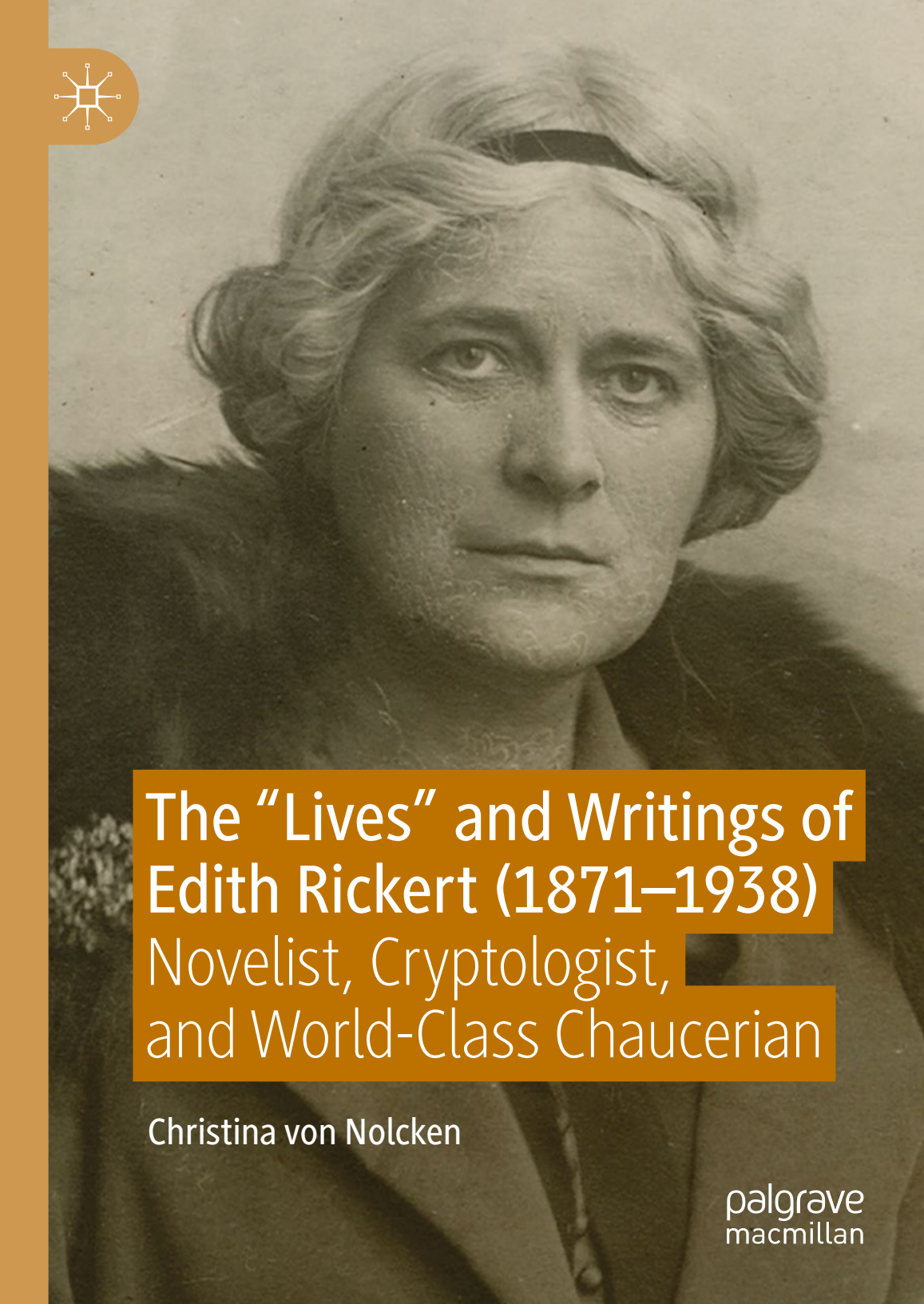

The "Lives" and Writings of Edith Rickert (1871–1938)

Novelist, Cryptologist, and World-Class Chaucerian

Christina von Nolcken

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Prologue: Edith Rickert, "My Book"

Edith Rickert penciled her nine-page "My Book" when she knew she had only a short time to live. She still hoped to gather the fruits of her "score," her "multitude" of lives into a larger book (Fig. 1).

