

Chapter 20

THE COLLECTOR, EDITH BEATTY (1886–1952)

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[Edith] was a grand person and a wonderful judge of all works of art—manuscripts, paintings and furniture.¹

IN 1955, ALFRED Chester Beatty wrote the above description of his late wife Edith, in a letter to the Harvard University Library curator Philip Hofer. Chester was writing in response to Hofer's recent publication of a sixteenth-century manuscript of Manuel Philes's *De animalium proprietate* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Typ. 222H),² in which Hofer noted that the manuscript, "was given to him [by Edith] in July 1952, only a few weeks before Edith died, on the very day they met."³ Building on previous research into Edith Beatty's collections of furniture and paintings, as well as Edith and Chester Beatty's early forays into buying manuscripts,⁴ this essay will further develop our understanding of this "wonderful judge of all works of art" (Figure 20.1).

As a Person

She was born Edith Dunn in New York on January 9, 1886, one of three children to Jessie (née Robertson) (who moved from Perth, Scotland, to New York in 1873) and John Dunn (born in Ireland, who emigrated to the United States in the 1850s). Unfortunately,

1 Copy of a letter from A. Chester Beatty (hereafter ACB) to Philip Hofer, January 24, 1955, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library (hereafter CBL), Chester Beatty Papers (hereafter CBP) CBP/C/07/1/040.

2 All collection numbers this essay refer to the present location of the Chester Beatty collection in Dublin. Current manuscript shelfmarks take the form CBL, W 000. See Appendix for previous Beatty manuscript numbers where applicable, which took the form W.MS.000.

3 G. W. Cottrell Jr. and Philip Hofer, "Angelos Vergecios and the Bestiary of Manuel Phile," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 8 (1954): 323–39. The manuscript was included in Harvard University, *Illuminated & Calligraphic Manuscripts, An Exhibition Held at the Fogg Art Museum and Houghton Library, February 14–April 1, 1955* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard College Library, 1955), no. 134, pl. 36.

4 Madeleine Korn, "Collecting Modern Foreign Art in Britain Before the Second World War" (PhD thesis, University of Reading, 2001), 1:221–40, 2:594–625; Fionnuala Croke, *Chester Beatty: The Paintings from the National Gallery of Ireland* (Dublin: CBL, 2012); Laura Cleaver, "The Western Manuscript Collection of Alfred Chester Beatty (ca. 1915–1930)," *Manuscript Studies* 2 (2017): 445–82.

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Edith's first twenty years are as yet unclear.⁵ According to Beatty's biographer, Arthur Wilson, in 1907 (aged twenty-one) Edith married Carol Dater Stone.⁶ Carol's father (Charles Francis) was a lawyer with Davies, Stone & Auerbach, and a professor of law at New York University from 1871 to 1885.⁷ A photograph of the young couple appeared in a 1908 edition of the *Evening Journal* after Carol went missing for a few days in the Green Mountains, near Benington.⁸ The marriage ended in divorce around 1911.

Edith married a second time to the widower (and later mining magnate and bibliophile), Chester Beatty, in 1913.⁹ Chester's first wife, "Ninette" Grace Madeleine Beatty née Rickard, had died of typhoid fever in April 1911.¹⁰ Two years later, when Chester moved to London with his children—Ninette (12) and Chester Jr. (6)—Edith joined her fiancé, and on June 21, 1913, they were married at the Kensington Registry office.¹¹ Edith's new brother-in-law, W.



Figure 20.1. Edith Beatty, Philip de Laszlo (1869–1937), 1916, London (England), CBL, Wx 85 © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

5 Information about Edith's parents provided by Laura Cleaver. Edith's brothers are mentioned in a letter from Edith to Abraham Shalom Yahuda, July 31, 1928, Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Yahuda MS Var 38 no. 217. Yahuda was Beatty's principal supplier of Arabic manuscripts between 1927 and 1949.

6 "When she came of age in December 1907," Arthur J. Wilson, *The Life and Times of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty* (London: Cadogan, 1985), 136. Wilson worked for Rhodesian Selection Trust from 1951.

7 J. Gardner Bartlett, *Simon Stone Genealogy* (Boston: Stone Family Association, 1926), 491–93; "Death notice," *The Evening Post*, April 29, 1910, 9.

8 "Lost in Green Mountains," *The Evening Journal*, August 19, 1908, 3.

9 Beatty made his fortune as a mining engineer turned financier, with his initial wealth acquired through interests in North American mines. Before Christmas 1914, he founded the mining company Selection Trust, alongside his brother, William Gedney Beatty (hereafter Gedney), Harold Titcomb, and Arthur Kelsey. Wilson, *Life and Times*, 140.

10 Beatty married first Grace Madeleine "Ninette" Rickard on April 18, 1900, at St. John's Cathedral in Denver. *New York Tribune*, April 1, 1900, 12.

11 Beatty, Ninette, Chester Jr., and Gedney landed at Plymouth on April 20, 1913. Edith appears to have arrived in London separately, "I thought you would be interested to know that Mr. Beatty has announced his engagement to Mrs Edith Dunn Stone of New York. Both are now in London, and I am under the impression that they will be married there." Memo from Lucius W. Mayer (mining engineer on Beatty's staff) to Mr. Hodges dated June 17, 1913, CBP/A/01/4/02.

Gedney Beatty, penned, “Mrs Stone is charming and we are delighted with the event.”¹² The speed of their relationship apparently astonished Beatty’s London staff: “Your brother’s engagement and marriage was a great surprise to everyone here, and I hope he will have all the happiness he deserves.”¹³ The new familial admiration was clearly reciprocated, as Edith presented Gedney with a manuscript copy of a Vitruvius, a fitting gift for an architect.¹⁴

Edith often acquired historic books with the intention of presenting them to others as personal gifts. In these cases, she liked to memorialize the gift by writing inscriptions into the books. She evidently encouraged her new husband to do the same: a copy of *Gardens: Old and New* (CBL, AJ721) that Chester presented to Edith in 1917 contains the teasing note: “Given to me this 6th day of December 1917 by my husband who was so absolutely lacking in the power of expression that he didn’t know what to write to his own wife. Edith Beatty.”

The couple honeymooned in Europe, with the New York *Sun* noting their presence in Paris on July 1913 at the Ritz and again in late September at the Astoria.¹⁵ In London, they resided at 24 Kensington Palace Gardens (“Baroda House”), bought by Chester in 1912 and redecorated to his taste under Gedney’s supervision.¹⁶ Some new furnishings were commissioned specifically for Edith, including a satin-wood cabinet to display Japanese *inrō* for her boudoir, presumably for a collection she already had.¹⁷

It appears that the couple did not at first intend to become permanent residents in London, and they were listed among the *Elite of New York* in 1914.¹⁸ They remained members of both the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of National History, with tickets purchased for the MET Opera for at least the following two seasons.¹⁹ Indeed, Edith did not initially warm to London, writing (ca. 1914) to Chester’s secretary in New York, “London is the same old grey city but I am trying very hard to like it this year.”²⁰ Early plans may have included frequent crossings of the Atlantic. The pair sailed to New York on the RMS Lusitania in January 1915, returning on March 27 on the Rotter-

¹² Letter from Gedney to Mayer, June 20, 1913, CBP/A/01/4/02.

¹³ Letter from Mayer to Gedney, July 2, 1913, CBP/A/01/4/02.

¹⁴ Copy of cable from Edith to Gedney, July 14, 1920, CBP/A/01/4/02. The manuscript was perhaps the fifteenth-century *De architectura* that Gedney bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum in 1941 (41.100.1); it had been purchased in a Sotheby’s sale on July 13, 1920, by Quaritch, the day before Edith’s cable to Gedney. Two printed books in the Dublin collection are inscribed to Edith from Will, both were Christmas presents (AK223 and AG393).

¹⁵ “Harry Welles Sings,” *The Sun*, July 13, 1913, 62; “Other recent arrivals,” *The Sun*, September 21, 1913, 52.

¹⁶ CBL, Chester Beatty Trust papers (hereafter CBT) 1016.

¹⁷ Letter from Gedney to Marshall in London, December 30, 1913, CBP/A/01/4/02.

¹⁸ “Mr. & Mrs. A. Chester (Edith Dunn) Beatty,” *Elite of New York*, 1914, B 32.

¹⁹ CBP/A/01/4/02.

