"Marianne Knight | Godmersham Park": Inscription as Community Interface in the Books of Jane Austen's Niece[1]

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Dispersed throughout the Knight Collection at Chawton House, once the library and property of Jane Austen's brother Edward Austen Knight (1767-1852), sit 14 duodecimo, leather-bound volumes comprising two multivolume novels by Maria Edgeworth, a gardening manual by John Abercrombie and three volumes of an illustrated edition of Sir Walter Scott's poetry. These texts are drawn together into a collection by the presence of a single, uniform signature in their flyleaves and inside front covers, that of Edward Austen Knight's third daughter, Marianne Knight (1801-95). Marianne's signature appears in isolation in only one of these 14 volumes, *Abercrombie's Practical Gardener*. In the other 13, the names of other people and places sit alongside it, raising the question of Marianne's relationship with other readers of her books and the contexts in which they were read. In order to answer this question, this paper reads Marianne's inscriptions as interfaces between her personal claims of ownership over the texts and their textual space, and two communities through which the texts circulate: Edward Austen Knight and his male heirs, and unmarried women in the Knight family. It will argue that Marianne uses the spatial qualities of her inscriptions to both push back against the inheritance structures of the patrilineal community which would dispossess her of her books and to create space in which to locate and express her intimacy and solidarity with a network of other unmarried women within her family.

"Knight (of) Godmersham Park": Staking a Claim

In 1779, Thomas Knight, a distant cousin of Jane Austen's father, Rev George Austen, visited the reverend at his home in Stevenson. According to William and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, Mr Knight and his new wife were so enamoured by George Austen's third son, Edward, that they brought him with them as they continued their journey (41). A few years later the Knights requested that Edward visit them at their estate in Godmersham until, as his brother Henry recalled "by degrees…it came to be understood in the family that Edward was selected from amongst themselves as the adopted son & Heir of Mr Knight" (qtd. in Hillan 13). Thus, when Thomas Knight died in 1794, Edward Austen inherited his property including the estates at Godmersham Park, Kent and Chawton House, Hampshire. Three years later Mrs Knight, who had been left a life interest in Godmersham Park, retired to a cottage in Canterbury allowing Edward Austen and his family to move to Godmersham Park (Austen-Leigh and Knight 159). In 1812, Mrs Knight died, and Edward Austen and his family took the name of Knight, completing the inheritance.

Marianne Knight was the seventh of Edward Austen Knight's children and the third to be born at Godmersham Park. The early death of her mother Elizabeth Knight (née Bridges) in 1808, followed by the marriages of her two older sisters Elizabeth and Frances Catherine

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(Fanny) in 1818 and 1820 respectively, resulted in Marianne assuming responsibility for the management of her father's house and servants at age 19. She remained in this role until 1852, when her father died and her eldest brother Edward Knight (jnr) (1794-1879) inherited the estates. Throughout her tenure as mistress of Godmersham Park, the library must have seemed as much under Marianne's jurisdiction as the household linen; nonetheless, her status as a daughter and not an heir made this management a kind of stewardship. Unable to inherit or fully lay claim to the house which she ran, Marianne's relationship to her home and the library within it was made fraught by intersecting ties of duty, affection, and her social precarity to which her inscriptions bear evidence.

As a material and textual object, Marianne's inscriptions are fundamentally engaged in negotiations of space and locality. Thus, while her social position within the household as an unmarried daughter is precarious, the inscription as interface provides her with a more stable material and textual space in which to position herself against or alongside her communities. In her introduction to a collection of essays on intimacy, Lauren Berlant argues that "desires for intimacy that bypass the couple or the life narrative it generates have no alternative plots, let alone few laws and stable spaces of culture in which to clarify and cultivate them" (5). As a result, she asks: "what happens to the energy of attachment when it has no designated place?" (5). While friendships between female family members were highly valued at this time, unmarried women remained bereft of social institutions through which to codify and enforce their rights to proximity in these relationships. Women were largely dependent on the good will of their male relatives for a home. The lack of a stable physical place in which unmarried women could collectively gather or express their solidarity and affection pushes the "energy of attachment" to create other spaces (Berlant 5). For Marianne, desire for relationships of permanence and agency with her unmarried female relations finds its place in her inscriptions. The textual interface of the inscription is one of the ways in which mid-nineteenth-century women like Marianne Knight were able to position themselves within an intimate affectionate network of unmarried female relations and friends and to claim social and physical space from within a patriarchal culture that refused them equal rights to property.