"My Book" (ERP 4/1)[1]

> (1) As I have always supposed, the sensation is one of intense, incredible relief. The little doctor was slow to tell me; but he could not deny the facts. I don't remember now how he said it or what I answered, but we laughed together as we laughed during the operation that was to have prevented all this trouble two years ago.[2]
>
> It is the most curious thing in the world that at the most intense moments of living all sense of the reality of experience should escape us. I remember 3 such moments. The first was when, a girl not quite 20, I stood alone at the

[1] Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library (SCRC), *Rickert, Edith, Papers 1858–1960* (ERP, by Box and File). I have lightly edited passages from letters, drafts, and *Diaries*. I normally refer to Edith as Edith but sometimes as Rickert in connection with her work with John Matthews Manly. I normally use first names for Edith's family and most of those she addressed as such, like Kate Platt (Kate), Sarah McNary (Sally), and Adelaide Underhill (Adelaide). I use surnames for persons Edith kept at a respectful distance, like Lucy Maynard Salmon (Salmon—for Edith "Miss Salmon"), Katharine Lee Bates (Bates—for Edith "Miss Bates"), or women now best known under their surnames, like Eleanor Prescott Hammond (Hammond), as well as for men, not least John Matthews Manly, because they normally addressed each other by surname. I have italicized off-set texts and extracts from Edith's writing.

[2] Edith is confused. In May 1937 she was operated on for a blood clot in her heart (Edith to British archivist Lilian Redstone, June 24, 1937); SCRC, *Chaucer Research Projects Records* (CRPR) 58/7. She died on May 23, 1938.

Fig. 1 Edith Rickert. SCRC, Archival Files, Chaucer Project, Series 1 (apf1-07146)

door of the old college building, looking across the campus in the sunshine of full June. The burden of my commencement speech was over. I had done well—even very well. I was completely happy & knew that I was happy; yet could get no grip of reality into my happiness. I looked down at my pretty ruffled white dress, stitched and hemstitched, inch by inch, by most loving mother fingers; I looked at my gray suede slippers, with a little pang at the thought that they must have cost far more than my parents could afford to spend, but with no dimmest foreshadowing that within two years I myself should put them, scarcely worn, on my mother's poor, thin, dead feet.—But all the happiness that bathed me in that moment as warmly as the June sunshine seemed unreal, & when I went among people again it was absorbed in a multitude of little joys & troubles & excitements of the passing moment.

The second time I slipped away from reality was at my mother's deathbed. Many years before I had had a nightmare that she was dead & had awakened in a grief scarcely to be controlled; but when the reality came, it slipped away at once. Not for a moment could I hold it. I knew that somebody stood by the bedside tearing a handkerchief in the effort to be quiet; but I wondered why she did it. Somebody met the compassionate eyes of friends & answered questions & did what was necessary; but it was not I. I stood outside & observed it all; nothing seemed important now that she was gone; all things, big & little, had become of one size. There was a girl who one day would wake up with desperate grief to find the most beloved one beyond her reach; but meanwhile I could talk of shroud & mourning & flowers. There had been a real world the day before: she had seemed better & I had played for her Schubert's Serenade; the book I had laid down when I went upstairs to find the strangeness of death coming over her face, was an old child's story about a doll Polly Cologne—I think I might still find the chapter & page where I broke off my reading.[3] But by the next morning—a silvery May morning with dew everywhere—the reality of the world had gone & there remained only an intense bitterness that a day could seem so beautiful when there was no reason for it. Nor did reality come back when I sat alone with my dead mother, combing her soft gray-brown hair for the last time. She was not there. I clung to her & held her close—the semblance of her, yet I had nothing in my arms that was real. A week later, I came upon her velvet bonnet & cape hanging in the hall closet, where she herself had put them when we came back from our last walk together, and the touch of them first awakened me fully to my sorrow. That last week should never be this week again!

When John [Matthews Manly (1865–1940)] told me he loved me, again that strange cloud between me & reality. My mind was full of echoes: "Is this the way of it?" Someone answered him. I remember now how we looked

[3] *Polly Cologne* (1881), by Abby Morton Diaz (1821–1904), read "almost to pieces" in Edith's lightly fictionalized fragment "It was the kind of February," 118 (ERP 4/4).

as we sat together on the absurd little sofa of the impossible parlor in the cheap Baltimore boarding-house. I cannot remember the tenth part that he said. Emotion blots out like tears; here & there stands out a word, a gesture, a look. His arm was stretched along the sofa back. I have forgotten what he said that I should have laid my cheek against that gray sleeve; but the memory is still alive in me that flashed through my mind with the touch of the rough cloth: "Is it like this? It can't be real like this. It is happening to somebody else." And when he kissed me for the first time—I can feel yet the warmth of his hand under my chin, to raise it, & the flying touch of the two timid, swift kisses that scarcely came before they passed; but enveloping these memories & all the rapture that followed, the ceaseless beating of the mind to make experience seem real.

I have never had a child. Is it so then, I wonder?

