professional expertise in medieval women's history with my passion for narrative nonfiction to produce a text aimed at that reader who loves all things medieval: the knights, the dragons, the outfits, and the stories.

Story: The prologue introduces 18-year-old Judith, half-sister to the Count of Flanders, as she is about to embark into her first marriage to Tostig Godwinson, middle son of the English Earl of Wessex. She is anxious about the new life that awaits her in a foreign country. The narrative then proceeds chronologically through Judith's life, beginning with her childhood and education at her brother's court in Bruges (their father died when she was a baby). Her brother's daughter Matilda was about the same age as Judith, and the girls were raised as sisters.



Judith's first marriage into the family of the powerful Earl Godwin put her close to the English royal family – Queen Edith was her sister-in-law and it was said that the Godwins controlled King Edward rather than the other way round. As Lady of Northumbria, Judith established herself as a powerful woman who patronized artists and churches even in the politically fraught years of the mid-11th-century. She hired a clerk, here called Scriptus, as her chief of staff, personal priest, and primary artist. The narrative follows circumstantial evidence to suggest that Tostig and Judith's marriage was a formal, political, and diplomatic alliance rather than a partnership of affinity or personal attraction.

In 1061, Judith accompanied her husband in a group of English travelers to Rome, where she was able to experience art, architecture, food, clothing, and languages from around the Mediterranean basin. She bought art materials like stone and precious metals and gathered ideas for new styles and trends.



When she returned to England, she very unusually established her own scriptorium, where she and Scriptus designed the four magnificent Gospel Books that we still have today – with their gold and silver treasure covers, elaborate illustration programs, and

the words of Jesus Christ marked out in red ink. Her team of scribes, artists, binders, and metalworkers worked under her direction; two of the books even include "donor portraits" of Judith interacting with figures from the Bible.



Tostig and Judith fled to Flanders from England in 1065, when the conflicts we now call the Northern Rebellion, the Battle of Stamford Bridge, and the Norman Conquest were starting to escalate. Judith became a widow in September of 1066: she lost her position, her husband, and her home as part of the collateral damage of those two turbulent years.



As civil war brewed in Flanders as well, Judith took the uncommon step of negotiating her second marriage herself – to Welf, Duke of Bavaria and Lord of Ravensburg castle. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this marriage was a happy one for both of them – they raised two sons and worked together to advance his position in the Holy Roman Empire. In Germany, Judith re-established herself as a patron of the arts, even receiving credit for the atypical design of Rottenbuch Abbey, which she and Welf founded.

Judith died peacefully in 1094 at Ravensburg, praised as a donor, founder, patron, and designer. She and Welf still rest in the crypt beneath the altar at Weingarten Abbey.

Audience: the biography bridges the middle grade and YA worlds.

Length/style: approximately 100 pages, ideally in full color in a medievalist style that allows echoes of the illustrations in Judith's manuscripts.

Comps: The biography fills an empty niche in the market: there are very few graphic biographies about premodern people, and hardly any about premodern women (Joan of Arc is an exception). Three somewhat similar titles:

Grolleau, Royer, Gilfillan, *Audubon on the Wings of the World*

Grolleau, Royer, Vick, *Darwin: an Exceptional Voyage*

Wulf, Melcher, *The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt*

Character depictions and sample to follow

JUDITH

Judith of Flanders is a medieval noblewoman, traveler, and patron of the arts and the church. As the daughter and sister of Counts of Flanders, she follows a traditional path for a woman of her class- marriage to advance the political goals of her father's family- but she also finds ways to express herself artistically and intellectually. Over the course of her life, she designs and commissions books, art objects, and even an entire abbey.

1040



1060



1085





MATILDA

Matilda is technically Judith's niece, but they are about the same age and are raised as sisters. Matilda's marriage to Duke William of Normandy makes her Queen of England after the Norman Conquest in 1066.



TOSTIG

Tostig, Judith's first husband, is the Earl of Northumria (in northern England). He dies in battle in 1066, fighting his own brother for the English throne.

SCRIPTUS

1055



Scriptus is a monk who lives in Judith's household, functioning as her chief of staff. He is an artist, a scribe, a writer, and a project manager. He draws the fanciful animals in Judith's books.

1075



WELF

Welf, Judith's second husband, is the Duke of Bavaria (in southern Germany) and Lord of Ravensburg Castle. The marriage includes affinity and affection; Judith and Welf work together in politics and patronage. They have two sons.