Of the 14 volumes bearing Marianne's name in the Knight Collection, ten pair her signature not with a person but with a place. Each volume of Edgeworth's *Tales of Fashionable Life* and *Patronage* bear the inscription: "Marianne Knight | Godmersham Park" (M. Knight, Ownership Inscription). In each of these volumes, Marianne's signature is clear and consistent (Fig. 1). Each is centred in the top half of the first empty recto page (the recto of the first flyleaf is marbled) and each is the same size, running almost the full breadth of the page. All ten are uniform. This is a decisive and assertive claim to ownership. Heather Jackson has argued that ownership marks such as the act of signing one's name are "far and away the commonest form of annotation" (19). She suggests that all marginalia is an extension of the impulse to claim ownership:

> The author has the first word, but the annotator has the last. Even in those cases in which the annotator seems most subservient to the text . . . the annotator is implicitly critical . . . Every note entails a degree of self-assertion, if not aggression. The reader leaves a mark and thereby alters the object. (90)

In this light, marginalia and particularly the act of inscription which introduces it, makes material the tension between author and reader by drawing the acts of reading and writing together to record, and in doing so, alter, the reading experience. However, in Marianne's

books, her inscriptions do so not for the author who will never read this altered text, but for other readers through whose hands it passes.

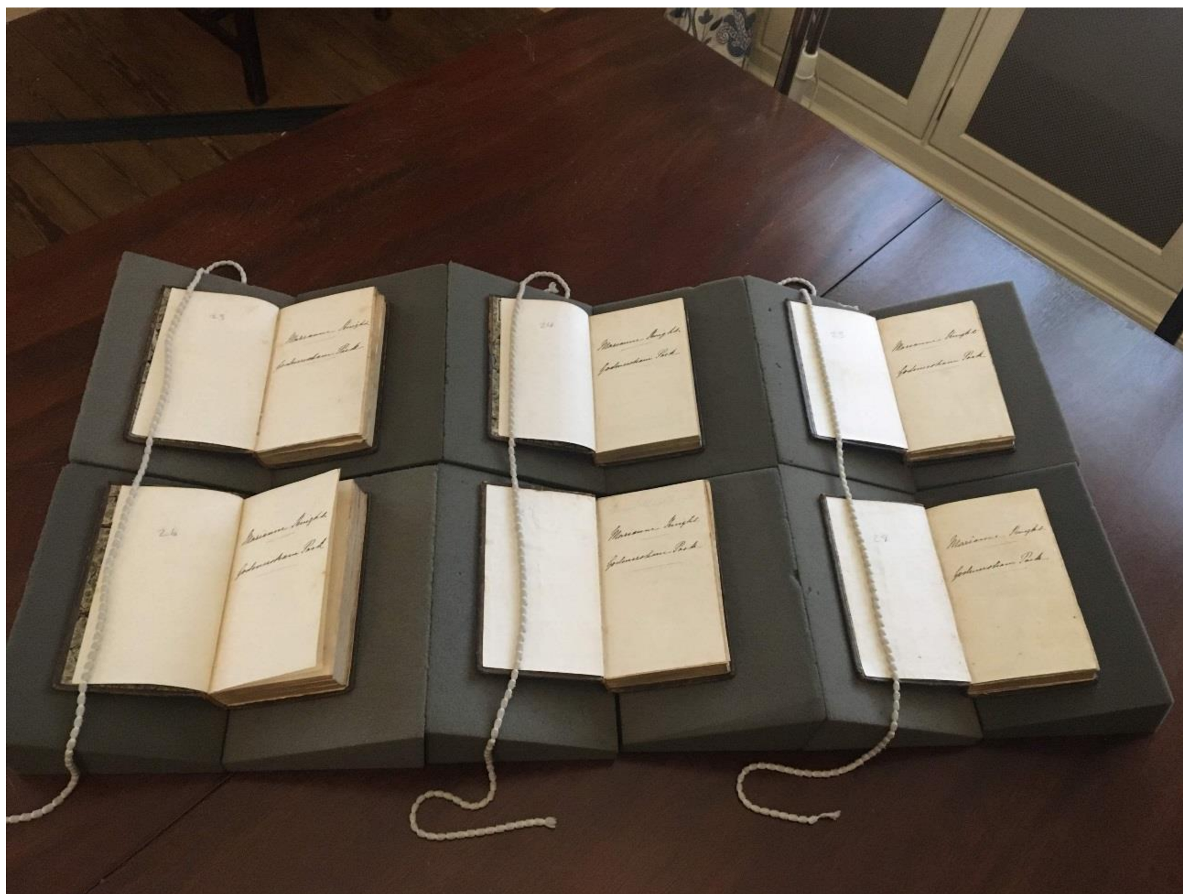

Fig. 1 Marianne Knight's inscriptions in her six-volume edition of Maria Edgeworth's Tales of Fashionable Life. Image courtesy of the Knight Family Collection on deposit at Chawton House.