And now I am near the last reality as we in our ignorance call it; & it seems as if all that the little doctor said is a mere formula. We all know that we must die some day—that we may die any day; that any night we may fail to see the morning, any morning fail to see the night. Yet we live daily on the assumption that we shall go on forever. All that has happened to me is that the limits have been set up. I shall go on as before, but for months, not years—perhaps a year. A year is a long time, faced as a whole, short enough in the living, telescoped into nothing when it is done. I have a year, more or less, & a book to write; & I think I can do it. I have a book to write because my life experience has been altogether outside the circle of the normal human round; & it has led to much thinking that cannot come when body & mind & soul are content with their own upbuilding & reproduction & with the upbuilding of the new beings into which their stuff has entered. All these normal activities have been denied me, at times to my great grief & bitterness of soul. But I have lived, not one life, but a score, a multitude, & the fruits of these exotic lives must be gathered into a book, or they will be wasted forever. For years—almost 10 years, ever since my last book was written—I have felt the undercurrent tugging me to the point that I have now reached, but compulsion was lacking.[4] Always I have waited until I should have lived more, have solved my problems, have cleared my faith in life of all that now obscures it; but now that the word of compulsion has sounded, I am glad. I have lived enough—far more than my share—the part of any one actor in the human drama. And perhaps in the writing I shall find that the problems are solved, that the faith is cleared. We shall see.

[4] Edith drafted her final published novel, *Olwen Growing* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1930)/*Severn Woods* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1930), in 1927–1928. I normally refer to the latter, for which Edith received galley proofs and which she was able slightly to revise.

Figs. 2 and 3 6029 Kimbark Ave. (ERP 26/6)

But I am glad that when I heard the news, my impulse was to laugh, & that the only foreshadowing of death is an immense relief.

(2) For nine years I have not had a home. Now I have found one that fits the heart & mind (Figs. 2 and 3). Strange that in a city scarcely older than myself, I should have stumbled upon this little old-fashioned house which must be half as old or more.[5] Imagine first the wide thoroughfare, paved with bricks & shaded with elms old enough to have grown crooked & spread out wide irregular arms: & across the way the florist's garden with its massed geraniums, scarlet & rose, with its border of marguerites & along the iron fence its thin line of sky-blue larkspurs. This I look upon from my porch among the trees. Here I live under my big awning of white sailcloth, among my own gay flower boxes of fuchsia, begonia, petunia, & mignonette, with trailing ferns & periwinkle & hops swinging in festoons. There is one box all of pansies, white & black & ruby & brown, purple & gold, crimson, sky blue & yellow & variegated love-in-idleness. Philip Sparrow who lives high up somewhere among the bricks comes down now & again for a nip at their little faces, & must be rebuked. In the nearest elm is a large bird's nest. The only possible tenant I have seen is a blue jay who flew once on my porch. Perhaps when I have been here longer I shall know; for the time can still be measured by weeks since I came into my home.

[5] Edith's final home was 6029 Kimbark Ave., in Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago. Manly lived at the time at 6030 Kimbark Ave.

My couch hammock swings at one end of the porch—which is 18 feet long—& at the other is my brown rug & my porch chairs & table on which I still keep up my custom, as in England, of having tea. All that my porch lacks is a gay little table cover. I had thought of getting one of Indian calico; but shall I—now? Yes, who knows—?

Sometimes I feel like the Lady of Shalott as I lie up here among my trees & watch the world drifting by. There is much that cuts the nerves: the earth-shaking trucks laden with trunks and ice and beer—all the impediments of modern civilization; the clattering milk carts, the hustling, shrieking automobiles tooting horns of unforgivable sound. But those who go on foot I like to watch: the procession of workers in the dewy morning & after the hot sunset; babies in carriages & toddling all the afternoon with their young mothers that seem to me now but little girls themselves; & in the evening by the dim light of the great arc lamps here & there under the trees young men & women in groups & couples living in their very unconsciousness of life, with no thought beyond the pleasure of the moment, the excitement of courtship that will bring them soon into the procession of wage-earners & baby-tenders. Unlike the Lady of Shalott I have been through much of what the world calls reality, but when one has passed beyond the stage of vital associations, it becomes once more as in the beginning a series of pictures.

Within doors my home is as much my own as without. The old house was made over into two flats. My landlord lives below—a good-natured, shrewd American with a shrill-voiced garrulous Alsatian wife & two gay, spoiled young daughters. They are kindhearted folk, but once up my steep, straight stairway I know nothing of them. At the head of the stairs is Anne Boleyn's father in black & white, 6ft. tall, a rubbing from his tomb in Hever Church made long ago in England.

I have only four rooms. In two of them I live most of the time. I have few things & all inexpensive, yet people say that the rooms are different from all others that they know.