²⁰ Letter from Edith to Gruver, summer 1914/1915, London School of Economics, Selection Trust Archive (hereafter STA).

dam.²¹ Not two months later the *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German U-boat, resulting in the loss of almost 2,000 lives.²²

Despite the conflict across Europe, society life seems to have continued much as normal. In 1915, Edith bought an Overland car, had her portrait painted by John Singer Sargent (NGI.7468), and spent \$54,751 on jewellery.²³ Jewellery continued to be a focus of Edith's collecting interests even two decades later; when she attended the opening night of the opera *Ariane*, one gossip columnist judged that Edith's taste for jewellery was on a par with that of the Sultana of Johor.²⁴ In comparison to Edith's 1915 spend on jewellery, in the same year Chester spent \$1,569 on antiques, \$1,908 on snuff bottles, and \$2,051 on books and manuscripts.²⁵ Edith's early collections also included clothing and furs.²⁶ It was not all diamonds and mink, however. At times during this period, Edith feared she would not see "dear old New York for some time."²⁷ She also made her own contributions to the war effort in London, running "a factory in her house of ten girls and ten machines," and later offering part of Baroda House as an American Red Cross hospital for recovering officers.²⁸

Edith eventually warmed to London and especially to their country estate, Calehill Park in Kent (bought by 1918), where she took to riding and breeding racehorses.²⁹ At one point Edith's stud farm located on the Calehill estate was home to ninety-two horses.³⁰ Indeed, thousands of newspaper listings from the 1920s and 1930s record Edith as a racehorse owner at various meetings.³¹ She was celebrated as one of the few "women owners" who raced both Jockey Club and National Hunt Rules.³² In 1925, the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* offered:

21 Letter from Gedney to Gruver, December 24, 1914, CBP/A/01/4/02.

22 They knew at least two people who were lost on the *Lusitania*. Gruver to ACB, May? 1915, CBP/A/01/4/02.

23 CBP/A/01/4/02. In the previous year, Edith had acquired a tiara for £1,200, CBP/A/01/4/02.

24 "Panorama," *The Tatler*, April 28, 1937, 149.

25 CBP/A/01/4/02.

26 Sydney Cockerell, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, noted Edith's extravagant spending on clothing: BL, Add. MS 52657, fol. 52v. See also Letter from Edith to Gruver, ca. 1914–1916, STA.

27 Letter from Edith to Gruver, ca. 1914–1916, STA.

28 Letter from Gedney to Gruver (?), September 11, 1914, CBP/A/01/4/02. Photographs of the hospital from 1918 are preserved in the Library of Congress, and appeared in the press.

29 *The Chronicle and Courier*, March 29, 1918, 6.

30 "Women in Sport: Varied Interests," *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, December 6, 1924, 660.

31 The earliest reference I found to Edith participating in horse racing was a farmer's race in 1922 in which her horse placed second, *Kentish Express and Ashford News*, April 15, 1922, 6. Two years later, a newspaper columnist noted, "Mrs Chester Beatty owns a couple of fillies, of whom I preferred April's Lady," "Racing of the Week," *The Sportsman*, February 18, 1924, 8.

32 "Women in Sport: A Successful Owner," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, June 18, 1927, 848; "Woman's Year on the Turf," *The Sketch*, December 7, 1932, 432.

Congratulations to Mrs. Chester Beatty on having scored her first racing win already, though she is practically a newcomer to the game...Mrs. Beatty is a woman with many and varied interests...her house is one of the chief centres for the more artistic and musical of London's social sets, for many of her great number of friends, whom she delights to entertain, belong to the artistic world. They do not, however, interfere with her interest in horses.³³

Edith's horses competed in Britain, Ireland, France, and Egypt where she was listed alongside King Fuad as a horse-owner of note.³⁴ In England, Edith was cited alongside Lady Ludlow, Alice Sedgwick (*née* Mankiewicz), as racehorse owners and among the great music devotees in London: "not only giving musical parties, but having musical people around them."³⁵ On her further interests, *The Sketch* published, "Mrs Chester Beatty, for instance, whose Pigskin won the City and Suburban so satisfactorily for backers last week, is very knowledgeable about works of art."³⁶

As a Traveller

For their first Christmas together, in 1913, Edith presented Chester with a copy of Georg Ebers's *Egypt: Descriptive, Historical and Picturesque*, published in 1878 (CBL, AK270/271).³⁷ The gift was appropriate as the family were set to take an extended holiday to Egypt. The party of six—which included Ninette (13), Chester Jr. (6), a maid, and nurse—departed New York on the SS Caronia on January 31, 1914.³⁸ They stayed at Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo, particularly well-situated for the many antiquities dealers marketing to wealthy travellers.³⁹ The holiday, which included a three-week cruise up the Nile, had a lasting impact on the couple's future lifestyle and foreshadowed their broadening collecting interests. From 1928, they become permanent winter residents in Cairo.⁴⁰ With Edith writing about her love of Egypt, it is no surprise that the couple

33 "Women in Sport: Varied Interests," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, March 14, 1925, 584.

34 "A Sporting Paradise," *The Graphic*, November 1, 1930, 204; Vartash, "Talk of the Turf," *The Sketch*, November 2, 1932, 224.

35 "Out-of-Door Gossip: Music as a Complement," *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, March 2, 1929, 504.

36 Marigold, "What Every Woman Wants to Know," *The Sketch*, April 27, 1938, 179.

37 A second book is also inscribed to Chester for Christmas 1913: Francis Alphonse Wey's *Rome* (AK233).

38 Letters from Beatty to Cunard Steamship Company, November 18, 1913 and January 9, 1914, CBP/A/02/01.

39 For more on Beatty's collecting activities in Egypt, see Jill Unkel, "An Old Story Retold: The Acquisition of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri," *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri at Ninety*, ed. Garrick V. Allen et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 51–82.

40 Letter from Beatty to Yahuda, February 14, 1928, Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Yahuda MS Var 38, no. 217; Letter from Beatty to Maurice Nahman, April 23, 1928, CBP/B/03/151.



Figure 20.2. Adoration of the Magi, Coëtivy Hours, attributed to the Dunois Master, 1443–1445, Paris, CBL, W 082, fol. 53 © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

purchased an estate in Cairo around 1930.⁴¹ Their “blue brick” house (*Bait el-azraq*), designed by architect Gaston Rossi, was “built by Mrs. Chester Beatty, wife of the well-known collector, on the banks of the Nile...[and] overlooks a pinewood and the Great Pyramids.”⁴²

The salesrooms of Cairo’s antiquities dealers appear to have been a strong draw. Both Edith and Chester’s signatures are recorded in the visitors’ book of notable dealer Maurice Nahman.⁴³ A receipt from Nahman preserved in the Chester Beatty Archive (hereafter Archive) records a purchase made by Edith in 1925 of three small objects including a bronze Coptic lamp.⁴⁴ While the current whereabouts of those objects are unknown, the fate of other acquisitions made in Egypt is recorded. Alan John Bayard Wace, then deputy keeper in the Department of Textiles, acknowledged Edith’s presentation of a Coptic embroidery to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1928.⁴⁵ To the British Museum, she presented a collection of New Kingdom papyrus scrolls that she had purchased in Egypt between 1928 and 1930.⁴⁶ Referring to additional scrolls for sale with the same (presumed) provenance, English Egyptologist Alan H. Gardiner wrote, “They are hymns and rituals which may or may not be interesting—anyhow they are not (if you will pardon the expression)—not in the same street as the two best of the papyri which Mrs. Chester Beatty bought.”⁴⁷ Although initially thought to come from Thebes,

41 “I love this land and always feel at home here.” Edith wrote from the Semiramis Hotel, Cairo to Yahuda, February 16, 1928, Yahuda MS Var 38, no. 217.

42 “Egypt’s Grandeur: Palaces and Pyramids, Scenes on the Nile and Suez Canal,” *The Graphic*, October 31, 1931, 166; Mercedes Volait, *Architectes et architectures de l’Égypte moderne, (1830–1950): Genèse et essor d’une expertise locale* (Paris: Maisonneuve and Larose, 2005), 362–65.

43 Edith signed Nahman’s visitors’ book about 1928. In 1935, Chester signed the book with their Cairo address. New York, Brooklyn Museum, N362 N14. On Nahman, see Elizabeth Dospěl Williams, “‘Into the hands of a well-known antiquary of Cairo’: The Assiut Treasure and the Making of an Archaeological Hoard,” *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 21 (2014): 251–72; Iman R. Abdulfattah, “A Forgotten Man: Maurice Nahman, an Antiquarian-Tastemaker,” *Guardian of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honor of Zahi Hawass* (Prague: Charles University, 2000), 105–23.

44 Papers related to gifts from Edith to the V&A, CBP/A/02/08.

45 Although no receipt is preserved in the Archive, it was very likely purchased during their stay in Egypt the previous winter as Edith was certainly in touch with Nahman at that time. Letter from Nahman to ACB, April 4, 1928, CBP/B/03/151. In May, Nahman confirmed that he sold several items to Edith, Letter from Nahman to ACB, May 8, 1928, CBP/B/03/151.