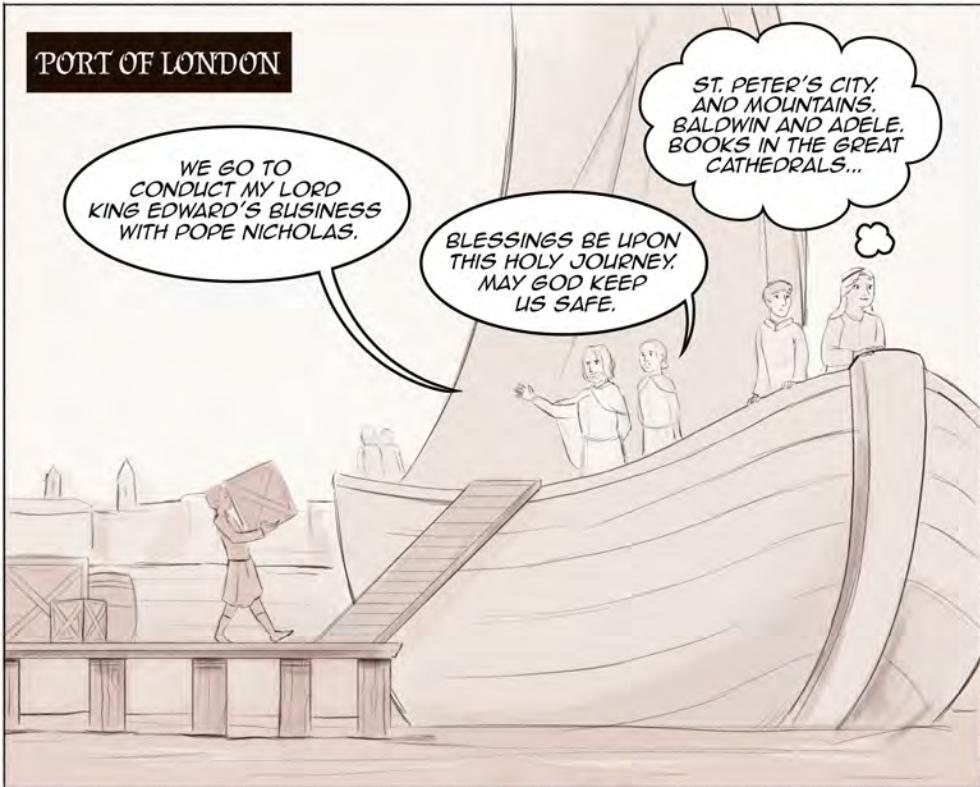
1070



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PORT OF LONDON



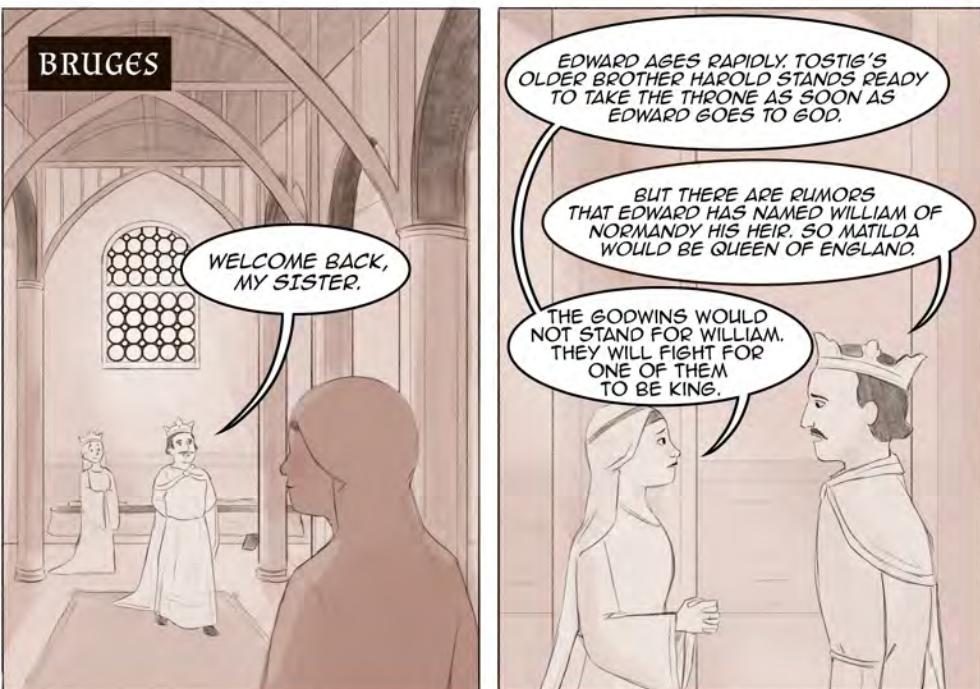
SPEYER CATHEDRAL



ALPINE CROSSING



BRUGES



ROME







ROME



ROUEN

LONDON

AUTUMN 1061



The Life and Travels of Judith of Flanders

1031-1094

Flanders.....	1031-1051
England.....	1051-1065
Pilgrimage to Rome.....	1061
Flanders.....	1065-1071
Holy Roman Empire...	1071-1094