The wall paper looks gray but was chosen because it is full of subtle green & brown & rosy lights. Under one window is my big green couch over which hangs as a tapestry, the green & gold & rosy & blue camel trapping that Kate [Platt (1866–1940)] sent me from India—embroidered all over, a wilderness of flowers. At the second window is my work table, all papers; & on it my Japanese wicker yellow shaded lamp. The third window opens like a door on the porch. In the far corner is the fireplace—no gas, no asbestos—but a deep hollow built to take small logs, so that I need never be without the companionship of living & unrestrained fire. On the mantel shelf I have photographs of the few great men whom I have known, who have contributed richly to my very sense of life: John Burroughs & Dr. Furnivall &

Mistral, some Danish painters.[6] I have wanted to add Edward Carpenter.[7] And above the mantel lamp Ivanowski's painting of Death & the Prince Balthazar made for my story.[8] The angle is formed by my big black cabinet full of manuscript & grandmother's spinning wheel & between them is a little bench made by a carpenter who has done odd jobs for me from a rough sketch of mine. I have stained it black & put on it an oblong cushion with one of Kate's Indian covers—purple linen embroidered in green & copper & gold.

Over the little round table in the corner, where I serve such meals as I have at home hangs my exquisite Indian embroidery, again from Kate, ashes of roses brocade touched with wisteria here and there, & a border of dull crimson silk. It was once the dress of some little Indian child long ago; the opening of the head & neck has been filled in with other handiwork of a later time.

For the rest, the rugs & books & furniture are not distinguished. The pictures are curious perhaps—water-colors of Tibbles [Edith and Kate's cottage in Kent] by various people, some crude watercolors of my own—St. Bartholomew's, Les Beaux, Deerhurst doorway, the Thames, Fuenterrabía, two etchings of Westminster by Gertrude Keeling & one of Alcántara made for me in Algeria by Philip Zilcken, Benda's drawing of Clearing the Land from The Golden Hawk.[9] My piano—but I seldom touch it these days—the lack of technique has almost killed the love of the music.

At the other end of the hall are my little bedroom & bathroom close together, & the small kitchen rather bare & shabby now as I have done little to it. I had thought one day of making a Dutch kitchen of it with blue & white linoleum & curtains, blue walls & shelf paper for the pantry, & my blue & cream color Dutch china that comes straight from south Holland, ranged on shelves about the room. Perhaps I shall do it yet if the little doctor proves to be wrong. He might be wrong. Somehow it seems now as if he had never spoken at all. Did I go down town on Wednesday, or was the whole expedition a dream?

[6] John Burroughs (1837–1931), American naturalist and essayist; Frederick James Furnivall (1825–1910), British philologist and medievalist; Frédéric Mistral (1830–1914), French writer and winner of the 1904 Nobel Prize in Literature. The Danish painters would have included Peder Severin Krøyer (1851–1909) and Julius Paulsen (1860–1940).

[7] Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), British philosopher and anthropologist.

[8] Sigismund de Ivanowski (1875–1944), Ukrainian-born illustrator of Edith's *Folly* (1906) and "The Lords of the World" (1907).

[9] Gertrude Keeling, British artist (exhibited 1896–1940); Philip Zilcken (1857–1930), Dutch artist and member of the French Société des Peintres Orientalistes; W. T. Benda (1973–1948), Polish-born artist.

Lying in my hammock among the leaves & flowers, I cannot believe for a moment that I am going to leave all this so soon. An adventure, to be sure, & one can have no fear of the inevitable; I have always been eager for adventure. But it is the sense of unreadiness that is troubling, of so much that could be done & ought to be done. In this life, just as I am, physically & mentally, I have certain powers & certain opportunities not quite like those of anyone else. So with each of us. It is our business to be used to the utmost. And why, I wonder? Because stagnation means atrophy—going backward—& that is the one crime. The perpetual urge in us toward growth & grasp & power & understanding—that is God. And so we long for fulfilment in every way & denied in one direction, push out in another. The God cannot be denied without that destruction of soul which is worse than any dream of death. But when the body fails in mid-life & in full power, what then? What does one make of all the loss? How does one adjust one's self? I must think.

I have given John [Matthews Manly] the key of my home—with all that this means, & he comes when he wills. And it is because our life together & apart has been as it has been that I have learned from the strange byways of life; & therefore most especially do I wish to write this book if I can.

Acknowledgments

This volume could not have happened without the help and encouragement of very many people.

I am especially grateful to my readers, Professor Susan Kim, Cynthia Barry, and the anonymous readers of the Press. I would like also to thank my editors, Allie Troyanos, Eliana Rangel, Linda Braus, Brian Halm, Linda Irudhayaraj, and Paul Smith Jesudas, along with the rest of the Palgrave Macmillan production team. I was much helped early on by Professors Anne Robertson and Frances Ferguson, and then by Professors Aden Kumler and Timothy Peto, Drs. Caryn O'Connell and Rosalind Bayley, Shirley Lukitsch, John Drazenovic, Oliver and Nicola Payne, and Julia Payne (sorry, Julia, I couldn't use all your transcriptions). I further thank Dorothy Saul-Pooley and Charles Ware for their extraordinarily generous hospitality and for allowing me to read Kate Platt's letters.