The uniformity of Marianne's marks of ownership act to form a collection; they link the marked text with other books and objects belonging to her. While this form of collection may bring the owner a sense of agency and pleasure, it functions best in the hands of another. Such marks let other readers know to whom they ought to return the book and with whom they are in conversation when reading it. If the borrower is also an annotator or holds a competing claim to the text, they might add their own mark, thus recording the circulation of the text through a family or friendship network. Inscriptions and bookplates added by Knight heirs to Marianne's books are evidence of this practice. While a singular ownership mark might stake a claim to the space of the book object forbidding further annotation or marks, multiple hands on a page or the deliberate phrasing or placing of marks opens out the discussion of the text to successive readers. Marianne's connection of her name with Godmersham Park in her volumes of Edgeworth directly addresses the readers of the Godmersham Park library, and particularly those men who stand to inherit it. By placing her name alongside the family estate entailed to the male line, Marianne positions herself in a relationship of ownership with not only the volumes but with her home. Her inscription thus reframes the conversation that the book elicits. She stakes her claim to the book object but

also positions herself, and by extension others like her, as equal collocutors, interpreters and claimants on its textual space and that of the patriarchal house.

This social potential of inscription is connected directly with the material circulation of the annotated book. As Jackson argues:

> The ostensible addressee is not the only addressee…the physical nature of the books and the history of the circulation of books ensures that there always is a third party tacitly present at the writing of marginalia. When the reader takes on the role of a writer and leaves traces in the book, the communication between reader and text necessarily involves not only their two speaking parts but also the silent audience that will sooner or later witness the performance. (95)

Regardless of whether Marianne envisioned a future in which her brother's heirs read her inscriptions, she would almost certainly expect that her father and brother themselves as well as other members of their community who shared the use of the Knight family library would read them. In this light, her inscriptions can be seen to operate on a social and performative level, actively pushing against the assumption of possession which underpins these heirs' access to her books and carving out a place for herself in the family library. The inclusion of "Godmersham Park" directly underneath her name in these volumes links three entities together in a chain of mutual ownership: Marianne, the books and Godmersham Park. This inscription suggests that the book is owned by both Marianne and Godmersham. There is also the hint of a missing "of" between the phrases which, positioned in such a clear relationship as they are on the flyleaves of these volumes, we might read as Marianne's claim not just to the book but also to Godmersham Park itself and indeed, Godmersham Park's claim on her. The missing "of" leaves ambiguous the direction of possession in these inscriptions so that all are possible at once.

By 1852 Marianne had been mistress of Godmersham Park for over thirty years and could fairly claim her books and herself as belonging to the house. Her brother's decision to let and eventually sell Godmersham Park after the death of their father was a stark reminder, if one was needed, that as an unmarried woman, Marianne had no permanent home other than what her male relatives allowed her. Sophia Hillan has written poignantly of the moment of Marianne's removal from Godmersham Park. She notes that while written records of the time show that the Knight siblings settled outside of the estate were worried about the fate of their youngest brother, Brook John, "who if anyone was to make amends to Marianne was not clear" (149):

> She [Marianne] was the only one left utterly bereft: having given her late girlhood and all her adult years to the care of her father and the estate, and having lived nowhere in her life but Godmersham, she would now, in her fifty-second year, have to find a new home. No longer Miss Woodhouse, she had suddenly become poor Miss Bates…Though Fanny described the misery of 'the packing up, division of everybody's things, parting with servants &…the expense!', it was Marianne and her elderly aunt Louisa Bridges who carried out the real, heartbreaking work of emptying the family home. (149)

The whims of her brother now made tenuous what had before seemed a tacit understanding of belonging, the missing 'of' between the names "Marianne Knight" and "Godmersham Park." Berlant has argued that intimacy "reveals itself to be a relation associated with tacit fantasies, tacit rules, and tacit obligations to remain unproblematic" (7). Marianne's intimacy with

Godmersham Park reveals itself to be problematic when her tacit claim to her home expressed in her inscriptions is made precarious by her brother's inheritance. By Marianne's side at this moment is her maternal aunt Louisa Bridges, who was herself an unmarried sister dependant in part upon her brother's and later her nephew's goodwill. Unlike Marianne however, Louisa seems to have been given a home on her family estate at Goodnestone in Kent for most of her life. She lived in the dower house, Goodnestone Farm, likely until her mother's death in 1825 and according to her great nephew, Lord Bradbourne, died at Goodnestone two months shy of her 79th birthday (Knatchbull-Hugessen 19).