46 Of a total of nineteen scrolls, Edith purchased and presented Chester Beatty Papyrus (hereafter CBPap) II–V, VII (see Appendix). Jointly, Edith and ACB presented CBPap IX, while Chester purchased and presented all but one of the remaining scrolls. H. R. Hall, “The Chester-Beatty Egyptian Papyri,” *BMQ* 5.2 (September 1930): 46–47; Alan H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, Third Series: Chester Beatty Gift (London: British Museum, 1935). The only scroll Beatty kept was CBPap I. For this scroll (and a few additional fragments) he paid the dealer Phocion J. Tano £420; Gardiner acted as Beatty’s agent: Letter from Gardiner to Beatty, March 26, 1928, CBP/B/05/022; Alan H. Gardiner, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: Description of a Hieratic Papyrus with a Mythological Story, Love-songs, and other Miscellaneous Texts: the Chester Beatty Papyri, No. 1* (London: Walker, 1931).

47 Letter from Gardiner to Beatty, March 28, 1928, CBP/B/05/22.

contemporary research would indicate that the whole set of scrolls was looted from the French archaeological site at Deir el-Medina.⁴⁸

Following the couple's 1914 trip to Egypt, a visit to China and Japan in 1917 further broadened their collecting interests.⁴⁹ Photographs of their holiday are preserved in an album assembled by Edith.⁵⁰ Six months from their initial embarkation, Chester, Edith, and Ninette (16) left Japan for San Francisco, with Chester's secretary in New York, Esdras Ludwig Gruver writing to Gedney, "they bought a lot of beautiful things which you will be very interested in."⁵¹ On their return to London, Sydney Cockerell, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge), noted "a very agreeable evening" during which he saw a lot of Edith's newly bought Chinese embroideries and snuff bottles.⁵² Research by Mary Redfern has highlighted "off-hand remarks" that suggest "works now in the permanent collection [of the Chester Beatty] were acquired for Edith" during that trip.⁵³ Chester wrote to the dealer S. H. Kuhn: "If you run across any very fine, genuine imperial embroideries or wonderful priest robe embroideries, Mrs. Beatty would like you to get them for her."⁵⁴ Redfern has linked two yellow robes on a receipt from Kuhn with robes in the Beatty collection (CBL, C 1051 and C 1052), and a priest's robe with "500 figures" to the Daoist "robe of descent" Edith presented to the V&A in 1928 (T.91-1928).⁵⁵

As a Collector and Gift Giver

Edith's earliest European manuscript purchase may have been an eleventh- or twelfth-century copy of Jerome and Origen's *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul*. This was auctioned at Sotheby's on November 20, 1912, and later noted in the 1969 Sotheby's sales catalogue as "a present from his wife."⁵⁶ It is unclear if Edith purchased it at the 1912 auction or acquired it later. If it was purchased in 1912, was it a gift to her future hus-

48 Unkel, "An Old Story Retold." Gardiner correspondence (1935), Oxford, Griffith Institute, AR 39–50.

49 Chester Jr. (9) stayed in London with Edith's mother. See CBP/A/01/4/02; BL, Add. MS 52654, fol. 17r.

50 CBP PA 27. A photo of a banquet hosted by Mr. Yamanaka, Japan, April 1917 was published by Mary Redfern, "On Doctor's Orders: Chester Beatty's 1917 Journey to China and Japan and the Development of his East Asian Collection," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 83 (2018): 59–79 at 62.

51 Letter from Gruver to Gedney, July 20, 1917, CBP/A/01/4/02.

52 BL, Add. MS 52661, fol. 15v.

53 Redfern, "Doctor's Orders," 75.

54 Copy of a letter from Beatty to Okita, July 27, 1917, CBP/B/03/040; Redfern, "Doctor's Orders," 75.

55 Receipt from Kuhn, April 2, 1917, CBP/B/03/040; Redfern, "Doctor's Orders," 75.

56 Philipps MS 21163. *Catalogue of Important and Interesting Historical & Ecclesiastical Manuscripts ... Which will be Sold by Auction ... 20th of November, 1912* (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1912), lot 131; *The Chester Beatty Western Manuscripts: Part II...24 June 1969* (London: Sotheby & Co., 1969), lot 42 (W.MS.105). On the Beattys' relationship with Cockerell, see Cleaver, "Western Manuscript Collection," 445–82.

band? More certain is the purchase she made in 1919, when she convinced Henry Yates Thompson to part with his fifteenth-century French Coëtivy Hours (CBL, W 082; Figure 20.2). The inscription on the flyleaf reads, “To A. Chester Beatty from his loving wife Edith Beatty.”⁵⁷ This was a gift befitting a wedding anniversary, as the manuscript itself had been commissioned on the occasion of the marriage of Marie de Rais and Prigent de Coëtivy. However, that the Coëtivy Hours had been a gift did not prevent Chester from attempting to dispose of it in the 1930s.⁵⁸

In 1920, Edith identified another volume for her husband, this time an Italian copy of Cicero’s *Orationes* made for Lorenzo de Medici ca. 1480 (CBL, W 124). This was purchased from Cockerell and presented to Chester in 1921. As with the Coëtivy Hours, it was also included in Beatty’s 1930s Sotheby’s sales, and there sold to Quaritch. However, the volume took a circuitous route back to Edith, as its numerous inscriptions record. Edith added to the flyleaf, “Recovered by the good offices of Sir Sydney Cockerell, July 23rd 1947, bless him, Edith Beatty.”⁵⁹ Edith’s relief on Cockerell’s resourceful return of a once-deaccessioned manuscript gift suggests that she had been upset by her husband’s decision to sell it. The manuscript is now part of the Beatty collection in Dublin, having reverted to Chester on Edith’s death in 1952.⁶⁰

Edith evidently enjoyed offering manuscripts as gifts, particularly to mark significant occasions with her husband. Her largest purchase in this vein was made in November 1925. Under the pretext of horseracing, Edith visited the Cheltenham house of Thomas Fitzroy Fenwick, grandson of the famed collector Sir Thomas Phillipps, where she negotiated the purchase of eight manuscripts from the Phillipps collection for a total of £21,800, intended as surprise gifts for Chester. These were: Dictys Cretensis’s *Trojan War* (*De bello Troiano*) (CBL, W 122); Statius, *Thebaid* (CBL, W 076); *Epistle* by Francesco Barbaro (CBL, W 113); Pontano, *Opera* (CBL, W 108); Augustine’s *City of God* (CBL, W 043); *Garden of Knowledge* (*Viridarium*) (CBL, W 080); Lactantius, *De divinis institutionibus*; and Paul the Deacon, *Homiliary*. Edith wrote to Fenwick following their meeting, “I beg to confirm the purchase of the following books [list above] ... These I shall pay for when they are delivered to London.”⁶¹ A. N. L. Munby later noted that the collec-

57 Jill Unkel, *Miniature Masterpiece: The Coëtivy Hours* (Dublin: CBL, 2018). Other books were acquired from Henry Yates Thompson in 1919. June accounts 1919, see CBP/A/01/4/02.

58 *Catalogue of the Renowned Collection of Western Manuscripts the Property of A. Chester Beatty, Esq., The First Portion ... Which will be Sold by Auction...7th of June, 1932* (London: Sotheby & Co., 1932); *Catalogue of the Renowned Collection of Western Manuscripts the Property of A. Chester Beatty, Esq., The Second Portion...Which will be Sold by Auction...9th of May, 1933* (London: Sotheby & Co., 1933).

59 “Sold my Medici Cicero (formerly Yates Thompson’s) to Mrs. Beatty.” Note added later: “She gave it to her husband and it got sold at Sotheby’s in his sale of 7th June 1932, lot 27, when he was in difficulties owing to the slump. I bought it back at Sotheby’s for Edith Beatty 28 July 1947 SC 1 Sept 1949.” BL, Add. MS 52657, fol. 45v.