Over the years I have been helped by more research librarians than I can name. I think especially of those in the University of Chicago's Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center. To them, and to Dean Rogers, Archives and Special Collections Librarian at Vassar College, I dedicate this volume.

Contents

About the Author

Christina von Nolcken is an associate professor emeritus in the Department of English Language and Literature and the Program in Medieval Studies at the University of Chicago. After receiving her BA, MA, and DPhil at Oxford University, she moved to the University of Chicago where she remained until her retirement in 2014. Her courses were especially on Old and Middle English language and literature. Her publications have included an edition of a handbook for itinerant Wycliffite preachers, reviews, and essays on the Wycliffites and other late medieval English writers, as well as on Chaucer and his late nineteenth-century reception, and on John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert.

Abbreviations

CRPR	Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library (SCRC), *Chaucer Research Projects Records*
EDR	SCRC, *Department of English Language and Literature Records 1900–1947*
ERP	SCRC, *Rickert, Edith, Papers 1858–1960*
HJBR	SCRC, *Office of the President: Harper, Judson and Burton Administrations, Records*
JBP	Vassar College Libraries, Archives and Special Collections Library, *Burroughs, John, Papers* 41/5
JMP	SCRC, *Manly, John Matthews, Papers 1885–1940*
LHJ	*Ladies' Home Journal*
LSP	Vassar College Libraries, Archives and Special Collections Library, *Salmon, Lucy Maynard, Papers*
MP	*Modern Philology*
Networks	*Collaborative Humanities Research and Pedagogy. The Networks of John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert*. Ed. Katherine Ellison and Susan M. Kim. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. 2022.
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004--
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*. Ed. John Simpson and Edmund Weiner. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; online, 2022

Text of CT	*The Text of the* Canterbury Tales, *Studied on the Basis of all Known Manuscripts, by John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, with the aid of Mabel Dean, Helen McIntosh, and Others. With a Chapter on Illuminations by Margaret Rickert* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1940).
SCRC	Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library
TLS	*Times Literary Supplement*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Edith Rickert has been interesting medievalists, especially Chaucerians, as well as students of American pedagogy and literary scholarship, cryptologists, and as a woman negotiating what largely remained a man's world.[1]

[1] On Edith, James Root Hulbert, "Rickert, Martha Edith," *Dictionary of American Biography: Supplement Two*, vol. 22, ed. Robert Livingston Schuyler and Edward T. James (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958): 557–558; Fred B. Millett, *Edith Rickert* (Whitman, MA: Washington Street Press, 1944); [Edward Charles Wagenknecht], "Rickert, Edith," *Notable American Women 1607–1950*, vol. 3, ed. Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul Samuel Boyer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971): 159–160.

On various of Edith's achievements, *Collaborative Humanities Research and Pedagogy. The Networks of John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert*, ed. Katherine Ellison and Susan M. Kim (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) (*Networks*), *passim*. On her pedagogy, Rachel Sagner Buurma and Laura Heffernan, *The Teaching Archive. A New History for Literary Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 88–106. On her place in the history of scholarship, Sealy Gilles and Sylvia Tomasch, "Professionalizing Chaucer: John Matthews Manly, Edith Rickert, and the *Canterbury Tales* as Cultural Capital," in *Reading Medieval Culture: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Hanning*, ed. Robert M. Stein and Sandra Pierson Prior (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005): 364–383; Roy Vance Ramsey, *A Revised Edition of The Manly-Rickert Text of The* Canterbury Tales, with a Foreword by Henry Ansgar Kelly (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010). On her place in the history of codicology, Henry Veggian, "From Philology to Formalism: Edith Rickert, John Matthews Manly, and the Literary/Reformist Beginnings of U.S. Cryptology," pp. 127–147 in *Networks*.