Some of the Knights' possessions, however, were not immediately removed from their place at Godmersham Park upon Edward Knight's decision to lease it. The family library remained at Godmersham Park some time before it was removed to Chawton House before Godmersham Park was sold in 1874. As Marianne dutifully packed up her home and readied it for vacant possession, she made additions and added loose-leaf notes to the two library catalogues extant at that time, an act which echoes her literary Aunt's description of Anne Eliot under similar circumstances "making a duplicate of the catalogue of [her] father's books and pictures" (Austen 41). Both dated from 1818, one of these catalogues lists the Godmersham Park library books alphabetically by title and the other by their position on the library shelves. In the twenty-first century these catalogues are a fascinating resource that have allowed scholars to determine which books Jane Austen and her family may have read. These are seen via a website which recreates the Godmersham Park library shelf by shelf (*Reading with Austen)*. In the winter of 1852-53 however, they were a clear representation of who could truly lay claim to the books in the library. Inside the catalogue which lists each book by position, three loose sheets of paper dated 14 January 1853 are added by Marianne as she and Louisa Bridges organise the household items. Written in Marianne's confident, capable hand, they detail the location of books no longer in their rightful place on the library shelves. Among them are Marianne's inscribed copies of Edgeworth. They are listed on a sheet titled "Books belonging to the Library Catalogue, now in the Drawing room" (M. Knight, Insert in Catalogue). As well as the copies of Edgeworth, this list includes one copy of each of Austen's six major works, a Bible, and a Book of Common Prayer. Unfortunately, none of these other volumes are extant in the Knight Collection today and therefore we cannot know if they also bear Marianne's signature. Nonetheless, as this note makes clear, when Marianne left Godmersham Park her copies of Edgeworth did not go with her. Books, inscriber and library were all now separated.

Gillian Dow regards Marianne's note in the 1818 catalogue as a protest at this separation: "I cannot now read it otherwise than to say this is a message for an elder brother, Edward, who has behaved *far* less magnanimously to his unmarried sister, Marianne, than his father, another Edward, behaved to his sisters, Jane and Cassandra" (161). As I have noted elsewhere in comparison to the inscriptions of another of Austen's nieces, the uniformity of Marianne's inscription in her volumes of Edgeworth stages a continuation of this protest (Kavanagh 20). Marianne links her name to Godmersham Park in a personal claim to possession which pushes back against her dispossession and carves out a textual space for herself within the family library. Both of Marianne's phrases are in dark ink and strongly underlined, forcing any further inscription to the margins or bottom of the page. The inscriptions are not dated and therefore an accurate assessment of their temporality is not possible. Marianne did not take the name of Knight until 1812 and this edition of *Patronage* was not published until 1814, so this suggests the earliest possible dates of the inscriptions. Similarly, Marianne's removal from Godmersham Park in early 1853 suggests perhaps the last point in time when she could legitimately sign her name next to Godmersham Park.

Nonetheless, the consistency in the ink of the inscriptions across all ten volumes of Edgeworth, their uniformity and confidence of style, together with the strong underlining of both Marianne's name and residence which is not evident in her other inscriptions, suggests that they were all written at the same time, perhaps, even as she moved them to the drawing room, at the very moment in which the chains of connection and ownership between Marianne, the books and Godmersham Park were being dissolved. In this way, Marianne's signatures attempt to locate her textually, to provide her with a material space in Godmersham Park, an interface to this library and its community and a rejection of her dispossession by its patriarchal dictates. Marianne's inscriptions allow her duel claims of possession of the book and Godmersham Park to continue even as they are fractured by her dislocation from her family home.

Inside volume five of Marianne's copy of *Tales of Fashionable Life*, a faint pencil signature continues the evidence of this text's circulation through the hands of the Knight heirs. Sitting above Marianne's dark ink, in a neat and flowing hand is the name: "Edward Knight ~" (Signature). Like Marianne's, it is undated and as such it is difficult to determine whether this signature was written before or after Marianne's or, indeed, if it belongs to her father or her brother. However, a copy of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* in the Knight Collection is inscribed in ink "Edw:d Knight Jnr" (E. Knight, Ownership Inscription). The hand is sharper and more angular than the signature in Marianne's book and the capital "K" is particularly different. The lack of the "jnr" and the differences in these hands leads me to posit that Marianne's volume was signed by her father rather than her brother. The pencil signature of "Edward Knight" does not appear on any of Marianne's other volumes. Read as an attempted reclaiming of the text, it is fairly weak; the lead is faint and while the size and positioning appear to mimic Marianne's, they do not have the same power over the eye. It commands less physical space and its isolation in only one, apparently random volume, of a larger novel diminishes any claim to possession it might impart. Why this volume and not the others? Did Marianne or some later reader erase pencil inscriptions in the other volumes? This seems unlikely due to the prevalence of signatures in the Knight Collection. It is perhaps more productive to read this signature, a name shared by the owners of Godmersham Park, Chawton House and the Knight family library, as representative of the context in which Marianne's own signatures were written and the community whom her inscription might address and push back against. Whether this is her father's signature in a favourite volume, or a rather fruitless attempt by him or his son to place their name and claim literally and metaphorically above Marianne's in order to regain the textual domain of the book, both indicate a larger community of readers which is inextricably bound to the politics of Marianne's position within the family. Marianne's signatures can thus more clearly be seen as an active carving out of space against this competing claim. She claims this space for herself in direct defiance of her father and his heirs by using her inscription to dominate the flyleaves of each volume of these copies of Edgeworth.