60 CBP/C/07/1/141.

61 Copy of letter from Edith to Fenwick, November 1925 (undated), CBP/B/03/162. Both Edith and Chester had previously purchased manuscripts from the Phillipps collection. Chester first visited the Phillipps collection in Cheltenham on October 6, 1920, after which he purchased

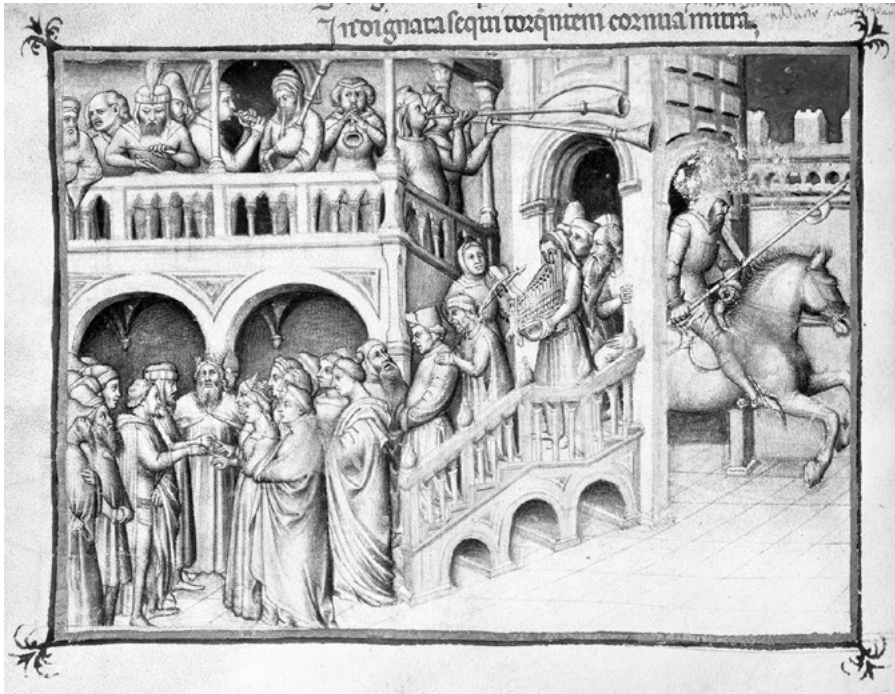


Figure 20.3. Marriage of Argia and Deipyle to Polynices and Tydeus, *Thebaid* of Statius, attributed to Jacopo Avanzo (fourteenth century) or Altichiero da Zevio (ca. 1350–ca. 1390), ca. 1380, Padua, CBL, W 076 © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

tion “included two books which for forty years Fenwick had been resolute in his refusal to sell at any price.”⁶² One was the *Thebaid* of Statius, “one of only two Meerman manuscripts Fenwick had refused to sell to the Prussian Government in 1887.”⁶³ The other was the copy of Dictys Cretensis’s *Trojan War* that Fenwick had refused to sell to Chester “as recently as August 1924.”⁶⁴

Edith’s surprise gift may also indicate a competitive streak between the couple as two active collectors. Chester had already shown strong interest in Fenwick’s collection, having purchased a number of manuscripts in 1920.⁶⁵ The above eight manuscripts, as

twenty-four manuscripts and two fragments from Fenwick. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Phillipps-Robinson c. 719; Cleaver, “Western Manuscript Collection,” 450–51.

⁶² Excerpt from publication, copy sent by Munby to Beatty, October 18, 1957, CBP/C/07/1/058. A. L. N. Munby, *The Dispersal of the Phillipps Library*, Phillipps Studies 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 71–77.

⁶³ CBP/C/07/1/058.

⁶⁴ CBP/C/07/1/058.

⁶⁵ Cleaver, “Western Manuscript Collection,” 450–51.

Toby Burrows has noted, included three of the top fifteen listed by Chester in his earlier notes on the “order in which Mr F places manuscripts.”⁶⁶ The *Thebaid*, listed as number two behind the *Book of the Chase*, was described by Chester as, “a beautiful book... not for sale except at a high price £3000–£5000,” to which he added that he, “would be glad to add such a book to my collection.” (Figure 20.3).⁶⁷ The *Dictys Cretensis*, at number six, was, as Chester wrote, “most remarkable...would like to secure the book. It is probably worth £3000–£4000. Mr Fenwick does not wish to sell same. Would probably... take £4500 to £5000 for it.”⁶⁸ Edith paid £7,000 for each. Paying well over Chester’s estimates, she clearly set out not to make a bargain or even pay market price, but to secure the manuscripts for her husband. The third book from Fenwick’s list was the *Epistle* of Francesco Barbaro, for which Edith paid £3,000. Of the other books purchased that November, Chester had written as follows: *Viridarium*, “The drawings of the beasts and animals in the margins are quite good but the writing is atrocious. Not interested;” *De civitate Dei*, “this book was priced £1200 before that was too high;” and he had rejected Paul the Deacon’s *Homiliary* due to its high asking price of £300. On a more positive note, Chester scribbled “fit for any museum” about Pontano’s *Opera*. Edith, on the other hand, was more animated in her excitement, writing to Fenwick: “Needless to say on arrival [Baroda House] I was bombarded with questions [from Chester]—‘Had I seen any books—if so which?’ &c. &c. To which I replied, ‘I spent the whole evening with the *Book of the Chase* No. 10298,’ mentally hoping the Lord would forgive me...I know in my soul I will not be strongminded enough to keep the books until Xmas, so when they arrive I will give him one a day, reserving the two great ones for Xmas and birthday in February.”⁶⁹ Of the at least nineteen Phillipps manuscripts and single folios now in the Chester Beatty, Dublin, six were among those purchased by Edith in 1925.⁷⁰

As with her husband, Edith’s manuscript interests were broad. Her dedication note in a richly illuminated “Collection of Traditions” (*Jami’ al-usul li-ahadith al-rasul*), produced in Timurid-ruled Shiraz (Iran) in 1436 (CBL, Ar 5282, Figure 20.4), reads, “To my dear husband on our 11th wedding anniversary, June 21st 1924, from his wife, Edith Beatty.”⁷¹ Edith also inscribed a seventeenth-century Indian Qur’an (CBL, Is 1562), “Dad

⁶⁶ “Notes by Mr. A. Chester Beatty on the Phillipps Collection.” Notebook now at Sotheby’s, London. Edith used the notebook as a guide in November 1925. “Thomas Phillipps and Alfred Chester Beatty,” *Reconstructing the Phillipps Collection: Toby Burrows: News from an EU project aimed at reconstructing the manuscript collection of Sir Thomas Phillipps*, <https://tobyburrows.wordpress.com/tag/edith-beatty/>, accessed September 5, 2022.

⁶⁷ Pencil note added by Joan Kingsford Wood, Beatty’s librarian at Baroda House: “Received from Office Oct. 7. 1946.” “Notes...on the Phillipps Collection.”

⁶⁸ “Notes...on the Phillipps Collection.”

⁶⁹ Excerpt from a letter Edith wrote to Fenwick, November 13, 1925, quoted in CBP/C/07/1/058. Cockerell saw the recently acquired collection on December 2, 1925: BL, Add. MS 52662, fol. 58r.

⁷⁰ CBL, Arm 558, W 017, W 022, W 029, W 043, W 066, W 076, W 080, W 108, W 113, W 122, W 143.8, W 167, W 169, W 173.1–3, W 179, and W 191 (Edith’s purchases in bold).

⁷¹ This manuscript has an eighteenth-century Istanbul library seal (owned by[?] Şehid Ali Pasha, aka Silahdar Damat Ali Pasha (1667–August 5, 1716), Ottoman vizier and general), but it is not clear





Figure 20.4. Double-page illuminated frontispiece, *Collection of Traditions (Jāmi' al-uṣūl li-aḥādith al-rasūl)*, Majd al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 1210), text copied by Muḥammad ibn Ḥājji al-Ḥāfiz, Timurid Shiraz (Iran), Ramadan 839H (March 1436), CBL, Ar 5282 © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

with love from Ede, Feb. 7th 1929." Glimpses of her support of Chester's collecting practices can also be gleaned from the Beatty Archive. On a letter from Liberty & Co, Edith noted, "Please draw Mr Beatty's attention to this": a large Qu'ran and a Jami dated 1502–1503 (908H). No manuscript of that date by the Timurid poet Nūr al-Dīn Jāmī exists in the collection.

Edith's manuscripts collection swelled after 1933, following Chester's disappointing attempt to sell his European manuscripts. Two of three planned sales were held at Sotheby's, London, but bidding was both financially and personally embarrassing.⁷² Following the cancelled final sale, Chester presented most of his "Western manuscripts" to Edith, the Coëtivy Hours being among the exceptions.⁷³ Edith, however, continued to present her husband with rare works. Her Christmas gift to Chester in 1937, was an illuminated Greek glossed Job dated to 1577 (CBL, W 136); in 1947 she presented him with an Armenian Gospel book completed in 1596 (CBL,



where Edith bought it. On Chester's interest in Timurid manuscripts, see Moya Carey, "The 'Greatest of all Bibliophiles': Baysunghur in the Collection of Chester Beatty," *Orientalism* 51.3 (2020): 2–9.

72 *The Chester Beatty Western Manuscripts: Part I...3 December 1968* (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1968); *Chester Beatty Western Manuscripts: Part II*; Cleaver, "Western Manuscript Collection," 447–48.