Feminist-inflected studies include Phyllis Franklin, "Edith Rickert at Vassar and the University of Chicago," unpublished paper presented at the Modern Language Association,

C. von Nolcken, *The "Lives" and Writings of Edith Rickert (1871–1938)*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-53264-1_1

She was the first in her family to go to college. She numbered among the University of Chicago's earliest doctoral students and, after many years doing other things, she was among the first eight women to reach the top of the University's professorial ladder. She prepared what remains the definitive edition of the medieval romance *Emaré*, as well as exquisite translations from Middle English, Old French, Anglo-Norman, and Provençal, plus a collection of early English carols, and an anthology of American lyrics. She documented aspects of medieval, and especially Chaucer's, life with a historian's accuracy and a novelist's imagination. She wrote for publications like the *Ladies Home Journal* (*LHJ*) on women's issues, some of which remain pressing today. Her literary theory has recently been described as cutting edge.[2] With University of Chicago Professor John Matthews Manly (1865–1940), she prepared numerous *Readers* and textbooks, including ones that helped put contemporary British and American literature on the academic map. With Manly she "busted" what historian David Kahn has described as "perhaps the most important of the MI-8 solutions" during World War I.[3] And, again with Manly, she spearheaded the eight-volume edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* that scholars have considered "a landmark of American literary scholarship."[4] Yet, as held by Edith's youngest sister, Margaret Josephine Rickert, Edith always believed her true *métier* was writing fiction.[5]

29 December 1984, Washington DC; available in SCRC, Archival Biographical Files, "Rickert, Edith"; William Snell, "A Woman Medievalist Much Maligned: A Note in Defense of Edith Rickert (1871–1938)," *PhiN-Beiheft*, Supplement 4 (2009): 41–54; Elizabeth Scala, "John Matthews Manly (1865–1940); Edith Rickert (1871–1938)," in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, vol. 2: Literature and Philology, ed. Helen Damico with Donald Fennema and Karmen Lenz (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998): 297–311; —, "Scandalous Assumptions: Edith Rickert and the Chicago Chaucer Project," *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* 30 (2000): 27–37; —, "Rickert, Edith, July 11, 1871-May 23, 1938," in *Women Building Chicago 1790–1990: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Rima Lunin Schultz, Adele Hast [et al.] (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001): 746–749; —, "'Miss Rickert of Vassar' and Edith Rickert at the University of Chicago (1871–1938)," in *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, ed. Jane Chance. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005): 127–145; —, "The Handmaid's Tale: Editing Women out in Medieval Studies," https://www.academia.edu/535820/The_Handmaids_Tale_Editing_Women_Out_of_Medieval_Studies, 2010 (here Scala's title differs slightly).

[2] Buurma and Heffernan, *Teaching Archive* 68–71.

[3] In *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), 353–354.

[4] Ramsey, *Revised Edition* 1–2.

[5] Margaret to *LHJ* (July 20, 1956; ERP 11/8). On Margaret, SCRC, *Rickert, Margaret. Papers 1918–1967*; Anne Rudloff Stanton, "Margaret Rickert (1888–1973), Art Historian," in *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, 285–294.

Here too Edith's achievement was far from insignificant. In 1890 her first published story, "Among the Iron-Workers," won first place in a competition for the finest short story by any undergraduate in any college in the U.S.[6] As a young woman she published five novels, some fifty stories and poems, and anonymous sketches for ephemera like the *Chicago Record* and the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. said of her second novel, *The Reaper* (1904), that they hadn't published a work of greater literary merit since Hawthorne. A reviewer described her third novel, *Folly* (1906), as "a great American novel" that would be as much discussed as Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth*. Edith's fourth novel, *The Golden Hawk* (1907), garnered similar praise. Finally, *Notable American Women* considers her much later sixth novel, *Severn Woods* (1930), the best of all (160).[7]

Edith's creative output also goes well beyond this. Her archive at the University of Chicago (ERP) preserves drafts of many further works, often quite as finely written as her published work. These include travel reports and sketches that are now of tremendous cultural interest, as well as poems, drafts of more than eighty further stories and of some eleven novels and novel plans. That she left so much unfinished is largely because, in the wake of the 1907 financial crash, her writing could no longer finance her three younger sisters' education. From 1909 Edith worked for publishers and magazines, prepared textbooks and, from 1914, taught fill-in courses at the University of Chicago. Then came World War I and her work as a cryptographer. Then came her academic appointment and her work on Chaucer. But she never stopped writing. As she told novelist Helen Waddell in 1934, "Two Sundays ago I was 'nagged' by an incident that had come to my attention. I dropped the Chaucer and wrote it through—5000 words in a Sunday morning and afternoon. No, the impulse and the vigor are not dead" (April 14; ERP 1/10).

I was initially drawn to Edith while introducing my students to Chaucer-related materials in SCRC. After reading "My Book," I wanted to reach toward the book that Edith didn't live to write. I knew I couldn't reach its final "fruits." But by drawing on Edith's abundant archival materials I believed I could enter some of the "strange byways of life" that pointed toward them.

[6] *Kate Field's Washington* 2 (1890): 121–124.

[7] Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles discuss examples of Edith's fiction, very perceptively and usually against the grain, in "Edith Rickert and the New Woman Movement," pp. 63–100 in *Networks*.