This competition of claims is repeated by Edward Knight Jnr's son and heir Montagu George Knight (1844-1914), who places his bookplate in a significant number of texts in the Knight collection at the beginning of the twentieth century, including all volumes of Marianne's Edgeworth and Scott. A more powerful statement of ownership than Edward's faint pencil signature, this bookplate reaffirms the positioning of these texts as "belonging to the library catalogue," even the copies of Scott which never appeared in the 1818 catalogue. Importantly, this bookplate claims Marianne's books not for Godmersham Park (no longer a part of the Knight inheritance) but for "Montagu George Knight of Chawton" (M. G. Knight, Bookplate) (Fig. 2). While distinct in form from Marianne and Edward's inscriptions these

bookplates are nonetheless another way in which the textual space of the flyleaves and inside front covers of Marianne's books are appropriated to negotiate claims of communities and individuals.

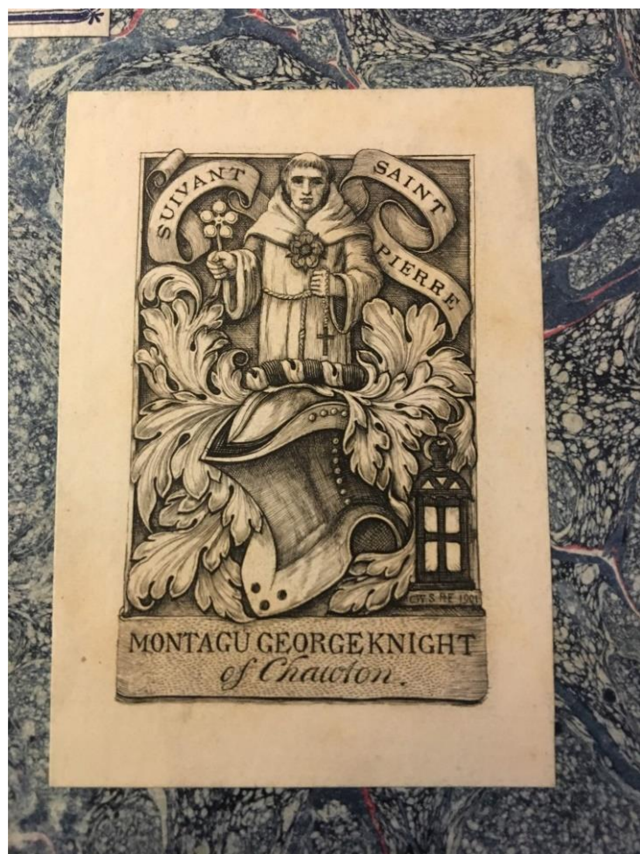

Fig. 2 Montagu George Knight's bookplate in volume one of Maria Edgeworth's Patronage inscribed by Marianne Knight. Image courtesy of the Knight Family Collection on deposit at Chawton House.

In their examination of Charles Clark's bookplate poem, Carrie Griffin and Mary O'Connell have demonstrated the power of bookplates as a claim of ownership. A printer, satirist, and book collector in the early nineteenth century, Clark pasted bookplates containing various iterations of the same poem in many of his most precious, valuable or rare books. The poem, which was also published under the title "A Pleader to the Needer when a Reader" in *Notes and Queries* in 1852, proscribes strict rules for the use and borrowing of Clark's book. In its various guises Clark's poem pays particularly close attention to the material condition of the book. While many of the lines refer directly to the safe handling of the book so that it is not "besmear[ed]," Griffin and O'Connell quote from a version on a bookplate in which he goes to pains to explicitly forbid annotation: "No marks the margins must de-face from any busy 'hand!'/ Marks, as re-marks, in books of Clark's, where'er some critics spý-leaves,/ It always me so wasp-ish makes, though they're but on the fly-leaves!" (83). Griffith and O'Connell cannily point out that Clark's obsession with preserving the materiality of his collection is used as a "signifier of his status and interests," which is not extended to his own material appropriation in the insertion of the bookplate:

The irony of this statement expressed in a bookplate poem printed by the author is clearly lost on Clark; he 're-marks' (1. 11) volumes as his own, using the '*fly*-leaves' (1. 12) to insist upon ownership in a bold and authoritative manner, thereby affecting the material book almost indelibly. (87)

Like Clark's bookplate poem, Montagu Knight's bookplate is designed to be circulated and to claim possession of the text within his community. It is a direct "plead" to readers who remove the book from the Knight family library. However, while Montagu Knight's bookplate is not as pedantic in its claims as Clark's poem, it participates in the same act of appropriation to an extent forbidding marginalia and reclaiming the book for the Knight heirs. In this bookplate, positioned earlier than Marianne's inscription and separated from it by a marbled flyleaf, the 'of' between owner and house, missing from Marianne's inscription, is brought forcibly into place. Its link to Chawton House rather than Godmersham Park works

to locate it within a space different from Marianne's inscription and under the rules and guidelines of the Chawton community. Thus, Montagu Knight's bookplate attempts to appropriate the textual space of Marianne's books, locating the text more permanently in a house in which Marianne has no clear position. As such, it is a clear representation of the community with which Marianne's claim to the book and Godmersham Park interfaces and the way in which it is vitally invested in claims of both personal possession and social and physical community spaces.

To the Edward and Montagu Knights, Marianne's inscriptions may seem aggressive, unnecessarily possessive, or perhaps even irrelevant once neither the woman who made them nor the books which contain them are 'of' Godmersham Park. But Marianne's record of the re-positioning of these books to place them outside of the library, next to the novels of her beloved aunt, Jane Austen, refigures the audience and community she intends them to reach as not for the inheritors of the family library but the women, particularly the unmarried women of the Austen and Knight families. As such, the two communities with which her inscriptions can be seen to interface present different affective responses to them: the male heirs who seek to reassert their presence and a community of other dispossessed readers whose claims are not in competition with Marianne's.

In *Happy Objects*, Sara Ahmed argues that "when happy objects are passed around, it is not necessarily the feeling that passes. To share such objects (or have a share in such objects) would simply mean you would *share an orientation toward those objects as being good*" (37–38). In the case of Marianne's copies of Edgeworth, the object in question could be the book itself or the narrative it contains, but it could also be the inscriptions and bookplates. To use Ahmed's terms, an object such as an inscription, and especially multiple inscriptions, fractures the "affective communit[ies]" of its readers (37). Those who attribute the books' ownership to Edward or Marianne Knight might find their signatures exciting or affirming, providing a sense of proximity to the inscriber while considering the competing inscription troubling or intrusive. Others might react positively or negatively towards the material fact of the inscriptions and bookplates themselves, understanding them, for example, as marks of historical importance or as damaging additions which deplete the value of the text. This last is often dependant on the relative fame of the person who stakes a textual or material claim to the text.

Ahmed also argues that the environment in which an object is encountered effects one's affective response to it:

> We are moved by things. And in being moved, we make things. An object can be affective by virtue of its location (the object might be here, which is where I experience this or that affect) and the timing of its appearance (the object might be now, which is when I experience this or that affect). To experience an object as being affective or sensational is to be directed not only toward an object, but to 'whatever' is around that object, which includes what is behind the object, the conditions of its arrival. (33)

Thus, the affect communities who respond to Marianne's signature might also include on the one hand, those who attribute fond memories to Godmersham Park or think of it as the proper family seat of the Knights and on the other hand, those who prefer Chawton House. As such, the texts' location also influences how these inscriptions might be read. Despite or perhaps because of the texts' repositioning first in a drawing-room at Godmersham and then within the Chawton House library, for Marianne's unmarried sisters, aunts, and nieces, her signature

can be read as a reminder of her ambivalent and precarious relationship to her family home, and their shared sense of dislocation. Far from alienating these women, or competing with them for textual space as her signature does with that of Edward and Montagu Knight's additions, for the female family members these inscriptions reconstruct a relationship of belonging and location so that in this textual space, Marianne Knight can sit alongside Godmersham Park even after she has left the house, after the library is moved to Chawton House and after Marianne herself has died.

"From Her Affectionate Sister": Intimacy, Locality and Gift-Giving

The way in which Marianne's inscriptions interface with this community of female relations and readers is made more explicit in her volumes of Scott's poetry. Each of these is marked as a gift from her younger sister Louisa (at that time not yet married) or Louisa Bridges. Each of these three volumes, *The Lady of the Lake*, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* are from the same illustrated edition of Scott's poetry, bound in matching gilded green leather. None of these three volumes are to be found in the Godmersham Park 1818 catalogues. The materiality of these volumes is important for two key reasons. First, the uniformity of their binding is mirrored in the consistency of Marianne's inscriptions ensuring that they comprise a set despite their different moments of gifting. Second, as gifts, the physical exchange of these objects is an important aspect of their affective connections and power

Fig. 3 Marianne's inscriptions in her illustrated volumes of Sir Walter Scott's poetry. Clockwise from top: The Lady of the Lake, Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field, and The Lay of the Last Minstrel. Image courtesy of the Knight Family Collection on deposit at Chawton House.