73 "In the Estate of Mrs. Edith Beatty, Deceased: Manuscripts," no. 64 was marked as "Delete," with a note pencilled that read, "Coëtivy Hours, belonged to ACB," CBP/B/07/1/141.



Figure 20.5. Evangelist portrait and opening of the Gospel of Matthew, Gospel book, Martiros Khizants'i, 1596, Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey), CBL, Arm 573.10 © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

Arm 573) (Figure 20.5), and in April 1948 she gave him a book bound by Viennese bookbinder, Georg Friedrich Krauss (CBL, BB769). Inscriptions in other books still in the collection reveal volumes gifted in the other direction: a copy of *The Odyssey of Homer* (Emery Walker, 1932) which was given to Chester by its publisher Wilfred Merton in 1937 (CBL, AB699), was, only two weeks later, re-gifted to Edith, "Because this is more her line than mine."

Edith also purchased manuscripts for her own collection. In 1920, she bought herself a fragment of the tenth-century Corvey Gospels

from the Phillipps Collection.⁷⁴ In January 1929, she purchased an Arabic manuscript, "Biographical Dictionary of Prominent Women" (*Akhbar al-nisa'*), by 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Jamil al-Mu'afiri al-Malaqi dated 1185–1186 and produced in Damascus (CBL, Ar 3016) from the scholar and book-dealer Abraham Shalom Yahuda.⁷⁵ In July of

⁷⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Phillipps-Robinson c. 719 fol. 23; Cleaver, "Western Manuscript Collection," 451.

⁷⁵ "Purchased by Mrs Beatty from Dr. Yahuda...Pro Yahuda, Jan. 1929," CBP/B/02/3/02. This

the same year, she acquired a fourteenth-century “Book of Devotions” from the Sotheby’s Holford sale through Maggs Bros. It was also Edith who purchased a copy of Crescentius’s *Liber ruralium commodorum* dated 1427 from a Sotheby’s sale on April 19, 1948. As research and digitization of the collections of the Chester Beatty continue, it is expected that other manuscripts that passed through Edith’s hands will come to light through similar inscriptions, particularly within the Islamic collections. Her guiding interests may explain the number of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manuscripts dedicated to horses and their care in the collection.

Edith’s personal collecting reached its zenith in the 1930s, when refurbishments at Baroda House led her to make a flurry of purchases to decorate the newly renovated rooms. By her efforts the ground floor was revamped with French furnishings and *objets d’art*, its walls hung with paintings by Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Cubist, and other Modernist artists. What had been Chester’s Chinese dining room became a French drawing room, hung with Degas’s *A Roman Beggar Woman*, Renoir’s *Mother and Child*, Pissarro’s *The Hermitage at Pontoise*, and Courbet’s *Low Tide at Trouville*.⁷⁶ Edith also collected works by contemporary artists, including a Raoul Dufy painting of Ascot (1935).⁷⁷ When in 1936, Gaston Derys published *Mon Docteur le Vin* with original water-colours by Dufy, the artist presented a signed copy to Edith (CBL, AB712).

Chester’s Adam-styled drawing room was similarly restyled, with a French Baroque flair and “flowers arranged in the French manner.”⁷⁸ Furniture here included a luxurious lacquer-veneered commode designed by Joseph Baumhauer, and two French circular tripod tables purchased from the Duveen Brothers.⁷⁹ Writing to Edith in September 1937, Joseph Duveen remarked that the rooms were scarcely recognizable from their previous incarnations, “You may pride yourself upon possessing the finest collection of pictures and works of art in London, and I would like, if I may, to felicitate you upon the discriminating taste you have shown.”⁸⁰ He highlighted several pieces as particularly

manuscript has no internal annotation (such as a typical gift dedication by Edith), but was catalogued in the first volume of Chester’s “Arabic Rare Texts” notebooks, and published in A. J. Arberry, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 8 vols. (Dublin: Walker, 1955–1966), vol. 1 as part of Chester’s collection of Arabic manuscripts; Moya Carey “Am Offered Cufic House”: Network Communication in A. S. Yahuda’s Exchanges with A. Chester Beatty,” in A. S. Yahuda as Cultural Broker: Between Near Eastern Philology and the Manuscript Trade, ed. Stephanie Luescher, Marina Rustow, and Samuel Thorpe (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming).

76 Croke, *Chester Beatty*, 17. *The Bystander* wrote that Edith was a collector of Matisse, Renoir, van Gogh, the classics of the “modern” French school: Mirón, “Not-so-Private Views,” *The Bystander*, January 1, 1935, 29. The Degas is now in the Birmingham, City Art Gallery (1960P44), Renoir in a private collection, Pissarro in Cologne, Museum Wallraf-Richartz (WRM 3119), and Courbet in Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery (WAG 6111). Korn “Collecting Modern Foreign Art,” 2:594–625.

77 CBP PA 35; Marigold, “Marigold in Society,” *The Sketch*, January 6, 1932, 9.

78 “Today’s Gossip: Period ‘Flower Power,’” *The Daily Mirror*, January 4, 1934, 9.

79 CBP PA 31; CBP PA 32.

80 Letter from Joseph Duveen to Edith, September 20, 1937, Correspondence: Beatty-Behrman (1913–1955), Duveen Brothers records (1876–1981), Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, Box 350, Folder 6. Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/>, accessed October 23, 2023.

outstanding, including the aforementioned commode, whose pendant was already in the V&A (Jones Collection, 1013-1882). Edith's reply to Duveen gives an unusual insight into her collecting appetite and strategy:

I don't suppose there is anyone in the world who has had the quantity of beautiful things pass through his hands that you have—therefore, I value your appreciation more than I can say...What angers me, though, is that no matter what new acquisition I get, they slip into place and one is only aware of a lack somewhere else. I am told so repeatedly that the joy of collecting is to do it slowly, that I feel like the odd man on the jury when I disagree. It's not my nature to want to do things slowly.⁸¹

As a Former Owner

While in her lifetime, she amassed a substantial and valuable collection of manuscripts, paintings, furniture, and *objets d'art*, following her death in 1952 Edith's collection met a more fragmented fate than that of her husband. Aside from a few personal gifts, institutional donations, and sales, Edith made no future provision for most of her acquisitions. A small number of donations were made to the British Museum,⁸² and at least one sculpture and a few prints were presented to the Fitzwilliam Museum.⁸³ Edith sold several manuscripts shortly before she died, including the Corvey Gospels, which she had purchased from the Phillipps collection in 1920.⁸⁴ This went to the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, through Maggs Bros., in 1952. She sold three further manuscripts through Maggs Bros. to the Morgan Library, New York, in 1951–1952 (MSS M.855, M.860, and M.862). These three had originally been purchased by Chester but were presented to Edith after 1933.

As already noted, the transfer of ownership included manuscripts Edith had gifted to her husband, including the Dictys Cretensis (Figure 20.6). In 1947, James Wardrop, then assistant keeper at the V&A, wrote, "I...have received a reply in which [Edith] agrees in principle to the loan [of the Dictys Cretensis]...but regrets her inability to further the matter owing to her illness."⁸⁵ She had indeed lent her collection to exhibitions in

81 Letter from Edith to Duveen, September 21, 1937, Correspondence: Beatty-Behrman (1913–1955), Duveen Brothers records (1876–1981), Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, Box 350, Folder 6. Online Archive of California.

82 Funerary dishes (1927,1214.8), likely purchased in 1917, and a Han dynasty Watchtower (1929,0716.1), which she acquired from the Johnstone Christie's sale in 1929 to present to the museum.

83 Prints by Charles Meryon—*Le Pompe Notre-Dame, Paris* (P.1698-R) and *Le Petit Pont, Paris* (P.1697-R)—were presented to the Fitzwilliam Museum in October 1920, a statuette of a woman, possibly Hera, dated to the sixth century BCE (GR.10.1928) was given in 1928, and in 1949, Edith presented a bronze portrait of Oriel Ross (M.6-1948) by Jacob Epstein.