Edith had been planning a lightly fictionalized autobiography long before she penciled "My Book" In her notebooks she calls it *Eve Awakened*.[8] It almost certainly underlay parts of *OlwenGrowing/Severn Woods*. It would also surely have underlain parts of Edith's projected *Book*. She describes its genesis to Manly in "By Way of Explanation" (ERP 4/1):

> *This is the fourth draft of a novel on the same theme. That the theme is worth developing I have no doubt whatever; that I have done it is another question.*
>
> *The first draft was written in a month in Maryland, in June, 1919, about 90<000>* [words]. *It was almost an autobiography, and you will be glad to know that it is entirely destroyed. The second draft was written slowly in 1921, about 150<000>* [words] *by many removes less autobiographical; it is, however, about half destroyed. Some of it I haven't had the heart to kill yet.* [The first two subsequently added word estimates are partly lost at the edge of the page.]
>
> *The third draft was written in six weeks in the autumn of 1922, just about 200,000 words. It was still more altered to get away from facts and introduced a new technical feature difficult to handle.*
>
> *The fourth draft was written in two weeks this June and contains about 75,000 words.* [Edith was working on its 75,000-word version in January and February 1927 (black notebook; ERP 3/6). Its June version was probably *Olwen Growing*]. *The scenes, the characters, the circumstances are all so changed that I doubt if anyone in the world but you and I could guess the factual basis. But that has to remain in some measure or I cannot write on the theme at all. I am willing to make any changes you suggest, or to write again from the beginning. I cannot imagine that you won't wish me to attempt the theme. It must, in fact, be got out of the way before I try to write on any other.*
>
> *Technically, the book is full of faults, due in part to a new and very difficult method—perhaps impossible, though I think now I see where my fundamental mistake has been, and I think I can remedy it.*
>
> *If the theme is worth doing and if my doing of it shows promise, I am willing to work the book over as often as need be, even to forty and four times.*
>
> *As to publication, my present idea is—assuming that it reaches the proper stage—to ask Mr. Arnold and Holt to publish it, to use a fictitious and probable-*

[8] ERP preserves several notebooks. Earliest is an exercise book (ERP 12/2). Next comes a small black notebook, cut as if for an address book, dating from 1923 or 1924 (ERP 3/6). Next, and overlapping with this, comes a blue notebook dating into the 1930s (ERP 3/6). ERP 3/6 also contains, under "Notes for the Collection of Sketches," slips and cards headed "Getting to Know the World," "Before I went to School," "Tibbles," "In Charcoal," "Yankees All," plus lists of Edith's and Kate Platt's character traits. ERP 3/6 further contains a red address book with notes mainly on Edith's Chaucer researches. ERP 11/5 preserves Edith's actual address book.

> *sounding name, and not to claim credit for it at all. I don't care about the credit; I want to do the beautiful thing.*

In drafts the protagonist's name is initially Ann. Later she becomes "the Child" or is addressed as "You." The drafts cover the protagonist's early childhood and initial meeting with "the Professor." They end with the dim hope that she and the Professor might meet again. The first sentence of a fragment entitled "The Child" (ERP 4/1) anticipates the overall trajectory:

> *The Child used to have a recurrent nightmare of running down an endless dark corridor, running till her little heart almost pounded out of her body, with the echoing footsteps of unknown horrors pursuing her and drawing nearer and nearer. At the far end was a point of* [light]*, sunshine streaming through an open door. If she could reach that she would be safe forever. She could not see who was beyond the open door—could not know it was you; but she fled to you, unknowing.*

Only in *Olwen Growing/Severn Woods* does Edith focus on what came next.

The outlines of Edith's biography are familiar, especially thanks to Fred B. Millett and Elizabeth Scala. Primary sources include Edith's autobiographical and semi-autobiographical drafts as well as her published and unpublished fiction. Obviously, such materials must be used with caution, but more documentary sources reveal how transparently they often reflect Edith's actual biography.[9] These primarily include Edith's *Diaries* chronicling her day-to-day life between 1896 and early 1906 (ERP 1/13-3/7),[10]

[9] As do several of the novels of Edith's colleague Robert Herrick (1868–1938), Professor of Composition and Literature at the University of Chicago from 1893 (SCRC, *Herrick, Robert, Papers 1887–1960*). Blake Nevius describes Herrick's 1924 *Waste*, for example, as "one of the most pessimistic autobiographies in American literature" (*Robert Herrick: The Development of a Novelist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 294). Two at least of Edith's later novel drafts can usefully be read in conjunction with Herrick's novels.