Marianne's inscriptions in these three volumes are particularly compelling because they make it clear that they were gifted not only by two separate women but on two separate occasions (Fig. 3). On the first flyleaf of *The Lady of the Lake* Marianne writes: Marianne Knight | A New Years gift | from her very affect^{ate} Sister | Louisa Knight | Jan^{ry} 1st - 1845" (Gift Inscription from Louisa Knight). Like her inscriptions in Edgeworth, this inscription is positioned just above the centre of the page. Her use of line breaks is also consistent with the Edgeworth inscriptions so that the two key subjects – her own name and Louisa's – each have their own line. The other two volumes are inscribed using the same formula, with almost identical inscriptions on their inside front covers which date the gifts to Marianne's 45th birthday: "Marianne Knight | from Aunt Louisa. | Sept^{br} 15th 1846" (M. Knight, Gift Inscription from Louisa Bridges). These two unmarried Louisas share not only a name but have continued the same gift. Such an act forms a network between these three women recorded in Marianne's act of inscription. As a material addition to the text, Marianne's inscriptions emphasise the social and affective value of the text. The sociable quality of this gift imparted by two different women ensures that it also holds significance as a memento of affection between a network of unmarried women. The gift of these volumes of Scott provides a physical and intimate connection between these female relatives emphasised by the material and spatial qualities of Marianne's inscriptions which connect her to each woman and the givers to each other through the uniformity of her hand.

In her study of the lives of eighteenth-century gentlewomen, Amanda Vickery argues for the connection between material and affective qualities in gifts: "gifts were valued in themselves and as material proof of the kind thoughts of others…Ever after, a gift prompted pleasant memories of the donor and moment of giving, 'with his own dear hands'" (*The Gentleman's Daughter* 188). The two Louisas' hands are evident in Marianne's recording of the act of gift giving. The hands of the gift-givers and the hand(writing) of the receiver are unified in the textual space and interface of the inscription. As such, Marianne's inscriptions not only stake her claim to the texts but record the method of exchange by which she attained them. In Ahmed's terms, the affects associated with their status as gifts and the women who gave them "stick" to the object of the book itself and are made manifest in the act of inscription (29).

Vickery, in her examination of the wills of unmarried women in eighteenth-century England, also demonstrates why this process of expressing and recording affection and intimacy through the gifted object is particularly pertinent to unmarried women in the long nineteenth century. She argues that the itinerate lifestyle of many unmarried women caused the concept of home to become associated not with a physical place but with movable objects:

> Of all women, the spinster was the least likely to be a householder and most likely to be itinerant. A spinster had to be ready to pack up her things and move on, insinuating herself into another household as circumstances demanded. Any permanence lay with her chattels—the tea set and bed curtains—not in a static residence. The comfort of home inhered in her movables. ("No Happy Ending?" 149)

Books form little part in the inventories, pocketbooks and wills which Vickery canvases in her article. It is likely that they were too heavy and too expensive to form a regular part of a spinster's "moveables" at this time. However, the significant number of gift inscriptions present in the Knight collection dated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrate that books were, if not a frequent, then a popular and significant gift given between unmarried women within the Knight family. As we have seen, this is not to say that the marginal space of the text remained uncontested. However, the inscription that records a gift, an act of deliberate exchange, interfaces differently with the names inscribed as part of

its circulation than those which compete for possession. Vickery goes on to argue that the wills of unmarried women provide evidence of their networks in a form unrecognised by traditional descriptions of inventory and property:

> Take the inventory and will of Frances Newman, a York spinster . . . At first glance, the inventory conveys a tragic, introverted life. But compare it with her will. Her testament suggests a warm network of trusted women . . . The will reveals what the inventory assessor has no interest in—the dense web of relationships that sustained lone women, both material safety net and emotional world. ("No Happy Ending?" 148)

In the same way, Marianne's gift inscriptions articulate and find a textual place, that is, a locality for this community, often marginal to the notable accounts of inheritance and property circulation, in the "movable" book object.

Gifts and inscriptions like those in Marianne's volumes of Scott are unified by the shared social position and cultural narrative of the spinster. Berlant has described intimacy as "involve[ing] an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way" (1). For Berlant, intimacy operates as a shared narrative. It has a history and an aspirational future. It is invested in connection as an ideal of relationship and communication which is characterised by expressive gesture. Gift-giving is itself an expressive gesture and it is not coincidental that in the moment of this shared act of gift-giving, the narrative of the two givers should begin to resemble each other more strongly.