84 Cleaver, "Western Manuscript Collection," 470.

85 Letter from Wardrop to Wood, August 15, 1947, CBP/B/07/1/095.



Figure 20.6. Wooden horse outside Troy, Dictys Cretensis, *De bello troiano*, by Bartholomew Sanvito (ca. 1435–1518) for Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, 1461–1483, Rome, CBL, W 122 © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

the past, including a 1932 exhibition of *Nineteenth-Century Masterpieces* and a 1938 *Cezanne Centenary*.⁸⁶ The nature of her illness is not explained within the Archive, but five years later Edith died at the age of sixty-six, on August 5, 1952.⁸⁷

In press obituaries, Edith was remembered as a racehorse owner, the wife of copper magnate and collector A. Chester Beatty, and—in her own right—as one of the best-known collectors of modern paintings.⁸⁸ Her estate was valued at £587,389 (duty £284,774), and, dying intestate, her collection passed to her husband, who had moved to Dublin (without her) in 1950. Most of Edith's manuscripts and printed books were shipped to Dublin in the 1950s, and some remain in the collection of the Chester Beatty today. Her paintings were not. A list preserved in the Archive and titled "In the Estate of Mrs. Edith Beatty, Deceased: Manuscripts" details 109 manuscripts.⁸⁹ About six hundred

⁸⁶ The *French Art Exhibition* was held at the Burlington House, to which Edith lent *Les Tuileries* by Pissarro. "The French Art Exhibition: Nineteenth-Century Masterpieces," *Illustrated London News*, February 2, 1932, 23. The Cezanne centenary exhibition was held at the Galerie Paul Rosenberg, Paris and Rosenberg and Helft's, London (April 19–May 20, 1939); Iris Brooke "Art Notes," *The Sphere*, April 29, 1938, 188.

⁸⁷ In 1949, on behalf of his brother, Anthony Blunt, Wilfrid Blunt wrote, "[Anthony] does not know whether she [Edith] is seriously ill...if not, he would much like to know whether her Impressionist paintings would be visible and in this case whether there is any chance that she would also be willing to lend." Letter from W. Blunt to Wilkinson, October 13, 1949, CBP/B/03/033.

⁸⁸ "No Will in Her £587,000 Estate," *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, June 19, 1952, 7; "Death of Mrs. Chester Beatty," *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, August 6, 1952, 5. "Art Gifts to the Nation," *Irish Weekly and Ulster Examiner*, October 9, 1954, 3.

⁸⁹ The manuscripts were numbered to 107, but four numbers were used twice (13a, 76a, 78a,

volumes of printed books (with little indication of content) were also shipped to Dublin. Here, only inscriptions on fly leaves and end-papers attest to Edith's prior ownership. A letter to Edith from Chester's first librarian, Francis Kelly, found inside an album entitled *Modes of Costumes Historiques* (CBL, Wep 3080), lends support to the suspicion that at least some of the fashion volumes in the Chester Beatty were among those acquired by Edith for her own enjoyment.⁹⁰

In memory of Edith, Chester planned a publication highlighting some of the finest pieces from her collection of French paintings and furnishings.⁹¹ He suggested that the catalogue include the "Marie Antoinette secretaire or commode, near Cezanne's *Le Garçon au Filet Rouge*" and the Louis XVI *secrétaire à abattant* "under the Toulouse-Lautrec."⁹² Of the pictures for colour reproductions he suggested Van Gogh's *The Old Peasant* (Stavros S Niarchos Collection F 444 JH 1563),⁹³ the Cezanne noted above (New York, Museum of Modern Art 190.1955), Degas's *Les Repasseuses* (Norton Simon M.1971.3.P/M.1979.17.P), and Manet's *Brioche* (New York, Metropolitan Museum 1991.287).⁹⁴ In February 1956, both the draft furniture catalogue entries and image proofs were in hand. The publication, however, never came to fruition. This was probably owing to the death of Chester's librarian, J. V. S. Wilkinson, in January 1957, and, a few months later, that of Wilfred Merton, owner of Emery Walker (the intended publisher).

Chester had already donated a selection of works from Edith's collection to various museums in her memory. To the V&A, he presented a panelled room (W.5:1-1955), a daybed by Jean-Baptiste Tiliard (W.5:1,2-1956), the set of Louis XVI chairs mentioned earlier (W.6-1956 and W.7-1956), and the Louis XVI secretaire noted above, together with a commode by Stockel (W.23:1to3-1958).⁹⁵ Other museum donations that Chester

85a) and two were deleted (37, 106). In addition, Chester presented no. 29 (the Salvin Hours) to the British Museum in 1955 (BL, Add. MS 48985), "In the Estate of Mrs. Edith Beatty, Deceased: Manuscripts," CBP/C/07/1/141.

90 Letter from Francis Michael Kelly, Beatty's first librarian at Baroda House, to Edith, undated, CBP/B/06/1/01. Only about twenty of the six hundred items can be positively identified. The only printed books specifically listed in her estate were the *Racing Calendar, 1817–1937*, the two-volume set of Eric G. Millar, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1927–1930) (four copies); Thomas W. Arnold, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty, a Catalogue of the Indian Miniatures*, 3 vols. (London: Walker, 1936); Thomas W. Arnold, *Chronicle of Akbar the Great* (Oxford: Roxburghe Club, 1937) (CBL, AB719); Jacob Baart de la Faille, *Les faux van Gogh* (Paris: van Oest, 1930) (AD763); and Jacob Baart de la Faille's *L'oeuvre de Vincent van Gogh*, 4 vols. (Paris: van Oest, 1928) (CBL, AD766, AD767, AD768, AD769); CBP/C/07/141.

91 John Wooderson, Beatty's secretary at Selection Trust, Memorandum, "In the Estate of Mrs. Edith Beatty: Book describing Mrs. Beatty's Collections," January 21, 1953, CBP/C/01/21.

92 Letter from Wooderson to Merton, February 27, 1953, CBP/C/01/21.

93 Madeleine Korn, "Collecting Paintings by Van Gogh in Britain before the Second World War," *Van Gogh Museum Journal* 7 (2002): 136–37.

94 Letters from Wooderson to Merton, February 27, 1953; March 10, 1953, CBP/C/01/21.

95 Credit line: "Bequeathed by Edith Beatty to Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, by whom given to the Museum in her memory."

made of objects formerly owned by Edith were not gifted in her memory, so her name is not recorded in the provenance or credit line. While the statue of *Cupid and Psyche* by Claude Michel Clodion was intended to be included in the mooted publication, and therefore formerly in Edith's collection, the credit and object history lines on the V&A website (A.23-1958) read only "given by Sir Chester Beatty F. S. A."⁹⁶

Some of Edith's paintings were kept by the family, but others were sold by Chester to cover death duties.⁹⁷ Bonnard's *Ruelle à Vernonnet* is in the National Gallery of Scotland (GMA 2982) and Renoir's *Bather* is now in the National Gallery in London (NG6319), both were sold in Chester's lifetime. A Degas painting of *Dancers in a Rehearsal Hall*, which formerly hung in Edith's boudoir, is now thought to be in a private collection, while Van Gogh's *The Rocks* is held by the Houston Museum of Art in Texas (74.139).⁹⁸ Courbet's *Low Tide* and Seurat's *Ville d'Avray, White Houses* are both in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (WAG 6111 and 6112), bought in 1961.⁹⁹ Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, which hung in Edith's Rococo drawing room at Baroda House, remained with the family until it too was sold at auction in 1987 and there purchased for the Yasuda Fire and Marine Insurance Company in Japan.¹⁰⁰ Chester's promised gift to the National Gallery of Ireland of "a collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings as a memorial to his wife" was never made good.¹⁰¹

Several of the manuscripts in Edith's collection are now preserved in the Chester Beatty.¹⁰² As noted above, these were transferred to Chester after Edith's death in 1952. An export licence to Ireland was granted in July 1953, despite the "moral" objection raised by the keeper of manuscripts at the British Museum, A. J. Collins. His plea for an export stop attests to the significance of Edith's collection:

The ninety-eight MSS. described on the attached schedule are the remains of the finest (and indeed the only important) collection of illuminated and other early manuscripts formed in this country since the First World War. Some of the most splendid volumes were dispersed at auction in 1932 and 1933, the remainder passing by gift from Mr. Chester Beatty to his wife. Mrs. Chester

⁹⁶ Listed as "winged man carrying away a sleeping lady." "Baroda House Furniture: Photographs in Colour," p. 2 (no. 34), CBP/B/01/21/1.

⁹⁷ Dublin, Trinity College Dublin MS 8133(9); cited in Brian P. Kennedy, *Alfred Chester Beatty and Ireland 1950–1968: A Study in Cultural Politics* (Dublin: Glendale Press, 1988), 115, no. 34.

⁹⁸ Both the Degas and the Van Gogh were sold through Arthur Tooth & Co., "Recent Acquisitions," *London Illustrated News*, November 17, 1962, 797.

⁹⁹ Frank Davis, "A Page for Collectors," *London Illustrated News*, May 11, 1963, 734.

¹⁰⁰ "A Van Gogh Goes for Gold," *London Illustrated News*, March 28, 1987, 70. The descendants of Paul von Mendelssohn-Bartholdy are currently seeking restitution of the painting, claiming it was sold under duress in 1934, "Seeking return of Van Gogh Sunflowers painting sold under Nazi coercion, German Jewish banker's heirs sue Japanese insurance company," *The Art Newspaper*, December 16, 2022, www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/12/16/nazi-loot-van-gogh-sunflowers-german-jewish-banker-heirs-sue-sompo-museum-art, accessed December 18, 2022.