[10] The *Diaries* are slightly out of order in ERP. Their order should be 1/13 (July 11-August 11, 1896); 1/14 (August 12-October 16, 1896); 2/1 (October 18, 1896-March 12, 1897); 2/2 (March 13-July 27, 1897; August 17-September 8, 1897); 3/5 (July 28-August 16, 1897); 2/3 (September 9, 1897-April 13, 1898); 2/4 (June 23-November 1, 1898); 2/5 (November 2, 1898-June 15, 1899); 2/6 (June 15, 1899-April 30, 1900); 2/7 (May 1, 1900-April 24, 1901); 2/10 (April 27-July 27, 1901); 3/1 (August 4-September 29; October 8-October 25, 1901); 3/7 (September 30-October 6, 1901); 2/8 (October 26, 1901-January 9, 1902; January 10-February 23, 1902); 2/11 (February 24-April 27, 1902); 3/2 (February 12-March 26, 1904; September 11, 1904); 2/9 (April 12–16, 1905); 3/3 (June 19-December 12, 1905); 3/4 (December 13, 1905-January 26, 1906).

supplemented by notebooks reaching into the 1930s. There are also letters, starting with the ones Edith exchanged with her family while she was an undergraduate and followed by letters she valued from others. Finally there are carbons of her letters to others (ERP 1/1-12). Some letters are preserved because she, or more likely her sister and executor Margaret Rickert, returned them to their senders. Those dating from 1909 to 1924 from Edith's English friend Kate Platt are now held by Charles Ware, the youngest son of the youngest daughter of Kate's youngest brother Ralph Platt (1877–1960).[11] Only one page from Edith to Kate survives, preserved because Edith copied onto it her first review of *The Golden Hawk* (February 21 [1907]; ERP 1/12). Margaret must also have deposited letters from Lucy Maynard Salmon (1853–1927) into Salmon's archive at Vassar College (LSP), where they are preserved with Edith's letters to Salmon.[12] Edith's letters to John Burroughs (1837–1921) are among his *Papers*, also at Vassar College (JBP); his letters to Edith can be found in ERP.[13] Mary B. Herrick must have deposited her letters from Edith in what would become ERP. Letters exchanged with medievalist Eleanor Prescott Hammond (1866–1933) are among Hammond's *Papers* in SCRC.[14] Letters exchanged with archivists Vincent B. Redstone (1853–1941) and Lilian Jane Redstone (1885–1955) are among SCRC's *Chaucer Research Projects Records* (CRPR).

Unfortunately, Edith also destroyed letters, as on September 23, 1899, and April 15, 1900 (*Diaries*), and Margaret, who deposited Edith's papers

[11] Most of the letters date from Kate's time in India (1909–1921). Family member Dorothy Saul-Pooley is writing Kate's biography.

[12] *Papers*, Vassar College Libraries, Archives, and Special Collections. On Salmon, Louise Fargo Brown, *Apostle of Democracy: The Life of Lucy Maynard Salmon* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943); Chara Hauessler Bohan, "Lucy Maynard Salmon: Progressive Historian, Teacher, and Democrat," in *"Bending the Future to their Will": Civic Women, Social Education, and Democracy*, ed. Margaret Smith Croco and O. L. Davis Jr. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999): 47–72; —, *Go to the Sources: Lucy Maynard Salmon and the Teaching of History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); *Vassar Encyclopedia* http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/faculty/prominent-faculty/lucy-maynard-salmon.html.

[13] Some she lent to Burroughs's biographer Clara Barrus (1864–1931) and are quoted in Barrus's *Life and Letters of John Burroughs,* 2 vols. (Cambridge MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1925). On Burroughs see also, Edward J. Renehan, Jr., *John Burroughs: An American Naturalist* (Post Mills, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 1992).

[14] Hammond left these to Edith (Manly to medievalist J.S.P. Tatlock, August 9, 1934; EDR 18/8). On Hammond, Derek Pearsall, "Eleanor Prescott Hammond," *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* 31.1 (2001): 29–36.

in what would become SCRC only in 1969, also surely destroyed some. No family correspondence survives after Edith's 1891 graduation from Vassar apart from two postcards to Margaret, evidently preserved among Margaret's *Papers* for their pictures (1/2).[15] Were it not for SCRC's somewhat untidy *John Matthews Manly, Papers 1885–1940* (JMP) and similarly untidy *Department of English Language and Literature Records 1900–1947* (EDR), nothing would survive between Edith and Manly apart from one night letter.[16]

[15] One, from Edith, sent from Lincoln and dated May 5, 1933, tells Margaret of her birthday gift, a photograph St. Margaret (probably of Scotland). "I love it & its namesake," Edith adds. The other, undated, from Ethel Rickert, depicts "Jane Seymour's ghost" at Hampton Court.

[16] The night letter is enclosed with a letter dated April 2 [1913] from Manly to his sister Annie Manly (University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections, *Manly Family Papers* 405/101).