In the winter of 1845, Louisa Knight was not yet married but her removal from her father's house had already taken place. As Louisa Bridges had assisted with the care of her deceased sister's children, the death of the youngest Knight daughter, Cassandra, precipitated Louisa Knight's removal from her family home to care for her widowed brother-in-law's house and children. In January 1845, at the time of her gift to Marianne, Louisa Knight had been caring for Lord George Hill's children for almost three years, largely in Kent in proximity to her family. However, it was understood that when Lord George returned with his family to Ireland later that year, Louisa would go with them. As Hillan explains: "it gradually emerged that Louisa would assist. It was a practical solution: Fanny had her own children and stepchildren, Lizzy had fifteen children of her own, and Marianne was still fully occupied with the tasks which had devolved to her twenty years earlier" (116). As the last unmarried daughter without a house to manage, Louisa was the expected choice. Underpinning this "practical solution" is the assumption that a spinster buys her board and position in the family through such acts of domestic labour. There is "no question" of hiring another woman to fill this role when a close relation is available to perform it (Hillan 116). Indeed, Vickery argues that such attitudes were reinforced by limited access to housing outside of family structures even for those women with the financial means to rent privately:

There were some hypothetical solutions to the plight of the intelligent spinster who desired neither marriage nor dependence on a brother, but they were never more than pipe dreams . . . The housing options of the spinster were limited by economics, unsurprisingly, but also by patriarchal attitudes . . . Spinsters were expected to be absorbed within the households of their families, not to be householders in their own right. ("No Happy Ending?" 141–142)

With these strong social expectations enforced by economic and legal systems it is little wonder that for women like Marianne, Louisa Knight and Louisa Bridges, dependence within

the family circle might be more appealing, and indeed, provide more stability – even if it occasioned a move to Ireland – than striving for domestic or financial independence.

The "pipedreams" of stable independence for spinsters to which Vickery refers also help us to understand the laden politics of gift-giving and gratitude for unmarried women in the Knight's social sphere. Marcel Mauss in his formative text, *The Gift*, argues that the receiver of a gift who cannot reciprocate is made "inferior . . . wound[ed]" by the "unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich almsgiver" (65). Similarly, Cynthia Klekar and Linda Zionkowski argue in their introduction to a collection of essays on gift-giving in eighteenth-century Britain that the "egalitarian potential of the gift falls short" in literary representations of ideological utopias like those referenced by Vickery, in part, because in such texts, "abject gratitude" is the only "appropriate recompense for women who are too genteel to labour and possess no resources to share" (9). The performance of gratitude is thus made necessary and painful for the receiver who cannot reciprocate. Similarly, the dutiful spinster trades her emotional and domestic labour for shelter and protection within the family placing her in a position of sometimes painful dependence. As Marianne's history demonstrates, this protection often remains precarious throughout the spinster's lifetime. In 1847, Louisa Knight's usefulness to Lord George and his family proved to be a more secure position than Marianne's role at Godmersham Park when Louisa and Lord George married in Denmark. In contrast, Marianne who remained single all her life, moved from the home of one brother or sister to another only finding a settled home 1884 at Lord George's estate where both she and Louisa died.

The immediacy of dislocation, duty and precarity in the lives of these women is a key context in which these gifts of Scott's poetry were given and in which Marianne memorialises the affection of her sister and aunt. By 1846, Louisa Knight had left for Ireland, so Louisa Bridges, another unmarried Louisa who dutifully assisted her brother-in-law, continues the gift given by her namesake. In doing so, she expands and confirms the community of readers towards which these inscriptions gesture. Despite the twenty months that separate these two gifts, Marianne's hand is as consistent and unifying as it is in her copies of Edgeworth. Her neat and formal positioning of her name and the details of each moment of gift giving work in concert with the binding to form these three volumes into a shared textual space in which each woman is given a locality through their relationship to Marianne. They are "sister" or "aunt," bound by affection and the materiality of the shared gift.

Through her inscriptions, Marianne uses the textual space of her books as a way of negotiating her position within her family. The archival evidence shows her interfacing with two key communities of readers: her father and his heirs, and unmarried women within her family. By asserting her claims to textual space, she ekes out a space not only for herself in the library at Godmersham Park, but also for her female relatives whose positions within the family are similarly dislocated, and precarious. Where geographical and domestic space is uncertain, this textual space creates permanent intimate connection and locality for all three women in the shared name of the two Louisas, which pushes back against the dictates of that other shared name, Edward Knight.

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