¹⁰¹ Kennedy, *Alfred Chester Beatty and Ireland*, 84–87.

¹⁰² CBP/B/07/1/141.

IN THE ESTATE OF MRS. EDITH BEATTY, DECEASED

MANUSCRIPTS

THE REFERENCES ARE TO E.G. MILLAR'S CATALOGUE OF THE WESTERN
MANUSCRIPTS 4 vols., 1927-30

- | | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| ✓ vi 1. | St. Augustine, Sermons, MS. on vellum, Italian, VIII-IX century, probably from the abbey of Nonantola, modern white pigskin (Millar, No.5.) | 400. 0. 0. |
| X 2. | Bede. Commentary on the Canonical Epistles and Apocalypse, MS. on vellum, Italian, VIII-IX century, probably from Nonantola, modern white pigskin (Millar, No.7.) | 450. 0. 0. |
| X 3. | Ansegisi Capitula, and other works, MS. on vellum, eleven decorated initials, School of Tours, IX century, calf (Millar, No.11) | 300. 0. 0. |
| ✓ vi 4. | Canons of the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, MS. on vellum, Italian (Nonantola?), IX-X century, boards, vellum back (Millar, No.12) | 450. 0. 0. |
| X 5. | Canons of the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, MS. on vellum, German, X century (belonged to monastery of Schonberg), old pigskin (Millar, No.13) | 520. 0. 0. |
| X 6. | Canons Conciliorum et Decreta Romanorum Pontificum, MS. on vellum, German X century, pigskin (Millar, No.14) | 360. 0. 0. |
| ✓ vi 7. | Latin Gospels, MS. on vellum, Flemish, c. 1000. from Stavelot Abbey (Millar, No.17) | 950. 0. 0. |
| X 8. | St. Gregory, Homilies on Ezechiel, MS. on vellum, French (Limoges) XI-XII century, velvet binding with gilt corner pieces etc. (15th century?) (Millar, No.18) | 620. 0. 0. |
| X 9. | Latin Gospels. MS. on vellum, German, XII century, velvet (Millar, No.20) | 120. 0. 0. |
| ✓ vi 10. | Latin Bible (Genesis - Ruth only), MS. on vellum, English, XII century, from Walsingham Priory, pigskin (Millar, No.22) | 500. 0. 0. |
| X 11. | St. Augustine. Works. MS. on vellum, English (Bury St. Edmunds Abbey) XII century, original white leather binding (Millar, No.26) | 140. 0. 0. |
| X 12. | St. Luke, Gospel with gloss, MS. on vellum, English (St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury), XII century, original white leather binding (Millar, No.27) | 110. 0. 0. |
| X 13. | Job, glossed, MS. on vellum, Flemish (?), 12th century, purple morocco by Lewis (Millar, No.29) | 300. 0. 0. |
| X 13a. | Bible (Isaiah - I Corinthians only), French (Limoges?) XII century, velvet (Millar, No.30) | 360. 0. 0. |
| X 14. | Latin Bible, MS. on vellum, English (Abbey of Pipewell in Northamptonshire) XII century, white pigskin (Millar, No.34) | 280. 0. 0. |
| X 15. | Haymo, Commentary on the Pauline Epistles, MS. on vellum, French (Pontigny) 13th century, brown morocco (Millar, No.36) | 200. 0. 0. |

Figure 20.7. Page 1 of 7, Manuscripts in the Estate of Mrs. Edith Beatty, Deceased, 1952, London, CBP/C/07/141 © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

Beatty died recently, and owing (so I am under the impression) to her intestacy, they have again become the property of her husband. He applies for the licence because he has made Eire his domicile.¹⁰³

Although a number of manuscripts were noted as being of National Importance (NI) (Figure 20.7), the licencing office saw no case for submission to the Reviewing Committee, and export licence was granted.

Today, thirty-six manuscripts inventoried in Edith's estate are numbered among the Chester Beatty collections in Dublin. The remainder were removed from the bequest by two codicils Chester added in 1965 and 1966 to his Irish will. The first withdrew twenty-seven manuscripts from the intended bequest to the Library Trustees, all but four of which had been part of Edith's estate.¹⁰⁴ The second codicil excluded "all manuscripts having English, French, Flemish, Belgian, Dutch, Italian, or Spanish provenance other than those currently on display at the Library."¹⁰⁵ All excluded manuscripts instead passed to Chester's residual estate following his death on January 19, 1968: seventy-five were sold through Sotheby's in 1968 and 1969.¹⁰⁶ All but six of those had been in Edith's estate.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed a little more about Edith Beatty as an energetic, resourceful, and competitive art collector and indeed "a wonderful judge of all works of art," while also proposing that she made numerous contributions to the museum collection that today bears only her husband's name. It is true that the wealthy couple's exceptional spending power in the salesrooms of London, Paris, Cairo, and beyond was fuelled by the profitability of Chester's consultancy in global mining finance. Nonetheless Edith and Chester Beatty's art collections *were* separate. This chapter demonstrates that the pair had different tastes, negotiating strategies and visions, but that they understood each other's respective collections as independent passion projects. Edith's gifts to Chester identified materials she knew that he would like, and vice versa. Chester's conscious decoupling from his western manuscripts after 1933 resulted in a transfer to Edith's ownership: there is no sense that they co-owned these treasures. Chester's 1950

103 Letter from A. J. Collins to E. T. S. Adamson, Export Licencing Branch, July 17, 1953, application no. 18/2/3152/53, London, The National Archives T 218/409.

104 Codicil dated September 17, 1965, and signed August 18, 1966. Four of the manuscripts on the list did not form part of Edith's estate: no. 14 (W.MS.114), no. 25 (W.MS.180), no. 26 (W.MS.198), and no. 27 (W.MS.199).

105 Codicil signed November 17, 1966.

106 *Chester Beatty Western Manuscripts, Part I; Chester Beatty Western Manuscripts, Part II.*

107 Not in Edith's estate: lots 30 (Jaume Domenche, *Universal History*, 1454–1455, Spain, W.MS.180), 34 (Giraldi-Guicciardini Hours, ca. 1500, Florence, W.MS.92), 49 (Bible, thirteenth century, England, W.MS.128), 70 (Missae de Virgine, late-fifteenth century, Florence, W.MS.114), 74 (*Statues of the Order of the Garter*, ca. 1563, England, W.MS.199) and 75 (*Proprium missarum de sanctis*, 1623, Venice, W.MS.106).

move to Dublin with “his” collection emphatically circumscribed that separation, as did his two later codicils that pushed many of Edith’s manuscript collections to the auction house rather than into his bequest to the people of Ireland. For Edith’s remarkable collections of paintings and furniture, it is not clear what she intended. According to its then director, J. B. Manson, Edith promised to leave her collection of modern pictures to the Tate Gallery.¹⁰⁸ Edith and Chester collected independently, and yet cohabiting led inevitably to contrasts of opinion: as Chester recalled, Edith particularly teased her husband over his taste in paintings:

My wife collected good paintings. She had a wonderful eye. Manets, Utrillos, five Van Goghs, quite a few Cezannes including *Boy with the Red Waistcoat* and a couple of smaller versions of *The Bathers*—these were some of the pictures she bought many years ago...She always said I was a rotten judge of painting. When I stored my canvases somewhere safe during the last war she said: “You don’t think Hitler’s going to bother to bomb *your* pictures!”¹⁰⁹

Even at the Chester Beatty, a now public museum, the collecting history of the founder’s wife is not well recorded, despite her fingerprints on manuscripts in the collection. Only hints of Edith’s acquisitions have so far been uncovered, often hidden within private letters related to her husband’s collecting. As recorded in newspapers, Edith was as well-known for her horse-breeding and artistic tastes as she was for being the wife of a mining magnate. As the editor of *The Studio* noted in 1932, Edith’s collection was an “expression of a personal taste.”¹¹⁰

108 Tate Gallery Board Meeting, November 27, 1934, cited in Korn, “Collecting Modern Foreign Art,” 1:240.

109 Quoted in Sheila Powerscourt, *Sun Too Fast* (London: Bles, 1974), 225.

110 C. Geoffrey Holme, “A Modern Picture Collection,” *The Studio* 104.473 (August 1932), 77–81.

APPENDIX

Table 20.1: Manuscripts acquired by Edith Beatty. This list does not include the manuscripts given to Edith by Chester after 1933. For a full list of these, see CBP/C/07/1/141.

Acquisition date	Description
1912 (?)	Jerome and Origen's <i>Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul</i> , eleventh/twelfth century, Italian (W.MS.105).
1919	Coëtivy Hours, Dunois Master, 1443–1445, Paris.
September 1920*	Cicero, <i>Orationes</i> , ca. 1480, Italy.
December 17, 1920	Corvey Gospel, tenth century, Germany (W.MS.10).
July 1920	Vitruvius
June 21, 1924	Collection of Traditions (<i>Jami'al-usul li-ahadith al-rasul</i>), 1436–1437 (839H), Timurid-ruled Shiraz (Iran).
November 1925	<i>Thebaid</i> of Statius, Jacopo Avanzi or Altichiero, ca. 1380, Padua.
November 1925	Dictys Cretensis's Trojan War (<i>De bello troiano</i>), Bartolomeo Sanvito, 1491–1483, probably Rome.
November 1925	Epistle of Francesco Barbaro (<i>Franciscus Barbarus epistolae</i>), Giovanni Marco Cinico, 1472, Naples.
November 1925	<i>Ioannis Ioviani Pontani opera</i> , Giovanni Pontano, fifteenth century, Italy.
November 1925	Augustine's City of God (<i>De civitate Dei</i>), ca. 1135, Nonántola.
November 1925	Garden of knowledge (<i>Viridarium</i>), a medieval encyclopaedia, 1386–1425, Avignon.
November 1925	Lactantius, <i>De divinis institutionibus/Divinae institutiones</i> , fifteenth century, Lombardy (W.MS.121).
November 1925	Paul the Deacon, <i>Homiliary (Summer part)</i> , ninth century, Reichenau (?) (W.MS.110).
1927	Qur'an, sixteenth century, Iran.

Source and inscription	Sale/current location
Purchased by Edith Beatty possibly from Sotheby's sale November 20, 1912, lot 131 (Phillipps MS 21163), "a present from his wife."	Sold Sotheby's June 24, 1969, lot 42, £3,000, to Leo S. Olschki.
Purchased from Henry Yates Thompson, £4,000; "To A. Chester Beatty from his loving wife Edith Beatty."	CBL, W 082
Purchased from Sydney Cockerell; "To A. Chester Beatty from his loving wife Edith Beatty. 1921."	Sold Sotheby's June 7, 1932, lot 27 to Quaritch. Reacquired 1947 (see below).
Purchased from the Phillipps Collection, MS 14122, £500.	Sold by Edith to Walters Art Gallery through Maggs Bros., October 1952; Walters Art Museum, MS W.751.
Quaritch (?); gifted to W. Gedney Beatty.	MET 41.100.1 (?)
"To my dear husband on our 11th wedding anniversary, June 21st 1924, from his wife, Edith Beatty."	CBL, Ar 5282
Purchased from Thomas Fitzroy Fenwick (Phillipps MS 1798), £7,000; gifted to A. Chester Beatty.	CBL, W 076
Purchased from Fenwick (Phillipps MS 3502), £7,000; gifted to A. Chester Beatty.	CBL, W 122
Purchased from Fenwick (Phillipps MS 6640), £3,000; gifted to A. Chester Beatty.	CBL, W 113
Purchased from Fenwick (Phillipps MS 7084), £2,000; gifted to A. Chester Beatty.	CBL, W 108
Purchased from Fenwick (Phillipps MS 12269), £1,500; gifted to A. Chester Beatty.	CBL, W 043
Purchased from Fenwick (Phillipps MSS 134 and 3948), £450; gifted to A. Chester Beatty.	CBL, W 080
Purchased from Fenwick (Phillipps MS 137), £300; gifted to A. Chester Beatty.	Sold Sotheby's May 9, 1933, lot 58, £250, to Rosenthal, now Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XI 1; Initial M Getty (83.MN.120)
Gifted to A. Chester Beatty (Phillipps MS 6659).	Sold Sotheby's December 3, 1968, lot 2, £14,000, to Martin Breslauer, now Cologne, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 128.
Purchased from Sydney Cockerell; "Sydney C. Cockerell Cambridge Aug. 19 1912;" "To my husband Xmas 1927 Edith Beatty."	CBL, Is 1547

Acquisition date	Description
1928–1930	Blinding of Truth by Falsehood, Nineteenth Dynasty, Thebes (Papyrus CB II).
1928–1930	Dream Book, Nineteenth Dynasty, Thebes (Papyrus CB III).
1928–1930	Hymns of Amen and Ra, Nineteenth Dynasty, Thebes (Papyrus CB IV).
1928–1930	Medical treatise on diseases of the rectum, Nineteenth Dynasty, Thebes (Papyrus CB V)
1928–1930	Magical papyrus, Nineteenth Dynasty, Thebes (Papyrus CB VII).
1928–1930	Ritual of the Cult of Amenhotemp I, Nineteenth Dynasty, Thebes (Papyrus CB IX).
1929	Qur'an, 1670–1671 (1081H), India.
January 1929	Biographical dictionary of famous women (<i>Akbar al-nisa'</i>) by 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Jamil al-Mu'afiri al-Malaqi, 1185–1186 (581H), Damascus.
July 1929	<i>Book of Devotions</i> , Johannes de Ecclesia, fourteenth century, Bruges (W.MS.77).
After 1933	The Tours Gospels, 857–862, Tours (W.MS.8).
After 1933	Gospel Book, ca. 855–865, probably St Amand (W.MS.9).
After 1933	The Seitenstetten Gradual, ca. 1260–1264, perhaps Salzburg (W.MS.48).
After 1933	Manuel Philes's <i>De animalium proprietate</i> ("On the Nature of Animals"), Angelos Vergecios, 1565, Paris (?) (MS.GR.10).
1937	<i>Book of Job, with catena</i> , Ioasaph Doryanos, January 15, 1577–1578, Crete.
July 23, 1947*	Cicero, <i>Orationes</i> , ca. 1480, Italy.
August 25, 1947	Armenian Gospel book, Martiros Khizants'i, 1596, Constantinople.
1948	Crescentius, <i>Liber ruralium commodorum</i> , 1427, Italian, arms of Pius VI (W.MS.174).

Source and inscription	Sale/current location
Purchased from Maurice Nahman (?); Given to the British Museum, 1930.	British Museum, EA10682.
Purchased from Nahman (?); given to the British Museum, 1930.	British Museum, EA10683.
Purchased from Nahman (?); given to the British Museum, 1930.	British Museum, EA10684.
Purchased from Nahman (?); given to the British Museum, 1930.	British Museum, EA10685.
Purchased from Nahman (?); given to the British Museum, 1930.	British Museum, EA10687.
Purchased from Nahman (?); given to the British Museum jointly with A. Chester Beatty, 1930.	British Museum, EA10689.
“Dad [A. Chester Beatty] with Love from Ede Feb. 7th 1929.”	CBL, Is 1562
Purchased from Yahuda.	CBL, Ar 3016
Holford sale, Sotheby’s July 29, 1929, lot 8, purchased by Maggs Bros. and resold in saleroom to Edith Beatty.	Sold Sotheby’s December 3, 1968, lot 21, £14,000, to Quaritch.
Acquired by Beatty through Quaritch, 1919, £1,775; gifted to Edith, after 1933.	Sold 1952 by Edith Beatty through Maggs Bros. to the Morgan for £15,750, now PML, M.860.
Acquired by Beatty from Phillipps Collection (MSS 2165 and 21787), December 17, 1920, £1,500; gifted to Edith, after 1933.	Sold 1952 by Edith Beatty through Maggs Bros. to the Morgan for £7,875, now PML, M.862.
Acquired by Beatty from Jacques Rosenthal, 1927; gifted to Edith, after 1933.	Sold by Edith Beatty, 1951, to Morgan Library, now PML, M.855.
ACB MS.GR.10 (MS. W.60C); gifted to Edith, after 1933.	Given by Edith to Philip Hofer, July 1952; presented to Harvard (Department of Graphic Arts) in memory of Mrs. Beatty by Philip Hofer (MS Typ. 222H).
“To A. Chester Beatty from his wife Edith Beatty. Xmas 1937.”	CBL, W 136
“Recovered from the good offices of Sir Sydney Cockerell, July 23rd 1947, bless him, Edith Beatty.”	CBL, W 124
Sent from Egypt by Sgt. Barbour, received 25 August 1947. “Given by Mrs. Beatty” (CBP/B/02/2/21).	CBL, Arm 573
Robert Hoe and Herman Marx collections; apparently bought by Chester and later resold or given away, early book-label no. 44; Marx sale Sotheby’s, April 19, 1948, lot 32, bought by Edith.	Sold Sotheby’s December 3, 1968, lot 26, £5,000, to Rainer; sold by Librairie J.-M. LeFell (Paris) to Lawrence J. Schoenberg, June 1998; sold by Schoenberg 2010; now private collection.

